



Constructing Turkish Identity as the “Other”: The Erasure of a Civilization in Balkan Memory

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 <https://ror.org/03a5qrr21>

Abstract

This article examines how European discourses that othered the “Turk” were taken up by Balkan nationalisms and translated into violent policies during the transition to nation-states from the late nineteenth century onward. It shows how a Europe-made adversarial frame legitimated this shift and fed practices of forced displacement and mass killing. Methodologically, the study draws on a systematic review of the literature and comparative readings in historiography. Backed by Western and Russian powers, separatist movements targeted the Ottoman legacy, dismantled a long-standing multi-confessional order, and normalised a security politics that accelerated ethnic homogenisation. The findings indicate that claims to legitimacy advanced in step with waves of violence, fracturing cultural and social continuities. Building the post-imperial political architecture on this basis kept the regional order brittle well into the twentieth century, helped trigger genocides, and left durable effects that marginalised minority communities. Without a careful reckoning with this trajectory, Europe’s self-narrative will remain partial and misleading.

Keywords

Balkans, Europe, Ottoman Civilization, Greco-Turkish War, Othering Policies

Citation

Dolgun, Uğur. “Constructing Turkish Identity as the “Other”: The Erasure of a Civilization in Balkan Memory”. *Journal of Sociological Context* 6/3 (December 2025), 503-528.

<https://doi.org/10.52108/2757-5942.6.3.6>

Article Information

Date of Submission	9.10.2025
Date of Acceptance	20.11.2025
Date of Publication	15.12.2025
Peer-Review	Double anonymous review - Two External Reviewers
Ethical Statement	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Similarity Check	Done – Turnitin
Conflict of Interest	No conflicts of interest have been declared.
Complaints	dergi@sosyolojikbaglam.org
Use of Artificial Intelligence	No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. All content of the study was produced by the author(s) in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.
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