

A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON TURKISM IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AKÇURA AND ATSİZ: CANER KARA'S INTERPRETATION**Oder Alizade*****Abstract**

This article examines Caner Kara's work "Türkçülük" (Turkism) through its ideological, historical, and systematic dimensions. Kara presents Türkçülük not merely as a declaration of identity, but as a proposal for social consciousness, moral stance, and a governance model. In the work, Türkçülük is defined around foundational principles such as "ethnic descent" and is integrated with ideals like communalism, legalism, and moralism. It is emphasized that Türkçülük is not only an intellectual orientation but also a historical reflex embodied in action. Kara also treats Turanism as the spatial and political extension of this ideological system. The book establishes a theoretical framework for addressing the issue of racism and explains Türkçülük's relationship to this concept. Furthermore, Türkçülük's connections with Islam, politics, and modern values are analyzed in a comprehensive manner. Ultimately, Kara's work attempts to present Türkçülük not merely as a historical ideology, but as a multidimensional system of thought with the potential to address contemporary social, political, and cultural problems.

Keywords: Turkism, Nationalism, Turanism, Sociology of Nationhood, Caner Kara,

INTRODUCTION

The idea of Turkism is not merely the outcome of a historical search for identity; it is a multilayered system of thought that has evolved in connection with various spheres such as social order, political orientation, and cultural continuity. Caner Kara's work *Türkçülük* (Turkism) is examined within the framework of an effort to define, interpret, and situate this multidimensional structure. In the book, Turkism is viewed not only as an expression of ethnic or cultural belonging but also as a worldview encompassing moral responsibility, social commitment, and political orientation.

Throughout the text, the theoretical framework of Turkism is analyzed alongside concepts such as racism, communalism, legalism, and moralism in terms of its definition, purpose, and method, and further discussed through its relationship with religious and political contexts. The author presents Turkism as a mode of thought that manifests continuity not only in individual identity but also in the domains of social structure, law, and morality. In this sense, while the book incorporates conceptual approaches that can be associated with theories of nationalism, it also attempts to delineate the boundaries of an ideological orientation.

The following sections provide evaluations based on the main themes presented in the work. The characterization of Kara's interpretation as "A Contemporary Perspective on Turkism in the Footsteps of Akçura and Atsız" arises from the fact that his conception of Türkük (Turkishness) and Türkçülük (Turkism) recalls the intellectual line of Yusuf Akçura and Hüseyin Nihal Atsız—particularly in its ethnological and race-based foundations. Kara interprets Turkism not simply as a matter of cultural affiliation or historical identity but as a worldview centered on lineage. In this respect, he exhibits a stance parallel to Akçura's "political nationalism based on race" articulated in his *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Political Systems) and to Atsız's approach grounded in "blood" and "national character derived from ancestry."

1. The Nature of Turkism

In the first chapter, the author defines Turkism around three fundamental principles: kinship shaped by blood ties, a sense of shared destiny based on common historical experiences, and uncompromising devotion to national independence (Kara, 2025, pp. 2–12). According to Kara, a true Turkist is not

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content merely with possessing a biological origin but internalizes the historical and cultural consciousness unique to the Turkish nation and dedicates their life to its collective future. In this context, Turkism represents not just an individual preference but the conscious acceptance of a historical obligation.

Kara emphasizes that a Turkist must assume responsibility not only intellectually but also through concrete action. Thus, the Turkist is portrayed as an agent responsible for diagnosing the threats confronting the nation and devising solutions to them. In this sense, Turkism is not simply a theoretical identity but an active endeavor aimed at recognizing and addressing social problems. Kara's use of the "microbe" metaphor reinforces this notion, attributing to Turkist individuals the duty of restoring the impaired components of the social structure.

Within this conceptual framework, the author positions Turanism as the spatial and political extension of Turkism. Comparing the fragmentation of territories belonging to the Turkish nation to the severed limbs of an organism, Kara interprets this not only as a physical disunity but also as a disruption of cultural and intellectual wholeness. For him, without unity in language, thought, and action, the reconstitution of the Turkish nation as an integrated entity is impossible.

Arguing that Turkism is grounded in an instinctive tendency toward solidarity, Kara associates this inclination with the natural affinity one feels toward those similar to oneself. He supports this claim with everyday examples—such as women preferring to sit next to other women on a bus or elderly people choosing to spend time with their peers. According to Kara, such behaviors stem not from hostility but from a sense of connection based on similarity, commonality, and belonging. Therefore, Turkism should be regarded not as an aggressive or exclusionary ideology but as a defensive mechanism shaped by the instinct for self-preservation.

The author asserts that ethnic origin and lineage possess a deeper binding power than religious affiliation or official identity documents. Using an example of family ties, he argues that one cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of a sister who bears a different surname, thereby defining Turkism not within political borders but as a moral and historical responsibility. This perspective reveals Turkism as not only a conceptual construct but also an ethical stance.

Kara's reflections on politics are grounded in the view that nationalism cannot be shaped around any political party or leader. In his opinion, Turkism is a comprehensive system of consciousness that cannot be confined within political engagement. A Turkist is defined not by loyalty to an ideological leadership but by their sense of duty toward their nation. Thus, Turkism prioritizes collective identity over individualism.

The author critiques the ideal of equality frequently encountered in folktales by contrasting it with the dynamics of real life. He argues that, in reality, individuals tend to associate based on similarity and that nationalism emerges naturally from this tendency. In this respect, Turkism is founded not on fictional narratives of unity but on biological and psychological realities.

2. The History of Practical Turkism

In the second chapter of his work, Kara argues that Turkism does not merely express an intellectual or emotional inclination; rather, it has historically evolved as a mode of existence grounded in concrete action and struggle. The author situates the history of Turkism in full alignment with the historical trajectory of the Turkish nation itself—since, in his view, every struggle for independence, every effort to preserve language and culture, and every act of state-building represents, at its core, a manifestation of a Turkist attitude (Kara, 2025, pp. 12–16).

Through historical references, this argument is substantiated: for example, İstemi and İşbara Qaghan's defiant stance against China, Mete Han's establishment of a systematic military organization, and Mahmud al-Kashgari's linguistic studies on the Turkish language are presented by Kara as historical

projections of Turkism. Through such examples, the author reframes Turkism not as a purely ideological domain but as a historical reflex rooted in production, resistance, and institutionalization.

Kara's use of the "immune system" metaphor plays a central role in explaining the nature of Turkism. He asserts that Turkism does not emerge as an externally imposed ideology under particular historical circumstances; rather, it functions as an internal defense mechanism that becomes active spontaneously during periods of national adversity. In this sense, Turkism is not merely a reaction to external pressures but a form of socio-cultural consciousness with historical continuity—one that persists at a genetic level within the national body.

Within this framework, the author draws attention to the methodological limitations commonly encountered in the historiography of Turkism. According to Kara, representing Turkism solely through literary or political figures constitutes a reductionist approach. In reality, Turkism is sustained through the dedication and effort of teachers in classrooms, artists on stage, and athletes in the field. Therefore, Turkism is not only a theoretical or discursive identity but also a tangible form of existence grounded in production, action, and professional devotion.

Kara connects this historical continuity to contemporary developments, interpreting the transformations that occurred in the Turkic republics following the dissolution of the Soviet Union as modern manifestations of practical Turkism. The adoption of the Latin alphabet by newly established Turkic states and their pursuit of academic and cultural cooperation with Turkey are regarded by the author as indicators of an awakening and revival within the Turkic world.

In light of these reflections, Kara emphasizes the resilient nature of Turkism—an ideology that, despite repeated attempts at suppression, has never been eradicated. This endurance, he argues, demonstrates that Turkism is not merely an ideological system but a lived practice embedded in the collective memory of the Turkish nation throughout history. The unity of action and thought within Turkism constitutes the essential foundation of its continuity and resilience.

3. The History of Intellectual Turkism

In this chapter (Kara, 2025, pp. 16–31), the author reveals that Turkism is not only an instinctive or reactive mode of existence but also a systematic intellectual movement shaped by cultural, intellectual, and historical dynamics. Kara examines the historical development of intellectual Turkism within the framework of both internal dynamics and external influences.

When exploring the emergence of Turkism as an intellectual program, Kara identifies two key tendencies observed in 18th- and 19th-century Europe: "Turquerie" and "Turkology." The first refers to the superficial and exotic fascination of European aristocrats with Ottoman-Turkish art, lifestyle, and aesthetics, while the latter represents a more academic discipline that investigates the historical and cultural existence of Turkic peoples. Although Kara notes that these tendencies did not directly give rise to Turkism, he argues that they indirectly influenced the external reflections of Turkish identity in the Western world.

The author emphasizes that intellectual Turkism developed independently of these external interests but that they nonetheless helped trigger a certain mental awakening. He highlights how the works of Western thinkers such as Joseph de Guignes, Pierre Loti, and Alphonse de Lamartine functioned as a kind of "mirror" for Turkish intellectuals, enabling them to question their own selfhood and historical identity—thus accelerating the emergence of intellectual Turkism.

Within this historical context, Kara identifies Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, and Ömer Seyfettin as the founding figures of intellectual Turkism. The works of these intellectuals and their publication activities—particularly around journals such as *Genç Kalemler* ("Young Pens") and *Türk Yurdu* ("The Turkish Homeland")—played a pivotal role in transforming Turkism into a systematic intellectual movement.

According to Kara, these figures laid the intellectual foundation for constructing the modern identity of the Turkish nation. This foundation, in turn, represented a response both to Western colonial

and Orientalist discourses and to alternative ideological tendencies such as Ottomanism and Islamism. The central principle of intellectual Turkism, Kara stresses, is the concept of “the nation.” Within this framework, intellectual Turkism offers a nation-based definition of identity in contrast to the community-based (ummah) approaches of the period. This orientation promotes a thought structure rooted in indigenous and national values rather than universalist or cosmopolitan ideologies.

Another notable argument in this section concerns Kara’s critique of constructing the history of Turkism exclusively through political or literary figures. He insists that the history of Turkism has been enriched through the contributions of numerous actors—from theater artists to athletes, from educators to cultural producers—and that this broader perspective must be incorporated into historiographical approaches.

This perspective transcends chronological and figure-centered narratives, conceptualizing intellectual Turkism as a multidimensional cultural movement. Kara’s evaluation reveals that Turkism is not an instinctive reaction but a historically constructed, intellectually systematized tradition of thought developed in response to external influences. The framework he proposes invites readers to perceive Turkism not as an ideological relic of the past but as a dynamic model of thought capable of addressing contemporary social, political, and cultural challenges.

4. The Definition of Turkism

In the fourth chapter of his work, Kara does not confine himself to outlining the conceptual boundaries of a term; rather, he grounds Turkism as a comprehensive worldview, an ideological orientation, and an all-encompassing way of life. His approach treats Turkism neither as a mere political stance nor as a field of academic inquiry, but as a system of belonging that shapes one’s existential orientation by merging emotion, thought, and action into a unified whole. In this respect, the chapter transcends conventional definitional attempts, transforming into both a conceptual manifesto and a behavioral guide (Kara, 2025, pp. 31–40).

The author defines Turkism not merely as a cause (*dava*) but as a task (*iş*) in itself. This characterization carries both conceptual and technical meanings: through the notion of “work,” Turkism is described as the will to transform an existing condition under the influence of a specific force. According to Kara, “Turkism is the name of the work done by a Turk, for a Turk, and according to the Turk.” His “multiplication of force and path” metaphor is intended to demonstrate that Turkism is not a passive form of loyalty but an active, productive, and transformative field of struggle.

Before constructing his own definition, Kara seeks to eliminate conceptual ambiguities by clarifying what Turkism is not. Turkism, he argues, is neither a subject of academic curiosity, nor a professional duty, nor a hobby-like historical pursuit, nor an ideological extension of the state’s official discourse. Similarly, it cannot be reduced to an instrument of personal interest or a political organization’s ideological appendage. This approach aims to grant Turkism theoretical immunity against tendencies that would render it an empty or shapeless slogan.

Kara formulates the definition of Turkism not only on a conceptual level but also through insights drawn from human psychology and patterns of social behavior. He contends that nationalism is not an acquired ideological stance but an innate human inclination. The instinctive foundation of Turkism, therefore, is interpreted not as opposition to universal values but as an inward-oriented form of affection. Within this framework, Turkism is defined not as hostility toward other nations but as an expression of responsibility and loyalty toward the Turkish nation itself.

This definition elevates Turkism beyond the status of a reactive ideological reflex, situating it instead as a constructive, restorative, and unifying level of social consciousness. Kara further emphasizes that Turkism cannot be confined within the limits of territorial nationalism. In his view, political borders, official documents, and even differences in religion or language cannot eradicate the awareness of kinship.

In this chapter, Turkism is presented not as admiration for the past or mere historical knowledge, but as a holistic domain of responsibility that demands active engagement in both the present and the

future. Within this framework, Kara's interpretation of Turkism constitutes a call to action—one built not only upon cultural and historical consciousness but also upon political determination, social solidarity, and moral responsibility.

5. The Purpose of Turkism

In this section (Kara, 2025, pp. 40–43), the author treats Turkism not simply as a mode of thought, a declaration of identity, or a feeling of belonging, but as an ideal movement directed toward explicit and long-term objectives. Thus, he positions Turkism not merely as a system of ideas but as the *raison d'être* and guiding ideological compass of a nation. For Kara, the defining element of any intellectual or ideological formation lies in its ultimate destination—the final goal it seeks to achieve.

From the perspective of Turkism, this goal is not limited to short-term political or cultural ambitions; rather, it represents a far-reaching struggle for existence rooted in historical continuity and oriented toward the future. Kara's understanding aligns closely with Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's classical formulation:

“In the Great Turkish Land, the unconditional sovereignty and independence of the Turkish race, and the advancement of Turkdom beyond all other nations.”

Kara interprets this aim not as a romantic ideal, but as a duty imposed by historical experience, a responsibility implied by present realities, and a vision projected for the future. Within this framework, the goal of Turkism is to ensure the unity of all branches of the Turkish nation, to re-establish a civilizational center based on historical and cultural heritage, and to attain a position of global exemplarity.

The phrase “*Büyük Türk Eli*” (“Great Turkish Land”) refers not merely to the borders of the Republic of Turkey but to all the regions historically inhabited by Turks, where their cultural and political imprints remain visible. Kara thus adopts a sense of belonging that transcends conventional state boundaries, interpreting Turkism as a quest for unity shaped by historical and social bonds. Inns, bridges, gravestones, and other architectural or cultural remnants scattered across ancient Turkic lands are viewed as tangible and symbolic foundations of this ideal.

Equally noteworthy is Kara's interpretation of the concept “*Türk uruğu*” (“Turkish lineage”), which he likens to a tree that branches out in different directions over time yet grows from the same root. This metaphor underscores both historical continuity and unity within diversity. According to him, every individual who knows they descend from the same origin—regardless of the name they carry—is a natural part of this ideal. This approach constructs not only an ethnic unity but also a collective sense of “we” grounded in shared historical consciousness.

The aim of Turkism, therefore, extends beyond political union or geographical integration. As Kara emphasizes, this ideal also encompasses cultural excellence, scientific progress, and the advancement of social qualities. The concept of “superiority” here refers not to racial privilege but to the capacity for civilizational production, institutional efficiency, and the development of humanistic values.

This understanding, extending from Bilge Qaghan to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, seeks to elevate the Turkish nation to a level compatible with the demands of the modern era. Kara interprets Atatürk's aspiration—“We shall raise our national culture above the level of contemporary civilization”—as the modern projection of the Turkist ideal.

Within this framework, Turkism is not a defensive effort to preserve identity but a forward-looking project of progress and transformation. Kara refuses to confine Turkism to nostalgic attachment to the past; instead, he interprets it through the will to construct the future. Education, art, science, politics, and cultural production are identified as key instruments in this process. Thus, the goal of Turkism is not merely to offer a vision but to necessitate its realization through action.

6. The Method of Turkism

In this chapter, Kara demonstrates that Turkism is not merely an idea or an ideal, but also a practical system grounded in specific methods, modes of struggle, and guiding principles. Moving beyond the theoretical dimension, the author seeks to develop a systematic strategy for how the Turkist ideal should be applied in practice. In this sense, the chapter offers a methodological framework that examines which approaches can be deemed legitimate and which should be considered problematic—without contradicting the essence of Turkism (Kara, 2025, pp. 43–52).

Kara emphasizes that every intellectual movement possesses both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. While the previous chapter addressed the goals of Turkism—the answers to the question of “why”—this section foregrounds the question of “how.” The author underlines the importance of discipline, methodology, and consistency in achieving the aims of Turkism. Within this framework, the notion of method (*usul*) is conceptualized as a multidimensional structure encompassing the practical realization of a belief system, the manner in which struggle is maintained, and the strategies for fostering social awareness.

In Kara’s framework, the essence of Turkism is immutable; flexibility is permissible only at the tactical level, according to the conditions of time. Social disorder, economic hardship, political oppression, or even occupation may affect the form of the struggle, but they cannot interfere with its principles. As Kara explicitly states: “The method may change, but the cause cannot.” A Turkist must be aware of their circumstances, yet never surrender to them.

Another key emphasis of the chapter lies in the responsibility to learn and to teach. According to Kara, the fundamental method of contemporary Turkism must rest on the principle of “educating oneself and educating others.” Turkism is not merely a matter of knowledge but a form of consciousness that must be carried with responsibility. At this point, the author stresses that a Turkist individual should not only strengthen their own intellectual capacity but also contribute to the mental transformation of those around them.

Kara illustrates this principle through the metaphor of “foreign burdens.” A Turkist, he argues, must recognize not only their own intellectual challenges but also the mental occupations, ideological deviations, and forms of cultural degeneration that afflict their fellow kin—and develop awareness in opposition to them.

The fundamental principles of Turkism are defined through the metaphor of insurance. According to this analogy, the core tenets of Turkism are fixed, secure, and immune to alteration. These principles cannot be reshaped, diluted, or adapted to fit temporal circumstances. Thus, Turkism is not a flexible ideology that can be redefined according to each person’s preference; rather, it is a faith-based system with clear boundaries, steadfast convictions, and uncompromising rules.

Another conceptual structure that stands out in this chapter is the emphasis on intransigence and determination. Kara argues that the method of Turkism cannot be built upon the desire to appear appealing to the masses, to develop populist rhetoric, or to seek political gain. The method of Turkism rests on the principles of clarity, truth, and resolve. Consequently, Turkism is not an object of social compromise but a moral stance shaped around immutable values. The method, therefore, must not dilute the cause but serve as a vehicle for preserving and transmitting its essence from generation to generation.

A further essential element highlighted by Kara is the principle of organization. The author asserts that for Turkism to evolve into an effective movement of struggle, it must manifest within an organized structure. However, this organization need not be limited to political parties or traditional associations. On the contrary, Turkist thought can find expression through diverse organizational forms—from academic clubs and artistic communities to sports associations and cultural initiatives. Thus, organization is conceptualized not only as an institutional structure but also as a moral and intellectual form of solidarity.

In the concluding section, Kara introduces a striking distinction between supporting a cause and belonging to it. He differentiates between holding a favorable opinion of Turkism and bearing the burden of its responsibility. For him, it is not enough to approve of an idea; one must also carry it, fight for it,

and be prepared to pay its price when necessary. This distinction underscores that Turkism is not a purely theoretical ideal but a mode of struggle with tangible, lived expression.

7. Racism

In this chapter, the author approaches one of the most controversial and frequently misunderstood aspects of Turkist thought—the issue of racism—from both theoretical and historical perspectives, aiming to clarify misconceptions and to articulate Turkism’s position on an ideological foundation (Kara, 2025, pp. 52–61). Kara argues that racism is not merely an external accusation directed against Turkism but also, at times, a distortion that arises internally from jealousy, identity crises, or intellectual deficiencies.

The chapter begins by noting that racism has been defined differently throughout history and has never been treated as an objective or ideologically neutral concept. Kara points out that this term has always been susceptible to manipulation and insists that Turkism must be evaluated independently of such distortions. In his view, Turkism is inherently related to a racial consciousness, and conceptualizing “Turkishness” as a *racial belonging* is both inevitable and necessary. Thus, a Turkist is not merely one who recognizes this belonging but also one who bears the responsibility to preserve and defend it.

While Kara does not deny that racism is perceived as a global threat in the modern world, he argues that this perception is largely shaped by global political agendas and ideological conditioning. Denying or discrediting the notion of race, he claims, does not eliminate its impact on social reality. According to him, races have historically played a decisive role in structuring human civilization, and even if rhetorically denied, this reality continues to exist in practice. Kara reinforces this argument through the metaphor: “The sun does not cease to exist simply because one denies its presence.”

In defending Turkism’s understanding of race, the author interprets it not as a doctrine of aggression but through the lens of *self-defense* (*nefs-i müdafaa*). In this sense, Turkish racial consciousness is presented not as an ideology that violates the rights of others but as a form of awareness grounded in the recognition and protection of one’s own rights. This approach may be understood as an effort to move the concept of race away from hate-based discourse toward historical and moral foundations.

In the historical context, Kara emphasizes the protective and regulatory role the Turkish nation has historically played toward other ethnic groups. He asserts that Armenian, Balkan, and Arab communities experienced relatively stable and prosperous lives under Ottoman-Turkish administration, but upon separating from this protective structure, they were drawn into crisis and instability. Through such examples, Kara argues that Turkish racial consciousness functioned not only for the benefit of Turks but also indirectly for the well-being of other peoples historically under their protection.

Another key argument concerns the idea that Turkish identity cannot be confined to a legal category of citizenship. For Kara, concepts such as “Turkish language,” “Turkish history,” “Turkish literature,” and “Turkish army” are not merely cultural products but manifestations of the creative power and historical existence of the Turkish race. He maintains that anyone who recognizes and values these elements must also acknowledge the race that produced them.

Kara’s framework positions Turkism within an ideological structure founded on national interests rather than universalist values. He defines racial consciousness not as a form of exclusion or hostility, as liberal and cosmopolitan critiques often suggest, but as an awareness of belonging, cultural loyalty, and historical responsibility. Thus, Turkism represents not only an emotional attachment but also a sense of affiliation that necessitates recognition, ownership, and, when necessary, defense.

In this context, one might recall Arsal’s thesis that “every human being must intellectually and scientifically recognize the existence of various races in the world, and the fact that they belong to one of them” (Arsal, 2018, p. 53). The racial foundation expressed by Kara is not *anthropological* but *ethnological*. The ethnological racial principle refers to the community of peoples who, in the past and

present, speak one of the dialects of the Turkish language and resemble each other in customs, traditions, and spiritual tendencies (Arsal, 2018).

Within the history of Turkist thought, Yusuf Akçura was among the first to base the notion of nationality explicitly on race. In his seminal work *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (*Three Policies*), Akçura argues that the idea of political nationality should rest on a racial foundation, rejecting cultural definitions of nationhood in this context. The expression “a Turkish political nationality based on race” defines the third of the three political models he examines (Akçura, 2016, p. 15). Accordingly, the policy and conception of nationality among Turks should be clearly and explicitly founded upon racial principles. This race-based understanding of nationhood constitutes the essence of *political Turkism*.

Within Akçura’s framework, the political orientation stemming from a race-based conception of nationhood is the establishment of *Turkish unity*. He emphasizes the importance of grounding the idea of nation on race and cites German nationalism as a model. According to Akçura, the Germans’ success stemmed from their realistic interpretation of nationhood, one that accepted race as its fundamental essence (Akçura, 2016, p. 77).

By contrast, Akçura criticizes the Ottoman intelligentsia of the Sultan Mahmud II era (1808–1839) for failing to grasp the practical limitations of the French model of nationalism—which was based not on blood and race but on moral will and civic ideals (Akçura, 2016, p. 76). He argues that Eastern intellectuals did not fully comprehend the inapplicability of French nationalism to the East, where religion and race were becoming increasingly significant political factors (Akçura, 2016, p. 79). Nevertheless, Akçura expresses concern that the notion of a racially based Turkish political nationalism is historically new—that earlier Turkic states had not been organized on racial principles and that such a conception of nationalism had not previously become widespread among Turks (Akçura, 2016, p. 82).

Although Ziya Gökalp’s conception of Turkism was not founded upon race, he still viewed Turks as an independent race that had sustained its existence since prehistoric times (Gökalp, 2015, p. 28). Similarly, in 1905, *Hayat* magazine (issues 4, 9, 16, 22, 35, 52, 81, 82) published a series of articles by Turan titled “Who Are the Turks and What Are They Composed Of?”—which, like Arsal’s definition, interpreted Turkism on an ethnological racial basis. The same racial principle appears in Nihal Atsız’s writings, where it is defended under the concept of “hereditary lineage” (*soyculuk*) (Atsız, 2011).

8. Communitarianism

In this section, the author presents a theoretical framework demonstrating that Turkism is not merely an ethno-cultural discourse or a form of ideological belonging but, beyond that, a comprehensive proposal for a social system (Kara, 2025, pp. 61–76). Kara treats *communitarianism* both as an ideological and an economic category, defining it as the cornerstone of a model based on national resources and founded upon independent and indigenous development.

In Kara’s interpretation, communitarianism rests upon a conception of public interest that transcends individual gain—where *collective welfare* takes precedence over *personal wealth*. At the beginning of the chapter, the author distinguishes conceptually between “community” (*topluluk*) and “society” (*toplum*), arguing that a true society is built on shared ideals, laws, and emotional solidarity. Thus, for a nation to possess political existence, not only geographic unity but also the establishment of historical and cultural commonalities is required.

Kara directly links his concept of communitarianism to the *Turanist* vision within Turkism. He argues that the fragmented geography of the Turkic world and the conditions of oppression in some regions constitute the main obstacles to the realization of a unified national ideal. When the relative economic development of Turkey is considered alongside the continued poverty and repression in regions such as Türkmeneli or East Turkestan, he claims, it loses its moral meaning.

Hence, Kara’s communitarian approach is not merely an economic prescription but also a moral and conscientious obligation. In his framework, communitarianism is positioned vis-à-vis socialism, and its points of divergence are clearly articulated. According to Kara, socialism is incompatible with national principles because it operates from a universalist populism and relies on class-based structures.

In contrast, Turkist communitarianism rejects class conflict, seeking to unify rather than divide individuals, and envisions a system in which production and labor serve the nation as a whole. In this sense, Kara conceptualizes it as a form of *national and indigenous economics* (*yerli ve millî iktisat*).

The fundamental principle of communitarianism, therefore, is that national resources should be utilized by national labor for the benefit of the nation. Kara presents this system as one free from foreign dependency, shaped not by imported ideologies but derived directly from the historical and cultural codes of the Turkish nation. His description of capitalism and socialism as “monsters wearing clown masks” metaphorically conveys his criticism that these ideologies do not correspond to the structural realities of the Turkish people. Development, he asserts, must be sought not in external forces but within the nation’s own inner dynamics.

Thus, Kara’s communitarianism is not solely economic but also a model prioritizing *cultural independence*. He connects it with the philosophy of the state, emphasizing that governance should operate in accordance with the interests of the nation. In this framework, the ruling cadres are portrayed not as the “superiors” of the people but as their *servants*. This view resonates with the populist leadership ideal symbolized by Bilge Qaghan’s declaration: “I did not sleep at night, I did not rest during the day.”

The ultimate goal is to transform the state into an organism that works for the welfare and future of its people. Kara defines communitarianism not as a technical formula for development but as a *profound social revolution*. However, this revolution does not imply destructive upheaval but rather the restoration and renewal of existing structures by returning to their historical roots. Kara notes that while this system resembles models such as corporatism, mixed economy, or national economy, its uniqueness lies in its direct foundation upon *Türk töresi*—the traditional moral and legal code of the Turks.

In this context, communitarianism is presented not only as a model for Turkey but as a *universalizable national system* that could resonate throughout the entire Turkic world.

9. Legalism (Yasacılık)

In this chapter, Turkist thought is presented not merely as a form of ethnic or cultural belonging but as the foundation of a distinctive conception of law and statehood (Kara, 2025, pp. 76–84). According to Kara, the construction of a legal system rooted in a nation’s historical and cultural heritage is an indispensable component not only of political sovereignty but also of social legitimacy.

Within this framework, *legalism* (*yasacılık*), understood as the juridical reflection of Turkism, is described not as a form of governance but as a normative system grounded in cultural continuity. At the outset, the author centers his analysis on the concept of *töre*—a term that encompasses not only traditional behavioral norms but also the institutionalized social rules transmitted through history. Drawing on everyday expressions used among the Caucasian Turks, such as “*sit according to töre*,” “*speak according to töre*,” and “*live according to töre*,” Kara emphasizes that *töre* represents an intergenerational value system that determines social order.

In this sense, *töre* is not a static collection of traditions but a dynamic structure that regulates contemporary social relations and provides normative orientation for the future. Kara argues that Turkey’s current legal system, being of Western origin, has failed to fully integrate with the nation’s collective memory. He claims that this system contains structural elements that conflict with the historical codes and cultural values of the Turkish nation. The repeated political crises and coups experienced during the Republic, he argues, demonstrate that these imported legal norms have limited social resonance.

Therefore, the author proposes a *töre-centered legal system* derived from the Turkish nation’s own historical accumulation, rather than the translated Western codes that serve as the main reference point of the current legal order. Legalism, in Kara’s view, is not simply a legal preference but a “*case for Törecilik*”—a struggle for the preservation of cultural identity and political independence.

The function of law, in this understanding, extends beyond the imposition of penal sanctions; it serves as a comprehensive regulatory system intended to protect the family, the individual, social values,

and public morality. Within this context, Kara draws a categorical distinction between the *principle of equality*, often emphasized in modern legal theory, and the *principle of justice*, which occupies a central position in Turkish *töre*. He argues that an application that produces identical legal outcomes for everyone (for example, imposing the same penalty on individuals of different ages) may achieve *formal equality* but still violate the sense of justice.

Kara's theoretical orientation in this chapter is framed through Nihal Atsız's assertion:

“We support laws derived from national custom and grounded in modern legal principles, rather than translated codes.”

Kara adopts this statement as the foundational basis of legalism, asserting that the modernity of a legal system lies not merely in its formal adaptations but in its organic relationship with social reality. Hence, the origin of legal norms must be determined not by an abstract universal ideal of law but by their harmony with the nation's historical and cultural foundations.

10. Moralism (Ahlâkçılık)

This chapter argues that morality is not merely an individual behavioral norm but a central organizing principle that ensures a nation's historical continuity and social cohesion (Kara, 2025, pp. 84–92). Kara conceptualizes morality not as a private ethical category confined to the individual conscience but as a normative structure embedded in the collective consciousness of society—one that, though unwritten, possesses powerful social enforcement mechanisms. Within this framework, *moralism* functions as a sociological bond safeguarding the cultural and spiritual survival of the nation.

Kara treats the formation of morality as the product of a historical and cultural process. In his view, morality derives from shared experiences, values, and reflexes, forming a socially validated normative system. He contrasts this understanding with the exclusive and formal character of positivist legal systems: while written law cannot always regulate the individual's relationship with society, moral norms shaped by social conscience can either exclude the individual or confer legitimacy upon them. Thus, morality, as Kara interprets it, is not only a regulatory force but also a transformative social power.

Echoing Ziya Gökalp's assertion that “an individual born outside society can only be socialized through national education,” Kara situates the transmission of morality not in formal state mechanisms but within natural spheres of socialization such as the family, school, and community. Accordingly, morality functions not only as a system of values internalized by the individual but also as a social regulator transmitted across generations through mechanisms of social control.

Another dimension of moralism emerges in Kara's critical examination of modern cultural transformation. He argues that value systems disseminated through mass media and popular culture often conflict with the historical and cultural codes of Turkish society. These influences are described as “attacks disguised under the guise of civilization,” aimed at severing society from its own authentic values. Employing the metaphor of *mankurtization*, Kara warns of the danger of individuals becoming detached from their historical and cultural memory, resulting in identity loss.

The chapter frequently references Hüseyin Nihal Atsız's understanding of morality. The modern lifestyle practices Atsız termed “the sewers of civilization”—taverns, beaches, bars, and beauty contests—form the basis of Kara's defense of traditional moral superiority. Yet, Kara does not claim that modernity has eradicated morality entirely; rather, he argues that Turkish morality is sufficiently deep-rooted to adapt to the requirements of the age.

For Kara, morality is not merely a system of values but also an educational process. He approaches the notion of “social pressure” (*mahalle baskısı*) positively, viewing such mechanisms of social regulation as tools that align individuals with communal norms and enable society to reproduce itself. In this understanding, morality is not an external interference into private life but a functional mechanism that preserves social integrity and continuity.

Toward the end of the chapter, Kara places morality above positive law. He observes that an individual may be legally condemned yet celebrated as a hero in the public conscience. This perspective

reveals his conception of morality as a dynamic value system representing the collective conscience of society, transcending mere individual behavior and written legal norms.

11. Turkism and Islam

The chapter titled “*Turkism and Islam*” seeks to clarify aspects of Turkism that are frequently misunderstood or deliberately distorted within religious discourse (Kara, 2025, pp. 92–139). The author contends that Turkism does not represent an ideological opposition to Islam; rather, based on the demographic and historical realities of the Turkish nation, it offers an intellectual framework compatible with Islamic thought.

Kara argues that the misconceptions surrounding this issue arise not only from ignorance but also from deliberate manipulations by certain ideological groups. These groups, he claims, are disturbed by the Turkish nation’s rediscovery of its historical identity and have used Islamic rhetoric as a political tool in their opposition to Turkism. According to Kara, such attacks are motivated not by religious conviction but by political calculation.

Critiquing the notion that Turkism is inherently anti-Islamic, Kara asserts that this view is often legitimized through weakly grounded narratives and fabricated *hadiths*. In contrast, Turkist thought, he insists, bases its religious reflections on a Qur'an-centered approach. Citing verse 13 of *Surat al-Hujurat*, he notes that the creation of different nations for the purpose of mutual recognition is a divine principle that cannot be denied either rationally or theologically. Within this framework, the concept of nationhood is not contradictory to Islam but rather a natural expression of it.

Furthermore, Kara rejects the claim that nationalism was imported into Turkish society from the West, arguing instead that it represents an indigenous and historically rooted form of consciousness. The existence of national states, organized military systems, and codified legal traditions among pre-Islamic Turks, he maintains, demonstrates that the idea of national consciousness predates modern ideological formulations. To describe Turkism as a “Western invention,” he contends, is as inconsistent as interpreting Islam outside its historical context.

Kara also provides a critical examination of the idea of Islamic unity in modern discourse, arguing that it is often employed with double standards. He observes that while the principle of *religious brotherhood* is emphasized in relation to Arab, Albanian, Kurdish, or Persian communities, it is conspicuously disregarded when it comes to the Turkish nation. This inconsistency, according to Kara, reflects not only prejudice against Turkism but also the instrumentalization of the concept of Islamic solidarity.

The chapter further addresses accusations that portray Turkism as a source of *fitna* (discord). Kara argues that such claims largely originated from Muslim circles influenced by Western powers and that, while Arab and Albanian nationalisms were supported, Turkish nationalism was systematically suppressed. This double standard, he concludes, reveals the ideological bias underlying these positions.

Kara explicitly states that Turkism does not seek to replace Islam, to compete with it, or to contradict it. At its core lies national responsibility rather than religious identity. Accordingly, he suggests that common ground can be found among individuals who live their faith sincerely while prioritizing the interests of the nation. Turkism, in this regard, is defined not as a theological doctrine or sectarian ideology but as an intellectual system focused on addressing the Turkish nation’s social, cultural, and economic challenges.

12. Turkism and Politics

In the final chapter, the relationship between Turkism and the political sphere is analyzed from both theoretical and historical perspectives, providing a systematic explanation of this ideology’s approach to politics (Kara, 2025, pp. 139–151). Kara defines Turkism not as a conventional political movement but as an ethical and value-based system of ideals that transcends the limits of political structures and social existence itself.

The author does not regard Turkism as a pragmatic political instrument organized around any particular party, leader, or faction. Rather, it represents a form of collective consciousness grounded in a broad, historically continuous vision of the nation. Within this framework, Kara distinguishes between two types of movements: *causes confined by politics* and *causes that confine politics*. The first refers to movements defined by personal ambition and loyalty to leaders, where principles are subordinated to individuals. The second describes ideological attitudes that establish the framework of political life and prioritize moral principles over political convenience.

According to Kara, Turkism belongs to the latter category, as it possesses a system of values that is not imprisoned by political calculations but instead has the capacity to guide and shape them. He explicitly rejects the notion that Turkism could ever become part of a political party or an election-based system. While participation in politics by a Turkist individual is not prohibited, such involvement should not imply integration into, or acceptance of, the logic of existing political mechanisms.

Kara argues that the multiparty democratic system has turned citizens into a mere “vote reservoir,” legitimizing political cunning under the guise of “the art of politics.” Within such a system, the dissolution or corruption of Turkism would represent, in his view, an ideological deviation and a historical betrayal.

He also offers a critical reflection on the historical evolution of the concept of politics itself. Once understood as the art of governing societies, politics has, in the modern era, become an arena where deceit, intrigue, and personal gain are legitimized. Turkism, he insists, cannot coexist with such practices, for it is a worldview founded upon truth, honesty, and public transparency. In this sense, the aim of Turkism is not to seize power but to advocate for and build a just social order based on rights and integrity.

Kara supports his argument with historical examples, particularly invoking Hüseyin Nihal Atsız’s statement:

“Turkism is not a political party; it is a path of cultural and intellectual struggle.”

This declaration, he argues, makes it clear that Turkism is rooted in cultural and intellectual foundations rather than in political machinery, and that it cannot be reduced to any form of political leadership. Maintaining Atsız’s approach, Kara writes, requires independence from the temporary and tactical shifts that dominate politics.

He further notes that the ultimate goal of Turkism is not merely political authority but, above all, the construction of a Turkist society—one composed of individuals who embody moral and intellectual discipline not in parliament but in schools, markets, workplaces, neighborhoods, and all spheres of daily life. Thus, in Kara’s view, Turkism is not a struggle for state power but an ideal that must spread at the level of social consciousness.

In conclusion, Turkism represents not a political ideology seeking office through elections, but a value system deeply embedded in the nation’s spirit—a long-term ideal of social transformation and moral renewal.

13. An Assessment of the Work’s Limitations

Caner Kara’s Turkism is clearly designed not as an academic study but as an ideological and propagandistic text. However, this does not negate the need to critically evaluate its internal consistency and its claim to present a coherent intellectual system. The book’s ambition is not merely to evoke emotion but to construct a worldview, a political orientation, and a model of society. Within this framework, several limitations become evident.

First, the definition and scope of Turkism are articulated with remarkable clarity and internal consistency. The concept is established in a way that leaves little room for dilution or misinterpretation. This precision reflects the author’s determination to transform Turkism into a disciplined stance rather than a vague sentiment. Yet this very strength may also result in a certain rigidity that limits interpretative flexibility. While Kara’s framework provides a strong foundation, its intellectual vitality would be

enhanced by greater engagement with contemporary contexts—new conditions, threats, and opportunities that demand adaptive thought.

Second, although the book places strong emphasis on the idea of *unity*, the question of how such unity might be practically achieved remains largely abstract and emotional. Geographic, cultural, political, and economic realities are often overlooked, and the assumption that unity can be achieved solely through ethnic or genealogical kinship is left unchallenged. In the modern world—structured through communication, cooperation, and institutional complexity—this omission risks rendering the ideal of unity theoretical rather than actionable.

Third, the book's repeated emphasis on *instinct* tends to reduce Turkism from a rational ideological construction to a merely biological reflex. This perspective, while emotionally powerful, undermines the analytical and intellectual depth of the ideology, replacing reasoned conviction with intuition. When compared to modern ideological systems, such an instinctual focus can restrict Turkism's conceptual sophistication.

Methodologically, the work exhibits certain structural deficiencies that at times limit the reader's intellectual engagement. Although Kara explicitly states that his aim is not academic, these shortcomings create noticeable gaps for readers who approach the book as a reference text. The preface, for instance, focuses primarily on the author's personal motivation rather than providing conceptual orientation. In a work addressing such a comprehensive and multi-layered ideology, both a theoretical introduction and a concluding synthesis would have enhanced the text's coherence and readability. Their absence leaves the book's powerful ideas occasionally dispersed rather than systematically organized.

The inclusion of quotations from historical figures, events, and works adds interest and inspiration, yet many of these references lack precise citations or bibliographic details. For example, references to Hun history, the Göktürk inscriptions, or the works of Süleyman Pasha and Ahmet Vefik Pasha often appear without full sourcing, thereby limiting opportunities for scholarly verification and further inquiry. Even for an ideological text, basic referencing practices would strengthen its credibility and utility.

Given the work's scope and thematic breadth, the addition of an index of names and places would have greatly improved its functionality. The text mentions numerous Turkic regions, historical figures, concepts, and works; their absence from a systematic index makes cross-referencing difficult. This omission prevents the book from functioning not only as a one-time reading experience but as a reusable reference source.

The neglect of such structural refinements restricts the book's long-term intellectual impact and accessibility. For instance, the chapter "*The Method of Turkism*" stands out as one of the work's most compelling sections, intensifying the idealistic and resolute tone of the whole book. Yet Kara defines "method" not as a flexible strategy but as a rigid, unquestionable framework. While this offers a strong defense of ideological purity, it may also constrain practical applicability and popular dissemination. The repeated maxim "Turkism is a cause and cannot change" echoes almost as dogma, leaving open questions about how Turkism should operate within today's fast-changing, communicative, and globalized world.

Although Kara calls for theoretical discipline, he provides few examples of institutional or methodological strategies for implementing it. The statement "each person should work in the field suited to their abilities" reflects a modern, merit-based principle—but without a structured methodological framework, such insight remains abstract.

CONCLUSION

Caner Kara's *Turkism* is essentially an ideologically oriented text whose character is more directive than explanatory. This reveals that the author's purpose is not to provide an academic analysis but rather to present a coherent ideological orientation. The fundamental principles of Turkism are conveyed predominantly through normative discourse, relying more on moral and emotional emphases than on theoretical elaboration.

Although the book makes frequent historical references, it does not sufficiently explore the philosophical dimensions of key concepts, their contemporary interpretations, or their relevance to current social issues. This shortcoming leads to the presentation of Turkism not as an open and evolving intellectual framework but as a fixed and completed ideological structure.

While Kara articulates his position with remarkable clarity and determination, this assertiveness occasionally transforms into a discourse resistant to critique. Nevertheless, his call for Turkism to evolve from a historical memory into an organized way of life is noteworthy. A more detailed treatment of its institutional and methodological dimensions, however, would have strengthened the structural foundations of the ideological framework he seeks to construct.

Ultimately, *Turkism* stands as a declaration of belonging and conviction, voiced with passion and certainty. Yet, it is evident that this declaration would gain greater intellectual and practical significance were it to be accompanied by a broader theoretical vision and a strategic framework for implementation. The book makes a meaningful contribution to ongoing debates about Turkism, but it would achieve greater impact through deeper theoretical engagement and a more systematic articulation of its ideas.

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