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Book Review

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The Balkans: From the End of Byzantium to the Present Day

by Mark Mazower

İstanbul, 2014

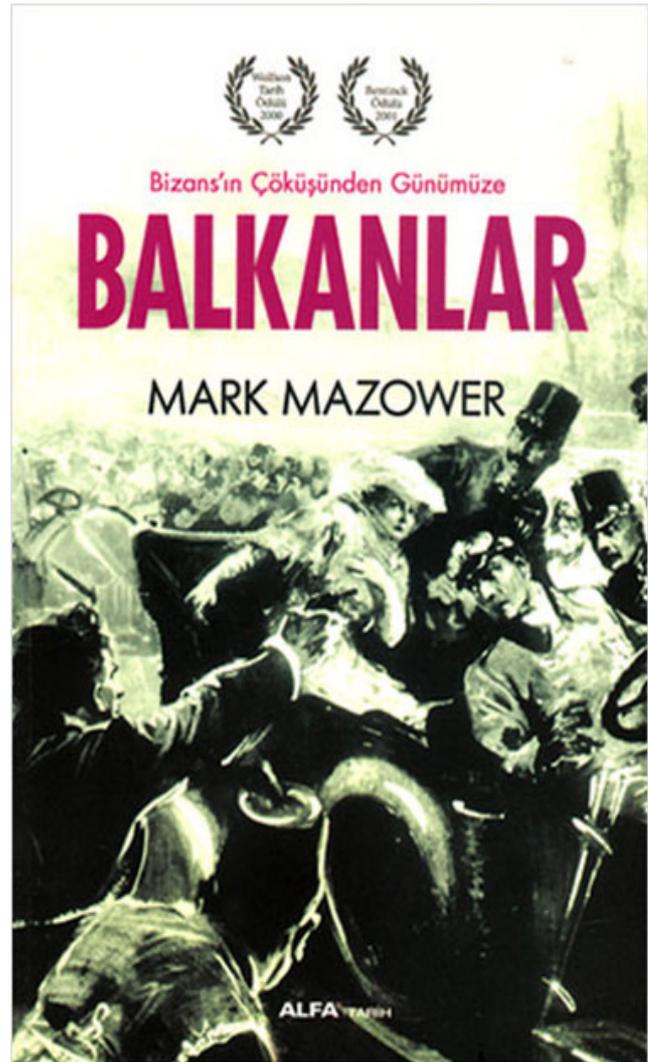
210 pages

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The Balkans have been witness of the conflicts of interest of many countries' because of their strategic importance throughout history. One of the most interesting of the studies about the Balkans, which has been the subject of many researchers, is the one that Mazower has written up, and briefly called 'The Balkans'. The book of Mark Mazower called "From the Byzantine Collapse to the Balkans Today", searches how long the word Balkan has been used, what is the origin of the name, in the triangle of Ottoman-Europe-Balkans. It is said that we must search firstly the origin of the Balkan name, if we know nothing about Balkans, or if we have little knowledge about it. Perhaps because of this, in the introduction bulletin of the book this is primarily mentioned and it is said as: "The geography we know today as the Balkans, is supposed to have been named with the same name since ancient times." Yet, two centuries ago this area Ottomans conquered from Byzantium was called "Rumeli", namely there was not a definition as called The Balkan peoples two centuries ago. The definition of this geography as "Balkans" begins at the end of the 19th century. The Balkans are used not only as a name for a geography, but also as a name with negative connotations such as violence, brutality, "primitiveness."

Mazower tried to search without having any prejudice and ideological approaches and Mazower dicusses the literature of west and mentions the reasons of prejudices that occurred against Ottoman after XVI century.

In the book the parts that take place, beside chronology and the preface, maps that the writer has written in Turkish edition. Are these: Geography and Human, before nation, east problems, creating nation-state and on violence.



While Mark and Mazower sharing a lot of people's ideas who have different views about Ottoman and The Balkans, on the other hand tried to answer some questions. Some of these questions are these: It is possible to take a fresh look at the Balkans today? Can we think this geography independently from the negative images that this region has been associated with for years? Did the Ottoman add anything to Balkans? Are the Turks considered European?

In this work, Europe and the Ottomans are not opposite, but on the contrary, they complete each other, and not only the problems which are lived at the base of the chaos that come from the past, It is also argued that the ideological and economic orientation of the West also plays a role in this.

The famous German philosopher Graf Keyserling undoubtedly referred to the strategic importance of the Balkans, by saying "if the Balkans had not existed, it would have had to be invented". This book can take its place on our library shelves as a sample resource for the ones who want more or, who wonder or know little about Balkan history that has an important place in world history.