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THE ROOTS OF THE RACIAL NATIONALISM OF THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS: IDEAS, INDIVIDUALS, INFLUENCES

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The Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides perpetrated within the Ottoman Empire by the Turkish government at the beginning of the 20th century were not only the direct implementations of ideological convictions or a result of a single decision. Those were, rather, the amalgam of certain theories adjusted to political and economic developments in the country and the desire to turn the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire into a Turkish nation-state. Stressing the importance of ideas and ideologies in the process of historical development, this article attempts to show certain strains of CUP members' worldview by deliberately singling out foreign thinkers and ideas that had a role on the formation of their worldview and on their political actions. This article refrains from discussing Turkism as a whole, but rather examines certain paths of the introduction of European thought to the mindset of CUP high ranking officials and ideologists, hoping to illuminate the background of their subsequent decisions and actions which had a tragic impact on the fate of millions of non-Muslim people in the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: CUP, dictatorship, ideology, Turkism, Turkology, racial kinship, Turan, Central Asia, language, Pan-Turkism, social-Darwinism, Gobineau, Le Bon, Vambery, Cahun, von der Goltz, Parvus, "the nation in arms."

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Introduction

The ideology behind policy has a crucial importance in genocides and any form of crime against humanity. The Turkish government, formed from the Committee (later Party) of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, *hereafter* Unionists, Ittihadists, CUP), made the decision of using radical solutions to the existing ethnic questions in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Ottoman Empire, putting the country on the path to war and genocides. The Committee harboured the ideology of Turkish nationalism which was still in the process of being formed. This was a fusion of ideas, as the ideologists and founding fathers of Turkism borrowed specific theories from nineteenth-century philosophers:

ideas about race, positivistic and materialistic thoughts on human society and civilization and accounts of travellers and scholars. This loose cluster of ideas clashed with imperial reality while attempting to bring it to life. Neither the Armenian nor the Assyrian and Greek genocides perpetrated by the Turkish government within the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century were the direct implementations of ideological convictions or a result of a single decision. Those were rather the amalgam of certain theories adjusted to political and economic developments in the country, and the desire to turn the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire into a Turkish nation-state. Stressing the importance of ideas and ideologies in the process of historical development, this article attempts to show certain strains of CUP members' mindset by singling out foreign thinkers and ideas that had a role in the formation of their worldview and on their political actions. Referring to *ideology* as a system of ideas, values, or beliefs, which guide or underline a 'concrete' political agenda,¹ I refrain, in the article set out below, from discussing Turkism as a whole, but rather discuss certain paths of the introduction of European thought to the mindset of CUP high ranking officials and ideologists, hoping to illuminate the background of their subsequent decisions and actions, which had a tragic impact on the fate of millions of non-Muslim people in the Ottoman Empire.

The CUP, which emerged as a secret underground committee with a moderate revolutionary stance and aimed at limiting the power of the monarch and retaining the integrity of the empire, was an amalgamation of different groups, branches and clubs of intellectuals somehow concerned with the future of the country. The ethnic and religious background of the members and founding fathers were diverse, as were their ideological convictions. Founded in 1889, it had several internal transformations and reorganisations, (significant years being 1902 and 1905); the Committee that was responsible for the coup d'état of 1908 and won seats in the Ottoman Parliament was, already, a Turkish-Muslim organisation with the vision of a Turkish nation-state. The CUP saw the coup d'état of 1908 as its own achievement and allowed only a limited role to other political actors. CUP leaders declared the CUP "the soul of the state," "the saviour of the fatherland" and "the sacred committee."² In 1909, however, the Law on Associations (*Cemiyetler Kanunu*) forced the Committee to separate itself from the parliamentary Union and Progress group, which remained in existence only on paper. The CUP continued to function as a parallel government in the Ottoman Empire.³ The organisation, as stated in a report by Party Secretary Bahaeddin Şakir, had 360 centres in the country, more than 850,000 members, and a majority in the parliament by the end of 1909. During the same period, the CUP had also succeeded in deposing the sultan. The governments of Ahmed Muhtar Pasha and Kamil Pasha between July 1912 and January 1913 were the only opposition that the

1 On different explanations of ideology see Michael Freeden, "Ideology and Political Theory," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 3-22.

2 Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 279.

3 Derya Bayır, *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 51-52.

CUP faced. The answer to the loss of power was the Sublime Porte raid of January 23, 1913, through which the Party of Union and Progress established a dictatorial regime in the Ottoman Empire, only to lose it after the country was defeated in WWI. After the coup of 1913 the ministerial cabinets, minister of the interior, governors, deputy governors, district directors, the minister of justice, judges and even professors and teachers at universities, directors of education in the provinces and inspectors of education were all “self-sacrificing members” of the Committee.⁴

Stepan Sapah-Gulian, a prominent Armenian journalist, political scientist, intellectual and a leader of the Social Democrat Hinchakian Party, correctly states:

Ittihad – Turkish nationalism – was the authorised owner of the situation. It had all the power of the country in its hands, using the machine as it wished. Its policy was to throw bait and crumbs to those who supported and agreed with it who came from any nation or people and to deceive and lull them [into a false sense of security] to gain time. Meanwhile, it vigorously implemented the various parts of its program with the greatest audacity. Cases were not lacking. But who was the investigator, the one to appeal to the court and to which institution? The parliament? The Senate? State Council? Public opinion? Journalism? But aren't the links to all those in its hands? And in all of these, the ruling, presiding voice belonged to it.⁵

Turkish nationalist Halide Edib made a similar remark immediately after the Mudros Armistice, during a meeting with Commander C. H. Heathcote Smith of the British Naval Volunteer Service, who was Admiral Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe's (the British High Commissioner) right-hand man in Constantinople. Concerning the CUP politicians detained in Malta before prosecution as war criminals and the need to form a new representative government, Edib stated: “Every man in this country was once a Unionist in the past.”⁶

Decision-making in the Committee took place through the following chain: the Congress that was convened once a year, the Central Committee, branches located in the vilayets and clubs. Decisive in this chain was the Central Committee, with 12-16 selected members.⁷ According to the party statute of 1909, the clubs carried out the social and cultural policies of the party in the regions and obeyed the local branches. They were the main tools of nationalistic propaganda.⁸ Two medical doctors, Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Nazim, were prominent in the Central Committee. Their power over the organisation

4 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 286-288.

5 Stepan Sapah-Gulian, Պատասխանատուները [Those Responsible] (Providence: Yeritasard Hayastan, 1916), 280-281.

6 Halide Edib, *The Turkish Ordeal: Being the Further Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1928), 28.

7 Arsen Avagyan, Геноцид армян: механизмы принятия и исполнения решений [Genocide of Armenians. Mechanism of Decision-making and Implementation] (Yerevan: AGMI, 2013), 25.

8 *Ibid.*, 17.

was fixed since 1905. Although without any visible title or position, they were the main decision makers and the real power behind the government. Turkish sociologist and political scientist Serif Mardin compared the role of Bahaeddin Şakir in the CUP to that played by Joseph Stalin in the Bolshevik party.⁹ The father of modern Turkish nationalism and CUP ideologist Mehmed Ziya Gokalp was also the member of the Central Committee.

Many foreign diplomats, missionaries and journalists deployed in the Ottoman Empire testified to the fact that, starting from the successful 1908 coup, the state policy of Turkification of the system of education and the economy was in force.¹⁰ While the constitution was based on the principle of equality for all Ottoman citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion, the government openly spoke of their plan to Turkify everyone and the rightful dominance of the Turkish race in the country.¹¹ The CUP, too, faced problems following the coup because of the appeals, usually anti-Western and anti-Christian in nature, issued before 1908 under the motto “Turkey for the Turks.” After several of these appeals were republished in the European press, CUP had to provide explanations.¹² The following episode clearly shows the ideological convictions and political agenda of the Unionists. When the Zionists made an approach to the CUP leaders and stated their interest in the decentralisation of Turkey, Dr. Nazim’s answer was: “*The Committee of Union and Progress wants centralisation and a Turkish monopoly on power. It wants no nationalities in Turkey. It does not want Turkey to become a new Austria-Hungary. It wants a unified Turkish nation-state with Turkish schools, a Turkish administration and a Turkish legal system.*”¹³

Before coming to power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908, the CUP tried to gather all the diverse opposition groups together in the fight against the empire’s despotic monarchy. Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism and Turkism were employed in parallel, using contradictory rhetoric, to attract different groups in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire, which was merely a revolutionary tactic.¹⁴ Most prominent members remained true to their beliefs after coup and, in forming those beliefs, European thought, different ideas and theories, or their highly individual interpretations of Western thought did not just have a minor role.

In general, different European philosophical ideas and thought began to penetrate the Ottoman Empire actively from the mid-19th century through wars, concessions, reform programmes, military and economic missions and missionary activities. The structure of

9 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 141.

10 George Horton, *The Blight of Asia, an Account of the Systematic Extermination of Christian Populations by Mohammedans and of the Culpability of Certain Great Powers; With the True Story of the Burning of Smyrna* (Indianapolis, Kansas City, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1953), 28; Harry Stuermer, *Two War Years in Constantinople: Sketches of German and Young Turkish Ethics and Politics* (London, New York, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 183.

11 A. D. Hagopian, “The Situation in Constantinople,” *Armenia* (NY), no. 8, March 1912, 235.

12 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 188.

13 *Ibid.*, 260.

14 *Ibid.*, 177.

the Committee also contributed to the adoption of European ideas. The organisation was made up of cells and, already in 1895, had two cells, one in Paris and the other in Geneva, whose members kept in touch with European intellectual and political circles. It may be assumed that, after the successful coup of 1908, when members in exile returned to the Ottoman Empire, they brought that influence with them. Significant in the formation of the Unionist worldview were Muslim Tatar intellectual members, who echoed 19th century nationalism earlier¹⁵ and who hoped for the future liberation and union of Tatar subjects of the Russian Empire. The latter were subjected to Pan-Slavism and the pressures of the imperial policy of assimilation.¹⁶ Before coming to the Ottoman Empire for “field work” representatives of the Tatar intellectual elite and a middle-class bourgeoisie participated in the language reforms for Russian Muslims and convened congresses (1905,1906,1909) demanding the union of all Russia’s Muslims and representation in Duma.¹⁷ Based on European ethnological, sociological, and historical data, they considered themselves to be representatives of the same race and marked with the same cultural and psychological characteristics. Arriving in the Ottoman Empire before the 1908 coup, Tatar exiles joined the Committee and started an active propaganda effort in the pages of its periodicals and organised open lectures and discussions. The best known among them were the Caucasian Tatars Ali Hüseyinzâde (Turan), Ahmed Agayef (Ahmet Ağaoğlu) and Crimean Tatars Yusuf Akçura and Ismail Gasprinski (Gaspıralı).¹⁸

Some leading Turkish nationalist writers recall how they were attracted to the French classics and Enlightenment philosophers. After the 1908 coup the number of intellectuals included in the list increased. This period contains references to 19th century European academicians and scientists, that replaced French literature. Names appeared such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Ernst Haeckel, Ludwig Buchner, Charles Darwin, John Draper, Ernest Renan, Hippolyte Taine, Herbert Spencer, Gustave Le Bon, Theodule-Armand Ribot, John Stuart Mill, Gustave Flaubert and others who introduced rationalism, scientific materialism, evolutionism and naturalism, rejecting everything contrary to reason.¹⁹ Although there were individual members of the Committee who were influenced by European philosophers and whose personal writings reflected such views, they could not affect the majority of the members of the organisation. Among those was a prominent Unionist Ahmed Rıza, who held positivistic views; he was influenced by positivism, not directly from Auguste Comte (who formulated the theory of positivism, 1798-1857), but by his own teacher positivist Pierre Laffitte (1823-1903).²⁰ Rıza attended meetings of

15 Zarevand, *Միացեալ, անկախ Թուրանիս կամ ի՞նչ կը ծրագրեն թուրքերը* [United and Independent Turania or What the Turks Plan?] (n.p., 1926), 16.

16 Ibid., 68.

17 Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: from Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 9-10.

18 Zarevand, *United and Independent Turania*, 74.

19 Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998), 292.

20 Sapah-Gulian, *The Responsibles*, 129.

positivists in Paris and contributed to their journals. In conformity with his philosophical views, Rıza held an anti-revolutionary stand for a long time, claiming that progress could only be achieved through education, not violence. According to Rıza, the Sultan could be inclined to a peaceful change of government and society could be improved only through enlightenment. This was contrary to the CUP's aims, although the positivists' motto "Order and Progress" influenced the name of the Committee which was "Union and Progress."²¹ Ziya Gökalp, the founder of modern Turkish nationalism, was heavily influenced by European sociologists' Emile Durkheim's (1858-1917) and Henri-Louis Bergson's (1859-1941) theories on society, culture, civilization, nation, state, and the correlations of the latter. Durkheim's ideas helped Gökalp to arrive at the definitions of the Turkish nation, national identity and what a nation state should be.²² Abdullah Cevdet, an intellectual and physician of Kurdish origin, one of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress, credited Ernst Haeckel as a thinker who had influenced him.²³

Several foreign thinkers and figures had a direct impact on the majority of CUP members, whether by their presence in the empire and personal communications with CUP, or just by imparting certain theories through their writings. Many Unionists fell under the influence of emerging European Turkology, which was a branch of Orientalism.²⁴ There were many disputes about the origin of the Turks in the 19th century and inconsistency among the writers: some of them, especially the Russian Tatars, who saw them as being the Mongols. It was a fact that as interest in races and peoples in Europe increased, research in Ottoman origins in Central Asia and eventually China, increased too. A number of western orientalist, foremost among them Hungarian orientalist Arminius Vambery (1832-1913), French orientalist Joseph de Guignes (1721-1800), German archaeologist Albert von Le Coq (1860-1930) and a German-born Russian Turkologist Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff (1837-1918), in the latter half of the 19th century, had founded a new science, Turkology. Their studies referred to the racial origin and kinship of the Turkic peoples, the history of their languages, and their "brilliant" civilization.²⁵ Several key ideas in Ottoman and later republican racial discourses – such as the purity and superiority of the Turkish race, the geographical extent of the Turkish world, the antiquity of the Turkish language, the historical homogeneity of Turkish culture and the contribution of the Turks to world civilization – were to be found outside the empire and within European intellectual discourses.²⁶

21 Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to Revolution 1908* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 29.

22 Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac and Company Ltd. and The Harvill Press Ltd, 1950), 66-67.

23 Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 209.

24 Charles Warren Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 140.

25 Zarevand, *United and Independent Turania*, 21.

26 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 293.

Gobineau and Le Bon

The idea of racial kinship with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia inherited by Ottoman Turkish intellectuals had an internationally diverse background. French aristocrat and thinker Count Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) was among the first to reflect on the topic.²⁷ Eighteenth-century anthropology had already occupied itself with the racial classification of nations because of phrenology, a psychological theory claiming to know a person's mental abilities from the size and shape of his skull. However, "scientific" racism came into its own only in the mid-nineteenth century with the publication of Gobineau's "Essay on the Inequalities of the Human Race." Although in his work, Gobineau was content to offer an objective analysis of the history of civilization from the racial perspective, it is not always clear whether the author was writing about Europeans, white people, or the French. His book kept the tendency of his day to use the terms "English race," "English nation" interchangeably.²⁸

The French diplomat and writer divided mankind into races distinguishing them by external features, mainly skin colour: white, black, and yellow. He also stated that those races are inherently unequal and structured hierarchically, with the white race being "higher" and yellow and black "lower." According to Gobineau, only "higher" races possess creative power.²⁹ Weitz formulated the concept that, ethnic groups were crucial for mankind, nationalities and even social classes began to be "racialised" in different historical moments and places. Gobineau's *Essay* demonstrates how easy the move between race and nation was.³⁰ In his works, Gobineau mentioned Turks as representatives of the yellow race. Based on "historical data," without specifying them, he also stated that the Oghuz ancestors of the Turanic hordes were from Altai which, in ancient times lived on the Asian steppes.³¹ Turkish intellectuals seem to share Gobineau's ideas. His influence was felt in "Genç Kalemler", the Young Turk periodical published in 1911 in Thessaloniki.³²

Gobineau's 19th century racial views were developed by the French publicist and physician Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), at the end of the century. Based on the works of his contemporary geographers and travellers, Le Bon argued that every nation, in addition to anthropological type, has a stable mentality, which determined its ideas, institutions, culture and religion.³³ Le Bon believed in the mental and physical inequality of races.

27 Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (Metropolitan Books: Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2006), 53.

28 Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 35.

29 Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of the Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 111-112.

30 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, 21.

31 Gobineau, *The Inequality of the Human Races*, 128.

32 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 53.

33 Gustave Le Bon, *Психология Народов и Масс* [The Psychology of Peoples and Masses] (Москва: АСТ, 2018), 9.

Using the Japanese as an example, he argued that education could impart knowledge to the “lower” races, but never endow them with critical thinking.³⁴ Thus, the mindset in race thinking that essential characteristics of each race are seen to be borne “in the blood” by every individual member of the race and that the particular characteristics assigned to the group are immutable and hereditary, became crucial.³⁵

Agreeing with Le Bon’s idea that all political and social beliefs become perceptible to the masses only if they have a religious connotation,³⁶ the Unionists often covered up their actions with quotations from the Quran. A common saying among them was: “Science is the religion of the elite, whereas religion is the science of the masses.”³⁷ Le Bon’s ideas were regularly cited by Unionists as being by “the greatest living sociologist,” while Tarde and Durkheim, for example, never gained such popularity among them.³⁸ Abdullah Cevdet translated Le Bon’s works, which became very popular reading among them. Leading Unionists shared Cevdet’s opinion that those who seek to act as “social doctors” of the nation should be familiar with Le Bon’s works. Although in scientific writings or personal correspondence Unionists frequently discussed the importance of race, they did not develop a theory on the “Turkish race.” There is little doubt that this was the result of existing European racial hierarchy, where Turks were always assigned to the lower ranks. Darwin himself had a prejudiced opinion about the Turks.³⁹ However, Japan’s victory during the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) questioned the existing racial European hierarchy as a victory of the “yellow” race over the “white,” of which Le Bon was a proponent. In 1905, Cevdet, in a meeting, questioned the philosopher about how the Europeans made a misjudgement when placing the Japanese at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, as the victory had cast serious doubt on the articulated racial structure and stimulated some Unionist periodicals to openly claim that the Turks and the Japanese were from the same race.⁴⁰

Vambery and Cahun

If Gobineau and Le Bon talked about race and the racial kinship of Turkic peoples, the lineage through language between the Ottoman Turks and Turkic peoples of Central Asia was developed by Arminius Vambery (1832-1913). While travelling to Central Asia in

34 Ibid., 42.

35 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, 35.

36 Le Bon, *The Psychology of Peoples*, 242.

37 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 308.

38 Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 206.

39 Francis Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887), 285.

40 Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 210.

1863, he visited Constantinople where he met Turkish statesmen and Young Ottoman⁴¹ intellectuals. He became acquainted with Young Ottoman writer and editor Ibrahim Şinasi (1826-1871) and contributed to the Young Ottoman periodical “*Hürriyet*” [Liberty] and “*Tasvir-i Efkar*” [Picture of Ideas].⁴² He was deeply concerned with the indifference of Turkish intellectuals towards the kinship of Turkish and Central Asian dialects, considering Turkish as plebeian. So, Vambery’s endeavour to travel to the Khanates of Central Asia for linguistic and cultural purposes seemed to many of them as literary madness. But “absolute lack of higher ideals” did not stop him, as Vambery recalls in his memoirs.⁴³ From his travels, Vambery noted the following observation: compared with the Ottoman Turks, the people in Central Asia, particularly Kipchaks, stayed true in physiognomy and character as well as language and customs, to their ancestral type. In terms of language, Vambery could not detect any foreign words in their spoken language, which he considered the best transition from Mongolian to the Chagatai language.⁴⁴ At the same time, Vambery noted that even under “corrupt Islamism,” western or Ottoman Turks managed to retain some of their character traits.⁴⁵ Vambery also talked about the political potential of the union of Ottoman Turks with the peoples of Central Asia. He believed that the Ottoman Empire, by awakening its oriental essence and by uniting Turkomans, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Tatars could establish an empire stretching from the Adriatic to China that would surpass the heterogeneous Russian Empire in power.⁴⁶

Returning to Constantinople in the 1890s, Vambery saw no change in Turkish society’s nationalistic views.⁴⁷ The identification of a Turk with an uneducated peasant or nomad continued and a clear line was drawn in society between Ottoman and ordinary Turks. That is why Vambery was surprised when Sultan Abdul Hamid II used words of Turkic origin in a conversation with him and when he saw a huge collection of samples of Turkic literature in the sultan’s library.⁴⁸ There were no ideas of common ethnic origin with other Turkic peoples or any interest in establishing any relationships with them existing. Vambery attributed this to the effects of Abdul Hamid’s despotic regime and to Islam’s denationalising tendency. Vambery sadly mentioned that the Ottoman was a man who only

41 A secret oppositional society established in 1865 by a group of Ottoman Turkish intellectuals. The Young Ottomans sought for new ways of government and constitution in conformity to Islam. Among the prominent members of this society were writers and publicists such as İbrahim Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ali Suavi, Ziya Paşa, and Agah Efendi.

42 Arminius Vambéry, *The Story of my Struggles: The Memoirs of Arminius Vambéry*, vol. I (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), 143; Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press* (New York: Longmans, Green & CO, Agents, 1914), 37.

43 Vambéry, *The Story of my Struggles*, vol. I, 153.

44 Arminius Vambéry, *Travels in Central Asia* (performed in 1863) (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1864), 383.

45 *Ibid.*, 185.

46 *Ibid.*, 436.

47 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 52.

48 Arminius Vambéry, *The Story of My Struggles: The Memoirs of Arminius Vambéry*, vol. II (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), 353.

had a small amount of Turkish blood flowing in his veins and whose physical features did not even bear the traces of a typical Turk.⁴⁹

The Unionist intellectual organ “*Türk*,” which began being published in Cairo in 1903 and which promoted purely Turkish identity, declared that Turkish was the most advanced and superior Oriental language. Articles encouraging the purification of the Turkish language frequently appeared in the journal. This radical attitude prompted Arminius Vambery to send a letter to the editor hailing his and his friends’ efforts, recalling that when he had written his first articles in “*Ceride-i Havâdis*” [Journal of News] a long time before, those who advocated the purification of the Turkish language had been mocked.⁵⁰

Vambery himself did not indoctrinate racial ideas (common origin, blood), emphasizing that it was impossible to divide people into races due to intermarriage and other factors. In defining a nation, he emphasised language and culture.⁵¹ However, there is the following idea with different formulations in his works:

I was all ablaze with enthusiasm when in my childhood I became acquainted with the life of the national heroes of Hungary. The heroic year of 1848 filled my youthful heart with genuine pride... I was intensely happy and in a rapture of delight. But I had soon to realise that many, nay most of the people questioned the genuineness of my Hungarianism. They criticised and made fun of me, because, they said, people of Jewish origin could not be Hungarians, they could only be Jews and nothing else.⁵²

It is very likely that he shared these ideas with Turkish intellectuals and politicians. Vambery was also interested in the constitutional movement and knew the Unionists who were in exile.⁵³

French writer and Orientalist Leon Cahun (1841-1900) was another writer who had influenced the Unionist worldview. Cahun, being the author of a number of literary and historical works, undertook the narration of the history of Asia in his “Introduction à l’histoire de l’Asie.” It was translated and edited by Necip Asim (1861-1935).⁵⁴ Cahun declared that the Turks are the “backbone” of world history and that new archaeological

49 Hermann Vambéry, *Das Türkenvolk in seinen ethnologischen und ethnographischen Beziehungen* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1885), 594, 612.

50 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 68.

51 Arminius Vambéry, *The Story of My Struggles: The Memoirs of Arminius Vambéry*, Vol. II (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), 431.

52 Ibid., 436.

53 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 314. The review “*Türk Yurdu*” published several articles of Vambery, also his obituary in 1913 (see the table of contents of “*Türk Yurdu*” in Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992), 127, 130-133).

54 Together with Vambery, Asim (a Turkish MP from 1927) was an honorary member of the Hungarian Turanic organization.

discoveries refute deliberate distortions of Turks' history.⁵⁵ Cahun notes that the application of the term "Mongolian, Uighur-Finnish or Turkic" to the diverse, mixed mass of people inhabiting Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire is not scientific, but that they speak the languages of the same language family. Cahun also gives the anthropological description of these people (skin colour, height, bone structure, customs, language and religion), classifying them as of the yellow race. The book's whole narrative has a derogatory tone and is prejudiced towards the Mongolian race.⁵⁶ Cahun also argued that the essence of the politically fragmented Turkic community, which has the same origin, is war and that military discipline is the basis of its existence.⁵⁷

Ziya Gokalp, a member of the Committee from the Diyarbekir branch and later the main CUP ideologist and the father of modern Turkish nationalism, wrote that he contacted Ali Hüseyinzade, a Caucasian Tatar emigre and proponent of pan-Turkism and bought Leon Cahun's book when he came to Constantinople for the first time.⁵⁸ Gokalp stated that his interest in Turkish history arose after he read Cahun's work.⁵⁹ Tekinalp (Moiz Cohen), a Unionist ideologist, also spoke positively about this book.⁶⁰ A Crimean Tatar emigre Yusuf Akçura, another CUP ideologue, reflecting on Cahun's attribution of Turkish identity to Lenk Temur and Genghis Khan,⁶¹ was sceptical about the "noble object of uniting all Turks" attributed to Genghis by the author.⁶² Nazim, Secretary General of the Committee, was also familiar with Cahun's work.⁶³

Von der Goltz and Parvus

Colmar von der Goltz was one of the individuals that had a direct impact on the Young Turk mindset. He trained several generations of Ottoman officers during a military mission to reconstruct the Ottoman army in 1883-1895, many of whom joined the CUP and organised the 1908 coup. In his book "Das Volk in Waffen" published in 1883, he put forward the idea of "the nation in arms" and argued that an era of total war had begun, in which the state would win only by mobilising the entire nation and resources, amalgamating civic and military life and by exhausting the enemy in a long-lasting struggle. This theory expressed the author's social-Darwinist worldview, according to

55 Léon Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie. Turcs et Mongols des origines à 1405* (Paris, Armand Colin et Cie, 1896), 33.

56 Ibid., 37.

57 Ibid., 75.

58 Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets*, 141; Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 105.

59 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 52.

60 Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal* (Liberty Press: London, no date), 76.

61 Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie*, 75.

62 Yusuf Akçura, Ismail Fehmi, "Yusuf Akçura's Üç tarz-ı siyaset [Three Kinds of Policy]" *Oriente Moderno* 61, no. 1 (1981): 9.

63 Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 489, 74.

which war was necessary, desirable, and unavoidable in the process of the development of any nation. In the course of the war and struggle for survival, “strong” nations would rightfully devour “weak” ones.⁶⁴ He started to use the term “the nation in arms” or “soldier nation” (asker millet)⁶⁵ in reference to Turks, based on emerging European Turkology, according to which the Turks were Turkic tribes from Central Asia, being born soldiers; therefore, war was their profession and they had a better chance of winning the “struggle for existence.”⁶⁶

He sympathized with the Young Turk movement and emphasised the role of his student officers in the coup. He kept in touch with them after the coup, giving advice in his open letters: “Be powerful so you will not be subjected to injustice.”⁶⁷ His influence on Ottoman officers was known beyond the Ottoman empire⁶⁸ but the idea of a “soldier nation” influenced the Unionist civil wing as well. Ahmed Riza authored a booklet in 1907 titled “Duties and Responsibilities: Soldier” (Vazife ve Mesuliyet’ler: Asker) based on von der Goltz’s teachings. In it, Riza calls on every Turk to fight against external and internal enemies. He classifies “non-Ottomanized Christians” as “internal enemies” or “secret enemies.” He was convinced that Christian secret enemies would limit the army’s combat effectiveness during the war, thus they were dangerous.⁶⁹

Alexander Helphand (also known as Mustafa Parvus, 1867-1924,) was the other individual who called the Unionist for the strive, but this time in the economic sphere and about the significance of war in general.⁷⁰ He played an influential role in the political

64 Handan N. Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 22.

65 Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi. İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 66-68.

66 Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie*, 75.

67 Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, 67.

68 I. I. Goloborod'ko, *Старая и Новая Турция* [Old and New Turkey] (Moscow: Pol'za, 1908), 189.

69 Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi*, 70-72.

70 Parvus was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Russia in 1867. He was influenced by Russian Marxists. In the 1890s, as a political exile in Switzerland, he received a Ph.D. in political economy from the University of Basel. He joined German Social Democratic circles where he developed close friendships with Karl Kautsky, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Radek (Asim M. Karaömerlioğlu, “Helphand-Parvus and his Impact on Turkish Intellectual life,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 6 (2004): 146). Parvus actively participated in the Revolution of 1905 and, together with his disciple Trotsky, became one of the most important political figures in the St. Petersburg Soviets. Helphand was arrested in 1906 and exiled to Siberia, from where he fled, at about the same time as Trotsky, to Germany. He engaged in an export and import enterprise, continuing social democratic propaganda in parallel with his commercial activities. (George Katkov, “Революция и германское вмешательство,” в *Тайна Октябрьского переворота. Ленин и немецко-большевистский заговор. Документы, статьи, воспоминания* [“Revolution and German Intervention” in *Mystery of the October Revolution. Lenin and the German-Bolshevik conspiracy. Documents, articles, memoirs*], compiler V. I. Kuznetsov (Saint Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2001), 147). Parvus convinced the German authorities to arrange the famous sealed train by which the emigre Russian Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, entered Russia in April of 1917 just after the February Revolution (Karaömerlioğlu, “Helphand-Parvus...,” 150). Although he financed and led the propaganda war for October revolution, the Bolsheviks did not let Parvus enter Russia afterwards. “The cause of the revolution cannot be taken up with dirty hands,” Lenin replied through Radek to Parvus’ desire to return to his homeland (Karl Radek, “Парвус,” в *Силуэты: политические портреты /А. Лунчарский,*

and intellectual life of Russia, Germany and Turkey. He was one of the leading Marxist theoreticians and revolutionaries in the 1905 Russian Revolution and was a prominent German Social Democrat in Germany, as well as being an economic adviser to Unionists in 1910-1914 in Constantinople.⁷¹ In the words of Karl Radek, a revolutionary comrade: “Parvus is part of the revolutionary past of the working class, that was trampled into the mud.”⁷² Turkologist Erik J. Zürcher rightfully defines him as “journalist, German agent, arms dealer and Marxist intellectual.”⁷³

During Italo-Turkish (1911-1912) war, he was sent as a war reporter for a German newspaper to Constantinople. Protected by Liman von Sanders,⁷⁴ Parvus became the main grain supplier from Germany to the Turkish army (and, for a short period, from Russia). In fact, Parvus was given the opportunity to conclude lucrative contracts for the delivery of bread and to earn money using this combination, a deal which, in his estimation, saved the Unionist regime during the WWI.⁷⁵ Parvus offered “strategical information” to the Turkish government about the Balkans before and during the wars (1912-1913) and, in turn, was rewarded. It has been suggested that he smuggled old-fashioned German arms to the Balkans and made a considerable fortune out of these deals.⁷⁶

He criticised European economic penetration of the Ottoman Empire and put forward the need for a national economy, a pre-condition for which he declared to be the abolishment of the capitulations.⁷⁷ He harshly attacked the Public Debt Administration (Düyûn-ı Umûmiye) founded in 1881 as a European institution for collecting taxes and revenues on major Ottoman goods.⁷⁸ Parvus, for the adherents of Turkism, was a “European” mentor: “*I wrote financial articles and was busy founding banks. Once I made my first commercial gains, I put them aside because they were the lever for further advancement.*”⁷⁹ Parvus’s ideas gained influence from the 1913 coup, with the state, now completely dominated by the CUP, engaged with policies concerning the national

К. Радек, Л. Троцкий [“Parvus” in *Silhouettes: Political Portraits* /A. Lunacharsky, K. Radek, L. Trotsky], eds. V. Zhuravlev, V. Loginov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), 253). He died of a heart attack in 1924 in Germany.

71 Karaömerlioğlu, “Helphand-Parvus...,” 145.

72 Radek, “Parvus,” 248.

73 Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey, a Modern History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 125.

74 Otto Viktor Karl Liman von Sanders (1855 –1929) was a German general who served as an adviser to the Ottoman Empire during WWI. In 1918 he commanded an Ottoman army during the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns.

75 Sergei Aleksandrov, “Немецкий агент Парвус,” в *Тайна Октябрьского переворота. Ленин и немецко-большевистский заговор. Документы, статьи, воспоминания* [“German Agent Parvus” in *Mystery of the October Revolution. Lenin and the German-Bolshevik conspiracy. Documents, articles, memoirs*], compiler V. I. Kuznetsov (Saint Petersburg: Aleteia, 2001), 114; Katkov, “Revolution and German Intervention,” 147.

76 Karaömerlioğlu, “Helphand-Parvus...,” 158-159.

77 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 337.

78 Karaömerlioğlu, “Helphand-Parvus...,” 152.

79 Hans-Lukas Kieser, “World War and World Revolution: Alexander Helphand-Parvus in Germany and Turkey,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011): 398.

economy (Milli İktisat). Parvus must have been in close contact with Mehmed Javid, the financial expert and minister of economics of the CUP (1909-1911, 1914), and with the Interior Minister Mehmed Talaat.⁸⁰ With the outbreak of the First World War, the Ottoman government suspended payment on the national debt and the capitulations were abolished from October 1, 1914.⁸¹

Parvus' impact on Young Turk thinking in economic matters can be best seen in his writings published between 1912 and 1914. He was made an honorary member of various Turkish organisations and contributed to Turkish journals and newspapers such as "*Bilgi Mecmuası*" [Information Magazine], "*Le Jeune Turc*" [The Young Turk], "*Türk Yurdu*" [The Turkish homeland], "*Tasvir-i Efkar*," etc. The most important among these was the review "*Türk Yurdu*," established in 1911. The editor of this pan-Turkist publication was the Crimean Tatar emigre Yusuf Akçura. The latter invited Parvus to provide economic columns for the periodical. This was a topic, he insisted, that was highly important but for which no Turkish author could be found. Introducing Parvus to the readers, Akçura pointed out that he was a well-known Social Democrat in Europe and, despite the ideological difference concerning nationalism between Parvus and the "*Türk Yurdu*" circle, they shared the same populist concerns.⁸² During his further collaboration, Parvus succeeded in confirming "*Türk Yurdu*" readers their feeling that the Turks were the victims of European imperialism and capitalism and equated foreign financial penetration to a military invasion.⁸³

He was himself an agitator and could use the mood of the crowd. In an address to the "Turks," during the final phase of the First Balkan War in April 1913, Parvus adopted an apocalyptic tone that contributed to Turkish fears of extermination. He wrote that the Great powers "*...want to annihilate you like the native Indians who perished in America.... They have closed all your roads and besiege you. If you cannot hold your positions and establish an economic force that meets modern demands, your death is certain.... Henceforth the last minute has begun.*"⁸⁴

Parvus changed his revolutionary ideas and became convinced that what was needed for the collapse of the capitalist system was not class struggle, but a war between states: "War carries all capitalist contradictions to extremes. A world war can only end with a world revolution," he wrote in 1910. He promoted his concept of a German–Ottoman war of destruction against Russia.⁸⁵ Together with such politically diverse figures as the Turkologist Ernst Jäckh, the Orientalist Max von Oppenheim, the left-liberal politician Friedrich Naumann and officers like Hans Humann, who was a close friend of the Ottoman

80 Kieser, "World War and World Revolution," 397.

81 Zürcher, *Turkey, a Modern History*, 125.

82 Karaömerlioğlu, "Helphand-Parvus..." 151.

83 Kieser, "World War and World Revolution," 398.

84 *Ibid.*, 400.

85 *Ibid.*, 396.

War Minister Ismail Enver, Parvus was among the German friends of the CUP regime and of supporters of the war in Constantinople.⁸⁶

He did not advocate ethno-religious nationalism, as seen in all his writings and in a letter addressed to Wilhelm Liebknecht: "I'm looking for a state where a person can buy a fatherland on the cheap."⁸⁷ He strongly opposed the Armenian reforms and had clashes with Armenian socialist organisations, in particular with the Hnchaks on this matter.⁸⁸ His writings served much greater ends and influenced the nationalist intellectuals considerably in perceiving the Ottoman Empire as being in an internal struggle between the nationalities of the Empire and the imperialistic war over the parts of the Empire. His constant contrasts and examples on Armenian, Greek and Bulgarian peasants on one side and the Turkish one on the other stirred anti-Christian sentiments in the country. He always agitated for strikes against European goods, a strategy used in both the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions. But in the end, it was the Ottoman Empire's Armenian and Greek entrepreneurs that were the main victims of the anti-Christian boycotts of goods and services, a strategy used in Milli İktisat. Most German and Russian socialists preferred to forget Helphand.⁸⁹ But Alfred Rosenberg, the leading Nazi ideologist, never tired of using Helphand as an example of the corrupting influence of Eastern Jews on Germany's national life.⁹⁰

Consequences

Two main areas in the CUP worldview can be singled out as a result of European influence: racism and social-Darwinism. European racial thought and developing Turkology contributed to the flourishing of the CUP's racial nationalism. Muslim emigre intellectuals from Russia began to nurture Pan-Turkism as an ideology, expanding its borders from a mere cultural and linguistic definition and marking it with their own political aspirations.⁹¹ Using the impact of harsh economic reality, the Balkan defeats and the frustrations of European economic and political pressure, they attempted to shift Turkism from romantic populism to grandiose schemes of pan-Turkism. They were intellectual-revolutionaries, but Unionist Turks were statesmen with practical insights and had a very good understanding of the geographical and political obstacles. Ali Kemal, the editor of the journal "*Türk*," was severe in his criticism of Pan-Turkism, considering it to be an unrealistic policy. Not only was its realisation precluded by geographic factors, but there was not even a strong Turkist movement in Central Asia to give it a semblance

86 Karaömerlioğlu, "Helphand-Parvus..." 148; Kieser, "World War and World Revolution," 408.

87 Aleksandrov, "German Agent Parvus," 110.

88 Sapah-Gulian, *The Responsibles*, 275-280.

89 Zbynek Zeman, Winfried Scharlau, *The Merchant of the Revolution: The Life of Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus), 1867-1924* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 276.

90 Ibid., 265.

91 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 427.

of credibility, as Kemal stated: “*We could not defend the Crimea, which is inhabited by Tatars who are a kind of Turk. Should we fight for the unification of Turks all over Asia?*”⁹² It is sufficient to bring an article published in the literary supplement of “*Peyam*” [Message] by Ali Kemal. First, Kemal refers to Tamerlane being perceived as the pride of Turkishness, who made his greatness known to the world, then adds that the latter did not even recognize the Ottomans as Turks and referred to Ottoman sultan Bayezid I as the “Greek emperor.” However:

Some among us, subject to the Turkish spirit and similar sentiments consider Tamerlane, like Genghis, ancestors worthy of honour. Unfortunately, those who adhere to Turkishness with such extreme jealousy and ignore Ottomanism are wrong about something. We are not the descendants of Timur, but of Bayazet, we are Ottomans. The Ottomans distanced themselves from other Turks, left and joined non-Turkish tribes, accommodated them in their country, and together with many of them, built a huge empire that exists today. And what happened to the other Turks, what trace has they left?⁹³

This was the attitude of the most high-ranking officials. As Edib describes it in her memoirs: “*Pan-Turanism never had a clear boundary, crystallised expression or an explanation. Talaat Pasha pleasantly and humorously remarked at times, that if any one criticised it, ‘It may lead us to the Yellow Sea.’*”⁹⁴

Pan-Turkism stayed as an elitist political ideology, nurturing the racial feelings of ordinary people and serving as a tool for manipulating them with the imaginary ideal of a Turanian empire extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Great Wall of China. The literary figures of Turkism turned from the discomfoting reality of the Turkish people to pre-Islamic Turkish mythology and epics.⁹⁵

Writers like Cahun and Vambery, Gobineau and Le Bon introduced the concept of *race*, defined Turks as a race, providing linguistic and cultural kinship with the Central Asian Turkic peoples and the Mongolian race in general. Afterwards, they helped to fix the racial characteristics of that race, considering them immutable and hereditary, emphasising the role Turkic peoples played: “*The hoof-print of the Turanian “man on horseback” is stamped deep all over the palimpsest of history.*”⁹⁶ The number of key ideas on the Turkish race were developed by CUP ideologists and were passed into republican racial discourses⁹⁷ – such as the purity and superiority of the Turkish race, geographical extent

92 Zarevand, *United and Independent Turania*, 48.

93 «Թիմուրլենկի մասին» [About Tamerlane], *Azatamart* (Constantinople), no. 1420, 21 January 1914, 2.

94 Halide Edib, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (London, New York: The Century CO, 1926), 315.

95 Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 428.

96 T. Lothrop Stoddard, “Pan-Turanism,” *The American Political Science Review* 11, no. 1 (1917): 16.

97 For more see Nazan Maksudyan, “The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism,” *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 3 (2005): 291-322; Illia Xypolia, “Racist Aspects of Modern Turkish

of the Turkish world, antiquity of the Turkish language, historical homogeneity of Turkish culture and the Turks' contributions to world civilization.

Race functions as part of a general category of group formation,⁹⁸ and served the Unionists' political agenda of establishing a Turkish nation-state and framing Turkish national identity. Crucial for the then still multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire was that, although in the given period (1908-1918) the ruling party was debating over the definition of the term *Turk*, it could easily define who was not a Turk.⁹⁹ In that definition, the role racial affiliation played was not minor. A great deal of research dealt with the cooperation of race with nationalism and genocide, showing that racial discourses have a great mutability in their meaning and operation within different settings.¹⁰⁰ What should also be stated is that modern nationalism and racism are not indigenous thoughts, rather were imported western strains of thought that served as raw material in the Turkish sociological milieu. The reason why racial thought resonated most among the Turkish intellectual elite was the existing belief in the concept of the "ruling nation" (*millet-i hakime*), which prevailed among the Empire's Muslim Turks. According to this, as the conquerors of the land, they were superior to the empire's other peoples and therefore had the inherent right to rule over them.¹⁰¹ Thus even before Turkish nationalism was fully formed as a political ideology, the Turks viewed themselves as the ruling nation.¹⁰²

Racial definitions and groups are not logical, being merely constructed entities, as Stoddard explains the awakening of Turkish nationalism: "*For his blood-race he will not stir: for his thought-race he will die,*" as race is "*not what men really are, but what they think they are!*"¹⁰³ It was only after racial immutability attached itself to Turkishness and constructed it as an identity that belonging and citizenship started to differ: Turkic peoples of Central Asia belong to the Turkish world whereas Ottoman citizens from minority origins were considered to be foreigners. This was a period in which race marked a domain beyond citizenship.¹⁰⁴ For fast and effective political and national consolidation, CUP affiliated propagandists targeted Armenians as a group, which had been marginalised over the entire 500-year history of the Ottoman Empire. They were already suspect in the eyes of many Turks because of their religion and occupations, but the CUP articulated old

Nationalism," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 2 (2016): 111-124; On the emergence of Sun-Language theory see Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 401- 402.

98 Kathryn A. Manzo, *Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 52.

99 Uğur Ümit Ungör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 52.

100 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, 21-22; Mark Levene, "Why is the Twentieth Century the Century of Genocide?" *Journal of World History* 11, no. 2 (2000): 329-331.

101 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 48.

102 *Ibid.*, 50.

103 Stoddard, "Pan-Turanism," 13.

104 Murat Ergin, "Is the Turk a White Man? Towards a Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 6 (2008): 830.

racial prejudices,¹⁰⁵ linked them to current anxieties (mainly the defeats in the Balkan Wars and the question of Armenian reforms) and created the “stab-in-the-back” myth, which was intensified with the outbreak of WWI. As Manzo stated: “*Nationalism’s dominant conceptual partners are not simply nation and state. They are also race and aliens, for without the racialised kind of alien there can be no national kin.*”¹⁰⁶ The existence and continuation of a national system of inclusion and exclusion in the Ottoman Empire over centuries nurtured this process.

The theory of social-Darwinism had some manifestations in all the communities of the Ottoman Empire. An example of this is the fact, that in Syrian and Lebanese missionary schools, the works of Darwin and Spencer were included in the curricula and Spencer’s “Synthetic Philosophy” was used as a teaching manual.¹⁰⁷ In the empire’s Armenian reality, we could meet references to Darwin and Spencer as well. In particular, the first issue of the periodical “Lusaber”, published in Cairo, began as follows:

The struggle for life is waged against conflicting elements. Countless species are erased, and the one which has sufficient vitality in it and is in favourable conditions, struggles and remains. In one word, the worthy live, the unworthy die, according to Darwin’s theory (the survival of the fittest). The newspaper asked the Armenian reader for support to win the “struggle for existence” by preserving Armenian culture.¹⁰⁸

However social-Darwinism was fully absorbed in the mentality of the Unionists’ military and political elite, partly synthesised with their racist and elitist ideas and partly based on the Turkish perception of the ruling nation.¹⁰⁹ The “survival of the fittest” in the eternal struggle for existence is the key idea of social-Darwinism, a philosophical theory that was established by the English sociologist Herbert Spencer in the 1850s.¹¹⁰ According to Spencer and social-Darwinist thinkers, the formula of social life is the following: the struggle for existence – natural selection – survival of the fittest. Destruction of the maladapted or weaker species is considered natural. Despite their economic and educational backwardness, Turks considered themselves to be the country’s ruling element. Forming the military-bureaucratic class of the empire, they were the title nation of the empire thus, according to some thinkers, proving their “biological fitness for the

105 For more on this see Stephan H. Astourian, “Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide: From Prejudice to Racist Nationalism” in *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard Hovhannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 25, 31.

106 Manzo, *Creating Boundaries*, 3.

107 Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 82-86.

108 «Մամուլը» [The Press], *Loussaper* (Cairo), no. 1, 1 December 1904, 1.

109 Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 48.

110 Robert G. Perrin, “Herbert Spencer’s Four Theories of Social Evolution,” *American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 6 (1976): 1356.

living conditions.” Von der Goltz was one of the individuals that contributed heavily to the spread of social-Darwinism, injecting the officers with the need for external and internal war, with the confidence that the Turks would be able to win because of their racial characteristics. Subsequently, in compliance with the social-Darwinist mindset, the Committee saw war as a significant stage in the development of the nation. Many high-ranking CUP officials considered pacifism a threat to the survival of the empire. The racial perceptions of the Committee of Union and Progress, as a ruling party, intertwined with social-Darwinism, were crucial, both in decision-making and the “justification” of the destruction of the empire’s non-Turkish populations.