

# **“Whiter than White” –Race and Otherness in Turkish and Greek National Identities**

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## Abstract:

Despite the fact that living together in the same geography has created many similarities for Turkey and Greece over the centuries, both sides are keen to identify, even exaggerate, the differences between them and other ‘inferiors’. In this article we look at the role of cultural and ‘scientific’ racism(s) in the formation of Turkish and Greek national identities. Both Turkish and Greek identities have been built on European-ness at the same time as Greekness and Turkishness. Therefore, the national identities in Turkey and Greece are defined within the context of mainstream Eurocentrism, and in that sense the same White European race-ism is shared as the essential aspect of Greek and Turkish national characteristics.

Turkey and Greece, being geographically contiguous and historically connected, have spent a good deal of their shared history fighting each other, militarily as well as politically. Despite the fact that living together in the same geography has created many similarities over the centuries, both sides are keen to identify, even exaggerate, the differences between them and other ‘inferiors’- ‘narcissism of minor difference’<sup>1</sup>. In this article we look at the role of cultural and ‘scientific’ racism in the formation of Turkish and Greek national identities.<sup>2</sup> Both Turkish and Greek nationalists define their identity within the context of mainstream Eurocentrism, and in that sense they share the same White European race-ism as the essential aspect of their nation's characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

Cultures have always compared themselves to each other and were ranked by their wealth and their ‘high’ culture. Those classified as ‘inferior’ could improve, become less ‘barbarian’ and more ‘civilised’ by assimilating the ‘higher’ culture. However, ‘scientific’ racism, which has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the notion that one can and should establish a social hierarchy based on biological markers, does not allow for

that. Discrimination based on biology means that hierarchical rankings are permanent, unchanging, because they are ascribed rather than achieved.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,

nations were increasingly differentiated on the basis of their success in war, empire-building, colonization, industrialization, population growth, science and 'high culture'. It was a short step to see these rankings as reflecting biological determinants.<sup>4</sup>

Social differentiation has been used for inclusion and exclusion throughout history, but 'scientific' racism and the relationship between culture and race as the principal point of differentiation is a modern phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Claims based on biological and cultural superiority are often mixed.

The prevailing academic attitude towards national narratives is sceptical: we treat nations as constructions based on and fed my myths. What those myths are essentially about is differences: in self-perception and identity, and in the perception of others. They cover many areas, such as temporal origins, location, ancestry, a heroic age, decline and regeneration of the nation.<sup>6</sup> Schopflin provides a taxonomy similar to Smith's, when he writes of myths of territory, of redemption and suffering, of unjust treatment, myths of election, of military valour, of ethnogenesis and antiquity, and myths of kinship and shared descent.<sup>7</sup>

According to Schopflin, myths of election state that

The nation is question has been entrusted, by God or by History, to perform some special mission, some particular function, because it is endowed with unique virtues. The Christian origins of this are very evident. In the modern world, the religious motif has been transmuted into something secular, like the particular virtue of civility or literacy or capacity of modernity or simply being more 'European' than everyone else.

This myth then legitimates an assumption of moral and cultural superiority to all competitors and rivals and requires them to recognize one's unique moral worth.<sup>8</sup>

This paper addresses the ways in which the Greek and Turkish nations have constructed and used myths of cultural and biological superiority, cultural and scientific racism, to create their own modern identities and to identify their inferior 'others' who threaten their national purity and security.

### **The Turks - 'White Europeans'**

When General İlker Basbuğ, the highest ranking officer in 2010, in an interview on a popular TV show, defined some citizens as, 'people who don't really have Turkish blood in their veins,' he was revealing just the tip of an iceberg.<sup>9</sup> General Basbuğ here was merely repeating what was established as one of the foundation stones of the new 'modern' Turkish identity under the founding father of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Atatürk genuinely believed that the root causes of the Ottoman defeat in the First World War and its economic decline and political chaos could be found in its cultural and religious dynamics, in Islamic and Eastern origins, and therefore the new Turkey should cut all its "Eastern/ Muslim" origins adrift and define itself as part of the "white/ Western" civilisation. He tried to prove this in many different ways for the rest of his life. The Turkish delegation at Lausanne, at the end of the Turkish-Greek War in 1922, sought to convince the British, French and Italian delegates that the Ankara government had nothing in common with the "old Eastern/ Muslim Turk" represented by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>10</sup>

What the founders of modern Turkey were trying to do through the way they formulated the essential elements of modern Turkish identity was simply respond to a strong and deep-rooted set of beliefs and perceptions constructed by the Western

powers about the Turks since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottoman Empire, as representing the official body of the East, the Orient, of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was seen morally, religiously and scientifically backward, and its traditional ways and customs became objects of derision. Examples of this way of looking at the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, as prototype ‘orientals’, can be seen in many Western texts produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>11</sup>

The first attempts to define and describe the Turks as an ethnic group, as part of the white European Aryan race(s), are found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These were in line with the general ‘scientific’ context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, where the concept of race was a preoccupation for the growing human sciences. A large number of so-called scientific researchers were involved in developing the concept of Aryan supremacy, which later fuelled the institutional racism of Hitler’s Germany in the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> To a large extent, Mustafa Kemal’s thinking was influenced by these authors, when he initiated his version of Turkish-ness in the 1920s, with the grand design of providing some comfort and an extra boost for Turkish national pride and self-esteem which had been undermined during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To serve this purpose, history writing was tailored to produce a tool in the search for a positive national identity. From then on started an official process of drafting/ constructing historical narratives for the younger generation(s), as well as imposing a new identity from above.

The Turkish Historical Society became the major instrument for manufacturing a kind of Turkish history, to support the Kemalist version of the new Turkish identity. As a result, a mixture of facts and half-baked comments, and a considerable number of simple mistakes were proclaimed official history, and teams of researchers were employed to dig out relevant evidence to develop further the main premises of this official account. In a state-sponsored systematic effort, missionary scientists were employed to prove the identicalness of the Turkish race and the ‘white’ race by verifying that ancient Turks were indeed the real ancestors of modern European Aryan race(s). In doing so, a selective reconstruction of historical events took place in order to suppress the Ottoman/ Islamic past and pursue Mustafa Kemal’s specific political goal of providing a fresh new start under a ‘white skin’ of Eurocentric flag. The central theme of this process, constructing a new Turkish identity, was the

rejection of the Ottoman-Islamic past by glorifying the invented- pre-Islamic past of the Turks, and presenting it as the original source of all-white Western history.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, the new Turkey, from the start, identified itself directly and immediately with the history, culture and perceptions of the western world, claiming a total break with the Ottoman and Islamic past. By 1925 an independent Turkish Republic was firmly established with its new western institutions and militantly secular modernising ideology. A completely new social order was created under the rule of its small secular military elite. The events of these early years mark an important watershed in the development of Turkish state ideology, which is still dominating most aspects of the state institutions and society today.

In 1932, a Turkish Historical Congress was convened in Ankara with the task of proving the theory that all white Aryan races originated in Central Asia (ancient Turkish heartland) – i.e. Turks were indeed the real basis of all ‘Western civilisation’. The second Turkish Historical Congress met in Istanbul in 1937, where further desperate steps were taken to prove that the Turks were an integral part of the group of white European races. The ‘scientific’ origins of Turkish-ness, blood and hereditary ties were debated openly during these two congresses, and an agreement was reached on essential purity and supremacy of Turkish blood. Eugene Pittard, the Swiss anthropologist whose work was perceived and practised as a racist account of humanity, not only participated but was announced as the honorary president.<sup>14</sup> After that the new administrative apparatus used ‘race’ as an evaluative criterion for the citizens of Turkey. Of course, this was not always the most obvious aspect of Kemalist nation-building process. There was also another level where recognition of a citizenship based on universal rights of the entire population was pronounced. However, like many other nationalist ideologies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Turkish nation-building process happened within the context of a particular hierarchy of races according to which non-Turkish, in particular non-white and non-European, groups were considered second class/ inferior compared to the dominant group of Turks.<sup>15</sup>

The founders of the Turkish Republic accepted this hierarchy of races uncritically and tried to present Turks as part of the dominant white group. During the last 90 years, there were numerous occasions where the Republic’s various minorities, non-Muslim

groups as well as Muslim Kurds and Alawites, were considered inferior 'races' and met with prejudice and discrimination, even open hostility. It is worth noting that in this process the terms 'Turkish blood' and 'Turkish ethnicity' were being used interchangeably in some official documents.

At the beginning of the republican era, the nation-making project initiated / imposed by Mustafa Kemal and his close associates sought to create an ethnically homogeneous Turkey, a 'pure Turkish Turkey.' The population exchanges between Turkey and Greece, as agreed in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, should be considered within this context, i.e. clearing Turkey of non-Turkish elements. The forced Greco-Turkish population exchange was widely discussed at the heart of ethnic population policy. Therefore, it is not surprising that later in the 1930s, in racist German press, there was a growing debate on Atatürk's policies and reforms, and attempts to interpret them in connection to the Nazi principle of ethnic homogeneity. The perception of Turkey's 'ethnically homogeneous' success story appears quite explicitly in Nazi discourse in the interwar period. Being against multi-ethnic entities, Nazi commentators praised the ethnic cleansing of Anatolia, from the 1915 Armenian deportations (first major brutal act of ethnic cleansing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange, calling for the adaptation of the 'Turkish method' for an effective solution to the minority questions.<sup>16</sup>

Mustafa Kemal belonged to the generation of officers and administrators who had become partially Westernised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was criticising the 'Eastern' in almost exactly in the same terms as any Western orientalist. Mustafa Kemal and his followers believed that Western aggression at the end of the First World War was the result of the 'irrational' policies of the 'old' Ottoman regime, which were in turn due to the outmoded mentality of the 'old Turk'. They therefore wanted to ward off Western aggression by ultimately becoming part of the powerful Western bloc and adopting Western perceptions, in other words, by cutting all links with the 'old', the Ottoman. This can be seen as the victim complex: the victimised came to share the philosophy of the oppressor, which was that, among the people, there were 'old' and 'new' and that the key matter was the survival of the 'new'. Thus, the objective of the oppressed people came to be that of joining the 'new', represented by the West. Kemalist nationalism, thus, originated in the

misunderstandings and prejudices with which Europeans had long viewed the 'East', the Oriental, and 'the Ottoman Turk'. Like any Western-centric, Orientalist critic, Mustafa Kemal always looked upon the Ottoman heritage with disdain, referring to it very seldom and then only to condemn that period roundly. The Ottoman past was regarded as representing the 'antiquated', 'medieval' and 'decrepit'. For Mustafa Kemal, the Ottoman period had no value, no merit, no authority, and therefore he believed that there was to be no relationship between the new Turkey and the old.

It is now more than 90 years since the establishment of the Republic, and in an ever more complex and impersonal society, the limitations and contradictions of Turkish national identity are coming to the fore more and more. As Turkey is moving deep into the twenty first century, a sense of confusion about ethnicity, nationhood, religion, secularity and the country's role in the world is becoming pronounced.

Bulent Arinc, Deputy Prime Minister, claimed in a speech in March 2015 that, 'There is no racism in Turkey; it has never found a base for its roots. When we look at Europe and other countries we see how far behind us they are, and we feel really sorry.'<sup>17</sup> However, every Turkish child still grows up memorising Atatürk's 1927 address to the youth, which speaks of 'the noble blood in your veins' and 'how happy the one who says he is a Turk'. All primary and secondary schools still teach a 'Turkish' history that starts with the Huns of Central Asia, giving an exclusively ethnic, not civic, sense of the nation. Nationalist demagogues still speak of 'pure Turks' in the country, clearly excluding the Kurds and all non-Muslims, and, more recently, Arabs, as the number of Syrian refugees fast increases in the country. In August 2015, Turkey's controversial President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (then Prime Minister), in a televised interview on NTV news network, remarked that being Armenian is clearly 'uglier than even being Georgian'. He said: 'You wouldn't believe the things they have said about me. I was called a Georgian. I apologise for this, but they even said [something] worse: They called me an Armenian.'<sup>18</sup>

Discussions of racism take on added importance with the recent influx of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Turkish nationalism, like other nationalisms, has many different forms that have changed over time and been influenced by internal and external conditions. Many Turkish citizens do not accept that there is racism in Turkey, even stating that they are proud of their hospitality towards foreigners. Yet, according to

recent reports, there is an increasingly high level of harassment and racist attacks against Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Since the start of the civil war in Syria, in March 2011, Turkey has been admitting Syrian refugees as part of the “open door” policy, placing them into camps set up in provinces on the Turkey-Syria border. So far Turkey has given refuge to at least 2 million Syrians, according to UN figures.<sup>19</sup> The Turkish government was initially praised for its open-door policy towards Syrian refugees and its humanitarian work in its camps. However, it was sharply criticised recently for failing to offer proper services and protection to them. Currently only about one-third of the refugees live in the 22 state-run camps, and the authorities do not supply the rest, the remaining 1.4 million who live outside the camps, with shelter or food. Insults and both open and secret racism against the Syrians are all around, in the newspapers and on social media. They are considered the criminals of the future. One can see headlines almost daily, such as ‘the threat of Syrian beggars’, and warnings about them taking jobs from the real citizens, the Turks.<sup>20</sup>

In May 2014, when reports came out that Syrians mugged someone in Ankara, local people stoned one of the buildings where Syrians lived and set it alight. Violence escalated, many were wounded and detained. There is now increasing resentment of Syrians everywhere and they are being openly attacked and marginalised on a daily basis. There were some serious lynching attempts against Syrians in the border towns Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Mardin. Anti-Syrian demonstrations, previously only in border towns and cities, now reached Istanbul, Ankara and many other western cities where hundreds of Turkish residents, armed with machetes and sticks, attacked Syrian refugees, their properties and businesses. Right-wing nationalist groups, together with some local gangs, are hunting Syrian refugees in city streets, and when caught their prey are badly beaten. Every single day Turkish newspapers are full of such horrific incidents. Media incitement and state inaction make the situation worse. Syrian refugees are presented as criminals, beggars, burglars and prostitutes, unable to adapt to Turkish culture. The sad fact is that millions of ordinary Turkish citizens, who are not part of such fascist gangs, are just watching such incidents without offering any protection to their Syrian neighbours trying to survive increasingly in ever more desperate conditions.<sup>21</sup>



## **The Greeks –‘The Founders of Europe’**

Nationalism in Greece in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been constructed around an ‘other’ than has had many faces: a Turkish, a Gypsy, a Macedonian and an Albanian. The Greek saying “If you wash the black man you only ruin your soap” is one that betrays an attitude towards foreigners of the ‘barbarian’ kind, and has time and time again become applicable, when Greece has had to deal with those it considers dirty, uncivilised and inferior.

We often talk about ‘the other’ in International Relations, but there are many types of ‘otherness’. Some are characterised (in the nationalist’s mind) by cruelty, others by arrogance and imperialist intentions, others by ignorance, others by inferiority. Not all enemies are considered inferior, some are simply regarded as inhuman, cruel, and arrogant-- for example the Greek nationalists criticised the Nazis as cruel, but not as uncivilised or inferior. What this article addresses is those others that are of the ‘inferior’ type, those the Greeks see as threats not to its territorial integrity, but to its culture and identity.

In order to understand who that other is, we first need to look at the Greek ‘self’, that is, we need to understand on what identity Greek nationalism has been built and developed over the last two centuries, since the 1821 revolution that led to the creation of the modern Greek nation, as Greek positions regarding the Macedonian question, as well as the Greek-Turkish enmity, but also its current attitude towards Roma and Albanians, reveal the ethno-cultural traditions on which Greek national identity is based.

Unlike the modern Turkish national identity that needed to make a break with its Ottoman past, in order to stress its modernity and European culture, Greek national identity is built on the idea of continuity and unity with the past. For Greeks the past is crucial to their national character, as it claims ownership of the Golden Ages of Classical Greece and the Byzantine Empire. Myths and collective memories of a national community that has remained almost unchanged through history, from

antiquity to the present day, through its struggles against invaders to preserve the identity of a timeless nation, play the most important role in the construction of itself. Despite many wars, despite statelessness, despite population movements within empires,

The historical trajectory of the nation has been traced in a linear form and without ruptures or discontinuities from antiquity to modernity. Thus, any changes which have marked the past and the history of the national community have been re-constructed in such a way that the nation is represented as a homogeneous and compact unit.<sup>22</sup>

Why has that been so important? Why is genealogical descent going back to antiquity so vital to the Greek conception of itself? It is because the achievements of those ancient people like Plato, Aristotle, Pericles, Demosthenes, Sophocles and others bestow the Greek nation with the gifts of democracy, civilisation, culture, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, the arts... Byzantium is, in addition, the birthplace of Christianity for Greeks, whose Greek Orthodoxy has been vital in their modern identity formation, their war of independence and their claim to Constantinople, the centre of Orthodoxy.

The integration of the past in the present within the Greek concept of national identity is manifest also in the Greek language. In Greek, the concept of an ethnic group or a nation is described with the identical term *ethnos* which embraces both the pre-modern concept of a homogeneous ethnic community and the modern notion of the nation as a political community.<sup>23</sup>

For most Greeks, the Greek nation is over 2,000 old, even though there was no Greek state for the vast majority of that time. That is because the *ethnos* does not need a

state, but is timeless and not reliant on either territorial, or political sovereignty. Rather than Greek it is, in essence, Hellenic.

The model of Greek nationalism was, in fact, France, England and Germany, as an imitation of Western Europe would indirectly lead them back to Greek antiquity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Greek nationalism embraced the ideal image Western Europe had of Ancient Greece. Thus, its identity was and is its history. Its mission has remained the advancement of civilisation.

If the Greek self is cultured, civilised, democratic, learned and European, then the other is likely to be uncivilised, ignorant and non-European, if not geographically, then culturally. Others like the Turks, the Roma and, in the past 20 years, after the fall of Communism, the Macedonians and the Albanians, have been absorbed and incorporated into the national narrative to serve as the antithesis to the Greek national character. They have been the black man who cannot be cleaned, no matter how much soap one uses.

In the last couple of decades negative stereotypes have been constructed and revived in the media and by politicians, resulting in xenophobic feelings, as well as a narcissism that is typical of a nationalist. The idea that one belongs to a superior group not only helps create a positive identity, but also leads to intense narcissism, a defence against feelings of weakness and loss of control, status and power, losses that threaten identity. This has been the case for Greece, as its attitude towards the Albanians reveals.

It all started with the exodus of Albanian refugees in the early 1990s.

At that time, the reasons for leaving the country were mainly political, as these people disliked the Communist regime and wished for change. At that time the Greek government decided to open the borders and issued a large number of visas, in order to let the members of the Greek minority reunite with their families over the border. Many of whom had been separated for over 40 years. Many

ethnic Albanians also crossed the border at this time. Since then, the reasons for emigrating have changed, now they are usually economic ones rather than political. Greek official policy has also changed.<sup>24</sup>

The largest group of immigrants to Greece are the Albanians, constituting 63.7% of the total documented migrant population. They are also the largest group expelled<sup>25</sup>:

**Table 1 Major expulsions from Greece according to nationality (in thousands)**

Nationality	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Albanian	84.3	277.0	221.0	216.5	241.2
Bulgarian	–	.4	1.0	0.8	1.4
Iraqi	.2	.3	11.5	1.8	3.9
Pakistani	–	.3	1.5	1.6	1.8
Romanian	.5	2.2	2.2	2.0	0.4
Turkish	–	.1	.4	0.6	2.3
Bangladeshi	–	–	–	0.4	0.5
Total	86.0	282.0	239.0	225.0	250.4

From 1991 to 1999, 1,820,000 migrants were deported, the majority of them from Albania.<sup>26</sup> There are also a large number of women and children, even prepubescent Albanian girls and boys, who are taken into Greece illegally, to work in the sex industry.

The rise of immigration in the 1990s was seen as a threat to the cultural and ethnic purity and authenticity of the nation. The number of Greeks who felt that the number of immigrants living in Greece was "too many" skyrocketed, from 29% in 1991, to 45% in 1992, to 57% in 1993, and 69.2% in 1994.<sup>27</sup> Greece is now considered to be the European Union's most xenophobic state.

Gabriella Lazaridis argues that the Greek media has contributed to these xenophobic notions by exaggerating the illegal activities of Albanians, perpetuating the stereotype which contributes to the exclusion of Albanian immigrants from economic, social, and spatial spheres of Greek life.<sup>28</sup> This leads to the continued exploitation of

migrants and foreigners who are seen as "others" and are not afforded the same rights as Greek citizens.

‘The sad truth is that racism and fear against the "Balkan other," personified by the economically devastated and desperate Albanian immigrant, is an everyday reality for the Greek population’ writes Maria Vidali. ‘Greek insecurities cover a wide spectrum, from fears that Albanians might break into houses, stealing and killing, to threats against the cultural and blood "purity" of the Greek population, and fears for the potential formation of a minority of ethnic Albanians in Greece’.<sup>29</sup>

In the collective Greek consciousness, Albanian is synonymous with dangerous, impure, uncivilised, ignorant, dirty and inferior. Balkan, rather than European. In the 1990s it became an insult to call someone ‘Albanian-looking’, as it had always been an insult to say someone looked ‘like a Gypsy’, for it meant that the person was dirty-looking, ugly, unkempt and morally suspect. A person on the periphery of civilised society

‘The hysteria directed against Albanian immigrants has been created and continually revived by the Greek media,’ argues Vidali. As a result, Albanians have been attacked because of their nationality and ‘even Greeks have been attacked for looking like Albanians’.<sup>30</sup>

A report by the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, reveals that racial prejudice and violence against migrants persist in Greece, despite a new anti-racism law coming into effect in 2014<sup>31</sup>

"Despite steps forward – including the enactment of a new anti-racism law – problems persist, including worrying levels of xenophobia and violence against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and the ongoing segregation of Roma children in some schools," ECRI head Christian Ahlund said as quoted in a statement on Human Rights Europe website.<sup>32</sup>

These 'others' are not welcome, for they can only pollute Greek society. European brothers and sisters, who are not inferior to the Greeks, are welcome to live, work and own property in the country. The English, German, French, Spanish, Italian etc. are not barbarians, but fellow Europeans, with a culture not unlike the Greek, which is, after all, the 'cradle of Europe', for the Greeks are the founders of west European civilisation, according to the national narrative. The concept of the 'barbarian' as the antithesis to the Greek is ever-present in Greek nationalism and the Albanian is it.

The intense narcissism, defence against feelings of weakness and loss of control and status Greece has been experiencing, has led to the rise of Golden Dawn, a far-right, neo-Nazi political party, that came third in the last election, gaining 17 parliamentary seats. The party's popularity soared when the financial crisis rocked Greece in 2009-2010, when feelings of weakness and insecurity rose. Golden Dawn appealed to many due to its "superior race" ideology and aggression towards immigrants. The xenophobic messages found fertile ground among the impoverished and powerless, as they articulated what many of them had been feeling since the 1990s, when Greece was 'invaded' by those who had no place in Greek society.

The last few years have been very hard for Greece. There have been severe social problems, as well as economic, partly due to the influx of migrants from outside the European Union. In reality, this xenophobia is not surprising, given the nature of Greek nationalism and the rising insecurity of both state and society.

Martin Jacques, writing about race, argues

Every race displays racial prejudice, is capable of racism, carries assumptions about its own virtue and superiority. Each racism, furthermore, is subtly different, reflecting the specificity of its own culture and history (...) there is a global racial hierarchy that helps to shape the power and the prejudices of each race. At the top of this hierarchy are whites (...) Being white confers a privilege, a special kind of deference (...) The existence of a de facto global racial hierarchy helps to shape the nature of racial prejudice exhibited by other races

(...) A race generally defers to those above it in the hierarchy and is contemptuous of those below it.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Greek nationalists regard the Greek nation as being quite high on the hierarchy, as it is white, Christian, European and with a long glorious history and intellectual tradition on which European civilisation is founded. Considering themselves to be above the Albanian in the pecking order, as they are above the Turk, the Gypsy and the Balkan Slav, they are contemptuous of them. In contrast, to those they consider their equals, if not their superiors, they are not so. The recent economic crisis was a stark example of this, as the Greeks, no matter how resentful they were towards 'Europe' and Germany in particular, they were neither contemptuous nor belittling in their attitude towards them. On the contrary, they were outraged that their 'equals', those belonging to the same white, civilised, European club, would treat them so harshly and so unfairly, that they would be so ungrateful to them –the Greeks, the nation that gave them the tools to be who and where they are today.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that many Turkish and Greek citizens do not accept that there is racism in their respective countries, as they state that they are proud of their hospitality towards foreigners, racism is visible everywhere and a deep-rooted everyday racism dominates Turkish and Greek media and social media. Public discourses against others and minorities are based on a 'them' and 'us' mentality. When people identify themselves as a member of a particular group, they do not feel comfortable with others. The Turkish and Greek public's concerns about minorities and refugees are to do with culture, values and sustainability.

Religious minorities, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Yazidis and Syrians, along with African and Middle Eastern migrants, face constant discrimination that has erupted into violence on several occasions in recent Turkish history. Kurds have suffered

years of discrimination against their cultural and national identity, also well documented. They are subject to hate speech and threats almost on a daily basis. The latest event was the hundreds of attacks on the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party during the June election campaign. Alevis not only face discrimination, but also fear persecution on multiple levels every day, including several recent instances of their houses being marked, all over Turkey. On top of these, a bizarre anti-China sentiment suddenly swept over Turkey in the summer of 2015. At the beginning of July, a Chinese restaurant in Istanbul was attacked by men with sticks and stones. 'We do not want a Chinese restaurant here, get out of our town!' the men were heard saying. On 4 July, in the western city of Balikesir, a group protested against China for persecuting Uighur Turks and hung an effigy of late Chinese leader Mao Zedong. On the same day, a group of nationalist activists attacked a Korean tourist, whom they assumed was Chinese, in the popular tourist district of Sultanahmet, Istanbul. On 9 July, Thailand's honorary consulate in Istanbul was attacked by 200 men, apparently mistaking it for Chinese.<sup>34</sup>

In Greece, recently the neo-fascist party *Golden Dawn* is dominating discussions on racism. Yet this focus on *Golden Dawn* as the locus of racism in Greece is rather misleading. A much deeper and widespread racism, institutionalised through the actions of the Greek state, should be an even greater cause for concern. Of all the minorities and migrants in Greece- Muslim Turks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Poles, Kurds and other Middle Eastern migrants, Africans, Pakistanis, etc, the Albanians are the least valued. The frenzy directed against Albanian immigrants has been advanced and continually reinforced by the Greek media. Quite often Greek television channels and newspapers have presumed that all criminals were Albanians, without actually having any proof. Many ordinary citizens in Greece casually use offensive names and images to describe Albanians. Greek newspapers often carry anti-Albanian and anti-immigrant letters and headlines. An Albanian boy, whose top grades had earned him the right to carry the Greek flag at a national parade, was prevented from doing so after nationalist protests.<sup>35</sup>

During a very popular talk show on Greek television, '*Apo Kardias*' (From the Heart), I watched with great interest, followed by mounting horror, as an Albanian couple, residents of Greece, sat sadly on stage and in fluent Greek explained their problems



and those of their family. They had lived in the country for many years, where they had worked and raised their children. When they had finished, the host looked at them and asked “Why should I help parasites like you?” With downcast eyes and shoulders stooped, the couple had no answer. They suddenly seemed ashamed to be there. The studio audience applauded. The show continued to run, hosted by the same man. “If you wash the black man you only ruin your soap.” No matter how long those people lived in Greece, no matter how well they spoke the language, no matter how many children of theirs they christened in the Greek Orthodox faith, they could never be Greek, or as good as the Greeks. Change of culture was not enough, because they could not change their inferior status, which was/is biological, unchanging, permanent. Had they been French, Italian, Dutch, Austrian, or other white European high on the sociobiological hierarchy, they would never have been called or thought of as parasitic.

The ‘other’ this paper has focused on is the inferior other: the uncivilised, backward, lesser other, the other that can only contaminate the dominant culture, the society and bloodline of the ‘better’ nation. Turkey and Greece have had such others, as we saw, outsiders in society, remaining outsiders even after years of attempted assimilation. The Greek and Turkish national narratives are White European. The Eurocentrism of their national consciousness has led to the severing of its ties with a non-European past, in one case, and to the emphasis on a continuing history and unity with a European past, in the other. So one has defined itself as a modern European nation, the other as an ancient European nation –the founder of Europe. In both cases their relation to the past serves as the basis for Europeanness. In effect then, we see dual identities: Turkish/European, Greek/European.

The concept of Europeanness of course involves selecting and appraising specific ‘European’ characteristics. Those inevitably depend on one’s perspective. British nationalists, for instance, see ‘European values’ as belonging to those on the other side of the Channel, and look at them less favourably. The entire Balkans are by some condemned to stay “Europe that yet has to become Europe”.<sup>36</sup> Despite different perspectives, common European values and characteristics, accepted by those nations and states that define themselves as European, include human rights, rationality,

modernity, democracy, the rule of law, equality and a capitalist economic system. Moreover, European means white.

What European does *not* mean is poor, immigrant, uncivilised, eastern, backward, non-democratic. Greek and Turkish identities have been built on Europeanness at the same time as Greekness and Turkishness. Their purity and status as higher races relies both on their specific national purity and superiority, and on their partaking of a high European culture. It is a mixture of cultural and ‘scientific’ racism that aims to exclude permanently those lesser ‘others’ who attempt to pollute and destroy their national identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Freud coined the phrase "*narcissism of small differences*" in a paper titled 'The Taboo of Virginity' that he published in 1917. Referring to earlier work by British anthropologist Ernest Crawley, he said that we reserve our most virulent emotions – aggression, hatred, envy – towards those who resemble us the most. We feel threatened not by the Other with whom we have little in common – but by the ‘nearly-we’, who mirror and reflect us. (Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, translated and ed., James Strachey, New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, pp. 58-63.)

<sup>2</sup> ‘Science has often been used as a justification to propose, project, and enact racist social policies. The philosophical and political underpinnings of ideas associated with racial superiority and inferiority were first given scientific legitimacy and credence with the publication of Charles Darwin’s (1859) revolutionary book, *The Origin of Species*.’ (R. M. Dennis, ‘Social Darwinism, scientific racism, and the metaphysics of race’, *The Journal of Negro Education*, Summer 1995, p.243, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/222108130?pq-origsite=gscholar> [accessed in August 2015].)

<sup>3</sup> Eurocentrism is a term, coined in the 1980s by Samir Amin, referring to the notion of European exceptionalism, a worldview centred on Western civilisation. Eurocentrism is the practice of viewing the world from a European/ western perspective and with an implied belief in the pre-eminence of European culture. ‘Eurocentrism includes a set of beliefs that are statements about empirical reality, statements educated and usually unprejudiced Europeans accept as true, as propositions supported by “the facts”.’ (J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World*, New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1993, pp. 8-9.) Similarly, Marta Araújo & Silvia Rodríguez Maeso write that

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'Eurocentrism... is a paradigm that organizes the production of interpretations of social reality (past and present), while masking its ideological basis under the pretence of political and scientific neutrality. ('History textbooks, racism and the critique of Eurocentrism: beyond rectification or compensation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31 August 2011, [http://www.academia.edu/3286477/History\\_textbooks\\_racism\\_and\\_the\\_critique\\_of\\_Eurocentrism\\_beyond\\_rectification\\_or\\_compensation](http://www.academia.edu/3286477/History_textbooks_racism_and_the_critique_of_Eurocentrism_beyond_rectification_or_compensation) [accessed in August 2015])

<sup>4</sup> I. Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1996; I. Wallerstein, *Centrist Liberalism Triumphant: 1789-1914*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.: 264; in Buzan and Lawson, 2015, p. 121

<sup>5</sup> B. Buzan and G. Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, Cambridge UP, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> A. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Oxford UP, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> G. Schopflin, 'The Functions of Myth and the Taxonomy of Myths', in G. Hosking & G. Schopflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood*, New York: Routledge, 1997

<sup>8</sup> Hosking & Schopflin 1997, p. 31

<sup>9</sup> 7 July 2010, *Wiki Leaks- The Global Intelligence Files*, [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/83/830370\\_irq-iraq-middle-east.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/83/830370_irq-iraq-middle-east.html) (accessed in August 2015).

<sup>10</sup> B. Gokay, *A Clash of Empires*, London: I B Tauris, 1997, pp. 145-157.

<sup>11</sup> V. Kechriotis, 'Postcolonial criticism encounters late Ottoman studies', <http://www.historeinonline.org/index.php/historein/article/viewFile/183/163.pdf> (accessed in August 2015).

<sup>12</sup> B. Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, Yale University Press, 2008, p.401.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Kinross, *Ataturk. The Rebirth of A Nation*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990 (first pb edition), pp. 465- 472.

<sup>14</sup> Eugene Pittard, *Les races et l'histoire*, La Renaissance du Livre, 1924. Pittard wrote on the European origins of the Turkish race – 'Neolitik Devirde Kucuk Asya ile Avrupa Arasinda Antropolojik Munasebetler', *Belleten*, 2/5-6, April 1938, p.38. Also see M. Sukru Hanioglu, *Ataturk: An Intellectual Biography*, Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 164-165.

<sup>15</sup> Racial hierarchy is defined as a system of stratification that focuses on the belief that some racial groups are either superior or inferior to other racial groups. The groups perceived to have the most power and authority are at the top of the racial hierarchy, while the most 'inferior' group is at the bottom.

<sup>16</sup> The Washington Post, 15 April 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/why-the-armenian-genocide-holds-a-lesson-for-jews-commentary/2015/04/15/93cbb536-e38b-11e4-ae0f-f8c46aa8c3a4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/why-the-armenian-genocide-holds-a-lesson-for-jews-commentary/2015/04/15/93cbb536-e38b-11e4-ae0f-f8c46aa8c3a4_story.html)

<sup>17</sup> Burak Bekdil, 'No Racism in Turkey', *Gatestone Institute*, 23 April 2015, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/5588/turkey-racism> (accessed in August 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Adam Taylor, *The Washington Post*, 6 August 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/06/is-armenian-an-insult-turkeys-prime-minister-seems-to-think-so/> (accessed in August 2015).

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- <sup>19</sup> 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Turkey, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html> (accessed in August 2015).
- <sup>20</sup> Pinar Döner, Adem Özkara and Rabia Kahveci, ‘Syrian refugees in Turkey: numbers and emotions’, *The Lancet*, Volume 382, No. 9894, 31 August 2013, p. 764.
- <sup>21</sup> *BBC News*, 25 August 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-28926956> (accessed in August 2015); Cagri Ozdemir, ‘Syrian refugees in Turkey face increasing hardships’, *Middle East Eye*, 12 February 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syrian-refugees-turkey-face-increasing-hardships-2055802649> (accessed in August 2015).
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- <sup>24</sup> Vidali, ‘Immigration: Living in a Policy Vacuum. The plight of Albanian immigrants in Greece’, *Central Europe Review*, Vol 1, No 21, 15 Nov 1999.
- <sup>25</sup> A.Triandafyllidou, "Greek immigration policy at the turn of the 21st century. Lack of political will or purposeful mismanagement?", *European Journal of Migration and Law* 11.2, 2009, pp. 159-177.
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- <sup>27</sup> P.Kiprianos, S. Balias, and V. Passas, "Greek policy towards immigration and immigrants," *Social Policy & Administration* 37.2, 2003, pp. 148-164.
- <sup>28</sup> G. Lazaridis and E. Wickens, "'Us" and the "Others": ethnic minorities in Greece", *Annals of Tourism Research* 26.3, 1999, pp 632-655.
- <sup>29</sup> Vidali, 1999.
- <sup>30</sup> Vidali, 1999.
- <sup>31</sup> Sputnik News, ‘Xenophobia, Violence Against Migrants on Rise in Greece’, <http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150224/1018685261.html> .
- <sup>32</sup> Sputnik News, 24.02.2015.
- <sup>33</sup> The Global Hierarchy of Race, *The Guardian*, 20 September 2003.
- <sup>34</sup> B. Tasch, ‘Anti-China sentiment is suddenly sweeping over Turkey’, *Business Insider UK*, 21 July 2015, <http://uk.businessinsider.com/china-turkey-ughurs-2015-7?r=US&IR=T> (accessed in August 2015).
- <sup>35</sup> *The Guardian*, 11 November 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/nov/11/thefarright.greece> (accessed in August 2015).

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<sup>36</sup> V. Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, p.11.