journal of sociological context
sosyolojik bağlam dergisi

Journal of Sociological Context 6/3 (December 2025), 503-528 Review Article

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

Uğur Dolgun | 0000-0003-4898-1007 | udolgun@istanbul.edu.tr

İstanbul University, Faculty of Economics, Department of Economic Sociology, İstanbul, Türkiye

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.

journal of sociological context
sosyolojik bağlam dergisi

Sosyolojik Bağlam 6/3 (Aralık 2025), 503-528 Derleme Makale

Türk Kimliğini "Öteki" Olarak İnşa Etmek: Balkan Hafızasında Bir Medeniyetin Silinmesi

Uğur Dolgun | 0000-0003-4898-1007 | udolgun@istanbul.edu.tr

İstanbul Üniversitesi, İktisat Fakültesi, İktisat Sosyolojisi Anabilim Dalı, İstanbul, Türkiye

https://ror.org/03a5qrr21

Öz

Bu makale, Avrupa'nın "Türk" kimliğini sistematik olarak ötekileştiren söylemleri ile Balkan ulusçuluklarının bu söylemleri şiddet politikalarına dönüştürdüğü geçiş dönemini incelemektedir. Amaç, 19. yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren ulus-devlete geçiş sürecinin, Avrupa kaynaklı bir düşmanlaştırma çerçevesiyle nasıl meşrulaştırıldığını ve Balkanlarda zorunlu yerinden etme ve katliam pratiklerine evrildiğini göstermektir. Metodoloji, ilgili literatürün sistematik analizi ile tarih yazımına ilişkin karşılaştırmalı okumalara dayanmaktadır. Batı ve Rusya tarafından desteklenen ayrılıkçı hareketler Osmanlı mirasını hedef alarak, yüzyıllardır süren hoşgörülü ve çok kimlikli ortak yaşamı tasfiye etmiş; bu da, etnik homojenleşmeyi hızlandıran bir güvenlik siyasetinin kalıcı hale gelmesine yol açmıştır. Bulgular, meşruiyet üreten söylemlerin etkisinin, sahada yaşanan şiddet dalgalarıyla eşzamanlı ilerlediğini ve bu sürecin ateş sarmalı içinde kültürel ve toplumsal süreklilikleri parçaladığını ortaya koymaktadır. İmparatorluk sonrası siyasal mimarinin bu anlayış üzerine inşa edilmesi, bölgesel düzeni 20. yüzyılda da kırılganlaştırmış, soykırımları tetiklemiş ve azınlık statülerini marjinalleştiren kalıcı etkiler yaratmıştır. Bu tarihsel süreç doğru biçimde okunmadığı sürece, Avrupa'nın kendi anlatısı eksik ve yanıltıcı kalmaya mahkum olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Balkanlar, Avrupa, Osmanlı Medeniyeti, Türk-Yunan Savaşı, Ötekileştirici Politikalar

Atıf Bilgisi

Dolgun, Uğur. "Türk Kimliğini "Öteki" Olarak İnşa Etmek: Balkan Hafızasında Bir Medeniyetin Silinmesi". *Sosyolojik Bağlam Dergisi* 6/3 (Aralık 2025), 503-528.

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

Makale Bilgisi

Geliş Tarihi	9.10.2025
Kabul Tarihi	20.11.2025
Yayım Tarihi	15.12.2025
Değerlendirme	İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme
Etik Beyan	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı – Turnitin
Etik Bildirim	dergi@sosyolojikbaglam.org
Çıkar Çatışması	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Yapay Zeka Kullanımı	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde yapay zeka tabanlı herhangi bir araç veya uygulama kullanılmamıştır. Çalışmanın tüm içeriği, yazar(lar) tarafından bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri ve akademik etik ilkelere uygun şekilde üretilmiştir.

Introduction

Where Europe begins and ends has never had a clear answer. As one scholar who describes European history as "the history of a culture" notes, in antiquity the term *Europe* referred chiefly to Thrace and Macedonia; to the lands of present-day Bulgaria, Albania, and Serbia; and to Illyria—then encompassing parts of what are now Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia.[1] This area, ringed by Greek colonies in the ancient period, would later come to be known as the Balkans.[2] Yet the word has long carried a political charge beyond its geographical sense, and much of its modern usage refers to that politics. Across history, the Balkans— the southeastern part of Europe—have been a region of strategic consequence: a crossroads between Asia and Europe; a bridge for empires and cultures; a hub of population movements; and a zone of socio-economic and cultural transition shaped by relations with its neighbors.[3] The term *Balkan* itself is Turkish, meaning "mountain range covered in forests" or "steep, impassable highlands," used by Turks to denote the parallel ranges between the Maritsa (Meriç) and the Danube. It was Europeans who gave the peninsula this name, and it first appeared in the literature in 1809, coined by the German geographer A. Zeune[4]; for the Turks, the general designation for these lands was *Rumeli*.[5]

The Balkan Mountains—after which the peninsula is named—run from the Timok River valley in northwestern Bulgaria in a broad arc parallel to the Danube, reaching the Black Sea. The Balkan Peninsula comprises European Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania, together with the post-Yugoslav states of North Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo. Thrace is divided among Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria. The portion within Turkey's borders—European Turkey, consisting of Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, the European side of Istanbul, and parts of Çanakkale—is known as Eastern Thrace. Western Thrace, under Greek administration, is bounded by the Meriç/Evros River on the Turkish side, the Mesta/Nestos on the Macedonian side, and the Rhodope Mountains along the Bulgarian frontier. Northern (Upper/Bulgarian) Thrace lies between the Balkan Mountains to the north, the Rila and Pirin ranges to the west, the Black Sea to the east, and Western and Eastern Thrace to the south. By *Rumeli* (Rumelia) is meant, from the fifteenth century onward, the southern Balkans under Ottoman rule; like "Balkans,"

1 J. G. A. Pocock, "Kendi Tarihleri İçinde Bazı Avrupalılar", çev. R. Öğdül, *Avrupa Fikri*, ed. Anthony Pagden, (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2010), 76.

2 Maria Todorova, *Balkanları Tahayyül Etmek,* çev. Dilek Şendil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 52

3 Mehmet Kayıran, "Milliyetçilik Akımının Balkanlar'daki Gayrimüslim Unsurlar Üzerindeki Etkisi (1789-1875)", *Türk Dünyası Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi Yakın Tarih Dergisi* 3/5, (Şubat 2019), 87.

4 Yusuf Hamzaoğlu, *Balkan Türklüğü*, Cilt 1 (Üsküp: Logos-A Yayınları, 2010), 17.

5 Yılmaz Öztuna, *93 ve Balkan Savaşları: Avrupa Türkiye'sini Kaybımız-Rumeli'nin Elden Çıkışı*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2021), 11.

the term bears geographical, cultural, and political overtones. Although their boundaries do not fully coincide, *Rumeli* has at times been used for, and closely associated with, both the Balkans and Thrace. In contemporary usage, the region includes Turkey's European lands (Eastern Thrace), northern Greece, Bulgaria, southern Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

1. Traces of the Turks in the Balkans and the Ottoman Identity

Turkic arrivals in the Balkans reach back to the era of the European Huns. Two principal corridors led into the peninsula: one across the steppe north of the Caspian and Black Seas, the other through Anatolia. The earliest Turkic groups to enter—Ogurs/Utrigurs, Bulgar Turks, Avars, Pechenegs, Ouzes, Cumans/Kipchaks, and Oghuz—began settling from the third century CE onward, largely via the northern route. Many later adopted Christianity and became Slavicized. Historians often refer to these communities as the "Lost Turkic Tribes" or "assimilated tribes." Nomadic lifeways that proved difficult to transpose into settled regimes, together with conflicts among these groups and with Byzantines, Slavs, Latins, and others, accelerated their assimilation; ideological pressures from Slavic and Byzantine authorities also played a role. A second wave arrived from Central Asia, first establishing a homeland in Anatolia and then, under the Ottoman beylik, crossing the Dardanelles into the Balkans; the Battle of Mohács (1526) is commonly taken to mark the onset of Ottoman predominance in the region.

During this period—amid political-military contention and economic strain—selected families from Anatolia were resettled in Western Thrace, Bulgaria, Macedonia, the lands of former Yugoslavia, and Romania[6]. Scholars from the region, who sometimes describe it as "deep Europe" or "the other Europe," not only acknowledge but emphasize the formative role Turks played in the making of a Balkan identity. As one study that analyzes the Balkans and the Turks through travelogues puts it, researching Balkan identity effectively means researching Ottoman history.[7] Recent work likewise shows that, in pre-dissolution Yugoslavia, most Bosniaks—despite their Slavic ethnicity and use of Serbo-Croatian—situated themselves in relation to an Ottoman past.[8] A similar pattern holds for Albanians in Kosovo.[9] Another scholar underlines that, for Turks in the Balkans, *Ottoman-ness*[10] continues to

6 İdris Koralp, "Balkanlarda Türkler", (Erişim 22.09.2008).

7 Sanja Lazarević - Aleksandra Úuric Milanovic, "Modernist Seyahatnamelerde Balkanlar ve Türkler: "Derin Avrupa'da" İngilizlerin Türkleri Sunumu", *Oğuz-Türkmen Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2/2, (Aralık 2018), 177.

8 The Ottoman past should not be reduced to a singular Turkish identity or a homogeneous religious outlook; as a multiethnic, multiconfessional formation, it absorbed and made its own the cultural practices of Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Balkan communities—including *Rum* and Armenian populations.

9 Orhan Türkdoğan, *Türk Toplum Sistemi* (İstanbul: IQ Yayıncılık, 2011), 63.

10 *The author cautions that his use of *Osmanlılık* (Ottoman-ness) should not be conflated with neo-Ottomanism—an ideological script that seeks to revive a project by recasting the empire as a Middle Eastern

function as a political identity under whose canopy many still take shelter; the experiences of the last century, it is argued, are inseparable from the fact that these communities once bore an Ottoman identity.

A further point is that whereas Turks in Turkey, as well as Albanians, Bulgarians, and Romanians, came to inhabit new political identities and left *Ottoman-ness* behind, this was not fully the case for Turks of the Balkans.[11] For communities repeatedly stigmatized on the grounds of their *Ottoman-ness* and subjected to various forms of victimization, the Ottoman identity continued to be a defining frame even after the empire collapsed. As one scholar puts it, we should move beyond the tendency to treat the Republic of Turkey as the sole heir to this legacy; even among peoples who have worked hardest to repudiate the Ottoman past and disparage the empire, cultural patterns connected—however unconsciously—to the Ottoman centuries persist in notable ways.[12] The insistence on denying such continuity, or the assumption that a centuries-long Ottoman cultural formation could be neutralized so quickly, can be read in two ways: as evidence of the assimilative force of Western imperialism's dynamic structures over non-Western societies; or as a sign that the Ottoman state's extensive tolerance toward the lifeways and religious practices of subject populations placed a brake on social integration. In the Balkans, moreover, Islam came to be identified with Turkishness and Turkishness with Islam; it was *Ottoman*[13] identity that folded the two into a single whole. Crucially, this identity also incorporated—largely on a voluntary basis—non-Turkish Muslim groups and, at times, even certain Christian communities under its canopy.

---

state—and he reminds us that "Ottoman" historically signified the Balkans first and Anatolia only thereafter. His second critique is that, while Greece and—more broadly—Slavic publics have tried to efface the name "Balkans" and replace it with what they deem the more "politically correct" label "Southeastern Europe," Turkey's policy toward the Balkans—unlike those of the regional states—has largely consisted of ad hoc, day-to-day maneuvers untethered to any overarching vision or analysis. A similar criticism surfaced in an oral-history project we conducted on the Turks of Western Thrace: interviewees who migrated to Turkey between 1967 and 1995 complained that, whereas Greece's Western Thrace policy has hewed to the same aims for over a century, the Turkish state has not shown comparable consistency. They attributed this to the fact that, in Greece, policy is set by extra-political specialists with deep knowledge of the region and of Turkey and who remain in post across successive governments, whereas in Turkey each new cabinet resets Western Thrace policy and leaves it to Anatolia-based bureaucrats with little familiarity with the region.

11 Recai Coşkun, "Yakındaki Uzak Vatan: Balkanlar", *Düşünce Dünyasında Türkiz* 3/18, (Kasım 2022), 55-56

12 L. Carl Brown, İmparatorluk Mirası: Balkanlar'da ve Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Damgası. çev. Gül Güven (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 19-21.

13 At the same time, the Ottoman Empire marks a distinct watershed in Turkish history. Under the rubric of Ottoman identity, "Turkishness"—in matters of statecraft, tradition, "civilization," and culture—was recast as having shed its putative "Asiatic" roots and as bearing an "Eastern" character specific to the Middle East. For example, in the "Orientalism" entry of his book, Steinz offers no general definition; instead he points to Mozart's Turkish March, then moves on to Turkish baths and the Ottoman harem motif—popularized for European audiences, not least by Dominique Ingres's Grand Odalisque.

Many forces drew the Ottomans toward the Balkans. As relentless Mongol campaigns pushed the Seljuk polity to collapse and Ilkhanid pressure constrained movement across Anatolia, Turkic principalities saw their room for maneuver shrink and turned toward the western frontier. They first secured stretches of the Aegean coast and then crossed the straits, establishing a new base in the lands they would call *Rumeli*.[14] In this conjuncture, a small tribal formation read the moment shrewdly and leveraged local opportunities: within a short span the Ottomans both absorbed the damage left by the Mongol incursions and consolidated into a durable state. A frequently noted key to this ascent was a strategic choice taken amid Anatolia's disorder—not to be pulled into the turmoil, but to pivot across the straits into *Rumeli*. Expansion there, in turn, strengthened their position in Anatolia and laid the groundwork for an imperial polity with wider reach.[15]

When geography and history are read together with due complexity, a clear pattern emerges: while the Ottomans were still a frontier principality that had not fully consolidated their hold over newly conquered Anatolian lands, they chose to cross into Europe, make *Rumeli* their primary base, and take the first steps toward becoming a Balkan state. Alongside grounding imperial legitimacy in a universal order—*nizâm-ı âlem*—they also styled themselves as the *Third Rome*[16], locating their capitals on the European side, first in

[14] Prof. J. Mool, who had toured the core Ottoman lands to compile a comprehensive survey, associated Turkish identity less with Anatolia than with Istanbul and *Rumeli*. Criticizing both the Ottoman government and Anatolia as "without identity," Mool asserted that "all of Turkey's past lies in *Rumeli*," and that places such as Kosovo, Mohács, Belgrade, Edirne, Niš, and Shkodër carry far greater meaning and historical weight for Turkey than Anatolia does. Donald Quataert likewise notes that, in regional terms, the Balkans remained the empire's most densely populated zone into the early nineteenth century.

[15] Kemal Ramazan Haykıran, *Suyu Aşan Kılıçlar* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2022), 11-13.

[16] Numerous sources attest that the Ottomans saw themselves as heirs to both Rome and Byzantium; the work of leading scholars such as Halil İnalcık, İlber Ortaylı, Stéphane Yerasimos, and Ali Kazancıgil is illustrative. Bayezid I—who never abandoned the ambition to take Constantinople—pressed for recognition of the title *Sultan-ı Rûm* ("Sultan of Rûm"). When Mehmed II conquered the city, he styled himself "Successor to the Caesars" (*Kayser-i Rûm*) and "heir to the Eastern Roman Empire." In his *Epistola ad Mahometem* (Letter to Mehmed), Pope Pius II even promised that, should he accept Christianity, Mehmed would be acknowledged as "Emperor of the Romans" and "King of Europe." During the succession struggle with Prince Cem, Bayezid II told European courts that the *Devlet-i Rûm* ("State of Rûm") could not be ruled by two sovereigns. The project of seizing and re-founding Byzantium, in short, long predated Mehmed and ran through earlier sultans as well. Similarly, Süleyman I refused to recognize Charles V's papal coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in 1530, declaring that the title *imparator* belonged to him alone and proclaiming himself the sole heir to the Roman-Byzantine empires. The Ottomans did not limit their claims to Rome and Byzantium, moreover; they cast themselves as emperors of the world. Near Eastern specialist L. Carl Brown offers a comparative view: among the great Mediterranean empires, only Rome—at its apogee—surpassed the Ottomans in territorial extent, yet it did not match their longevity; the longevity record belongs to Byzantium, but in the breadth of territory and the diversity of subject peoples it cannot be compared to the Ottoman Empire. By claiming continuity not just with Byzantium but with Rome—the matrix of many of the West's legal and political institutions—the Ottomans challenged the deep-seated East/West binary. They were also the last and most developed instance of the Islamic imperial tradition, drawing on the legacies of the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Mamluks, and Mongol polities. At their sixteenth-century zenith, the Ottomans shared the historical stage only with two other great Muslim

Edirne and then in Istanbul.[17] The conquest of Istanbul functioned as a kind of transfer of the imperial mantle: as the Byzantine Empire—the heir to Rome's rebirth—came to an end, the Ottoman Empire entered the stage. The fall of Constantinople also marked the emergence of Istanbul[18] as the center of the Islamic world and of Turkic-Islamic civilization and arts. One fact about the period is often overlooked: when Mehmed II laid siege to the city, the Byzantine realm had effectively shrunk to the walled core of Constantinople, whereas the Ottomans already held the Balkans up to the Danube and Anatolia up to the Taurus—meaning that they had long since eclipsed Byzantine territory.[19]

At times in the West one still encounters the claim that the duel between Christendom and the Ottomans began with the fall of Constantinople, a view that overlooks the fact that the Ottomans had conquered swathes of the Balkans and set foot in Europe a century earlier.[20] As the empire grew into a far-reaching polity[21] spanning Central and Eastern Europe, West Asia, and North Africa, one pillar of its world-historical ascent was the conquest of Istanbul; the other—indeed the only viable gateway to Europe under the conditions of the time—was consolidation in the Balkans. By taking Bursa and Nicaea, Orhan Gazi effectively drove Byzantium from Anatolia; with the capture of Edirne he also secured a forward base in Europe.[22] By the time Orhan died in 1362, Turkish power was anchored above all in the Balkans, and Murad I continued in that vein, making the region a homeland.[23] Just as Manzikert had opened the gates of Anatolia, Murad I's defeat of a coalition of Balkan states at the Battle of Çirmen (Chernomen) on the Maritsa in 1371 opened the gates of the Balkans; thereafter, many Christian princes, as vassals and representatives of the sultan, took the field with the Ottoman army.[24]

In short, once we recall that moving the capital from Bursa to Edirne was a strategic step toward the conquest of Istanbul—and a stage in a westward expansion policy—it

empires—the Safavids in Iran and the Mughals in India. Together these three neighbors embodied the remarkable reach of Islamic civilization across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Of the many Western Asian empires stretching back to the Hittites, Achaeans, Sasanians, and the empires of Alexander the Great and his successors, it was the Ottomans who endured as a decisive power in international politics into the twentieth century. For this reason, when Ottoman sultans called themselves "emperors of the world," it was not mere hyperbole.

17 Ali Kazancıgil, *Türkiye Üzerine Basmakalıp Düşünceler* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2010), 16.

18 Reader's Digest, *When, Where, Why and How it Happened*, (London: The Reader's Digest Association Ltd, 1999), 113.

19 Stefanos Yerasimos, *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023), 9

20 Jean-François Solnon, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Avrupa*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2020), XI-XII.

21 As Kazancıgil argues, the Ottoman transition from a small beylik to a world empire was enabled by a finely calibrated synthesis of the distinct modes of statecraft and cultural traditions of the pre-Islamic Turks, the Seljuks, the Arabs, the Persians, and Byzantium.

22 Reader's Digest, *When, Where, Why and How it Happened*, 113.

23 Norman Stone, *Türkiye: Kısa bir tarih*, çev. Orhan İsvan, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2011), 27.

24 Feroz Ahmad, *Bir Kimlik Peşinde Türkiye*, çev. S. C. Karadeli, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 9.

becomes clear that the Balkans were made a homeland before Anatolia.[25] Settlement in the Balkans reaches further back than in many Anatolian cities and even some parts of the wider Islamic world; the Ottomans first proved their statehood, in effect, as a Balkan power.[26] A further point is the region's enduring strategic value. As Finkel shows, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—when late marquee successes such as the sieges of Esztergom and Kanizsa stand out—the effectiveness of the Ottoman military owed much to the Balkans: not only was a large share of provisions for campaign supplied there, but a significant portion of the troops came not from the imperial center but from Bosnia, long known as the frontier province par excellence.[27]

From the moment the Ottomans set foot in *Rumeli*, they began relocating families from Anatolia; later, massacres in the Balkans triggered mass returns to the Anatolian homeland. In this reciprocal movement, the Balkans came to mean Turkey and Turkey, in important respects, came to mean the Balkans. A considerable share of today's population traces its origins to the peninsula two or three generations back, which is why *Rumeli* tunes still animate local song across many regions. In the Balkans, meanwhile—owing to the dense imprint of mosques, madrasas, külliyes, soup kitchens, endowments, inns, bridges, and other monumental works—the "Pillars of Islam" entered popular parlance as the "Pillars of Turkishness." The Balkans and Turkey form an inseparable whole not only in geography but across culture, language, history, custom, and belief. To speak of the Balkans is thus to speak of much more than conquest; it is to speak of the making of a civilization and a cultural world.

---

25 By contrast, this process of settlement and conquest stood in stark opposition to the policies and actions of Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian actors who, in the name of independence, turned the Balkans into a bloodbath. In the territories the Ottomans incorporated, the organizing principle was not naked force but freedom of religion and conscience: beliefs were not interfered with, and no community was excluded on ethnic grounds. Indeed, peasants and commoners were placed under protection against local authorities through a fiscal–land regime that both abolished feudal corvée and guaranteed local usufruct via the mîrî (state-domain) system, while nobles and military strata were treated with considerable latitude. So much so that groups who refused to accept the conquest of Rumeli and retreated to the mountains to take up banditry were later offered amnesty; these bands, known as armatoloi (armatoles), were transformed—under law—into guardians of the very uplands they had once controlled informally. From the outset in the Balkans, Ottoman policy took two main forms: either newly taken polities retained their political identity under tributary status, or Christian feudal lords were incorporated into the timar system and, on the basis of services rendered, were allowed to pass their lands to their sons. Unlike the Balkan dissolution of the 1990s—protracted, massacre-ridden, and abetted by Western indulgence—this model helps explain how the founding dynamics of a frontier beylik could be accepted across Christian lands and become the basis of a 624-year empire. As Stone notes on the very first page of his introduction, after observing that Turkey lost the Balkans in the nineteenth century and Arab lands in the twentieth, "since then the Balkans and the Middle East have been the world's open wounds; for that reason the Ottoman Empire is, to some degree, even missed today." In addition, some theories link the ready internalization and centuries-long endurance of Turkish cultural and civilizational forms to earlier Turkic groups—mentioned above—who had settled before the Ottomans and forged close ties with their surroundings.

26 İlber Ortaylı, *Avrupa ve Biz*, (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2008), 71.

27 Fikret Adanır - Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı ve Balkanlar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 25.

2. The Othering of Turkish Populations across Europe and the Balkans

Despite the depth of the bond between the Balkans and Turkishness, making sense of the region's step-by-step rupture—and of the massacres targeting its Turkish-Muslim inhabitants—requires first tracing how the image of the Turk took shape in Europe. Scholars note that, especially after the Ottoman victories of the sixteenth century, Europe's notion of the "other" began to shift: *Muslim* gave way to *Turk* as the primary marker. European letters and imagination thus turned to crafting a new figure that could stand in for Islam itself.[27] In the post-Renaissance milieu, the "Turk" acquired a double meaning: on the one hand, the ancient empire seen as Islam's standard-bearer; on the other, a byword for barbarity invoked to explain conduct or character. Cornell even suggests that European identity coalesced through wars stretching from the defeat of Muslim forces at the Battle of Poitiers[28] to the repulse of the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna.[29] Earlier Muslim armies, he argues, were treated as transitory threats; the decisive factor was the Ottomans, who embodied both Turkish and Islamic identities.

Europe, by means of mirror-like representations, fashioned a multilayered enemy in the new *"Other"*[30] that came to stand for the East and for Islam at once—tightening an inward

---

27 Lazarević - Milanović, "Modernist Seyehatnamelerde Balkanlar ve Türkler: "Derin Avrupa'da" İngilizlerin Türkleri Sunumu",177.

28 What Cornell labels the *Battle of Poitiers* is in fact the Battle of Tours. The engagement is often said to have determined Europe's future and to have ushered onto the stage a figure that would symbolize the enemy in the Western imagination. In this way, the Christian–Islamic clash comes to play a formative role in Eurocentric narratives, heralded as a "proto-cultural" idea of Europe's arrival. Writers such as Messadié, however, treat both the battle itself and the hero-making around Charles Martel—an illegitimate son of a saint—as among the exaggerations of European history. First, they note how accounts ignore that the Saracens had already been defeated by Duke Eudes of Aquitaine at Toulouse in 721. Second, they point to the way Tours/Poitiers was inflated into the ideal instrument of chauvinist exploitation, despite lingering ambiguity over whether it even counts as a "battle" in the formal sense. In October 732, Arab raiders under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ghāfiqī, intent on plunder, unexpectedly ran into a larger body of Frankish and Aquitanian infantry between Tours and Poitiers and, shocked by the encounter, broke and fled toward Languedoc. Chroniclers, knights—Martel among them, eager to extend his sway over Aquitaine—and popular minstrels then spun the rout of raiders into an outsized tale of heroism. That Martel was Charlemagne's grandfather further magnified the legend, giving his lineage a deeper symbolic weight in European history.

29 Talha Övet, "Avrupa 'Öteki'si", *Stratejik Öngörü Dergisi*, 11, (Aralık 2007), 95.

30 According to authorities such as Edward Gibbon and Margaret Meserve, one Renaissance thesis—floated and then abandoned under criticism—claimed that the Turks were descended from Troy. Some historians styled them Teucri (Trojans), rooting their lineage in Turkos, the warrior grandson of King Priam. In his 1458 treatise *Europa*, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Bishop of Siena, later Pope Pius II) vigorously rejected this view: the Teucri, he argued, were a literate people who had come to Troy from Crete and Italy and later contributed to Rome's rise; there could be no kinship with the Scythian "barbarian" Turks. The Trojan War, of course, is saturated with symbolic meaning. It animates Europe's founding texts—Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*—and long fed East/West antitheses. Because some sources cast the Trojans' ethnicity as Turkish, a thicket of beliefs grew up around the idea. The Spanish traveler Pero Tafur, visiting Constantinople in 1437, recorded locals saying, "The Turks will avenge Troy." The Byzantine historian-statesman Michael Kritoboulos writes that Mehmed II, upon visiting the

sense of solidarity while hardening its stance toward the outside. Given the pressure of the *Crusades*[31] and the long shadow they cast across the continent, the public climate was already primed to absorb and reproduce hostility toward the Turk. In what Amartya Sen terms the "descriptive distortions of ascribed identity," [32] the prejudices and clichés about Turks proliferated to such an extent that even a substantial volume could not do them justice; the brief notes indicated in the footnote must suffice here.[33]

Troad, praised the heroes of the war. When the Allies landed at Gallipoli in 1915 they even sent a warship named Agamemnon; and Atatürk is said to have remarked in 1922, "At Dumlupınar, we took the revenge of the Trojans and of Hector." Another reason fifteenth-century writers in Piccolomini's wake found the "Trojan Turks" thesis unconvincing is that it cut against entrenched prejudices about the Turkish "enemy." To Western observers the Turks combined unsettling strengths—military skill and strategic cunning, adroit use of treaties, an effective sovereign, conspicuously obedient subjects—with what they took to be the seductive dangers of the faith. Even as Europeans acknowledged the pull of Ottoman power, they clung to images of barbarity, cruelty, and violence; such typologies pushed the Turks—Trojan or not—outside the family of civilized nations. This was hardly new: in Christian rhetorical tradition, the enemy figured as Islam had long been dehumanized, and "Saracens" portrayed as monstrously cruel and uniformly hostile to Christians. With the Ottomans, however, the category of the enemy acquired a new dimension: the Turks were cast as foes not only of Christianity but of European culture itself. After the fall of Constantinople, fantasies of boundless Turkish savagery became commonplace in European letters, recoding the conquest as a riot of rape, plunder, and murder—although what was often remembered here were the depredations of the freebooters who sacked Byzantium during the Fourth Crusade. Piccolomini, for his part, also lamented "the ruin of Greek glory" and the collapse of the "New Rome," grieving the mortal blow to Hellenic learning and the stifling of a nascent humanist revival.

31 The historical record contradicts some of the claims mentioned in the previous footnote. Crusades branded the Muslim Turk as the "Other" and the "great Satan" in Europe's eyes; yet it is now widely argued that it was Europe itself that launched these campaigns and, between 1096 and 1270, repeated them eight times while carrying out large-scale massacres. So planned, organized, and hate-saturated were these expeditions that, during the bloodiest of them—the First Crusade—the Anatolian Seljuks scarcely grasped at the outset what they were facing or whom they were up against. The killings were not confined to the battlefield. Citing contemporary chronicles, the Byzantine historian Nomiku writes that the First Crusade's remnants first descended uninvited on Constantinople and, once they spun out of control, were forced by the emperor onto ships and deposited on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus; from the moment this marauding host—said to number up to one hundred thousand—set foot in Anatolia, they perpetrated countless acts of murder, plunder, and rape. On the massacres that set in motion a millennium of enmity between the Islamic world and the West, Qadi al-Harawi remarked: "Never before were Muslims so humiliated; never before were their lands so savagely laid waste."

32 Amartya Senn, *Kimlik ve Şiddet*, çev. Ahmet Kardam, (İstanbul: Türk Henkel Yayınları, 2006), 28.

33 According to lists compiled by Karlsson, Solnon, Zürcher, and Burçoğlu, roughly 2,500 publications about the Turks appeared in Europe in the sixteenth century. Many writers traced the Turks to Ishmael, son of Abraham by Hagar, and characterized them with the verse, "He shall be a wild man [a wild ass of a man]; his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall dwell to the east of all his brothers." In short order, the world's misfortunes were laid at the Turks' door and a teeming array of prejudices took flight. The French coined turquerie as a byword for boorishness, cruelty, and cupidity; the English spoke of "to speak like a Turk" for those who blurted out their views crudely; Germans popularized labels such as "Türkenhund" ("Turkish dog") and "Türkenknecht" ("Turks' lackey"); Italians introduced "bestemmiare come un Turco" ("to swear like a Turk") and "puzzare come un Turco" ("to stink like a Turk") into everyday speech; and in Austria, parents frightened children with lines like, "It's dark—the Turks are coming—get inside." The hostility was hardly confined to the street. Martin Luther could style the Turks as God's scourge upon Christians in the face of papal corruption, while his close ally Philip Melanchthon dubbed them "Red Jews," depicting them as circumcising their sons, abstaining from pork, and "bloodthirsty dogs." Theologians floated etymologies and lineages

As harsh prejudices against Turks gained currency across Europe, the earlier image of the Turk—feared yet admired—was recast as the "cruel Turk." This reframing furnished both the impetus and the moral license for nineteenth-century uprisings among Christian communities in the Balkans, while also pushing onto the agenda the debate later formulated as the *Eastern Question*[34].

Drawing on the notion of *Oriental Despotism*—circulating in Europe for some time and traced back to Aristotle—European discourse fashioned the *Eastern Question* as a problem with meanings that shifted according to interest. Conservatives read it through the lens of partitioning the Muslim Ottoman state; liberals framed it as the liberation of oppressed peoples, yet proposed as a "solution" the creation of small, dependent states aligned with their own advantage; and Marxists, while likewise invoking the rhetoric of oppressed

keyed to force and ferocity: that Turk derived from *torquere* ("to torture"), or that the Turks descended from the savage Scythians. In Sweden, clergy branded them "Christianity's mortal enemy," catechizing congregations on Turkish bloodlust; schoolbooks could even describe "Turks, believers in Muhammad's false religion," as man-eating monsters. In 1638, Sully sketched a "Christian European Commonwealth" of fifteen states, with a joint force of 50,000 cavalry, 250,000 infantry, 200 cannon, and 120 warships—the first objective being to drive the Turks from Europe; tellingly, no Orthodox state had a seat at the table. The most "benevolent" proposal came from the French humanist Guillaume Postel: convert the Turks to Christianity and then unite the world under the French king. By the eighteenth century, as Ottoman power ebbed, the Türkenhund image was retooled. After the defeats before Vienna, Turks were rendered less threatening and more ridiculous—stock figures at carnivals, masked balls, and in the theater, foils to the noble, powerful European. Yet as the empire opened resident embassies in Europe and prominent writers and travelers disseminated more favorable judgments, a trope of the "noble savage" crept in; "Turk" acquired warmer tones in books, travelogues, operas, and musicals. What did not change—whether the inflection was negative or positive—was the persistent casting of the Turk as the *Other*.

34 Two points stand out in debates on the *Eastern Question*. First, following Zürcher, why was it framed as a "question" at all? Dissatisfied and aggressive Serbian nationalists helped trigger the First World War, bringing down not only the Ottomans but also the Habsburg, German, and Russian empires. This was an outcome none of the parties had planned or desired: the great powers of Europe and Russia had laid out intricate schemes for the Balkans, but they had not anticipated that the Balkan states would seize the moment to act independently of their patrons, nor that a conflict would so quickly spiral beyond the peninsula. Second, looking further back, the historian Albert Sorel argues that the *Eastern Question* began the moment the Turks set foot in Europe and that, from then on, its telos was fixed: expel them from Europe. Read this way, the question came into being with the Ottoman passage into the Balkans, and its "solution" was their removal from the very Balkan lands where they first arrived. The drama began in the Balkans—and, in this logic, ought to end there. In this schema, guarding Europe's strategic frontiers fell above all to the Balkan states, with Greece at the forefront. From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that Turkey—kept at bay through ever-new criteria and hurdles—was persistently denied EU membership, while Bulgaria (2007), Romania (2007), and Croatia (2013) were admitted despite not being, at the time of their accession, demonstrably more advanced socio-economically than Turkey. In a similar vein, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing wrote in *Le Monde* on 9 November 2002 that Turkey's accession would spell the end of the EU, effectively excluding Turkey on cultural-historical grounds: a country outside the Indo-European language family, with a capital not on the European mainland, and—so he claimed—distant from the Greco-Latin heritage and the intellectual currents of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Left unaddressed were basic counterpoints: Finnish, Hungarian, and Estonian are likewise outside the Indo-European family; the Republic of Cyprus—some 70 km south of Turkey and about 100 km west of Syria—is no less a Mediterranean/Middle Eastern island; and the role of Islamic-Turkish scholars in the very emergence of Renaissance and Enlightenment thought goes unmentioned.

peoples, cast nationalist movements as auxiliaries to the "communist revolution" they sought in Europe.[35] In this schema, the Ottoman Empire became the chessboard upon which outside powers executed their strategic moves in rapid succession.

3. European-Backed Chaos and Massacres in the Balkans

> "All the nineteenth century's enemies of the Turks rallied under the banner of Hellenism. As Hellenism was exalted, hostility toward the Ottomans swelled. Hellenism swept across Europe from end to end. This new creed bound Britons and Russians, Germans and French, together. That dark infatuation cost Byron his life and inspired paeans in Hugo."
>
> Cemil Meriç, *Umrandan Uygarlığa*

Stoked by a divisive strain of nationalism—the choice fruit of the French Revolution—Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian *komitadji* irregulars rose up under the pretext of independence and launched raids on Turkish villages[36] with a clear strategic bet: that Ottoman reprisals would mirror their own brutality and prompt Europe to intervene—taking the side of the cross against the crescent—even though both parties resorted to comparable forms of violence.[37] The Greeks opened their "war of liberation" with the Morea massacres of 1821, when, under the leadership of Orthodox clergy, thousands of Turks—men, women, and children—were killed.[38] A document from the British Foreign Office notes that nearly

---

35 Taner Timur, "Osmanlı Mirası", *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, ed. İ.C. Schick - E.A. Tonak, (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1998), 19.

36 In *Suyu Arayan Adam* (*The Man in Search of Water*), Şevket Süreyya Aydemir relates these brutalities in stark terms. Leaving aside the wider *Rumelia* he calls "European Turkey," even Edirne—within today's borders—was seething with *komitadji*—half-bandit, half-politician types. He records Greek and Bulgarian bands raiding villages and farms, setting fire to threshing floors and sheepfolds, or abducting men into the hills. The raids did not remain confined to the countryside; they spilled into the town as well. At the first sight of a distant plume of smoke or the crack of gunfire, streets would empty; children would sprint home in panic; men returning from work would fall silent and hurry to their houses. The bands appeared everywhere and in every disguise: in one case, a *komitadji* entered a village mosque in the garb of a dervish to join the prayer and detonated a bomb, killing dozens.

37 Greek leaders were willing to countenance the most radical concessions in the name of securing the uprisings' success. As researchers such as Protopsaltis, Miller, and Luttrell show, rebel leaders who maintained contacts with the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy—fully aware that Orthodoxy was the core marker of identity and that the populace would not approve—offered, first, to submit to the Western (Latin) Church and, second, to cede certain Aegean islands to the Knights of Malta (Order of St John), a medieval order that, after its campaigns against the Ottomans and the loss of its centers of power, had been striving to sustain a dispersed, semi-clandestine presence across European cities. The Roman Church told the Greeks quite openly that the first pledge was unrealistic, but the second proved enticing: it promised a renewed Catholic footprint in the eastern Mediterranean and a widening of Rome's sphere of influence.

38 While the Balkan uprisings are often remembered for British incitement and support, Karal—in his article "The Occupation of the Greek Islands by the French and Ottoman–Russian Relations," drawing on reports by Hasan Pasha, governor of the Morea—documents the close coordination between the French, who promised the freedom of "the Hellenes" and "the Hellenic land," and insurgent Greek leaders in moves toward the annexation of the Morea and Crete. The Greek scholar Papageorgiou likewise notes

one hundred thousand Turks fleeing the massacres in Rumelia died outdoors from cold and starvation.[39] Similarly, the Yugoslav orientalist Popović writes that when the 1821 uprising broke out, large-scale massacres occurred; for instance, he states that during the events of 23 September, the *entire* Turkish and Muslim population of Tripolitsa was slaughtered.[40] Fortune then favored their cause: in 1824 Lord Byron—Europe's celebrity poet and an emblem of a darker Romanticism—died of fever in the Greek theater of war, and the mythology built around his genius helped swell a continent-wide wave of anti-Turkish sentiment. In these years, all Muslim populations in the Balkans were folded into the label *turci*, branded as traitors for alleged collaboration with the Ottomans and first subjected to the brutality of Serbian *komitadji* bands. As the "sick man of Europe" trope took hold and Ottoman defeats mounted, Serbian forces embarked on sweeping campaigns of ethnic cleansing across Turkish and Muslim settlements.

The brutality did not stop at people; it extended to everything marked as Turkish. Mosques and monuments—so common in engravings of Belgrade—were razed. After long avoiding direct intervention, the Ottoman army could no longer ignore local pleas and, in 1876, moved to suppress a Bulgarian uprising; predictably, the episode was seized upon as political fodder in Britain. William Gladstone—an ardent Turkophobe—aimed his pamphlet, *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, at his rival Benjamin Disraeli, who favored policies that did not exclude the Ottoman Empire. Within two months it sold some 200,000 copies, cementing the "cruel Turk" image and helping align British opinion with Greek aims. In the pamphlet, Turks were cast as a foreign body that had to be expelled from Europe without delay.[41] Anti-Turkish rhetoric[42] intensified markedly during the

that the first contingent to arrive by sea in support of the 1822 revolt was French, and that the French, eager to blunt British influence and cultivate ties with the Greeks, made a point of staying at the forefront of Greek political and military affairs. Of the two figures who appeared to represent the Greeks at the Congress of Verona, one was the French admiral Philippe Jourdain. The two-man delegation, though not formally invited, forced its way into the Congress and, through letters drafted by the Provisional Greek Government, lobbied three audiences: first, the allied leaders—Britain, France, Prussia, Russia, Austria—to argue the justice and legitimacy of the Greek Revolution; second, the Russian tsar, whose pride they stroked by invoking his descent from Orthodox kings and to whom they expressed gratitude for aid to the Greek cause; and third, the Pope, from whom they sought support to throw off the yoke of the "followers of the Qur'an" and the "barbarians." In short, Orthodoxy and confessional kinship were paraded before the tsar, while the Pope was courted through the familiar "cross-versus-crescent" imaginary.

39 Haluk Dursun, *Nil'den Tuna'ya Osmanlı*. (İstanbul, Timaş Yayınları, 2009), 23.

40 Aleksandre Popovic, *Balkanlarda İslâm*. (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), 298.

41 The decisive step in expelling the Turks from Europe was their removal from the Balkans, a region laden with symbolic weight on every plane. An episode in Nikolaos Kasomoulis's military memoirs illustrates the point: on 6 January 1828, at the harbor of Nafplio, Ioannis Kapodistrias made a ceremonial landing under the escort of British, French, and Russian warships (Kasomoulis names the Warspite, the Ira, and the Eleni). Backed and protected by the great powers, he was soon fashioned into the leader of Greek independence and the founding governor of the modern Greek state. Born under Venetian rule, Kapodistrias—after a European education and official service in Europe and in Russia—went on to play prominent roles in the Greek uprisings launched in the Morea in 1821 against the Ottoman Empire.

42 During the years when anti-Turkish rhetoric gripped Europe and disinformation staged realities of its own, there were a few exceptions—works written from the field with a measure of detachment —such

First World War, with Britain at its center. Prime Minister Lloyd George, who branded the Turks "the cancer of humanity," told the public: "I am very glad that the Turks are at last being called to account for the wrongs they have done to humanity." The effort to shape opinion spanned a wide front. On one side, Sir Mark Sykes—architect of the Sykes–Picot Agreement and a key hand behind the Balfour Declaration, and an avowed Turkophobe—was commissioned to write pieces drawing on Greek and Armenian claims; on the other, Britain's propaganda apparatus (Wellington House, later the Ministry of Information) tasked James Bryce and Arnold J. Toynbee with producing the famous 1916 *Blue Book*, which, again drawing on Greek and Armenian narratives, used racialized language to vilify Turks and push hostility to an extreme. Toynbee, who wrote other propaganda tracts as well, went so far in *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks*[43] to allege that, after the Balkan Wars, the Turks killed the Greeks and Slavs who remained on their territory.[44]

as Edoardo Scarfoglio's *In Levante e attraverso i Balcani* (1890) and Hans Barth's *Türke, wehre Dich!* (1898), the latter written from Rome for the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Scarfoglio chastised the European press—above all the British papers—for splashing across their pages the tear-soaked romances of Byron, which stoked unbridled fervor, and the calumnies adapted by Greek *komitadji* from folk legend, under headlines like "Turkish Atrocities!," "The Treachery of Muhammad's Partisans!," "Young Girls Abducted to Harems!." Athens, he wrote, was the hub of these fabrications, with London quickly joining in. Beyond political gain, baser motives loomed large: cash-strapped newspapers subsidized "by the handful of gold," a public hungry for the sensational, and a deep ignorance about the East. Barth, for his part, observed that the press, bent on casting the Turks as Christianity's greatest enemy and claiming that, after the hapless Armenians, the noble Greek people were now to be extirpated, even took to organizing philhellene rallies. The propaganda worked across Europe. Thousands of Italians volunteered for the Greco-Turkish War, spurred on by public figures—General Giuseppe Garibaldi, hailed as a national hero for his role in Italian unification; Amilcare Cipriani, the Paris Communard known as the "great-hearted communard"; and figures such as Colonel Enrico Bertet and Colonel Luciano Mereu. As the conflict unfolded, correspondents —apart from Barth—at Corriere della Sera and Avanti! began reporting that volunteers who had set out as philhellenes were returning home with philoturk sentiments. Greek cowardice and desertion at the front shocked them; being treated like riffraff, and being stripped of their gear and cash, also changed minds. The Romanian diplomat-historian Neagu Djuvara recalls the 1873 document known as the "Garibaldi Project": a Neo-Latin–Slavic alliance to partition the lands of the Turks, Germans, and Austrians. It envisioned a Slavic Balkan Confederation with its capital in Istanbul, the Turks first driven back to Bursa and then expelled altogether, and a strong Greek state established to make the outcome stick. Similar claims surface in Martin Bernal's classic *Black Athena*. In short, the Greco-Turkish War was the micro-level expression of the long contest between East and West: European publics lining up with the Greeks—the West's stand-ins—against the Turks as avatars of the East.

43 Toynbee's views shifted radically after the war. In his memoir *Acquaintances*, he admits that what he wrote under wartime propaganda wronged the Turks. Although he had been the inaugural holder of the Koraes Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek History, Language, and Literature at the University of London, his 1921–22 dispatches for the *Manchester Guardian*—in which he reported Greek atrocities in Anatolia—cost him that position. On his return he published *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922), framing the Greco–Turkish war as a problem of civilizational encounter: both sides, he argued, lay within the orbit of "Western civilization," with the Greeks standing for what he called the Near East (the Eastern Greek–Latin world of Byzantium and its environs) and the Ottomans representing the Middle East, an Islamic society rising over the ruins of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Seen in this light, much Western commentary—from Homer and Aristotle to Toynbee and Huntington—clusters around the twin tropes of othering and a supposed "clash of civilizations." The imperial–orientalist mindset is crystallized in Rudyard Kipling's famous dictum that "East is East, and West is West," which posits a permanent, irreconcilable divide.

44 Ingmar Karlsson, *Avrupa ve Türkler.* çev. Turhan Kayaoğlu (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2007), 25-27.

Many historians and scholars underscore that the Turkish-Muslim civilians massacred during the Greek uprisings were consistently ignored by Christian Europe[45], while the Greeks—through deft image-making—won significant sway in Western public opinion. One scholar even argues that the construction of an 'enemy perception' provides both the legitimacy and the motivation for major atrocities. He first cites Nazi Germany's genocide against the Jews as the most characteristic example of this dynamic, and then draws a parallel between this and the anti-Turkish hostility in the Balkans.[46] As the Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich, who followed events closely, remarked with pointed irony, "Greece was condemned to live."[47] Another hinge point is that the Greek revolt played a decisive, accelerating role in the Ottoman Empire's eventual unraveling. The Greek uprising[48] and, subsequently—taking advantage of the Russo-Ottoman War—the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832[49] became an inspiration and a template for minority insurrections that transformed themselves into nation-states.[50] The path opened by the Greeks would be followed by South Slavs, Armenians, Albanians, and Arabs.[51]

45 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, çev. Yasemin Saner, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 157; Solnon, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Avrupa*, XIII; Karlsson, *Avrupa ve Türkler*, 26; Stone, *Türkiye: Kısa bir tarih*, 137.

46 Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, *Balkan ve Karadeniz Ülkelerinde Güncel Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Osmanlı-Türk İmajı*. (İstanbul: Balkar Yayınları, 2020), 13-14.

47 Stone, *Türkiye: Kısa bir tarih*, 106.

48 In his article, Ferhat Pirinççi examines the roles of the local Greek bands known as klephts—brigands active in the Morea (Peloponnese)—and the armatoles, auxiliary militias recruited by the Ottomans from local Greeks to combat them. Under the unifying force of Greek nationalism, these two formations converged and played a decisive part in the uprisings that led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece, standing effectively against Ottoman attempts to suppress the revolt.

49 For Nikos Svoronos, the Kingdom of Greece in effect existed as a shadow monarchy even before its formal establishment under European and Russian auspices. The Ecumenical Patriarchate (Phanar), covertly financed by wealthy subjects, became a spiritual Hellenic kingdom: it fanned nationalist sentiment among its flock, prepared the ground for revolt under the ideal of a Hellenic "Renaissance" (the Greek Enlightenment), cast the Turks to the outside world as "barbarian masters," retained its administrative and commercial leverage within the empire, and pursued an imperial expansion that served Greek interests at the expense of other Balkan peoples. Some researchers contend that the coastal belt—and, by their own self-understanding as Greece's forward sentries, nearly all of the Aegean islands—lay largely in the hands of affluent Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) elites. They also maintained a footprint in select Anatolian towns and, despite mutual frictions, dominated commercial life in tandem with Jewish and Armenian partners. Yet, in these accounts, the crux lies elsewhere: *Rum* notables were steadily purchasing the few Turkish-owned houses along the littoral as well as parcels in major inland centers, seeing this as a duty owed to the future Greek state; nor did many bother to conceal that profits from trade were being channeled to finance Greek nationalist bands. Bernard Lewis adds that, after the Armistice of Mudros, the French general Franchet d'Espèrey entered Istanbul on a white horse—echoing Mehmed II's triumph—after disembarking from the Allied Agamemnon. In short, as Hercules Millas underscores, the history of Greek nationalism and of the Greek state is simultaneously the history of the Ottoman Empire's western domains and of the social forces and developments that took shape within the empire itself.

50 Timur, "Osmanlı Irası", 21.

51 By this period, virtually all communities other than the Turks had fallen under the spell of nationalism—and not only in the Balkans. Among Arabs too—whose social philosophy had long been shaped by the classical notion of ʿaṣabiyya (group solidarity)—the nationalist ideal took firm root. The diffusion of

A widely held conviction was that once Turks were driven from the Balkans, Europe would at last attain its "ideal Europe"[52].[53] An implicit mission followed from this. With the construction of the Kingdom of Greece, a wall was effectively raised along Europe's edge. Built against the East, that wall sharpened the West's boundaries: Europe—hard to justify as a continent in strictly geographic terms—was thus made into one.[54] Those inside the wall were integrated into "Europe," while those outside—the "others"—were pushed toward Asia.

Another point often overlooked is that although the first to rise in pursuit of an independent state were the Serbs, the Greeks were the ones who succeeded in breaking away from the Ottomans and founding a state. Europe's admiration for the Hellenic world—seen as its own point of origin—did not end with the military and diplomatic backing given at the time to the creation of the Greek kingdom. The steady territorial expansion achieved under the *Megáli Idéa* owed much, beyond realpolitik, to this factor as well. (This orientation still weighs heavily on Greek foreign policy today: witness Europe's reluctance to confront Athens—whether in disputes with Turkey or on the Macedonia question.)

When it was first established, Greece held 47,000 square kilometers and fewer than one and a half million inhabitants—who, despite sharp differences in language, ethnicity, and historical consciousness, shared only one common denominator: Orthodoxy. Its emergence today as a country of 131,957 square kilometers with a population exceeding ten million owes not only to Europe's indulgence and support, but also to the elevation of Orthodoxy into the decisive instrument for forging national consciousness.[55]

---

nationalism across the Middle East, and its manifestation as collaboration with Britain against the Ottomans, owed much to the missionary schools in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Counted among the fathers of Arab nationalism, Rifā'a al-Tahtāwī formulated—drawing on and adapting French thought—a concept of the *homeland* opposed to Ottomanism, and traced Arab history back to ancient Egypt. Albert Hourani treats these dynamics from multiple angles in *A History of the Arab Peoples*. A particularly pointed observation comes from the Iranian scholar Daryush Shayegan: during the Ottoman collapse, Arabs stirred by a "search for national identity," intoxicated by the idea of the nation, sought to measure themselves against Western societies, turned their faces toward them, and began to act under their tutelage. The consequence was not only a kind of cultural seclusion but also a widening distance among the newly created Arab states themselves.

52 The ideal of "Europe" was so tightly bound to the cleansing of Turks from the Balkans that a Slavic Society was founded to unite some 200 million Slavs under one roof and, by inflaming them against the Turks, to drive the Ottomans from the peninsula through war—if need be, through mass killing. In this vein, agitators such as Spiridovitch, who urged Slavs and Europeans alike to expel the Turks by any means, trafficked in outlandish conspiracy tales.

53 Spiridovitch, *Türksüz Avrupa*, 20.

54 Orhan Gökdemir, *Helenizm Siyonizm Türkçülük*, (İstanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 2007), 10.

55 Ferhat Pirinççi, "Yunan Ulusal Kimliğinin Oluşumu Sürecinde İçsel ve Dışsal Parametrelerin Analizi", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 46/1, (Ocak 2006), 54-55.

The Greek uprising resonated across Europe more than other Balkan revolts—just as its leaders hoped. Sympathy stirred by appeals to classical roots, Hellenic civilization, and the death of Europe's great poet meant that a cause initially backed mainly by liberals gradually won broad popular applause. As the historian Jacques Droz emphasizes, the public opinion mobilized in Greece's favor became something European governments had to reckon with: liberals endorsed it as a struggle against despotism; intellectuals and opinion leaders, because of the rebels' ancient Greek pedigree; conservatives, because they saw it as Christianity's war against Islam.[56]

Meanwhile, perceptions of Balkan peoples underwent a sharp reframing. Western travelogues had long cast the region as marginal—backward, unruly, dependent[57] — circulating stock images of laziness, cruelty, savagery, and coarseness. In European thought and letters, long-standing negative representations of the Turks—together with the supposedly "reasonable" evidentiary materials that propped them up—coalesced into the figure of the "savage Turk." Marketed to European publics as the freedom-seeking struggle of oppressed Christians against Turkish rule, this frame both legitimized the uprisings and helped fuel the massacres that followed.

When the First Balkan War broke out, King George I of Greece, King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and King Peter I of Serbia rallied around the same claim: to "liberate" Christian populations from Turkish oppression.[58] In the Ottoman polity—careful to preserve its cosmopolitan fabric—one does not find the kind of *othering*-based policies and mindsets that sank deep into Europe's political imagination. Indeed, at the very moment when a monster-type built on the Muslim-Turk image was gaining currency in Europe, the lived reality looked rather different: while the philosopher and astronomer Giordano Bruno, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rome's Campo de' Fiori, the Mughal emperor Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar in Agra was putting minority protections and freedom of belief into legal form and advancing a program grounded in tolerance.[59] Within the empire, ethnic and confessional communities were treated not as "others" but as constitutive parts of the whole and were brought under a protective umbrella. As with the Arabs—esteemed as a "noble nation"—non-Muslim groups, especially Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, enjoyed far-reaching corporate privileges; otherwise they could scarcely have preserved their

56 Kayıran, "Milliyetçilik Akımının Balkanlar'daki Gayrimüslim Unsurlar Üzerindeki Etkisi (1789-1875)", 87.

57 Lazarević - Milanović, "Modernist Seyahatnamelerde Balkanlar ve Türkler: "Derin Avrupa'da" İngilizlerin Türkleri Sunumu", 179.

58 Trandafir G. Djuvara, *Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması Hakkında Yüz Proje*, çev. Pulat Tacar, (İstanbul: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1999), 343-346.

59 Senn, *Kimlik ve Şiddet*, 36.

faiths and collective identities over centuries but would have been assimilated.[60] On the strength of such recognized privileges, it is even plausible to speak of an *Islam-Orthodox Empire*.[61] It should be recalled that when Mehmed II took Istanbul, the religious and legal prerogatives and the high level of state protection[62] he extended to the Greek Orthodox

[60] A striking observation in Toynbee is that the Ottoman practice of designating *devşirme* recruits as kul—so as not to reduce their own subjects to that status—gradually inverted: *devşirme* rose to the highest offices and reaped their privileges, while "the empire's own people," he argues, were effectively relegated to the position of kul. He treats this as a configuration unique to Ottoman history. In this reading, the commanding heights of government, the bureaucracy, and the military came to be staffed predominantly by converts of non-Muslim origin, whereas "the Turks" were tied to the land and, over centuries, turned into an under-schooled peasantry. In a piece for the London-based Hürriyet, Namık Kemal complained that while Greek, Armenian, and Jewish children learned to read within six months through schooling in churches and synagogues, Turkish children—neglected by the state—were left in ignorance. Historians such as Stone and Lewis also note that the privileges attached to the *devşirme* system opened rare paths to advancement, to the point that some Muslim families are said to have bribed Christian neighbors to register their sons as theirs and thus secure entry into the system. The Ottoman political-military elite was recruited above all from Rumelia. Türkdoğan further emphasizes that the overwhelming majority of sultans' mothers and consorts were of non-Muslim origin, and that the palace became the stage for intense rivalries between these women—often themselves former *devşirme*—culminating in a "sultanate of women" whose members sought to fill the court with advisers and officials from their own milieux. In this portrayal, ordinary Turks counted for little outside the fields they worked and the fronts they fought on, while the upper reaches of the state and key posts were dominated by minorities. Because those classified as reaya were largely confined to agriculture, they struggled to accumulate capital or amass wealth. By contrast, non-Muslim subjects leveraged urban residence and commercial opportunity to become the backbone of an emerging bourgeoisie—and, after the Tanzimat, to serve as junior partners to European industrial firms that had seized the domestic market—benefiting from new forms of prosperity while, in some cases, funding separatist terror. The dynamic was hardly limited to the nineteenth century. Lewis recounts the career of Mikhail (Michael) Kantakouzenos "Şeytanoğlu," a Greek magnate and, by some accounts, the wealthiest merchant of the sixteenth-century empire. In his classic work, Avcıoğlu also details the conflicts of interest among Christian and Jewish communities—sometimes pushed to extremes and even violence—both within and beyond the Ottoman order.

[61] Some historians trace the label "Islam-Orthodox Empire"—sometimes applied to the Ottomans—back quite far. As İlber Ortaylı reproduces in facsimile, an eighteenth-century Austrian publication titled *A Brief Description of the Nations and their Characteristics Found in Europe* presents a graphic table: Spaniards, French, Welsh, Germans, English, Swedes, Poles, and Hungarians each occupy their own column with characteristic traits, while the final column—tellingly—offers a joint appraisal under the heading "Turk or Greek."

[62] Mustafa Akdağ notes that the privileged autonomy granted to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate has long posed a murky, persistent snag vis-à-vis Turkey's sovereign rights on its own soil. Historical records relate that Mehmed II received Gennadios, the Orthodox spiritual leader, bestowed on him not only the patriarchal office but also the title *Megas Authentēs* and the rank of an Ottoman pasha, and transferred to the Patriarchate lands conferring some of the broadest property rights in the empire. In Akdağ's reading, the downstream consequences of these arrangements would be confirmed—tragically and to Turkey's detriment—during the War of Independence. Even outspoken critics of Turkish history and of the republic's minority policies—dissident scholars of minority background such as Bali, Yumul, and Benlisoy—acknowledge certain realities about the Patriarchate and non-Muslim communities. In their work, the Western church is depicted as a structure that takes shape from the individual and becomes a community through collective action, whereas in the Eastern churches—whose ontology is anchored in the community—the sense of solidarity is sharper. The upshot, unsurprisingly, is that these congregations tend to assume conservative and nationalist traits. For example, with the transition to multi-party politics, many minority groups backed the Democrat Party (DP) rather than the Republican People's Party (CHP), which they associated with the War of Independence, the bureaucracy, and the status quo. A related observation appears in Anthony D. Smith's *Chosen Peoples*: the status accorded to

Patriarchate—then on the verge of institutional eclipse—were far greater than what it had enjoyed under Byzantium.* Nor did it stop there: in the interest of justice, an Armenian patriarch was appointed—this community would later be honored as the *millet-i sâdıka*—and extensive guarantees were afforded to their flock. Comparable concessions held for Jews as well, a community rarely granted permanent residence in other civilizations. Most strikingly, the Armenians and Jews admitted to the city after the conquest were precisely those two groups whom Byzantium had long sought to keep at arm's length from its core.

Economic opportunity was the chief reason non-Muslim minorities recognized Ottoman rule. Venetians, Genoese, Provençals, and other Latin merchants had monopolized maritime trade, tightening their grip on Istanbul, Galata, the Marmara (Princes') islands, and the Black Sea lanes and edging the *Rum* (Greek Orthodox) and others out of overseas commerce. Mehmed II's conquest of Istanbul broke that Latin monopoly; under Ottoman protection, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews emerged as major economic actors.[63] Many scholars agree that once Mehmed extended freedom of worship and free commerce, the city drew a heavy influx of newcomers and, within a short time, Turks themselves became a minority.[64] As Balivet argues, the Ottoman use of *Rum*[65] signaled more than a geographical label: it pointed to a fusion of people and culture, such that Orthodox Greeks and Muslim Turks were in deep, reciprocal interaction.[66] Unlike Armenians and Jews, Greeks functioned as a translocal power with leverage across multiple countries. The historian Nikos Svoronos speaks of the great power[67] exercised by a small Hellenic community and of its regional ascendancy. Centered in the Phanariote[68] milieu around the Patriarchate, this power simultaneously occupied key posts at the Porte, dominated the empire's foreign trade, maintained influence in Greece, and—by obtaining princely titles in the Danubian

the Greeks within the Orthodox Church after the conquest of Istanbul helped sustain the salience and durability of Greek ethnic identity. Over time, self-definition proceeded not only along confessional lines but also through identities shaped by that confession.

63 Halil İnalcık, *Doğu Batı: Makaleler II*, (İstanbul: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2008), 249.

64 Jacques Attali, *1492*, çev. M. Ali Kılıçbay, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1992), 85.

65 Although *Rum* is often equated today with "Greek," the term originates in the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire and literally means "Roman." In use, *Rum* referred not only to Greeks but to all Orthodox Christian communities—of diverse ethnic backgrounds—living under the empire's aegis.

66 Orhan Türkdoğan, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk Toplum Yapısı*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008), 7.

67 According to Feroz Ahmad, the power was so staggering that a Rum merchant of distinguished Byzantine lineage, having amassed a vast fortune from the fur trade and the salt monopoly, donated sixty ships to the Ottoman navy.

68 In the Phanar quarter, the Patriarchate stood alongside a constellation of long-rooted Phanariote families. Some of these households played decisive roles during the Balkan Wars and along the road to the empire's collapse. While many initially backed the Ottomans—out of commercial interest and administrative position—others, spurred by British and French encouragement, assumed key roles in the project to bring the empire down. Among the Phanar elite, Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis not only headed the Filiki Eteria (*Friendly Society*), whose clandestine cells stretched across the Balkans, but also emerged as a leader of the Greek Revolution. His ambition extended beyond a merely national Greek state: he envisaged an uprising that would sweep the entire peninsula and culminate in a revived Byzantine Empire.

principalities—secured a share in their governance.[69] These advantages did not prevent them from adopting what the literature calls a *singular belonging*[70] —a reductive posture—and from using those opportunities to advance that exclusive identification. Meanwhile, though their strongest commercial rivals were the Jews of Salonica, cooperation with Anatolian Armenians often enabled them to prevail.

In sum, the ethnic cleansing, identity erasure, assimilation, and othering policies Greece imposes today on Turks and other Muslim communities in Western Thrace rest on a long genealogy empowered by European patronage. Framing the issue as Athens' treating these lands as a forward outpost—or as an inseparable part of a territory once "bestowed" upon it—is not wrong, but it is incomplete. In the near term, Greece's core claims were staged through the modern project's outcomes—nationalism[71] and the nation-state—most visibly in the violent pursuit of the *Megáli Idéa*: expelling Turks from the Balkans and seizing Istanbul and Izmir. In the longer durée, they are cast as rightful inheritance claims over Thrace, the Aegean, and Anatolia, grounded in asserted ancient Greek/Hellenic origins[72].

---

69 Gökdemir, *Helenizm Siyonizm Türkçülük*, 204.

70 Singular belonging (exclusive allegiance): An orientation in which an individual, convinced of belonging exclusively to a single collective, channels all available opportunities and resources to that collective and is motivated in decisions and actions by this belief.

71 The Balkans rank among the places where nationalism—and the identity-based manipulations it licenses—has produced the most lethal violence. Unlike the canonical script of European modernity, Balkan nationalisms unfolded not through "progressive" modernization but through schisms marked by massacre and brutality. In the late Ottoman search for ways to save the empire, ideological projects crystallized: Westernism, Ottomanism, and Islamism institutionalized themselves and gathered adherents, while Turkish nationalism was met with sustained suspicion—calibrated to the perceived claims of minorities. Hence Turks were among the last to consolidate a sense of collective identity and to pursue an explicitly ethnic project. Probing deeper, and unlike other Balkan and Arab populations, the very notion of "Turkishness" had long carried pejorative connotations (coarse, unlettered, "yörük"/nomadic), rendering ethnic self-assertion particularly fraught. At the level of everyday identity, Islam outweighed ethnicity: across the empire—above all in Anatolia—self-identification as *Muslim* typically took precedence over *Turk*. Several factors are adduced here: (i) Islam's reception through an Arab-centered doctrinal canon, embraced in an "Arab Islam" register without much internal critique; (ii) after Selim I's conquest of the Mamluk realm and assumption of authority over Mecca and Medina, a shift of the imperial center of gravity toward the "holy lands," with the caliphate's burdens reinforcing the ascendancy of Arabic scholarly and religious schools; and (iii) by the reign of Ahmed I, the consolidation of rigorist pietism and romanticized mystical idioms that captivated the unlettered populace—quite unlike the more accommodating *Bektashi* current that had helped embed Islam in the Balkans, or the plural textures of Anatolian Islam. An irony follows. Even if many in Anatolia did not habitually name themselves "Turk," European cartography labeled the polity "Turkey" well into the Tanzimat era, treating *Turkishness*—not *Ottomanness*—as the operative identity. The dynasty, by contrast, studiously avoided the term *Turk*, preferring designations such as *Memâlik-i İslâm*, *Memâlik-i Şâhâne*, *Memâlik-i Mahrûsa*, *Memâlik-i Osmâniyye*, or *Diyâr-ı Rûm*.

72 In the register of Hellenic roots, Halil İnalcık—in his essay "Hellenism, the *Megáli Idéa*, and Turkey"—underscores a key point: Greeks have long been divided over what counts as their "true" past, and the split has produced periodic socio-cultural tensions. Secular "Westernizers" gravitated toward Hellenism, whereas the popular strata largely privileged Orthodoxy and the living traditions of the Byzantine Church. An effort to bridge the divide—"Helleno-Christianity" (often likened to a Turkish-Islamic synthesis)—sought to fuse the two, but never commanded broad allegiance. In practice, the Rum/Orthodox identity symbolized by the Church retained the upper hand both in society and in politics.

Put differently, resentments sedimented over more than a millennium and crystallized in nineteenth-century nationalisms—resentments that, despite European and Russian backing, failed to exact their price from either the Ottoman Empire or the Republic of Turkey—were displaced onto those over whom Greece had leverage: the Turks of Western Thrace and other Muslim minorities, through forms of physical and psychological violence that continued until roughly a decade or so ago. A further reading is also possible: the pressures at issue can be seen as an attempt to settle, via Greece and at Turkey's expense, a longer historical account between Europe and the Turks—the power that, directly or indirectly, helped bring down both the Western and Eastern Roman empires and for centuries posed a challenge at Europe's doorstep, up to the gates of Vienna.

Conclusion

This study set out from the question of how the image of the "Turk," fashioned in Europe's political and intellectual fields, has—especially since the nineteenth century—functioned as a central legitimating device in Balkan nation-formation, operating along an axis of *othering*. It has shown that this othering did not remain at the level of discourse: it systematically eroded the Ottoman Empire's carefully negotiated, multiethnic and multiconfessional institutional legacy in the region and, in the end, helped pave the way to massacres.

The analysis focused on the cultural, institutional, and spatial mechanisms through which this configuration took effect across the Balkans and on how it secured a durable place in collective memory. Methodologically, the study adopted a historical-comparative frame and, drawing primarily on secondary sources, subjected archival materials, travelogues, and the polemical writings of the period to critical scrutiny.

In light of this analysis, the findings underscore the pivotal role of these othering mechanisms in the making of modern Balkan nation-states and, finally, assess their lasting imprint on contemporary Balkan societies' collective memory and identity politics. Three levels of findings stand out in this study. First, Europe's boundaries were drawn not on maps but around othering mechanisms anchored in a civilizational claim; within this architecture, the figure of the "Turk" functions as the outside that holds the inside together around shared referents. Although this political image was framed through a rhetoric of liberation in Balkan nationalisms—despite their record of violence and massacres—in practice it triggered simultaneous transformations: The refashioning of memory through singular historical narratives, denial, and slander; the reordering of space—by disabling religious and educational institutions, dissolving the *waqf* regime, and disrupting settlement patterns and demography; and the reallocation of property—through land-title and taxation

regimes that severed historical claims. Second, attempts to purge—or to deny—the past are themselves projects of inscription with their own distinct content. The semantic slide from *Rumeli* to "the Balkans" and then to "Southeastern Europe" is more than a change of name; it signals an effort to replace a multilayered Ottoman past with a homogenizing, exclusionary national narrative. By contrast, cultural continuities—from cuisine to music, from urban morphology to everyday speech—undercut and complicate this purge. Collective identities that coalesce around the Ottoman legacy, as in Bosnia and Albania, operate as social forms of resistance to the exclusionary discourse of modern nation-building and amount to more than mere cultural survivals. The evidence suggests that the past functions not as a passive inventory but as a dynamic force shaping the present. Third, the Balkan experience shows plainly how Europe constructs an "outside within"—the constitutive outside. In Gladstone's hate-suffused agitation, in Byron's romantic war narratives, and in propaganda tracts such as Bryce and Toynbee's *Blue Book*, the central issue is not simply cultural intolerance; it is the conversion of Europe's civilizational discourse into an instrument of imperial rule—a rewriting of a continent's shared memory in the service of a single political project.

Ultimately, the reality we reach is that this project of exclusion and othering never fully succeeded. A minaret's silhouette in Bosnia, the façade of an Ottoman mansion in Albania, a Turkish idiom in Bulgaria, or Turkish dishes claimed in Greece endure as silent witnesses that defy the amnesia imposed by official history. They show that the past is not a dead inventory but an active agent intervening in the politics of the present. For that reason, the question "whose past?" is, in a sense, misplaced. The real question is: "which fractured realities are we prepared to confront?" The tragedy of the Balkans feeds on the postponement of that reckoning; its hope lies precisely in undertaking it—in re-commoning space, property, and memory. Europe can shed an identity built upon the Other only when it faces the broken mirror it left in the Balkans—seeing its own reflection in the cracks rather than trying to polish them away. Then the Balkan legacy can cease to be a theater of conflict and become a poetics of coexistence in and through brokenness.

References

Adanır, Fikret - Faroqhi, Suraiya. *Osmanlı ve Balkanlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015.

Ahmad, Feroz. *Bir Kimlik Peşinde Türkiye*. çev. S. C. Karadeli. İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006.

Akdağ, Mustafa. *Türkiye'nin İktisadî ve İçtimaî Tarihi (1453-1559)*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1995.

Avcıoğlu, Doğan. *Türkiye'nin Düzeni*. İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1968.

Aydemir, Şevket Süreyya. *Suyu Arayan Adam*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1999.

Bali, Rıfat vd. "Gayrimüslim Cemaatlerde Muhafazakârlık". *Muhafazakârlık*. ed. Ahmet Çiğdem. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002, 656-661.

Barth, Hans. *Ey Türk Uyan!* çev. Goncagül Artam. İstanbul: Tarih Encümeni Yayınları, 2003.

Brown, L. Carl. İmparatorluk Mirası: Balkanlar'da ve Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Damgası. çev. Gül Güven. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017.

Burçoğlu, Nedret Kuran. "Avrupa ve Avrupalılık". *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 6/23 (2004), 9-20.

Collins, Roger. *The Basques in European History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990.

Coşkun, Recai. "Yakındaki Uzak Vatan: Balkanlar". *Düşünce Dünyasında Türkiz Dergisi* 3/18 (2022), 49-60.

Djuvara, Trandafir G. *Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması Hakkında Yüz Proje*. çev. Pulat Tacar. İstanbul: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1999.

Dolgun, Uğur. "Araştırma Bulgularının Sosyolojik Esaslar Çerçevesinde Genel Bir Değerlendirmesi". *Batı Trakya'dan Türkiye'ye Göç (1967-1995)*. ed. Nilüfer Erdem. Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2024.

Dursun, Haluk. *Nil'den Tuna'ya Osmanlı*. İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009.

Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1. London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776. https://archive.org/details/declineandfall01gibbuoft

Hacısalihoğlu, Mehmet. *Balkan ve Karadeniz Ülkelerinde Güncel Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Osmanlı-Türk İmajı*. İstanbul: Balkar Yayınları, 2020.

Hamzaoğlu, Yusuf. *Balkan Türklüğü*. Cilt 1. Üsküp: Logos-A Yayınları, 2010.

Haykıran, Kemal Ramazan. *Suyu Aşan Kılıçlar*. İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2022.

Hourani, Albert. *Arap Halkları Tarihi*. çev. Yavuz Alogan, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2024.

İnalcık, Halil. *Doğu Batı: Makaleler II*. İstanbul: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2008.

İnalcık, Halil. *Rönesans Avrupası*. İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2014.

Karal, Enver Ziya. "Yunan Adalarının Fransızlar Tarafından İşgali ve Osmanlı-Rus Münasebâtı". *Belleten* 1/7, (Temmuz 1938), 623-643.

Karlsson, Ingmar. *Avrupa ve Türkler.* çev. Turhan Kayaoğlu. İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2007.

Kayıran, Mehmet. "Milliyetçilik Akımının Balkanlar'daki Gayrimüslim Unsurlar Üzerindeki Etkisi (1789-1875)". *Türk Dünyası Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi Yakın Tarih Dergisi* 3/5, (Şubat 2019), 754-87.

Kazancıgil, Ali. *Türkiye Üzerine Basmakalıp Düşünceler*, İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2010.

Koralp, İdris. "Balkanlarda Türkler". Erişim 22 Eylül 2008. https://www.ruyiad.org.tr/balkanlarda-turkler

Kritovulos, Mikhael. *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*. çev. Charles T. Riggs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954. https://archive.org/details/history-of-mehmed-the-conqueror

Lazarević, Sanja - Milanovic, Aleksandra Úuric. "Modernist Seyehatnamelerde Balkanlar ve Türkler: "Derin Avrupa'da" İngilizlerin Türkleri Sunumu". *Oğuz-Türkmen Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2/2, (2018), 175-189.

Lewis, Bernard. *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*. çev. M. Kıratlı. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1984.

Meriç, Cemil. *Umrandan Uygarlığa*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996.

Meserve, Margaret. *Rönesans Tarih Düşüncesinde Türkler*. çev. Mehmet T. Akad. İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2023.

Messadie, Gerald. *4000 Yıllık Tarihî Aldatmacalar*. çev. Sonat Kaya. İstanbul: Pegasus Yayınları, 2013.

Millas, Herkül. *Yunan Ulusunun Doğuşu*. çev. Özcan Buze. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020.

Mool, Johns. *Anadolu'da Türkiye Yaşayacak mı?* çev. Habil Adem. İstanbul: Selis Kitaplar, 2009.

Namık Kemal. *Sürgünde Muhalefet: Namık Kemal'in Hürriyet Gazetesi.* İstanbul: Vakıf Bank Kültür Yayınları, 2019.

Nomiku, H. A. *Haçlı Seferleri*. çev. Kriton Dinçmen. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997.

Ortaylı, İlber. *Avrupa ve Biz*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2008.

Övet, Talha "Avrupa 'Öteki'si". *Stratejik Öngörü Dergisi* 11 (Aralık 2007), 95-102. Erişim: http://strateji-kongoru.tasam.org/pdf/avrupaotekisitalhaovet.pdf

Öztuna, Yılmaz. *93 ve Balkan Savaşları: Avrupa Türkiye'sini Kaybımız-Rumeli'nin Elden Çıkışı*. İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2021.

Papageorgiou, Stefanos P. *Modern Yunan Tarihinden Kesitler*. çev. Murat Issı. İstanbul: Yazılama Yayınevi, 2015.

Pirinççi, Ferhat. "Yunan Ulusal Kimliğinin Oluşumu Sürecinde İçsel ve Dışsal Parametrelerin Analizi". *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 46/1 (2006), 53-78.

Pocock, J. G. A. "Kendi Tarihleri İçinde Bazı Avrupalılar", çev. R. Öğdül, *Avrupa Fikri*, ed. Anthony Pagden, İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2010.

Popovic, Aleksandre. *Balkanlarda İslâm*. çev. Komisyon. İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995.

Reader's Digest. *When, Where, Why and How it Happened*. London: The Reader's Digest Association Ltd, 1999.

Senn, Amartya. *Kimlik ve Şiddet*. çev. Ahmet Kardam, İstanbul: Türk Henkel Yayınları, 2006.

Smith, Anthony. *Seçilmiş Halklar*. çev. Ayhan Küçük. İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2018.

Solnon, Jean-François. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Avrupa*, çev. Ali Berktay. İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2020.

Steinz, Pieter. "Şarkiyatçılık". *Avrupa'yı Avrupa Yapan Değerler*. çev. Kadir Türkmen. İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2016.

Stone, Norman. *Türkiye: Kısa Bir Tarih*, çev. Orhan İsvan, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2011.

Şâyegân, Dâryûş. *Batı Karşısında Asya*. çev. Derya Örs. İstanbul: Ağaç Kitabevi, 2005.

Tafur, Pero. *The Travels of Pero Tafur*. Trans. William M. McAllister. New York: The University Press, 1911. https://archive.org/details/tra_pero_tafur_english

Timur, Taner. "Osmanlı Mirası." *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*. ed. İrvin C. Schick - Ahmet Tonak. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1998.

Todorova, Maria. *Balkanları Tahayyül Etmek.* çev. Dilek Şendil. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022.

Toynbee, Arnold J. *Hatıralar: Tanıdıklarım*. çev. Deniz Öktem. İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2005.

Toynbee, Arnold J. *Türkiye'de ve Yunanistan'da Batı Meselesi*. çev. Mehmet Ali Yalçın. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2022.

Türkdoğan, Orhan. *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türk Toplum Yapısı*. İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008.

Türkdoğan, Orhan. *Türk Toplum Sistemi*. İstanbul: IQ Yayıncılık, 2011.

Yerasimos, Stefanos. *Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri*. çev. Şirin Tekeli. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023.

Zürcher, Erik Jan. *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*. çev. Yasemin Saner. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008.