SPATIAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE NATION

Modernizing Geographies in Greece and Turkey

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The Role of Religion and Geography in Turkish Nationalism: The Case of Nurettin Topçu

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In July 2007, Turkey underwent one of the most interesting elections in its recent history. As the army pressed on the so-called pro-Islamic AK party government with a declaration on its website, chaos reigned in the country and some political commentators labelled the missive an electronic memorandum heralding a postmodern coup. Hundreds of thousands of people, provoked by Kemalist vigilant forces, and apparently with the army's approval, took to the streets in a massive demonstration against the government. Yet, all this militancy backfired and the AK government survived, even winning a landslide victory in the elections. Just after the election many Kemalist commentators wrote angrily that they were unable to understand the Turkish people. In their view, Turkish people acted mysteriously and inexplicably under extraordinary conditions. Other commentators welcomed the results and doubted whether nationalism really was on the rise, as most political commentators had previously envisioned. They saw the AK victory as a response to an increasingly aggressive nationalism, since the party represented an Islamic rather than nationalist viewpoint. Some commentators must have been wrong to point out that nationalism was on the rise in Turkey. Was that really the case? I hope to shed light on this question in this chapter.

The confusion about the nature of this controversy perhaps stems from the fact that many scholars and commentators seem to think in simplified categories. They only take into account two mainstream Turkish nationalisms, one represented by the Kemalists and the other by more fascistic elements. However, they pay no attention to the

ways in which different ideologies and discourses and the rest of the political spectrum consisting of liberals, socialists and Islamists have historically been articulated with each other. They also disregard the transformation of ideologies and discourses in time and therefore stick to a static, unrealistic recipe for understanding social, political and ideological change.

In fact, Turkish nationalism, from the outset, has never been in the monopoly of the Kemalists and extreme right wingers. For instance, emerging in the 1970s and reaching its apogee in the 1980s a political current called the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis embodied an articulation of conservatism, pro-Islamism and extreme Turkism, and also had a considerable ideological as well as political impact on the ruling elites. Although today's AK party does not exactly represent the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis in its entirety, it would be interesting to examine its deep relation with this synthesis. However, I am not going to examine this idea here. Instead, I would like to question whether the historical and epistemological origins of the synthesis of Turkish nationalism and Islamic ideology could be found in the underestimated and now forgotten version of Turkish nationalism, namely, in the Anatolianism (*Anadoluculuk*) of Nurettin Topçu.[1] The focus of this chapter, therefore, will be on Topçu, an eminent intellectual whose intellectual impact on the mental map of the conservative movement after the 1940s was considerable. Together with Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Topçu had a deep impact until the 1970s on many intellectuals[2] as well as on conservative Turkish people.[3] He was one of the founders of the Aydınlar Ocağı (Hearths of the Intelligentsia),[4] a very influential organization which, with its use of the Turkish-Islamist synthesis, deeply influenced the Turkish right. To locate Anatolianism and Topçu in the wider context of Turkish nationalism, I would first like to focus on some aspects of studying Turkish nationalism.

Three distortions in the study of Turkish nationalism

The controversies over the nature of Turkish nationalism can be traced back to the time of its birth almost a century ago and they have continued to exist to this day. Debates on nationalism have been unceasingly pursued both at political and academic levels. No doubt, the big current issues in Turkey, such as the Kurdish problem, membership of the European Union, the question of non-Muslim minorities and the rising impact of Islam on politics as well as on daily life, necessitate a rethinking of cultural identity and thereby invite a reassessment of Turkish nationalism. The ruling elite aggressively imposed this nationalism on the people as a political identity,

especially after the coming of the new republic in 1923. Yet, it should also be noted that an intellectual poverty and deep-rooted political biases and distortions characterized these debates.

Three distortions have contributed to a misunderstanding of the nature of Turkish nationalism. The first is the mainstream historiographical tradition centred on the modernization paradigm. Within the framework of this paradigm, the new Turkish Republic exemplified, first and foremost, a modern nation-state and was a departure from the Ottoman Empire, which was mistakenly characterized as a pre-modern and Islamic entity. In this scenario, the critical contribution of the new Turkish Republic was reduced to the secularization of everyday life and the laicization of the state. The foundation of the republic was seen almost as an antithesis of the Ottoman Empire in terms of social, political, cultural and economic life. It was within this context that a new national identity was to replace the religious, Ottoman, Islamic one and herein lay the meaning of Turkish nationalism. Within this perspective, based on modernization and secularization (still the most dominant viewpoint albeit with many variants), the state's will and imposition on the population forced them to accept an identity based on Turkish nationalism. Actual hostilities between ethnic communities and the enormous demographic earthquake that the late Ottoman Empire witnessed were all reduced to a dualism between a secularist nationalist elite and a traditional Islamic people. Silenced in this scenario were the bloody, profoundly tragic stories and histories of ethnic and religious struggle among Muslim and non-Muslim communities that indeed shaped the social and political agenda of the late Ottoman period. Also silenced in this scenario was the ethnic diversity of some Muslim communities such as the Kurds.[5] Instead, almost everything was explained exclusively along the lines of progressivism versus traditionalism and thus the crucial social and political struggles were covered up.

The second distortion in misunderstanding the true nature of Turkish nationalism derives from recently popular analytical tools and the way they have been used. Over the last three decades or so many scholars have focused on the social and cultural construction of nationalist ideologies, discourses and movements; by this reading, a powerful *ruling* elite manipulated the masses and convinced them to accept its nationalistic leadership, with the behaviour of average people participating in nationalist movements simply attributed to manipulation by nationalist elites. By so doing, these scholars in fact perceive the national community as a *superficial* construction. Ironic though it may seem, left-wing scholars have also used this manipu-

lative, cultural, constructivist approach and, indeed, have perhaps unintentionally reduced people to passive recipients of the elite discourse. Reminiscent of the famous, or infamous, concept of false consciousness, people's support for the nationalistic goals of elites is seen as a reflection of elite manipulation. But, if it is simply a manipulation, why bother to understand the vested interests of many people who joined the nationalistic movements? Why, instead of focusing on elite mechanisms of seduction, bother to understand the territorial, material, sexual and political interests of those masses who were manipulated by the elite?

Nationalism may be new to human history, but it is not superficial. It seems to me that nationalism embodies a modern articulation of two deeply-rooted human instincts and practices – territoriality and kinship. If such a modern articulation is superficial and imagined, it is so only because it presents itself in modern times in its modern fashion. It is so only because it is a modern reflection of actual instincts and traditions, and not because it is superficially created by elite achievements!

The third and final problem regarding misconceptions of Turkish nationalism derives from the fact that many of us have been so preoccupied with the official interpretation of Turkish nationalism that we have ignored and neglected to focus on different varieties of nationalist thoughts and movements. In reality, there were several versions of nationalism that sometimes contradicted and sometimes supported the official interpretation. Ignoring the varieties of Turkish nationalism made us overlook the specific evolutionary paths of Turkish nationalism. This has also distorted our understanding of the specific ways in which different varieties of Turkish nationalism contributed to the formation of current nationalist thoughts and practices. Particularly important in this respect is the rise of the so-called Turkish-Islamic Synthesis from the 1970s onwards that embodies one of the most powerful, widespread and hegemonic versions of Turkish nationalism. In this chapter I intend to trace the genealogy and epistemological roots of this version of Turkish nationalism. To do so, I would like to study an intellectual circle called Anatolianists (*Anadolucular*). They were the ones whose conservative imagination brought up two central themes in the making of Turkish nationalism – territoriality (geography) and religion (culture), namely Islam. Nurettin Topçu, known as one of the leading figures of the Anatolianist movement, has been especially important in the movement and the main emphasis here will be on him.

Anatolianism during the rise of Turkish nationalism

Anatolianism as a nationalist ideology first systematically appeared among intellectuals gathered around the journal *Anadolu* in 1924. The timing was not coincidental, since there were a lot of ideological attempts from the early twentieth century onwards to envision a new identity based on the new realities of the late Ottoman Empire. It was a time when everything was in a state of colossal flux. It was a time when the search for new identities, new territories, new ideologies and even new communities took place with unprecedented vigour and on an unprecedented scale. To understand the peculiarities of Anatolianism within the context of other nationalist currents, it is important first to take a brief look at the emergence of nationalism within the sociopolitical realities of the time.

In the eyes of the ruling elites of the Ottoman Empire, nationalist goals were quite difficult to pursue. The social structure and demographic characteristics of the empire made it difficult to employ a nationalistic agenda; for, far from being a solution, nationalism was the problem. Balkan and other nationalisms were perceived as threatening the disintegration of the empire. As long as the empire lasted, however, an imperial ideology was necessary. With the loss of territories in the Balkans and the Arap provinces, the basis of imperial governance became problematic because of the catastrophic diplomatic and military failures in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Particularly important in this respect was the ongoing turmoil and chaos from 1911 onwards, including the Balkan wars, the catastrophe of the First World War and the troubled years of the War of Independence. Despite the ever growing difficulties of imperial rule and design, the Ottoman ruling elite continued to dwell on Ottomanist ideology. While the ruling Union and Progress Party pursued such policies, it was cautiously interested in Turkish nationalism as well. It helped Turkish nationalist journals such as *Türk Yurdu* intellectually and financially and was not indifferent to promoting nationalist thoughts. In a sense, pragmatism prevailed, and understandably so. The ruling elite pragmatically considered all kinds of ideologies that could help it preserve the territorial integrity of a homeland, but the problem was that the imperial *territory always kept changing*.

One answer for identity formulation was found in the idea of Turan. For some time before and during the First World War, many prominent Young Turks were interested in pan-Turanism. Ziya Gökalp, the eminent ideologue of the Young Turks, was an important advocate of it. His literary writings between 1910 and 1915 were full of themes about Turan. Pan-Turanism aimed to unite all kinds of Turkic

communities in a vast and ambiguous geography on the basis of race, culture and history.[6] In one of his famous poems, Gökalp wrote that 'for the Turks motherland is neither Turkey nor Turkistan, mother-land is the great and eternal country: Turan.'[7] Turan, an Iranian word, referred to the geographical area from Lake Aral to Chinese Turkistan.[8] The stronghold of Turanist ideas had been Hungary. The Ottoman Turkists adopted many Hungarian Turanist views and attached an exclusively Turkish bias to the term. In the nineteenth century, the term was used in Turkic studies and came to mean also an ethnic Turkic background.[9] The famous Turkish nationalist Yusuf Akçura is known to have written an article in Turanist journals entitled 'the Role of Hungarians and Turks in Turan'.[10] Moreover, Turanist ideals were put into action when the charismatic adventurist Enver Pasha imagined creating Turanism after the First World War in Central Asia where he fought against the Bolsheviks, but it ended in failure. However, the idea of pan-Turanism served the purpose of reclaiming new ideals and territories in an era when the Ottomans had been losing much of the land in the Balkans and elsewhere.

With the coming of the republican era, the political and diplomatic realities of the time made the ruling elite drop much of its Turanist rhetoric. Relations with the Soviet Union from which the new republic had benefited so much made it impractical and impossible to pursue such visions. Furthermore, the new regime wanted to avoid being seen as irredentist in the eyes of European states with which Turkey aimed to establish friendly relations. Even Turkish Hearths, which started to espouse pan-Turkist ideals during the Young Turk era, openly affirmed in 1927 that its area of interest did not cover Turks outside its borders.[11] However, this abandonment of Turanist ideals in official ruling circles did not mean the disappearance of Turanist ideological movements. Such movements continued to exist during the single-party era mainly thanks to the activities of Nihal Atsız who championed pan-Turkist ideals in the 1930s and 1940s. He and his proponents strongly attacked limiting Turkish geography to the borders of Turkey. Their activities reached their apogee during the Second World War, but in 1944 the government suppressed them, especially after the Soviets defeated the Nazis.

Official Turkish nationalism was an eclectic amalgam of three elements – ethnicity, history cum language, and territoriality, all vaguely defined and subject to modification in time by the pragmatic needs of the day. Ethnicity, for one, was used and abused to replace the religious identity that still was quite dominant even during the early years of the republic. Furthermore, in the *Zeitgeist* of the era,

ethnic nationalist movements were widespread and lively all around the world. The problem with ethnicity as a basis of identity was that ethnic consciousness, as well as the intellectual basis of ethnicity, happened to be quite limited because of its imperial historical legacy. In addition, the use of ethnicity for identity politics was a difficult and uneasy undertaking in a country where different ethnic communities such as the Kurds still existed. The republic was young, dynamic, eager to forget a past characterized by continuous failures, and in search of the self-confidence needed to create a future Turkish citizen. To do so, an aggressive politics of assimilation was introduced, especially in so far as the Muslim population was concerned. The Balkan separatist movements of the late nineteenth century had made the ruling elite suspicious of the possibility of assimilating non-Muslims. This assimilationist perspective, aimed to include Muslims while excluding others, as Ayhan Aktar clearly showed,[12] made it difficult to label the Kemalist use of ethnicity as racist in the sense of the traditional use of the term. Ethnicity, in the eyes of the Kemalist ruling elite, could serve to achieve Durkheimian organic solidarity. Modelled on the organic family and kinship, such views could be the basis for the new community called the Turkish nation.

Another constitutive element of the official Kemalist version of nationalism was the use and abuse of history and language. As far as the nineteenth century is concerned, historians point to the existence of a widespread ideological trend regarding the right to nationhood: the existence of great national achievements in the distant past.[13] One can understand the intellectual involvement in history of the ruling elite, led by Atatürk, to manifest that Turks were historically a great nation to be proud of. In this context, the extremely dubious and superficial historical theories designed in the 1930s in the service of creating Turkish nationalism are understandable. Like the use and abuse of history, extensive and controversial theories about language were undertaken to fabricate a novel place for Turkish as a language.[14]

Territoriality was no easier than the other two elements. For Kemalist generations, many of whom were born in the then lost Balkan territories, sticking to the terrain that emerged from the diplomatic and military *realpolitik* in the aftermath of the First World War was not an easy task. For nationalists such as Yusuf Akçura and many others from the Caucasus and other places of the Ottoman Empire, similar difficulties were always there. Even if we set aside the uneasiness of forgetting the lost territories that once belonged to the motherland, there were problems of Turkification about the actual territory left in hand. One can observe unsettling issues regarding

territoriality, for example in the Turkification of the names of many places, as exemplified in the change of the city name *Diyar-ı Bekir* (the land of Bekir) to *Diyarbakır* (the land of copper). Not surprisingly, then, the first faculty to be established in the early republican era was Ankara University's faculty of language, history and geography.

The Anatolianist version of Turkish nationalism

In the 1910s a new variety of Turkish nationalism, Anatolianism, emerged to counter the official interpretations of identity politics the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) advocated.[15] In particular, objections were raised against Ziya Gökalp who represented the CUP in ideological matters. Because the CUP's policies had, without question, failed in the eyes of many because of the catastrophe of the First World War, criticism of Gökalpian thought was overwhelming and widespread. After the 1908 revolution most CUP policies failed and, by the end of the First World War, the country was close to collapse. As expected, the military defeats and occupation of Anatolia, the empire's heartland, introduced a climate of political and ideological change and confirmation that Enver Pasha's aggressive and adventurist style based on an imperial vision was costly and dangerous. In a sense, the imperial vision had gone and people were focusing increasingly on what had been left out of the crumbling empire. When the obvious needs of the current situation brought realism rather than adventurism to the fore, Anatolianism, a more realistic version of nationalism, was seen as more viable and therefore preferable.

At the heart of this new variety of nationalism, Anatolianism, was a new way of looking at territory. However, like pan-Turkist nationalist views, it also made use of the ethnic dimension. Yet, its ethnic vision was limited to the boundaries of Anatolia. In other words, unlike other varieties of Turkish nationalisms of the time, it was not coloured with any Turkish irredentist claims. In this respect, one can hardly talk about finding any mainstream racist claims. While the Turanist and pan-Turkist varieties were often preoccupied with external Turks living in external territories, Anatolianism never mentioned them at all. Indeed, when they were mentioned, it was to show why it was impractical, irrelevant and impossible for any Turkish nationalist project to include Turks living outside Anatolia. Moreover, according to Anatolianism, the nationalist mission had no need to create the nation, which was thought to exist *already* and hitherto in Anatolia, namely in the geography designated as the *vatan* (motherland).

Like this different understanding of territoriality, a special emphasis in Turkish nationalism on the role of Islam constitutes an important

characteristic of Anatolianism, an emphasis derived mainly from its conservative nature. According to the proponents of this ideology, the traditions, customs and common historical experience the population of a certain geographical entity share are perceived as the most important components of nationalism. In a sense, the future of the country was thought to be grounded in tradition. Change and progress, if desired, should be achieved gradually and should harmonize with tradition. These conservative characteristics made it difficult for the new Kemalist regime to embrace Anatolianism and that is why, though the new regime allowed such conservative ideologies to exist, the Kemalists by no means accepted them until the beginning of the multi-party era shortly after the Second World War.

The origins of Anatolianist nationalism are evident in several intellectual circles as early as the 1910s. Nüzhet Sabit's journal *Vazife*, for one, advocated such an ideology in 1911. His emphasis on the need for a concrete geographical entity, which is indispensable for nationalism, can be considered an Anatolianist forerunner. Later, in 1913, a group of intellectuals such as Musa Kazım, Mehmet Şemsettin (Günaltay) and Halim Sabit raised similar ideas and concerns after they left the Islamic circle centred on the journal *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (the right way). Likewise, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, a prominent conservative scholar and intellectual during the republican era, as early as 1919 wrote an unpublished book called *Anadolu'nun Bugünkü Vazifeleri* (The Current Tasks of Anatolia), which played an important role in shifting attention from the history of Islam to the history of Anatolia.[16] Most importantly, a journal called *Anadolu* was published a year after the foundation of the republic in 1923. Many of the major figures of the Anatolianist ideology either came from this circle or were deeply influenced by it.

. One figure, from the second generation of the Anatolianist movement, Nurettin Topçu, however, comes into prominence during the republican era. He was younger than the first generation, but met them at an early age and continued his Anatolianist perspective until his death in 1975. Especially important was his journal *Hareket* (Action), published in 1939, which became one of the first to be able to oppose Kemalism without being banned. Despite censure, and irregular publication, his journal continued almost until the end of his life.

Topçu was born in Istanbul in 1909. His family was well-known in Erzurum, a city in Eastern Anatolia and his father was a merchant who lost his fortune during the First World War. After graduation from İstanbul Lisesi in 1928, Topçu went to France on a government scholar-

ship to study philosophy. His undergraduate degree was from the University of Strasbourg and he became the first Turkish doctoral student at the Sorbonne. His Ph.D. thesis, which was published in French in 1934, was entitled *The Ethics of Revolt.* During his stay in France in the early 1930s, Topçu met several distinguished French intellectuals such as Louis Massignon and Maurice Blondel. The latter's philosophy of action deeply influenced him throughout his life.[17]

Blondel's philosophy of action rested on the revival of morality and Christian spirituality in the age of materialistic and positivistic intellectual hegemony. All through his life Topçu endorsed similar philosophies.[18] In Paris he was also able to get to know prominent Turkish intellectuals such as Remzi Oğuz Arık and Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, both of whom had a deep impact on his devotion to Anatolianism.

Upon his return to Turkey in 1934, Topçu married the daughter of a prominent politician, Hüseyin Avni Ulaş who had always been very influential in the formation of Topçu's political thought. Ulaş was the leader of the opposition called the Second Group in the early years of the Grand National Assembly and was famous as an eminent opponent of Kemal Atatürk. Topçu first taught at the prestigious Galatasaray Lisesi, but was dismissed from there when he refused to make an illegitimate professional favour for some students. As a punishment, he was first sent to İzmir and then later to the city of Denizli where he met Said-i Nursi, an influential Sufi intellectual who after almost five decades since his death still has millions of supporters in Turkey. The most significant intellectual impact on his thinking, however, came from a Nakşibendi sheik Abdülaziz Bekkine.

In İzmir in 1939 Topçu began to publish his famous dissident journal *Hareket.* After the troubled times of the single-party era, he became involved in conservative right-wing politics. He was an enthusiastic anti-communist and took part in several associations such as the Association of Turkish Nationalists (*Türk Milliyetçiler Cemiyeti*),[19] Turkish Cultural Hearths (*Türk Kültür Ocağı*), the Association of Nationalists (*Milliyetçiler Derneği*) and the Association of the Nationalists of Turkey (*Türkiye Milliyetçiler Derneği*). However, after the assassination attempt on a well-known secular writer, Ahmet Emin Yalman, the Democrat Party, which was then in power, harshly suppressed most ultra right-wing and Islamist organizations and Topçu suffered from this development. During the 1950s, he taught history at Robert College, but lost his post in 1960 with the coming of the military coup. He also taught at Haydarpaşa Lisesi, Vefa Lisesi, İstanbul Erkek Lisesi, and İmam Hatip Lisesi respectively. Although he

was involved in conservative politics in the post-1960 era, he was never able to be elected as a deputy. His influence on conservative intellectuals, however, was formative.

Topçu's intellectual odyssey paralleled the formulation of a sound basis for his Anatolianist nationalism. His vision of nationalism, like that asserted in the *Anadolu* journal, began in 1071 when the Turks first came to Anatolia. At first glance, Topçu's nationalism differed considerably from the aggressive nationalisms of the twentieth century in that race seemed to play no role in his nationalist imagination, though he upheld many of the typical biases about the superiorities of a pure race.[20] Unlike many official interpreters of nationalism who believed that the real history of the Turks started in Central Asia, he traced it to Anatolia – the territory that over centuries shaped and reshaped the destiny of the Anatolian Turks.[21] He argued that races changed and evolved over time in response to the conditions of the territory. In fact, according to him, environmental characteristics changed people so much that it would be difficult to claim racial similarities among the various Turkic peoples.[22]

However, if we take ethnicity as a subset of race, Topçu's nationalism can well be characterized as extreme and exclusionary. According to him, a nation is an entity of people having a similar shape of face and body, similar concern for the problems of the land, similar experience of blood and labour for the sake of the land, same language, similar ideals and similar faith.[23] Thus, to be a nation requires at least the same language and religion. In this respect, one can understand why there is no mention of Kurds who are Muslims and have been residents of Anatolia for centuries.

Topçu's emphasis on the essential role of territoriality in the making of Turkish nationalism should also be read as a reflection of his contempt for a nomadic lifestyle. Settlement in Anatolia gave the Turks superior civilizational characteristics over other Turks who continued to be nomadic. With settlement in Anatolia, he argued, came an agricultural life, which he regarded as a materially and morally superior lifestyle.[24]

While these explanations for the foundation of nationalism sound quite materialistic, materialistic factors alone could not lead to nationalism. A core element needed to be articulated alongside these other factors and here Topçu used analogies from the historical experiences of other nations. According to him, culture provided the core for French nationalism, race for German nationalism and economy for British nationalism. In the Turkish case, the core, the vital spirit of nationalism, came from Islam. Islam provided nation-

alism with its soul and morality. The merger in Anatolia between agriculture and Islam produced the fundamental characteristics of Turkish nationalism.[25] In other words, by means of geography, the new environment, the Turks were able to have a settled agricultural life. The geography articulated with Islam created the specific nature of Turkish nationalism.

His ideas about the primary role of Islam in Turkish nationalism did not result in an easy relationship with mainstream Islamists. Interestingly, as early as 1939, he radically criticized them:

> The Islamists denied the role of labour and soil that cultivated the children of this country. They were unable to conceive the fact that geography and economy constituted the skeleton of the nation, and that Islam was its soul and that soul and body could not be separated from each other.[26]

According to him, the Islamists, like the Turanists, separated race and geography from Islam and this eventually led to the Islamists being unable to grasp the importance of nationalism.[27]

Nurettin Topçu's Anatolianist thought also relied on another spatial duality, that between the urban and the rural. He was an ardent opponent of anything related to urbanism. In fact, Topçu shared many of the ideological elements of the important ideology of peasantism, which was largely founded on this duality. Indeed, peasantist movements were able to find a wide audience during the 1930s and after.[28] His belief in the superiority of rural life and rural people, his contempt for cities and urban values, and his emphasis on the supposedly inherent conservatism of peasants were very much at the centre of his social and political thought. To him, the only viable material basis on which his conservative moral values could be built was a rural lifestyle and values. Thus, the superior moral features of the peasants derived mainly from farming and a settled life.[29]

Topçu's exaltation of rural life went hand in hand with his contempt for cities and urban people. Cities embodied everything bad and antithetical to nationalism. Unemployment, for one, was a city phenomenon. Millions of unemployed people lived in cities wasting their energy and productivity. These people wasted their lives in cinemas, cafés, political party offices and stadiums. Rural women, however, spent their time working productively on the land, while most urban women remained unemployed in their houses in the cities.[30] Topçu, however, did not simply exalt rural values and emphasize the superiority of rural life for the sake of economic development alone.

The peasants, shaped economically by agriculture and morally by Islam, objectively represented the unity of both, despite the fact that Topçu demystified some of the negative characteristics of the idealized peasants as well.[31]

Topçu's hostility to urban values was also related to his distaste for cosmopolitanism. Cities embodied all the characteristics of cosmopolitanism, the antithesis of his nationalism. To him, urban people with their inherent cosmopolitan way of life could not, by their nature, assimilate nationalist values. With such a standpoint constituting a common theme for nationalistic ideologies in many other places as well, Topçu feared the migration of rural people to the cities. When and if this ever happened, he thought, rural people would lose their superior characteristics and become prisoners of city life; the consequent alienated labour, mechanization, industrialization and cosmopolitan lifestyle all ran counter to his understanding of nationalism.

Topçu was critical of capitalism and Marxian socialism. According to him, they both shared a common denominator – the fetish of material, earthly interests. Instead of a morally-driven rural economy, urban people set up a system of social relations based on exploitation, alienation and moral corruption. Against the official interpretations of peasantism that some Kemalists of the time advocated, which basically had no room for relations of production based on exploitation, he emphasized the hierarchical relations between the haves and have-nots.

A critique of industrialization and mechanization had also been a strong theme in Topçu's writings. Both embodied the worst of all possible worlds and should be avoided as much as possible. Even the nineteenth-century positive sciences were seen as responsible for the development of industrialization, for there was no inherent idealism in science.[32] Although he was sufficiently realistic to recognize the necessity of industrialization in modern times, he thought that at least industrialization should be dependent on the material well-being of rural people. Like the peasantists of the single-party era, Topçu believed that industrialization would create a proletariat out of the rural population.

Instead of big industrial business, Topçu favoured small business. He saw the moral dimension associated with small businesses as more important than efficiency. According to him, small businesses were associated with religion and morality[33] and Topçu was very much a man of abstract moral concerns. Morality, whether derived from religious or political values, stood at the very centre of his thinking.

He never thought that morality could have material bases. Indeed, he even believed that morality should precede economic rationality, a theme that echoed similar standpoints in the interwar years.

In Turkish political thought, Topçu probably bears the distinction of being the only thinker who fiercely opposed technology. The fetish of technology in modern times paved the way for the dissociation of matter and spirit, thereby dismantling the unity of things. Technology, a human creation, imprisoned the very human who created it! In this sense, he shared many of the ideological characteristics of the anti-modernist ideologies that became quite dominant during the interwar era, especially in Europe.[34] Technology meant Europe and Europe meant technology, and Topçu hated both![35]

Likewise, he was critical of consumer society, which he saw as a means of building European domination. Heavy industry led to mass consumption and turned people into spiritless beings in search of material conformism and hedonism. The fetish of consumption destroyed the basis of human creativity, annihilated the unity of matter and spirit and by so doing subjected non-Western societies to dependence on Western cultural imperialism. As early as 1939, his fear of capitalist aggression even led him to voice environmental concerns.[36]

Topçu hated merchants. They represented rootlessness. As many of the fascist ideologies of the interwar years show, this notion of rootlessness was used and abused to a great extent. Merchants exemplified so many negative characteristics such as easy money, manipulation, deception, shrewdness and a relentless pursuit of self interest.[37] Merchants never felt they owed anything to the soil that fed them. They exploited people and natural resources, and made fortunes out of agricultural producers.

Not surprisingly, the image of the merchant went hand in hand with Topçu's anti-Semitism. His attitude to Jews could rival that of the Nazis in the 1930s.[38] According to him, 'there are two enemies, two evils against human beings: money and the Jew.'[39] In an article called 'Humans and the Jews', he argued that what the big Jewish philosophers such as Spinoza, Marx, Freud and Durkheim achieved in the realm of thought and spirit, the merchant, money-oriented Jews achieved in the realm of material life.[40] He developed anti-Semitic views on many topics, including why the USA could never become a proper nation-state. It was because of the Jews, he argued, since the the US state was not founded on things to be proud of like heroism or sacrife, but rather on big capital appropriated by Jews. The USA, for him, was not a political state but an economic state.

It is a state of the big capital exploited by the Jews and the absolute will of the state had been in the hands of the Jews. The Jew is a merchant without a judicial and moral existence. He neither thinks nor acts; [he] only buys and sells. He is a swindler of big markets.[41]

Likewise, he said that 'the Western merchant nations as best seen in the example of the Jews, could not constitute a moral civilization.'[42]

One of the most important characteristics of Topçu's political thought are his anti-liberal and anti-communist views. Such attitudes have certainly been the landmarks of conservative ideologies almost everywhere. In his view, liberalism leads to chaos, anarchy and a loss of discipline both in the state and the society.[43] He accuses the liberal state of losing its potency, authority and discipline.[44] Topçu was obsessed with notions of order and authority.[45] Liberalism ignores and belittles tradition, custom and, above all, religion and the state, all of which were the sources of authority. Moreover, by subjecting everything to the will of the majority and disregarding the guidance of the so-called spirit, liberalism establishes the rule of quantity over that of quality.[46] In this sense, he indeed pinpoints one of the major deficiencies of democratic rule that has frequently been mentioned.

To Topçu's mind, a state with great authority was the most important factor in establishing a sound basis for nationalism. With such a state all Turkey's problems could be solved. In the absence of such a state, he argued, either the international currents of communism or the cosmopolitan forces of America would strangle Turkish nationalism.[47] Indeed, the emphasis on these two evils, international communism and cosmopolitan America, stands firmly in his social and political thought – again a common theme shared by many of his interwar European contemporaries.

Like liberalism, Topçu harshly attacked communism. From the late 1930s onwards, the critique of communism constituted one of the central themes in his writings. In the 1950s and after, he also took part in many anti-communist movements such as the Association for the Struggle Against Communism (Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri). The reasons for his anti-communist tendencies, however, differed to a large extent from the mainstream anti-communism of the cold war era. For one thing, Topçu blamed capitalism for the existence of the communist ideal. It was the ignorance and irresponsibility of industrial capitalism towards the poverty it created that in turn created communism.[48] Likewise, he blamed the materialistic aggression of European culture for the emergence among the lower classes of class

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hatred, which was open to exploitation by the communists.[49] Topçu argued that communism was related to the feeling of revenge and 'revenge can never bring justice'.[50] Because the communist ideal was based on revenge, it could never be constructive, only destructive. In his conservative imagination, destruction by all means was no good![51]

Topçu saw communism as the antithesis of nationalism. It destroyed the national spirit, provoked cosmopolitanism and created a restless, internationalist class, the proletariat. Communism opposed evolutionary views and advocated revolution. Interestingly, Topçu often mentioned the word *tekamül*, evolution. To his mind, evolution moved from inanimate things to plants, then to animals and finally to humans. In the human mind, creative evolution took a higher form through mysticism.[52] It is unusual to encounter this sort of evolutionary view in a man of such religious devotion!

Topçu made a huge distinction between communism and socialism. In fact, he used the terms nationalism and socialism interchangeably. Such an attitude can be understood in the context of the use of these concepts during the interwar years. For this reason what he thought about fascism was also very important. The positive perception of fascism in Topçu's thought requires no explanation and a lengthy quotation tells almost everything he envisions about the issue:[53]

> State socialism is traditionalist and conservative. It accepts the conditions of the community, is not at odds with historical necessities, is not revolutionary, but evolutionary. Fascism and German National Socialism, both based on national values and traditions, are the perfect realization of state socialism. Both are spiritualist, namely, both rely on spiritual and moral values.[54]
>
> Fascism does not recognize homo-economicus. According to fascism, humans are moral, religious, warlike and political beings. Nation, however, is not the totality of all the people living in a community at a certain time, but an ideal existence embracing the past, future and present generations. It is like a river coming from the past and flowing towards the future. The fascist state is the realization of the holy will and it is, by its nature, moral. Authority was demanded by the national will which is the ideal. And with this demand the national will is associated with God. The fascist state as the embodiment of the holy will is integrative of all the factors of the nation, organizer of all the social works and the user of the most powerful authority on the community with the purpose of reaching the

strongest order. Fascism got its theories about individual and the state from the German philosopher Hegel.[55]

Even decades after the collapse of the Nazi regime in Germany Topçu continued to admire Hitler. As one of his followers reported, in the 1950s and 1960s Topçu retained a photograph of Hitler together with Hüseyin Avni Ulaş and Mehmet Akif Ersoy.[56]

Conclusion

As seen above, the recent debates on nationalism and the rise of Islam in Turkey can be traced back to the ideology of Anatolianism. In Turkey, conservative nationalism such as the one advocated by Topçu was never a pan ideology. His nationalism to a great extent coincided with the territorial realities of the new republic. As we have seen, the arguments regarding territorial claims have been very much at the centre of debates related to Turkish nationalism, yet Topçu's imagination of territory, that is, Anatolia, articulated with a particular understanding of Islam, was what differentiated his thought.

Topçu's position was certainly not supported by the Kemalists, especially when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was alive. Atatürk himself disliked cultural conservatism. For Topçu and other Anatolianists, however, nationalism was inherently conservative.[57] Therefore Anatolianism was not actually appropriate for Atatürk's project. In particular, Kemal Atatürk was strictly against the use and abuse of religion and supported an uncompromising Westernization based on laicism and secularization. However, after 1946 when the country's political structure was transformed into a multi-party system due to the changing national and international conditions, cultural, traditional and religious elements were more and more imported into the formulation of Turkish nationalism.[58] In this respect, Anatolianism in general, and Nurettin Topçu's thought in particular, were increasingly welcomed by larger audiences.

This does not mean, however, that all the extreme views of Topçu were incorporated into the conservative imagination of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis of the 1970s and after. His contempt for technology, industry and the like was too extreme to digest. Yet, an identity formation based on Islam and Anatolianist nationalism and his standpoint on cultural conservatism, his emphasis on the authoritarian state, his xenophobic attitudes, his mystic viewpoints, his anti-liberalism and anti-communism, and his attack on the Enlightenment all contributed largely to the conservative imagination that dominates Turkish political spectrum today.