The Greek-Turkish conflict is an ethnic one as the terms ‘Greek’ and ‘Turk’ denote. Such a conflict could not have existed before the era of nationalism. Indeed, ‘the Greeks’ and ‘the Turks’ did not even exist as national entities before the 18th and 19th centuries. Then the Grecophones, the Tourkophones, the Christians, the Muslims and/or any other ‘group’ had not yet developed nationalist stereotypes. The notorious conflict did not start in ancient times but it is associated with recent national perceptions and constructions. It was during the 19th and 20th century that the Greeks and the Turks respectively, created their national states, their prejudices vis a vis the Other and their national historiography and identity.
The book of Özkırımlı/Sofos covering the ‘nationalism’ of the two parties actually deals with the totality of the Greek and Turkish history. The Greek nationalism appears at the end of the 18th century and the Turkish on the end of 19th. The previous history of the area is about multi-ethnic empires and about people with various religious and/or local identities. It is nationalism itself that has invented a national past that goes back for centuries. Hitherto, Greek-Turkish relations and the related historiography passed more or less through three stages. For many decades the parties blamed the other for all problems, past and present. At some point, it was the Marxists of the two parties that put the blame on ‘imperialism’, clearing the people from the blame of the nationalist conflict. Their solution lay in the classless society. The last stage is one of introspect, self-criticism and deconstruction of national ideology.

There are various publications with collected articles of academics of the two countries, however, *Tormented by History* is the first book written in common by a Turkish and a Greek historian and dealing with nationalism critically. It is also one of the very few comparative studies on the two countries. It is a unique endeavor not only for its balanced and explicit narration of the last two centuries. More importantly, it sets an example of how historiography can transcend nationalism and develop an academic and/or international interpretation of the past, accepted by both parties.

The authors explain how nationalism developed in the two countries, shaping the political environment and the understanding of the intelligentsia and of the people. The passage to modernity actually corresponds to the rise of nationalism and the dawn of a new identity. This national project is packed with contradictions, uncertainties, doubts, fears and destructive drives. The positive intentions and hopes are accompanied with bias, double standards, destruction and pain. The past is constructed to strengthen the new identity. Within this imagined history the Other has a predominant role: It is the threat that necessitates ‘our unification’. Within this milieu the two nations perceive a special past and present and a sense of what is ‘ours’. Irredentism and expansionism and the origin of the supposed national ‘psyche’ are explained and exposed within this setting. The selective mechanisms are presented to show the imagined heritages: Ancient Greek and/or Byzantine and Asian and/or Ottoman respectively.

The minorities in the two countries are an important issue for both states. They are seen as a danger for the integrity of the country (if they are stationed within ‘our’ borders) and as an ill treated part of the nation (if they are outside ‘our’ borders). Initiatives of assimilation and of cleansing are explained. Recent issues, such as of the Kurds and of ‘Macedonia’ are dealt with, too.
The book tries to show the main characteristics of the two nationalisms and as a consequence of the two national states. Maybe a limitation of this endeavor is that the two cases, the Greek and the Turkish nationalisms, are narrated as two parallel developments. The interference and the counter effect of one on the other are not thoroughly narrated. Also the differences between the two nationalisms are not sufficiently stressed and exposed comparatively. These inadequacies are insignificant however, when the merits of the enterprise are taken into consideration.

How, however, was the 'common ground' in historiography achieved? The prohibitive national dichotomy in evaluating the past and present was transcended by the authors by distancing themselves from the national narration. This approach may be interpreted as a search for a modern post-nationalist identity. The writers negated the practice of reproducing an identity based on the ‘Other’. Together with modern historians, they perceived national identities as a contingent phenomenon. This book points to a new basis in judging societies and identities. In this respect it can be seen as a brave political initiative, too.

This study is indispensable for all researchers and laymen who want to study the bilateral relations of the two nations. It may prove more useful to the Greeks and Turks themselves who will find in it the political, ideological, cultural and psychological background that gave birth to the two states and the corresponding national perceptions. Since nationalism shares common traits all around the globe, it is also valuable to all those who want to study the dominant ideology of our time. All nations are tormented with what they perceive as ‘their’ history, whereas it is in our power to reinterpret the past.