

THE BALKANS IN TURKISH HISTORIOGRAPHY: A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

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Abstract

Throughout history nations have tried to establish their own ideas of nationalism. In doing so, each country aimed to create their own version of 'history'. In order for them to succeed, long-forgotten traditions, customs and legends were put to use in the process of nationbuilding. Another aspect, opposite 'emphasizing forgotten aspects of history', was to neglect some historical events in order to enable people to forget these traumatic events. One fine example is Turkey, which tried to neglect all the painful events that happened during and after the Balkan Wars in order to start the newly founded Republic of Turkey with a clean sheet. This was probably due to the fact that the newly established Turkish nation should not be based upon the atrocities committed against the Turks by others, nor the hatred against those who were responsible for these deeds. The most famous example of these atrocities are the events of 1915, mistakenly labeled 'genocide' by some. Just as during the Balkan Wars, the events of 1915 exposed a large number of Turks to persecution and torture; as well as large-scale ethnic cleansing and forced migration. Therefore the remaining region, Anatolia, was proclaimed the 'Turkish Motherland'; which is interesting since the history of Turks in the Balkan region is far more stretched. Turkish tribes entered the Balkan some thousands of years prior to Anatolia, but eventually either assimilated or were victims to the previously mentioned methods of ethnic cleansing; in both cases they subsequently disappeared from history. To forget the pain of the Balkan Wars as well as the events of 1915, Turkey has long been neglecting these aspects of its own history. This paper should be seen as a preliminary research in an attempt to put more of an emphasize on this field of study.

Keywords: *Nationbuilding, Turkish History, Historiography, Balkan, happenings of 1915*

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Özet

Dünya'nın her yerinde, her ülke milliyetçilik akımından sonra kendi milletine uygun bir 'tarih' üretmek istemiştir. Unutulan örf, adetler ve destanlar tekrar kullanılmıştır bu millet inşa etme sürecinde. Başka bir seçenek ise tarihindeki bazı acı olayları unutmaya çalışmaktır. Türkiye bunun en güzel örneğidir, Balkan Savaşları'ndan sonra başına gelen tüm acı olayları yeni kurulan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne yansıtılmamak için kendi tarih yazımbiliminde yeterince ilgi verilmemiştir. Bu ihmalkarlık belki Türk milletinin yaşadığı tüm zulümlere rağmen başka milletlere karşı kin ve nefret beslememesine yol açmış olsa bile, aynı zamanda boş bırakılan bu alanlar başka millet tarafından kendi çıkarları için çok daha farklı gösterilmiştir. Bunlardan en meşhur örnek 'soykırım' olarak kullanılmaya çalışılan 1915 olaylarıdır. Tıpkı Balkan Savaşları'ndaki gibi, 1915 olaylarında da bir çok Türk zulüm ve işkenceye maruz kalıp zorunlu göç ile etnik temizleme gibi geniş çaplı Türk düşmanı hareketlere tabi tutulmuştur. Bunun dışında Anadolu bölgesi 'Türklerin Anayurdu' ilan edilirken, Balkan bölgesinin aslında Türk tarihinde çok daha önem taşıdığını da unutmamak lazım. Binlerce yıl Balkanlarda yaşayan farklı Türk budunları, ya başka halklarla karışıp kaybolmuştur ya da daha önce bahsettiğimiz etnik temizleme yöntemlere maruz kalmıştır. Bu acıları unutmak için Balkan Savaşları olsun, 1915 olayları olsun Türkiye'de uzun süre ihmal edilmiştir. Bu araştırma sadece yüzeysel olarak bu konulara daha çok odaklanması gerektiğini vurgulayan çalışmadır.

Anahtar Kelimeleri: *Millet İnşa Etmek, Türk Tarihi, tarih yazımbilimi, Balkan, 1915 olayları*

An Introduction

This preliminary research will try to shed a light on the topic of the Balkans in Turkish historiography with the aim of inspiring others to focus more on this topic of neglect in historiography. The Balkans are a troublesome region, especially for those countries that have a direct link with the region but are unable to embrace it in their historiography due to the process of nation-building. Turkey is one of those countries in regard to the Balkan.

In Turkish historiography the aspect of the Balkans is almost entirely neglected, at least in the official history. However, there is great debate in Turkey about the terminology 'official history'. The questions is frequently asked if there exists any kind of 'official history'. Members of the Turkish

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Historical Society deny that there is an official Turkish history, dictated by the Turkish government. They confidently show various history professors at various state universities in Turkey, who can freely announce their own theories. Some of those theories are taught during classes and are the opposite of what one might expect. This is especially the case surrounding sensitive topics like the Armenian controversy of 1915 and the Kurdish minority in Anatolia. So in that, the Turkish Historical Society has a good (and more importantly) a confident case that there is in fact no 'official history' in Turkey but an open debate to all.

However, this is not to say that there is no general history at all in Turkey. In high school, called 'Lise' in Turkish after the French 'Lycée', the students use Lycée-schoolbooks in which Turkish history is stated by sixteen empires throughout history. This is somewhat comparable to the schoolbooks of any other country, including the Netherlands¹. If one is to look into these schoolbooks, it is not hard to see where the focus lies in Turkey. Better yet, it is also interesting to see how some parts of history are left out or neglected for purposes of nation-building.

One aspect that is virtually neglected is the aspect of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913; in Turkey this part of their history is neglected due to the fact that with the Balkan Wars the Balkan regions were lost for the Turks. The Ottoman Empire regarded the Balkan regions of the very core of the empire and reigned the lands for over 500 years. But in just a couple of years, the entire region was lost. The inability of the Ottomans to defend the very core of their empire, has left a serious burden at the new Ottoman regime that took over in the same period.

In order to secure the process of nation-building in Anatolia, which is actually not the primary region of the Ottomans and was conquered at a fairly late period of time, the region of the Balkans in Turkish historiography has been left out. Although one can wonder why this has been implemented on a psychological level, this research will focus on the historical aspects of it.

Of course the psychological aspects are important as well as the neglect of the Balkan Wars; which has prevented the need for a general feeling of revenge in Turkish circles, and has also prompted the Turks to focus themselves on the creation of a new homeland without any active animosity or hostility

¹ The Canon of Dutch History ('Canon van Nederland' in Dutch) is a list of fifty subjects, subdivided into ten periods of time, that are taught in high schools throughout the Netherlands.

towards their victorious neighbors in the Balkans. This is not to say that there are no feelings at all, but if one were to compare the feelings of hostility with the suffered pain of the Turks, it seems very marginal. But again, this research is in no way a psychological one and all the remarks can just be seen as the thoughts of this author thinking out loud.

Prelude

The Republic of Turkey is seen by many political analysts as the new upcoming power in, not only the region, but also in the world. In his book 'The Next Hundred Years'² George Friedman tries to paint a picture in which Poland, Japan, the United States and Turkey will be the new great powers. The geostrategic role of Turkey will ensure that Turkey will dominate not only the Middle East but also the Balkan region, according to Friedman. He is backed by Hugh Pope in his book 'Sons of the Conquerors: the Rise of the Turkic World'³, who takes it a step further and points out that Turkey will be the leading role in the rise of the Turkic states in Central Asia. Another book of the same writer, and his (at that time) spouse Nicole Pope, is the recently published 'Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey' in which the role of Turkey is accordingly described in what seems like an upcoming role for the relatively new nation.

This new role of Turkey is also an important part in the works of Parag Khanna; primarily his two books 'How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance'⁴ (2011) and 'The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order'⁵ (2008).

The significance of Turkey as a political power is seen also in the work of the Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani, especially his renowned book 'The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East'

² Friedman 2009: George Friedman, *The Next Hundred Years*, New York 2009. Translated into Dutch as 'De Wereld in 2100: voorspellingen voor de komende 100 jaar' by Joost van der Meer & Bill Oostendorp, published by Spectrum in 2009.

³ Pope 2009: Hugh Pope, *Sons of the Conquerors: the Rise of the Turkic World*, London 2005. Translated into Dutch as 'Zonen van de veroveraars: De herrijzenis van de Turkische volken' by Jan Braks and published by Atlas in 2006.

⁴ Khanna 2011: Parag Khanna, *How to Run the World: Charting a Course to the Next Renaissance*, New York 2011.

⁵ Khanna 2011: Parag Khanna, *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order*, New York 2008.

which has been translated to many languages, among which Dutch⁶. He is accompanied by the new book of American diplomat Condoleezza Rice 'No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington'⁷. In this book, which came out in November 2011, she also focuses on Turkey. Just like for instance the Swedish diplomat Ann Dismorr who wrote 'Turkey Decoded'⁸ in which she accurately describes both her own experiences in Turkey as well as the recent rise of Turkey in combination with its new assertive foreign policy towards the Middle East, Balkans and Caucuses.

The thread through all of these publications indicate at least that Turkey is hot in a wide circle. The country is seen as one that is in progress, one that has potential. Countries are debating on their relations with the Anatolian country and yet others have set activities to strengthen these international relations. One example are the Dutch of the Netherlands, who are preparing to celebrate the 400-year-old relations with Turkey in this year of 2012. It is not very odd that the Netherlands have decided to celebrate these bilateral relations if we take the following into account. Turkey is now on the fifteenth place within the G20 and its staggering 11% economic growth within the last year is only exceeded by China. It is also interesting to see that the Netherlands are one of the biggest trading partners of Turkey and it is understandable that, seeing the immense economic growth, the Netherlands want to consolidate or even expand their investments in Turkey. This would certainly explain why the Netherlands are celebrating the 400-year relations, when this was never celebrated before.

The newly focus on Turkey is not just something that is happening in the Netherlands, this is in fact just one example. Like the publications show, it is a global happening in which more and more diplomats, writers and academics want to know more about Turkey.

If someone were to ask me if this was the only reason why I think one must focus more on Turkey, it is of course not the only argument I would give them. Turkey is also on the verge of joining the European Union in five to ten years. Therefore this country will be a integrating part of Europe within

⁶ Mahbubani 2008: Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East*, New York 2008. Translated into Dutch as 'De eeuw van Azië: een onafwendbare mondiale machtsverschuiving' by Amy Bais, published by Nieuw Amsterdam in 2008.

⁷ Rice 2011: Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington*, New York 2011.

⁸ Dismorr 2008: Ann Dismorr, *Turkey Decoded*, London 2008.

decades. In this context it is important to know the globalizing nature of the new European cultures because Turkey will be part of the European society within a relatively short period of time.

With the Turkish economic growth and the political significance of the country in joining the European Union or not, there are two important arguments why Turkey should be in the highlights. It also explains why a debate has caused Turkey to be in the picture in recent years, consequently the place in Turkey in the new world order⁹. This has brought various publications forward in which more and more intellectuals and academics are longing for more knowledge and information concerning Turkey. Therefore, in order to know Turkey, one must study its culture and society; not only from a sociological or anthropological point of view but from a historiographical perspective as well.

Research aims

This paper will focus on the position of the Balkans, especially the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, in contemporary Turkish historiography and how it is perceived in contemporary Turkish historiography. By investigating the Turkish view on the Balkan Wars we will get more insight in the Republic of Turkey. At the same time, the research would help us understand Turkey, Turkey's culture, nationalism and the dynamics in Turkish society better. This is of incredible importance because Turkey may become a member of the European Union: in the debate about whether or not Turkey should be allowed to join, objective information about Turkish history and society is of vital importance. Lawmakers and public opinion makers cannot properly inform the people without access to such information. The research is also relevant for other reasons. If we want to understand the present, we have to understand the past. When one only studies one side and neglects to study what the other side did and thought and how events influenced it, one's view on history will be distorted and, as a result, one will misunderstand the present.

The aim of the research is to precisely position the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) in contemporary Turkish historiography. In order to better understand the present situation in the Balkans we need to know the entire historic and cultural situation in the region. Thus far, only a few researchers have focused on the Turkish peoples living in this region, the role they played in the first few years

⁹ Friedman 2009 & Khanna 2011

and decades of the 20th century and the impact this had on both the Turks living there and the other peoples, and on the situation in this region and in Turkey itself today.

One could without exaggerating state that the research in itself and the focus on Turkish historiography is quite new and innovative in the Netherlands, especially when one puts the focus on how the Balkan Wars are viewed from the point of contemporary Turkish historiography. There are only a few (historiographical) resources about the Balkan Wars and even less about the faith of the Turkish minorities in that region during and right after the Balkan Wars, even in Turkey. The history of (conflict in) this area should be studied from all sides, not merely from the perspective of the victors.¹⁰ Thus far, only a few, perhaps no one, has done so.

Therefore it is important to research at least the following four points of the Balkans in Turkish historiography in correlation to the process of nation-building in modern-day Turkey in present times: The Balkans in contemporary Turkish historiography between 1985-2010 as taught in Turkish high school books throughout Turkey. The significance of the Balkans in Turkish history from ancient times to the Middle Ages; The political role of the Balkans in the modern Republic of Turkey from the late 19th and early 20th century onwards;

A case study of what the neglect of the region of the Balkans within Turkish historiography has caused on an international level surrounding a contemporary but controversial topic, which is still highly debated in academic circles;

Geographication

We have established that Turkey is a country with great interest in contemporary times due to their economic growth and political aspirations to join the European Union. Like the emeritus professor Norman Stone from Oxford University stated, this is not something of recent times exclusively. During the opening reception of the Institute for Turkish Studies in the Dutch

¹⁰ An interesting view on this matter was first mentioned to me by Prof. Dr. Duco Hellema from the University Utrecht in 2010. According to him, the dominant view in Europe is 'a Christian perspective on the Balkan Wars' since the Christian peoples on the Balkan portrayed it to be a 'struggle for freedom by the oppressed Christians against the oppressing Muslims'. The Islamic (or better yet: Ottoman-Turkish) perspective in all this was accordingly neglected and ignored.

city of Utrecht in the Netherlands on November 25th of the year 2011, Prof. Dr. Norman Stone stated the following:

"It is striking to see how Turkey is coming back as a subject of major interest as it used to be. It is very odd that this subject begins rather unbound at about, I suppose... what... 1950, when Turkish politics went into a rather confused period.

*In the period before, 1938 and the death of Atatürk, the Turks had an enormously favorable press in Western Europe. There were best-selling Turkish authors in England in the 1930s. I used to see them on the shelves of my great aunts library in the later 1940s. And Turkey was very much on the map and did not count as anything other than a rather exotic part of Europe. And everybody rather abided that what Atatürk achieved."*¹¹

Professor Stone seems to be right, Turkey has endured a slump in academic circles from about 1950 until recent years. In the years after 1950 there seems to be a In both cases the big reference is the first president and founder of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, somewhat of a untouchable hero in present-day Turkish circles. Atatürk lived from 1881 until 1939 and founded the Republic of Turkey on October 29th, 1923. The legacy of Atatürk, summarized in his 'six principles', are still the core of the Turkish Republic.¹² The aspects of secularization (or laïcité) are imbedded in the Turkish society since the era of Atatürk.¹³ But of course Atatürk got his inspiration from other factors as well. It is frequently said that Atatürk received his political ideas from the Young Turks, an ideological movement in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴ The Ottoman Empire preceded the Republic of Turkey from 1299 until 1922 and is commonly seen as the predecessor of Turkey. It was in this empire that the movement of the Young Turks was predominant in the early 1900s until the end of days for the Ottomans. The base of the Young Turks, the regions from which most of its members originated, were the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ Most historians see this as the main connection to why Atatürk, an Ottoman officer

¹¹ Norman Stone, 'Scientific aims of the institute and the significance of research on Turkey, Turks and related issues', Conference: Official Opening Reception of Institute for Turkish Studies, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 November 2011.

¹² Shaw & Shaw 1977: 375.

¹³ Ahmad 2003: 8.

¹⁴ Zürcher 2004: 142.

¹⁵ Zürcher 2004: 90.

from the Balkan province as well, was so attracted to the Young Turk movement.

Atatürk was born and raised in Selanik, home to one of the biggest ports of the Ottomans; being second to only the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. Selanik, in present-time terms known as Thessaloniki, was situated in a Balkan province of the Ottoman Empire. Seeing that it contained one of the biggest ports, it is needless to say that it was in fact a very important city for the Ottoman Turks. Selanik has uphold its important strategic position as a port up to contemporary times since Thessaloniki is now one of the most important regions of Greece.

All of this shows that the basis of the political movement that paved the way for the modern Republic of Turkey of today, originated from the Balkan-based Young Turks. This aspect is important in trying to understand the Turkish society as it is shaped today. It is also interesting to see how the Balkan region is perceived from a Turkish point of view and if this is consistent with the European view on a historiographical level.

But the brief period of Young Turk-dominance in the Ottoman Empire, which lasted only for one decade, is of course not the only connection of the Balkans with the modern political core of the Republic of Turkey.¹⁶ Even the Ottoman Empire had its main base in the Balkans and probably regarded itself more as a part of the western or European society than as anything else. However, in modern day terms the Ottomans are more and more regarded as part of the non-European society; more specific the Islamic or eastern parts of the world.¹⁷ Especially by rightwing populist parties in countries such as the Netherlands, where their support (and therefore political thoughts) is rapidly growing.¹⁸

However, if we look at the rise of the Ottomans we see that the first lands that were conquered were in the west. The Ottomans consistently fought against the Byzantines and other East-European forces. This resulted in the conquest of most of the Balkans in the 14th century, long before the Anatolian lands was conquered by the Ottomans. Nonetheless the Anatolian part of the Ottoman Empire is currently regarded as the core of the Turkish nation, something which

¹⁶ Ahmad 2003: 17.

¹⁷ Goffman 2002: 5.

¹⁸ Dutch rightwing Member of Parliament Geert Wilders wrote a column in the major Dutch newspaper 'De Volkskrant' on November 19th, 2011 entitled: 'The Turkish President Gul is Not Welcome in The Netherlands'

is also emphasized in contemporary Turkish historiography while the Balkans are mostly neglected. This is best illustrated by the current celebration of the Battle of Manzikert, which took place in the year 1071, in the modern Republic of Turkey. The Battle of Manzikert took place in the east of Anatolia and symbolizes the entrance of the Turks in Anatolia in modern day Turkey.¹⁹ In comparison, none of the important battles that took place in the Balkan provinces are currently remembered or celebrated in Turkey.

This is very interesting since one might argue that, for instance, the First Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was important in introducing Ottoman power into Europe and subsequently ending the power of the Serbs in the region. This also paved the way for a long-lasting Ottoman rule as well as expansion into great parts of Europe well into the 19th and 20th century; resulting in an Ottoman hegemony in the Balkans for nearly five and a half century.²⁰ Nonetheless, this battle is neglected in Turkey at present times. The same could be said of the Battle of Niğbolu (or 'Crusade of Nicopolis' like it is known in western sources) in 1396.²¹ This battle is largely regarded as one of the last great crusades, but failed disastrously in stopping the advance of the Ottomans in Europe; more specifically the East-European provinces as well as the Balkan region of Europe. But this battle is also greatly neglected in contemporary Turkish celebrations.

The Battle of Varna in 1444 was yet another crusade against the Ottomans and is regarded as the last major battle of the Crusades. After the decisive victory of the Ottomans, the strategic conquest of Constantinople became a new objective; consequently securing the dominance of Ottoman presence in the regions of the Balkans. The defeat of the European crusader army at Varna made the fall of Constantinople inevitable and it was subsequently conquered by the Ottomans in 1453. The defeat of the crusaders at Varna also meant that all of present-day Bulgaria was to remain under Ottoman domination for over four centuries. The current Turkish flag, with the crescent and star, was also first adopted after this battle. Yet, contemporary school teachers in Turkey are eager to portray this in other periods, for one to the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915. In contrary to Varna, Gallipoli is still part of Turkey today

¹⁹ Su 1961: 34.

²⁰ Ahmad 2003: 17.

²¹ Shaw 1976: 33.

although officially it is part of the European continent as is the current Bulgarian city of Varna.

The Second Battle of Kosovo was yet another important battle between Ottomans and European forces in the region of the Balkans that ended in a decisive victory of the Ottomans in 1448.²² But just like the other battles stated before, this battle is also not celebrated in Turkey.²³ Primarily because the region is currently not part of Turkey and possibly secondly because it would remind people that the Turks in fact lost the main lands of the Ottomans and settled with Anatolia instead.

This is even more clear if one was to look at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, when the Turko-Tatar ruler Timur Gürkan (also known in western sources as 'Tamerlane') attacked the Ottomans.²⁴ At that moment of time the Ottoman Empire was regarded as an important empire but still had not conquered Anatolia, leaving important cities like Diyarbakır to other rulers.²⁵ The epicenter of the Ottomans was still on the Balkan and West-Anatolia; this was only reinforced when the Battle of Ankara (a city in the heart of Anatolia) was besieged by Timur, which resulted in many Ottomans fleeing to the safer provinces of the Balkan.²⁶

All of this shows the importance of the Balkans in Ottoman history, but this is not the only significant part of history that needs to be focused on. Prior to the Ottoman Turks, other Turkish or Turkic tribes also migrated, invaded, raided or even conquered great parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This process dates back as far as ancient times when the Scythians (İskit and Saka tribes) entered the Balkans in approximately 800 B.C., which is almost two thousand years prior to Selçuk (or Seldjuk) tribesmen of Turkish origin that invaded Anatolia in 1071.²⁷ Nonetheless the latter is greatly celebrated in Turkey while the former is completely neglected.

²² Shaw 1976: 53.

²³ Su 1961: 34.

²⁴ Shaw 1976: 32.

²⁵ Shaw 1976: 33.

²⁶ Shaw 1976: 21 & 39.

²⁷ Seydi 2007: 10.

Historiography

After looking at contemporary Turkish historiography, it is possible to define different periods within it:

- The first period of five to ten years, right after the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey, can be dismissed as one can hardly speak of ‘historiography’ when the literature is written or published during or immediately after an event.

- The period of 1933 until 1950 is very much focused on the heroic part of Turkish history because the newly found Republic of Turkey used historiography as well as historians for ‘nation building’-purposes. This subsequently distorted most objective sources of historiography.

- The period after 1950 is ‘tainted’ with several coups in Turkey in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 which makes it practically impossible to research objective historiography in Turkey. For instance the number of books concerning the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 seemingly decreased drastically between 1960 and 1985.

However, one must keep in mind that the coup of 1997 is known as ‘the first postmodern coup in world history’.²⁸ The term derives from the fact that no military soldier actually intervened but that the Turkish General Staff, commander of the Turkish Armed Forces, issued a brief statement in which the elected party was ‘strongly urged’ to back down from politics. The big difference between 1997 and for instance 1971 and 1980, lies in the fact that the latter two interventions were mostly directed to left-wing-politicians and intellectuals with sympathy for political leftists movements. Because most of the university professors identified themselves with the political left, they were apprehended and/or lost their jobs at the university when the military intervened in Turkey. In 1997, this wasn’t the case. For one, the 1997-intervention was directed against conservative right-islamists and only a few academics identified themselves with this ideology. Secondly; no violence was used, and no military actually walked the streets. Therefore there were no soldiers on the streets to apprehend demonstrators, nor were there any demonstrators to begin with. Furthermore, no military was present to stop or influence university publications from scholars because the militaries never left their barracks during

²⁸ Türker Alkan (1997), ‘*Postmodern bir askerî müdahale*’ [*A postmodern military intervention*], in: Radikal Gazetesi [The Radical Gazette], İstanbul, June 13, 1997.

this coup. This lack of intervention has not caused to Turkish historiography to stop being objective. This is why this coup went by fairly unnoticed by the Turkish people as well as the international community.

Assessing the ups and downs within Turkish politics has shown that the period from 1985 until 2010 is the most suitable period to look into the Turkish historiography written and/or published in that specific timeframe. The period between the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (1923) and the years immediately after it are too directly related; therefore this period is more qualified as an eye-witness period and/or a period of primary sources. A period of historiography can only begin with the publication of second-, third- or even fourth-hand publications of a period, which used the historiography of an earlier era. Seeing that the periods between the various coups (1950-1960, 1960-1971, 1971-1980) are too short to examine, being a period of only nine to ten years, one is forced to look at the period between 1985 and 2010. The coup of 1997 is to be singled out since, like reported before, it was a post-modern coup which did not actually intervene with every-day life in Turkey. Therefore the period after the 1980-coup seems to be the most suitable period to begin with. As a closing year, the year 2010 is important because in taking 2010 as the closing year, one can also see the changes and shifts (if any) in Turkish historiography after the political party of AKP gained control in the Turkish parliament (2002), the Netherlands started negotiations with Turkey concerning the membership of Turkey to the European Union (2004) and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007; putting the borders of the European Union more closer to Turkey than ever before.

Approach

During this historiographical research the literature that is written in Turkey about the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) can be found in a couple of easy ways; first of all, one can approach one of many academic publishing houses and/or bookstores in Turkey and ask for a list of publications on the matter. After doing this with Libra Books in İstanbul, one of the most known bookstores of Turkey, the following list of reprinted, used and new publications was provided:

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<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Publisher</i>
Mükeaid, Mahmud Belig	Bulgar Komitalarının Tarihi ve Balkan Harbinde Yaptıkları	1936	Ankara?	Askeri Matbaa
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi 1912-1913	1937	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı
Çağan, Nazmi	Balkan Harbi'nde Edirne	1965	Ankara	Türk Tarih Kurumu
Tansu, Muzaffer	Konuşan Hatıralar - Balkan Harbi ve 1. Dünya Harbi	1974	İzmir	Aydın Matbaası
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi Tarihi	1975	İstanbul	Sander Yayınları
Muhtar, Mahmut	Balkan Harbi	1979	İstanbul	Tercüman Yayınları
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi Birinci Çatalca Muharebesi	1983	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı
Öztuna, Yılmaz	93 ve Balkan Savaşları Avrupa Türkiyesi'ni Kaybımız - Rumeli'nin Elden Çıkışı	1990	İstanbul	Babıalı Kültür Yayınları
Görgülü, İsmet	On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu 1912-1922 Balkan-Birinci dünya ve İstiklal Harbi	1993	Ankara	Türk Tarih Kurumu
Kurnaz, Şefika	Balkan Harbinde Kadınlarımızın Konuşmaları	1993	İstanbul	Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı
Kurnaz, Şefika	Balkan Harbinde 87. Alay (Trabzon Gönüllüleri)	1995	Trabzon	Trabzon Belediyesi
Görgülü, İsmet (ed.)	On Yıllık Savaşın Günlüğü - Balkan, Birinci Dünya ve İstiklal Savaşları	1997	İstanbul	Yapı Kredi Yayınları
Bardakçı, İlhan	Bir İmparatorluğun Yağması (Balkan Bozgunu ve 1. Dünya Harbi)	2006	İstanbul	Türk Edebiyat Vakfı
Bardakçı, İlhan	Balkanlar Harbinde Osmanlı Donanması	?	İstanbul?	Deniz Harp Akademisi Komutanlığı
Çağan, Nazmi	Balkan Harbi'nde Yanya Savunması ve Esat Paşa	?	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı
Mükeaid, Mahmud Belig	Bulgar Komitalarının Tarihi ve Balkan Harbinde Yaptıkları	1936	Ankara?	Askeri Matbaa
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi 1912-1913	1937	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı
Çağan, Nazmi	Balkan Harbi'nde Edirne	1965	Ankara	Türk Tarih Kurumu
Tansu, Muzaffer	Konuşan Hatıralar - Balkan Harbi ve 1. Dünya Harbi	1974	İzmir	Aydın Matbaası
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi Tarihi	1975	İstanbul	Sander Yayınları

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Muhtar, Mahmut	Balkan Harbi	1979	İstanbul	Tercüman Yayınları
Andonyan, Aram	Balkan Harbi Birinci Çatalca Muharebesi	1983	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı
Öztuna, Yılmaz	93 ve Balkan Savaşları Avrupa Türkiyesi'ni Kaybımız - Rumeli'nin Elden Çıkışı	1990	İstanbul	Babıalî Kültür Yayınları
Görgülü, İsmet	On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu 1912-1922 Balkan-Birinci dünya ve İstiklal Harbi	1993	Ankara	Türk Tarih Kurumu
Kurnaz, Şefika	Balkan Harbinde Kadınlarımızın Konuşmaları	1993	İstanbul	Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı
Kurnaz, Şefika	Balkan Harbinde 87. Alay (Trabzon Gönüllüleri)	1995	Trabzon	Trabzon Belediyesi
Görgülü, İsmet (ed.)	On Yıllık Savaşın Günlüğü - Balkan, Birinci Dünya ve İstiklal Savaşları	1997	İstanbul	Yapı Kredi Yayınları
Bardakçı, İlhan	Bir İmparatorluğun Yağması (Balkan Bozgunu ve 1. Dünya Harbi)	2006	İstanbul	Türk Edebiyat Vakfı
Bardakçı, İlhan	Balkanlar Harbinde Osmanlı Donanması	?	İstanbul?	Deniz Harp Akademisi Komutanlığı
Çağan, Nazmi	Balkan Harbi'nde Yanya Savunması ve Esat Paşa	?	Ankara	Genelkurmay Başkanlığı

The first thing that catches our eye is the fact that in the period 1936 until 2011 at least nine out of nineteen books indeed cover the period from 1985 until 2010. Another thing that is interesting to see, is the fact that eleven of the nineteen books are published by governmental institutions like ministries and the military. This could add a strong centralized policy to position the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars in a certain way within Turkish historiography. It is however to early in this preliminary research to make any comments concerning this.

Besides academic publishers and/or bookstores, one can look at the National Library in Ankara, Turkey. The catalogue on the website of the National Library shows exactly 790 publications that are found when searching with the term 'Balkan'.²⁹ If one narrows the search engine to show the publications between the years 1985 until 2010, the number becomes 697. When you also restrict the search to 'The Balkan Wars' [Balkan Savaşları], 'The Balkan War' [Balkan Savaşı] and 'The Balkan Battle' (Balkan Harbi), you get 24, 54 and 28 results.³⁰ When you lift the restriction on the years between

²⁹ Website Milli Kütüphane [National Library of Turkey], <http://www.mkutup.gov.tr/> (last checked on: June 7, 2011)

³⁰ Online catalogue Milli Kütüphane, <http://mksun.mkutup.gov.tr/F/> (last checked on: June 7, 2011)

1985 and 2010, the results become 25, 57 and 39 results. This strengthens the argument for restriction the publications to the years between 1985 and 2010, because it clearly shows that most publications were in fact written and/or published in those years.

After looking at academic publishing houses/bookstores and the National Library of Turkey, you can thirdly look at a cross-referenced verification by experts. This constitutes of verifying the literature that is found to the impact it had when it was published. These publications will be valued and verified with western literature and sources. In some cases the aspect of oral history will also be used to verify some of the information. Books that were picked, by internationally renowned experts like Prof. Dr. Martin van Bruinessen (University Utrecht), were the following among others:

- Şimşir, Bilal (1968-1989), *Rumeli'den Türk göçleri I, II & III* (Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1968-1989)
- Şimşir, Bilal (1986-2009), *Bulgaristan Türkleri* (Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara 1986, reprinted in 2009)
- Türbedar, Erhan (2003), *Balkan Türkleri: Balkanlar'da Türk Varlığı* (ASAM Yayınları, Ankara 2003)

This cross-referenced verification by experts has to be performed by certain criteria and rules in order to avoid picking random experts. The criteria that have to be followed, at least for this preliminary research, are the following:

1. The expert has to be an academic at an university;
2. The expert needs to have an interest in the history of the Ottoman Empire and/or Turkey in general, or an interest in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 in particular;
3. The expert is required to have lived, worked or stayed in Turkey for a period of time, in which he or she has got accustomed to Turkish historiography and the culture surrounding it;
4. The expert has done some excellent work by researching a subject in Turkish history in co-operation with Turkish historians;
5. The expert is respected in both Turkey and his own country, therefore being seen as 'an internationally renowned expert on Turkey'.

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Yet more feedback is given from Turkish-based research centers specialized in the Balkans, most important the Research and Application Center of the Balkans of the Sakarya University³¹. This Research and Application Center of the Balkans of the Sakarya University has verified the (at least temporary) conclusions concerning the subtopics (the Balkans in Turkish history from ancient times and the Young Turks) at forehand.

Lastly, the only academic research centre in the Netherlands concerning Turkish Studies has also provided feedback to this research. This Institute for Turkish Studies has, through its members of their Advisory Board and Editorial Board (with such prominent names as emeritus Prof. Dr. Norman Stone from Oxford University and emeritus Prof. Dr. Norman İtzkowitz from Princeton University), acted as counselor in the process of conducting this preliminary research. This has proved a major advantage indeed. All of these verifications and feedback has at least shown that the results of this research are conducted within an academic framework of guidelines and that the results are also accepted by internationally renowned scholars in this field.

Concluding remarks

Like stated before, the significance of the Balkans can only be researched accordingly when one known the place of the Balkans in Turkish or Turkic history in accordance with the historiography of Turkey and of course the non-Turkish historiography surrounding this topic. After placing the significance of the Balkans in the right context, with the help of mostly non-Turkish historiography since Turkish historiography is very neglecting at this point, we can describe the role of the Balkans in Turkish history from ancient times to the Middle Ages and onwards. In doing do, we can accordingly place the role of the Balkans in pre-Ottoman Turkish history. Then the Balkans and its place in Turkish history in accordance with both Turkish and non-Turkish historiography, can be seen clearly. In Turkey's official version of history the Scythians (İskit and Saka tribes), who entered the Balkans in approximately 800 B.C., are not mentioned. Instead, it focuses on the events of almost two thousand years later; when Selçuk (or Seldjuk) tribesmen of Turkish origin

³¹ Website Sakarya University - Research and Application Center of the Balkans, http://www.sabamer.sakarya.edu.tr/english/index_eng.html (last checked on: June 7, 2011)

invaded Anatolia in 1071. In doing so the stretch in which Turkish tribes poured from Central Asia to Europe (be it either Balkan or Anatolia) is reduced from three thousand years to a mere thousand years.

It is also important to see the recurring thread of the importance of the Balkans in Turkish history and the subsequent neglect of it in Turkish historiography by looking at the political movement that shaped the last days of the Ottoman Empire as well as the political pillars of the modern Republic of Turkey. A lot of the political ideas of this movement, the Young Turks, are still the very core of political thoughts in Turkey.

This becomes even more clear when one looks at the developments of the Young Turk movement in the late 19th and early 20th century and how it is perceived in both western and Turkish historiography. By some the Young Turks are regarded as dictatorial leaders but fact remains that they were primarily present in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire and that they were heavily scarred through the lost of their homelands, which were consequently the Balkan provinces of the Ottomans.³²

Because Turkish historiography is rather neglecting this aspect of the Young Turk movement, non-Turkish western historiography has assembled two major theories concerning the Young Turks which are to be examined further. The first thesis is that the Young Turks became dictatorial by the trauma that was inflicted upon them by the Balkan peoples that revolted against the Ottomans and commenced ethnic cleansing against all non-Slavic, Turkish, Muslim and pro-Ottoman communities. Because most Young Turks were either living, working or originated from the Balkan, they were all victims by this ethnic cleansing; either by witnessing this firsthand or losing their assets, family members and ancestral lands. When the Young Turks also saw that Europe did nothing to prevent it and even snubbed and humiliated the Turks time and again, this also caused a traumatic quest for equality.³³ According to this thesis their trauma would have transformed itself to a dictatorial regime in which everything was put to work to secure and maintain the Ottoman lands that were still in Ottoman hands. This would subsequently explain why Anatolia became such a focus point for the Young Turks and why they were fixated in creating a new Ottoman homeland in Anatolia. In this process every possible threat, especially Ottomans that were regarded non-loyal to the Ottoman state, was

³² Üngör & Polatel 2011: 4.

³³ Ahmad 2003: 40.

dealt with accordingly. One of the contemporary discussions concerning this process is the Turkish-Armenian controversy of 1915.

The other major theory of the Young Turks is that they became bitter and vengeful after their decline and subsequent demise in the Balkans by the Ottoman-subjects-turned-rebels of Romanian, Serbian, Montenegrins, Bulgarian, Greek and Macedonian origins.³⁴ The uprising by these peoples resulted in the retreat of the Ottomans from the Balkans and the subsequent ethnic cleansing by the victorious armies. Millions of Ottoman Muslims were driven out, tortured, killed or simply driven out of their homes in the Balkans after the establishment of these newly independent states in the Balkans. According to the thesis, the Young Turks became so vengeful and anti-Christian that they evoked a massive ethnic cleaning in Anatolia focused on the Anatolian Christians. According to the thesis, which is supported by scholars Erik-Jan Zürcher and Ton Zwaan, the Young Turks would create new homelands for themselves and their fellow-Balkan refugees by sending the Anatolian Christian to the Balkan states. This would also prompt the Balkan refugees, who were forced to leave all their possessions behind in the Balkans, to replace their possessions by taking the assets of the Anatolian Christians who were forced out of Anatolia in return. This anti-Christian and vengeful stance is also backed by the Turkish-Armenian controversy of 1915 in the views of the scholars that support this thesis.

Because Turkey has neglected the Balkans in their own historiography, probably to stop any resentment and feelings of revenge as well as thoughts of retaliation by trying to recapture the Balkan lands, especially the efforts of the Young Turks to change the heterogenic aspect of the Ottoman Empire and/or the homogeny of Anatolia has become a highly debated matter among scholars up to contemporary times. The fact that Turkey neglected the matter up to the 1970s has backfired tremendously when Armenian terrorists send hitmen to kill of Turkish ambassadors, diplomats and other Turkish citizens living outside Turkey.³⁵

Ironically, both theories refer to the Turkish-Armenian controversy of 1915 which harbors over 24.000 publications so far. It shows the consequences of the neglect of the Turkish-Armenian controversy of 1915 in Turkish historiography. The issue of Turkish-Armenian controversy is by far the most

³⁴ Üngör & Polatel 2011: 25.

³⁵ Zürcher 2004: 277.

important example of what kind of distortion can occur when one side neglects to conduct descent research. Of course the neglect of the 1915-controversy has a direct link with the aim to create a new nation in Anatolia; the process of nation-building.

One possible explanation of the neglect of the happenings of 1915 in Turkish historiography during at least the first decades of the modern Republic of Turkey, is comparable to the neglect of the Balkans in the same historiography. In both cases the possibility that the neglect had something to do with an effort to stop any resentment and feelings of revenge as well as thoughts of retaliation by trying to recapture the Balkan lands by the newly inhabitants of the Republic of Turkey, is present.

Conclusion

This preliminary is a short and summarized paper in order to show that there is in fact neglect in Turkish historiography and that this is the main reason for the current historical disputes between Turkey and the west. This neglect has everything to do with the aim of the new Republic of Turkey to restrain its people from holding a grudge to any other nation. So in fact, contemporary Turkish historiography accordingly provides an answer to why there is neglect in Turkish historiography in correlation with the process of nationbuilding in Turkey.

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