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THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE FORMATION OF TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY AND TURKISHNESS

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Abstract

Although not a reflection of liberal ideals, the Ottoman Empire had no official language policy or policies that standardized education. For the Ottoman rulers, the main aim was to maintain power and ensure the continuation of the Empire. However, the Turkish Republic was founded with the modernist idea of a nation-state, and therefore it required a common culture. As a result, language and education were standardized to create a *Turkish national identity*. Adoption of a language policy was one of the most important strategies used by the founders of the Turkish Republic during the process of transition from an empire to a nation-state. This article focuses on the role of language and the contributions made by intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp in creating the Turkish nation and defining Turkishness. In this article, the classical ethnic-civic dichotomy is challenged and a constructionist position is adopted.

Key words: Turkey, national identity formation, national language.

There are two ways of looking at nationalism as a political phenomenon. One is to separate ethnic nationalism from civic nationalism (the classical ethnic-civic dichotomy), and the other is to adopt a constructionist position and argue that every nationalism contains varying degrees and forms of civic and ethnic elements. The latter is the approach presented in this paper.¹ Differentiating between civic and ethnic nationalism is a weak approach in explaining most nation-building projects (including the Turkish one) and the complicated interrelations and continuities between national identity, ethnies, nation and nationalism. In

contrast, the constructionist approach allows us to grasp this relatedness and also the hybrid nature of community, which is both voluntary and natural.² This way of understanding connects nationalism with ancient cultural characteristics and ethnic cores.³ From the constructionist perspective, we can argue that intellectuals and state elite use the historical cultural reservoir to build a state and create a national identity. Among the elements of culture, language, ‘being *part* of culture, providing an *index* of culture and becoming *symbolic* of the culture’⁴, is one of the numerous markers of national identity.⁵ Thus, language can be used to construct national identity. According to the recent literature, equating identity and language is far from being adequate⁶, but this equation dominated the social sciences for a long time. Furthermore, we reject the equation language=nation=race, but agree with the widely accepted idea that national identity is comprised of numerous elements, one of which is language.⁷ In some countries the connection between language and national identity is weak; in others, such as Turkey, this connection is strong.

This article examines the importance that was placed on language in the construction of the Turkish national identity during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state beginning with the Tanzimat, the process of Westernization that began in 1839. We also attempt to understand the roles that Ziya Gökalp (a poet, author and one of Turkey’s first sociologists) and other leading intellectuals played in shaping the official language policy and in defining the concept of ‘Turkishness’. We argue that, within the process of forming the national consciousness needed to build the Turkish state, language was used as a significant instrument to create Turkishness as a collective identity.⁸ Like Hans Kohn, we see language as a force that shapes nationalism, and an element that contributes to the development of the national sentiment.⁹ Related to the analysis of Turkishness, we will emphasize an important fact that has been largely disregarded in the literature; that is the willingness of people to adopt the Turkish national identity. We believe that besides elements such as language and religion which contribute to determine the inclusion or exclusion of a group into Turkishness, the willingness of a group to adopt Turkishness is important to consider. Groups of people are not passive actors, and their exclusion or inclusion in a national identity is not entirely determined by state policies.

This article focuses on the role of language, but the purpose is not to underestimate the role of other important factors like religion, or to argue that language alone can form the basis of national identity. We contend that, in the case of modern Turkey, language was the main instrument that defined the nation and national history, since it did not contradict the major modernisation policies that were developed. In fact, in constructing the new Turkish nation-state, the founders of the republic focused on three important elements: secularism, language, and history. They defined the nation based on these elements. For example, although an element of Turkishness, religion could be interpreted as a form of reactionist power with the potential to oppose secularism.¹⁰ The nationalist ideology emphasized secularism in order to avoid forming the new society on religious grounds and the nationalist movement based itself on common language and Turkish history.¹¹

From empire to nation: the *young pens* and the *new language*

Although it was not a reflection of liberal ideals, the Ottoman Empire had no official language policy or any standardization system for education regarding the ‘millet’ within its borders.¹² The main aim of the rulers was to protect the existence of the state at any cost.¹³ However, the issue of language simplification and purification did not first emerge with the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Its roots go back to the Tanzimat period, during which the idea of language simplification was defended and implemented by various intellectuals, such as Şinasi, Ziya Paşa, Ahmet Vefik Paşa, and Ali Suavi.¹⁴ The earliest truly systematic reform movement was actually spearheaded by a literary group called the *Young Pens (Genç Kalemler)*, which published a journal by the same name. *Genç Kalemler* was the first major Turkish nationalist publication and movement to defend language reform. Its members were also known as *yeni lisancılar* (exponents of the *New Language*), and the most influential names of the group were Ziya Gökalp and the short-story writer Ömer Seyfettin.¹⁵ The first issue of *Genç Kalemler* was published by Ömer Seyfettin, Ali Canip, and others in Salonika in 1911.

The authors of *Genç Kalemler* were influenced by the populist movement that had emerged in Russia and, though they wanted to communicate with the masses, they were faced with a language barrier. They realized that the prevalence of two different languages - the Turkish used by the ordinary people and the Ottoman Turkish - was a major problem, and believed

that simplification was needed in order to permit communication with all the nation's people. The Turkish intellectuals legitimized and upgraded the language spoken by the people in general, and decided to restructure it so it could be used as a tool to create national sentiment, and to mobilize people around a specific ideal.

Genç Kalemler gained fame with an article entitled *New Language* written by Ömer Seyfettin. The piece underlined the importance of a national language for building national solidarity, and for enhancing the development of national literature. In his article, Seyfettin argued:

Turks can maintain their sovereignty only by vigorous and serious progress, and progress depends upon the dissemination and spread of knowledge, science and literature among us all. What is necessary for the publication and circulation of these is a national and popular language. If there is no language that is national and natural, knowledge, science, and literature will remain as an incomprehensible riddle, just as they are today. Let us abandon that old and ornamented language, that Turkish language of yesterday, created by five centuries of irrationality and oddity. Let us write our spoken Turkish, which will be alive with its foundations, principles, and rules.¹⁶

In fact, Seyfettin identified the fundamental social problem of his time, the need for a national language that would bring the masses and the elite together. Language reform was one of the main principles of Seyfettin's nationalist philosophy; however, he did not consider this an ideological weapon. Rather, he saw it as an essential condition for mass communication and national education. Seyfettin used simple language in his stories, and was thus able to establish unity through communication in the language of everyday life.¹⁷

Ziya Gökalp, another author in *Genç Kalemler*, also wrote in simple language that the people could understand. He opposed the continued use of two languages. As mentioned one was Ottoman Turkish that was the language of the administration and of classical literature, a mixture of three tongues (Arabic, Persian and Turkish). The other was Turkish, the language of the ordinary people and of popular literature.¹⁸ Gökalp clearly stated his position in *The Principles of Turkism*, saying:

The national language of Turkey is Istanbul Turkish. There is no doubt about this! But there are two varieties of Turkish used in Istanbul. One is the Istanbul dialect, which is spoken but not written, and the other is Ottoman, which is written but not spoken. I wonder which of these will become our national language?’¹⁹.

Gökalp argued that this dichotomy should be eliminated either by making the written language also the spoken one, or the spoken language also the written one. He believed that Ottoman was an artificial language, and thus claimed it could not become a national language; Gökalp’s opinion was that the spoken language should be used as the written language.²⁰ He and other Turkish intellectuals eventually upgraded the language that ordinary people spoke, and this language was later used as a boundary setter in nation-state building to mobilize the masses around the Turkish national ideal.

At this time, their purpose in using a simple language, either through simplifying Ottoman Turkish or promoting the spoken Turkish, was to maintain the unity of the Ottoman state, which had been invaded by the great powers of Europe. The idea was that the new language would help to disseminate ideas to the common people. In a very real sense, the support of the new language by the members of *Genç Kalemler* was not only a literary issue, but also an attempt to prevent the dissolution of the Empire. This movement was the first to promote İstanbul Turkish as the *official language* of the Empire.²¹

Language was the main concern of *Genç Kalemler*. One of the main issues tackled by the movement was interference by intellectuals and government institutions in the development of language, which *Genç Kalemler* perceived as a living organism. Another aspect they dealt with was the interaction among the prevailing languages of the time, and how to purify Turkish by eliminating foreign rules and words. For example, while *Genç Kalemler* promoted simplification and purification through the abandonment of compound words, plurals, and particles of Arabic and Persian that had been naturalized in Ottoman Turkish, they defended the idea of continuing to use the Arabic and Persian words that had taken root in the language of the common people.

In fact, there were three different movements surrounding the language issue at the time. A group named the *linguistic purists* (*tasfiyeciler*, or the *tasfiyecilik* movement) was in favor of purifying the language by removing all foreign rules and words. The leading promoter of this view was Fuad Kösearif. Another group, the *conservatives* (*muhafazakarlar*), rejected any change in or interference with the current language of the time. Süleyman Nazif was one of the leaders of this movement. The third viewpoint was that argued by *Genç Kalemler*²² and theirs was the perspective that dominated the republican era.

In addition to his views on one Turkish language for all citizens, Gökalp was also concerned with simplifying and purifying language. Gökalp was known for his determination in systematizing Turkism, and the journal *Genç Kalemler* effectively became the voice of Turkism.²³ In promoting the purification of the Turkish language, Gökalp's aim was not only nationalistic. He also wanted to formulate a language that was capable of grasping the meanings created by the 'world civilisation'. This, in itself, was an indirect way of contributing to the nationalist ideal. Regarding the purification of Turkish, it is important to note that, particularly in the early years of the republic prior to 1935, the Turkish language was influenced by the extreme view on *purification* (*özleştirme- öz-Türkçeleştirme*) that was advanced by the *tasfiyecilik* movement. Some of Atatürk's speeches clearly voiced the ideals of this movement; however, its impact was lost in 1935, partially due to the proposal of Kvergic's *Sun Language Theory*²⁴, which claimed that all languages stemmed from Turkish, and partially due to the spread of the views of *Genç Kalemler*.

The organic connection between *Genç Kalemler* and the Young Turks²⁵ political movement, especially through Gökalp, is worth mentioning. On one hand, it demonstrates the character of the nationalism of *Genç Kalemler*. On the other, it shows the active engagement of *Genç Kalemler* in politics within the context of the Ottoman patriotism of the day. It is also important to note the interchangeable use of the terms 'Turkism' and 'Ottomanism' by the members of *Genç Kalemler* and the Ottoman Turkish nationalists. This provides an understanding of the transformation that occurred in Gökalp and, to a certain extent, how the Ottoman nationalists moved toward the idea of creating a Turkish nation state and later advancing Kemalism. In fact, the close link between Ottomanism and

Turkism, which can also be interpreted as an ideological contradiction, preserved its complex character during the foundation of first institutions of language and history, such as the Turkish Association (Türk Derneği), the Ottoman History Committee (Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni), and Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocakları). The contradiction is even apparent in the names of these institutions.

As steps were being taken to construct the Turkish national identity, several official initiatives were made. Examples are the founding of the Turkish Language Institution in 1932, and the launching of the Sun Language Theory in 1935. Radical initiatives like the Linguistic Purification Movement (öz-Türkçecilik) and the group promoting the Sun Language Theory shared similarities, even though they contradicted each other in many ways. In fact, both lost popularity before Atatürk's death, and Atatürk himself ceased to encourage them once he realized they were leading to a dead end. However, although *purification* was a serious depletion of the language and the Sun Language Theory was considered by Lewis to be nothing but “a disease of fakery”, each represented a different method of using language to promote nationalism²⁶.

A similar influential official initiative was the foundation of the Turkish History Institution in 1931, which introduced the Turkish History Thesis. The Turkish History Thesis helped to legitimize the Turkish Republic in Anatolia by creating a strong link between the citizens of the new republic and the soil they inhabited. It also contributed to the transcendence of Islam by reminding Shamanism of the pre-Islamic past. It was also intended to boost pride in Turkish culture so that Turks would claim a respected place among the world's civilisations.²⁷

During the transition process from empire to nation-state, the idea of national language, which had begun to take shape with the Tanzimat, became an important issue and area of research. In fact, attempts to create a new language that would unify the Ottoman Empire ultimately led to the creation of modern Turkey. The Turkish Republic was established with the modernist idea of a nation-state, and when this occurred language reform reached its peak. Turkish became the official language of the state and, therefore, the language of education. It became the most powerful and prestigious language of the new republic. As in the history of most countries, a number of unofficial languages were also spoken in Turkey

at the time, but the state supported the official one Turkish was taught not only in schools, but also in the military service²⁸ and other state-run courses aimed at increasing literacy.

Like other nation-states that have been founded throughout history, the new Turkish Republic standardized language and education in order to create and strengthen the Turkish national identity and modernize the country. The foundation of the republic was characterized by a process of homogenization initiated by the state elite. More specifically, Turkish nationalism was a particular model of Westernization and secularization promoted by the state elite, and was influenced by intellectual immigrants that flooded into Turkey from the Balkans and the Soviet Union. However, it is impossible to deny the effects of the reforms that were implemented during the late Ottoman period. Analysis of this historical continuity reveals that the roots of Turkish nationalism lie in the *Young Turk* movement. The Turkish identity was first emphasized by the *Young Turks*, and, later, by the members of the *Union and Progress Party* (İttihat ve Terakki), one of them being Ziya Gökalp.

The shaping of official language policy and national identity

The national identity issue emerged in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, when the Empire faced problems in ensuring the continuation of the social order. The Ottomans' military defeats had encouraged the national revival of the non-Muslim groups within Ottoman borders, and these groups were influenced by Western nationalist movements. In particular, the nationalist movements that emerged in the Balkans had significant influences on the development of Turkish national consciousness and the concept of a national language. The Ottoman Empire faced with nationalism via Balkan nationalisms and Turkish nationalism was developed as a reaction to these. The ideological roots of these nationalisms can be said to lie in the populist movement that emerged in Russia. Turkish intellectuals were exposed to these concepts mainly through Turks who had immigrated to Turkey from Russia.²⁹ The populist movement became a source of inspiration for Turkish intellectuals, including Ziya Gökalp. Over time, as described above, Gökalp played an important role in building Turkish national consciousness and promoting the idea of a national language. He defined 'nation' as follows:

A nation is not a racial or ethnic or geographic or political or volitional entity, but is composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality, and aesthetics; that is to say, of those who have received the same education.³⁰

Gökalp argued that people have greater desire to live with those who share their language and religion than with those who share their bloodlines.³¹ Of the various elements of culture, he focused on the importance of language, viewing it as the touchstone of nationality.³² Gökalp considered language as basic to the education of the masses. Going further, he argued that independence in the sphere of language was a prerequisite for political independence.³³ Gökalp played a major role in the development and adoption of official policies at the end of Empire's rule and during the early Republican period by establishing as a priority in the creation of Turkish national identity, and by excluding ethnic affiliation as a significant aspect of identity.³⁴

When the foundation of the Turkish Republic was declared, Gökalp's response to the question "Who is a Turk" is worth to be mentioned. In defining Turkishness, Gökalp emphasized the role of culture as opposed to blood ties, and argued that anyone who stated he or she was a Turk in Turkish, provided that he or she was sincere in the argument, should be considered a Turk. According to Gökalp, to be a Turk, it was not enough to be born as a Turk.³⁵ He was also very clear about the inclusion of different ethnic groups living within the borders of modern Turkey into Turkishness:

There are fellow citizens in our country whose ancestors have come from Albania or Arabia sometime in the past. If they have been educated as Turks, and have become used to working for the Turkish ideal, we must not set them apart from other citizens. How can we consider as aliens those who have shared not only our blessings but also our misfortunes? In particular, how can we say, "you are not Turks" to those among them who have made great sacrifices and have performed great services for the Turkish nation.³⁶

Similarly, Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, stated in one of his speeches, 'one of the most obvious characteristics of a nation is language. A person who says that he belongs to the Turkish nation, should, primarily and absolutely, speak Turkish. If a man

who does not speak Turkish claims his loyalty to the Turkish culture and community, it will not be correct to believe him'.³⁷ Atatürk also emphasized the close link between Turkey's political and economic independence and the liberation of Turkish from under the yoke of foreign languages.³⁸ As discussed earlier, this was an opinion shared by Gökalp as well.

Although Gökalp conceptualised nation more as an ideal than a territory, his definition intersected at various points with that of Atatürk, and it also contributed to the official understanding of Turkishness, which was basically defined in territorial and cultural terms, not ethnic terms. Similar to the French model, the founders of the republic used the term "nation" (ulus)³⁹ to refer to territorial citizenship. However, as argued at the beginning of this article, like other forms of nationalism, Turkish nationalism comprises both civic and ethnic elements.

In the process of building the Turkish national identity, discriminatory measures were taken within in the legal sphere and in official initiatives. In addition, certain speeches and sayings were open to misunderstanding. For example, Atatürk exalted the Turks with sayings like 'the power you are in need of exists in the noble blood in your veins' or 'a Turk is worth the whole world'.⁴⁰ The purpose of these types of messages in speeches was to strengthen the sentiment of Turkishness among the members of a newly emerging state, but they were sometimes misinterpreted.

One important example of ethnic elements of nationalism in the legal sphere is the Law on Settlement (No. 2510), promulgated in 1934, and is still valid, though not applied, today. This law gives ethnic Turks priority in obtaining Turkish citizenship.⁴¹ However, this ruling, which encouraged migration of Turks from the Balkans and the Caucasus to Turkey contradicts the definition of Turkish nationalism as strictly territorial. It clearly implies that Turkish nationalism contains both civic and ethnic elements. It is also important to stress that dominance of civic versus ethnic elements of Turkish nationalism varied over time and depended on political developments in other parts of the world. For example, while civic elements dominated in the early years of the Turkish Republic, the 1930s saw more focus on ethnic elements as in the above-mentioned Law on Settlement.

However, in order to better understand the concept of Turkishness, a more detailed analysis of the willingness of migrant communities to adopt this identity is required. The integration of the non-Turkish Muslim communities that migrated from the Balkans cannot be explained by religious unity alone. The readiness of these people to define themselves as Turks by appropriating Turkish culture and Turkish language was an essential factor. The Turkish state and Turkish intellectuals identified acceptance of culture and language as the main criteria for being recognized as Turks. For example, although Muslim, Arab communities did not adopt Turkishness and therefore were not considered as Turks. This shows that exclusion from or inclusion in Turkishness depended not only on state policies since, in line with the constructionist approach, we do not consider such groups as passive actors.

Discussions about the concept of Turkishness that occurred in Turkish Parliament during the preparation of the 1924 Constitution clearly reveal the views of the law-makers of the time. In discussions on Article 88, Hamdullah Suphi Bey, Deputy for Istanbul, objected to the initial text that read, ‘the people of Turkey, regardless of religion and race are named as Turks (*Türk itlak olunur*)’. He said:

It may be an aim for us to give the title of Turk to all people who live within our political borders. However, as you know, we went through a very difficult struggle (war of independence) and we all know in our hearts that the struggle is not over.....⁴²

Referring to struggles between the Turkish and European governments over rights for non-Muslims and population exchange projects, he continued:

When we want to send the Greeks and Armenians, what will our answer if they say, ‘These people are Turkish according to the law accepted by your parliament.....they cannot be Turks’. The parliament cannot make these fugitive Greeks and Armenians Turks. They do not want to be Turks, no way⁴³.

After the Turkish Republic was founded, individual members of different cultures that had been living side by side, almost as separate entities, were now supposed to mix together in the public sphere as citizens. The creation and continuation of the nation-state required

cultural homogenization, penetration of once-separate communities and weakening of their social boundaries. Groups that had live as closed communities within the social order of the Ottoman Empire, interpreted this process as threat to their social distinctiveness. Muslim or non-Muslim communities of the Balkans or the Caucasus that wanted to adopt the Turkish culture and language were included within the definition of Turkishness with ease. In fact, the discussion about Turkishness that took place during the preparation of the 1924 Constitution also shows that Jews who were willing to adopt Turkish culture and language were also accepted as Turks. Hamdullah Suphi bey said:

Someone (meaning a Jew) asked me ‘How can I become Turk? Could you please tell me?’ I said, ‘You can be a Turk. Jews who left Spain and came here with the Spanish language will be Turks after accepting the language of the country and the Turkish schools as their own, like Jews in France, like Jews in England.’⁴⁴

From this perspective, the main criteria for becoming a Turk were willingness to speak Turkish and adopt the Turkish culture. This meant it was possible for anyone, regardless of religion or race, to take on Turkish identity. As shown in the points taken by parliamentary deputies during the debate over Article 88 of the constitution, the elite who found the Turkish Republic saw Turkish ethnicity as strictly subjective quality. This view prompted rethinking of the meaning of ethnicity both theoretically and in Turkish political practice.

After the objection of Hamdullah Suphi bey and other members of the parliament, Article 88 was changed to read, “People of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards Turkish citizenship” the words “as regards Turkish citizenship” were added after heated debates which were in fact about the non-Muslim communities of Turkey and concerned mainly Armenians and Greeks rather than Jews. This text change was criticized for being a way of excluding certain communities. However, these communities were Christian, and this exclusion was the result of the attitude of those groups denying Turkish identity and the debates and plans for population exchanges as mentioned above.

Atatürk believed that cultural homogenization could only be realized through education. The unification of education and alphabet reform were major tools that enhanced the power

of language, which was the core element in the creation of Turkishness and a culturally homogeneous, modern and secular society.

The law on the unification of education was enacted by the Turkish Parliament in 1924. This ruling was a major step towards secularisation, and it became a significant factor in the construction of Turkishness, since the masses, including women, were taught in a uniform way. Four years later, in 1928, the Latin alphabet was adopted. The new alphabet did lead to more literacy; however, the consequences of this change went much deeper. First, the spread of literacy reduced the gap between the common people and the intellectuals, a dichotomy that was the main concern of *Genç Kalemler*. Second, once lines of communication were established between the intellectuals and the people, the masses were influenced by nationalist propaganda and began to embrace the nationalist ideology. The adoption of the Latin alphabet signified a break with the past. It not only facilitated the strengthening of national identity, but also became a tool for establishing distance from religion, which can be considered the most significant consequence of this reform.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In this article, we have attempted to criticize the classical approach to nationalism via the analysis of Turkish nationalism and the way in which Turkish national identity was constructed. We have also highlighted lines of continuity between cultural past and nationalism in Turkey, arguing that Turkish nationalism is connected to ancient cultural characteristics, and that the role of the cultural historical reservoir in the process of radical change is undeniable. One could say that, the Turkish national identity represents a fusion of three identities that existed long before the republic was founded: *Ottoman*, the name of the dynasty signifying the state; *Muslim*, the name for those who believe in Islam, referring to religious identity; and *Turk*, the name given to various tribes, referring to ethnic identity.⁴⁶ There are different levels of Turkish identity.⁴⁷

We discussed at length the role that language played in the formation of Turkish national identity. The argument was that language was the main tool that intellectuals and the founders of the Turkish Republic used to create the Turkish nation and define Turkishness. We identified Turkishness as a subjective entity, and explained that, theoretically, no

community within the country's borders was excluded from this identity. In practice, however, it was clear that some communities such as Greeks and Armenians were excluded due to the way they were perceived by the state elite and due to a lack of willingness to adopt Turkish identity. In short, becoming Turkish (adopting Turkish identity) was a process that depended on both state and community. Although an important element of Turkishness, being Muslim was not enough to become a Turk. For example, Arabs living in Turkey rejected to adopt the Turkish identity and developed their own nationalism. Turkish national identity was conceptualized as an ideal, and inclusion under this identity required willingness on the part of each community. The Turkish state used two criteria to define this willingness: speaking Turkish and adopting Turkish culture.

It is important to underline that Turkism was not promoted as the official ideology of the new republic. On the contrary, the official educational and cultural policies were internationally focused and anti-Turanist, and were highly secular and socialist in content. In building the nation-state, the founders of the Turkish Republic selectively used certain cultural and historical pieces, and other fragments of pre-nationalist heritage to actively foster Turkish national sentiment. Atatürk, who was influenced by ideas of Ziya Gökalp, contended that people who lived in Turkey (within the borders of the Turkish Republic) were Turkish. During a speech given at Eskisehir, he stated:

Neither Islamic union nor Turanism may constitute a doctrine or logical policy for us; henceforth, the government policy in the new Turkey will consist of living independently, relying on Turkey's own sovereignty within her national frontiers.⁴⁸

We defend the argument that the Turkish revolution was a cultural revolution, and that Turkishness was culturally and territorially defined by the founders of the republic. Religion, language and ethnicity (in the recent sense of the term, not with any racist connotation) are all important elements of culture that have a place within the content of Turkishness but are of varying significance. Language is the most important element. The group's willingness to adopt the Turkish language and culture were most important, as this combination makes possible the creation of common values and consciousness through creating a homogenous and secular national culture.

This article also discussed some extreme theories that were put forward during the process of creating the Turkish nation-state, specifically the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory. These theories which were discarded in a relatively short period of time, but they both fostered a certain level of national pride for the pre-Ottoman past. These theories helped to prove the Turks that Anatolia had belonged to Turks since time immemorial. The most critical step in the creation of Turkish national identity was Turkish Language Reform. This successfully eliminated the gap between the language of intellectuals and that of ordinary people, and also promoted the homogenization of society, despite problems with the educational system and the extreme approaches advocated by the Sun Language Theory and those in favor of language purification.⁴⁹

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- ²⁰ Ibid., Gökalp, pp 76-77.
- ²¹ M. Arai, ‘The Genç Kalemler and the Young Turks: A Study in Nationalism’, *METU Studies in Development*, Vol.12, No.3-4, (1985), pp 215-18.
- ²² Murat Belge, ‘Türk Dilinde Gelişmeler’, in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: 1983), Vol.10, p. 2603.
- ²³ See H. N. Orkun, *Türkçülüğün Tarihi*, (Ankara: Çağ Yayınevi, 1944), pp 79-84; and Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, (London: Luzac Company Ltd.&The Harvill Press Ltd, 1950), p. 118; Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, (İstanbul: İnkilap&Afa, 1918), pp 7, 11, 13.

²⁴ Kvergic's theory, which influenced the Turkish language policies for a short period of time, was based on totally unscientific arguments and analysis. However, its brief popularity temporarily prevented efforts to purify Turkish of foreign words since it contended that all words in all languages originated from Turkish. The reason for its influence was contextual since it nicely suited the demands that arose as part of the process of developing nationalist ideology. This theory argued that the origin of Turkish language was so old as to be untraceable, thus promoting the ideas that the Turkish nation had a "glorious" and "ancient" past of which the people should be proud. In fact, a similar approach was adopted for history. The History Thesis claimed that all nations within Anatolia were of Turkish origin because people who came from Central Asia were the first residents of the region, and were thus the ancestors of all those who later lived in these lands. The aim was to frame Anatolia as the homeland of the Turks, therefore challenging the arguments put forth by the Greeks and Armenians. Both the History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory were attempts at restoring national self-confidence in reaction to the image of "the Turk", seen in the West as *primitive, vulgar and barbarian* (Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türkiim Diyebilene*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001, pp. 162-163, 192). For details of the Sun Language Theory and the Language Society, see *The Turkish Language Reform* by Lewis (1999).

²⁵ The *Young Turk* movement was founded by young Ottoman bureaucrats (1889) who had been educated in the modern colleges of the Empire, or often in Europe. Made restless by the impotence of the state they served, they aimed to establish a constitutional, parliamentary regime. For more details see Zürcher's 'Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics-1908-1938', in Kemal Karpat (ed), *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, (Boston: Brill, 2000), pp. 150-79.

²⁶ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform, A Catastrophic Success*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁷ Suavi Aydın, *Modernleşme ve Milliyetçilik*, (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1993), p. 227.

²⁸ Joshua Fishman, *Language and Ethnic Identity*, (New York&Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp 26-30.

²⁹ Niyazi Berkes, *Türk Düşününde Batı Sorunu*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1975), pp 231-32.

³⁰ Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. by Robert Devereux, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Gökalp, pp. 15-16.

³² As argued by Taha Parla, Gökalp's understanding of religion was based on Sufism, not orthodox doctrines, and it was morally oriented rather than politically oriented (Taha Parla, *Ziya Gökalp, Kemalizm ve Türkiye'de Korporatizm*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989, p. 39). Influenced by Durkheim, Gökalp viewed Islam as an historical fact dependent on societal conditions in which it developed. Gökalp focused on the function of Islam and

concentrated on the moral value of Sufism which can establish solidarity among members of the society. In other words, he was more interested in the function of Islam than its theology (Ibid., Parla, p. 47). The interpretation of Gökcalp adopted here is, in a way, a critique of people who argue that Gökcalp's theory was based on three irreconcilable elements: Turkism, İslamism and Westernism. Considering that Gökcalp's version of Turkism refers to a cultural norm whereas Islam refers to a moral norm, it is possible to argue that the three seemingly contradictory elements coexist.

³³ Ziya Gökcalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, (İstanbul: İnkilap&Afa, 1918), p. 61.

³⁴ Gökcalp played an important role in the adoption of official policies and influenced Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with his ideas. However, while Gökcalp believed that culture and civilisation existed separately, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk equated the two, stressing that it was difficult and unnecessary to make this distinction. In other words, while the separation of the spiritual and material was impossible according to Atatürk, it was possible in Gökcalp's thinking and is crystallised in his famous motto, 'I am of Turkish nation, Islamic umma, and Western civilisation'. In fact, this motto signifies the complexity of the coexistence of Eastern culture with Western civilisation in a Muslim country. In Turkey, this debate has sparked deep discussions and created fierce opposition between the conservatives and radical Islamists on one side and the supporters of total secularism and modernisation on the other.

³⁵ Ziya Gökcalp, *Makaleler IX*, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1980), p. 37.

³⁶ Ziya Gökcalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. by Robert Devereux, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 16.

³⁷ Baskın Oran, *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1993), p. 203.

³⁸ Cahit Külebi, 'Türk Dili', in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1993), Vol.9-10, p. 2582.

³⁹ The synonym of the term "ulus" is "millet" which originally means "religious community". Mustafa Kemal Atatürk consciously avoided to use the term "millet" and instead used the modern term "ulus".

⁴⁰ Baskın Oran, *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1993), p. 204.

⁴¹ See Kemal Kirişçi, and N. Sönmez, (1995). 'Report on Recent Movements of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Illegal Immigrants Into Turkey', Paper presented at the 45th International Study Congress on Refugees in Origin Countries and Countries of Refugee, Republic of San Marino, September 25-27; and Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, (Bloomington&Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 78.

⁴² Şeref Gözübüyük and Z. Sezgin, *1924 Anayasası Hakkındaki Meclis Görüşmeleri*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi İdari İlimler Enstitüsü, Balkanoğlu Matbaacılık, 1957), p. 437.

⁴³ Ibid., Gözübüyük and Sezgin, pp. 437-38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Gözübüyük and Sezgin, p. 438.

⁴⁵ Baskın Oran, *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1993), pp 200-201.

⁴⁶ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, (Boston: Brill, 2000), p. 1.

⁴⁷ For a larger discussion about the levels of Turkishness see Soner Çağaptay, 'Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930's', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.8, No.2, (Summer 2002).

⁴⁸ Cited in Landau, Jacob.. M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, (Bloomington&Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 78.

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform, A Catastrophic Success*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).