

**Atf - Reference:** Kıbrıs, Güldeniz (2019) Political myths as tools for nationalist propaganda. *Journal of Abant Cultural Studies*, 4(7): 1-15.

## Political myths as tools for nationalist propaganda

Güldeniz Kıbrıs\*

### Abstract

Political myths are stories that narrate the events of the past creatively through which ‘collectivities’ – in this context especially nations – “establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own systems of morality and values” (Schöpflin, 1997: 19). They are used strategically by the political elite as a part of their nationalist propaganda. This paper examines these myths through a general survey of Pan-Turkist journals published in the late 1930s and early 40s. It, at the end, aims to reveal the symbiotic relationship between Turkish foreign policy and nationalist propaganda as reflected on journals. The study could pave the way for understanding strategic communication tools by making use of an interdisciplinary approach.

**Keywords:** political myth, nationalism, propaganda, Pan-Turkism

## Milliyetçi propaganda aracı olarak siyasi mitler

### Öz

Siyasi mitler geçmişi yaratıcı bir biçimde anlatan, ‘kolektivitelerin’- bu bağlamda ulusların - kendi varlıklarının temellerini, kendi ahlak ve değer sistemlerini oluşturduğu ve belirlediği hikayelerdir (Schöpflin, 1997: 19). Siyasi seçkinler tarafından stratejik olarak milliyetçi propagandalarının bir parçası olarak kullanılırlar. Bu çalışma, 1930’ların sonunda ve 40’ların başında yayınlanan Pan-Türkçü dergilerinin genel bir incelemesi üzerinden bu mitleri anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışmanın amaçlarından bir tanesi de dış politika ile iç politikada kullanılan milliyetçi propaganda arasındaki simbiyotik ilişkinin ortaya konmasıdır. Ayrıca, çalışma, disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşımla stratejik iletişim araçlarını anlama yolunu açabilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** siyasi mit, milliyetçilik, propaganda, Pan-Türkçülük

### Introduction

Ernst Renan (1882) states, “a nation... is a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that one had made in the past and of those one has prepared to make in the future.” Since it is based upon a spiritual principle, it needs political myths, or ‘political tales’ as strategic tools for communication in order to legitimize the past, present and future. The myths constitute the ideological baggage of nationalist ideologies and become much more visible in periods of social clashes and military threat. In his vein, the Second World War provided a suitable ground for the proliferation of those myths and the late 1930s and early 40s witnessed the rise of Pan-Turkist journals. This also shows the

---

\* Ph.D student, University of Leiden History and Middle East Studies; Lecturer, University of Koç, Department of History, e-mail: guldenizkibris@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-9287-6752

**Geliş tarihi - Date of reception:** 05.03.2019

**Kabul tarihi - Date of acceptance:** 15.04.2019

symbiotic relationship between foreign policy and nationalist propaganda. In fact, once the war was over, these journals came to a halt.

The current paper provides a general survey of Pan-Turkist political myths as reflected on several Pan-Turkist journals. These myths, which constituted the fundamentals of the nationalist propaganda, were nurtured by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism, orientalism and the Kemalist ideology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the article is divided into three parts; the first attempts to locate political myths in a theoretical framework. The second part presents a mental map of the Pan-Turkist journals by relying on the sources that could have nurtured them and the cross-fertilization between them. The last part is a general examination of these journals.

### **Theoretical framework**

Political myths are great stories that narrate the events of the past creatively (Smith, 1986; Ram and Sabar-Friedman, 1996; Frye, 1982), through which “collectivities – in this context especially nations – establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own systems of morality and values (Schöpflin, 2000). In the popular saying, the word myth generally means falseness and is often used pejoratively (Esch, 2010) as opposed to scientifically established truths (Eliade, 1991). The reason is that in modern societies, it is generally believed that, human beings draw their everyday guidance from modern sciences, and make their political choices on a rational<sup>1</sup> basis.<sup>2</sup> Myths are repressed in that picture, “partly into the obscurer levels of the psyche, partly into the secondary or even irresponsible activities of society” (Eliade, 1957: 37). However, even along scientific rationality, political myths are still dominant in most societies, in their everyday lives, people are still looking on stories about the past, reproducing them in response to political, social and economic transformations. As Clifford Geertz (1983) says, in today’s world, “the mythical has not gone out of politics, however much the banal may have entered it.” This demonstrates a need for a theoretical understanding of political myths that goes beyond its claims to truth (Bottici, 2007; Benner, 1997).

According to Henry Tudor, a political myth “is a story, but a story told for a purpose and not simply to amuse” (1972: 16). The purpose is to create links between governing and its subjects and also the past, present and future for a certain group<sup>3</sup> (Bottici and Challand, 2006: 317). Through political myths, a group shapes itself into a political community (Bottici, 2007) in relation to a particular past, forms solidarity with others who share that identity and, perhaps more importantly, justifies why those who govern have the right to do so and why the community should obey them (Schöpflin, 1997). As Jackson (2005) and Wilmer (2002) argue, myths frame the way to perceive a situation.<sup>4</sup> Therefore at some point, political myths can affect what the community considers to be legitimate and as a result, they can act as ‘cognitive lenses’ through which people perceive world politics (Esch, 2010: 360; Bennett, 1980: 167; Bottici, 2007: 253). These ‘great tales’ have power to create conflicts and prejudices against other groups and facilitate stereotyping and scapegoating by influencing the group’s ideas (Kaufman, 2001: 26). As Bottici and Challand state; “a political myth is not simply a prophecy, but it tends rather to become a self-fulfilling prophecy” (2006: 329). That is to say, they may turn discourses into realities (Esch, 2010: 363) by offering “life models” (Campbell and Moyers, 1991: 16) At some point, similar to Gramscian common sense, myths are believed to be always around and normal. Once they diffuse, as Bouchard (2013) would say, myths become an unchallengeable and banal part of political life. From that point on, questioning them

becomes something like questioning the very existence of the political community (Schöpflin, 2001: 1-2). Over time, myths, together with symbols and rituals, become a part of a 'religion of politics.' The nation, state, leader, territory associated with that community and the community itself are sacralized. According to Gentile, myths give that national state a saintly quality and represent it as a sublime ideal for which people are prepared to die (Gentile, 2006). It gives people a reason to live, die, obey; creates an ideological baggage (Wilson, 1997: 183) based on binary oppositions such as good and evil; friends and enemies (Levis-Strauss, 1978: 73). These have 'symbolic power' (Fulbrook, 1997: 73) through which political experience is shaped. With political myths, as Sorel (1975) says, the anxieties of both the ruler and ruled could be solved, emotions could be controlled, radical changes could be promoted, certain memories could be maintained, political choices could be manipulated, and finally national identities could be constructed and maintained. At the end, a Gellnerian central culture binding different subjects to each other is constructed and by diffused from and by the state.

Moreover, myths rise at certain junctures such as "periods of profound cultural clash, and accelerated economic and social changes, a definite political or military threat from the outside to the viability of the community" (Smith, 1999: 83). In his *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Smith identifies three typical conditions for the emergence of ethnic myths. First, according to him, myths emerge during "prolonged periods of warfare." Here it does not matter whether the community engages actively in war. The second condition is related in "incipient secularization or its threat" which have the potential of leading clash of traditional and 'rationalistic' cultures. The last condition stated by Smith is the period when "incipient commercialization breaking down the community's isolation" takes place (1999: 84). In that context, myths serve as antidotes to sense of estrangement, alienation and insecurity (Smith, 1999: 83-4).<sup>5</sup> by reducing complexities into "a relative and comprehensible simplicity" (Flood, 2002; Cobb, 1998: 2-3). In fact, it is precisely at times when social complexity increases and a greater need for societies emerges to tell stories that make sense of what seems confusing and unconnected (Mullins, 1972: 510). They, in a way, provide ontological security (Berenskoetter, 2014; Giddens, 1991) which "refers to the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1990: 92). In this context, social actors can grasp the situation, make choices in the face of uncertainty depending on 'the familiar and the understandable' (Della Sala, 1010; Bottici, 2007: 114-5) values which define Self and Other (Fulbrook: 73). What myths do is to explain the present by referring to the past and serve as guides for the future and as justification for the tragedies of history (Schöpflin, 1997: 23). This is how political myths produce and reproduce meaning and significance about why the political community came together, why it excluded others and how political authority should govern (Cassirer, 1974; Flood, 2002; Schöpflin, 1997: 19; Tudor, 1972).

"What was done in the past is not forever lost for it may repeat itself" as Tudor (1972) says. In relation to that, Smith points out, "...returning to 'basics' ... purifying ourselves of the dross and uninspiring ambiguous present through a return to the glorious past and its heroism ... helps us to transcend a disfigured and unworthy present, and endow our individual lives with a wider significance in a union that will outlive death and dispel futility" (1986: 182-3). This longing for the past is thus a response to that community's practical need for rebirth after experiencing decline and decay (Tudor, 1972). For example, if a territory was lost in that time period and if it is contested, the reference to

past may be used to provide “prior title,” ownership for the community (Smith, 1999). Omer Bartov (1998) mentions the rise of German myths about Jews following the First World War when Germany’s national unity was threatened, political myths about the ‘great and glorious’ past of the Aryan race worked to restore domestic consensus and harmony. Similarly, Tismaneanu refers to the fall of communism in the Balkans and argues that the post-communist landscape was favorable for collective passions, fears, illusions and disappointments. Within that context, political myths came into being as “responses to the sentiments of discontinuity, fragmentation and the overall confusion of the post-communist stage” (1998: 5). Yinan He (2007), by referring to Liah Greenfeld and Daniel Chirot’s study of the early nation-building stage in Russia, Germany and certain Arab countries, states that when elites feel themselves insecure and dissatisfied with their domestic power status and felt humiliated they resort into nationalistic propaganda and polemics over sensitive historical issues.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, the conditions of uncertainty, distress, continuous instability and insecurity create a propitious environment for the emergence of political myths in order to control the pace and scope of political, social and cultural change (Ram and Saar-Friedman: 51-78) happening in the present. This is what was provided by the Second World War.

### ***Fundamentals of Pan-Turkish myths***

Although Pan-Turkish journals became much more visible during WWII, the fundamentals of Pan-Turkist myths were not new. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were European Orientalists who wrote a number of books on Turkish race and the origins of Turkish language. A raw list could include: *Histoire Générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mongoles, et autres Tartares Occidentaux* (1756-1758) by Joseph de Guignes (1721-1800); *A Grammar of the Turkish Language* (1832) by Arthur Lumley Davids (1852-1913) which was the first systematic survey of Turkish language; *Travels in Central Asia* (1864) and *Sketches of Central Asia* (1867) by Arminius Vambéry (1832-1913), which was about the common origins of Turkic groups and their subdivisions relying on physical traits and customs, and *l’histoire de l’Asie* (1896) by Leon Cahun (1841-1900), which stressed the role of Turks in carrying ‘civilization’ to Europe, as a part of greater Turanid race that included the Japanese and Fin as well. The Ottoman elite was of course well-aware of all these. Among these works, Cahun’s book occupied a significant place in the memory of intellectuals from different factions. Şerafettin Turan, in his book on intellectual sources of Mustafa Kemal, considers it as one of the books that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk read (1990: 40). An ardent Pan-Turkist, Reha Oğuz Türkkan (1920-2010) also states that he read Cahun during his high school years (1943: 54).

A late Ottoman intellectual, Ali Suavi (1838-1878) stated that Turks were the foundational element of the Ottoman Empire and ‘Turk’ was a race that also included people living in Central Asia (Mardin, 1998: 371). Ahmet Vefik Pasha (1823-1891), in his *Lehçe-i Osmani* (1890), claimed that the Ottoman Turkish was originated from the same source with the Central Asian dialects. Ahmet Mithat (1844-1912), on the other hand, called Central Asia as the fatherland of the Turks. The other significant work was *Kamus-u Türki* (1889) by Şemseddin Sami (1850-1904), through which Sami argued that speaking the same language was the first and foremost condition of belonging to the same race. Two other significant works were *Les Turcs Anciens et Modernes* (1869) by Mustafa Celaleddin Pasha (Constantin Borzecki) (1826-1875) and *Tarih-i Alem* (1876) by Süleyman Pasha (1838-1892). The first one extensively dealt with racial origins of the

Turks and considered Turks and Europeans as belonging to the great Touro-Aryan race, differently than the Mongols. This work was very much influenced from Guignes. The second work also used the information in Guignes in order to glorify ‘militaristic qualities of the Turkish nation.’ Lastly Necib Asım (1861-1935) is worth mentioning. He translated Cahun’s book into Ottoman Turkish in 1896, then published it in 1900 (Kushner, 1977: 61-72).

The other group of intellectuals were from among the Turkic-speaking populations in the Russian Empire. Once they migrated to the Ottoman lands in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, they became very active in Ottoman cultural and political life (Soysal, 2002: 483-4). One of them was Ismail Gasprinski (1851-1914), a Crimean Turk, who emphasized a spiritual and linguistic unity of all the Turks of the Russian Empire in line with ‘unity in language, thought and action’ (Kushner, 1977: 12; Landau, 1995: 9-11). Ağaoglu Ahmet (1869-1939), wrote in *Türk Yurdu*, could be added to that picture as well. Besides, Yusuf Akçura (1878-1935) was the first intellectual that systematized the transformation of the Turkist movement from Phase A to B, meaning from a cultural into a political one, as Miroslav Hroch would agree. In his long article titled, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset (Three Systems of Government)* (1904), Akçura clearly stated that Pan-Turkism was the most feasible strategy for the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, for Gökalp (1997; 2001), empires, since they were constituted by many nations, are doomed to collapse. Therefore, Turkish nationalism should be the supreme ideal for nations. The unity of all Turks, formation of Turan must be the mefkure that could motivate the Turks. For Gökalp, the first step to reach Turan is Turkeyism which in fact was realized, the second is Oghuzism meaning unification of Oghuz Turks along with Turkmens of Azerbaijan, Iran and Khwarizm and the last step, Turan which is the unification of all Turkic-speaking people, such as the Yakuts, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Kipchaks and Tatars who speak the same language with other Turks, but not share the same culture. The Greater Turkestan or Turan are formed by all these. In Gökalp’s Turan, there is not a place for Hungarians or Magyars. Besides, Gökalp attributes a functional aspect to Islam. In his collection of articles published in 1918 under the title of *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, he states that Islamic religious beliefs can be a unifying factor of different Turks living in different areas. Here, it is worth mentioning that Gökalp pursues mainly the religious and cultural aspects of Islam; not the political ones. In his formula, Turks should borrow only material achievements and scientific methods from the West. The rest, however, should be thoroughly Turkish. This includes all elements of culture, particularly emotional and moral values.

Adopting the same references of Turkish nationalism, there gradually emerged two major groups. One was led by Enver and Talat Pashas, the other was led by the later Kemalists. In the First World War, the former hit the road to Sarıkamış by launching a military operation. However, the catastrophic deaths of large number of soldiers stopped them. This first defeat of the Pan-Turkist ideal was later followed by an incorporation of the Turkish speaking lands to the Bolshevik Russia in 1917. The Unionists had gradually converted to a more limited and defensible project, which, in fact, ended with the First World War. This reflected on the works of intellectuals as well. Halide Edip, who had claimed that Azerbaijan’s independence should be the first step towards Turan and whose *Yeni Turan* had become an inspiring source for the Pan-Turkists, left Pan-Turkism. Similar to her, the Turanist poet Mehmed Emin Yurdakul changed the words ‘Turan’ to ‘vatan’ (fatherland) in his poems. All these were followed by the RPP’s limiting of the activities of Turkish Hearths in 1927. In fact, the Turkish Hearths and Pan-Turkist circles

were challenging to the ideals of the new nation-state. This, of course, did not mean that the Pan-Turkist ideal was completely abandoned by the political elite. However, it was marginalized from the political center in the first years of the Republic. Thus, one could argue that although the ultimate goals of the two groups were not the same, the intellectual sources they were nurtured were the same. In other words, the Pan-Turkist ideal was always somewhere as the ideological romantic baggage supplying the mentalities of nationalists who were not a part of the Pan-Turkist group.

The political-mythical package of two hundred years drew the mental map of the Kemalist elite. *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti* (The Society for the Study of Turkish History), which later took the name of *Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Turkish Historical Society) was formed. It was followed by *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Linguistic Society). At the request of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a history commission was established. It wrote a history textbook titled, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (*The Main Tenets of Turkish History*) in 1930, which was somehow found unsatisfactory therefore was published in one hundred copies (İğdemir, 1973: 15-23). The published text was in fact a summary of the original material. In its introduction, the goal was stated: “to reveal the secret of intelligence and characteristics of the Turk, to show this special character and strength of the Turk to himself and to declare the deep racial roots of our national evolution.”

In many papers presented in the First History Congress in Ankara, race was emphasized as the single decisive criterion of any civilization. It was argued that national history should be written by referring to the racial origins. In the Turkish case, this meant ‘correcting’ the image of the ‘barbarian’ Turks. Eugene Pittard’s emphasis on ethnic continuity became the guiding principle of the Society. The ‘historian’ of the new regime, Afetinan (1933) presented a paper in which she argued that Turks did not belong to the Mongoloid yellow race, because they had already been in the highest stage of civilization at a time when Europe was in ignorance and savagery. Contributing to İnan, Reşit Galip, in his presentation, depicted the physical characteristics of the Turkish race: “tall, white skinned, mostly blue-eyed, as being one of the most beautiful representatives of the white race” (1933: 159). In this context Turks are imagined as different than the Mongoloid yellow race which was at the same time considered uncivilized and barbaric. Hasan Cemil Çambel (1933) referred to the anthropometric and linguistic data by Hommel, a German anthropologist and argued that the creators of the Crete civilization were ancient Turks. All these made Turks Western and European.

In the second congress Pittard (1943), also presented a paper in which he argued that Turks were the members of brachycephalic Homo-Alpinus race, which migrated to Europe from Central Asia through the Straits and Danube. They were the ones who taught Europeans to domesticate animals and how to cultivate lands. Nurettin Onur (1943) mentioned blood types and how they could be used to determine people’s races. According to the information provided by him, the A blood type was specific to Europe and Asia, and the B blood type was seen in India and China. In Turkey, the percentage of type A increases from the east to the west. This could be an evidence for Turks being the origin and transmitter of the A type. Şevket Aziz Kansu (1943), examining the skeletons of Seljuk Turks, argued that there was ethnic continuity in Anatolia. Moreover, Sadi Irmak (1943), emphasized the importance of blood types and finger print in distinguishing different races from one another. According to his research, Turks’ blood groups and fingerprints are very similar to those of people living in Southern Europe and this could be used to understand ancestral origins of the Turks. He, then, stated that Turkish race was not contaminated unlike German or Greek races. Here, what could be searched as

another point could be the changing Turkish of the Germans in the aftermath of the First World War. These perceptions, at some point, could have shaped the nationalist propaganda against the Germans. Irmak considered the Greeks as the other degenerated nation. This is not surprising given the historical animosities between Greece and Turkey. All in all, these political myths made Turks a superior antique nation with homogeneous character. Their state-building capabilities were raised by Sadri Maksudi Arsal (1943) in two points. First, he believed that nomads had the ability of unifying many tribes in case of a war and this made them talented in establishing states. This point, however, did not mean that Turks were nomads; in fact, they played a role in terms of defense; but the actual state builder were sedentary Turks, according to Arsal.

In the Second History Congress, the Sun-Language Theory was also publicized with Hasan Reşit Tankut and İbrahim Necmi Dilmen's presentations. According to this theory, Turkish is the earliest language in the world. Other great languages like Arabic, Persian and French, were originated from it. Özdoğan here makes a very interesting point indicating that the Sun-Language Theory had already been presented by Enver Celalettin Pasha in 1917, but it did not become that popular (2002: 85). This may be related with the fact that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the intellectual elite was not that ready for this kind of an idea, which did not clearly fit into their visions of empire. In the early Republican era, the theory paved another step towards making the propaganda of 'civilizing features' of the Turkish race. It had put forth that Turks were never barbarians instead they were an 'ancient civilized nation' which established all the earliest civilizations in China, India, Mesopotamia, Nile Valley, Anatolia and the Aegean coast by disseminating their talents and values. Although Turks did not live there now, their original homeland was Central Asia. The myth goes as the following: Once Turks migrated from there due to climatic changes, they scattered around the world, spread their ideals and established new states (Berktay, 1983: 51-54). These arguments made Turks members of a universal civilization meaning that they are no longer under the monopoly of the Ottomans. In fact, they are themselves the founder of this great and glorious empire.

### ***The Second World War and political myths as strategic tools for propaganda***

The outbreak of the Second World War stirred new hopes in Pan-Turkist circles who had been marginalized as the result of the RPP's centralization attempts. These circles included a new generation of Pan-Turkists, who went through a Kemalist education. They were familiar with the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun-Language Theory. For some of them, the Second World represented a romantic opportunity fueling their dreams about reaching to the Kızıl Elma, the Red Apple; the ultimate mefkure of the Turks, either symbolically or literally. The foreign policy concerns of the government based on active neutrality and security alliances with both sides of the war contributed to these dreams.

Italy's entry to the war and its subsequent invasion of Albania incited a great anxiety in Turkey followed by a rapid rapprochement with Germany. Turkey and Germany already had close relationships since the First World War in terms of trade and technical assistance. In order to guarantee Turkey's support in its plans of attacking the Middle East, Germany signed a friendship agreement with Turkey. Only four days after this agreement, in June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union (SU) and its lands inhabited by the Turkic people. In the meantime, the İsmet İnönü government was quite cautious and prudent and this required taking stern measures to control political activities in the

country. The Wealth Tax and nationalist political propaganda otherizing particularly non-Muslims had already encouraged bottom-top nationalist discourses of everyday life.

Since 1941, there were semi-official contacts between Turkey and Germany regarding the Turkic people in the SU. Some participants to meetings between the two states were Franz von Papen, Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir Erkilet -a General with Tatar origins and the author of several articles in Pan-Turkist journals-, General Ali Fuat Erdem and Nuri Killigil Pasha, brother of Enver Pasha, who became a hero for the Pan-Turkist after he died on the way to 'reach Turan.' They mainly discussed the possibility of a German-Turkish collaboration besides the German strategy of gathering soldiers from the Turkish-speaking prisoners of war in German camps. Taking the benefit of all these, Germany launched an intensive and expensive Pan-Turkist and anti-Soviet propaganda campaign in Turkey. It mostly utilized communication technologies and so predominantly journals and newspapers. Unsurprisingly, it was exactly this time when the propaganda machine formed by Pan-Turkist started to work intensely.

Although the government had always tried to keep the Pan-Turkists under its control, during the Battle of Stalingrad, Pan-Turkist journals were all making war propaganda in an aggressive way. Most importantly, they were not alone in their cause. In *Cumhuriyet*, Nadir Nadi wrote several times about why Turkey should join the war. There were other articles in *Tasvir-i Efkar* as well. When Germany invaded Crimea and Caucasus in the spring of 1942, the Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu made a speech saying, "we are Turk, Turkist will always be Turkist. For us being a Turkist is a matter of blood, culture and conscience." This ideological climate made the Pan-Turkist myths find a vein and, in fact, they were exactly the tools that the government needed in its propaganda in this period of both political-economic transformations and military threat.

Through new journals of the late 1930s and 1940s such as *Ergenekon*, *Kopuz*, *Bozkurt*, *Tanrıdağ*, *Çınaraltı*, *Türk Yurdu*, *Geçit*, *Birlik*, *Büyük Ülkü*, *Kara İnci*, and *Gök-Börü*, the political myths about the superiority of Turks were reemphasized. These journals, in fact, constituted an alternative platform for the Turkists, who did not have the opportunity of voicing their ideas anywhere after the closure of the Turkish Hearths. Here, one should not ignore the symbiotic relationship between different visions of nationhood. Although being pro-Western, the Kemalist History Thesis, had already revived the available ideological basis influenced by former Pan-Turkist generation and European Orientalists. It already had adopted the myth of the golden age to eliminate links with the Ottoman and Islamic pasts and construct a new 'tradition' in a Hobsbawmian way (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1-14). The new generation of Pan-Turkists would be relying on the Kemalist baggage as well despite the fact that they were not pro-Western. Thus, the Second World War and what could be gained with it was the new mefkure of the new generation. It is certain that this Pan-Turkist mefkure included an irredentist vision, but some supporters adopted a much more symbolic understanding. Many Pan-Turkists however had these dreams in which they became conquerors like Alexander the Great or Mehmet the Conqueror as Şevket Süreyya Aydemir (2008: 54) mentioned in his *Suyu Arayan Adam*. This kept them in a motivated and aggressive stance in the Second World War.

The journals included articles on the superiority of the Turkish race, strategies to reach Turan, and nostalgic poems about the land of Turan. They were also anti-communist since the SU was perceived as a power which had 'enslaved Turks' living in Turkic regions. One of the most prolific writers was Reha Oğuz Türkkan who was born in 1920, during the War of Independence and later joined the Pan-Turkists. In his high school



years, he took classes from Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, -the editor of *Ülkü*-the journal of People's Houses-, Behçet Kemal Çağlar, Mükrimin Halil Yinanç and Enver Behnan Şapolyo. *Ergenekon* became the first and, one of the most important platforms that young Türkkan voiced his racist and war-prone opinions. It was published in Ankara starting from November 10, 1938. Its slogan was “the Turkish race above everything and the Turkish race above any other race.” Then, after its 4th issue, *Ergenekon* was closed mainly because of its militant tone against Germany.

After *Ergenekon*, Türkkan began to publish *Bozkurt*, which had a more militant tone than the previous one because of the Second World War. The journal first appeared in 1940. In July 1941, it was suspended since it published a map of Turkic lands showing them as the land of Turks. The map was accompanied by a call to İnönü stating that the Turkish youth was just waiting for his signal to fight. *Bozkurt* resumed publication on March 5, 1942 and then continued irregularly until July. Its slogan was the same as that of *Ergenekon*: “Turkish race above all others.” The contributors were Nihal Atsız, Nejdet Sancar, Hüseyin Namık Orkun, Fethi Tevetoglu, Peyami Safa, Ali İhsan Sabis, Behçet Kemal Çağlar, Zeki Velidi Togan, Abdülkadir İnan and Besim Atalay. A total of seventeen issues came out. The main goal of the editor this time was to educate the Turkists or *Bozkurtçus*, in his words. In *The Credo of Bozkurtçu*, Türkkan informed the intended audience about what they believed in: “the given superiority of the Turkish race and Turkish nation which was rooted from our blood.” Therefore, “Turks should not mix with other blood(s).” *Bozkurtçu* needed that blood “to war whenever it is necessary,” “to establish a Turkish State of sixty-five million people” (Türkkan, 1942: 6).

*Çınaraltı* was published by Orhan Seyfi Orhon and Yusuf Ziya Ortaç from August 9, 1941 to July 15, 1944, for 146 issues. It was republished in 1944, then also in 1948. Among the main contributors were Hüseyin Hüsnü Erkilet, İsmail Hakkı Akansel, Nihal Atsız, Nejdet Sançar, and Hüseyin Namık Orkun. Its slogan was İsmail Gasprinski's ‘unity in language, thought and action.’ The articles of *Çınaraltı* were mostly on history, language, literature and education (Orhon, 1943a: 3, 6-7). It was much more moderate compared to *Ergenekon*, *Bozkurt*, *Tanrıdag* and *Gök-Börü*. The contributors were closer to Ziya Gökalp's understanding of nation as a cultural unity, so that the creation of a national consciousness based on a common culture and common language was the mefkure (Orhon, 1941: 3). Accordingly, it had also an emphasis on Islam as one of the unifying factors. Instead of an irredentist blood-fetish that Türkkan clearly states, Orhon drew the national boundaries of Turkey and emphasized national unity in the ‘Credo of the Turkist’ (Orhon, 1942: 3). On the other hand, *Çınaraltı* also referred to a project of building an honor gallery of Turkish history. According to Adnan Giz, the first criterion for being taken into consideration for that gallery should be “carrying pure Turkish blood” (1943: 8, 10, 15). Besides, in letters from readers consisting mostly of teachers and students, blood tie and race were always emphasized as the building elements of the Turkish nation.

The complex stance of *Çınaraltı* was because Ortaç and Orhon were close to the political circles. They probably designed a broader framework to gather different elements under the same roof. In this context, the readers of that journal, as it can be understood from their letters, were the new Kemalist generation, which probably perceived itself as the ‘missionaries’ or the ‘guardians’ of the new regime. Given the wartime conditions, theirs was evolved into aggressive nationalist discourses. Furthermore, most of the articles in *Çınaraltı* did not seem that aggressive about the ‘outside Turks.’ For instance, while *Bozkurt* makes calls to İnönü to take action, *Çınaraltı*

states that “Turkish state does not have an intention of attacking to any other state” (Orhon, 1943b: 3; 1943c: 3). The sentences, however, continue as the following: “we should not forget that we are the children of a glorious nation.” That is to say, *Çınaraltı* had a much more complicated and less aggressive stance although still referred to political myths to encourage young Turkists. The lack of Bozkurt-like perspective could explain its longer survival in Turkish press.

*Tanrıdağ* was the other significant journal of the Second World War. It was published weekly from May 8 until September 4, 1942. After the death of its editor, Rıza Nur, it was closed until November 5, 1950. Although Rıza Nur was the one mainly setting the tone of the journal with his articles, there were other important contributors such as; Nihal Atsız, Nejdet Sançar, İsmail Hakkı Akansel, Hasan Ferit Cansever, Fethi Tevetoğlu, and Hüseyin Namık Orkun. The journal states that one of its main aims was to purify the Turkish language; therefore, ‘pure Turkish’ words were used in the titles and dates. Similar to other journals, the authors of *Tanrıdağ* continuously mentions the superiority of the Turkish race (Akansel, 1942a: 47; 1942b: 5-8; Göğem, 1942a: 11-13; 1942b: 6-7, 11-12). It resorts to the myth of army-nation very much as Nejdet Sançar’s article reveals: “army and war is the oldest friend of Turk.” “In this world of struggles, Turkish nation should bring up fighters” (Sançar, 1942: 8-9). In that context, “our nationalism should be a racist and separatist one” relying on the unity of race.” Therefore, “Turkish nationalism should be neither peaceful nor utopian but based on a historical analysis” (Tunçer, 1942: 11-12).

The journal also includes ‘addresses to the youth.’ According to one of the address, young people should learn history by making research rather than reading the books written by European authors (Cansever, 1942: 11-12). The other one states that the current decadent situation of the world was mainly rooted from the lack of discipline, therefore Turks should be working a lot (Unaner, 1942: 2). Rıza Nur declares that there were three kinds of Turkish nationalism: Turanism, Turkism and Anatolianism. The first one was a part of the second, because the real Turan origin belongs to Central Asia which had been the original homeland of the Turks. The second included all Turks, and the third one was ‘exclusive’ and did not accept any other Turks other than the ones living in Anatolia. Rıza Nur argues that special attention must be paid to the last one besides indicating that Anatolianism ‘absolutized’ the definition of Turkishness and weakened the impact of nationalism by centralizing it. The most viable and living option, according to Rıza Nur in this context, was “racial Pan-Turkism” (Nur, 1942: 4-6).

## Conclusion

There is no single way of defining nationhood. There are different varieties of nationalism and these varieties, in some cases, use similar political myths to legitimize themselves. In fact, even in modern times, people rely on political myths as fundamental elements of nationalist discourses. Thanks to these myths, leaders and historical events could be idealized and the nation’s existence could be justified strategically as opposed to its ‘others.’ The Pan-Turkist political myths had been already present in the ideological climate of Turkey as reflected on the works of the first generation of Pan-Turkists in Soviet Russia, European Orientalists and the Kemalist elite. In the Second World War, they proliferated and even adopted by some politicians of the center as a part of nationalist propaganda. Thus, although their ultimate goals were different, different perspectives nurtured each other and finally evolved into the Pan-Turkism of the new younger

generation of the late 1930s and early 1940s. An alternative imagining of a world where Turks were great and glorious in Central Asia was fabricated at a time when, ‘the ancient legendary land of the Turks’ was threatened by the Soviet Union and Germany.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The term ‘rational’ has a wide range of uses in popular and philosophical discourse. In this study, it is simply used to emphasize a secular mode of thinking which is argued to be superior than faith, superstition, or emotions.

<sup>2</sup> The cognitive aspects of individuals involved in foreign policy making is problematized by Political Psychology Literature. Interestingly, earlier contributions were from the late Cold War period: R. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); R. Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1977); M. G. Hermann (ed.), *Political Psychology*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1986). Some scholars working on the effect of discourses on international relations are R.K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, “Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (Sept. 1990): 259-268; J. Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); L. Godinho, “Discourse and International Relations: A Theoretical and Methodological Approach,” *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7, N.2, (November 2016-April 2017); R. Harré and G. Gillett, *The Discursive Mind*, (California, London, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1994); J. Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, Issue: 2, (1999): 225-254; M.J. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); M.J. Shapiro (ed.), *Language and Politics*, New York: New York University Press, 1984); R. Bleiker, “Discourse and Emotions in International Relations,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 19, Issue: 3, (Sept. 2017): 481-508; J. Weldes and D. Saco, “Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of ‘The Cuban Problem,’ 1960-1994,” *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, VI. 25, Issue: 2, (1996): 361-396; C.G. Ripley, “Discourse in Foreign Policy,” *Politics*, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the differences between utopia, illusion and myths see: Henry Tudor 1972; Clare Flanagan, “Political Myth and Germany 1945-1949,” *German Life and Letters*, 57:1, (January 2004): 111-125.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Esch 2010: R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics, and Counter-Terrorism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); F. Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State and War: Identity, Conflict and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia*, (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The significance of estrangement and alienation in creating nationalism is also stated in: B. Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics*, (Amsterdam: CASA, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Also see: C.G. Jacobsen, “Myths, Politics and the Not-So-New World Order.” *Journal of Peace Research*. 30, no. 3, (1993): 241-50; L. Greenfeld and D. Chirot, “Nationalism and Aggression,” *Theory and Society* 23, no.1 (1994): pp. 79-130.

## Bibliography

- Afetinan, Ayşe (1933) Tarihten Suret ve Tarihin Fecrinde. *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakaşalar*, ss. 18-41. İstanbul: T.C. Maarif Vekaleti.
- Afetinan, Ayşe; Tevfik, Mehmet; Rıfat, Samih; Akçura, Yusuf; Galip, Resit; Cemil, Hasan; Maksudi, Sadri; Vasıf, Semsettin; and Beyler, Yusuf Ziya (1996) *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları: Kemalist Yönetimin Resmi Tarih Tezi*. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları.
- Akansel, Mustafa Hakkı (1942) Türk Irkının İstikbali Büyüktür. *Tanrıdağ*, 3: 22 May.

- Akansel, Mustafa Hakkı (1942) Yabancı Kan ve Devletlerin Batması. *Tanrıdağ*, 8: 26 June.
- Arsal, Sadri Maksudi (1943) Beşeriyet Tarihinde Devlet ve Hukuk Mefhumu ve Müesseselerinin İnkişafında Türk Irkının Rolü. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss.1062-1093. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- Aydemir, Şevket Süreyya (2008) *Suyu Arayan Adam*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Bartov, Omer (1998) Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust. *American Historical Review*, 103(3): 771-816.
- Benner, Erica (1997) Nationalism within Reason. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 43(1): 28-40.
- Bennet, W. Lance (1980) Myth, Ritual and Political Control. *Journal of Communication*, 30(4): 166-179.
- Berenskoetter, Felix (2014) Parameters of a National Biography. *European Journal of International Relations*, 20(1): 262-288.
- Berktaş, Halil (1983) *Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi ve Fuat Köprülü*. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları.
- Bottici, Chiara (2007) *A Philosophy of Political Myth*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bottici, Chiara and Benoi, Challand (2006) Rethinking Political Myth: The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9 (3): 315-336.
- Bouchard, Gerard (2013) *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, Joseph and Moyers, Bill (1991) *The Power of Myth*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Cansever, Hasan Ferid (1942) Yeni Bir Tarih İlmine İhtiyacımız Vardır. *Tanrıdağ*, 3: 22 May.
- Cassirer, Ernst (1974) *The Myth of the State*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Cobb, William W. (1998) *The American Foundation Myth in Vietnam: Reigning Paradigms and Raining Bombs*, Maryland: University Press of America.
- Çambel, Hasan Cemil (1933) Ege Medeniyetinin Menşesine Umumi Bir Bakış. *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakaşalar*, ss. 199-214. İstanbul: T.C. Maarif Vekaleti.
- Della Sala, Vincent (2010) *Not so different after all? The EU and Myths of Exceptionalism*. <https://eustudies.org/conference/papers/download/78>
- Eliade, Mircea (1991) *The Myth of The Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Esch, Joanne (2010) Legitimizing War on Terror: Political Myth in Official Level Rhetoric. *Political Psychology*, 31(3): 357-391.
- Flood, Christopher G. (2002) *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge Press.
- Frye, Northop (1982) *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. Toronto: Academic Press.
- Fulbrook, Mary (1997) Myth-making and National Identity: The Case of the GDR. *Myths and Nationhood*, Eds. George Hosking and George Schöpflin, pp. 72-87. New York: Routledge.

- Galip, Reşit (1933) Türk Irk ve Medeniyetine Umumi Bir Bakış. *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakasalar*, ss. 99-161. İstanbul: T.C. Maarif Vekaleti.
- Geertz, Clifford (1983) *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gellner, Ernest (1973) Scale and Nation. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. 3:1-17.
- Gentile, Emilio (2006) *Politics as Religion*, Translated by George Staunton. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Giz, Adnan (1943) Türk Tarihinin Şeref Galerisi. *Çınaraltı*, 83: 24 April.
- Göğem, Ziya (1942a) Irk Tayininde Kan Gruplarının Degeri I. *Tanrıdağ*, 16: 21 August
- Göğem, Ziya (1942b) Irk Tayininde Kan Gruplarının Degeri II. *Tanrıdağ*, 17: 28 August
- Grant, Susan-Mary (1997) Making History: Myth and the Construction of American Nationhood. *Myths and Nationhood*, Eds. George Hosking and George Schöpflin, ss. 88-106. New York: Routledge.
- Greenfeld, Liah and Chirot, Daniel (1994) Nationalism and Aggression. *Theory and Society*, 23(1): 79-130.
- He, Yinan (2007) Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006. *History & Memory*, 19(2): 43-74.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1983) Introduction: Inventing Traditions. *The Invention of Tradition*, Eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ss. 1-14. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Irmak, Sadi (1943) Türk Irkının Biyolojisine Dair Araştırmalar: Kan Grupları ve Parmak İzleri. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss. 841-845. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- İğdemir, Uluğ (1973) *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Tarih Kurumu*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.
- Jacobsen, Carl Gustav (1993) Myths, Politics and the Not-So-New World Order. *Journal of Peace Research*, 30(3): 241-50.
- Kansu, Şevket Aziz (1943) Selçuklu Türkleri Hakkında Antropolojik Bir İlk Tetkik ve Neticeleri. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss. 440-456. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- Kaufman, Stuart J. (2001) *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Kushner, David (1977) *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism: 1876-1908*. London: Frank Cass.
- Landau, Jacob M. (1995) *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Levis-Strauss, Claude (1978) *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.
- Mardin, Şerif (1998) *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin Doğuşu*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Mullins, Willard A. (1972) On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science. *American Political Science Review*, 66(2): 498-510.

- Onur, Nurettin (1943) Kan Grupları Bakımından Türk Irkının Menşei Üzerine Bir Etüd. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss. 845-851. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- Orhon, Orhan Seyfi (1941) İdeal. *Çınaraltı*, 1: 9 Aug.
- Orhon, Orhan Seyfi (1942) Türkçülüğün Amentüsü. *Çınaraltı*, 47: 15 Aug.
- Orhon, Orhan Seyfi (1943a) Yeni Yıl. *Çınaraltı*, 67: 2 Jan.
- Orhon, Orhan Seyfi (1943b) Tehlike. *Çınaraltı*, 93:3 July.
- Orhon, Orhan Seyfi (1943c) Tan Gazetesi. *Çınaraltı*, 93:3 July.
- Özdoğan, Günay Göksu (2002) *Turan'dan Bozkurt'a: Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Nur, Rıza (1942) Türk Nasyonalizmi. *Tanrıdağ*, 1: 8 May.
- Pittard, Eugene (1943) Neolitik Devirde Küçük Asya ve Avrupa Arasında Antropolojik Münasebetler. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss. 65-84. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- Ram, Haggay and Friedman, Galia Sabar (1996) The Political Significance of Myth: The Case of Iran and Kenya in a Comparative Perspective. *Cultural Dynamics*, 8(1): 51-78.
- Renan, Ernst (1882) *What is A Nation?*  
[http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What\\_is\\_a\\_Nation.pdf](http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf)
- Sançar, Nejdet (1942) Türk, Ordu ve Savas. *Tanrıdağ*, 3: 22 May.
- Schöpflin, George (1997) The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths. *Myths and Nationhood*, Eds. George Hosking and George Schöpflin, ss. 19-35. New York: Routledge.
- Schöpflin, George (2000) *Nations, Identity, Power*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Schöpflin, George (2001) The Construction of Identity. *Osterreichischer Wissenschaftstag*: 1-2.
- Smith, Anthony (1986) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Smith, Anthony (1999) *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sorel, George (1975) *Reflections on Violence*. New York: AMS Press.
- Soysal, Gün (2002) Rusya Kökenli Aydınların Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Milliyetçiliğinin İnşasına Katkısı. *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan, Vol.4. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Tankut, Hasan Reşit (1943) Dil ve Irk Münasebetleri Hakkında. *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, ss. 221-223. İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası.
- Tismaneau, Vladimir (1998) *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tudor, Henry (1972) *The Political Myth: Key Concepts in Political Science*. New York and London: Praeger Publishers.
- Tunçer, Sıtkı (1942) Milliyetçiliğimiz Nasıl Olmalıdır? *Tanrıdağ*, 10: 10 July.
- Turan, Şerafettin (1999) *Atatürk'ün Düşünce Yapısını Etkileyen Olaylar, Düşünürler, Kitaplar*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu.
- Türkkan, Reha Oğuz (1942) Bozkurtçunun Amentüsü. *Bozkurt*, 1: 5 March.
- Türkkan, Reha Oğuz (1943) *Kuyruk Acısı*. İstanbul: Stad Matbaası.
- Unaner, İhsan (1942) Olaylar Karsısında Durumumuz. *Tanrıdağ*, 4: 29 May.

Wilson, Andrew (1997) Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine. *Myths and Nationhood*, Eds. George Hosking and George Schöpflin, ss. 182-197. New York: Routledge.