

History Teaching and the formation of National Identity: The Greek and Turkish Case Compared

Most of us came across history and “our” past, for the first time and in a rather systematic way quite early in life, usually in primary schools. What I remember from my childhood is that this narration, naturally, was quite simplistic because it was meant to be for small children. This national history is full of stories which are nice to hear. Some are happy-end stories; they end up with our victories or with our successful struggles for liberation which secured our independent state. Some stories mention unhappy incidents and/or years, too. The sad side of a story usually is caused by forces which are understood as “our enemy”. In these narrations the unhappy part of our national history has a temporary character.¹ The sorrow part is understood as the price we have to pay to secure what is sacred: our country, our identity, our honor, the memory of ancestors, etc.

Overall, this history is a source of pride. It is accompanied by some symbols, such as national flags, portraits and statues of our heroes, well known patriotic verses, names of places where victorious battles were fought, etc. However, the problem with me is that I was not brought up with one such history – as most lucky children are - but with two: One was Turkish and the other was Greek. And these two stories were not in harmony, they were contradictory. They were saying completely different things. What was a positive incident for the one it was negative for the other. The good guys, the heroes, the just and respected characters were shown as a source of trouble in the other version of the “history”.

Actually, during my childhood I was not aware of this contradiction. I only knew that I was supposed to narrate two different stories that were poles apart to different teachers. In Istanbul I attended a Greek minority primary school where we had both Turkish and Greek teachers. I knew what the “historical truth” was in each case. (It was something like having to follow catechism in Christianity and a course on Darwinism at the same time.) There is not any problem for the people that are brought up with one single national truth and a single reality. One follows the fate that is dictated by one’s national identity: There is only one “truth” and no dilemma; there is no problematic, no contradiction, no difficult questions to ask and no hard decisions to make. But once one is face to face with the multidimensional aspect of history or with the various versions of the same story one has a couple of alternatives:

- 1- One may chose one of the national versions and live happily thereafter.
- 2- One may forget the problematic, make belief that there is not a contradiction that we have to face, and again live happily thereafter.
- 3- Or one may try to sort out the dilemma. In that case a paradigm shift may occur and the nationalistic approach may be rejected. Some may end up with schizophrenic type disturbances, others really enjoy the new intellectual adventure. (This adventure and what is the paradigm shift constitute part of this lecture).

¹ As a Greek anthem says: Η Ελλάδα ποτέ δεν πεθαίνει, ... μόνο λίγο καιρό ξαποσταίνει και ξανά προς τη δόξα τραβά (Greece never dies.. only rests a little and sets up for glory again.)

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

The first time I was interested in the Greek and Turkish textbooks was in 1980s when our son went to primary school in Athens, and to our great surprise, he started talking against the “Turks”. This incident triggered my interest and caused my lifelong hobby: the Greek-Turkish relations. I published my first comparative study on textbooks in Turkish, in Greek and in English in the years 1987-1991.

Textbooks are important for three reasons:

- 1- They are influential in education, shaping opinions and identities.
- 2- They help us understand the intentions of the state. Through the textbook we know what kind of citizens a particular nation-state wants to have; we know what kind of future generations our political leaders want to create; what kind of a belief about the “self” and the “other” the citizens are going to have.
- 3- And finally, by studying the textbooks used until today we understand what kind of an education the citizens and the politicians that shape our present and our future had when they were at school. Textbooks help us understand the way the opinion makers of today think and feel. In the last resort we are all the product of our environment. Textbooks show, partly at least, this environment.

I will give you some indication of what kind of a schooling the generation that presently is thirty years old or older had, by referring to textbooks used in the two countries in the decades of 1970-1980. The present day textbooks are considerably better but they still need amendments. In fact I am not going to speak about textbooks in general. The books used in schools is a complex issue and cannot be handled in a lecture. I will only try to show shortly how opinions about the “self” and the “other” as well as an identity which is called “national” were tried to be formed in the last decades in Greece and Turkey.²

² For those who are not familiar with the history of Greece and of Turkey and their bilateral relations I have to remind that the modern Greek state was established in 1829 after a national liberation war against the Ottoman Empire which lasted seven years. The Ottomans had subdued the territories which constitute modern Greece as early as the fifteenth century. In Greek historiography the four hundred or so years of Ottoman rule are known as the *Tourkokratia*, a word whose simple meaning ('Turkish rule') has overtones of the 'dark years of bondage'.

The Balkan wars (1912-13) enabled Greece to extend its national boundaries at the expense of the Ottoman Empire (the 'sick man of Europe'), annexing Northern Greece and most of the Aegean islands. With the defeat and partition (by the Treaty of Sevres) of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, Greece, with the encouragement of Great Britain, seized the chance to occupy Izmir and its environs, that is western Asia Minor (1919).

A successful counter-offensive by the Turkish army, led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) caused the disorderly retreat of the Greek army and its decimation. In 1923 the Treaty of Lausanne officially established the modern national state of the Turks. Except for the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul and the 'Muslims' of Western Thrace, the Turkish and Greek minorities in the two countries were then forcibly exchanged. Thus by a rare and perhaps unique coincidence, each nation had fought against the other for national recognition.

The Cyprus issue, among other incidents brought underlying tensions to a head. Turkey reacted to *Enosis*, the possible union of the island (which was under the British rule) with Greece, and the widespread riots against the Greek minority population of Istanbul in September 1955 marked a new era in Greek-Turkish relations. Eventually, in 1974, the military junta ruling Greece attempted a coup against the Cyprus government of Makarios. This broke the Treaty of Zurich (1960), which had recognized an independent Cyprus while protecting the rights of the Turkish minority. Turkey, one of the guarantors of the Zurich agreement, thereupon moved its troops into Cyprus to define and secure a Turkish zone.

Today, in spite of various efforts for reconciliation a number of issues seem to be causing friction between Greece and Turkey. The most important disputes and grievances concern the status of Cyprus, the continental shelf in the Aegean sea, the present and future of the minorities in Istanbul and Western Thrace, and the military status of the Aegean islands.

The Greeks and the Turks have been *educated* to become antagonists and opponents. For generations they have been fed with aggressive ideologies, with prejudices against the other side, with one-sided information and with historical distortions and exaggerations. This educational practice then naturally generates its own increasing momentum. This process is seen best in the textbooks.

The main difference between Greek and Turkish history textbooks is that the Turkish texts make limited reference to Greeks, whereas in the Greek ones Turks are prominent. This is because the Ottoman Empire was for centuries entangled with a multitude of other states (France, Hungary, Russia, Iran, and so on), while modern Greece most often confronted the Turks. Apart from this difference the similarities are striking.³

Our superior nation

The basic belief which is impressed upon nine to twelve-year-old pupils is that they belong to a superior nation. Such notions as equality among nations and peoples, or that civilization can derive from the interaction of different cultures, are not to be found in these textbooks. The present Greeks claimed they are the founders of world civilization, and the Turks claimed that the ancient Aegean civilization (that is, the ancient Greek civilization) flourished because of the Turks!

According to a Greek sixth-grade textbook, the Greek nation is already around 4,000 years old:

After the wars against the Persians . . . a new Greek civilization was created which the whole world still admires . . . This civilization was later conveyed and spread to deepest Asia by Alexander the Great. When the Greeks became Roman subjects, this civilization was carried to Europe and formed the basis of the present-day civilization. [During the Byzantine era the Greeks] fought against the barbarian nations to save civilization and Christianity. When Sultan Mehmet II brought this long and glorious historic period to a close, Greek intellectuals escaped to the West and took with them the torch of Greek civilization, helping to kindle the Renaissance in Europe . . . The Greeks were enslaved by the Turks for almost 400 years . . . With its trust in God and its patriotic devotion, the eternal Greek race was reborn. (G3, pp. 186-7.)

The Turkish textbook for the equivalent school year tells another story:

³ The abbreviations in the text refer to the following textbooks which were in use in the years 1980-1990:

Greek:

- G1: *Arhaia Ellatha* (Ancient Greece), Fourth Grade, prepared by G. Kamaterou-Glitsis.
- G2: *Romaiki kai Vizantini Istoria* (Roman and Byzantine History), Fifth Grade, prepared by A. Bouyioukas.
- G3: *Elliniki Istoria ton Neoteron Hronon* (Greek History of Recent Times), Sixth Grade, prepared by H. Diamantopoulos and A. Kiriazopoulos.

Two new books were introduced in 1988-9, replacing G1 and G2 above. They are:

- G1 New: *Arhaia Hronia* (Ancient Years), Fourth Grade, prepared by D. Aktiris, A. Velalithis, Th. Katsoulakos and K. Horeanthis, under the supervision of D. Melas.
- G2 New: *Sta Vizantina Hronia* (In the Byzantine Years), Fifth Grade, prepared by V. Asimomitis, M. Karla, N. Nikolopoulos, Y. Papagrigoriou and Y. Salvaras, under the supervision of D. Melas.

Turkish:

- T1: *Sosyal Bilgiler* (Social Sciences), Fourth Grade, prepared by F. Sanır, T. Asal and N. Akşit.
- T2: *Sosyal Bilgiler* (Social Sciences), Fifth Grade, prepared by F. Sanır, T. Asal and N. Akşit.
- T3: *Milli Tarih* (National History), First Grade Junior High School, prepared by N. Akşit. (This last book is used here to provide comparability. Greek primary schools had six grades, Turkish only five at the said years.)

Archaeological excavations and research in Central Asia have shown that the oldest civilization in our world was the creation of the Turks . . . Turks from Central Asia migrated to various parts of the world and helped the natives who still lived in the Paleolithic Age to move on into the Neolithic Age. They learned from the Turks how to cultivate and how to work metals. In these new countries the Turks made further advances, building big cities and founding strong states. Important centres of civilization were thus created in Mesopotamia, in Anatolia, in Syria and around the Aegean Sea. (T3, p. 25.)

The Greek textbook has Alexander the Great bringing civilization to the people of Asia. In the Turkish one it is the other way round:

The first human beings lived in Asia; the great religions were born in Asia . . . Asians were the first to invent gunpowder, the magnetic compass, paper, porcelain, silk, glass, the calendar and writing. The oldest and greatest civilizations, as well as the first great states, were founded in Asia. The hardest working and the highest-minded nations are in Asia. (T2, p. 192.)

The naiveté of the above passages is not just because they were written for children, in a simplistic style. Such understandings are accepted respectively in Greek and Turkey as the 'official view of history', and can be found in many history books. Supervision of the writing of history is a major preoccupation for politicians and for the states in the Balkans.

Belittling the neighbour

Superiority is always relative, and requires that the other party be discredited. Thus Turks were till recently presented to Greek schoolchildren as follows:

Emperor Constantine . . . made preparations for the defence of Constantinople even though he knew, as once Leonidas in Thermopylae was also aware, that the barbarians would eventually win . . . Sultan Mehmet II. . . . aroused the fanaticism of the Turkish soldiers by promising wealth in this life and happiness in Heaven. Those who died in their efforts to take the city would meet the Prophet (Muhammed) and His rich offer of food in Heaven . . . Terror and horror followed the capture of the city: massacre, plunder, enslavement, vandalism and other barbarisms. Those who sought sanctuary in the church of Saint Sophia fell victims to the fury of the janissaries. (G2, pp. 152, 157.)

In the new versions of this textbook, however, there are some significant changes. The reference to the expected victory of the 'barbarians' has gone; so have 'the fanaticism of the Turkish soldiers' and their expectation of 'food in Heaven'. With the fall of the city, according to the new book, the Turks started 'to plunder, to kill and to vandalize', but that is all. (G2 New, p. 198.)

In the sixth-grade textbook further brush strokes develop the portrait of the Turk:

It is impossible to imagine a greater catastrophe for our nation than our enslavement to the Turks. The Turks being savages and without civilization were disastrous in their impact, and did not grant a single right to the enslaved nation. (G3, p. 8.)

It is interesting to note a contradiction here. The 'historian' goes on to tell the children how the population was forcibly converted to Islam, 'by any available means', and the churches turned into mosques; how 'satanic, disgusting and pitiless kidnapping' supplied the ranks of the Janissary Corps; and how the Greeks had to pay heavy taxes 'to stay alive', faced 'disgraceful humiliations', and suffered denial of all justice. The next chapter, however, refers without comment to the 'privileges' granted under the Ottoman Empire to its Greek-speaking population. These privileges in fact conceded autonomy to the Greek Orthodox Church, including the right of jurisdiction in the Orthodox community, and gave the Greek-speaking

community autonomy in matters of education, religion and culture. Such historical facts are ignored, subordinated to the larger need to maintain the image of the wicked Turk.

Depiction of Turks in more recent history implies little change. The account of events in 1821, with a touch of paranoia, accuses the Turks of evil intent: 'The massacre of Chios demonstrated to the whole world the bestiality of the Turks and their ultimate aim, extermination of the Greek race'. (G3, p. 91.) Or again, 'hundreds of Greek civilians were massacred' by the Turks in 1922, during the war. (G3, p. 168.)

The character of the "Turk" and of how he is to be presented in textbooks still is being debated in Greece. A history textbook for the 6th grade prepared by Maria Repousi was eventually banned and is not taught at schools after wide protests of "intellectuals", politicians and the Church of Greece, because the protesters believe that the atrocities of the Turks against the Greeks were not properly included in the book.

In Turkey the textbooks were no better. According to the fourth-grade book:

In 1200 BC barbaric tribes . . . invaded the region which is called Greece today. In doing so they devastated the region and pitilessly killed the aboriginals. The Romans called these unknown tribes 'Greeks'. (T1, p. 191.)

These Greeks subsequently – Turkish fifth - graders are taught - :

intermixed with other tribes which came from Anatolia, thus forming a cross-breed. Then they were mixed with the Macedonians, the Romans, the Slavs and the Albanians. Therefore the Greeks of today have nothing in common with the ancient Greeks but a common language and some customs. (T2, p. 15.)

So history 'proves' the desired point! And there are lessons to be drawn:

Greece attacked the Ottoman Empire (1912-13) when the empire was at its weakest. During this war the aggressors acted with cruelty. They killed the Turks without pity [pity is altogether in short supply -HM] . . . Until the Greeks appreciate our friendly offers we should be very wary and cautious with this neighbour. Turkish boys and girls must realize this. (T2, p. 152.)

In 1821 'most of the Turks who lived in the Peloponnese and on the islands, were killed by the Greeks - forty-five to fifty thousand died'. (T2 , p. 64.) During the Turkish War of Liberation 'the Greek army killed civilians without hesitation, women and children included, and set fire to villages and towns'. (T2, p. 99.) And as final touch, to be sure of making an irreversible impact on these children of impressionable years as well as demonstrating the unchangingly pitiless Greek character, the 'historians' record that in 1821 'the Greeks showed by their actions that they are capable of killing without mercy even the babes in their cradles'. (T2, p. 64.)

Omissions

Two categories of events are skilfully left out of these textbooks; first, "our" ugly or unpleasant deeds, and second, any praiseworthy actions by "them". Schoolchildren in each country almost never read or heard that their ancestors might have injured the other side.

According to the Turkish textbooks, "when the Turks captured Istanbul (in 1453) nobody was hurt and nobody lost property". (T2, p. 19.) According to the Greek textbooks, when on 23 September 1821 the Greeks captured Tripolis in the Peloponnese, "the Greek army rushed into the city; it is impossible to describe what followed". (G3, p. 76.) What in fact followed was a massacre. (According to the memoirs of the Greek commanding officer, "From Friday to Sunday, the Greek soldiers went on slaughtering women, children and men. 32,000 people

were killed around Tripolis.” At the end a crier was sent out and the massacre was terminated.’)⁴

The expansionist, aggressive and booty-seeking policies of both Greeks and Turks are metamorphosed into humane expeditions, acts of benevolence and expressions of tolerance.

Alexander the Great was not only a great conqueror . . . but also a man who civilized [the East] ... He respected the religion, the traditions and customs of [the conquered]. (G1, p. 168.)

Sultan Mehmet II is the best example of the greatness and of the humane approach of the Turkish nation. He allowed the inhabitants [of Constantinople] to live as before and respected their religion, tradition and customs. (T2, p. 19.)

According to these textbooks, expansionist wars were fought for the triumph of tolerance, or at least 'because we had no choice':

The ancient Greeks had to cope with many difficulties [as they established their colonies]. The greatest difficulty was the attitude of the people living there already. Their attitude was sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile [meaning, they defended their homeland: HM]. In this second case, the Greeks *had* to fight. (G1, p. 43.)

Mustapha Kemal [in 1919] did not respect the Treaty of Sevres. He revolted . . . and started to fight against the Greeks [meaning, he defended his country: HM]. Greece was therefore *obliged* to enforce the Treaty by means of guns. (G3, pp. 167-8.)

Byzantine . . . Constantinople was squeezed between Turkish territories. The strait of Bosphorus was very important and *could not* possibly be left to the enemy. (T2, p. 19.)

The Ottoman State was not aggressive. But when its neighbours posed a threat, and only then, it acted promptly to check the danger. (T2, p. 27.)

Beograd *had* to be conquered in order to defend the Ottoman territories. (T2, p. 28.)

Estimating the damage

Besides distorting and manipulating historic events, these textbooks are also arbitrary in their evaluation of them. Severity and harshness in ancient times and more recently are used to “prove” the continuous and characteristic brutality of the neighbouring nation. Labels such as Greek and Turk create images of permanent ethnic prototypes, ignoring the complexity of life and the way that ethnic groups change and evolve. These textbooks leave the impression that they are concerned with two invariable, unchanging racial groups.

The notion of immutable nations is then further reinforced by assigning definite national characteristics: “our” nation is superior, benevolent and strong; the other is harsh, uncivilized, insignificant and so on. Children are left to conclude that the other side was always in the wrong, and their own side was always almost perfect.

Before ending this issue of textbooks I have to repeat that the textbooks presently used in the two countries are much better. Both in Greece and in Turkey there has been criticism of the nationalistic approach to history and in particular of its presentation in the textbooks. The intention of both states to build a national identity based on some nationalistic “principles” however, has not really changed: (1) “We” are the best or almost the best: old, civilized, benevolent, just, brave etc. and (2) Consequently the “other” or “others” are inferior.

As for the method to accomplish this is characterized by, (1) selective use of the past, (2) exaggerating “our” positive sides and silencing “our” negative sides, (3) exaggerating “the other’s” negative sides and silencing “the other’s” positive sides. (4) creating and repeating myths.

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⁴ Th. Kolokotronis, *Memoirs*. The sufferings of the defeated when the Ottoman army entered Constantinople in 1453 are extensively described by many Greek historians.

THE AGENTS OF NATIONALISM: THE CITIZENS OF NATION-STATES

Nationalism, national identity, national stereotypes and national prejudices are issues of academic interest for many; for me, due to my origin and due to my life story they were also phenomena that shaped my life. I was personally curious to find out what was going on with “these Greeks and Turks”! I approached the issues comparatively. I ended up in trying to demonstrate that nationalistic phenomena are unconstructive and harmful.

I noticed that many of my students but also in general a great number of people who study similar issues are under the impression that they are studying a social phenomenon detached from themselves, “out there”. They rarely suspect that the subject is also about their being, their own attitudes and their way of thinking. They normally do not associate nationalism with their beliefs and understanding. Whereas we all live in the era of nation-states and we are all under the influence of nationalism. This can be expressed differently, too: each of us is an agent of nationalism. Nationalism is not “out there”, nationalism is a social phenomenon, it is what *we* think and what *we* do.

Some researchers use the term “banal nationalism” (Michael Billig) for the widespread nationalism in our societies which is expressed as supposedly innocent symbols, expressions and similar everyday manifestations.⁵ Nationalism and the effects of a national identity in Greece and Turkey but also in all societies are mostly covered and unconscious.

Before I take up the issue of historiography I would like to give an example and show how tricky, difficult, complex and delicate an issue is to become aware and accept the existence of nationalistic tendencies of the “self” and/or of “our” side. Even professional academics, for example psychoanalysts, even experts in conflict resolution may not notice the possibility of being nationally prejudiced and a victim of socially imposed stereotypes. The study of Dr. Vamık D. Volkan and Dr. Norman Itzkowitz - *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict* (The Eothen Press, 1994) is an opportunity to present an example of a supposedly “scientific” approach. Dr. Vamık Volkan is deceived by his national identity: he sees only what his identity dictates.⁶

Dr. Volkan analyzes the Turkish-Greek conflict from a psychoanalytic perspective. In his study the Greeks and Turks appear as stereotypes with permanent, centuries-old obsessions. The Greeks are shown repeatedly as being “obsessed” with the Turks, after many traumatic face-offs, whereas the “average Turk ... is not obsessed with the Greeks”, since he is rather “balanced”. It is not clear, however, why the Turkish side is balanced.

The words used to denote exactly the same things are of interest. The words used tend to function efficiently as an advertising mechanism, targeting the subconscious. For example the Turks “conquer” (p. 64),⁷ whereas the Greeks “invade” (p. 102); the Greeks purify their language to “reject” Turkish words (p. 88), the Turks simply initiate “language reforms” (p. 114). The Greeks grow “against” Turkish territories (p. 77), the Turks simply expand “against Anatolia” (p. 28); the identity discussions among Greeks show their “confusion” (p. 87), but Turkey’s recent “identity crisis” is simply a process of “searching [for] a newer identity” (pp. 186, 188). Crete is “absorbed” by Greece (p. 203), Turkey “conquers” Cyprus or “triumphs” in Cyprus in the sixteenth century and “intervenes” in 1974 (p. 131); the Turks were “humiliated” by “the other” in Cyprus (p. 142), but the Greeks “thought” that they were

⁵ In September a book is published in Turkey (*Sözde Masum Milliyetçilik*, Ed. H. Millas, İletişim) where nationalism that is expressed in Greece and Turkey and in areas such as cartoons, books for children, TV serials, banknotes, toponyms, sport activities, media, popular songs (rebetiko), church and folklore was shown and discussed.

⁶ For a detailed analysis see: H. Millas, “Greek-Turkish Conflict And Arsonist Firemen” in *New Perspectives On Turkey*, Istanbul, Spring 2000, 22, pp. 173-184

⁷ Page numbers refer to the original book.

insulted by "the other" (p. 204). The word *self-determination* is used only once, as a right of the Turks (p. 101). When innocent people are killed, they are "massacred" if the dead are "ours" (p. 78) and they "lose their lives" if they belong to "the other" (p. 67). The examples can be extended ad infinitum.

I do not infer that the author deliberately chose these words to praise the Turkish side and to belittle the Greeks. Unfortunately this approach is unconscious and therefore more difficult to abandon. This is a good example of a case where our national identity plays a trick on us: we believe that we reach a conclusion after reasoning whereas we are drafted away by our unconscious – even if we are psychologists!

According to Dr. Volkan the Ottoman Empire was "magnanimous", the Greeks "felt Turkish rule to be an improvement in their lives," and the Turks "inflicted no blow to Greek national pride". Dr. Volkan perceives one thing when he studies the capture of Istanbul in 1453 and the Greeks something else. The Turkish analyst sees a "Greek trauma" with a sexual dimension: "The seizure of Constantinople by the 'youthful and virile Turkish sultan after he opened a hole in the city wall was perceived as a rape and the Turks as lustful.'" According to Dr. Volkan, the Greeks perceived the cannon that the Turks used in 1453 as a phallic symbol that raped them (p. 43). The book is full of sexual and Oedipal "explanations" in which the Greeks seem to be the ones feeling inferior.

There may be a Greek version of the event, too. First, why should the fall of Istanbul be traumatic to Grecophones of the fifteenth century, when, according to the thesis of the "magnanimous Ottoman state" the Greeks "felt Turkish rule to be an improvement in their lives," and the Turks "inflicted no blow to Greek national pride" (p. 72)? Second, a study of more than five hundred novels with Turkish and Greek authors showed no sign to justify such an interpretation of the Greek-Turkish relationship. On the contrary, the sexual discourse on both sides, as described by the interethnic "love affairs" produced by nationalist authors, showed that the most prevalent understanding and self-image is one in which "our" man is dominant over the woman of "the other." In other words, the dominant syndrome is not one of "you-raped-me" but on the contrary – and as Dr. Volkan's perception of the "hole" and of the role of the cannon of 1453 seems to confirm – is rather one of "I-raped-you".

Since we talk about love and prejudice I would like to touch upon another case of one sided national approach which shows the important role of national identity.

The Greek and Turkish literary texts helped me in noticing another area where our national identity dictates to the citizens (to the authors, to be precise) actions which are not noticed, either by the authors or by the readers. As I was reading various Turkish and Greek novels I came across many cases where Greeks and Turks, men and women, fell in love. In the first instance almost all cases seemed "normal" to me. When I classified them, however, I was really surprised. In the novels of the two countries - in real life of course the case is different – and among two hundred cases of love affairs between Greeks and Turks, it is always the women of the "Other" who prefer to unite with "our men". Cases to the contrary are - according to my findings - completely absent.⁸ It was only recently, the last five years or so, that cases to the contrary are noticed in both Greek and Turkish literature.⁹

⁸ Actually the two cases where 'our' women get in sexual relation with the 'Other' man confirm the rule: in both cases the authors (Ali Neyzi and Sevgi Soysal) have openly acknowledged that the 'Other' was among their recent ancestors. See: H. Millas, 'Les Romains, Les Femmes et Les Relations Gréco-Turques', in Nancy: *Genese/Oluşum*, August 1999 (No. 60-61).

⁹ Remember the case of the TV serial "Yabancı Damat" (The Foreign Bridegroom / Σύννορα Αγάπης) and the Greek novel *Αθώοι και Φταίχτες* (*The Innocents and the Guilty Ones*) (2004) of Maro Douka.

Why can't we let "our" woman love the "other"? How can one explain this one sided and symmetrical sensitivity? Especially, when in real life – from the time of Romeo and Juliet - we see (to be precise, we try not to see this!) that there is not such a strict rule in love! I can think of two explanations.

First, women play a special role in nationalistic discourse. They do not directly participate in the interethnic fights, they only "watch men", and therefore they are perceived acting as judges and as criteria that indicate the righteous side. Their preference counts. We want to believe that they normally fall in love with "us" and prefer "our men".

A second explanation of this 'sensitivity' with respect to our/their women may be the fact that traditionally the wars were marked by the enslavement of the women of the 'Other', as war trophies, followed by being the "wife" of the winner. Symbolically the marriage (or sexual connection) of "our woman" to the "Other" may be a sign of our defeat. This sensitivity may contain archaic taboos and a sense of inequality of sexes.

Whatever the reason is, the role assigned to women in nationalistic rhetoric and in literary texts is directly associated to national identity and reveals the existence of this identity more than any other parameter. In other words, in the case of Greeks and Turks, the image of the 'Other' is related to the so-called national identity and is concurrent with nation building.

Other examples of nationally biased texts are shown in a well documented study on textbooks used around the world and on how the French Revolution is being presented in these books.¹⁰ The book contains articles about 47 countries. Each (national) country interprets the French Revolution which took place in the very center of Europe, relatively recently and in front infinite eye witnesses differently. Some praise the event some condemn it. In some cases there are similarities among different national texts, in some other cases there are different interpretations within the same country. In short history writing is characterized by relativity. This relativity may be due to differences of ideologies, of religious beliefs, or of national paradigms. Today we discuss the national paradigms.

You may be curious to hear about the Greek and the Turkish textbooks on the French Revolution... The Greek textbooks give great importance to the event and evaluate it as a positive social development. The Turkish case is unique. In the chapter where the developments in Europe were discussed this revolution is shown as important and positive because it started a new era of democracy and liberty. But in the chapter that deals with the developments in the Balkans the same revolution is seen as negative because it spread nationalism in the Ottoman lands and caused movements of separatism among the ethnic groups of the Empire.

After this rather long introduction, with which I tried to give you an idea about the way ideas, opinions and perceptions are formed and how at the end our national identity leads us and limits our ability to judge without prejudices, we may have a look on how historiography developed in Greece first and then in Turkey.

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¹⁰ *Bilder einer Revolution (Images of a Revolution)*, Studien zur Internationalen Schulbuchforschung, Schriftenreihe des Georg-Eckert-Instituts, Frankfurt/Paris, 1994.

HISTORY WRITING AND IDENTITY

The most popular understanding is that history teaches, among other topics of course, how identities are formed. In practice history teaching itself forms identities, especially national identity.

People are not born with a national identity, nor do they inherit an identity automatically through a not-clearly-specified process (a magic) called tradition or national memory. Identity is taught and constructed. And history is the main instrument in constructing a national identity. That is why so much has been written about the role of the historians in “nation building”. (Modern historians are set to deconstruct the national discourse “eternal nation”, but this is not our topic today.)

There are many myths about national identity. National identity is believed by some to be as old as “our nation”. Our nation is supposed to be “very” old. All nations try hard to prove that they are as old as it takes. Maybe this belief in a “primordial nation of ours” originates from religious needs. It may be an effort to cling to eternity identifying the self with an eternal nation. Some historians call nationalism “ethnolatry” because they see similarities between believing in an ethnicity/nation and believing in a god.

I will try to summarize how Greek and Turkish national identity was formed, from what stages it passed, how it is still in a flux, and most importantly, how it is evolving to unknown to us directions. I will try to show that what we sometimes consider normal and/or unavoidable developments are actually ideological choices.

Naturally if national identity is a matter of choice and a matter of preferred ideology, the whole concept of the citizenship changes. The members of a national group do not bear any more the responsibility to follow the supposed unavoidable destiny of the nation but instead, to form an identity which will influence the future of the nation (and humanity in general).

The most important lesson of all, should be that there is not a single identity that may be called Greek or Turkish, there are a number of them (meaning different things) and there are going to be many more in the future – before all these identities will be replaced by some others, but which we cannot foresee today what they are going to be.

The Greeks and The Turks

The dynamics of nation-building in Greece and in Turkey were different. The Greeks first developed a national identity, then went through a fierce nine-year war of independence (1821-1829) against the Ottoman Empire, and finally established their national state. Meanwhile the political leaders of the Ottoman Empire, which was threatened with disintegration, tried to create a citizenship identity (‘Ottomanism’) that would secure the loyalty of all its subjects, Muslims and Christians alike. As the Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians rejected this option and established their own nation-states, the Ottomans next tried ‘Islamism’ as a reference of unity. But an alliance of all the Muslim populations could not be secured either, and the Albanians and later the Arabs seceded. ‘Turkism’, that is, a national identity, was initiated as a political project, promoted by the state, starting with the Young Turks (1908), ending with the modern Turkish republic (1923).¹¹

There are other differences too. Greece is a small country in terms of its population and its area with respect to its neighbour. Turkey has a heritage of a sophisticated state apparatus, whereas the Greek state is relatively new. The Turks believe that they have an uninterrupted

¹¹ For these typical models in creating national-states (first *the* state or first the nation) see Hugh Seaton-Watson, ‘On Trying to be a Historian of Eastern Europe’ in D. Delatant & H. Hanak (eds), *Historians as Nation Builders*, London, 1988.

presence in history, having established various states at various times and places, whereas the Greeks believe that they have an uninterrupted presence in history in *one place*, in spite of the ‘loss’ of their state and independence for four centuries, succumbing to the ‘invasion’ of the Other. The Greeks were the first in the Balkans to establish a ‘national consciousness’ and a national state, whereas the Turks were among the last. The Greeks have a sense that in the last two hundred years they have extended their borders, ‘liberating’ traditional Greek lands (but not all), whereas the Turks have the grievance that they have lost ‘lands’ that were originally Ottoman, in other words, theirs. The Greeks are mostly Christians, the Turks mostly Muslims, and for some, this religious difference is of significance: many (Greeks, Turks and third parties) identify the Christians with the ‘West’ and the Muslims with the ‘East’.

There are similarities too. Each side fought its ‘war of liberation’ against the other in order to establish its nation-state (in 1829 and 1922). Because of this unique coincidence both communities perceive the other as the historical enemy, and the other operates as a constituent of a modern national identity. Grievances and insecurity with respect to sovereignty (or historical) rights are expressed mostly between the lines in both national historiographies. Greeks claim the heritage of the ancient Greeks and of the Byzantines, whereas the Turks insist that there is no connection between modern Greeks and ancient civilizations. A perception of being ‘autochthons’ on the Greek side and ‘a new-comer’ on the Turkish side is felt in the respective historical narratives. Some Turks still call Central Asia their ‘home’ (*ana yurt*), whereas others propose historical theses to promote the idea of a homeland within the borders of present-day Turkey. The controversies on claims and ‘legitimacy’ are still alive (expressed as phobias *vis-à-vis* the Other), but both sides declare that they do not experience any insecurity on issues of sovereignty.

Greek historiography and the perception of the nation (*ethnos*)

During the age of revolutions and on the eve of the Greek war of independence, that is, in the years 1780-1830, some Grecophone intellectuals of the Diaspora who lived in various cities of Western Europe and who were influenced by the French Revolution and the ideological controversies of the time spread republican ideas within their ethnic communities and proposed radical actions against ‘the tyrant’, the Ottoman ruler. Others, such as those close to the conservative patriarchate of Constantinople, who lived within the Ottoman state anathematized them as ‘atheists’ and advised prudence and adherence to ‘paternal ideals’. It was during this period that questions related to national/ethnic identity were posed for the first time: are we *Romeoi* (Romans, in the sense of Byzantines), *Grekoï* (Greeks, ‘as the westerners call us’), *Hellens* (as the ‘Ancients’) or *Orthodox Christians*?

The Grecophone Orthodox Christian community living in the Ottoman empire under the official status of a millet (religious community), and which in modern times could be identified as an ‘ethnic group’, perceived itself as a *genos*. *Genos* is a Greek word etymologically originating from Sanskrit, meaning a group of the same origin (*genus* in Latin, *gen/gene* in English). During the years of nation-building the word *genos* was gradually replaced by *ethnos*, and the latter was and is still used in Greek in the sense of ‘nation’. There is no other word for ‘nation’ and the ethnic/national distinction does not exist among the Greeks in general, but only among a small group of historians who are aware of the latest trends in historiography.¹² ‘Ethnic’ (*ethnicos*) is used for ‘national’. In other words, in the Greek historiography ‘Greekness’ and Greek nationhood are heavily loaded with a sense of ‘ethnicity’ and not with citizenship and/or loyalty to a state. This may be due to the historical

¹² The prestigious Babiniotis dictionary (G. Babiniotis, *Lexiko tis neas ellinikis glossas* [Dictionary of the Modern Greek Language], Athens, 1998) defines ‘ethnic/ethnos’ the same way as one would define ‘nation’; it adds that ‘foreigners’ use the Greek word ‘ethnic’ to denote national groups and minorities.

fact that the Grecophones did not directly associate ‘identity’ and ‘state’, since a communal identity (as *genos*, characterized by a consciousness of a religious difference *vis- a-vis* the Muslim Ottoman state) was widespread and established among them long before the existence of a state with which the community identified itself.

Therefore those who do not possess the basic ‘national’ prerequisite of Greekness, namely Greek Orthodox belief, were almost completely absent from Greek historiography. Groups that ethnically would have been defined as minority groups were perceived to belong to another nation/*ethnos*. As a popular belief that is encountered in historiography too, ‘Greekness’ is associated with a common language, a common origin and a common religion, in other words with an ethnicity. The notion of ‘citizenship’ (or loyalty to a state) is not fashionable in the Greek discourse. On the other hand, Orthodox Christian Grecophones are seen as ‘Greeks’ irrespective of their citizenship and self-identification.

The forerunner of republicanism among the Grecophones was the Jacobin-type intellectual Rigas Velestinlis (1757-97), who planned a revolution against the Ottoman monarchs. His sense of history was one of class controversy, the people being on one side and the dominating aristocrats on the other. For Velestinlis all ethnic groups, irrespective of religion, origin and language, ought to unite against the tyrants. He foresaw a state where all (‘Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Wallachians, Armenians, Turks and all other kinds of peoples’, as Article 7 in his ‘constitution’ stated) would be equal and sovereign. Religion is not even mentioned in his writings. Apparently he was – if his vision is expressed in modern terminology – in favour of a strictly secular state where class privileges would not exist. He was executed by the Ottomans in 1797 and his ideals were soon silenced. He was reclaimed twice much later and ‘appropriated’: first, at the beginning of the 19th century, by nationalists who presented him as a national hero fighting for a Greek state and ‘the nation’, and, a century later, by socialists, as an ‘internationalist’. Actually he can be envisaged as a proto-nationalist republican, who had not yet aligned himself wholly with the Greek nationalist/ethnic movement.¹³

The ideals of Greek intellectuals who were for an ethnically/nationally independent state can be traced in the political pamphlets of Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), who lived in Paris, as well as in the historical analysis entitled *Hellenic Nomarchy* (in the sense of ‘reign of law’) which was published anonymously in 1806. These texts were clearly anticlerical, even sceptical, on issues of religion, and they were attacked by the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Istanbul as anti-religious. Their discourse was ethnic/national, in the sense of an identity that was defined as a historical continuum based on language and culture. A class controversy was indirectly voiced in these texts, since it was pointed out that some (e.g. religious dignitaries and wealthy farmers) lived in luxury, whereas the laymen suffered. In fact, during this pre-revolutionary period a contention prevailed between middle-class/secular intellectuals on one hand and the religious/conservative groups on the other, even though both sides tried to prove that their visions were not in opposition to communal traditions and values.

The Greek state and Helleno-Christianity

The republican discourse was silenced before the termination of the uprising for independence and even forgotten after the founding of the new Greek nation-state. The founding of the Holy Alliance (of throne and altar) in 1815 and Metternich’s determination to discourage popular class and anti-royalist revolutions should have played a decisive role in

¹³ See A. B. Daskalakis, *To Politeuma tou Riga Belestinli [The Polity of Rigas Velestinlis]*, (Athens, 1976).

this. Instead, a simple national myth dominated historiography during the 19th century: The Greeks, the descendants of the glorious ancient Greeks, after many centuries under the tyrannical ‘Turkish yoke’ staged a national revolt and won their independence anew.¹⁴ Greek-Orthodox Christianity, that constituted the basic belief of most of the Grecophones, was dexterously integrated into the ancient heritage. According to this ideological construction, the ancient Greeks were somehow the heralds of the new ‘light’, of Christianity. The term ‘Helleno-Christianity’ was invented (by S. Zambelios in mid-nineteenth century) to express this national harmony, and religion was thus ‘ethniced’ during this nation-building phase.¹⁵ Greekness was closely associated with a religion, and even with a part of it: with the Greek Orthodox Church and its legacy. The class dimension of the Greek revolution was completely silenced in the nineteenth century.

The sense of ‘being the offspring of a glorious past’ was initiated and encouraged to a great extent by the European republican intellectuals. The Romantic movement also gave momentum to this (modern) Greek revival. The Greeks themselves, on the other hand, promoted the idea of their resurrection because it was to their political advantage to appear as a nation that was heir to a glorious past but which had suffered and had been unfairly treated by the (Muslim) Other. In fact, the national enterprise was presented basically as ‘religious liberation’. In the Greek national iconography Greece was represented as a suffering woman mostly dressed in a torn ancient Greek robe. This image accorded with the grammatically feminine ‘definite article’ that defines in Greek the word ‘Greece’ (η Ελλάς).

It was during the nineteenth century that the Other – the Ottoman Turk - was constructed in Greek historiography as the absolute negative Other: despotic, barbaric, backward, uncivilized, cruel, corrupt, perverted, exploitative, and so on. This image in general was not different from the one prevalent in the West. The more the Other was negative, the more the Greek revolution and the new state were justified and legitimised. The Ottoman period was described in almost all historical texts of the nineteenth century as a period of darkness, of the death of the nation; on the other hand, the successful Greek revolution was named – and it is still known as – the ‘Resurrection of the Nation’. The story of the nation is narrated in terms of the familiar story of Jesus Christ: death, resurrection and eternal life thereafter. The fighters of the revolution and of the subsequent wars are called ‘ethno-martyrs’. The losses in this war are ‘sacrifices made on the altar of the homeland’. Even the patriarch of Constantinople, who opposed and condemned the Greek revolutionaries of 1821 - but who was still hanged by the Sultan for his inability to control his ‘flock’ - is metamorphosed into a ‘martyr of the Greek nation’. This grand narrative presents all Greeks, the nation, being united and in harmony, and consistently against the Other. Class differences and skirmishes are redundant in this narration, as the Orthodox affiliation was considered the pillar of the nation.

A major ‘addition’ to this historical narrative was initiated after an unexpected challenge. In the 1830s the German historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790-1861) made public his views: modern Greeks could not be the descendants of ancient people because there was a great gap between the ancient and modern Greeks. According to him, modern Greeks are ‘Hellenized’ Slavs and Albanians who moved to Greece during the eighth century. Racially, the modern Greeks were not the continuation of the old civilisations. The glorious ancient civilisation had perished without leaving any heirs.¹⁶

¹⁴ See, for example S. Trikoupis (1788-1873), *I istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos* [*The History of the Greek Revolution*], vols. 1-4 (London, 1853-1957); I. Philimon (1798-1873), *Dokimion istorikon peri tis Ellinikis epanastaseos* [*Historical Essay on the Greek Revolution*], vols. 1-4 (Athens, 1859-61); A. Frantzis (1778-1851), *Istoria tis anagenithisis Ellados* [*The History of Greek Rebirth*], vols. 1-4 (Athens, 1839-1841).

¹⁵ S. Zambelios, *Asmata dimotika tis Ellados* [*Folk Poems of Greece*], Athens, 1852.

¹⁶ See, for example: J. P. Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea wahrend des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1830). Also G. Valoudis, ‘J. Ph. ‘Fallmerayer und die Entsehung des neugriechischen Historismus’, *Südostforschungen*, 29 (1970).

This thesis was perceived as a direct threat to the modern Greek identity based on the belief in the revival of the ancient nation. The confusion and the agony were overcome by the discovering (for some, by the invention) of the Byzantine empire. The immediate reaction was culminated in the publication in 1852-3 of the studies of the best-known Greek historian, K. Paparrigopoulos (1815-91).¹⁷ With his *History of the Hellenic Nation* he cut the Gordian knot by demonstrating that the Byzantine empire was 'Greek', thus securing the 'uninterrupted continuation' of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present. Paparrigopoulos is still very popular among the Greeks: his thesis, which is the most official interpretation of the national historiography, is welcomed as common sense, and his general approach is followed by many Greek historians. His work is the closest to what could be called a master narrative.

Today we are in a position to suspect that there were also political considerations behind this thesis of 'Greek Byzantium': it legitimised the Greek claims to Ottoman lands. The decades of 1850-1920 became the years of a national ideal known as the *Megali Idea* ('Great Idea'), according to which the Greeks could and should 'liberate' all of their lost and enslaved lands and populations. Greek historiography was marked for a few decades by this irredentist historical interpretation. This idea, that was first voiced in the Greek parliament in 1844, proved unrealistic and was finally abandoned when the Greek armies were decidedly defeated in Anatolia in 1922.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth Greek historiography turned to the study of the Greeks of Byzantium, as well as of the Greeks living outside the national borders of Greece and especially in Anatolia (Asia Minor). The prominent historian Pavlos Karolidis (1849-1930) is remembered mainly for this enterprise.¹⁸ The general tendency was to portray the Greeks as a great nation that created superior civilisations but had to face the menace of the Turks, who dominated 'our' lands and who retained them, enslaving part of 'our nation'. The 'Greek lands' were perceived to extend beyond the borders of the new state. What legitimized the unity of the nation (the *ethnos*) was not the state but a historical 'essence' or 'Greek culture', defined by an enduring language and a religious affiliation expressed as Christian Orthodoxy.

Alternative approaches: class analysis and religion

The Greek national/nationalistic historiography was challenged from the first quarter of the twentieth century. Following the Russian revolution of 1917, the Marxist movement in Greece developed relatively rapidly as an alternative worldview. The Greek Communist Party of the time opposed the expedition against the Ottoman state that was defeated in the First World War, not only because it was in general against irredentism but also because it was against the British policy and in favour of the Turkish Kemalist resistance which had friendly relations with the Bolshevik regime.

Yanis Kordatos (1891-1961), the former secretary of the Greek Communist Party, a young lawyer who dedicated his life to history writing, in 1924 challenged the taboo of the Greek Revolution, claiming that it was not a national uprising against the Turks, but a class struggle of the oppressed masses against the oppressors who happened to be both Turkish and Greek dignitaries and landlords.¹⁹ Starting with his first book, he showed that not only the Sublime

¹⁷ K. Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou Ellinikou ethnous*, [*The History of the Hellenic Nation*], vols 1-5 (Athens, 1865-1874).

¹⁸ P. Karolidis, *Syghkronos istoria ton Ellinon kai lipon laon tis Anatonis apo to 1821 mehri to 1921* [*Modern History of Greeks and Other Nations of Anatolia from 1821 to 1921*], vol. 1-7 (Athens, 1922-6).

¹⁹ See, for example, Y. Kordatos, *Istoria tis neoteris Elladas*, vols 1-4 (Athens, 1957-8).

Porte but also the patriarchate of Istanbul was against the revolution. He published his studies in a hostile social environment, facing fierce opposition and threats, but insisted on claiming that modern Greeks were a new nation and not the 'continuation' of ancient people. He was the first to use the term *ethnotita* ('ethnic group') to describe the Grecophone communities of the Middle Ages, distinguishing them qualitatively from the modern Greek nation.

The approach of Yanis Kordatos, who was apparently influenced by the Marxist historiography, was a negation of traditional national paradigm. He published studies on ancient Greece, the Byzantine period and modern Greece, as well as works on such topics as the life of Christ, Greek philosophy and Greek literature. It is interesting to note that, even though he negated the 'diachronic' existence of a Greek nation, all his work covers the cultures and the people that the traditional Greek national historiography considered as Greek. A more careful analysis of this work may show that his approach is a combination of class analysis not completely disconnected from the national paradigm.

This blending of the two paradigms becomes apparent when the portrait of the Other *vis-à-vis* 'us' is examined. The Turks, even though they were not presented with permanently negative racial characteristics, still appeared as backward and generally negative, for 'historical' reasons. This controversial approach is also found in subsequent Marxist historians who followed Kordatos. Nikos Svoronos (1911-1990), for example, who stated in the 1970s that the modern Greek national consciousness appeared for the first time in the thirteenth century (and not in ancient Greece), did not express a very different opinion about the Other either. In fact, the Greek Marxist historiography did not revise the traditional image and 'role' of the Turks, even though these historians did not reproduce extreme nationalist stereotypes.²⁰

A number of religious researchers constituted a small group of historians that were relatively distant from the national paradigm and seemed closer to the Marxist approach. Trying to negate the ethnic/national understanding that set barriers between groups of people based on ethnic characteristics – language, race, colour, and so on - and appropriating a more universal approach (a more 'ecumenical' approach, as they would say), they developed an all-inclusive discourse. They voiced, mostly in encyclopedias financed and published by the Greek Orthodox Church and in personal publications, a comprehensively different historiography, distant from the nationalist one, evaluating correctly both the contingent character of the 'nation' but also its limitation in envisaging a reconciliation of the 'human race of the Creator'.²¹

However, in their enthusiasm to stress the importance and the contribution of the Greek Orthodox Church they seemed to reproduce the old demarcation lines that were set between East and West, between believers and nonbelievers, or between the Greek Orthodox communities and the Others. At times when they criticized the intellectuals of the 'Greek Enlightenment' – of the period when the Greek intelligentsia was under the spell of the developments in Western Europe – they sounded like the Marxists who opposed some Western ideals (capitalism, exploitation, imperialism); when they expressed their reservations about the Other opposing Catholicism, Protestantism, and so on, they were reminiscent of the Manichaeism of the nationalists and the barriers set between nations.

The recent decades a considerable number of Greek liberal historians, following the professionalisation of historians and having come into contact with the latest trends, have produced texts that are distanced from the nationalist paradigm. This modern approach which typically presents its methodology and interpretation as 'academic', uses a language special to a field of interest and voices a new paradigm, but it is not readily deciphered and understood

²⁰ N. Svoronos, *Histoire de la Grèce moderne*, (Paris, 1972).

²¹ See, for example, *Thriskeftiki kai ithiki egkiklopedia* [*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*], vol. 5 (Athens, 1964); G. Metallinos, *Tourkokratia* [*Turkish Rule*], (Nea Smyrni, 1988).

by the public. This anti-nationalist historiography manages to coexist with the popular understanding of (national) history without creating serious conflicts and clashes, exactly because of its specialized covert discourse. In practice it neither publicly challenges national taboos nor blatantly contradicts traditional interpretations. It operates protected against probable attacks within a specialised group of academics.

This school of thought has gained momentum. A series of studies that question nationalistic and semi-nationalistic interpretations related to Greek history have been published in book form or in specialist periodicals.²² The historians concerned are inclined to investigate ignored fields, such as the Greek case of nation-building and the history of marginalized ethnic groups, such as the Jews, the Albanians and the Turks of Greece. Various ethnographic studies and local histories by professional historians and of historically minded intellectuals have also been published in recent years. However, the phenomenon of Rigas Velestinlis of the 1790s, the ‘Greek national hero’ as is characterised by Greek historiography, has still to be redefined, and his ideals in favour of a republic in which ‘all will be sovereign’ irrespective of ethnicity, religion and language, still awaits its historian.

The political conjuncture and the rise of Turkish ethnic nationalism

During the last decades of the Ottoman empire the authorities initiated various desperate efforts to save the state. Parallel to economic and administrative reforms, the ‘identity’ of the citizens became a major issue. As happened with the Greeks, discussions took place as to what this ‘identity’ ought to be. The agents during these debates, however, were different on the two sides: in the Greek case the state was still nonexistent and intellectuals initiated the discussion, whereas in the Turkish case the state itself and its dignitaries played a major role in trying to determine under what umbrella the loyalty of subjects of the empire could be secured.

The crisis of successive ‘secessions’ in the Ottoman empire started with the Greek revolution of 1821. Up to that time the empire had lost lands as a result of attack by foreign countries (Russia, Austria, France), but not because of its subjects wanting their own state. With the Tanzimat reforms in 1839, nine years after the establishment of the modern Greek state, the state policy known as ‘Ottomanism’, intended to secure equality and peace among all citizens, was introduced. However, as it was briefly stated above, Bulgarians seceded and Armenians were next in line. Islamism was supposed to secure at least the loyalty of the Muslim population of the empire. But there was unrest among the Arabs, and the Muslim Albanians seceded too. ‘Turkishness’ seemed an alternative to accomplish a unitary state by combining citizenship and ethnicity.

In the Ottoman period history writing in the modern sense developed during these turbulent years. The traditional Ottoman historians, who exceeded 500 in number²³ and were known as *vakanüvisler* (‘recorders of incidents’), had been mostly concerned with the political affairs of the empire. The ‘modern’ historians differed mostly in being much better informed about developments in the West and about the kind of history that was produced there, but most importantly in being the bearers of a new identity, Turkishness, that was in the ascendant. Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1822-95), with his 12-volume *History of Cevdet*, was a high-ranking civil servant.²⁴ He was influenced by the Arab historian and philosopher Ibn-Khaldun

²² For examples of history journals published in Athens, see *Ta Istorika*, *Istor* and *Historein* which is published in English.

²³ See: F. Babinger (1891-1967), *Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und Ihre Werke*, (Leipzig, 1927).

²⁴ A. Cevdet Pasha, *Tarih-i Cevdet* [*History of Cevdet*], 12 vol (Istanbul, 1853-91).

(1332-1406), who believed in the eventual demise of any state. Cevdet's influence on the subsequent generations looking for rather more optimistic worldviews, however, was limited.

Two historians of the Western world inspired Turkish 'consciousness' and Turkish historiography. The French historian David Léon Cahun (1841-1900) and the Hungarian philologist Ármin Vámbéry (1832-1913) were both renowned among Ottoman intellectuals, the first for his book *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie, les Turks et les Mongoles* (1896), and the second for his studies on the Turkish language which he started publishing from 1858.²⁵ These western sources gave an impetus to Turkish nationalism, to 'Turkishness', then known as Pan-Turkism and/or Turanism/Pan-Turanism, and which among the Young Turks was conceived as an ideal which would unite all Turkic people, of the Balkans as well as of Asia. This unity was understood as an ethnic and cultural unity, which found expression above all in a common language. Interestingly Vámbéry tried to develop a Hungarian national historical interpretation of an 'Asiatic past', but in practice he inspired the Turkish nationalists and an 'Asian' ideal in a distant country.

The Ottoman/Turkish historians of this period did not develop systematic contact with the historians of other countries; their sources were rather erratic and few historians produced prominent works during this period. Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), who was influenced by the teachings of Emile Durkheim, and Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), a Turk from Russia who was influenced by the nationalist movements of the Tatars, were the most influential historians of the period prior to the founding of the modern Turkish democratic state.²⁶ The Romantic understanding of the 'people' and the views of Herder, the original, 'very old' cultural past of the nation, the positivism of Comte, social Darwinism and the teachings of Gobineau were some of the main ideas that dominated the understanding of their texts.

Islam, the religion of the nation-to-be, was mentioned and even stressed by these historians, not so much as a characteristic of the nation but as a reference in demarcating the Self and the Other, the enemy of the state and of the country. The idea that was highlighted was nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), which was not very clearly defined, but understood as union on a cultural/ethnic/racist basis. The main concern was to demonstrate the historical importance of the Turkish nation. Issues of the Turkish language were widely discussed, and literary texts played an important role in spreading the idea of the nation. During this initial period of nation-building the nation was understood as the union of the Turks, where the Turks were perceived as a group with certain ethnic characteristics: a common language, culture, religion, history and ideals. As in Greece, during this period there is no clear distinction between nationhood and ethnicity. Turkish nationalists perceived the citizens of the country that were not Muslims and spoke a language different from Turkish as members of another nation, though they also preserved the notion of citizenship and loyalty to the state as a means of legitimizing membership of the nation.

The modern Turkish state and secular nationalism

With the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War the country was occupied by the Allies. The Greek army occupied western Anatolia, the ancient Ionian lands, taking a step towards the 'Great Idea', that is, in the direction of establishing the 'Greek' Byzantine state anew. The Turkish liberation war followed and was won - and this is the self-image of many Turks - against the biggest powers of the world (the United Kingdom, Italy and France). But it

²⁵ See M. Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism*, (London, 1981).

²⁶ See, for example, Z. Gökalp. *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Z. Gökalp* (London, 1959); and Y. Akçura, *Türkçülüğün Tarihi [The History of Turkishness]* (Istanbul, 1998).

was only the Greeks who had come to stay, and the critical battles and the associated military victories were won in practice against the Greeks (1922).²⁷

Turkish nation-building gained new momentum with the systematic fostering of national identity in the newly established modern Turkish state, the Republic of Turkey (1923). The bases of Turkish national ideology and national narratives were founded by intellectuals who were mostly literary authors and poets. In many cases the historians followed. Even prominent Turkish historians and spokesmen of Turkish national ideology, such as Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) and Fuat Köprülü (1890-1966), started their political activities in literary journals together with the nationally influential short-story writer Ömer Seyfettin (1884-1920). In the Turkish case there has not been a historian who attained the social recognition of, say, the Greek Paparrigopoulos, nor a corresponding *oeuvre* of indisputable validity to be considered a master narrative. The historiography is more diversified, probably because society has not yet attained a consensus on some issues.

As was the case with the Greeks, there is no clear distinction in the Turkish language between the meanings of the words 'national' and 'ethnic'. Millet, an old Arabic word that once had various meanings, was eventually used to denote the nation. *Milli* and *milliyetçilik* mean 'national' and 'nationalist', and both have a very positive meaning since they denote the 'modern' ideology that is distanced from the refuted 'Ottoman understanding' characterised as conservative and backward, basically because it lacked the Turkish 'national consciousness', that is, nationalism. Many Turks identify themselves as nationalists, but this is not understood in the Western sense. In fact, 'Atatürk nationalism' is a constitutional requirement. The word 'ethnic' (*etnik*) has recently been used by the new generation of academics mostly in connection with existing local minority and ethnic (Kurdish) issues that Turkey faces. However, unlike Greece, where the concept of a common origin of the nation is very strong, probably due the legacy of an empire, the notion of 'citizenship' (*vatandaşlık*, being a subject of a state) is also encountered.

The main issue of concern to history writing during the first years of the Turkish republic was the legitimisation of initiatives taken by the new republic. Notions such as 'modernisation', 'westernisation', 'equality of the genders' and 'positivism' (actually the word 'science' was used) were presented as positive axioms, and the past evaluated anew accordingly. The ancient regime of the Ottomans was criticised as backward and conservative, even though it was not rejected in its totality. Great effort was exerted to demonstrate that the Turks had been a great nation throughout history, having established many states and founded an important civilisation.

In the 1930s a great historical project was initiated with the encouragement of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leading figure of the modern Turkish nation-state. The project was called the 'Turkish History Thesis' (THT) and its main purpose was to create a grand national narrative that would assist Turkish nation-building. According to this thesis, the Turks were the oldest people on earth and originally lived in Central Asia; they then migrated and founded almost all the major civilisations (Mesopotamian, Ionian, ancient Greek, and so on). They had come 'very early' to Anatolia. All ancient people were actually Turks - even Homer was presented as a Turk whose real name was Omer. Related to this, a second thesis, the 'Sun Language Theory', propagated the idea that all languages were derived from Turkish.

These extreme views were popularised mostly through textbooks published by the state apparatus, and it is in these books that one can find their most systematic presentation. Almost all professional historians in the country were mobilised to find the historical 'facts' that would prove the above ethnocentric understanding. This thesis was the main 'history' that was

²⁷ For a detailed account of the role of the 'Greek' in the formation of Turkish nationalism, see H. Millas, 'Milli Türk Kimliği ve Öteki (Yunan)' ['The National Turkish Identity and the Other/the Greek'], in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, vol. 4, *Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul, 2002).

read and taught in Turkey for about two decades. The thesis approached racism at the end of the 1930s as Dr Afet İnan (1908-85), a protégée of Atatürk, investigated the origin of the Turkish people by taking measurements of their skulls.²⁸ Eventually the Western view that the Turks belong to the 'yellow race' was refuted. During the Second World War some of the Turkish intelligentsia briefly flirted with racist ideals that were popular in many countries in Europe, and this was indirectly reflected in historiography, too. At this time neither class analysis nor religious historical interpretations were welcomed by the authoritarian Turkish regime, which censored all views that did not endorse the dominant secular and nationalist interpretations of history.

Legitimising identities and sovereignty rights

During the first decades of the modern Turkish nation-state, Turkish historiography was marked by two concerns: 1) deciding on and establishing a national identity, and 2) founding a basis for legitimising the modern state, in other words, the newly secured sovereignty rights. Both concerns were directly connected to the main political and cultural issues that shook the Balkans and caused a series of wars and suffering related to ethnic cleansing.

The identity issue was expressed as a question of the kind 'Who are we that want to create a nation? Who is included and who is excluded in our enterprise?' The answer had to satisfy the citizens that were supposed to form a social union with considerable cohesion. Sovereignty, on the other hand, was threatened by the real or imaginary enemies that had claims on the lands of this new country. Both issues were directly connected to 'history' and had to be dealt with by this discipline. A third concern, which was only indirectly connected with 'history', was the legitimacy of the leading cadre of the new state and more precisely with the governing Kemalist elite. This was mostly done by denigrating the Ottoman past (and its leaders) and presenting the present (and its leaders) as the hope for the future.

Most of the Turkish historiography of the twentieth century developed around these parameters. The Turkish history thesis proposed a Turkish identity that had its sources in Central Asia, and mostly for that reason it incorporated serious shortcomings in legitimising the historical rights of existing borders. It tried to solve the dilemma by constructing a 'history' where all autochthonous nations in the area were 'Turkish'.

The highly secular THT did not prove very effective. It satisfied neither the masses who felt themselves in alliance with the traditional Islam - which was pushed aside by the positivist leading elite, together with the Ottoman legacy, in favour of an imagined 'pagan' Central Asia - nor the intellectuals and people of common sense who could not tolerate the idea that all neighbouring communities and countries throughout history were actually Turks (in which case why all these wars?). The THT was never officially refuted, but gradually, and especially after 1970, it was abandoned, even though its spirit is still felt in some textbooks. Two other grand theories were proposed in the 1950s/1960s and 1970s/1980s that dealt with the above-mentioned national concerns. The first was initiated by a historian who spread his ideas publishing mostly literary texts such as novels and 'narrations', Cevat Şakir (1886-1973), and by Kemal Tahir (1910-73), an author who published historical novels and influenced a number of historians that mostly propagated the idea that the Turkish historical case can be best explained by the Marxist model of the 'Asian mode of production'. Turkish historians who developed related theories to define the history of Anatolia are İdris Küçükömer (1925-1987) and Sencer Divitçioğlu (b. 1927). According to these historians, the

²⁸ See, for example, A. İnan, *Türkiye Halkının Antropolojik Karakterleri ve Türkiye Tarihi: Türk Irkının Vatanı Anadolu* [*The Anthropological Characteristics of the Turkish People and the History of Turkey: Anatolia, the Fatherland of the Turkish Race*] (Ankara, 1947).

class and religious conflicts that shaped the Western world did not take place in Anatolia.²⁹ This school, which I will call 'Anatolianism', did not appear as an organised movement but rather as an understanding that is still popular among intellectuals sympathetic to the Western way of life and having 'leftist' tendencies. The second grand narrative, known as the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS), was initiated by intellectuals of more conservative tendencies.

Anatolianism and the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis

Anatolianism, as expressed in a series of publications by various intellectuals, has been a major theme in the Turkish historiography. It is an unofficial and non-systematic historical thesis that proposes an 'identity' and a scheme to legitimise the new Turkish state. Contrary to the THT, which locates Turkishness in Central Asia, this new theory presented all the people who once lived in Anatolia (mainland Turkey) as 'our' ancestors and the present Turks as their descendants. As a consequence, the present Turks were not seen as the people that once came from the East but were considered 'autochthons'. The history of Anatolia was mostly perceived as a unique case, justified as an outcome of a different course of development, and rather superior to the Western model where class prevailed, definitely more just and humane, often theoretically legitimised as the 'Asian mode of production'.

Accordingly, the ancient Greeks were no longer presented as Turks, but the Greeks and especially the Ionians who once lived in Anatolia were presented as the ancestors of the Turks. This theory, like the THT, is also basically secular, downgrading the Islamic tradition. However, it propagated the idea that the Turkish state (the Ottoman and the present) was a special case in history. It was presented as benevolent, just and caring for its subjects. Therefore all subjects were very happy and loyal to this (Turkish) state. The subsequent revolts of the various ethnic populations are either ignored or explained as 'foreign intrigues'. Deconstructing this understanding, one concludes that in the Ottoman society there was no class struggle, but the state operated for the benefit of all. It was the West and its imported feudalism and capitalism that caused the economic and social problems in the Ottoman empire and consequently in modern Turkey. In the 1960s and 1970s mostly young historians published studies along these lines.³⁰

This theory, which has many variations and is popular still among Turkish intellectuals even today, had the advantage of being capable of endorsing the Turks as an autochthonous people and at the same time legitimising the existing state: it is legitimate because it has been lawful, benevolent and 'accepted' by all. The question of identity, however, still presented difficulties because it posed a dilemma. Islam was not considered a necessary constituent of the Turkish identity because in such a case the previous pagan and Christian people who lived in Anatolia had to be considered the Other. Religion, language and even culture and civilisation were therefore silenced in this theory, and the 'geographical' aspect of identity, as well as the biological continuity, were predominant: the subordination of all to the Anatolian geography thus secured 'an ethnic/national unity'. This approach, however, was not in harmony with the religious sentiments of the majority of Turks.

The role of the Other (the Greek) is unique in the texts of the 'Anatolianists'. He appears as an historical witness testifying to the righteousness, moral superiority, magnanimity, and so

²⁹ See, for example, İ. Küçükömer, *Düzenin Yabancılaşması [The Alienation of the Social Order]* (Istanbul, 1989; 1st edn, 1969); S. Divitçioğlu, *Asya Üretim Tarzı ve Osmanlı Toplumunu [Asian Mode of Production and the Ottoman Society]* (Istanbul, 2003; 1st edn 1967).

³⁰ The prime minister of Turkey used this theory in his book addressed to the European readers when he tried to advance the idea that Turkey should be accepted as a member of the European Community. See T. Özal, *La Turquie en Europe*, (Paris, 1988).

on of the Turkish state. This Other is developed as an antithesis to Greek accusations that the historical Turk is all-negative. This Turkish myth perceived the Greeks as being happy with the political dominance of the Turks. The Other in the case of the Anatolianists is one who is not from the local area, but the West in general. This Western world is invariably portrayed as imperialistic and/or nationalist, with strong prejudices against the Turks and the East. The self-image of the Anatolianists is quite comforting: they conceive themselves as 'humanitarians', anti-nationalists, modern, progressive and secular. Closer analysis reveals a special 'class' relationship: within the 'community' (the state and/or nation) there is no class strife, but the relationship with the West is marked by class conflicts, expressed in terms of 'exploitation' and 'imperialism'.

The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS) is one of the most recent national historical interpretations. According to this theory, which reached maturity in the 1980s, the present-day Turks are the people who came to Anatolia from the East in the twelfth century having accepted Islam. Thus, Islam is considered part of the national identity as well as the Asian heritage. The followers of the TIS accord importance also to the Ottoman heritage, which they consider significant and superior. The legitimacy of the 'state' is based rather on historical victories and the balance of power in the geographical environment. This theory is popular among political groups that see themselves as nationalists, a word that means in this context 'loving their country and the Turks', whereas others identify them as the 'extreme right'.³¹ Ibrahim Kafesoğlu is one of the most esteemed historians of this school, which propagates its ideas through extensive publications, numerous journals and newspapers.³²

The Other in the case of the TIS is almost everyone who differs from the 'Turks', both ethnically and religiously. The tendency to perceive minorities or ethnic groups of non-Turkic origin as foreign is typical. The non-Muslim minorities are very often perceived on a class basis and are described as wealthy communities involved in trade and industrial production (avoiding the word 'capitalists' to distance themselves from Marxism), in close cultural and/or economic contact with the West, and taking advantage of the Turks economically.³³ The Other in this case encompasses different religion, ethnicity and class (he is from the upper class and exploitative).

Alternative Turkish historiographies

The various historical theses mentioned above form the main trends in the Turkish historiography developed after the founding of the Turkish nation-state. Hence a Turkish national master narrative is deeply contested both among professional historians and among the various political groups that espouse one of these interpretations. History became a weapon of diverse ideological camps in Turkey all struggling to mobilise their supporters and defeat their opponents. In the process of all this contestation Turkish nation-building (ethnogenesis) took place.

A radical challenge to the above historical interpretations came, as happened with the case of Greece, first from the Marxist intellectuals and later from liberal academics who followed the trends of a more international, and sometimes even anti-national approach. The Marxists, who operated more as intellectuals than as historians, challenged the ethnic, 'black and white' approach whereby the Turkish side always appeared in a good light and the Other the reverse.

³¹ It is interesting that the TIS is reminiscent of the Greek understanding of 'Helleno-Christianity'. They both search for national identity and their national historical origin in two components: ethnicity and religion.

³² See: İ. Kafesoğlu, *Türk İslam Sentezi [Turkish-Islamic Synthesis]*, (Istanbul, 1999).

³³ The title of the book of Salahi Sonyel is typical of how the non-Muslim minorities are perceived: *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, (Ankara, 1993).

This tendency was expressed mostly in literary texts such as novels or newspapers, and in many cases seriously challenged old and established historical 'truths'. Kemal Tahir, a novelist who introduced the Marxist 'Asiatic mode of production' to the Turkish historiography in order to stress the peculiarity of his national history, was mentioned above. Of the earliest Turkish Marxist historians, Mete Tuncay (b. 1936) has played a major role in questioning national narratives, such as the THT and later the TIS.

After 1980 in particular, a group of historians appeared, conscious of a Marxist tradition and organised around the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey and the publishing house İletişim, which published a series of journals and books in line with the modern developments in historiography. They dealt with local history and with taboo issues, such as the past and present of the ethnic and minority groups of Turkey and the population exchange of 1923 (see below). They also reviewed the Turkish historiography critically. This group keeps a deliberate distance from nationalist discourse, and is highly critical of ethnocentric approaches. They have been aware of new developments in the field of historiography, and ready to study and discuss new approaches in history.³⁴

Class and economic analysis predominate in their works. For some (Keyder, for example), Christian minority groups are not seen as 'foreign' bodies within the Ottoman state but an economically productive (positive) power. Societal events such as ethnic cleansing are explained on the basis of economic turmoil. When the relationship of states is on the agenda the model becomes rather Leninist where imperialist motifs are used to explain the intentions of the Western powers.

This group of historians, who are politically mostly uncommitted, is also characterised by its zeal in cooperating with the Other. Probably what is new and most important in Greek and Turkish historiography is what has been initiated by the historians of the two countries since 1995, and especially since 2000. Both sides have shown a willingness to study issues that are of interest to both and have jointly produced historical texts. There are a few projects of this kind running at present.

This is not only an indication of the widening of the spectrum of research in history writing but also of a change of philosophy and state of mind, surpassing ethnocentric approaches. These historians seem to believe that one-sided national interpretation may not be enough to produce historical narratives that bear international validity. Definitely they are more 'cosmopolitan' in their understandings as well as more relaxed in their communication with the Other and in being exposed to contact with the views of the Other.

An assessment

Both the modern Greek and Turkish states were founded through a proclaimed process of negating the Ottoman empire and traditional social formations: Greece by rejecting the Ottoman legacy altogether, Turkey by transforming it and by re-evaluating it. Irrespective of the degree of success of this rejection and transformation, the national founding myths of the two countries, which were used to legitimise their new political formations, differ and in some respects are almost opposed to each other. The national myths are so deeply rooted that it is difficult to use a lexicon

³⁴ See, for example, Z. Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat [National Economy in Turkey]*, (Istanbul, 1982); Ş. Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türk İktisadi Tarihi 1500-1914 [Economic History of Ottoman State-Turkey 1500-1914]* (Istanbul, 1988); Ç. Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development*, (London, 1987). The number of historians in the last decade who employ a "critical" approach is so great that to mention only some does injustice to the forgotten ones. Still as an indication I mention Cemal Kafadar, Şükrü Hanioglu, Engin Akarlı, Hakan Erdem and Cemil Koçak.

that is not nationally biased. The term 'the two societies', the Greeks and the Turks, is a modern invention. In the Ottoman milieu there were not clear-cut distinct communities with established 'ethnic' characteristics. For example, there were Turkophone Orthodox Christian and Grecophone Muslim communities which in 1923 were forcefully exchanged as Greeks and as Turks respectively. The criterion for nationality/ethnicity was in practice their religious beliefs. The exchange included about two million people.

Even though the religious bias was quite distinctive in both the Greek and the Turkish cases, the legitimacy of the new identity was based mostly on a discourse of 'nation', with an imagined ethnic uniformity. In other words, declarations of secularism and ethnic/national approaches should be considered with caution, since religious background and identity seem to have influenced perceptions and behaviour, both of the individuals and of the states. In other words, religion either played a direct role within the said states, for example as expressed with Helleno-Christianity and TIS, or was used indirectly to describe the 'national' aspect of the citizens - mostly the Self and the Other as well as the minorities in each state.

Political confrontations between the Greeks and the Turks (or the Greek Orthodox and the Muslim populations) were often the result of coincidence. The conflicting parties then chose different constructed identities (Greekness vs. Turkishness) in order to legitimise and explain the struggles with each other. Class analysis and/or Marxist explanations were developed to highlight economic power relationships; 'exploitation' and 'imperialism' were developed to justify historical enmities and/or current personal or communal interests. In this case, too, a distinction should be made between 'genuine' class analysis that transcends nationalism and sets the basis for a new paradigm, and a class analysis that in fact explains and consequently legitimises national histories. In some of the cases mentioned above, analytical tools such as 'imperialism', 'capitalists' and 'exploitation', mostly directly borrowed from Marxist literature, are utilised to 'explain' nationalistic behaviour.

The historiography that was developed in Greece and Turkey following the establishment of the two nation-states can be seen as a kind of a Greek-Turkish dialogue (or quarrel) on history where the Greeks first posed their arguments and then the Turks developed their counter-arguments.³⁵ The main concerns seem to be the 'identity of the nation' and the sovereignty rights of the countries, something that is understandable taking into consideration the political strife of recent decades. Anderson defines a nation as a 'political community imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.³⁶ By 'limited' it is meant that beyond national boundaries lie other nations. By 'sovereignty', but also by other sacred principles voiced by all nation states such as 'liberty' and 'independence', is meant the subduing of the imaginable rivals, the enemies, the Other. The Other, as the one beyond our living space, is a *sine qua non* of every nation.

A premise not clearly stated but always insinuated in both Greek and Turkish historiography is that the Other had been harmful and/or a threat since it caused, among other ills, economic difficulties and 'our exploitation'. This negative aspect of the Other has, in other words, a class dimension in the consciousness of each nation. The Other is sketched as the appropriator of the nation's means of survival. The Greek historiography described the dominating Ottomans as a kind of upper class that exploited the Greeks; conversely, the Turkish one described the Greeks and the Greek minorities as exploiters and 'rich', too. The

³⁵ Consider, for example, the following Greek-Turkish 'historical' grand narratives and arguments / counter-arguments: 1) We the Greeks are the descendants of the glorious ancients. No, you are not, Greeks are actually Turks. 2) The Ottomans were barbarians. No, they were magnanimous and tolerant. 3) The Ancient Greek and Byzantine lands are ours. No, modern Greeks are a different race from the ancient Greeks and Byzantines. 4) You as a nation behaved as invaders in recent centuries. No, you had the *Megali Idea* and you were the invaders in recent decades. And so on.

³⁶ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London and New York, 1990), p. 15.

religious difference is suggested directly or indirectly every time the Other is described as negative or different. Among the ills of the Other the destruction of 'our sacred places' is quite often called to mind. Interestingly, the national flags of both countries each carry a different religious symbol that had been in a contention for many centuries in Europe: a cross and a crescent. Religion and class analysis are in most cases subordinated to and mostly used to legitimise an ethnic/national narrative.

Even if there are a number of historians who do not agree with this view, the dominant narrative in both countries presents the 'West' as siding with the nation's Other. The West in this case is shown as 'imperialistic', 'biased owing to religious differences' (the West is 'Christian' for the Turkish side, 'Catholic' and/or 'Protestant' for the Greek side), or simply as the aggressive Other. The cases where Greece and Turkey had been favoured and/or assisted by the West are also 'forgotten' in the respective nationalist historiographies. This approach *vis-à-vis* the role of the West shows how historical religious controversies are used in modern times. It should be added that both historiographies infer that 'their country' is located between the East and the West, in other words, in the centre of the world.

Gender, in fact 'women', plays a supplementary role in both historiographies. The national issue seems to bear a masculine importance. In both cases 'our' women (and to a lesser degree children and old people) are presented as the part of the population that must be protected from the ill intentions of the Other. The Other is shown threatening the honour of 'our' women - a metaphor that is often used, especially in literary texts. There is a renowned story in Greek history where Greek women (the Souliots) jumped to their death from a high cliff, dancing a national dance, rather than be captured by the Ottomans. There are many women heroines fighting against the Other, participating in a 'men's war'. These women do not symbolise any particularities of 'women' but live and fight like men. This participation operates as an indication that the people act as a whole.

In the Turkish historiography women are also portrayed as assisting the men: psychologically supporting their husbands who are fighting at the front; carrying ammunition; being involved in the fighting themselves and tending the wounded. Turkish women, contrary to Greek heroines, rarely participate in actual fighting. In the republican national discourse the Turkish woman is the main criterion for the 'modernisation' of the country: her dress, her role in the society, her legal status, and so on are of special importance.

In general the Greek historiography seems to be characterised by a greater uniformity in describing both the past of the nation as well as the Other. The Turkish historiography presents greater diversity. This should be related to the relatively late formation of nation-building in the Turkish case, as well as to the multi-ethnic/national heritage of the Ottoman Empire (the millet system) and to its legacy.

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN HISTORICAL LEGACY

History education and the national identity that is formed through the process of recognizing this teaching as true has consequences. The obvious one is perceiving the “self” as positive, just and with various merits and the “other” as negative, unjust, and with a number of faults and shortcomings. Various myths are created and accompany the national historical discourse, too. I would like to sojourn shortly on the myth of tradition and especially historical legacy. I would like to distinguish two different meanings that I have in mind when I use the word ‘legacy’:

A-By legacy one may mean what is *actually* handed down from the past (as from ancestors or predecessors), or

B- what people *believe* (or imagine) that is handed down from the past.

A great number of Greeks and Turks claim to be the ‘heirs’ of an empire, respectively of the Byzantine and of the Ottoman, which both once covered the whole of the Balkans (among many other areas). We know that through nation-building process (‘ethnic engineering’) a wide spectrum of intellectuals actually ‘creates’ a certain historical past. The past is invented, rather than discovered. The modern states with their central educational system contribute too in this process.³⁷

This process of nation-building was accompanied by the construction of grand national narratives and historiographies. The *believed* legacy is a product of this process. On the other hand the *actual* legacy still persists in the daily life of the modern citizens, irrespective whether this is acknowledged or not.

Language, food, toponyms, monuments, etc.

Both Greece and Turkey made and still make great efforts to “improve” the national language in each country. By this, actually two things are meant: first, to cleanse the local language of “foreign” words and influences and second, to publicize the cleansed language among the citizens. The purpose of these campaigns has been to show that there is a national language which originated in antiquity and that it can and should exist and prosper remaining pure and “clean”, not being influenced by foreign (and consequently harmful) infiltrations. What is systematically avoided is to mention – let alone to teach – that the Greek and Turkish languages share a lot. Even though the two languages belong to two different language families and they vary structurally³⁸, they share two aspects: they contain thousands of words and hundreds of expressions and proverbs which are identical in both languages.

In spite of thousand of words that were purposely “excluded” from the Greek and Turkish the last decades, thousands still remain that are common in the two languages. A recent

³⁷ A classic in the field is Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1984. Also Van Henten, J.W. & Houtepen, A., (eds), *Religious Identity and the Invention of Tradition*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001. For the role of centralized education in nation building see: Gellner, E., *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaka, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983.

³⁸ Greek is an Indo-European language whereas Turkish an Altaic one.

publication shows that about five thousand words are shared.³⁹ Some of these may be of Greek origin (e.g. *αγίασμα/ayazma*), or of Turkish (*αγάζ/ağa*) or of some other language (*αβαντάζ/avantaj*). More important is the case with the expressions and the proverbs which in fact show how close the two communities had been in the past and how they shared and expressed some notions. Taking the word “eye” as an example we see that they are about forty expressions that are shared: *δεν χορταίνει το μάτι μου / gözüm doymuyor* (“my eye is hungry” meaning something like “I can’t keep my eye from... because I like it so much”); *με κλειστά μάτια / gözü kapalı* (“with closed eyes”, i.e., with great trust) etc. Many common proverbs, too, show the close interaction between the two communities. Both sides ignore this proximity: *όποιος κοιμάται με στραβό το πρωί αλληθωρίζει / körle yatan şaşı kalkar* (whoever sleeps with a blind man wakes up cross-eyed).

This kind of a legacy is not reminded and taught. Instead the notion that words, food, music, ethical principles, rituals of beliefs, etc., “cannot be shared” (and should not be shared) between the Greeks and the Turks is directly and/or indirectly propagated. The Turkish coffee case is notorious. The Greeks started calling it “Greek”. Some other common foodstuff is also an issue of dispute. *Döner/gyros*, *baklava* and other “Ottoman” (or are they “Byzantine”?) food cannot be shared.

The traces of coexistence are systematically concealed. Thousand of toponyms have been changed in both countries the last decades replacing them with “national” ones.⁴⁰ The traces of the “other” are wiped away by purposely demolishing or leaving to decay monuments such as holy places (mosques and churches respectively), cemeteries, monuments, etc. All these were accompanied with a discourse of “returning to national roots”. In history books and especially in textbooks the “other” is absent to a scandalous extent: it is as if the “other” has never existed. Even the ethnic minorities in Greece and Turkey – the Turks in Greece and the Greeks in Turkey - are called “Muslim” and “Rum/Roman” respectively. Very few people know that once the Greeks and the Turks (actually the Grekophones and the Tourkophones) lived very close to each other, in the same geographic areas sharing beliefs and practices.

Actually many cultural characteristics are not “ethnic” and/or “national” but local, i.e., geographically determined. Music and food are especially so. There are hundreds of folksongs and food recipes that are identical in the two communities. This situation is not reminded; on the contrary it is silenced. In each country the schooling is programmed to teach that there is a “national” essence in all of the traditional and/or cultural patterns. Cultural habits may prove very close if examined with the intention to locate similarities. This does not mean there are no differences in many other areas of public and private life. It means however, that there is a shared legacy which is ignored due to ideological reasons.

Even the ethnic categories such as “Greek” and “Turk” are problematic in themselves. There are Turks who used to speak only Greek (the Turks of Crete) and Greeks who spoke only Turkish (the Karamanlis). These populations were exchanged in 1923-1925 and later integrated (or assimilated) in the new format of nationhood. Naturally these categories are systematically silenced in official historiography and in everyday discourse.

Both Greece and Turkey tried to orient an educational program which was supported by the press and later by the media, by the museums of the country, by the men of letters and art, etc., as soon as they have been established as nation-states. This cultural enterprise was the cultural aspect of nation-building. Some call this effort acquiring “a national consciousness”,

³⁹ H. Millas, *Κατάλογος Κοινών Ελληνικών και Τουρκικών Λέξεων, Εκφράσεων και Παροιμιών*, (Catalogue of common Greek and Turkish words, expressions and proverbs), Papazisi Publisher, Athens, 2008.

⁴⁰ See: Kerem Öktem “Ulus, zaman ve mekan: Türkiye ve Yunanistan’da toponomik politikalar” in *Sözde Masum Milliyetçilik (The So-called Innocent Nationalism)*, H. Millas (Edit.), Kitap Yayınları Publisher, Istanbul, 2010.

others “a national identity”; others may call the same endeavor social engineering, construction of a national identity, propaganda or brain-washing.

When ‘legacy’ (tradition, culture, national history) is envisaged as actual and as believed (imagined, constructed), the following can be said in light with the above:

1- The actual legacy is a reality that humans do not have control over. On the other hand, modern nations ‘invent’ ideological frameworks which operate as believed legacies, too.⁴¹ This kind of a legacy is no less influential than the actual one. On the contrary, quite often it operates as an ideological drive that moves the masses and shapes social developments.

2- The nations in the Balkans, as in the case of the Greeks and the Turks, developed such an imagined legacy under the influence of the ideology of nationalism which was dominant during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and especially Western Europe. The history of Greece and Turkey can be understood best not by looking at the actual legacy of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, but rather by understanding in what the nations believed as a legacy and what the ideological concepts and ideals were at various periods.

3- The believed legacy in the two countries can be summarized as a Darwinist ideology of struggle, highly xenophobic, not only bilaterally, but also towards the outer world in general, in short, a nationalistic perception with the general meaning of the word.

4- The dissimilarity that exists between the national and believed legacies, on the one hand, and the actual one, on the other, can be better understood when the *actual* legacy of the Ottoman practice is taken into consideration. The Ottoman social practice was, as is the case with most multi-national and multi-religious empires, one of co-existence of various ethnic and religious groups. This practice was characterized by its tolerance *vis a vis* the religious and ethnic diversity and multiplicity. I offer a paragraph written by a ‘westerner’, an Italian traveller who was surprised when he visited the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul in 1788. It gives a vivid picture of the all-inclusive empire:

A stranger, who has beheld the intolerance of London and Paris, must be much surprised to see a church here between a mosque and a synagogue, and a dervise [sic] by the side of a capuchin friar. I know not how this government can have admitted into its bosom religions so opposite to its own. It must be from degeneracy of Mahommedanism, that this happy contrast can be produced. What is still more astonishing is to find that this spirit of toleration is generally prevalent among the people; for here you see Turks, Jews, Catholics, Armenians, Greeks and Protestants conversing together, on subjects of business or pleasure, with as much harmony and good will as if they were of the same country and religion.⁴²

5- This *actual* legacy was negated and the *believed* one taken on. The *believed* legacy is dominant in the Balkan countries, as referred to above and as shaped through the modern ideology of nationalism.

6- Therefore the issue of ‘legacy’ should not be approached as an entity that reaches us from the past but mainly as an ideological construction of the present. The believed legacy is not an event of the past that has been terminated and is not interfered with. It is in operation.

⁴¹ Hobsbawm distinguished between three types of invented traditions which each have a distinctive function: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion and collective identities, b) those establishing or legitimating institutions and social hierarchies, and c) those socializing people into particular social contexts; the first type has been most commonly referred to and often taken to imply the two other functions as well. (Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.)

⁴² Bozodar Jereznik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travelers*, London: Saqi, 2004, p. 232-3, quotes Bisani, N., *A Picturesque Tour through Part of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, London: R. Faulder, 1793, p. 217.

7- In consequence, attention should be paid to what lies ahead and not so much to what the parties are supposed to have inherited from the past. ‘Legacy’ is not a real issue of the far-distanced past but rather of a believed very recent past and of the present, of the era in which ideologies are born and mature. The actual heritage is not so negative after all; the believed one is the problematic one.

THE PERCEPTIONS OF A CONFLICT:

GREEKS AND TURKS IN EACH OTHER’S MIRRORS

The Greek-Turkish controversy has been approached from a variety of perspectives over the last few decades. While innumerable articles and books have been written on the conflict itself, there are no studies on the history of the literature and the discourses employed by the parties in question. There are three main identifiable phases in the history of agents’ perceptions about the past. During the first period, the trend was to place the blame entirely on the “other”. In the next phase, and over the last two decades, the controversy was being ‘explained’ mostly by making references to the (negative) role played by certain institutions and administrative practices, rather than that of parties. In the third stage, mostly in academic circles over the last few years, the causes of the conflict have been sought in the societies themselves.

First phase: Nation-states and the imagined history of a conflict

The Greek-Turkish conflict is one with clear ethnic connotations: such a conflict could not have existed before the era of nationalism. Indeed, it should be emphasized that there was no Greek-Turkish controversy before the nineteenth century, as ‘the Greeks’ and ‘the Turks’ did not even exist as national entities then. The notorious hatred between Greeks and Turks is less a ‘historical’ phenomenon and more an outcome of recent national constructions.⁴³ Before the establishment of the Greek nation-state, the image of the ‘Other’ was either a relatively ‘balanced’ one, or else the concept of an ‘enemy of the nation’ was not a prominent one. This is discernible in the memoirs of the Phanariots (the high class Greeks of Istanbul), and even in the memoirs of the fighters of the Greek Revolution of 1821-1830.⁴⁴

The establishment of the two nation states, Greece in 1830 and Turkey in 1923, brought on the first phase in conflict perceptions identified here: this involved demonizing the ‘Other’ and exalting ‘our nation’. In this changed political and ideological atmosphere, new dynamics appeared: a) the citizens began to perceive themselves as members of a national group, b) they began to perceive other groups as nations in turn, c) a discourse of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ was constructed, within which permanent national characteristics were attributed to each, uniformly positive and negative respectively. This discourse can be detected in all nationalist texts produced in the two ‘nation-states’.

A study of Greek and Turkish novels, for example, sheds light on these different ‘Self-Other’ perceptions in nationalist discourses, and how they appeared during a certain period manifesting a new understanding of the past and present. In general, the emergence of modern Greek and Turkish literature was generally in step with the process of nation building and the search for a national identity. In the first Greek novels which appeared after the founding of the new Greek state, the ‘Turks’ are presented as (meaning that they were *perceived* as) a

⁴³ See Stefanos Pasmazoglou, *Ευρώπη-Τουρκία (Europe-Turkey)*, Vol. 1, Athens: Themelio, 1993, pp. 59-86.

⁴⁴ See H. Millas, *Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων - σχολικά βιβλία, ιστοριογραφία, λογοτεχνία και εθνικά στερεότυπα*, (Images of Greeks and Turks - textbooks, historiography, literature and national stereotypes), Athens: Alexandria, 2001, pp. 293-300.

nation with common negative characteristics, as the historical enemy, as a source of problems, and as a threat.⁴⁵

On the other hand, in the first Turcophone novels of the Ottoman period and especially before nationalism was spread within the Ottoman society, the Greeks do not appear as the 'Other'. They are certainly not portrayed as ethnically negative stereotypes.⁴⁶ With the appearance of the Young Turks the 'Ottomanists' stopped publishing their works around 1912, and a new generation of authors appeared.⁴⁷ From then on, nationalism existed not only as an ideology and political movement, but also as a rhetoric that ran through all texts: historiography, textbooks, literature, newspapers, and so on. In the era of nation states, depictions of the 'Other' in Greek and Turkish texts were almost identical, but always as a mirror image of each other: the enemy, a source of political problems and a threat to 'our' freedom, was juxtaposed with 'us' and the corresponding positive connotations.

The political situation and wars between the two countries (i.e., the war of 1897, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1914, and the Greek-Turkish clash of 1919-1922) do not suffice to explain such negative imagery of the 'Other'. The literary texts did not depict the actual environment of the writers but rather sketched the 'Other' in accordance with a *nationalist ideology* and a *constructed past*, indifferent to personal experiences.⁴⁸ This negative image is congruent with images of the 'Other' found in the textbooks and historiography of each country. A study on textbooks from the late 1980s in the two countries showed that both sides had developed a simplistic narrative of 'us' and 'them', lacking any positive references to the 'Other'.⁴⁹ All the blame for past incidents was attributed to the 'other side', while any notion of 'our mistakes' was absent.

Second phase: Blaming certain agents and institutions

Parallel to this black and white nationalist approach, alternative explanations of the Greek-Turkish controversy emerged and hesitantly advanced by some marginalized groups. This occurred particularly after 1920 in Greece and after 1950 in Turkey. The initiators of this approach were mainly the Marxists of both sides, as well as a few adherents of ecumenical or universal religious views. These small groups produced texts that were mostly critical of their 'own side', and generally directed their criticisms at the choices of the state and its policies. For example, they criticized nationalist textbooks, or protested against actions taken against the ethnic minorities. The Marxists blamed 'capitalism', 'imperialism', 'nationalism' and the 'dominant' classes for the precarious relations between the two countries, while the 'religious' writers advocated closer ties, and traditional values.

⁴⁵ Only forty years before, the image of the 'Turk' in Grecophone literature was not negative, as is readily noticeable in the politically oriented poems (and other writings) of Rigas Velestinlis, and other Greek intellectuals (H. Millas. *Yunan Ulusunun Doğuşu (The Birth of The Greek Nation)*, Istanbul: İletişim, 1994, pp. 87-122, 257-294). After 1834, literary authors such as I. Pitsipios, Gr. Palaiologos, St. Ksenos, D. Vikelas, and A. Papadiamantis portray an unsavory Turk who is in confrontation with 'us'. This tendency persists in the 20th century.

⁴⁶ H. Millas. *Türk ve Yunan Romanlarında Öteki ve Kimlik (The Other and Identity in Turkish and Greek Novels)*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2005.

⁴⁷ For a more detailed account see H. Millas. "Non-Muslim Minorities in the Historiography of Republican Turkey: The Greek Case", in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, Ed. By Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, Leiden: Brill, 2002 and "Constructing Memories of 'Multiculturalism' and Identities in Turkish Novels", in *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory – 'Multiculturalism' as Literary Theme after 1980*, (Ed.) Catharina Duff, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2006.

⁴⁸ See Millas: "The Image of Greeks in Turkish Literature: Fiction and Memoirs", in *Oil on Fire?*, Studien zur Internationalen Schulbuchforschung, Schriftenreihe des Georg-Eckert-Instituts, Hanover: Verlag Hansche Buchhandlung, 1996.

⁴⁹ See above: "History Textbooks".

In the field of literature, the adherents of Marxism or Socialism would self-identify as internationalists. Examples in the Greek case are Dido Sotiriou and Kosmas Politis, and in the Turkish case, Nazım Hikmet and Orhan Kemal. In many cases, these writers present class consciousness and the class struggle as more important than ethnic ideals and perceptions. The ‘religious’ group made a more limited contribution to literature because, traditionally, they did not choose modern literary genres to express their views. In Turkish literature, the novels of Samiha Ayverdi (1906-1993), and in the Greek case, the writings of Ph. Kontoglou (1895-1965) represent examples of this category.⁵⁰

In the field of historiography, the ‘critical’ historians resemble the authors mentioned above: there are no clear dividing lines between historians and literary writers as regards their worldviews.⁵¹ The ‘stories’ narrated in the literary texts do not always develop in parallel with the prevailing historiography in each particular period and/or ideological field. Indeed, in many instances, it is the novel that introduces new historical concepts and interpretations, and the historiography that picks up the trend. In all cases, the two ‘genres’ have complemented each other. In the 1860s in the Greek case, and the 1910s in the Turkish case, it was the literary narrative – novels, short stories, poetry and literary criticism – that established the main ethnic interpretations and themes of ethnogenesis in these countries. In later years, it was again Marxist literary writers who first introduced the class oriented historical interpretations that historians would later use. Over the last few decades too, young novelists in both countries have dared to criticize practices of ‘our’ recent history, in line with young historians.

This approach not only indicates a widening of the spectrum of research in history writing, but also a change of philosophy and mindset, transcending ethnocentric approaches. These historians seem to believe that one-sided ‘national interpretations’ are inadequate when it comes to producing historical narratives of international validity. They are certainly more ‘cosmopolitan’ in their understanding of the ‘Other’, as well as more relaxed in their exchanges with the ‘Other’.

Today there are many young historians and academics, as well as columnists and other intellectuals – though not yet politicians – who write in a similar vein. They tend to place the blame for the tensions in Greek-Turkish relations on external actors, referring to past or present ‘mistakes’ made by ‘agents’ such as the state, the mass media, the education system, or politicians. This is what distinguishes this phase in conflict perception from the previous one.

A further implication is that once the ‘reason’ for the conflict is determined in this way, the future is visualized with relative optimism: if these agents are merely controlled, the situation will improve. When the blame is placed on more abstract phenomena such as ‘nationalism’, ‘imperialism’, ‘racism’, ‘fanaticism’, or ‘prejudice’, these concepts are again evaluated as the outcome of actions by the above-mentioned concrete agents, generating the same semi-optimistic prospect.

Third phase: a critical view of society and national identity

There are some interesting studies on the Greek and Turkish communities by anthropologists, social psychologists, and experts of conflict resolution. These studies approach the communities in conflict as their main field of interest. They do not assume any

⁵⁰ H. Millas. *Türk Romanı ve ‘Öteki - Ulusal Kimlikte Yunan İmajı, (The Turkish Novel and the ‘Other’- The Image of the Greek and National Identity)* Istanbul: Sabancı, 2000, pp. 108, 311.

⁵¹ See “History Writing and Identity” above.

‘agents’ and/or ‘external forces’ who act to destroy an assumed ‘normal’ state that would have existed otherwise. This kind of a study presupposes an impartial approach.

The parties involved in the Greek-Turkish conflict have long made simplistic or ‘pseudo-academic’ references to the ‘psychology’ of their opposite parties. These mostly exhibited the same shortcoming, however: each party tried to show the ‘other side’ as ‘sick’. This method was not used as an explanatory tool, however. It rather represents a variant of the approach classified as ‘the first phase’ above.⁵² The Greeks, for example, used the argument that the (barbarian) ‘other side’ were jealous of Greek civilization, while Turkish ‘analysts’ argued that their ‘Other’ could never overcome the ill-feeling that came with being ruled by the Turks – of being ‘our recent slave’. Eventually, substantial efforts to look deeper into the ‘psychology’ of the parties involved were initiated by third parties, and by people who did not identify themselves ‘very strongly’ with either national identity of the parties in conflict.

In *Ours Once More* (1982), Michael Herzfeld tried to ‘understand’ the making of modern Greece through the process of the creation of a canon of folkloric treasure. His study explores the way in which ideology and identity assume a role in forming the foundations for a modern nation. The Greek-Turkish conflict is not the main issue in this book, but national identity is still seen to be in a constant dynamic with the ‘Other’.⁵³ Benjamin Broom’s *Exploring the Greek Mosaic* (1996), which covers national images as well as his conflict resolution work in the field of Greek-Turkish relations, is a ground-breaking effort. Broom has tried to identify what lies behind the accusatory discourse of the parties: fear, insecurity, and shame.⁵⁴

Lately, in a new approach to the Greek-Turkish ‘phenomenon’, Greeks and Turks have themselves begun to develop critical stances on their societies that do not involve ‘external agents’ as an explanation. Instead, they see the society itself, with its predetermined identity, as creating many of the fears, and consequently the tension. Alexis Heraclides, in *Greece and the Danger from the East*⁵⁵ criticizes Greek prejudices and certain irrational policies towards Turkey. In *Echoes From The Dead Zone* (2005), the Cypriot social anthropologist Yiannis Papadakis, describes the prejudices with which the Greeks and Turks operate, based on his own personal experience.⁵⁶ Studies have also been published recently that question historical discourses and taboos that have applied for decades. For example, *Our Undesired Citizens* by Giorgos Margaritis tells the story of the killing and expulsion of Greece’s Albanians, and of the Jews whose extermination by the Nazis went unhindered. Tasos Kostopoulos’ *War and Ethnic Cleansing, the forgotten aspect of a decade of national assault, 1912-1922* is about Greece negative side.⁵⁷ On the Turkish side too, many articles and books have been written in the same vein. Self-criticism with reference to society as a whole, past and present, is widespread, particularly in the mass media. The question of the ‘character of our society’ is not an academic issue in Turkey but a political and ideological one, fiercely debated by journalists and academics on a daily basis. In approaching the question, references are made to ‘facing our history’, dealing with ‘our identity’ – whether to self-identify as Turks or citizens of Turkey –and to the historical dimension – the Kurdish, Armenian, and general

⁵² See for the case of Vamik Volkan above.

⁵³ Herzfeld, Michael. *Ours Once More, Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

⁵⁴ Broom, Benjamin, *Exploring the Greek Mosaic, A Guide to Intercultural Communication in Greece*, United States: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1996.

⁵⁵ Alexis Heraclides, *Η Ελλάδα και ο Εξ Ανατολών Κίνδυνος (Greece and the Eastern Danger)*, Athens, Polis, 2001. Turkish edition: *Yunanistan ve Doğudan Gelen Tehlike, Türkiye*, İstanbul, İletişim 2002.

⁵⁶ Papadakis, Yiannis. *Echoes From The Dead Zone*, London-New York: Tauris, 2005.

⁵⁷ Tasos Kostopoulos. *Πόλεμος και Εθνοκάθαρση, Η Ξεχασμένη Πλευρά μιας Δεκαετίας Εθνικής Εξόρμησης, 1912-1922 (War and Ethnic Cleansing, the forgotten aspect of a decade of national assault, 1912-1922)*, Αθήνα, Βιβλιόραμα, 2007.

'minorities' issues. Greeks come to the agenda through the minorities debate and the Cyprus issue. Such publications about Turkish identity and the 'Other' are numerous.⁵⁸

The most novel characteristic of this 'third phase' in 'explanations' of the Greek-Turkish conflict is the two-fold shift in the focus of attention that has occurred. Firstly, there has been a change from interest in the 'Other' and his 'shortcomings', to interest in 'our side', and its shortcomings. Secondly, the source of tension is no longer identified as the 'agents' (textbooks, nationalism, politicians etc.) and 'external factors' at work, but rather the national identity itself. In other words, the existence *as a nation* of those involved is being examined. Even though a clearly declared common interest of study is not in evidence, both societies seem to be simultaneously preoccupied with the national identity that shaped the consciousness of the two nations, and particularly their images of the 'Self' and the 'Other'. In this latest phase of perception, the perceptions of the nations themselves have been recognized as a decisive factor in shaping the environment in which Greek-Turkish relations evolve.

The Content of such Perceptions: National identity and the 'Other'

Having analyzed perceptions among Greeks and Turks in terms of phases, it is useful to consider their content. A relatively reliable source of information is the body of surveys and opinion polls conducted in both countries. Their results, notwithstanding certain reasonable reservations, remain far more trustworthy than the personal opinions, and 'feelings' of individuals. The limited results available demonstrate that images of the 'Other' have not changed substantially, even though 'behavior' has done. This is a paradox that requires explanation.

After the earthquakes of 1999, a rapprochement followed in Greek-Turkish relations, but the same cannot be said of each party's images, perceptions and expectations of the 'Other'. A comparison of two opinion polls evidences this: the first was conducted jointly by ICAP in Greece and by PIAR in Turkey, and was published in both countries in 1989; the second was conducted by Kappa Research in the Balkans in 2003, and published in 2004 in Greece. According to the first poll, in 1989, 73% of Turks did not trust Greeks, while 81% of Greeks distrusted Turks. According to this poll, the Greeks and Turks trusted each other much less than they did members of other countries such as Great Britain, the US, the Soviet Union, West Germany, France, Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. Fifteen years on, the second opinion poll showed that only 18% of Turks believed that Greece was supporting Turkey's bid for EU membership, whereas this percentage varies from 23% to 63% in countries like Albania, Bulgaria, FYR and Macedonia. Moreover, 90% of Turks perceived Greece as a threat, while 96% perceived Greek Cyprus as such. The next country the Turks identified as a regional threat was Bulgaria, but only by 48%. According to the same poll, 91% of Greeks perceived Turkey as a threat.

This does not mean, however, that the policy shift after 1999 has had no effect on the opinions of both parties: it has done on the political level. An opinion poll conducted by

⁵⁸ Akçam, Taner. *Ermeni Sorunu Hallolunmuştur*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2008; Aktar, Ayhan. *Türk Milliyetçiliği, Gayrimüslimler ve Ekonomik Dönüşüm*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2006; Behmoaras, Liz. *Bir Kimlik Arayışının Hikayesi*, İstanbul: Remzi, 2005; Deringil, Selim. *Simgeden Millete*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2007; Kızılyürek, Niyazi. *Milliyetçilik Kıskaçında Kıbrıs*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2002; Mahçupyan, Etyen. *İçimizdeki Öteki*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2005; Herkül Millas. "Milli Türk Kimliği ve Öteki -Yunan" ("Turkish National Identity and the Other -the Greek), in *Milliyetçilik Vol 4, Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2002; Neyzi, Leyla. *Ben Kimim? Türkiye'de Sözlü Tarih, Kimlik ve Öznellik, (Who am I? Oral History in Turkey, Identity and Specificity)*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2004.

Strategy Mori⁵⁹ showed that 71% of Turks did not see a Greek-Turkish war as probable. A poll by Kappa Research⁶⁰ showed that 66% of Greeks advocated good relations with Turkey, but only 40% wanted to see Turkey join the EU. Thus it seems that the political climate has improved, but that ill feelings persist. A clue to this discrepancy was seen in a study conducted by academics on students of primary and intermediary education⁶¹ The reason why students had a negative image of the Turks did not relate so much to what they are today, but rather to what they are believed to have done in the distant past.

These results support this chapter's earlier conclusions: they demonstrate that these nations' perceptions about the past are influenced by their identities and 'grand narratives', i.e. the story in which they place themselves and their nation. The 'Other' is needed, to set the imaginary boundary according to which the 'Self' can be defined. The Greek national identity 'needs' a negative 'Other', more specifically, a negative 'Turk', in order to be at peace with the Greek national 'grand narrative' and national identity. One historical and cultural theme, Tourkokratia, is particularly popular in the Greek society, adding meaning to the 'story of the nation', connecting the story of the nation to the "negative other", to the "Turk" by using religious symbols, too.⁶²

The Turkish national identity was similarly founded on a dynamic with an entity that can be seen as the 'Other', an imagined Greek. Yet Turkish nationalists imitated many Greek practices and much Greek discourse as they developed their theses and practices. They perceived the 'Greek' both as a threat against Turkish sovereign rights and as an example to be followed. Thus the Greek Revolution of 1821 gave an impetus to Turkish national revival: foreign affairs started to be managed by Muslim dignitaries (Tercüme Odası), the Janissary was dismantled (1826), and the army modernized, because the revolution was perceived as a signal of the impending destruction of the Ottoman Empire. These concerns can still be found in abundance in Turkish historiography and textbooks.⁶³ The subsequent Greek territorial and irredentist expansions, such as the war of 1897, the revolt in Crete and its annexation to Greece, the Balkan Wars and finally the Greek invasion of Anatolia (1919-1922), further stimulated Turkish nationalism. Starting with the Young Turks, a major project of 'nationalizing' (*Türkleştirme*) was launched and continued for decades.

The imitation of Greek nationalism is apparent, though not recognized by Turkish nationalists. Economic boycotts and the 'cleansing' of minorities were first practised by the Greeks in 1904-1905 in Macedonia. The first massacres of the 'undesired' started in 1821 in Tripolis (Treblice) in the Peloponnesus. The policy of uniting all of 'our nation' became known as *Megali Idea* (1844) by the Greeks, and as *Büyük Mefküre* among the Turks about fifty years later, in both cases meaning the 'Great Ideal'. The Greeks claimed they were the heirs of ancient Greek glory, while the Turkish History Thesis (1933) claimed the same. The image of the negative Greek is closely associated with the nationalist grand narrative on the Turkish side. The silencing and distortion of the history of the Ionian and Byzantine civilizations in mainstream Turkish historiography is only one of the indications of the above

⁵⁹ See To Vima, 13th March 2001.

⁶⁰ See To Vima, 5th January 2007.

⁶¹ See To Vima, 9th December 2001.

⁶² See for example 'Tourkokratia: History and the Image of Turks in Greek Literature' in *South European Society and Politics*, Routledge, Volume 11, Number 1, March 2006. Also in *When Greeks Think About Turks – The view from Anthropology*, (Ed. D. Theodossopoulos), London & New York: Routledge, 2007.

⁶³ H. Millas. 'Non-Muslim Minorities in the Historiography of Republican Turkey: The Greek Case', in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, Ed. By Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, Leiden: Brill, 2002.

processes; textbooks which reflect the official view provide another. The ‘national’ literary texts leave no doubt about the persistence of feelings of insecurity vis-à-vis the ‘Other’.⁶⁴

Perhaps the greatest similarity in the content of perceptions on both sides is their uneasiness regarding their sovereign rights. The Greeks perceive a threat from a powerful neighbor who had once occupied their land for centuries. The Turkish side perceives a potential threat originating from a neighbor who makes ‘historical’ claims on its lands.⁶⁵

Greeks and Turks today – an assessment

What can these trends in ‘Self-Other’ perceptions tell us about present-day Greek-Turkish relations and future expectations? Before this can be understood, it is necessary to analyze the *contexts* or ‘spheres’ in which these perceptions form.

A study on the images of Turkey in the Greek press has revealed a general understanding of ‘Turkey’, reflecting a sort of national consensus on the one hand, but also a set of fluctuating opinions, influenced by the political atmosphere of the period in question. The first trend operates within the sphere of (what I call) *consensual nationalism*, i.e., the manifestation of the minimum national consensus that creates the group called ‘the Greeks’. The second may be seen as *contingent nationalism*,⁶⁶ and is mainly political, liable to change according to local and international realities. Thus there may be different opinions within a nation-state about the ‘Other’, but these do not challenge the first ‘sphere’. Contingent nationalism may elicit sudden and/or frequent changes, whereas consensual nationalism displays durability. Analyzing Greek-Turkish relations from this perspective, the crucial area becomes this latter sphere, and any changes that occur in national identity secured by national consensus.

This differentiation enables us to interpret the changes within the contingent sphere – the three ‘phases’ of perceptions of Greek-Turkish relations mentioned above – as compared with the relative endurance of the consensual sphere, i.e., of national identity. This ‘difference’ between the two is expressed in language in various ways. Some people make a distinction between ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’, (εθνικισμός/πατριωτισμός – *milliyetçilik/yurtseverlik*); others speak of ‘nationalism in the good sense’ (εθνικισμός με την καλή έννοια – *pozitif milliyetçilik*) versus ‘racism’ or ‘chauvinism’. Yet it is more constructive to see national identity as a belief that can generate various political programs. With this differentiation in mind, it becomes possible to understand how and why nations change their political targets, while at the same time preserving their identity. It also becomes possible to explain how a nation (or a country) can change its political position *vis-à-vis* another nation, but keep intact its myths and all related feelings towards the ‘Other’. These occurrences take place in different spheres.

National identity is associated with national myths about the ‘Self’ as well as the ‘Other’. These myths and images operate within the sphere of *consensual nationalism*. In this sense, the ‘Other’ also obtains a time-persisting character. This is why stereotypes about the ‘Other’ persist, even though people declare that they do not feel ill-will towards the ‘specific/concrete/real’ ‘Other’. The specific ‘Other’ does not change the character of the

⁶⁴ H. Millas. *Türk Romanı ve ‘Öteki - Ulusal Kimlikte Yunan İmajı, (The Turkish Novel and the ‘Other’- The Image of the Greek and National Identity)* Istanbul: Sabancı, 2000; *Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων- σχολικά βιβλία, ιστοριογραφία, λογοτεχνία και εθνικά στερεότυπα, (Images of Greeks and Turks - textbooks, historiography, literature and national stereotypes)*, Athens: Alexandria, 2001.

⁶⁵ See H. Millas. *The Imagined Other as National Identity – Greeks and Turks*, Ankara: CSDP-European Commission, 2004. Also in: www.stgp.org.

⁶⁶ H. Millas, “1998 Yunanistan Basımında Türkiye” (“Turkey in the Greek Press of 1998”), in *Bilanço 1923-1998*, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul 1999.

‘historical/imagined/abstract’ ‘Other’, who forms the basis of *consensual nationalism*. These clarifications are indispensable in order to understand what has changed lately in Greek-Turkish relations and in the related perceptions and images.

The findings of this study highlight that ‘nations’ – in this case, the great majority of Greeks and Turks – are far from having transcended their historical prejudices. Their concerns are about a (real or imagined) negative past that presupposes a fearful future. In short, despite the many different opinions that may exist among individuals on such matters, it is as if *in general* the Greeks regret that the past five centuries were the way they were, and hold the ‘Other’ responsible. Meanwhile, the Turks regret that the ‘Other’ thinks this way about the past, and about the ‘Turk’ today.

Furthermore, there is no symmetry in the complaints and prospects of the two sides. For example, the Greek identity is associated with a ‘lost’ grandeur (expressed as history) – due to the ‘Other’. It is irretrievable, ‘irreversible’, ‘non-reimbursable’. It is a story of mourning and distress. The Turks believe that they have a ‘misinterpreted’ grandeur – the Ottoman past. This can be retrieved through the ‘testimony’ of the ‘Other’; and they ask for this. It is a matter of self-image, hence their persistent discourse about ‘friendship’ and ‘resemblance’.

Almost all complaints voiced by each side seem to be associated with one main concern: sovereignty rights. Historical and current grievances, as well as future concerns are connected directly or by way of insinuation to this ‘national’ issue *par excellence*. Even questions of images and interpretations of the past are seen as factors that may eventually create a climate that will endanger ‘our’ national integrity, and ‘our’ liberty.

Transcending national prejudices and developing a ‘neutral’ attitude towards the ‘Other’ are complex processes that are related to national identity and to the founding myths of each nation. Indeed, the entire enterprise is usually presented as an effort in which, on the one hand, the ‘Other’ would be stripped of its negative characteristics, while on the other, ‘our’ national identity and ‘our’ related myths would be preserved. This sounds like a contradiction, an oxymoron. In reality, the negative ‘Other’ is a constituent of national identity. The revision of this historical ‘Other’ presupposes a revision of ‘our’ history.

Meanwhile, the political programs of Greece and Turkey might still be changed (relatively) easily for the better, as occurred after 1999, without a decisive step being taken to revise historiography and the related identity. In this case, however, national myths and images of the ‘Other’ might remain active or ‘dormant in the subconsciousness’, ready to emerge at the first political crisis. appear

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Synopsis:

The formation of all nations and the related understanding among the citizens are associated with some specific social actions such as centrally controlled education and special national history writing. When bilateral and international relations are viewed with these parameters in mind then the conflicts are seen, not as a consequence of history, but the end result of nationalistic education and history writing. The cases of Greece and Turkey are good examples to study phenomena such as national identity, the so-called historical hatred, the imagined and binding national heritage, national prejudices; in short frozen conflicts.

Nations are modern and complex formations but their constituents (their citizens) have a different belief: they attribute simplistic positive and negative characteristics to themselves and to 'Others', respectively. They also believe that nations are very old and even eternal. This world-view (nationalism) creates tensions between nations. International relations can be best understood when the perceptions of the members of nations and the 'mechanisms' of nationalism are understood. The case of the Turks and the Greeks, their discourse and the reproduction of some beliefs may be seen as an example of these phenomena.

This lecture is mainly based on five published articles by H.Millas

- “History Textbooks in Greece and Turkey” in *HistoryWorkshop*, UK, Spring 1991, Issue 31, pp. 21-33.
- “Greek-Turkish Conflict and Arsonist Firemen” in *New Perspectives On Turkey*, Istanbul, Spring 2000, 22, pp. 173-184.
- “History Writing among the Greeks and Turks: Imagining the Self and the Other” in *The Contested Nation – Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, Edit. Stefan. Berger and Chris Lorenz, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2008.
- “Ethnic Identity and Nation Building: On Byzantine and Ottoman Historical Legacy” in *Europe and the Historical Legacies in the Balkans*, Raymond Detrez and Barbara Sagaert (edit), Bruxells, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt, New York, Oxford, Wien: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008, pp 17-30. (Presentation at the conference ‘The EU and the Historical Legacy in the Balkans’, University Centre St-Ignatius, Antwerp (UCSIA), November 16th -17th 2006)
- “Perceptions of Conflict: Greeks and Turks in each other’s mirrors” in *In the Long Shadow of Europe, Greeks and Turks in the Era of Postnationalism*, Edit by O. Anastasakis, K. Nicolaidis, K. Öktem, Martinus Nijhoff, 2009.

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