

Arařtırma Makalesi/ Research Article

**Turkist-Turanist Nationalism under Pressure: State
Repression and Ideological Resilience in Wartime
Turkey (1939–1945)***

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Abstract

This article examines how the Turkish single-party regime reshaped Turkist-Turanist nationalism through state repression during the Second World War. Rather than treating Turkist-Turanism as either a marginal ideological current

* This article is related to Özbilek’s completed Master’s thesis; however, it was independently developed through a distinct theoretical and conceptual framework, reformulated research questions, and a substantially different analytical structure.

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or a decisive force behind Turkey's post-war Western alignment, it argues that wartime repression weakened the movement's organisational capacity while preserving and transforming its ideological repertoire. Drawing on qualitative historical analysis and process tracing, the study analyses official archives, parliamentary proceedings, diplomatic records, periodicals, and newspapers to reconstruct the sequence linking legal restrictions, censorship, press polemics, courtroom mobilisation, and post-war anti-communist politics. It demonstrates that the 1938 Law on Associations, wartime emergency legislation, censorship, periodical closures, and the Racism-Turanism trials displaced Turkist-Turanist activism from formal organisation into print culture, commemorative politics, and anti-communist discourse. The article further argues that the Racism-Turanism trials functioned simultaneously as instruments of domestic repression and diplomatic signalling, reflecting the Turkish government's efforts to preserve wartime neutrality while containing anti-Soviet nationalist agitation. Finally, it shows that the deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations after 1945 did not vindicate Turkist-Turanism as a political programme or determine Turkey's Western alignment. Instead, changing geopolitical conditions made elements of its anti-communist vocabulary selectively compatible with the state's emerging security priorities. By linking nationalism studies, modern Turkish history, and historical international relations, the article demonstrates how authoritarian repression can weaken organisational structures while simultaneously producing durable ideological repertoires.

Keywords: Turkist-Turanism, nationalism, state repression, ideological resilience, anti-communism, Turkey

Savaş Dönemi Türkiye'sinde Türkçü-Turancı Milliyetçilik: Devlet Baskısı ve İdeolojik Direnç (1939–1945)

Öz

Bu makale, Türkiye'deki tek parti rejiminin İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Türkçü-Turancı milliyetçiliği devlet baskısı yoluyla nasıl dönüştürdüğünü incelemektedir. Çalışma, Türkçü-Turancılığı ne marjinal bir ideolojik akım ne de Türkiye'nin savaş sonrası Batı bloğuna yönelişini belirleyen temel bir siyasal güç olarak değerlendirmektedir. Bunun yerine, savaş yıllarında uygulanan baskının hareketin örgütsel kapasitesini zayıflatırken ideolojik repertuarını koruyup dönüştürdüğünü ileri sürmektedir. Nitel tarihsel analiz ve süreç izleme yöntemlerini kullanan araştırma; arşiv belgeleri, parlamento tutanakları, diplomatik kayıtlar, süreli yayınlar ve gazeteleri inceleyerek hukuki kısıtlamalar, sansür, basın polemikleri, mahkeme süreçleri ve savaş sonrası antikomünist siyaset arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, 1938 tarihli Cemiyetler

Kanunu, savaş dönemi olağanüstü mevzuatı, sansür uygulamaları, süreli yayınların kapatılması ve Irkçılık-Turancılık Davaları'nın Türkçü-Turancı hareketi resmî örgütlenme alanından basın faaliyetlerine, hafıza siyasetine ve antikomünist söyleme yönelttiğini göstermektedir. Makale ayrıca Irkçılık-Turancılık Davaları'nın, Türkiye'nin savaş dönemi tarafsızlığını koruma ve Sovyet karşıtı milliyetçi ajitasyonu denetim altında tutma çabalarının bir parçası olarak, aynı anda hem iç politikaya yönelik bir baskı aracı hem de dış dünyaya verilmiş diplomatik bir mesaj işlevi gördüğünü ileri sürmektedir. Son olarak çalışma, 1945 sonrasında Türk-Sovyet ilişkilerinin bozulmasının Türkçü-Turancılığı bir siyasal program olarak doğrulamadığını ve hareketin Türkiye'nin Batı bloğuna yönelişini belirlemediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Buna karşılık değişen jeopolitik koşullar, hareketin antikomünist söyleminin belirli unsurlarını devletin şekillenmekte olan güvenlik öncelikleriyle seçici biçimde uyumlu hâle getirmiştir. Modern Türkiye tarihi, milliyetçilik çalışmaları ve uluslararası ilişkiler literatürünü bir araya getiren bu makale, otoriter devlet baskısının örgütsel yapıları zayıflatırken aynı zamanda uzun ömürlü ideolojik repertuarlar üretebildiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkçülük-Turancılık, milliyetçilik, Devlet baskısı, ideolojik direnç, anti-komünizm, Türkiye

Introduction

World War II Turkey was not simply a neutral state watching a European war from its margins. It was a single-party polity in which domestic ideological control and foreign-policy caution became mutually reinforcing instruments of rule. The Republican People's Party, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, or CHP, under İsmet İnönü, sought to avoid military entry into the war while preserving regime authority under conditions of inflation, scarcity, mobilisation, diplomatic pressure, and intensified ideological polarization. This context made nationalism both useful and dangerous. State nationalism remained central to republican legitimacy, yet extra-state nationalist currents, especially Turkist-Turanist nationalism, could become diplomatically risky when they invoked Turkic peoples under Soviet rule, attacked communism, criticized education policy, or appeared to sympathize with Axis power politics.

The article asks one primary question: how did the Turkish single-party state's wartime repression of Turkist-Turanist nationalism shape

the movement's ideological resilience and its later contribution to anti-communist political discourse in early Cold War Turkey? The answer advanced here is not that Turkist-Turanism became politically consequential because it functioned as a coherent wartime opposition party. It did not. Its organisational capacity was limited, its social reach is difficult to measure, and its polemical press should not be mistaken for representative public opinion. Its significance lies elsewhere. The CHP regime's legal and coercive response displaced Turkist-Turanist nationalism from formal organisation into periodical polemic, courtroom mobilisation, anti-communist rhetoric, and memory politics. This displacement limited immediate political action but preserved an ideological vocabulary that became more usable after the Soviet crisis of 1945 and Turkey's turn towards the United States.

The problem is therefore one of mechanism. Repression did not simply silence Turkist-Turanism; it altered the arenas in which Turkist-Turanists could act. The 1938 Law on Associations restricted organisations based on race, class, or religion, while wartime press controls, closures, bans, arrests, and trials narrowed the public field of political expression.¹ The result was not the disappearance of nationalist dissent but its displacement into semi-legal and symbolic forms. Journals such as *Bozkurt*, *Orhun*, *Gök-Börü*, *Çınaraltı*, *Tanrıdağ*, and *Atsız Mecmua* became substitute arenas of opposition, performing functions that formal associations could no longer safely perform.² Courtrooms then transformed ideological polemic into public confrontation: the *Atsız-Sabahattin Ali* case staged Turkism and communism as rival national projects, while the 3 May 1944 demonstrations converted print

¹ "Cemiyetler Kanunu," Law No. 3512, 28 June 1938, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 3959, 14 July 1938, 10272.

² Çetin Adem, *Orhun Dergisinin Türk Düşünce Hayatındaki Yeri*, Master's Thesis, Niğde University, 2009; Zakir Aşar, "Dr. Rıza Nur and Tanrıdağ Magazine", *Journal of International Civilization Studies*, 3/1 (2018), pp. 45–77; Canan Çılgın, *1940'lı Yıllarda Yayımlanan İrkçi Turancı Dergilerin İncelenmesi: Bozkurt, Gök-Börü, Ergenekon, Orhun*, Master's Thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University, 2011; Murat Karataş, "II. Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkçü Dergiciliğin Bir Örneği Olarak Gök-Börü Dergisi", *Journal of Universal History Studies*, 2/1 (2019), pp. 134–153; Mehmet Soğukömeroğulları, "Atsız Mecmua Üzerine", *Asia Minor Studies*, 1/1 (2013), pp. 94–121.

controversy into visible mobilisation.³ The Racism-Turanism trials subsequently made repression itself a resource of movement memory. After 1945, Soviet pressure over the Straits and the eastern frontier changed the strategic meaning of anti-communism; what had been diplomatically risky anti-Soviet agitation during the war became increasingly compatible with the state's post-war security orientation.⁴

This interpretation requires careful distinction between three phenomena often collapsed into one another. The first is ideological expression: the circulation of Turkist-Turanist arguments in journals, pamphlets, poems, historical essays, and polemical attacks. The second is organisational capacity: the ability to form legal associations, sustain networks, mobilize followers, and act collectively. The third is later political resonance: the reactivation of themes such as anti-communism, national vigilance, betrayal, youth mobilisation, and 3 May commemoration in the changed environment of 1945-1947. The article argues that the first survived because the second was constrained, and that the third became possible because repression had converted the movement's wartime defeat into a usable political memory.

This approach also corrects a recurrent overstatement in discussions of wartime Turkist-Turanism. Turkist-Turanist anti-communism did not determine Turkey's foreign policy, did not cause the Truman Doctrine, and did not by itself produce Turkey's post-war Western alignment. The international balance, Soviet policy, British retrenchment, American strategic calculations, and Turkish state interests mattered far more. Yet Turkist-Turanist discourse became compatible with this new strategic environment. It provided a vocabulary through which communism could

³ Mustafa Müftüoğlu, *Milli Şef Döneminde Çankaya'da Kâbus*, Başak Yayınları, 2005, pp. 51–67; Mahmut Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi III: Milli Şef Dönemi 1939–1945*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, pp. 264–265; Cemil Koçak, *Tek-Parti Döneminde Muhafiz Sesler*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, pp. 224–229.

⁴ Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1943–1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973; Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An "Active" Neutrality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol. 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, pp. 472–473; United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, vol. 7, "The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State," document 622.

be represented not only as a political doctrine but as a national-security threat, a cultural contaminant, an educational danger, and a proxy for Soviet expansion. That vocabulary was not identical to official state policy, but it became easier to absorb selectively after 1945.

The historiographical problem is not the absence of scholarship on Turkism, Turkist-Turanism, or wartime neutrality, but the separation of these fields into parallel literatures. One body of work reconstructs the intellectual genealogy of Turkism, its movement from late Ottoman cultural nationalism into republican state nationalism, and the ideological divergence between Kemalist nationalism and Turkist-Turanist nationalism.⁵ More recently, Güllü has examined the historical differentiation between Turkism and Turkish nationalism, arguing that concepts once used interchangeably during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods gradually acquired distinct ideological meanings under the combined influence of nation-state consolidation, shifting political priorities, and the geopolitical conditions of the interwar and Second World War years.⁶ A second literature examines Turkist-Turanist periodicals such as *Atsız Mecmua*, *Bozkurt*, *Gök-Börü*, *Çınaraltı*, *Tanrıdağ*, *Orhun*, and *Ergenekon*, showing how these journals produced racialized, literary, historical, and anti-communist vocabularies during the single-party period.⁷ A third literature explains Turkey's wartime

⁵ Yusuf Akçura, *Türkçülük: Türkçülüğün Tarihi Gelişimi*, Türk Kültür Yayını, İstanbul, 1978; Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, 7th ed., Varlık Yayınları, İstanbul, 1968; Günay Göksu Özdoğan, "Turan'dan "Bozkurt"a: Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük 1931–1946 (trans. İsmail Kaplan), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001; Bengücan Fındık, *Tek Parti Döneminde Kemalist Milliyetçiliğin Karşısında Türkçü-Turanlı Milliyetçilik*, Nobel Bilimsel Eserler, Ankara, 2022; Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010.

⁶ For details, see. Ramazan Erhan Güllü, *Türkiye'de Türkçülük ve Milliyetçilik Tek Parti Dönemi (1923-1945)*, vol. 1, Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul, 2026.

⁷ Çetin Adem, *Orhun Dergisinin Türk Düşünce Hayatındaki Yeri*, Master's Thesis, Niğde University, 2009; Selda Aslan, *Çınaraltı Mecmuasında Türkçülük*, Master's Thesis, Gümüşhane University, 2022; Selda Aslan, "Çınaraltı Dergisinde Türkçülük Anlayışı", *Düşünce Dünyasında Türkiz*, 14/64 (2023), pp. 107–130; Zakir Avşar, "Dr. Rıza Nur and Tanrıdağ Magazine", *Journal of International Civilization Studies*, 3/1 (2018), pp. 45–77; Canan Çılgın, *1940'lı Yıllarda Yayımlanan İrkçi Turanlı Dergilerin İncelenmesi: Bozkurt, Gök-Börü, Ergenekon, Orhun*, Master's Thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University, 2011; Tefrik Orkun Develi, *Türkçülüğü Anlamak: Tanrıdağ Dergisi ve 1940'larda Türk Milliyetçiliği*, Master's Thesis, Hacettepe University, 2009; Gülcan Ergün, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında*

neutrality as a strategy of diplomatic survival under pressure from Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, and eventually the United States.⁸ Studies of the Racism-Turanism trials have brought these fields closer together by showing that the state's response to Turkist-Turanism cannot be separated from the international conjuncture of 1944–1945.⁹ What remains insufficiently explained is the mechanism linking repression, ideological survival, and post-war anti-communist usability. This article addresses that gap by arguing that CHP repression weakened Turkist-Turanist organisation while preserving its ideological repertoire through periodical polemic, courtroom confrontation, anti-communist accusation, and later memory politics.

The present article contributes by bringing these strands together. It treats Turkist-Turanism neither as a marginal literary nationalism nor as a direct determinant of foreign policy. It examines Turkist-Turanism as a case of oppositional ideological resilience under authoritarian legalism. In this formulation, authoritarian legalism refers to the state's use of law, administrative closure, censorship, police action, and military-court procedure to define acceptable national expression while delegitimizing rival nationalisms as threats to order and diplomacy. Ideological resilience refers not to uninterrupted organisation but to the survival of

Türk Milliyetçiliği, Master's Thesis, Istanbul University, 2010; Murat Karataş, "II. Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkçü Dergiciliğin Bir Örneği Olarak Gök-Börü Dergisi", *Journal of Universal History Studies*, 2/1 (2019), pp. 134–153; Güldeniz Kıbrıs, *Creating Turkishness: An Examination of Turkish Nationalism through Gök-Börü*, Master's Thesis, Sabancı University, 2005; Bekir Koçlar, "Türk Milliyetçiliği Düşüncesini Tanımlama ve Temellendirme Çalışmalarına Bir Örnek: Ergenekon Dergisi", *History Studies*, 5/2 (2013), pp. 263–286; Mehmet Soğukömeroğulları, "Atsız Mecmua Üzerine", *Asia Minor Studies*, 1/1 (2013), pp. 94–121.

⁸ Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An "Active" Neutrality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774–2000*, OR: Frank Cass, London and Portland, 2000; İsmail Soysal, *Tarihçeleri ve Açıklamaları ile Birlikte Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları 1920–1945*, vol. 1, 3rd ed., Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2000; Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943–1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973.

⁹ Hülya Öztekin, "1944 İrkçılık-Turancılık Davası ve Basındaki Tartışmalar", *Selçuk İletişim*, 11/1 (2018), pp. 212–236; Koçak, *ibid.*, pp. 224–229; Goloğlu, *ibid.*, pp. 264–271.

a political vocabulary across repression, defeat, and changed geopolitical circumstances.

The paradox is visible in the gap between official and oppositional nationalism. On 5 August 1942, Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu told the Turkish Grand National Assembly: “*Colleagues, we are Turks, we are Turkists, and we will always remain Turkists.*” He then defined Turkism not as a narrowly biological category but as a matter of “blood,” “conscience,” and “culture.”¹⁰ This formulation widened the regime’s nationalist vocabulary while preserving its claim to monopolise legitimate nationalism. Atsız later used precisely this opening against the government. If the prime minister could declare the state Turkist, Atsız could ask why alleged communists remained in education, publishing, and public institutions. The political force of Turkist-Turanist opposition lay in that inversion: it appropriated the state’s own language of national authenticity and redirected it against a regime that claimed exclusive authority to define the nation.

The state response reached its symbolic peak in İnönü’s 19 May 1944 address. Its significance lay not in a rejection of nationalism, but in the state’s attempt to separate official nationalism from racist and Turanist militancy. İnönü drew that boundary explicitly: “We are Turkish nationalists, yet we oppose the principle of racism in our country,” and added that “Pan-Turanism is a harmful ideology.”¹¹ The speech therefore recoded extra-state Turkist-Turanist activism as both ideological deviation and state-security risk. Domestically, it warned nationalist militants that claims made outside CHP control could be criminalised as threats to public order and constitutional authority. Externally, it signalled, especially to Moscow and the Allies, that Ankara would discipline anti-Soviet nationalist currents capable of compromising neutrality. The address thus functioned simultaneously as ideological correction, coercive warning, and diplomatic reassurance.

¹⁰ *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi (TBMM ZC)*, 5 Ağustos 1942, vol. XXVII, Devre/Session: 6, İnikat/Sitting: 77, p. 24.

¹¹ İsmet İnönü, 19 May 1944 address, quoted in “İsmet İnönü’nün Türk Gençliğine Tarihi Nutku”, *Akşam*, 20 May 1944, p. 1; Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 224–226. Öztekin cites the longer speech passage to *Aydın Tarihi*, no. 126, May 1944, pp. 27–29; the official communiqué on the investigation appears as *Aydın Tarihi*, no. 126, May 1944, p. 21.

The article proceeds as follows. The Methods section explains source selection, verification limits, periodisation, and the distinction between ideological expression, organisation, repression, and resonance. The Results section analyses six linked processes: legal constraint and the substitution of periodicals for organisation; domestic critique through economy, ruralism, education, and moralised nationalism; anti-communism as the movement's central political grammar; the Atsız-Sabahattin Ali trial and 3 May demonstrations; the Racism-Turanism trials as both domestic repression and diplomatic signalling; and the post-war reversal that made anti-communism more usable after the Soviet crisis. The Discussion interprets the findings theoretically and historiographically. The Conclusion clarifies why Turkist-Turanism mattered despite repression and identifies future research directions.

Methods

This article uses qualitative historical analysis, source criticism, contextualization, and process tracing to explain how Turkist-Turanist nationalism moved from wartime polemic to post-war anti-communist resonance. It does not claim to measure public opinion, organisational membership, or social support quantitatively. Instead, it treats demonstrations, court narratives, press campaigns, parliamentary debates, official speeches, periodical polemics, censorship decisions, and state decrees as differentiated forms of evidence. Each category is interpreted according to its evidentiary limits. Demonstrations indicate visible mobilisation, not mass endorsement. Periodicals reveal ideological construction, accusation, and factional self-presentation, not neutral social reality. Court narratives, memoirs, and later nationalist accounts preserve political memory, but they also reflect retrospective vindication, grievance, and commemoration.

The case is selected because Turkist-Turanist nationalism occupied an analytically revealing position within wartime Turkey's ideological field. It was close enough to official nationalism to use the language of national authenticity, yet distant enough from CHP state nationalism to be criminalized as racist, Turanist and diplomatically dangerous. Its anti-communism connected domestic criticism of education, culture, economy, and public administration to anxiety about Soviet power. Its periodicals made the movement visible despite weak formal

organisation. Its repression produced a trial memory that could later be reactivated under early Cold War conditions. The case therefore clarifies how authoritarian regimes regulate ideologically adjacent dissent, rather than only ideologically alien opposition.

The article's periodization extends from 1938 to 1947. The starting point is the 1938 Law on Associations, *Cemiyetler Kanunu* No. 3512, adopted on 28 June 1938 and published in *Resmî Gazete* on 14 July 1938.¹² The law is methodologically important because it structured the associational constraints under which wartime ideological currents operated. The endpoint is 1947 because the Racism-Turanism acquittals, the Soviet-Turkish crisis, the Tan incident, and the Truman Doctrine are necessary for tracing how a repressed wartime current became a more usable anti-communist repertoire in the early Cold War.¹³ The periodization therefore follows the mechanism under investigation rather than the formal chronology of the Second World War.

The source base is organised into four categories. The first consists of official and archival materials, including documents from the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of State Archives, Republican Archives (*Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) (BCA); the Official Gazette (*Resmî Gazete*); the Proceedings of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*); Monthly Review of Current Events (*Ayın Tarihi*); records from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); and documents published in the U.S. Department of State's *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series.

The second category consists of periodicals and newspapers, including *Bozkurt*, *Orhun*, *Gök-Börü*, *Çınaraltı*, *Tanrıdağ*, *Atsız Mecmua*, *Türk'e Doğru*, *Bucak*, *Kür Şad*, *Kızılelma*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Ulus*, *Tanin*, *Tan*, and *Görüşler*. These publications are not used as transparent evidence

¹² "Cemiyetler Kanunu," Law No. 3512, 28 June 1938, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 3959, 14 July 1938, 10272.

¹³ Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey," 12 March 1947, Harry S. Truman Library; United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Truman Doctrine, 1947," Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations.

of public opinion. Turkist-Turanist journals are read as sources for ideological construction, accusation, rhetorical framing, and movement self-presentation. State-aligned newspapers are treated as evidence of official or semi-official framing. Leftist and anti-leftist newspapers are analysed in relation to censorship, political pressure, and public positioning. Later nationalist journals and memoirs are treated primarily as sources for memory politics rather than as neutral accounts of wartime events.

The third category consists of trial-related narratives and official reports where accessible. The Racism-Turanism trial record remains a major evidentiary problem unless an official court file, certified transcript, or reliable published documentary edition is consulted. Claims based on later accounts by defendants, sympathizers, or polemical nationalist authors are therefore used cautiously and distinguished from official records. Secondary reconstructions by Koçak, Goloğlu, Müftüoğlu, and Öztekin are used for chronology and interpretation, but page-specific claims require checking against the exact editions cited.¹⁴

The fourth category consists of secondary scholarship on Turkish nationalism, Pan-Turkism, single-party rule, wartime diplomacy, Turkish-Soviet relations, anti-communism, the Wealth Tax, education policy, periodical culture, intelligence, and the early Cold War. This scholarship is not used as a substitute for primary evidence on Turkist-Turanism. It situates the article's mechanism within broader debates on nationalism, authoritarian control, wartime neutrality, and state security. Toman's study of the American wartime intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in neutral Turkey is more directly relevant because it treats wartime neutrality as a field of covert intelligence activity, economic warfare, external pressure, and security management.¹⁵ Toman's work on U.S. public diplomacy in Turkey after 1953 is used only for the post-war extension of the argument, where the

¹⁴ Koçak, *ibid.*, pp. 224–229; Goloğlu, *ibid.*, 264–271; Müftüoğlu, *ibid.*, pp. 51–67; Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 212–236.

¹⁵ Murat Toman, "Intelligence as Covert Statecraft: The OSS, CIA's Predecessor, in Neutral Turkey, 1939–1945", *Vakanüvis: Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11/1 (2026), pp. 752–782.

article discusses how anti-communist vocabularies became compatible with the institutional and ideological architecture of Turkish-American alignment.¹⁶ These works strengthen the historical-international-relations frame without replacing the article's primary-source base.

The analytical strategy is process tracing. The article follows a sequence from legal constraint to print substitution, from print polemic to courtroom mobilisation, from courtroom mobilisation to state-security repression, and from repression to post-war anti-communist reactivation. The aim is not to establish a direct causal chain in which Turkist-Turanism produced Turkey's Cold War alignment. Such a claim would overstate the movement's influence and understate the role of Soviet pressure, British retrenchment, American strategy, and Turkish security calculations. The article instead identifies a narrower mechanism of displacement and selective reactivation. Repression reduced Turkist-Turanist organisational space, but it concentrated the movement's discourse around anti-communism, national betrayal, youth activism, and the memory of persecution. These themes became more politically usable after 1945 because the Soviet crisis altered the strategic meaning of anti-communism.

Results:

A. Legal Constraint and the Substitution of Periodicals for Organisation

The first condition of Turkist-Turanist resilience was legal constraint rather than organisational strength. The 1938 Law on Associations narrowed the formal field of political association, while the 1940 Martial Law Act expanded emergency powers over publications, meetings, associations, and communication. The latter authorised restrictions on newspapers, books, other printed materials, printing houses, censorship, and public or private meetings.¹⁷ These powers did not

¹⁶ Murat Toman, "U.S. Public Diplomacy in Turkey (1953–1961) within the Context of Wilsonian Liberal Internationalism", *Hitit Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 18/3 (2025), pp. 1030–1051.

¹⁷ "Cemiyetler Kanunu", Law No. 3512, 28 June 1938, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 3959, 14 July 1938, 10272; "Örfî İdare Kanunu", Law No. 3832, 22 May 1940, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 4518, 25 May 1940. The 1940 law authorised the prohibition of the printing and publication of "newspapers, books, and other printed materials," the closure of printing houses,

abolish ideology. They changed the institutional terrain on which ideology could operate. Turkist-Turanist activity therefore moved from formal association into printed polemic, informal circles, newspaper controversy, and later courtroom confrontation.

This displacement mattered because Turkist-Turanism already had a developed print repertoire. Periodicals did not merely communicate doctrine; they performed quasi-organisational work by naming enemies, identifying allies, standardizing nationalist vocabulary, and linking domestic criticism to anti-communist and geopolitical anxiety. Dinçer's study of *Bozkurt* supports this interpretation by describing Türkkan's publishing activity as an attempt to create an independent current through related Turkist journals.¹⁸ Aslan similarly shows that Çınaraltı sought to disseminate and popularize Turkism among wider audiences, while Soğukömeroğulları notes that *Atsız Mecmua's* historical and nationalist articles concentrated on Turan and Turkism.¹⁹ These page-specific secondary readings justify treating the periodical field as a substitute organisational form rather than as a merely literary venue.

The boundary between tolerated cultural Turkism and dangerous political Turanism remained unstable. Publications could frame themselves through history, language, literature, education, ruralism, and anti-communism, but when print nationalism acquired foreign-policy implications, the state intervened. *Bozkurt's* own self-narrative presented the journal's emergence after the closure of *Ergenekon* and situated it within a continuing nationalist publishing line.²⁰ Its July 1941 issue then published a programmatic article on the expectation of Turkishness.²¹ Arabacı, using archival material, states that this issue was regarded as injurious to the state's foreign policy and links the episode

censorship of the press and printed publications, and the prohibition of all public and private meetings held in enclosed or open places.

¹⁸ Hasan Dinçer, "Türkçü Bir Derginin Tarih Anlayışı: *Bozkurt* 1939–1942", *History Studies*, vol. 15, Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılı Özel Sayısı (2023), p. 85.

¹⁹ Aslan, *ibid.*, (2023), p. 107; Soğukömeroğulları, *ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁰ *Bozkurt*, "Ergenekondan Çıkan *Bozkurt*", *Bozkurt*, no. 3, May–June 1940, p. 65.

²¹ *Bozkurt*, "Türklük Bekliyor", *Bozkurt*, no. 11, July 1941, p. 283.

to the journal's temporary closure from 25 July 1941.²² The analytical point is that Turanist print could not be treated as domestic ideology alone. In wartime conditions, claims about Turkic lands beyond Turkey's borders could be read as anti-Soviet signals and as challenges to the diplomatic caution required by neutrality.²³

Orhun sharpened this tension in 1944. Atsız's first open letter to Saraçoğlu appeared in the journal's fifteenth issue, while the second appeared in the following issue, which also reprinted the first letter.²⁴ Atsız's tactic was not to reject official nationalism, but to turn it against the government. Saraçoğlu had told the Turkish Grand National Assembly that Turks were Turkists and would remain so, while also framing Turkism as a matter of conscience and culture as well as blood.²⁵ Atsız used this language as an accusatory standard. If the state claimed Turkism, it could be asked why alleged communists remained in education, publishing, and public institutions. In this way, periodical polemic converted the regime's own nationalist vocabulary into a weapon of ideological indictment.

The state's response confirmed that the dispute concerned monopoly over legitimate nationalism. As mentioned above, İnönü's 19 May 1944 speech, reported in *Akşam* on 20 May 1944, declared that the regime was nationalist but hostile to racism and regarded Turanism as

²² Caner Arabacı, "Basın Kanunu ve İnönü Dönemi Türk Basını", *SBE Dergisi*, (2014), p. 58.

²³ *Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA)*, 30-18-1-2, 95-65-14. Bozkurt featured a cover depicting a map of Turan that incorporated regions such as Altai, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh, Bashkir, Kazan, Chuvash, Nogai, Turkmen, Azerbaijani and Anatolian Turks. Including part of the Soviet Union's borders on this Turan map resulted in the closure of the periodical by the Council of Ministers on the basis that it was "*like touching the foreign policy of the state*".

²⁴ Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, "Başvekil Saracoğlu Şükrü'ye Açık Mektup", *Orhun*, no. 15, March 1944, pp. 1, 9; Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, "Başvekil Saracoğlu Şükrü'ye İkinci Açık Mektup", *Orhun*, no. 16, April 1944, p. 1.

²⁵ He stated that "*Colleagues, we are Turks, we are Turkists, and we will always remain Turkists. For us, Turkism is not only a matter of blood but also a question of conscience and culture. We are not proponents of diminishing or decreasing Turkism; instead, we advocate for growing and expanding Turkism and will continuously work in this direction*". *TBMM ZC.*, 5 Ağustos 1942, vol. XXVII, Devre/Session: 6, İnkat/Sitting: 77, p. 24.

harmful.²⁶ Öztekin reproduces the same formulation and shows that the press placed İnönü's anti-racist and anti-Turanist boundary-making at the centre of the controversy.²⁷ The speech separated official nationalism from extra-state Turkist-Turanist activism. Nationalism remained legitimate when articulated by the state; it became dangerous when oppositional actors used it to accuse officials, define internal enemies, or imply revisionist claims beyond republican borders.

The movement's wartime significance therefore cannot be measured only by formal institutions. Turkist-Turanism possessed limited legal organisation, but it had a mobile polemical repertoire. Arguments, names, accusations, slogans, and commemorative meanings could migrate from one printed venue to another even when particular journals were closed or suspended. Repression interrupted organisation, but it also dramatised a memory of persecution. After 1945, that memory allowed Turkist-Turanists to claim that they had recognised the communist danger before the state was prepared to acknowledge it. The movement's resilience thus lay not in uninterrupted organisation, but in the survival of a polemical repertoire that repression itself helped make politically reusable.

B. Domestic Critique: Economy, Ruralism, Education, and Moralised Nationalism

Turkist-Turanist opposition was not limited to foreign-policy maximalism or the imagination of Turkic unity beyond Turkey's borders. Its wartime force came from its capacity to translate domestic hardship into nationalist diagnosis. Economy, rural development, cost of living, education, universities, language policy, cultural institutions, and minority discourse became fields in which the CHP regime could be accused of weakening the nation from within. This domestic orientation matters analytically because it prevents Turkist-Turanism from being reduced to external irredentism. Its claims about a wider Turkic world remained important, but its everyday polemical energy came from a domestic claim: the national body was being morally, economically, and educationally mismanaged.

²⁶ "İsmet İnönü'nün Türk Gençliğine Tarihi Nutku", *Akşam*, 20 May 1944, p. 1.

²⁷ Öztekin, *ibid.*, p. 226.

Wartime economic control supplied the first field of critique. The 1940 National Protection Law defined emergency economic conditions in relation to mobilisation, war, and the possibility of war, and authorised state intervention for the purposes of economic and national-defence capacity.²⁸ Turkist-Turanist writers accepted the premise that economy and security were connected, but redirected that premise against the government. Scarcity, inflation, profiteering, black-market activity, and visible inequality were not treated as ordinary economic dysfunctions. They were moralised as evidence of weak national discipline, bureaucratic detachment, insufficient economic nationalism, and the failure to defend ordinary Turks against wartime exploitation.

The Wealth Tax intensified this moralised economy. The law presented extraordinary wealth and wartime profit as legitimate objects of one-time state extraction.²⁹ Parliamentary debate shows that the policy was immediately framed through the language of social justice and popular burden. Kâzım Karabekir warned that if the tax merely pushed prices upward, the state would take from the rich only to recover the burden again from the poor.³⁰ This official language helps explain why Turkist-Turanist commentary could represent the tax not only as fiscal policy but as national justice. A Turkist article on the Wealth Tax placed the measure inside a language of national transformation and wartime correction.³¹ The significance is not that Turkist-Turanists invented resentment against minorities or profiteers. It is that they supplied a nationalist moral grammar through which fiscal extraction, social resentment, and exclusionary views of non-national elements could be connected. The later supplementary and cancellation laws

²⁸ "Millî Korunma Kanunu", Law No. 3780, 18 January 1940, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 4417, 26 January 1940.

²⁹ "Varlık Vergisi Hakkında Kanun", Law No. 4305, 11 November 1942, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 5255, 12 November 1942.

³⁰ *TBMM ZC.*, Devre 6, Cilt 28, İçtima 3, 11 November 1942, pp. 26–27.

³¹ Reha Kurtuluş, "Büyük Bir İnkilâp: Varlık Vergisi!", *Gök-Börü*, no. 5, January 1943, p. 11.

further confirm that the measure belonged to an exceptional wartime fiscal regime rather than normal taxation.³²

Ruralism offered a second field of critique. Turkist-Turanist writers did not invoke the peasant simply as an economic actor. They used the village as a moral standard against which urban officialdom could be judged. One early article framed the Turkish peasant as the central national question, while a later article treated service to the village as a debt owed by Turkists, intellectuals, and officials.³³ This rhetoric allowed Turkist-Turanists to claim moral proximity to the authentic nation while portraying the CHP elite as bureaucratic, urban, and performative. The state's own wartime tax policy made such rhetoric politically usable. The 1943 agricultural-products tax extended extraordinary extraction to rural production, and the parliamentary record shows that the measure was contested precisely because it touched the producer, transport obligations, subsistence, and wartime public finance.³⁴ Ruralist polemic therefore did not stand outside state policy. It attached itself to the visible tensions produced by mobilisation, food supply, and fiscal extraction.

Industrialisation supplied a third diagnostic field. A Turkist article on the Soviet wartime economy used Soviet resilience as a lesson in mobilisation and industrial capacity.³⁵ The ideological move is revealing. The Soviet Union was condemned as communist, but its capacity for industrial mobilisation could still be used to criticise Turkey's weakness. Anti-communism therefore did not prevent selective admiration of discipline, planning, industry, and national preparedness. Turkist-Turanist criticism was not simply anti-state. It became anti-CHP when the state appeared insufficiently productive, insufficiently vigilant, or insufficiently capable of converting national will into economic strength.

³² "Varlık Vergisi Kanununa Ek Kanun", Law No. 4501, 17 September 1943, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 5513, 21 September 1943; "Varlık Vergisi Bakayasının Terkinine Dair Kanun", Law No. 4530, 15 March 1944, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 5657, 17 March 1944.

³³ Ergenekon Köylüsü, "En Büyük Dava: Türk Köylüsü", *Bozkurt*, no. 2, June 1939, p. 43; Fethi Tevet, "Türkçülükte Borç ve Alacak", *Bozkurt*, no. 9, Dec. 1940, p. 233.

³⁴ "Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu", Law No. 4429, 4 June 1943, *Resmî Gazete* no. 5423, 7 June 1943; TBMM debate, 4 June 1943, Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi.

³⁵ R. Oğuz Türkkân, "Nasıl Yükseldiler? Rus Mucizesinden Ders!", *GökBörü*, no. 7, Feb. 1943, p. 3.

Education was the most important domestic field because it connected generational formation to ideological security. State policy itself linked village, education, and national transformation. The 1940 Village Institutes Law authorised institutions designed to train village teachers and personnel useful to village life.³⁶ Turkist-Turanist writers accepted the premise that education formed the future nation, but contested the state's ideological custody over that process. Their criticism of language reform treated language not as a technical pedagogical matter but as a measure of national authenticity.³⁷ Their criticism of cultural institutions likewise framed cultural programming as evidence that institutions designed to nationalise culture could become insufficiently national.³⁸

University criticism extended this anxiety into higher education. Turkist-Turanist articles on higher education and youth treated universities as national-security institutions rather than as merely academic bodies.³⁹ The logic was straightforward: if schools and universities formed the future elite, then alleged leftist or communist influence in education could be represented as infiltration of the nation's reproductive core. The later 1946 Universities Law used official language that made the national function of higher education explicit, defining universities as autonomous scientific and teaching institutions while also assigning them a role in training citizens attached to the ideals of the Turkish revolution and possessing national character.⁴⁰ Turkist-Turanist polemic anticipated that logic but redirected it against the wartime state. It claimed that the state had failed to protect education from ideological contamination.

The convergence of economy, ruralism, education, language, and minority discourse produced a coherent nationalist accusation. Scarcity

³⁶ "Köy Enstitüleri Kanunu", Law No. 3803, 17 Apr. 1940, *Resmî Gazete*, no. 4491, 22 Apr. 1940.

³⁷ Ergenekoncu, "Korkunç Bir Keşmekeş: Dilimiz", *Bozkurt*, no. 11, July 1941, p. 288.

³⁸ O. Bozkurt, "Beyoğlu Halkevinin Adı Pera Halkevi Olmalıymış", *Bozkurt*, no. 13, Mar. 1942, p. 8.

³⁹ Aydın Yalçın, "Yüksek Tahsil Dâvâmız ve Eksikliklerimiz", *GökBörü*, no. 1, Nov. 1942, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Kemal Hakkı Kut, "Gençlik Davasının Maarif Cephesinden Tetkiki", *GökBörü*, no. 6, Feb. 1943, p. 18.

became evidence of moral decay. Taxation became a question of national justice. The village became the authentic nation against which urban officialdom could be judged. Language became proof of cultural authenticity. The university became a security institution. Minority discourse connected fiscal resentment to ethnoreligious exclusion. These were not separate complaints. They formed a single diagnosis: the nation was being weakened by profiteering, bureaucratic detachment, artificial culture, insufficient industrial discipline, non-national elements, and alleged communist infiltration. This diagnosis enabled Turkist-Turanism to move beyond literary nationalism into a wider oppositional posture without becoming a formal party. It also made its anti-communism portable after 1945, when the Soviet crisis made the language of internal vigilance more compatible with the state's post-war security orientation.

C. Anti-Communism as the Movement's Central Political Grammar

Anti-communism was not a secondary theme in wartime Turkist-Turanism. It became the grammar through which the movement connected domestic critique, moral nationalism, educational anxiety, and geopolitical threat perception. Communism was presented in three linked registers: as an external danger associated with Soviet power, as an internal network allegedly embedded in education and public institutions, and as a moral doctrine that weakened hierarchy, family, discipline, sacrifice, and national unity. The force of this grammar lay in its capacity to join foreign danger to internal decay. Communism could be represented at once as Moscow's project and as a domestic corrosion of the national body.

This grammar enabled Turkist-Turanists to accuse the CHP state from within the language of national defence. Their objection was not to state authority as such. They valued hierarchy, discipline, youth mobilisation, and coercive order. Their charge was that state power was misdirected: strong enough to repress nationalists, yet too weak or too compromised to remove alleged communists. Anti-communism therefore became a test of official nationalism. The issue was not whether the state spoke in nationalist language, but whether it acted as a nationalist state against the enemies defined by Turkist-Turanist polemic.

Atsız's open letters to Saraçoğlu made this accusation explicit. The first letter addressed the prime minister as both a Turkist and head of government, thereby converting official nationalism into an object of public examination.⁴¹ The second letter intensified the accusation by shifting from general concern about leftist activity to a named map of alleged communist influence in education and intellectual life.⁴² The figures named in this polemic should not be treated as proof of communist organisation. They matter because of their rhetorical function. By naming writers, academics, and public intellectuals, Atsız transformed anti-communism from an abstract geopolitical posture into a concrete domestic accusation. The nation could now be imagined as threatened not only by Soviet power, but also by identifiable persons in schools, universities, publishing networks, and ministries.

Saraçoğlu's 1942 parliamentary statement created the opening that made this inversion possible. By declaring that the government was Turkist and would remain so, and by defining Turkism as a matter of blood, conscience, and culture, the prime minister enlarged the state's nationalist vocabulary in public parliamentary language.⁴³ Atsız then used that vocabulary against the state itself. If the prime minister spoke as a Turkist, Turkist-Turanist writers could ask why state power was not being used against alleged communist influence. The open letters were therefore significant not because they offered a coherent political programme, but because they converted periodical polemic into direct address to executive authority. Atsız did not speak only to an oppositional readership; he addressed the prime minister as the representative of a state that had publicly claimed nationalist legitimacy. The logic of the letters was performative as well as accusatory. They invited the government to prove its nationalism through purge, surveillance, and exclusion. Ignoring the accusations risked appearing indifferent to communism among nationalist readers. Acting on them would validate Atsız's role as ideological prosecutor.

⁴¹ Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, "Başvekil Saracoğlu Şükrü'ye Açık Mektup", *Orhun*, no. 15, March 1944, pp. 1-4.

⁴² Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, "Başvekil Saracoğlu Şükrü'ye İkinci Açık Mektup", *Orhun*, no. 16, April 1944, pp. 1-6.

⁴³ Şükrü Saraçoğlu, speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, 5 August 1942, *TBMM ZC*, Devre 6, Cilt 27, İçtima 2, İnikat 77, pp. 24–25.

Prosecuting Atsız, which followed through the Sabahattin Ali libel case and the broader Racism-Turanism process, moved the question from polemic into public order and state security. The shift from accusation to prosecution therefore marks a decisive transition: Turkist-Turanist anti-communism moved from print opposition into direct confrontation with the single-party state.

The state's reaction also shows why anti-communism was not automatically acceptable within wartime CHP politics. The regime was nationalist and did not accept communism as an official ideology. Yet aggressive anti-Soviet Turanism could endanger neutrality and relations with Moscow. İnönü's 19 May 1944 speech separated official nationalism from racism and Turanism, thereby defining the boundary between legitimate state nationalism and the extra-state Turkist-Turanist movement.⁴⁴ Recent work on OSS activity in neutral Turkey reinforces this wider context of wartime statecraft. Toman argues that intelligence in wartime Turkey was "not merely ancillary to diplomacy," while also insisting that OSS activity "did not by itself determine Turkey's late-war realignment."⁴⁵ This bounded formulation is useful for the present argument. Wartime Turkey was not a setting in which ideological agitation could be separated from diplomacy, intelligence, economic pressure, and neutrality management. Anti-communism became acceptable only when subordinated to state priorities; when it became anti-Soviet agitation, accusatory mobilisation against officials, or a language of border-transcending Turanism, it could itself become a security problem.

This temporal distinction explains the movement's later resonance. Before 1945, radical anti-Soviet nationalism could compromise neutrality. After 1945, the deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations changed the strategic meaning of anti-communism. United States diplomatic records show that the Soviet Union denounced the 1925 treaty in March 1945 and later raised issues concerning Kars, Ardahan,

⁴⁴ "İsmet İnönü'nün Türk Gençliğine Tarihi Nutku," *Akşam*, 20 May 1944, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Toman, *ibid.*, 2026, pp. 752–753.

the Turkish Straits, and Soviet security guarantees.⁴⁶ Under those conditions, themes that had been diplomatically risky during the war became increasingly compatible with Turkey's post-war security orientation. This did not mean that the state adopted Turkist-Turanism as doctrine. Its racialised, exclusionary, and irredentist elements remained problematic. But its anti-communist grammar could be selectively detached from wartime Turanist radicalism and inserted into broader mobilisation against Soviet pressure.

The Truman Doctrine internationalised this shift. Truman's March 1947 address placed Turkey within a broader framework of national integrity, financial assistance, and resistance to coercion.⁴⁷ Turkist-Turanists did not cause this realignment. Soviet pressure, British retrenchment, American strategy, and Turkish security calculations mattered far more. Yet the changed geopolitical environment made parts of Turkist-Turanist anti-communism more usable. Wartime accusations could be retrospectively reinterpreted as early warning rather than irresponsible agitation. Anti-communism thus bridged repression and post-war relevance. It did not give Turkist-Turanists state power, but it gave parts of their discourse a new strategic utility.

D. The Atsız-Sabahattin Ali Trial and the 3 May 1944 Demonstrations

The Atsız-Sabahattin Ali libel case should not be treated as an anecdotal episode in wartime nationalism. It was the hinge between periodical polemic and public mobilisation. A printed accusation became a courtroom confrontation, and the courtroom became a site where two political languages were staged against each other: Turkist-Turanist anti-communism on one side, and the state's claim to legal order and controlled nationalism on the other. The case mattered because it converted ideological writing into a public event.

⁴⁶ United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. 7, "Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State," 19 December 1945, document 622, pp. 802–803.

⁴⁷ Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey," 12 March 1947. Truman stated that Turkey needed support for "the maintenance of its national integrity" and declared that it should be U.S. policy to support free peoples resisting attempted subjugation "by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

The libel action emerged from Atsız's second open letter, where he moved from general anti-communist accusation to a named map of alleged communist influence in education and intellectual life.⁴⁸ The legal question concerned personal insult, but the political meaning quickly exceeded defamation. Atsız's supporters framed the case as a confrontation between national vigilance and communist infiltration. State-aligned commentary, by contrast, represented the same mobilisation as disorder and attempted pressure on judicial authority. The trial therefore concentrated several abstractions into one public scene: nation, betrayal, youth, communism, justice, and state authority.

The 3 May demonstrations transformed this symbolic confrontation into visible mobilisation. The evidence should be used with caution. The demonstrations do not prove mass public support for Turkist-Turanism, and they should not be treated as a substitute for formal organisation. They do show, however, that the movement's polemical language had sufficient resonance among some students and nationalist circles to produce public action at a politically sensitive moment. Öztekin shows that several newspapers initially reported the 3 May hearing without foregrounding the demonstrations; Ulus then openly addressed the matter on 7 May through Falih Rifkî Atay's intervention.⁴⁹ That sequence matters. Delayed framing, selective silence, and subsequent condemnation were part of the state-aligned press response.

Atay's intervention reveals how the state-aligned press recoded the demonstrations. Rather than treating them as legitimate nationalist mobilisation, he represented the events as the work of a few agitators misleading a small group of young people.⁵⁰ This language was politically useful because it separated the state from both communism and uncontrolled nationalism. Youth could be described as deceived rather than sovereign; organisers could be described as agitators rather than representatives of a broader national sentiment. The demonstrations thus became evidence for a new state-security frame: Turkist-Turanist

⁴⁸ Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, "Başvekil Saracoğlu Şükrü'ye İkinci Açık Mektup," *Orhun*, no. 16, April 1944, pp. 1–6; Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 215–216.

⁴⁹ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 217–218.

⁵⁰ Falih Rifkî Atay, "Nizam Düşmanlığı Yaptırmayız," *Ulus*, 7 May 1944, quoted in Öztekin, *ibid.*, p. 218.

polemic could produce mobilisation, and mobilisation could be treated as a threat to public order.

The official and newspaper response after 3 May confirms that the authorities interpreted the event as more than a courtroom disturbance. The communiqué reproduced by Öztekin described searches, clandestine organisation, propaganda activity, secret communication, youth recruitment, and conduct contrary to constitutional and penal order.⁵¹ İnönü's 19 May address then gave this security framing its public ideological form. *Akşam* reported the speech under the title of İnönü's historic address to Turkish youth; *Ulus* presented the president's speech as providing directives to youth; *İkdam Gece Postası* framed it as a historic speech clarifying the country's security and salvation.⁵² The state was not merely responding to a libel case. It was converting ideological polemic into a matter of internal order and external credibility.

The demonstrations also altered the movement's own memory structure. For Turkist-Turanists, the courtroom and street action could later be remembered as evidence that nationalist youth had confronted communism before the state was prepared to do so. For the state, the same episode justified coercive intervention against a movement that had crossed from print into public action. This dual meaning made the event durable. It was neither only a legal episode nor only a street demonstration. It was the moment when periodical polemic became politically visible enough for the state to recode it as subversion.

E. The Racism-Turanism Trials as Domestic Repression and Diplomatic Signalling

The Racism-Turanism trials must be interpreted on two levels at once. Domestically, they were a coercive intervention against nationalist dissent that had escaped the boundaries of controlled cultural expression. Diplomatically, they signalled that Turkey would

⁵¹ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 223–224. Öztekin reproduces the official communiqué and cites *Aydın Tarihi*, May 1944, p. 21.

⁵² "İsmet İnönü'nün Türk Gençliğine Tarihi Nutku," *Akşam*, 20 May 1944, p. 1; "Cumhurbaşkanımızın Nutku," *Ulus*, 20 May 1944, p. 1; "Milli Şefimizin Tarihi Nutku," *İkdam Gece Postası*, 20 May 1944, p. 1.

discipline anti-Soviet nationalist currents capable of provoking Moscow or weakening Allied confidence in Ankara's neutrality. Reducing the trials to either domestic repression or foreign-policy theatre alone distorts the episode. They were a political-legal process in which state security, wartime neutrality, and ideological boundary-making converged.

The wartime sequence is essential. In late April 1944, Turkey halted chromite exports to Germany; in August 1944, it suspended commercial and diplomatic relations with Germany.⁵³ FRUS records show that, by July 1944, Saraçoğlu informed the American ambassador that Turkey was prepared to break relations with Germany once assurances were received, and that the rupture would be complete and absolute.⁵⁴ The trial process unfolded inside this recalibration. It began after arrests, searches, public denunciations, and official statements had already framed Turkist-Turanism as a political and security problem. The chronology therefore supports a cautious interpretation: the trials were not simply a spontaneous legal reaction to extremist ideas. They occurred while Ankara was adjusting its diplomatic position in the last phase of the war.

The domestic function of the trials was to reassert the state's monopoly over nationalism. The CHP regime did not reject nationalism as such. It rejected a form of nationalism that escaped state control, racialised the nation in politically embarrassing ways, attacked public officials as protectors of communism, and implied political claims beyond the borders of the republic. As mentioned above, İnönü's 19 May address made this boundary explicit by distinguishing legitimate state nationalism from racism and Turanism.⁵⁵ The issue was monopoly over national definition. Nationalism remained legitimate when voiced

⁵³ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 84, "Turkey," Holocaust-Era Assets Finding Aid.

⁵⁴ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944, vol. 5, "The Ambassador in Turkey to the Secretary of State," 3 July 1944, document 933, pp. 871-872.

⁵⁵ "İsmet İnönü'nün Türk Gençliğine Tarihi Nutku," *Akşam*, 20 May 1944, p. 1; Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 224-226.

by the state; it became punishable when used by oppositional actors to define enemies, mobilise youth, or suggest revisionist missions.

The prosecution and press treatment further illustrate this recoding. Öztekin shows that the case developed out of the Atsız-Sabahattin Ali trial and the 3 May demonstrations, and that the press framed Turanism, racism, secret organisation, and public disorder as connected problems.⁵⁶ The trial opened in September 1944 and culminated in March 1945 with acquittals for some defendants and prison sentences for others. In October 1945, the Military Court of Cassation overturned the first judgment and the defendants were released; the case resumed before the Second Martial Law Court in August 1946, and all defendants were acquitted in March 1947.⁵⁷ These dates are verifiable through Öztekin's press-based reconstruction. The unverified 1947 judgment quotation sometimes attributed to the acquittal should not be used unless the court text is inspected.

The diplomatic function of the trials was subtler but no less important. A movement that discussed Turks under Soviet rule, attacked communism, and imagined a transborder Turkic political geography could complicate relations with Moscow. The Turkish state had reason to show that anti-Soviet nationalist agitation would not be allowed to dictate public policy. Recent work on intelligence and neutrality reinforces this broader context of wartime statecraft.⁵⁸ The same caution applies here. The trials did not mechanically produce diplomatic realignment, but they belonged to a wartime environment in which domestic ideology, diplomacy, intelligence, economic pressure, and neutrality management intersected.

Öztekin's conclusion supports this interpretation directly. She argues that the case emerged and developed in relation to the international conjuncture and Turkish foreign policy, and that the state's attitude towards Turanism changed with the course of the war and its diplomatic possibilities.⁵⁹ This does not mean that the prosecution was a mere diplomatic performance. It means that domestic repression and

⁵⁶ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 218–224.

⁵⁷ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 229–230.

⁵⁸ Toman, *ibid.*, 2026, pp. 752–753.

⁵⁹ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 230–231.

external signalling operated together. The trials disciplined an internal nationalist current while also reassuring external audiences that Ankara would not permit anti-Soviet agitation to compromise neutrality. The trials therefore weakened Turkist-Turanist organisational capacity while strengthening the movement's memory field. Repression produced named defendants, a courtroom record, a narrative of persecution, and later opportunities for retrospective vindication. The state tried to turn Turkist-Turanism into a security problem; the movement later turned that repression into evidence of ideological foresight. This is the core mechanism of ideological resilience under authoritarian control. Repression did not end Turkist-Turanism. It changed the form in which it survived.

F. Post-War Reversal: Soviet Pressure, Anti-Communist Legitimacy, and Ideological Resilience

The post-war environment altered the political value of anti-communism. During the war, radical anti-Soviet Turanism could endanger neutrality. After 1945, Soviet pressure transformed the strategic meaning of anti-communist discourse. FRUS records show that Molotov raised frontier rectification, bases in the Dardanelles, and modification of the Montreux regime during Soviet-Turkish discussions in 1945.⁶⁰ A later State Department memorandum recorded that the Soviet government had denounced the 1925 treaty in March 1945 and that Turkey rejected Soviet demands contrary to Turkish independence.⁶¹ These official records confirm why "Soviet pressure" is the safest formulation. The evidence supports a sustained Soviet challenge to Turkey's security position, not a simple claim that every Soviet move took the form of a single formal ultimatum.

For Turkist-Turanists, this shift enabled a retrospective claim of vindication. Their wartime anti-communism had been criminalised when it threatened neutrality, but after Soviet pressure intensified, the

⁶⁰ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin, 1945, vol. 1, "Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State," 7 July 1945, document 702, pp. 1045-1046.

⁶¹ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 7, "Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State," 19 December 1945, document 622, pp. 802-804.

same language could be presented as early warning. This did not mean that the state adopted Turkist-Turanism. Its racialised, exclusionary, and irredentist dimensions remained politically problematic. Yet anti-communism could be detached from the most dangerous forms of Turanist maximalism and inserted into a broader national-security discourse. The movement's post-war relevance depended on that selective detachment.

The Tan incident of 4 December 1945 illustrates the new public usability of anti-communism. It should not be attributed narrowly to Turkist-Turanists. The attack emerged from a wider anti-left press campaign, student mobilisation and the representation of Tan and the Sertels as enemies of the nation. Acar shows that pro-government press narratives presented the incident as a legitimate youth reaction, and that Tanin and Cumhuriyet helped frame left publications as communist instruments.⁶² The primary newspaper record supports that context: Tanin's issue of 3 December 1945 placed anti-communist mobilisation on the front page through a call to national action, while Tanin's 4 December issue published an unsigned editorial on fifth-column propaganda.⁶³ Ulus reported the following day that two newspaper offices had been destroyed in Istanbul, described student participation, and connected the events to agitation against provocative publications.⁶⁴ This episode shows a changed domestic field. In May 1944, youth mobilisation around the Atsız case had been recoded as disorder and manipulation. In December 1945, anti-left student mobilisation could be framed more readily as national vigilance. The shift did not mean that the state had become Turkist-Turanist. It meant that anti-communist action, when directed against leftist publications rather than state officials, had become more politically usable. Anti-communism was moving from the margins of polemical nationalism into a wider repertoire of state-compatible public mobilisation.

⁶² Ayla Acar, "Basında 'Tan Olayı' - 4 Aralık 1945", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 43, 2012, pp. 8–13.

⁶³ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, "Kalkın Ey Ehli Vatan!", *Tanin*, 3 December 1945, p. 1; "Beşincikol Propagandası," *Tanin*, 4 December 1945, p. 1. See also Acar, *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

⁶⁴ "Dünkü Nümayış," *Ulus*, 5 December 1945, p. 1.

The Truman Doctrine internationalised this shift. Truman's 12 March 1947 address placed Turkey within a framework of assistance, national integrity, and resistance to coercion. The speech stated that Turkey needed support for the modernisation necessary to maintain national integrity, and declared that the United States should support free peoples resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.⁶⁵ The Office of the Historian summarises the doctrine as a major reorientation of United States policy towards political, military, and economic assistance for states threatened by external or internal authoritarian forces.⁶⁶ This does not mean that Turkist-Turanists caused Turkey's Western alignment. Soviet pressure, British retrenchment, American strategy, and Turkish security calculations were the decisive factors. But the new strategic environment made parts of Turkist-Turanist anti-communism more usable.

The legal reversal of the Racism-Turanism case must be placed in this context. The 1945–1947 process did not prove that all wartime charges were fabricated, nor did it make the defendants' ideology democratic or inclusive. It did, however, allow the movement to recast repression as unjust persecution and to reinterpret anti-communism as political foresight. The sequence from prosecution to reversal helped transform a weakly organised wartime current into a durable memory community. Its resilience was therefore not only textual. It became legal, commemorative, and political.

This process explains why Turkist-Turanism mattered despite repression. Its wartime organisation remained fragile. Its programme did not direct state policy. Its racialised and exclusionary elements limited its acceptability. Yet its anti-communist repertoire survived because repression gave it dramatic form and post-war geopolitics gave it renewed utility. The movement's importance lies not in governing the state, but in supplying a vocabulary that could be reactivated within broader anti-communist politics.

⁶⁵ Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey," 12 March 1947.

⁶⁶ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, "The Truman Doctrine, 1947."

Discussion

The findings challenge two inadequate readings of wartime Turkist-Turanism. The first treats the movement as marginal because it lacked durable organisation and failed to shape state policy directly. The second overcorrects by treating Turkist-Turanist anti-communism as a hidden driver of Turkey's post-war Western alignment. Both readings miss the article's central mechanism. Turkist-Turanism mattered not because it commanded institutions, but because repression converted a weakly organised current into a durable ideological repertoire. The CHP state could restrict associations, close journals, prosecute defendants, and police demonstrations. It could not fully prevent the movement from converting those restrictions into a memory of persecution, foresight, and anti-communist vigilance.

The central argument, therefore, is not that repression strengthened Turkist-Turanism in any simple or automatic sense. Repression first weakened it. It limited legal organisation, exposed writers to prosecution, disrupted periodical continuity, and made overt Turanist mobilisation politically dangerous. Yet repression also changed the form in which the movement survived. It displaced Turkist-Turanism from formal organisation into polemical print, courtroom drama, youth mobilisation, and post-war commemoration. This is why the concept of ideological resilience is more precise than "survival" or "influence." The movement survived less as an organisation than as a set of reusable arguments: communism as internal betrayal, youth as national conscience, the courtroom as nationalist sacrifice, and state repression as proof that official nationalism had failed to defend the nation.

This mechanism is best understood through the distinction between infrastructure and repertoire. Infrastructure refers to associations, offices, stable networks, legal status, and organisational continuity. Repertoire refers to recurring arguments, slogans, symbols, enemies, commemorative dates, and narratives of persecution. The CHP state was relatively successful against infrastructure. It was far less successful against repertoire. Indeed, the state helped produce the very repertoire it sought to suppress. The Racism-Turanism trials, the 3 May demonstrations, and the public denunciation of racism and Turanism

became mnemonic resources. They allowed later nationalists to narrate wartime defeat as evidence of moral clarity rather than political failure.

This argument also revises how the movement's authoritarian character should be interpreted. Turkist-Turanists were not liberal victims of single-party repression. Their discourse repeatedly privileged hierarchy, discipline, militarised youth, racialised identity, anti-communist exclusion, and suspicion of minorities. The conflict was therefore not democracy against dictatorship. It was a struggle between state nationalism and oppositional nationalism inside an authoritarian political field. The CHP regime repressed Turkist-Turanism not because it rejected nationalism, but because it rejected a rival nationalism that claimed the authority to identify enemies, accuse officials, mobilise youth, and imply transborder national missions. The state's problem was not nationalism itself. It was nationalism outside state control.

The evidence also forces a more political reading of wartime neutrality. Neutrality was not only a diplomatic posture between Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States. It also required domestic ideological management. Ankara's wartime policy depended on treaties, trade, chrome exports, intelligence activity, and military caution, but also on preventing domestic actors from sending signals that could be read internationally. Anti-Soviet Turanist writing, maps of Turkic lands, accusations against alleged communists, and student mobilisation were not merely domestic expressions. Under wartime conditions, they could acquire diplomatic meaning. This is why repression should be interpreted not only as domestic policing, but also as foreign-policy signalling.⁶⁷

The article therefore contributes to Turkish historiography by connecting three fields that are too often separated. The literature on Turkism and Turanism explains ideological genealogy and periodical

⁶⁷ Toman, *ibid.*, 2026, pp. 752–753. Toman writes that intelligence in wartime Turkey was “not merely ancillary to diplomacy” on p. 752 and that OSS activity “did not by itself determine Turkey's late-war realignment” on p. 753. See also Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An “Active” Neutrality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; Edward Weisband, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1943–1945: Small State Diplomacy and Great Power Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973.

production. Diplomatic history explains wartime neutrality and Turkey's changing relations with the great powers. Scholarship on the Racism-Turanism trials shows that the state's response was shaped by the international conjuncture. This article links those literatures through a more specific claim: repression displaced Turkist-Turanism from organisational politics into a portable anti-communist repertoire that became more usable after 1945.⁶⁸

The post-war shift is decisive. Before 1945, aggressive anti-Soviet Turanism could embarrass the government and endanger neutrality. After Soviet pressure over the treaty relationship, the Straits, and the eastern frontier, anti-communism acquired a different strategic value. This did not vindicate Turkist-Turanism as a doctrine, and it did not make the state Turkist-Turanist. Rather, it made parts of the movement's vocabulary more compatible with the security environment. The movement's racialised, exclusionary, and irredentist elements remained problematic. Its anti-communist grammar, however, could be detached from wartime radicalism and inserted into a broader language of national vigilance. Compatibility, not causation, is the key causal claim.⁶⁹

This distinction matters because it prevents two forms of overstatement. The first would claim that Turkist-Turanists shaped Turkey's Western alignment. They did not. Soviet pressure, British retrenchment, American strategy, and Turkish security calculations explain the strategic realignment. The second would claim that the

⁶⁸ Öztekin, *ibid.*, pp. 230–231; Günay Göksu Özdoğan, “Turan”dan “Bozkurt”a: Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük 1931–1946 (trans. İsmail Kaplan), İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001; Güldeniz Kıbrıs, *Creating Turkishness: An Examination of Turkish Nationalism through Gök-Börü*, Master's Thesis, Sabancı University, 2005; Murat Karataş, “II. Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkçü Dergiciliğin Bir Örneği Olarak Gök-Börü Dergisi”, *Journal of Universal History Studies*, 2/1 (2019), pp. 134–153.

⁶⁹ United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 7, “Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State,” 19 December 1945, document 622, pp. 802–804; Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey,” 12 March 1947. Truman stated that Turkey needed support for “the maintenance of its national integrity” and declared that it should be U.S. policy to support free peoples resisting attempted subjugation “by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” See also Ömer Arda Özbilek, “II. Dünya Savaşı Sonrası Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Gerilmesi ve Anti-Komünizm 1945–1950”, *Sakarya Üniversitesi Türk Akademi Dergisi*, 2/1 (2023), pp. 23–47.

movement disappeared because the state prosecuted it. It did not. Its institutional weakness coexisted with discursive durability. Turkist-Turanism did not govern the state, but it supplied concepts, memories, and accusations that could be reactivated when anti-communism became state-compatible.

The argument also contributes to nationalism studies by treating ideology as practice rather than only doctrine. Turkist-Turanism contained doctrinal claims about race, history, language, unity, and anti-communism. But its resilience depended on practices of circulation and repetition: publishing accusations, naming enemies, staging courtroom confrontation, commemorating repression, and translating geopolitical change into ideological vindication. The movement's importance lies in this practical capacity. It shows how a defeated current can remain politically available when its central vocabulary later fits a changed international context.

The limitations of this argument are equally important. The evidence supports claims about periodical discourse, official repression, courtroom mobilisation, press framing, and post-war anti-communist usability. It does not support broad claims about national public opinion. Demonstrations around the *Atsız* case show visible mobilisation among some students and nationalist circles; they do not prove mass social support. Nor does the post-war usability of anti-communism prove that the state adopted Turkist-Turanism. The article therefore deliberately avoids claims of mass popularity, direct policy influence, or linear causation.

The larger implication is that repression can produce ideological durability without producing immediate political success. Turkist-Turanism was organisationally constrained during the war, but repression helped give it a memory structure. The state tried to define the movement as a security danger. The movement later reinterpreted that same repression as evidence that it had recognised the communist threat before the state was prepared to do so. This is why Turkist-Turanism mattered despite defeat. Its significance lies not in institutional power, but in the afterlife of a repertoire that linked nationalism, anti-communism, youth, persecution, and post-war strategic anxiety.

Conclusion

Turkist-Turanist nationalism mattered in wartime Turkey not because it became an effective formal opposition movement, but because repression converted it into a durable ideological repertoire. The 1938 Law on Associations, wartime censorship, periodical closures, arrests, and the Racism-Turanism trials restricted organisational capacity. Yet these pressures displaced Turkist-Turanist activity into print polemic, courtroom confrontation, youth mobilisation, anti-communist accusation, and later memory politics. The CHP state could suppress associations and prosecute defendants, but it could not eliminate the vocabulary that linked communism to national betrayal, educational infiltration, cultural decay, and insufficient state vigilance.

The article has argued that the Racism-Turanism trials should be read simultaneously as domestic repression and diplomatic signalling. Domestically, they restored the boundary between state nationalism and oppositional Turkist-Turanist nationalism. Diplomatically, they demonstrated that Ankara would discipline anti-Soviet nationalist agitation while neutrality, Soviet relations, and Allied expectations still required caution. The trials therefore belong not only to the history of Turkish nationalism, but also to the history of wartime neutrality, state security, and ideological control.

The post-war Soviet crisis changed the political value of anti-communism. The treaty crisis, the Straits question, the Kars-Ardahan issue, the Tan incident, and the Truman Doctrine did not make the state Turkist-Turanist, nor did Turkist-Turanism cause Turkey's Western alignment. Rather, the new strategic environment made parts of Turkist-Turanist anti-communism more usable. Its racialised and irredentist elements remained problematic, but its language of vigilance could be selectively reactivated within broader anti-communist politics.

The article's contribution is threefold. For modern Turkish history, it explains why a repressed and organisationally weak movement retained political resonance. For nationalism studies, it shows how ideological repertoires survive through displacement, commemoration, and selective reactivation. For historical international relations, it demonstrates that neutrality requires domestic ideological

management and that repression can also function as external signalling. Future research should extend the analysis beyond 1947 by examining post-war nationalist networks, the Demokrat Parti period, early Cold War anti-communist associations, the institutionalisation of 3 May Turkism Day, and the later careers of former defendants.

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