

## THE DEBATES OF MEDITERRANEAN-NESS IN TURKISH AND ITALIAN IDENTITY FORMATION (1860-1960)

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### Abstract

Mediterranean identity has been a by-product of the cultural/civilizational synthesis produced by the peoples surrounding the sea and it has been an important element of local, national or regional identity construction. This article compares and contrasts Turkish and Italian perceptions of the Mediterranean as a geo-political and geo-cultural space between the 1860s and 1960s. In Italy, Mediterranean-ness evolved from a modern/nationalist to an ultra-nationalist/expansionist identity element and later became less visible, since it had been precluded by the European-ness starting from the 1960s onwards. On the other hand, in Turkey, tough with a lesser emphasis, the discussions on Mediterranean-ness evolved from a neo-classical/neo-Hellenic literary movement (*Nev-Yunanîlik* – Neo-Hellenism) to a humanist/leftist mode of thinking on Mediterranean civilization (*Mavi Anadolu Hareketi* – Blue Anatolia Movement) and Mediterraneanism remained as a minor intellectual movement instead of a socially and widely recognized identity element. The article aims to analyze the socio-cultural, political and international factors leading to these different perceptions of the Mediterranean. In doing that, it attempts to examine Mediterranean identity debates to search for common and diverging points in terms of identity construction.

### Introduction

Fernand Braudel's seminal work on the Mediterranean world has turned out the Mediterranean region to be considered as a unit of analysis in the disciplines of history as well as international relations.<sup>1</sup> Both historians<sup>2</sup> and scholars of international

<sup>1</sup> Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2000; David Abulafia (ed.), *The Mediterranean in History*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2003; W. V. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; John Watkins and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds.), *Mediterranean Identities in the Premodern Era: Entrepôts, Islands, Empires*, London: Ashgate, 2014.

relations<sup>3</sup> began to treat this particular region as a geopolitical/geo-economic space, shaping and shaped by historic cycles and current international politics. Perception of the Mediterranean not merely as an intermediate sea among the three continents of the Old World, but also as a cradle of civilization - uniting the elements of Southern European, Western Asian and Northern African characteristics and thereby creating a cultural/civilizational synthesis - has become a significant field of analysis.

One of the most interesting, yet most understudied dimensions of the Mediterranean studies is the identity dimension. The Mediterranean identity, a by-product of the cultural/civilizational synthesis produced by the peoples surrounding the sea has been an important element for defining who the “Mediterranean people” are.<sup>4</sup> However, Mediterranean-ness has been overshadowed by other elements of identity. The European-ness, Muslim-ness, Arab-ness, etc. have been considered as the dominant element of self-definition, while Mediterranean-ness has been disregarded as a loose and fabricated concept attempting to forge an identity exceeding beyond existing religious and national identities.

Although Mediterranean-ness has been discussed in the literature since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was perceived not as a current phenomenon, but as an ancient one, once created by the Ancient Greeks and Romans and then collapsed with the collapse of the Roman Empire and the separation of surrounding territories of the Mediterranean through religious and cultural divergence.<sup>5</sup> Events like Crusades did not contribute, for some historians, to create a common Mediterranean-ness, but exacerbated the disintegration of the regional identity, based on religious lines.<sup>6</sup> A new form of crusading discourse was reproduced with the advance of the Ottoman Empire into the Mediterranean world starting from the mid-fifteenth century onwards; in the words of Andrew Hess, “a 16<sup>th</sup> century world war” shattered the Mediterranean region.<sup>7</sup> While the French revolution brought national identities to the forefront, the idea of European civilization’s uniqueness and superiority over the other civilizations/cultures emphasized European-ness instead of Mediterranean-ness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a similar manner, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey, an important Mediterranean country, attempted to be labelled as a European country first and foremost and Mediterranean-ness could not evolve as a significant element of self-definition. In North African countries and Levant, Arab nationalism and French colonialism prompted an infertile ground for the development of a Mediterranean identity uniting north, south and east of the Mediterranean.

<sup>3</sup> Stefania Panebianco (ed.), *A New Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Identity*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003; Stephen C. Calleya, *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, London: Routledge, 2005; Massimiliano Ferrara, Roberto Mavilia, Valeria Talbot (eds.), *Politics, International Relations and Cooperation in the Mediterranean Area*, Soveria Mannelli: Robettino, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Kousis, Tom Sellwyn and David Clark (eds.), *Contested Mediterranean Spaces: Ethnographic Essays in Honour of Charles Tilly*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011; Claudia Esposito, *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014; Robert J. Blackwood and Stefania Tufi, *The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean: French and Italian Coastal Cities*, London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry (eds.), *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998; Eric S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2011; Denise Demetriou, *Negotiating Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean: The Archaic and Classical Greek Multiethnic Emporia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Conor Kostick (ed.), *The Crusades and the Near East*, London and New York: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Hess, “The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 4/1, (1973), pp. 55-76.

A renewed interest in the debates on Mediterraneanism have emerged only after the end of the Cold War and in a globalizing world, where the boundaries among identities have begun to evaporate and hybrid identities have started to emerge. Instead of focusing solely on national or religious identities, regional identities surpassing beyond them began to reappear.<sup>8</sup> Transformation of loosely-attached European states into a European Union both showed that a regional identity beyond national identities is possible and also preclude the emergence of a Mediterranean identity except for a grand - but not much successful - project of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP). The EMP was designed not to bring a common Mediterranean identity to the forefront, but to prevent the spread of Mediterranean problems towards Europe by attempting to solve them before they reach the European continent. Even the very name “Euro-Mediterranean” demonstrated that Europe and the Mediterranean are two distinct entities.<sup>9</sup>

Within this historical context, this article focuses on a comparative analysis of Mediterranean dimension in the construction of Turkish and Italian identities. The Mediterranean-ness of Italy have been discussed in the literature widely because of its Roman origins, its positive and negative implications on Italian unification and its use and abuse by the Fascist regime as a concept legitimizing Italian expansionism.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the Mediterranean-ness of Turkish identity has been largely disregarded because Mediterraneanism has never been considered as a dominant element of it. However, still, a comparative study is believed to be possible considering the long historical interaction between Turkey and Italy since the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards and some similarities in the identity formation process in these two countries.

This article aims to compare and contrast Turkish and Italian notions of Mediterranean-ness from 1860s to 1960s, which followed divergent patterns. In Italy, Mediterranean-ness was evolved from a modern/nationalist to a fascist/ultra-nationalist/expansionist identity element and later became less visible since it had precluded by the European-ness, while in Turkey, tough with a lesser emphasis, it evolved from a classical/neo-Hellenic to a humanist/leftist identity element and Mediterraneanism remained as a minor intellectual movement instead of a socially and widely recognized identity element. The article attempts to analyze the socio-cultural, political and international factors leading to these divergent patterns of Mediterranean-ness.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Sant Cassia and Isabel Schafer, “Mediterranean Conundrums”: Pluridisciplinary Perspectives for Research in Social Sciences”, *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 16/1, 2005, pp. 1-23; Luca Zavagno, “Mediterranean World or Worlds of the Mediterranean: Introduction”, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 31/3, (2010), pp. 239-245.

<sup>9</sup> Michelle Pace, “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Common Mediterranean Strategy? European Union Policy from a Discursive Perspective”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 9/2, (2004), pp. 292-309; Kristina Kausch and Richard Youngs, “The end of the ‘Euro-Mediterranean vision’”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 85/5, (2009), pp. 963-975; Raffaella A. Del Sarto, “Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU’s Southern Buffer Zone”, in Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds.), *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflict and Memory in a Transnational World*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 149-165; Laris Gaiser and Dejan Hribar, “Euro-Mediterranean Region: Resurged Geopolitical Importance”, *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies*, Vol. 5/1, (2012), pp. 57-69.

<sup>10</sup> Fabrizio Donno, “Routes to Modernity: Orientalism and Mediterraneanism in Italian Culture, 1810-1910”, *California Italian Studies*, Vol. 1/1, (2010), pp. 1-23; Claudia Fogu, “From *Mare Nostrum* to *Mare Aliorum*: Mediterranean Theory and Mediterraneanism in Contemporary Italian Thought”, *California Italian Studies*, Vol. 1/1, (2010), pp. 1-23.

## 1. A Brief Historical Background: The Mediterranean in the Ottoman and Italian Geopolitical/Geo-Economic Setting until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the Italian Mediterranean-ness was very much represented by the Italian city-states, particularly the merchant colonies of Venice and Genoa throughout the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea basins. These city-states not only transformed the Mediterranean into a network, linking various trading posts in a way to form an inter-linked commercial establishment, but also created a common merchandising framework by concluding treaties with or achieving trade concessions from the Eastern Mediterranean empires, such as the Byzantines or Mamluks. This new form of interdependence between Eastern Mediterranean empires and Italian city states resulted in a dramatic increase in terms of reciprocal mobility of Mediterranean peoples. Merchants, diplomats and mercenaries have travelled along the Mediterranean from north to south and from east to west.<sup>11</sup>

The Turkish encounter with the Mediterranean world was also realized through these Italian city states. Accordingly, the Turkic principalities, which had been established in Asia Minor since the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, began to engage in trade relations with the Italian city states. Particularly, those principalities ruling the Aegean and Mediterranean shores had close contacts with the Mediterranean world. Establishment of the port of Alaiye (today's Alanya in the Mediterranean shores of Anatolia) by Alaaddin Keykubad of the Seljuk Sultanate of Anatolia showed the interests of the Turks in navigation and maritime trade.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the navy created by Çaka Bey, based on his Western Anatolian principality, turned out to be a significant naval force in the Aegean.<sup>13</sup> In addition to naval skirmishes among the Mediterranean fleets, peaceful trade relations dominated the region as well. Anatolian agricultural and stock farming products were traded throughout the Mediterranean via the fleets of Italian city states. In other words, Turkic principalities turned out to be new trading partners of Italians in the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup>

This trend was further followed by the Ottomans. The early Ottomans not only rivalled with the Venetian and Genoese naval presence in the Mediterranean, but also engaged in lucrative trade relations. The earlier capitulations, or commercial privileges, granted to some Italian city states demonstrated that relations between the Ottomans and Italians passed beyond the conflictual nature of religious enmity. A very complex network of commercial and military relations was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry over the control of the Mediterranean. Moreover, the Ottoman conquest of most of the southern and Eastern Mediterranean added a Mediterranean dimension to the Ottoman identity.<sup>15</sup> Despite

<sup>11</sup> Monique O'Connell and Eric R Dursteler, *The Mediterranean World: From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Napoleon*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016, pp. 135-147.

<sup>12</sup> John Freely, *The Western Shores of Turkey: Discovering the Aegean and Mediterranean Coasts*, London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2006, p. 332.

<sup>13</sup> Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Çaka Bey: İzmir ve Civarındaki Adaların İlk Türk Beyi*, Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1987.

<sup>14</sup> Feridun Emecen, *Batı Anadolu Beylikler Dünyası*, İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995; Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, New York: Phoenix Press, 2000; Palmira Brummett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

the Ottoman gradual retreat from Western Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, Mediterranean trade still remained as an essential component of Ottoman economy until its disintegration as well as a significant component of European economy (though largely overshadowed by Atlantic and Indian Ocean trade).<sup>16</sup> These economic linkages resulted in the limited but still existing Mediterranean element in Ottoman/Turkish identity.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the unification of Italy and the Ottoman attempts for modernization diverted attention from the Mediterranean region to a great extent. While different Italian political entities come together to form a unified state, multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire began to disintegrate; hence the political patterns of Turkish and Italian experience are quite different. However, there were significant similarities as well. Both the unified Italy and the disintegrating Ottoman Empire needed Great Power recognition to be labelled as members of the European club. The Ottoman Empire was accepted as a part of the European international law system with the Treaty of Paris in 1856, although legal equality between Europe and the Ottoman Empire could never be achieved. Still, the Ottomans were aware that without being part of the European system and without having benefitted from the balance of power, it was impossible to survive. Similarly, when unified in 1861, Italy required the recognition of the European Great Powers; hence it turned its attention to become a member of the privileged club of the European states.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to their search for recognition as a member of the European state system, both the Ottoman and Italian states had also dealt with significant regional disparities within their dominions. The north-south divide in Italy and multi-ethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire prevented the ruling elites to establish a uniform identity for their citizens. Since its unification, Italy had to cope with the problem of north-south divide, which had been represented by “the northern political, intellectual, and social elites, through a type of orientalism in which the South was imagined as the antithesis of the modernist and nationalist project in Italy”.<sup>18</sup> Hence Mediterraneanism was very much associated with the South and particularly some northern intellectuals preferred to use Mediterraneanism to denote a lower culture compared to the modern European civilization. The Ottomans, on the other hand, encountered with a fierce local nationalism resulted in revolutionary upheavals and emergence of new nation-states via carving up from the imperial territories, such as Greece in 1829 and Serbia in 1878. Therefore, they developed Ottomanism and constitutionalism as the solution towards these separatist tendencies.<sup>19</sup> In other words, while the Ottomans attempted to create a constitutional system based on representation of all components of the Empire, Italians fostered a form of nationalism unifying the historical Roman/Mediterranean heritage with the modern elements of nationalism as promulgated by

<sup>16</sup> Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye İktisadi Tarihi, 1500-1914*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2007, pp. 66-74.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, London: A & C Black Publishers, 2002, pp. 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> Stephanie V. Love, “‘An Educated Identity’: The School as a Modernist Chronotope in Ferrante’s Neapolitan Novels”, in Grace Russo Bul-laro and Stephanie V. Love (eds.), *The Works of Elena Ferrante: Reconfiguring the Margins*, London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016, pp. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, Brill: Leiden, 2000, pp. 8-13.

the French revolution. Neither Italy, nor the Ottoman Empire totally overcame this problem of regional disparities despite their efforts in doing so.

## 2. The Geopolitical and Geo-cultural Perception of the Mediterranean in Italy and Ottoman Empire/Turkey

Based on the general historical account of Mediterranean-ness and particular emphasis on the Turkish-Italian intercourse, it can be argued that there had been divergent paths of Mediterraneanism in the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and in Italy. Starting with the Italian case, it can be argued that after the unification, Mediterraneanism was perceived by some Italian romantics as well as academicians as a common identity that could really end regional divergences and unite the Northern and Southern Italy by inspiring the people with an identity surpassing their sub-regional identities.<sup>20</sup>

This perception of the Mediterranean as a uniting element had several characteristics: First of all, there was a significant emphasis on the Roman heritage in the Mediterranean underlining the unity of the Mediterranean basin under Roman rule. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, which ended this unity, the medieval Italian presence in the Mediterranean was not much brought to the forefront by these authors. For instance, Amato Amati, a nineteenth century Italian geographer and historian, wrote in 1861 that the Mediterranean was once an “Italian lake”; his emphasis on the Italian-ness not Roman-ness of the Mediterranean is quite significant reflecting the attempt to modernize the former Roman regional hegemony within a nationalist fervour.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, it was argued that the fall of the Roman Empire resulted in the fall of the Mediterranean; however, the central role of the Mediterranean in world politics would be regenerated with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1867. Hence the opening of this great waterway, just a couple of years after the unification of Italy, aroused the hopes of Italian politicians such as Luigi Torelli for a renewed Italian interest in the Mediterranean. In his treatise on the Suez Canal published in 1867, Torelli argues that this canal would revitalize the Mediterranean trade and therefore increase the influence of Italy in the region.<sup>22</sup> Third, some Italian politicians focused on the geopolitical significance of the Mediterranean for the unified Italy. Even before the unification, for example, Count Cesare Balbo emphasized the significance of the Mediterranean for the rise of Italian power.<sup>23</sup> In other words, in the pre- and post-unification Italy, the Mediterranean turned out to be a region of interest for the Italian intellectuals and politicians.

In this period, there were two types of Mediterranean-ness, one domestic and the other external. Within Italy, the Mediterranean-ness was either perceived as a characteristic for the underdeveloped and uncivilized South vis-à-vis developed and civ-

<sup>20</sup> Fogu, “From *Mare Nostrum* to *Mare Aliorum*: Mediterranean Theory and Mediterraneanism in Contemporary Italian Thought”, pp. 1-23; Donno, “Routes to Modernity: Orientalism and Mediterraneanism in Italian Culture, 1810-1910”, pp. 1-23.

<sup>21</sup> Amato Amati, *Elementi di Geografia dell’Italia*, Napoli: Presso F. Perrucchetti Libraio, 1862, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Luigi Torelli, *L’Istmo di Suez e L’Italia*, Milano: Stabilimento Giuseppe Civelli, 1867, pp. 55-61.

<sup>23</sup> Cesare Balbo, *Delle Speranze d’Italia*, Capolago: Tipografia Elvetica, 1844, pp. 148-149.

ilized North, or it was romanticized similar to the Orientalist romanticization of the East in the same period. To start with the North-South divide, also known as the *Mezzogiorno* problem, the Bourbon-dominated Kingdom of Two Sicilies in the south was perceived quite negatively for its underdevelopment and illiberal administration. This resulted in the development of a pejorative Mediterranean-ness of the south compared to the European-ness of the north.<sup>24</sup> The second approach to the south was its romanticization via an Orientalist tune focusing on the rural landscape instead of cities as bearers of civilization.<sup>25</sup>

While the Mediterranean-ness was a negative adjective within Italy because of its adoption by the Northern intellectuals as a sign of division between the North and South, external Mediterranean-ness perceived the Mediterranean first and foremost as a region of rivalry and expansion. According to this line of argumentation, the prospective rivalry for the control of the Mediterranean would be between Italy on the one hand and Britain and France on the other. Even pre-unification politicians such as Devincenzi-Bernardi or Balbo mentioned about this rivalry and advised unification for dealing effectively with the Mediterranean rivals of Italy.<sup>26</sup> More important than rivalry, the Mediterranean was projected as a cradle of civilization in this period as well. According to Devincenzi-Bernardi, the Mediterranean was defined as a “great field, where civilization has developed since the ancient times” and he argued that without this sea, Europe would have been as uncivilized as Tartaria or inner parts of Africa.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, according to Luigi Campo Fregoso, Italy, the inheritor of the Roman civilization, should direct its attention to the Mediterranean because Italy has a geographical, intellectual, political, religious and historical primacy in the Mediterranean.<sup>28</sup>

This “primacy” argumentation was strengthened with the writings of the Sicilian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He coined the term “Mediterranean race” as an Arian race in order to reject the Northern European claims of a deep racial divide between the north and the south of Europe. For Sergi, the Mediterranean race was a pure race, the Italians were perfect representatives of it, and the great achievements of the Roman period and Renaissance had been a product of the Mediterranean race.<sup>29</sup>

However, after the end of the World War I and with the rise of fascist rule in Italy Mediterranean-ness turned out to be a justification for Italian expansionism in the region.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the conceptualization of *mare nostrum*, namely displaying the

<sup>24</sup> John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 1-20.

<sup>25</sup> Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 187-223.

<sup>26</sup> Ottavio Giglio di Devincenzi-Bernardi, *Delle Strade Ferrate Italiane: Massime per Rispetto alle Presenti Condizioni del Mediterraneo*, Napoli: Stamparia del Vaglio, 1848, pp. 15-16; Balbo, *Delle Speranze d'Italia*, p. 306.

<sup>27</sup> Devincenzi-Bernardi, *Delle Strade Ferrate Italiane: Massime per Rispetto alle Presenti Condizioni del Mediterraneo*, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Luigi Campo Fregoso, *Del Primato Italiano sul Mediterraneo*, Roma: Ermano Loescher, 1872.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle A. Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943*, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985; Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*.

Mediterranean as an “Italian sea” was not merely a fascist enterprise; rather the “military inferiority” emerged after the Italian defeat in the 1896 Abyssinian War contributed much to a renewed interest in the colonization of the Mediterranean, which ultimately led to the Ottoman-Italian war and Italian colonization of Libya and the Dodecanese islands. During this colonization process the argument of *mare nostrum* played a significant part in the construction of the Italian national identity.<sup>31</sup> However, it was in the fascist era that the *mare nostrum* discourse began to transform into a state policy, provided the Italians with an “imperial geographical destiny” and emphasized a “historical legacy” to maintain a “civilizing mission” towards the uncivilized parts of the Mediterranean. Fascist intellectuals such as Guido Vannutelli and Giuseppe Fioravanzo wrote extensively on the centrality of the Mediterranean in world politics.<sup>32</sup> This discourse revitalized the traditional description of the Italian people as a “sea-going race”, therefore emphasized the significance of the Mediterranean for Italian daily life as well.<sup>33</sup> Ironically and paradoxically, the Mediterranean was also perceived quite negatively by Mussolini in geopolitical terms. According to him, the Mediterranean was a landlocked sea whose two waterways, namely the Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal were controlled by the British. Therefore, Italy was perceived as a captive of the British via the Mediterranean.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude, until the early 1920s, the Mediterranean was a significant concept of the Italian unification. It turns out to be a vague but unifying characteristic for diverse Italian city-state cultures on the one hand, while it had also been perceived as a dividing characteristic between the northern and southern parts of the country. Beyond this paradoxical perception, the Mediterranean was considered as a vital region for the regeneration of the former glorious days of Italy as the bearer of inheritance of the ancient Roman civilization. It was thought that only through the control of the Mediterranean Italy could be a great power once again. The defeat of the fascist rule in Italy at the end of the World War II, on the other hand, forced the Italians to once more attach themselves to the broader European identity in order not to be excluded from the projects for European unification; therefore Mediterranean-ness became subordinated by European-ness.

The course of Mediterraneanism in Turkey was quite different. While the Ottoman Empire began to disintegrate, the literary movement of neo-Hellenism was interestingly adopted by some late Ottoman/early Republican authors, whom were called as *nev-Yunanîs* (neo-Hellenists), such as Yahya Kemal, Yakup Kadri as a pattern emphasizing a common Mediterranean heritage, of which the Ottoman Empire/Turkey was a part.<sup>35</sup> This movement was established in the 1910s and argued that in order

<sup>31</sup> Fogu, “From Mare Nostrum to Mare Aliorum: Mediterranean Theory and Mediterraneanism in Contemporary Italian Thought”, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Guido Vannutelli, *Il Mediterraneo e la Civiltà Mondiale dalle Origini all’Imperio Fascista della Nuova Italia*, Bologna: Licinio Cappelli, 1936; Giuseppe Fioravanzo, *Il Mediterraneo: Centro Strategico del Mondo*, Verona: Officine Grafiche A. Mondadori, 1943.

<sup>33</sup> Fogu, “From Mare Nostrum to Mare Aliorum: Mediterranean Theory and Mediterraneanism in Contemporary Italian Thought”, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Steven Morewood, *The British Defence of Egypt, 1935-1940: Conflict and Crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean*, London and New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Şevket Toker, “Türk Edebiyatında Nev-Yunanilik”, *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Nr. 1, (1982), pp. 135-165; Yıldırım, 2013a) Emre Yıldırım, “Türk Kimliğinin “Nev-Yunani” ve “Akdenizli” Formülasyonu: Yahya Kemal Beyatlı ve Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu”, *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 6/26, (2013), pp. 624-642.



to understand the achievements of the European civilization, one should start examining the ancient Greek civilization and literature. According to Yahya Kemal, the Turks were the heir to the ancient Greeks both in terms of geography and in terms of civilization. He even admitted that the motto of the neo-Hellenist movement in the Ottoman Empire was a Platonic principle: “around the Mediterranean, we, the civilized ones, we look like frogs at the edges of a pool”.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, similar to the Italian intellectuals, Yakup Kadri perceived the Mediterranean as a cradle of civilization. He once wrote that “the contemporary civilization began to spread its first lights from the shores of this sea and the humanity found its complete scale and value for the first time around here. The Greeks name this process as ‘the Greek miracle’; however, naming it as ‘the Mediterranean miracle’ would be more appropriate”.<sup>37</sup>

After these earlier and preliminary argumentations on the role of Mediterranean-ness in Turkish culture and identity, the real significant step was taken with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, which perceived itself as a European state and which denounced its Middle Eastern/Islamic heritage by creating a new identity based on European civilization and peculiar Turkish culture. An interesting component of this identity was its Anatolian-ness, which referred to the pre-Islamic heritage of Anatolia as a part of Turkish identity. This understanding made the ancient Anatolian civilizations, particularly the Trojans, Assyrians and Hittites as the founding elements of Turco-Anatolian identity of the new Republic. More interestingly, and quite in line with this argumentation, a group of Turkish humanists, called as the movement of “Blue Anatolia” underlined the Mediterranean-ness of Turkish identity in the 1950s and 1960s. Sabahaddin Eyüboğlu, Azra Erhat, Cevad Şakir Kabağaçaçlı (known in Turkey with his penname, the “Fisherman of Halicarnassus”) were among the members of this group, which attempted to create a Turco-Mediterranean identity based on Anatolian-ness<sup>38</sup>, this movement “pick[s] up the notion of a homeland-based culturalism as the basis of national identity and transform it by refracting these ideas through the prism of humanist philosophy and literature”. Similar to the previous neo-Hellenist movement, the Blue Anatolian movement underlined the ancient Greek civilization but, different from it, this movement put a specific emphasis on its Anatolian-ness. In other words, according to the Blue Anatolianists, what had so far been displayed as the ancient Greek civilization was originally Anatolian since it was the Ionian philosophy and literature that created this civilization, not the Greek mainland.<sup>39</sup> This was quite in line with the archeological discourse of early Republican era, separating between the Greco-Roman and the Greco-Anatolian civilization and displaying the latter as the forerunner of modern Turkey.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 627.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 627.

<sup>38</sup> Kaya Akyıldız, “Mavi Anadoluculuk”, Uygur Kocabaşoğlu (ed.), *Modernleşme ve Batıcılık: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce*, Vol. 3, İstanbul: İletişim, 2002, p. 480; S. M. Can Bilsel, “Our Anatolia”: Organicism and the Making of Humanist Culture in Turkey” *Muğarnas*, Vol. 24, History and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the “Lands of Rum”, (2007), pp. 223-241; Emre Yıldırım, “Erken Cumhuriyet Yılları Millî Kimlik Tartışmaları: Hasan Ali Yücel ve Türkiye’de Hürmanizma Arayışları”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8/7, (2013), pp. 745-463; Aslı Gür, “Political Excavations of the Anatolian Past: Nationalism and Archaeology in Turkey”, in Ran Boytner, Lynn Swartz Dodd and Bradley J. Parker (eds.), *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: The Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, (2010), pp. 80.

<sup>39</sup> Gür, “Political Excavations of the Anatolian Past: Nationalism and Archaeology in Turkey”, p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

## Conclusion

There are significant similarities and differences between Turkish and Italian perceptions of the Mediterranean. To start with the similarities, both Turkish and Italian authors perceived the Mediterranean as a cradle of civilization and referred to an ancient civilization as the forerunner. The Italians considered the Roman civilization as a great civilization defining and defined by the Mediterranean; therefore, they attempted to derive Mediterranean-ness from this Roman origin. Although it was difficult for the Ottoman/Turkish intellectuals to set ancient Greek civilization as a starting point due to dominance of Islamic/Turkish elements in Turkish identity and almost a century-long Turco-Greek contention, still the neo-Hellenist authors and Blue Anatolia movement perceived ancient Greek civilization as a benchmark to understand current European civilization. However, particularly the Blue Anatolia movement focused on a Greco-Anatolian civilization, which was more Anatolian than Greek. In order to harmonize this earlier civilization with current Turkish nationalism and to overcome the representational difficulties as a result of the Turco-Greek contention, the Blue Anatolia movement preferred to emphasize the Anatolian origins of the Greek civilization. Still, both Italian and Turkish Mediterranean-ness was stemmed from an ancient civilization discourse.

Secondly, both in Italy and Turkey, Mediterranean-ness never became the dominant element of national identities. Italian nationalism attempted to create a modern national identity based on Italian-ness to overcome local identities, which had been extremely strong. Mediterranean-ness could only act as a supplementary identity element surpassing local identities and creating a common self-definition based on belongingness to the same environment. Considering the Turkish identity, Mediterranean-ness was even looser, since the Turkish identity formation was very much based on the ethno-religious elements, namely Turkish-ness and Islam. Moreover, both in the Turkish and Italian cases, the Mediterranean identity was not strong enough to surpass European-ness as a supra-national identity. Particularly, from the 1960s onwards, both in Italy and in Turkey European-ness became more significant in line with the European integration process and Mediterranean-ness was overshadowed by this broader component

The third similarity was that Mediterranean-ness was used for political purposes. For the Italian part, the political use of Mediterranean elements of identity was quite related to the Italian unification. Accordingly, the Mediterranean was both a unifying and dividing element. It is a unifying element because it is an identity component surpassing local identities and creating a commonality that supported Italian nationalism. On the other hand, it is a dividing element because it fostered an intra-Italian division between the northern and southern parts of Italy and was associated with underdevelopment. For the Turkish part, Mediterranean-ness was perceived both by the Neo-Hellenist and Blue Anatolian movements as a link associating the Eastern Turks with the Western European civilization. In other words, presentation of a commonality between Turkey and Europe based on their Mediterranean origins was ex-

pected to increase the ties between European and Turkish cultures and by extension the recognition of Turkish culture as a European one.

Besides these three similarities, the Turkish and Italian perceptions of the Mediterranean have significant differences as well. Despite its shortcomings, Mediterranean-ness was still more significant in Italy than in Turkey. Mediterraneanism has had a wider audience in Italy while it was a very marginal movement in Turkey comprised only a few intellectuals. Secondly, the discourse of *mare nostrum* had always been stronger compared to the definitions of Mediterranean as “a Turkish lake”. Italian claims over the Mediterranean until the end of the Second World War were quite revisionist, while Turkish claims over Mediterranean as “a Turkish lake” had been waned even as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey were status quo powers, whose Mediterranean discourse hardly passed beyond the control of some strategic Aegean islands and Cyprus. Finally, the Italian discourses of Mediterranean ranged from a liberal/nationalist tendency in 1860s to a liberal/colonialist discourse in 1890s and finally epitomized with ultra-nationalist/fascist policy. The Turkish discourses, on the other hand, were very much remained within the confines of the literary circles and a coherent Mediterranean policy was not designed and developed throughout the late Ottoman and early Republican periods.

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