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**"Pan-Turkism in Turkey and in Central Asia during the  
Twentieth Century"**

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## INTRODUCTION

*Our history, which was divided by various events, has overcome the obstacles in its path and has returned to its natural course. The inevitable was realized in 1991 and these five brotherly republics have re-emerged as independent and sovereign states. We welcome this rebirth with great enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup>*

~President Süleyman Demirel

Numerous movements in the world draw international attention; yet, not many of them remain active for long. Very few movements have been persistent in world politics, because very few ideologies have a long-lasting effect on a particular group of people. Pan-Turkism is perhaps among the few movements that has been persistently present in the world politics for more than a century. It has not been always prominent; yet, it has not disappeared. Pan-Turkism did not lose its force even during the Soviet regime. Although, many scholars argue that the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1990s had encouraged the revival of Turkey's Pan-Turkist movement in the Central Asian Turkic republics, the continuity of Pan-Turkism remained fresh throughout the twentieth century. The Pan-Turkist nationalism in Turkey was evident before and after the formation of the Republic of Turkey. It was active before and during the two World Wars, and during Communism in the Turkic lands. Throughout the twentieth century, the Turkic republics of Central Asia in particular were Turkey's target in spreading the Pan-Turkist ideology, because the Anatolian Turks always have claimed Central Asia as their ancient homeland, or land of origin.

Pan-Turkism is a movement that carries an ideology of uniting all the Turkic people, descendants of Bozkurt (the Grey Wolf), in a territorially, politically and culturally cohesive homeland. Turks are a group of people who inhabit the Eurasian continent, from Siberia in the East, to the Anatolian peninsula in the West. Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli suggest that, the Pan-

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli, "Pan-Turkist Dreams and Post-Soviet Realities: The Turkish Republic and the Turkic States in the 1990s," in *Modern-Day Turkey in the Greater Middle East: Kemalism Faced with Its Ottoman Legacy*, (London: Zed Books, 2001), 4.

Turkist ideology emerged in late nineteenth century “among the Turkic-speaking communities in the ‘soft underbelly’ of the Russian Empire.” Precisely, the Tatar intellectuals introduced Pan-Turkism, which they saw necessary to combat the revolutionary pressures of Pan-Slavism.<sup>2</sup> Jacob Landau argues that, Pan-Turkism developed due to nationalism in Southeastern Europe, and was “further encouraged by the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8.”<sup>3</sup> Despite diverse scholarly interpretations on Pan-Turkist upsurge, the Pan-Turkist ideology, and the movement that followed afterwards, was essential for the survival of the Turkic people of Eurasia within the Russian Empire.

*Gasprinsky's principles of unity: of language, mind and action*

*Pan-Turk sentiment was expressed cautiously, due to official press censorship, focusing chiefly upon the oft-repeated phrase: ‘unity in language, thought and action’ (Dilde, fikirde, işte birlik).<sup>4</sup>*

~Jacob Landau

One may ask, why did not Turkic nationalism, or Pan-Turkism, arise prior to late nineteenth century? The answer is, as Serge Zenkovsky claims, because the Turkic people of Central Asia under the Russian rule were tribal “nomads, lacking any written language whatsoever”<sup>5</sup> and consequently a communal unity. Yet, it changed when the Crimean Tatars – a Turkic group of Russian Empire, first initiated and encouraged the movement in late 1800s. One of the initiators of the movement was Ismail Gasprinsky. He was a Russian-educated Crimean Tatar, who had also studied European political and literary understandings in Paris and in Turkey. In 1870, Gasprinsky had even volunteered to join the Ottoman army, which did not accept him, to help suppressing the Greek uprising against the Turkish authority in Crete. As Zenkovsky describes, Gasprinsky was a “national and social leader,” who traveled through the Muslim regions of the Russian Empire, in hopes of

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<sup>2</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: from irredentism to cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 11.

uniting the Muslim population in one ideology. It was Jemal al Din Afghani's Pan-Islamic ideology incited Gasprinsky's nationalist mindset. Jemal al Din Afghani was an Afghan religious reformer, who aimed to purify Islam of any superstitious beliefs, and to free the Muslim lands from the Russian Empire. Thus, in 1881 Ismail Bey introduced the propaganda to unify the Muslims of the Russian Empire by publishing a newspaper/journal called *Tarjuman* (The Interpreter). Since, education was crucial for the unification of Muslims under the Russian rule, Gasprinsky introduced a new academic curriculum, called "New method schools," or *Usul jadid*, where students learned the Arabic language phonetically, in addition to learning the Qu'ran and subjects such as geography, mathematics and history.<sup>6</sup> As Charles Hostler states, Gasprinsky's "pedagogical and journalistic activity did not exhaust his energies and interests." Indeed, it further inspired him to work harder. He became famous not only within the Muslim and Turkic population of the Russian Empire, but also abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Gasprinsky's principles of unity in thought, language and action that initially aimed at uniting the Muslims of the Russian Empire, majority of whom were of Turkic ethnicity, soon aimed at uniting the Turkic people of Russia. It was rather an *unconscious* consequence of Gasprinsky's Pan-Islamic ideology. Moreover, Zenkovsky states that, the movement of uniting Turks became even stronger and tangible, due to Gasprinsky's second principle – the unity of language – because the Muslims of the Russian Empire already had ties in common Turkic linguistic heritage. Therefore, his journal *Tarjuman* circulated throughout the Turkic world. Now, it aimed at reviving Turks' consciousness not only of their Muslim identity, but especially their Turkic identity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 30-36.

<sup>7</sup> Charles W. Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets: The Turks of the World and their Political Objectives* (London: Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., 1957), 125.

<sup>8</sup> Zenkovsky, 30-36.

*The “Gospel” of Pan-Turkism and Yusuf Akçura*

*When it comes to the advantages of a policy of Turkism, the Turks in the Ottoman territories will be closely bound both with religious and ethnic ties; they would be more strongly united than simply by the tie of religion; and other Muslim elements who, though not Turkish, have to some extent been Turkicized will identify themselves more closely with Turkism; while elements which have not identified themselves with Turkism will also be Turkicized.<sup>9</sup>*

~ Yusuf Akçura

Yet another founder of Pan-Turkism and an influential Pan-Turkist was Yusuf Akçura.

Yusuf Akçura was a Tatar of the Volga region of the Russian Empire. Unlike Gasprinsky, he sought the Turkic unification through common ethnic heritage, instead of religious belief.<sup>10</sup> As Zenkovsky, Jung, and Piccoli suggest, Akçura believed Gasprinsky’s idea of uniting the Turkic people through Pan-Islamism was out-of-date. Therefore, he introduced a new doctrine of the Pan-Turkist ideology. He called it the “Üç Teri siyaset,” or “The Three Systems of Government,”<sup>11</sup> which set up the principles of Pan-Turkist ideology. He argued that, it was necessary to seek more “ethnically defined Turkish nationalism” called *Türkeçülük*, which would be a “coherent political alternative to Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism.”<sup>12</sup> To some extent, Akçura’s Pan-Turkist ideology preached for the Turkic unity through ethnic and racial, or even blood ties, rather than religious ties.

*Ziya Gökalp: ‘moderate’ Pan-Turkism with powerful message*

*In truth, a man desires more to live with those who share his language and religion than with those who*

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<sup>9</sup> Yusuf Akçura and İsmail Fehmi, “Yusuf Akçura's Üçtarzı Siyaset,” *Oriente Moderno*, 61, no. 1/12 (January-December 1981): 18.

<sup>10</sup> Carter V. Findley, *The Turks in World History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> Different scholars translate the title of this work differently.

<sup>12</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 6.

*share his blood, for the human personality does not dwell in the physical body but in the soul.*<sup>13</sup>

~Ziya Gökalp

*Social traits are not transmitted through biologic inheritance but only through education, which means that ethnic origin plays no role whatever as regards national character.*<sup>14</sup> ~Ziya Gökalp

Unlike Akçura's racist message, Ziya Gökalp proposed a more moderate principle for a Turkic unity. Ziya Gökalp was a Turkish activist and a writer from Turkey, who promoted Turkish nationalism. In his book, "Principles of Turkism" published in 1923, Ziya Gökalp argued that, although the ancient societies maintained the ideal of the ethnic group, they never had ethnic purity. He stated that, during the early 1920s with the diverse structure of societies, it was unreasonable to think about ethnic purity, or territorially united Turkist homeland. Gökalp specified that the twentieth-century social solidarity "rests on cultural unity ... transmitted by means of education and therefore has no relationship with consanguinity."<sup>15</sup> Unlike Akçura, Gökalp argued that Pan-Turkist nation was possible through common education and cultural unity, instead of ethnic and blood bonds. He described a nation as "not a racial or ethnic or geographic or political or volitional group, but one composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality and aesthetics ... who have received the same education."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the basis of Turkism was not on racial bonds, rather on academic knowledge, which one received under a particular culture or society. Moreover, Gökalp viewed it unjust to claim a fellow citizen of a foreign ethnic or racial background not a Turk, if he or she obtained Turkic upbringing, education and mentality. He stated that, "those who have shared not only our blessings

<sup>13</sup> Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün esasları*, translated by Robert Devereux. (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1968), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>15</sup> Gökalp, 12-13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 15.

but also our misfortunes ... who have made great sacrifices ... for the 'Turkish nation' must not be outsiders in the society. He considered it incorrect to "ask the pedigree of humans, because race has no influence whatever on social traits."<sup>17</sup> Although, Gökalp's nationalist ideology of 'Turkism did not appeal to extreme Pan-Turkists, it was nevertheless, "the champion of cultural nationalism," which greatly influenced Kemalist nationalists of the Turkish Republic, as well as the Turkish foreign policy in Central Asia in 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

Findley describes most vibrant revolutionary stages of the Pan-Turkist movement.<sup>19</sup> The first stage he claims to have been during the Young Turk revolutions of 1905 and 1908. The second stage of Pan-Turkism was after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in the form of Basmachi rebellion in Central Asia. The third stage was the Turkish ultranationalism during the Second World War. Lastly, the fourth stage was in 1990s upon the Soviet collapse.<sup>20</sup> However, another sign of Pan-Turkism was in the Kemalist period of the Turkish Republic from approximately 1924 to 1938.

### *The Young Turks*

The Young Turks was an organization that organized a Young Turk revolution. It was a secret society founded in 1891 in Geneva, also known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CPU).<sup>21</sup> Hostler states that, first stage of the Young Turk revolution in 1908 aimed at unifying the Ottoman Turks. Gareth Winrow agrees with Hostler that, the Young Turk revolutionaries did indeed carry Pan-Turkist policy, which further encouraged Turkish nationalism in Anatolia.<sup>22</sup> Fehmi,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>18</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 6.

<sup>19</sup> This also supports my argument that Pan-Turkist movement had not been dead throughout the twentieth century, in order for it to revive in 1990s.

<sup>20</sup> Findley, 181.

<sup>21</sup> Hostler, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Charles W. Hostler, "The Turks and Soviet Central Asia," *Middle East Journal* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1958): 262. Gareth M. Winrow, *Turkey in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 7.

however, argues that the Young Turks had their “own brand of Ottomanism.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, one could conclude that the Young Turks sought freedom of and equal rights for all Ottoman subjects,<sup>24</sup> regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, from the monarchy and aimed at “the restoration of constitutional government.”<sup>25</sup> In short, the Young Turks incited nationalistic sentiment not only in Turks of Anatolia, but also in Turks of Central Asia.

*The “Turkic Napoleon:” Enver Paşa’s ambitions in the Basmachi rebellion of Central Asia*

*‘This time I will show them that patriotism  
in Turks had not died, and that we know  
how to make enemies pay’.*  
~Enver Paşa<sup>26</sup>

Another movement that showed signs of Pan-Turkism in Central Asia was the Basmachi rebellion. It was the movement that, as Martha Olcott argues, demonstrated “the most pervasive challenge to Soviet rule” in a six-year period of armed fight from 1918 to 1924. The cause of the rebellion in the Soviet Turkestan<sup>27</sup> was due to Soviet regime’s complete political control, as well as its “attempt to restructure Muslim society.” Yet, the Basmachi rebels were not alone in their cause to save their traditional Muslim society. In fact, as Olcott states, they received sufficient support from the “Dzhadidi (Muslim reformers), *Pan Turks* (italics mine), and the Turkestanis nationalists.”<sup>28</sup> Although, Zenkovsky argues, unlike Findley, that, the 1905-07 Young Turks revolution did not result in any resistance from the Central Asian Turks, one could argue that the Young Turks did indeed fuel, rather *indirectly*, the continuity of Turkic resistance against the colonial rule in the form of the Basmachi rebellion.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Akçura and Fehmi, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Subjects of Ottoman Empire were: Turks, Jews, Arabs, Armenians and people of the Balkan region.

<sup>25</sup> Akçura and Fehmi, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (Istanbul, 1989): 191.

<sup>27</sup> Turkestan was the name that the Soviet regime had given to the Central Asian region.

<sup>28</sup> Martha B. Olcott, “The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-24,” *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 3 (July 1981): 352.

<sup>29</sup> Zenkovsky, 11.



The two revolutionary groups did not have a direct contact with each other, yet a single person of great significance in both movements, highly contributed to their connection and further advancement. It was Enver Paşa, one of the most important, and later one of the most controversial, political and military officials of the Ottoman Empire, who stimulated and maintained the Pan-Turkist ideology in the Basmachi movement.

Prior to his arrival in Central Asia in 1921, Enver Paşa had already gained political and military fame, as well as infamy. Şuhnaz Yılmaz describes, that Enver Paşa “became the ‘hero of freedom’ after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.”<sup>30</sup> Yet, due to his ambitious personality and thirst for power, he was banished from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, during his exile years, Enver Paşa persistently attempted to “redeem himself” as a leader “first in the nationalist struggle in Anatolia, and failing to achieve that, in the Basmachi movement in Central Asia.”<sup>32</sup> Enver Paşa’s presence significantly contributed to the renewal and centralization of the Basmachi force against the colonial rule. The Basmachis grew in number and strength under his administration. Moreover, as Olcott highlights, Enver Paşa’s goal was to “defeat the Bolsheviks ... use the independent Turkestan as the nucleus of a Pan-Turk confederation.”<sup>33</sup>

Yet, Enver Paşa did not directly force the Pan-Turkist ideology upon the Basmachi rebels. Instead, he “spoke in a simple and romantic language which they could understand and assimilate.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, Enver Paşa expertly attracted the tribal leaders like Ibrahim Bek and Dzhunaid Khan into

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<sup>30</sup> Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4, Seventy-Five Years of the Turkish Republic (October 1999): 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 40; Enver Paşa became a refugee, because he had been blamed for pulling the Ottoman government into the First World War on the side of the Central powers.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Tachau, “The Search for National Identity among the Turks,” *Die Welt des Islams* 8, no. 3 (1963): 40.

<sup>33</sup> Olcott, 358.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 359.

adopting, or absorbing, the Pan-Turkist ideology into the Basmachi rebellion.<sup>35</sup> Hostler further supports Olcott's view, that the Basmachi movement was one of many "...examples of positive Pan-Turkist action..."<sup>36</sup> In short, it is clear that, with Enver Paşa's influence the Basmachi rebels gradually shifted from their initial mission. They soon aimed at not only protecting the Muslim identity of Central Asia, but also protecting its cultural unity, political and ethnically Turkic identity.

Although, the rebellion did not succeed, the Basmachis proved as a sufficient force and a challenge against the Soviet rule. They proved the Communists that it would not only be hard to conquer the region, but especially rule it. The rebellion brought together the Central Asian communities in their fight to protect Islam and contributed to the "political modernization," and the development of a unique political identity.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Basmachi rebellion also serves as another evidence how the Pan-Turkist movement under Turkey's encouragement was active in Central Asia during the twentieth century, and that Pan-Turkism did not just revive upon the Soviet collapse.

*The Turkish Hearth: youth as the key of Pan-Turkist force*

*"...Turkish nationalism, like Arab nationalism, has already reached the second or "racial" stage of development... It has already passed the bounds of what might strictly be termed "Pan-Turkism" and has now arrived at the truly momentous concept known as 'Pan-Turanism'."*<sup>38</sup>

~T. Lothrop Stoddard

In spring of 1912, the students of Istanbul's Military Medical Faculty founded an organization called Türk Ocağı, or the Turkish Hearth. It aimed to "serve as a cultural center with the purpose of promoting Turkish nationalism." Yet, as Frank Tachau clarifies, the Turkish Hearth soon served as the "focal point of pan-Turkist activities." Although there are ongoing debates on

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>36</sup> Hostler, 264.

<sup>37</sup> Olcott, 363-365.

<sup>38</sup> T. Lothrop Stoddard, "Pan-Turanism," *The American Political Science Review* 11, no. 1 (February 1917): 15.

whether the Turkish Hearth aimed at reuniting the Turks of Turkey with the Central Asian Turks, its presence, nevertheless, demonstrated the energy of the Pan-Turkist movement, even during the harshest last decade of Ottoman rule. However, after the War of Independence, the Kemalist government forced the Hearth founders to alter their irredentist goals. In turn, the Pan-Turkist ideology of the organization disappeared. It happened so, because the Kemalists did not approve of Turkish nationalism extending beyond the Anatolian territory, also known as the Pan-Turanist ideology, which they believed the Turkish Hearth preached. Yet, although by 1931 the Kemalists officially disbanded the Turkish Hearth and “condemned (it) as an anachronism,” the Kemalists did carry on some elements of Pan-Turkism within their own reform movement.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as Hostler argues, the Turkish nationalism of Kemalist Turkey represented the core of the Pan-Turkism of the time.<sup>40</sup>

*Secrets of Kemalism*

*The Kemalists incorporated certain elements of cultural Pan-Turkism in order to construct a new and cohesive nationalist ideology.<sup>41</sup>  
~Dietrich Jung and Wolfango Piccoli*

Thus, the Kemalist reforms of 1923-1938 of newly established Turkish Republic serve as another proof that Turkey's Pan-Turkist movement had not revived simply in 1990s. Although, Jung and Piccoli argue that, the Kemalist regime rejected the Pan-Turkist ideology;<sup>42</sup> Tachau's article clearly presents, how Atatürk's administration became a prominent leader that repeatedly, yet *unconsciously*, contributed to the continuity of the Pan-Turkist movement. The founder of the Turkish

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<sup>39</sup> Tachau, 170-175.

<sup>40</sup> Hostler, 109.

<sup>41</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7.

Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk conducted the reforms, particularly in language, in order to establish and highlight the unique Turkish identity of the new Turkish Republic.

The evidence of Pan-Turkism in Kemalist reforms was especially obvious in the third stage of the language reforms. The Güneş-Dil Teorisi, or the Sun-Language Theory, was the moderate phase of language reforms, which replaced the radical purism of Öz Türkçe<sup>43</sup> phase.<sup>44</sup> After the Third Language Congress in 1936, the Kemalists declared that now there was no need to purify and replace already existing words with foreign roots in Turkish language, because Turkish was “the mother of all languages.” The Congress “proved” that Turks “had been culture creators, and their homelands (Central Asia and Anatolia) were the cradle of human civilization (or 'high culture').”<sup>45</sup> Thus, Turks were so universal that they did not need to hesitate to use words with foreign roots; they were Turkic in origin anyway.

Although Yılmaz Çolak states that, the Sun Language Theory ended “the great chaos caused by the radical purists” of the preceding Öz Türkçe phase, it nonetheless did not lessen the nationalistic sentiment of the movement. It was not, as Hostler agrees with Çolak, a “tactical retreat from extremism in language reform.”<sup>46</sup> In fact, the Sun Language Theory even further highlighted the *ethnic* nationalism, or the Pan-Turkist sentiment, of the language reform movement. The Turkish language served as a *direct* source with which Kemalists could “rescue” the Turkic race that has been significantly damaged by Arabic and Persian influences of the Ottoman Empire. This stage assured the firmly established freedom of the Turkish language and the Turks themselves.

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<sup>43</sup> Öz Türkçe, or Pure Turkish, phase of the language reform aimed to purify the Turkish language from any foreign elements, i.e. Arabic and Persian words.

<sup>44</sup> Yılmaz Çolak, “Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (November 2004): 77.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>46</sup> Hostler, 111.

Thus, Kemalists were *ethnic* nationalists, who ambitiously sought for uniquely pure national identity from the ethnically Turkic past, not the Ottoman past. Yet, it is important to note that Kemalists did not seek to spread their nationalist ideas and gain political power “beyond the borders of the Republic of Turkey.”<sup>47</sup> Atatürk was particularly cautious in maintaining his political and nationalistic goals within the borders of the Turkish Republic. He focused exclusively on Turkey’s internal stability and international status as a new republic. Perhaps that is why some scholars do not identify Atatürk as a Pan-Turkist nationalist. He was not, in a direct sense; yet, the Sun Language Theory demonstrated Atatürk’s hidden, but strong, sense of connection to the Turks outside of Anatolia.<sup>48</sup>

*Pan-Turkism alive as ever during Soviet times:  
the battle between the loyal Pan-Turks and the ‘coward’ Communist Turks*

*My first word is this; Listen here, you Muscovite son  
We crush those who breed like dogs.  
Manliness is our fame and glory  
Bitchiness and barlotry anger us.<sup>49</sup>  
~B. Ay*

*My name is Turk! The Wall of China is too little for me.  
The walls of Byzantium are too simple for me.  
The army of Moscow doesn’t matter to me.  
My name is Turk, my last name is Turk, the son of a Turk.<sup>50</sup>  
~ M. Uğuralp*

Similar to the Kemalist nationalists of Turkey, yet more extreme in their force, were the right-wing ultranationalists of the Turkish Republic in late 1940s, as well as from 1950s to 1960s.

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<sup>47</sup> Gregory A. Burris, “The Other from Within: Pan-Turkist Mythmaking and the Expulsion of the Turkish Left,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 4 (July 2007): 612.

<sup>48</sup> H. Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent-Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 287.

<sup>49</sup> B. Ay, “İlk Sözüüm Şu,” *Orkun* no. 22 (1951): 1.

<sup>50</sup> M. Uğuralp, “Adım Türk,” *Orkun* no. 39 (1951): 7.

Jacob Landau suggests that the Second World War served as an ideal opportunity for the Pan-Turkist ideology to “reassert itself and reaffirm its goals.”<sup>51</sup> Pan-Turkists’ approach of spreading and maintaining Pan-Turkism was to deny the credibility of Communist-Russian ideology. They even isolated or expelled the leftist, or Communist, Turks of the Turkish Republic from the political and social spheres of the state. For them a Communist Turk was not a Turk, rather a “Moscovite,” who was unwanted in the Turkish political society.

Yet, more significant goal of ultranationalist Pan-Turkists was to get rid of not only Communist Turks, but also eliminate Communism and the Russian imperialist power from Eurasia in general. They claimed the Turkic identity and Pan-Turkist ideology as the only pure ideology. They supported their Turkic dominance by creating myths about the purity and superiority of the Turkic blood and race. The ultranationalists took advantage of mythmaking for the sake of establishing and “liberating the (Turkic) homeland,” thus, Central Asia from the hands of Communism. Unlike Gökbalp, the Turkish ultranationalists claimed that an individual could not become a real Turk, if he or she had not been born a Turk. Because unlike other races, Turks were claimed to have maintained their “moral conduct.” Therefore, for Pan-Turkists the Slavs – Russians in particular, were immoral group of people. They claimed that, due to Slavic, or Russian, immorality the world suffered from the economic backwardness.

In short, as Gregory Burris highlights, the Pan-Turkists used the phenomenon called “the myth of a golden age,” through which they glorified their past in order to ensure a glorious future. For ultranationalists, a Turk was a sign of powerful masculinity and “the nation’s greatest heroes,” whereas a Communist (Russian or Turk) was a sign of feminine immorality, impurity, and the nation’s “greatest villain.”<sup>52</sup> As Tachau states, Pan-Turkist nationalists with irredentist goals “were

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<sup>51</sup> Landau, 111.

<sup>52</sup> Burris, 163-168.

pursuing unattainable ideals,” which clearly explains the lack of complete success of Turkey’s Pan-Turkism in Central Asia in the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup>

*Germans and Turks: a centuries-old friendship, yet again, proves worthless*

Yet, the Pan-Turkists of Turkey were not alone in their irredentist Pan-Turkist dreams especially during the Second World War. Germany had a significant role in assisting Pan-Turkist leaders in their irredentist goals. In fact, Pan-Turkists during the Second World War expressed racist ideology similar to the Nazi Germany.<sup>54</sup> As Landau suggests, some Pan-Turkist organizations in Europe might have maintained partnerships with Germany’s Nazi groups and the Nazi supporters long before the war. Pan-Turkists plainly ignored the policy of neutrality that the Turkish government tried to maintain during the war. Instead, they madly spread their anti-Soviet sentiment throughout Turkey, as well as, throughout major cities of Western and Central Europe.<sup>55</sup> Hostler states, that German government sought Turkey’s collaboration and assistance in its mission conquering Russia. To ease their military mission in the Soviet empire the German Ambassador to Turkey, Franz Von Papen proposed Turkey to take part in the mission as the representative of the Soviet Turkic population. Franz von Papen granted the Pan-Turkists in Berlin and in Turkey the “right to organize the liberated Turko-Tatar areas into a federation.”<sup>56</sup> This proposal attracted the Pan-Turks of Turkey into the mission, as well as further excited them in their anti-Soviet campaign. Because, as Hostler argues, the advantage of the German-Soviet conflict and the possible collapse of the USSR would ensure the Pan-Turkists the reality of establishing Pan-Turkic nation.

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<sup>53</sup> Tachau, 168.

<sup>54</sup> Jacob M. Landau, “The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Pan-Turkism,” *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 1 (1988): 3.

<sup>55</sup> Landau, 112.

<sup>56</sup> Burris, 163-168.

During the Second World War, many Soviet Turks, who were prisoners of war under the German army, volunteered to “serve in the German Armed Forces against the Soviets.” By winter of 1941, General Oscar von Niedermayer of the German 162<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division organized and directed four different legions. Those legions consisted of Soviet Turks or Soviet Christians with anti-Soviet sentiment. There was “a ‘Turkestan Legion’ ... a ‘Caucasian-Muhammedan Legion’ ... a ‘Georgian Legion’ ... an ‘Armenian Legion’... a ‘Volga-Tatar Legion’ and a ‘North Caucasian Legion,’” that served with Turkey’s encouragement under the German command. Surely, soldiers of these legions were “used for front line action and for fighting partisans.” Nevertheless, Germany assured Turkey that, with German victory, Soviet Turks would be able to establish themselves as independent nation-states under Turkey’s leadership.

Yet, upon Germany’s defeat, the Turkish officials, especially Pan-Turkists, realized that Germany simply aimed to “exploit Turkish assistance in the liquidation of the Soviet Empire and to leave in German hands the future of the huge Soviet Russian colonies.” Although, Turkey “passionately (desired) the annihilation of Russia,” it soon realized the necessity to “maintain absolute neutrality” in order to improve its international status. Moreover, in 1944 the Turkish government went as far as arresting Pan-Turkist leaders with accusations of “spreading racist and Pan-Turkist doctrines ... conspiring to overthrow the government of the Turkish Republic.”<sup>57</sup>

Although, the Pan-Turkist dream of establishing Pan-Turkic homeland failed to become a reality, it nevertheless brought consciousness to the Soviet Turks of their Turkic “ties with the Turks of the Turkish Republic.” The Turkish Pan-Turkists demonstrated their support and encouragement

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<sup>57</sup> Hostler, 264-267.



in “achieving political independence from the Soviets,” as well as instilling an anti-Soviet sentiment in the Soviet Turks’ mindset.<sup>58</sup>

*Turkey and Central Asia in 1990s: Revival of Pan-Turkism or Turkic reunion?*

*“The stronger Turkey is, the more attractive it will be as a partner to the Central Asian countries.”<sup>59</sup>*

~Adam Balcer

*Turkey is ‘the morning star that shows the Turkic republics the way.’<sup>60</sup>*

~President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev

Was it Turkey the guiding star, or the morning star, for the Central Asian Turkic republics, or was it the Central Asian republics the morning stars of Turkey’s ambitions? One could answer that neither. Yet, it is obvious that both regions have mutually guided each other in their political dreams throughout their existence. Hostler argues that, the Turkic (and Muslim) people of Soviet Central Asia “historically and culturally, have gravitated toward the Middle and Near East, the seat of Islamic civilization.” Yet, similarly, Turks of the Turkish Republic have been “*naturally* (italics mine) interested in the status of their “brethren,” the Turkish-speaking peoples of the Soviet Union.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, there is no concrete answer to this question, except above explanation. Yet, it is clear that Turkey’s Pan-Turkist ambitions in Central Asia have been active since the Ottoman Empire, and did not revive simply in 1990s.<sup>62</sup>

Upon the Soviet collapse in 1990, Turkey enthusiastically created new partnerships with Central Asian Turkic republics. Under the support and exaggerated encouragement of the West, in

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<sup>58</sup> Hostler, 264-267.

<sup>59</sup> Adam Balcer, “Between energy and soft Pan-Turkism: Turkey and the Turkic Republics,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 159.

<sup>60</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Hostler, 261.

<sup>62</sup> Winrow, 7.

particular the United States,<sup>63</sup> Turkey quickly proved itself a leader in the region's development. The Turkish government put forth several cultural and educational projects that aimed at introducing Turkish culture and language to the Turkic republics. For instance, soon after their independence, Turkey encouraged the new republics to adopt and use the Turkish-based Latin alphabet, instead of using the Cyrillic alphabet. Yet, among the five Turkic republics, only Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan changed their alphabet to Latin.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, in May 1992, Turkey established the Avrasya television channel broadcasted in Turkish (with subtitles,) as an opportunity for Central Asian Turks to connect with the Anatolian Turkic culture. However, Turks of Central Asia soon lost interest in Turkish television, due to low quality of the programmes and due to confusion with Turkish language. Moreover, Turkish newspaper *Zaman* was widely circulated throughout the republics. The Central Asian Turkic youth received education based on Turkish curriculum in boarding schools founded and sponsored by the Turkish government.<sup>65</sup> In 1993, the Turkish ministry of culture founded the Turkic Cultures and Arts Joint Administration (TÜRKSOY).<sup>66</sup> As Polad Bülbüloğlu notes, TÜRKSOY aimed to "increase cultural relations among the Turkish speaking countries and communities, to do research on Turkish culture, to improve and protect it, make it known in the world...and to contribute to regional and international peace with this cultural weapon."<sup>67</sup> In short, it was an organization, which aimed at promoting cultural Pan-Turkist ideology, rather than political Pan-Turkism.

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<sup>63</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Heinz Kramer, "Will Central Asia become Turkey's sphere of influence?" *SAM: Center for Strategic Research* (March-May 1996): 4, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://sam.gov.tr/will-central-asia-become-turkeys-sphere-of-influence>.

<sup>65</sup> Winrow, 26-27.

<sup>66</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 21-22.

<sup>67</sup> Polad Bülbüloğlu, "Cultural Cooperation in the Turkic World," *Eurasian studies* 33, no. 3 (1996): 45-47.

Furthermore, it is clear that the independence of the Central Asian Turkic republics did not excite Turkey simply in its foreign policy, economic and cultural ambitions. Turkey sought for an opportunity to restore its political and strategic importance for the West. The West viewed Turkey as an important player in preventing the “spread of fundamentalist Islam.”<sup>68</sup> The 1990s have tested the Turkic bond between Turkey and Central Asia. In 1992, at the first Turkic summit the former President of the Republic of Turkey Turgut Özal stated that, if Turks of Turkey and Central Asia manage to create and maintain unity with one another without making any mistakes, then “the twenty-first century will be the century of the Turks’.”<sup>69</sup> Yet, despite President Özal’s encouragement, it seems that Turkey has made not just one, but several mistakes. These mistakes have caused doubts in maintaining smooth Turkish-Central Asian relationship, as well as the success of political Pan-Turkism.

One mistake was that Turkey did not manage to prove itself different from former colonial powers, which have controlled the region. Turkey had unrealistic goals and gave careless financial promises to help the Central Asian republics. Turkey ignored to learn more about the uniqueness of the Central Asian Turkic cultures, which further confused the Central Asians on Turkey’s true mission. In short, it is clear that, Turkey attempted to achieve too much, too fast and in too short of time. Second, Turkey attempted to create Turkic unity based on its own rules ignoring the perspectives of the Turkic republics. In the euphoric atmosphere, or the “honeymoon period,”<sup>70</sup> Turkey’s rather aggressive projects became too obsessive and too oppressive.

In short, such cultural projects became weapons that came heavy upon newly established republics, which at last wished to freely choose and decide their own identity. Turkey, though perhaps unconsciously, did not allow that opportunity of freedom of choice. The academic and

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<sup>68</sup> Kramer, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Kramer, 4.

cultural projects imposed Anatolian Turkish identity upon the Central Asian Turks, rather than allowing them time to discover and to establish their own identity. Moreover, Turkey might have pushed too hard to create Turkish identity, instead of unified Turkic identity. As Winrow notes, the Central Asian Turks “were prepared to consider themselves as part of a wider ethnic Turkic umbrella ...,” but they “did not perceive themselves as being “Turkish” or “Turkish-speaking,” as Turkey referred to them.”<sup>71</sup> Consequently, along with such attitude the possible success of Pan-Turkism, especially of political Pan-Turkist movement, had failed to materialize.

These projects and various Turkic summits between Turkey and the Central Asian republics further proved that there was no strong and promising political unity. First, Turkey’s “unrealistic promises and proposals by offering up to three billion dollars in support to the Turkic states” underestimated the financial need of the region. Second, Turkey’s financial collapse in 1994 further reduced Turkey’s political and economic reliability in the eyes of the Turkic republics.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, as Jung and Piccoli state, Turkey shifted its policy “from ‘fanciful notions of ethnic solidarity’ to a more explicit notion of self-interest ... replacing the excessive emphasis on commonalities by a more sober and realistic attitude based on inter-state relations.”<sup>73</sup> Turkey did so, in order to disprove misunderstandings about its Pan-Turkist goals in Central Asia. Turkey was scared to damage its international status, which in turn further reduced the possible revival of the political Pan-Turkist movement. Moreover, Turkey’s approach to gain political power in Central Asia through cultural projects, proved to be a failure.

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<sup>71</sup> Gareth Winrow, “Turkey’s Evolving Role in the Post-Soviet World,” in *The Political Economy of Turkey in the Post-Soviet Era: Going West and Looking East?* edited by Libby Rittenberg (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1998), 108.

<sup>72</sup> Winrow, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 10.

*The twenty-first century: the century of the Turks*

*'...if we can exploit this historic opportunity in the best possible way, if we do not make any mistake, the twenty-first century will be the century of the Turks.'*<sup>74</sup>

*~President of Republic of Turkey  
Turgut Özal*

*"...one step too many by Turkey would put the whole world behind Armenia."*<sup>75</sup>

*~Prime Minister Demirel*

The successes and failures of contemporary Pan-Turkism is debatable topic. Jacob Landau argues<sup>76</sup> that, Pan-Turkism has failed, because it has “disappeared as an organized phenomenon and is rarely mentioned at all.”<sup>77</sup> He claims that, politically Pan-Turkism has failed due to internal and external forces that pressure the Republic of Turkey.<sup>78</sup> Nowadays, Turkey resists actively supporting the propaganda of political Pan-Turkism due to its internal and external reasons. The internal reasons have been Turkey’s unresolved issues with Armenian genocide since the Ottoman Empire, as well as the unsettled Kurdish ethnic conflict. Adam Balcer suggests that, in near future Turkey could earn much economic benefit and political success in the Central Asian region, only if it “copes with several serious internal challenges (e.g. the Kurdish issue).”<sup>79</sup> The external reasons, which discourage Turkey from promoting political Pan-Turkism, have been its desire to join the European Union and the on-going Russian presence in Central Asia.<sup>80</sup> Although Landau’s argument is clear, one must argue that Pan-Turkism has not failed completely. Because, recently Pan-Turkism has been

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<sup>74</sup> Jung and Piccoli, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>76</sup> He wrote this article in 1988 – before the collapse of Soviet Union. Therefore, his perspective and analysis are certainly out-of-date, although some arguments easily could be applied to the current state of Pan-Turkism.

<sup>77</sup> Jacob M. Landau, “The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Pan-Turkism,” *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 1 (1988): 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> Balcer, 160.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 152-160.

more successful, appealing and continuous as an ideology and a cultural movement, rather than a political movement.

Since the 1990s, Central Asia has become of great economic importance for multiple world powers. Due to its wealthy deposits of oil (petroleum) and natural gas, Central Asia is an arena of tense rivalry, or the “Great Game,” not only for Russia and for Turkey, but also for China, Iran, the United States and for the European Union.<sup>81</sup> However, despite strong rivals, Turkey’s firm grip on the Central Asian region is apparent. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu quotes that, “there must be an effort to recreate the Silk Road through widespread railroads, transportations lines, energy corridors, oil and gas pipelines and communication networks.”<sup>82</sup> He states that, Turkey’s present goals in Central Asia have been “to ensure a smooth transition and that the developments will move in the right direction” in the Turkic republics. Davutoğlu notes three necessary transformations for Central Asia. Those are geo-political, geo-cultural and geo-economic transformations. He describes the geopolitical transformation as an action, or tool, to changing the “region’s status in world politics...” rather than reviving Pan-Turkism. He states that, in order to ensure a better future it is necessary to “keep working on harmonizing the citizenship identity with the local identities... to expand the intrinsic culture of peace and foster an understanding of living together among the peoples of Central Asia.”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Sabirzyan Badretdin agrees that, for Turkey it is necessary to “emphasize mostly cultural, social and economic ties among Turks...” rather than political. Because cultural Pan-Turkism will attract people, instead of politicians, and encourage more economic and improved political unity.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 152-160.

<sup>82</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkic Republics Since Independence: Towards a common Future,” *Center for Strategic Research* no. 5 (January 2013): 6.

<sup>83</sup> Davutoğlu, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Sabirzyan Badretdin, “Pan-Turkism: Past, Present and Future,” *Turkoman* (December 1998): 3.

Yet, it is apparent that such cultural approach of gaining political Pan-Turkist unity did not succeed in 1990s.

Nonetheless, could we consider the twenty-first century as either the century for Turks or as the century of Pan-Turkism? Winrow states that, “the term ‘Pan-Turkism’ should be employed with great caution,” because for many it implies the “political unity of Turkic people – a Turkic Empire” thus an “aggressive expansionism.”<sup>85</sup> Although Pan-Turkism is appealing both for Turkey and for the Central Asian republics, in the twenty-first century society it is neither achievable nor acceptable in its political form. The contemporary society, which pursues democracy, will not accept the idea of a Turkic Empire. Unlike the idea of a cohesive Turkic nation, the possibility of a Turkic Union, modeled on the European Union, is indeed possible and acceptable. Because, as Mehmet Halil quotes, “‘Turk’ is not the name of a nation. It is the name of a race from which many nations have sprung: Anatolians, Azerbaijanis, Northern [Turks], Turkestanis, etc. - all of these are without doubt Turks; but they are not of one nation. In order for them to be one nation, their cultures and fatherlands must be one. But their fatherlands are different from one another, and even their cultures are [not the same].”<sup>86</sup>

Another reason is, as Heinz Kramer argues, Turkey’s key goal in its foreign policy in the region has been to assist the new republics in becoming “pluralist, secular democracies, respectful of the rule of law, progressing towards a market economy...” Therefore, based on these principles, Turkey “should be careful to assure that her links with the Turkish Republics do not have pan-Turkist implications.”<sup>87</sup> Otherwise, it will be a disadvantage to Turkey in its political goals and economic partnership with world powers, especially Russia. Because Russia is Turkey’s important

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<sup>85</sup> Winrow, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Mehmet Halil, "Milliyetperverligin Manası," *Anadolu mecmuası* nos. 9, 10, 11 (December 1924, January-February, 1925): 313.

<sup>87</sup> Kramer, 2.

partner in trade and tourism. Moreover, Russia's continuous economic influence and linguistic legacy in Central Asia, does not allow Turkey and the Turkic republics to unite at least in cohesive cultural and educational Turkic upbringing, as Ziya Gökalp thought possible.

As Kramer and Balcer highlight, in the twenty-first century Turkey has been maintaining a "low profile," or a "neutral stance" in the Central Asian political issues and conflicts. For example, the absence of Turkey's military involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Moreover, Turkey's attempt to improve its relations with Armenia in 2008 and 2010, further proved Turkey's resistance to create close political ties, especially with Pan-Turkist intentions, with the post-Soviet Turkic republics.<sup>88</sup> In the twenty-first century, the realization of political Pan-Turkism became even more challenging for Turkey, due to positions that the Central Asian Turkic republics chose for their national benefits and security. For instance, Turkmenistan's stand on maintaining "permanent neutrality" reduces the number of political alliances or opportunities for Turkey, and discourages its objective to maintain a wholesome Pan-Turkist politics.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the twenty-first century is not entirely the century for Turks; at least not yet.

## CONCLUSION

*Pan-Turkism offers the most attractive alternative to extreme nationalism, fundamentalist Islam, and secular westernization ... pan-Turkism must overcome the negative image that may follow from a superficial impression that the movement is nothing more than a front for Ankara's political ambitions.*<sup>90</sup>

~ Sabirzyan Badretdin

In recent days, the Central Asian Turkic republics have been more preoccupied in search of their national identity, rather than their ethnic individuality. Thus, one could conclude that, the collapse of Soviet Union did not result in the revival of Pan-Turkism, particularly political Pan-

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<sup>88</sup> Balcer, 153.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>90</sup> Badretdin, *Pan-Turkism*, 2.



Turkism. Instead, it resulted in cultural and economic reunion of the Turkic republics of Eurasia. Moreover, nowadays, it is only through cultural cooperation and mutual appreciation between Turkey and Central Asia that will make cultural Pan-Turkism successful.<sup>91</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet regime did not revive Pan-Turkism, because as Badretidin argues, Pan-Turkist ideology have been always in existence without any major disruptions. He quotes that, prior to 1991, “pan-Turkism existed only as an ideology.”<sup>92</sup> Although, Badretidin’s argument is agreeable, at the same time, it proves inaccurate and disputable. Badretidin ignores all the significant Pan-Turkist movements that took place throughout the twentieth century both in Turkey and in Central Asia. The Soviet collapse and Turkey’s presence in Central Asia in late twentieth century did not revive the Pan-Turkist *movement*. Because, in 1990s there was no successful political Pan-Turkist movement either. Turkey’s attempts to revive a political Pan-Turkist movement through cultural projects had failed.

Instead, the independence of the Turkic Central Asian republics from the Soviet regime reunited the Turkic nations of Eurasia. This strengthened the Pan-Turkist ideology and its *cultural* movement. Pan-Turkism has been always a persistent ideology and a *cultural* movement, which had not achieved its entire fruition or concrete result as a *political* movement.

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<sup>91</sup> Bülbüloğlu, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Sabirzyan, *Future of the Turkic World*, 3.

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