

From Deterioration to Improvement in Western Thrace, Greece:  
A Political Systems Analysis of a Triadic Ethnic Conflict

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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by

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A Dissertation  
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of  
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in Partial Fulfillment of  
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of  
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Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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Date: 30th April 2004

Spring Semester 2004  
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research  
to all the inhabitants of Western Thrace  
– *both* to the Turkish-Muslim Minority *and* to the Greek Majority.  
Despite many problems, they have managed to coexist peacefully.  
Considering all the violent conflicts in the Balkans throughout history,  
that is a great achievement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of preparing this dissertation has been a very difficult and, at times, painful experience for me. I would not have completed it without the help, encouragement, and guidance of a number of people, to all of whom I owe my thanks.

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Though this dissertation is the result of the help and support I received from all these people and institutions, errors and omissions here are, of course, mine alone.

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## ABSTRACT

FROM DETERIORATION TO IMPROVEMENT  
IN WESTERN THRACE, GREECE:  
A POLITICAL SYSTEMS ANALYSIS OF A TRIADIC ETHNIC CONFLICT

Dimostenis Yağcıoğlu, Ph. D.

George Mason University, 2004

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In the Western Thrace region of Greece, there is a Muslim-Turkish Minority that has had a series of problems with the Greek government and with the local Greek Majority.

After a period of increasing tensions and deterioration in government-minority and minority-majority relations in Western Thrace (1974-1990) -- *and when there were signs that the conflict was going to turn violent* -- the situation began to de-intensify gradually but substantially. The period of deterioration was then followed by a period of improvement (1990-2003/4) in the situation of the Minority, and in its relations with the Government and the Majority.

This dissertation examines the dynamics that led to the deterioration in the first period, the reasons behind the shift from deterioration to improvement, and the dynamics that made the improvement long-lasting, uninterrupted and significant. To understand these dynamics and the changes, I have used a modified version of the Political Systems Analysis model, developed by David Easton.

The data was collected from primary and secondary sources on the conflict from these two periods, and from interviews with individuals from the Minority, the Majority, and the Greek government.

This research shows that the Political System Analysis model can be very useful in explaining why and how the Government changed its policies, and how the situation in Thrace first deteriorated and then improved. The most important conclusion of the dissertation is that it was the change of the inputs from the actors and the addition of new actors that contributed to the Greek Government's pro-Minority shift in its policies. Another conclusion of this research is that in a democratic political system where the government is responsive to inputs from actors in its political environment, the freedom to peaceful protest is respected, the inputs from transnational and international actors (such as the European organizations) are important, ethnic conflicts, though a major problem, can be dealt with peacefully and constructively.

The dissertation ends with recommendations for further research and with suggestions as to what each of the key actors in the W. Thrace conflict should do to improve the situation in the region even further.

## 1. Introduction

### Description of the Problem

After the end of the Cold War, and with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, world public opinion and academic circles started paying closer attention to ethnic conflicts in the Balkan Peninsula. One of these conflicts, a relatively overlooked one, has been taking place in the northeastern edge of Greece, in a region called Western Thrace<sup>1</sup>. There, a --mainly Turkish-- Muslim minority<sup>2</sup> has been having a conflict with the Greek government and the Greek majority of the region on issues related to identity, human rights, minority rights, the minority's socio-economic development and its integration to society.

The main reason why this conflict has not attracted widespread attention by the world media and academic researchers is that there has been very little overt physical violence in Western Thrace. Minority members have been especially careful to avoid the use of violence in

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<sup>1</sup> Western Thrace, a relatively small region, is situated in the northeastern part of Greece, bordering Northern Thrace (which is part of Bulgaria), and Eastern Thrace (which is part of Turkey). It is one of the poorest and least developed areas of Greece, with a large rural population working basically in the agricultural sector (Oran, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> This minority is a small group of people (about 120,000) which constitutes a tiny percentage (1.1%) of the overall population of Greece (US Dept. of State, 1996; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, 1996).

The minority is not a homogenous group. In fact, it consists of (a) those who are ethnically Turkish; (b) of the Pomaks, whose mother tongue is a Bulgarian dialect; and (c) of the Muslim Gypsies (Roma) (Zengin, 1994). Despite their ethnic differences, however, they have acquired a common group identity, because of their common religion, the influence of Turkey and the Turkish culture, and due to the fact that they have been treated as a single group by the Greek state (Poulton, 1991; Dede, 1975; Sotiriou, 1991). (I give a more detailed description of the Muslim Minority in Chapter 2.)

their struggle to have their demands accepted by the government, and neither the government nor the majority responded to that struggle by overt violence, with a few exceptions. One of the instances where brute violence was used against the minority proved to be very important in the course of the conflict.

This conflict intensified after democracy was re-established in Greece, in 1974, and especially when the minority's struggle gained a Turkish-nationalist character. Tension reached its highest point at the end of the eighties, and resulted in the violent event alluded above: A small-scale pogrom against minority members and businesses in January 1990.

After this incident, however, government-minority and majority-minority relations have gradually improved, and the conflict de-intensified, to a significant extent. The governments of Greece took several measures to improve the minority's conditions, and most policies that clashed with minority rights and human rights were abandoned or modified.

How and why did this shift take place? Exploring answers to this question is important not only for a better understanding of this specific conflict but for other conflicts with similar characteristics, as well. In my dissertation, I attempt to do exactly that.

### **Significance of this Research**

i. The Turkish-Muslim minority in this conflict, despite the often-jingoistic nationalist rhetoric of many of its leaders, has employed non-violent protest methods. Members of the minority engaged in mass petitions, sit-downs, school boycotts, mosque boycotts, marches and demonstrations, disobedience of court orders, and burning of textbooks. They used the courts extensively to pursue their demands, and in some instances their cases went all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, and have obtained some positive results through these judicial

means. Therefore, the Western Thrace conflict could be considered a case where non-violent methods were employed successfully.

ii. In this conflict a government (the Greek government), perceiving the minority as a threat and a potential danger to national security, first entangled itself in a dynamic of a self-fulfilling prophecy that could have led to further escalation and bloodshed. That is not unlike many ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and throughout the world. But, what is interesting in the case of Western Thrace is that the government appears to have managed later to *disentangle* itself from this destructive dynamic. This merits an in-depth examination into this conflict.

iii. The Balkans have gained the reputation of a region where ethnic conflicts are frequent and often lead to violence. The Western Thrace conflict, however, has de-intensified without becoming overtly violent, thanks mainly to measures leading to an improvement of the minority's conditions. While this seems to be counter-intuitive, it actually is congruent with the general trend of government-ethnic minority conflicts in the second half of the nineties as analyzed by Ted Gurr and his colleagues in the book Peoples versus States (2000). So, an examination of this case may help weaken the not-so-correct impression about the violent character of Balkan inter-ethnic relations and it may improve our understanding of the general global trend of improvement in government-minority relations.

### **The Triadic Nature of the Conflict**

The Western Thrace conflict has a triadic character. By "triadic", I mean that there are three sets of main actors in the conflict. Each actor's actions and perceptions are influenced by and linked to the perceptions and actions of the other two actors. While other actors do play a role, it is this triangle of mutual interaction and perception that is the crux of the conflict.

In the conflict of Western Thrace the triad of actors basically consist of

- (1) the Muslim-Turkish minority and its elite,
- (2) the government of Greece (central and local) and the local Greek majority, and
- (3) the government of Turkey.

The triadic nexus linking national minorities, nation-states, and external national homelands, and the dynamically interactive quality of this nexus can be observed in a large number of conflicts throughout the world. Yet, this type of conflict currently is a particularly common phenomenon in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

After the disintegration of communism, such conflicts emerged, re-emerged or became salient in this part of the world, thus attracting the attention of political scientists, political theorists and sociologists. The most systematic and extensive theoretical work on this type of conflicts was written by Rogers Brubaker (1996), from which I have borrowed most of the terminology I use in this chapter.

A triadic relational nexus is the result of a mismatch between ethnocultural and political boundaries. There are many groups who, while belonging to nations with their own state, live outside the territory of that state.

Therefore, many ethnic groups have an ambivalent membership status, belonging by residence and usually by citizenship to one state and by ethnocultural affinity to another, often a neighboring, state. (Hungarians in Romania, Albanians in Macedonia, Russians in Latvia, etc.)

These groups must live under the influence and pressure of two mutually antagonistic nationalisms: The "nationalizing" nationalisms of the states in which they live, and the

"homeland" nationalisms of the states to which they belong (or they *believe* they belong) by ethnic-cultural affinity, though not by legal citizenship.

This relationship does not have to be conflictual, and indeed, in some cases it is not. (For instance, in the case of the Danes in Germany, or the Swedes in Finland.)

In cases where this triadic relationship is deeply conflictual, however, (e.g. the current situation in Eastern Europe, and the crises in central and eastern Europe between the two World Wars) the most likely outcome is a spiral of escalation that leads to government-minority violence and a cold-war-like situation between the nationalizing state and the kin state.

A "nationalizing state" (another term I borrowed from Brubaker) is an ethnically heterogeneous state that, nevertheless, claims and aims to be a nation-state, whose dominant elites promote the language, culture, welfare, demographic size, and political power of the nominally state-bearing nation.

The self-conscious, organized, and to varying degrees politically alienated national minorities in those states, are often led by people who demand cultural or territorial autonomy and resist actual or perceived policies or processes of assimilation or discrimination.

The external national homelands of the minorities are influenced by elites who (again to varying degrees) closely monitor the situation of their ethnic brethren in the neighboring states, loudly protest alleged violations of their human and minority rights, and maintain that they have the right, even the obligation to defend their interest and ensure their well-being.

A state becomes an external national homeland for ethnic groups in neighboring regions when political elites and intellectuals define ethnonational kin in other states as members of one and the same nation, claim that they belong, in some sense, to the state, and insist that their condition must be monitored and their interests protected and promoted by the state. Homeland



politics takes a variety of forms, ranging from encouraging their ethnic brethren to immigrate to their "motherland" (for instance, by making it easy for them become citizens), to irredentist claims on the minority-populated territories of other states.

Each actor in this triadic relationship is an active participant in the intensifying conflict, interpreting and misinterpreting the dangers of the present in the light of the injustices and atrocities committed in the past. (Narratives of victimization and of threat, linking the present with the past and projecting onto the future play a crucial and usually conflict-intensifying role.)

Efforts by nationalist elites in the external homeland to mobilize grievances and fears among the ethnic minority is an important part of the process. But such efforts may be successful only if there is a powerful nationalist elite in the minority that would be engaged in parallel and usually more intense mobilization activities. And, of course, the grievances and fears must be there to be mobilized.

An intensifying spiral of mistrust, misinterpretation and mutual fear lead to escalation of the conflict making the eruption of violence and bloodshed very likely.

### **The General Outline of the Dissertation**

Before I begin analyzing the situation in Western Thrace, I give, in Chapter 2, a brief overview of the region, of its recent history, and of the relations between the two communities there.

Then, in Chapter 3, I present an evaluation of what was written on the Western Thrace Conflict, by whom, when and with what purpose. Naturally, most publications about this conflict are in Greek and in Turkish.

My next step, in Chapter 4, is to engage in a theoretical discussion on nationalism, group identity formation, and government-minority relations that would help the reader understand why there exist national minorities and why they are distrusted and often oppressed by governments. I then proceed (in Chapter 5) with an attempt to explain, using the basic points derived from this theoretical discussion, the formation of the Greek Nationalism and its attitude toward the minorities within Greece.

As I mentioned in the section about the significance of the research, the non-violent struggle of the Muslim Minority in the eighties and early nineties is one of the most crucial features of the Western Thrace conflict. It is imperative, therefore, to give a general introduction to non-violent strategies and to explain why a minority might choose to employ them. I do that in Chapter 6. Then, in Chapter 7, I identify the specific non-violent methods the Muslim Minority used and what actions it engaged in during the periods I examine, but also in earlier times.

In Chapter 8, I describe the research methods I used in this dissertation, and explain how I gathered and analyzed my data. As it is clear by now, this dissertation is a single-case study. I collected my data through reading primary and secondary sources pertaining to this conflict, and through in-depth interviews with individuals from the Minority, the Majority, and the Greek government, who were actively involved in or witnessed the events that led to tension and then to de-intensification.

The tool I use to analyze my data is David Easton's (1965) model of "Political Systems Analysis". After giving a brief introduction of this model, I explain how I use its concepts to look for themes, how I develop questions based on these concepts, and how I search for answers to these questions throughout my data.

In Chapter 9, I adapt Easton's framework to the political system of Greece, and I identify the most important actors within and outside the Greek society, who play a role on issues related to the Western Thrace Minority.

Chapters 10, 11, 12, and 13 constitute the most important part of my dissertation. In these chapters, again using the Eastonian model, I analyze in detail and explain how government-minority and minority-majority relations deteriorated in period A (1974-1990), how the shift toward de-escalation began, when the tensions reached their peak , in 1990, and how the situation of the Minority and of Western Thrace in general improved significantly in period B (1990-2003/4).

I then move to my conclusions, in Chapter 14, and I end this dissertation with recommendations (in Chapter 15) for further research and with some suggestions as to what each of the key actors in the Western Thrace conflict should do to improve the situation in the region even further.

## ***2. Western Thrace and the Turkish-Muslim Minority: An Overview***

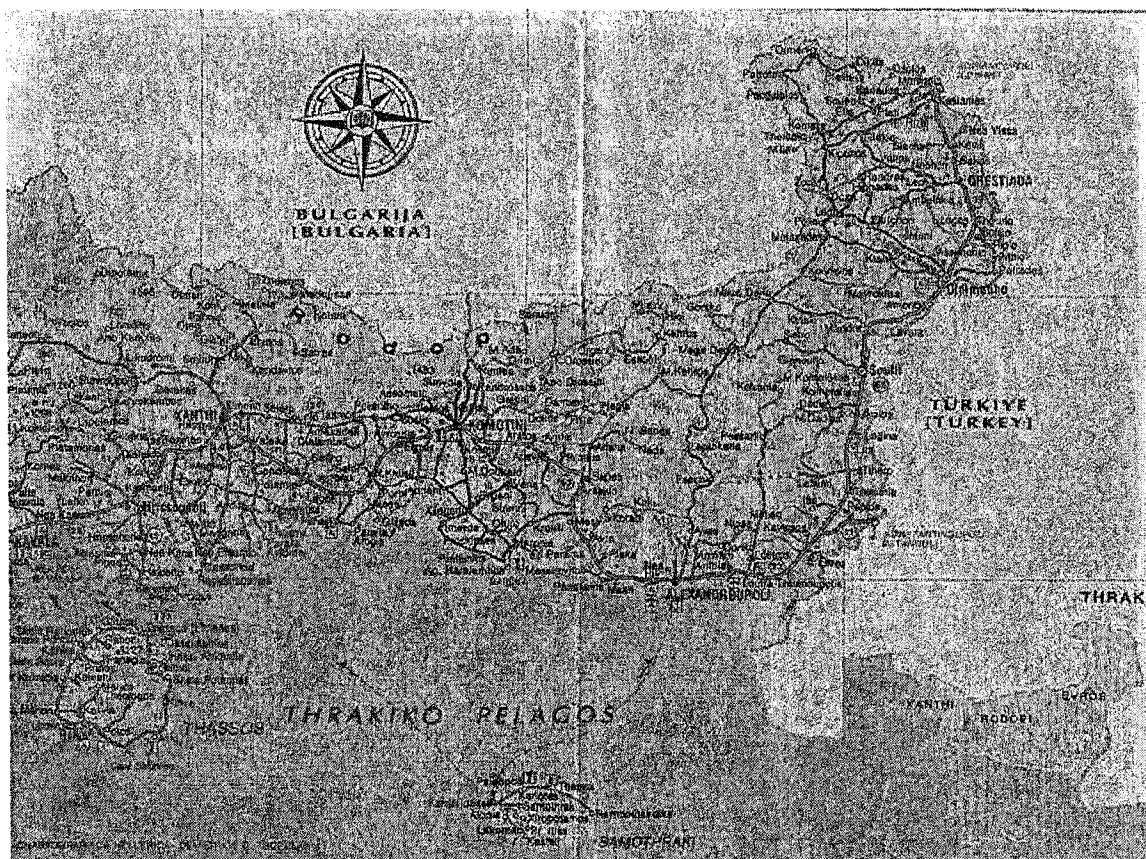
### **The Province**

A relatively small region (about 3,300 square miles), *Western Thrace* is situated in southeastern Europe (see Figure 2.1), and in the northeastern part of Greece, bordering Northern Thrace (which is part of Bulgaria), and Eastern Thrace (which is part of Turkey) (see Figure 2.2). It is one of the poorest and least developed areas of Greece, with a large rural population working basically in the agricultural sector (Oran, 1991). Tobacco and cotton are the most important agricultural products produced in this region.

Western Thrace consists of three counties: Xánthi, Rodhópi, and Évros (see Figure 2.2). Xanthi, Komotini, and Alexandroupolis are the largest cities of these three counties, respectively. While in the Evros county, which borders Turkey, the Turkish-Muslim minority is barely 10% of the county's population, and in Xanthi about 40%, in Rodhopi the Turkish-Muslim community constitutes the *majority* (approximately 54%) (Dodós, 1994, p.70). What we see here, therefore, is the minority-majority phenomenon (a minority being the majority in a region), observed in almost every interethnic conflict in the Balkans, and in many other conflicts in the world.



Figure 2.1: Western Thrace in Southeastern Europe



**Figure 2.2: The Map of Western Thrace**

(Source: Demetrius B. Tsopelas. *Chartographica Hellenica*. Athens, Greece)

## The Minority

*The Turkish-Muslim Minority* is a small group of people (about 120,000) which constitutes a tiny percentage (1.1%) of the overall population of Greece, and 36% of the Thrace residents (US Dept. of State, 1996; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, 1996)<sup>1</sup>.

The minority is not a homogenous group. In fact, it consists of

- (a) those who are ethnically Turkish;
- (b) the Pomaks, whose mother tongue is a Bulgarian dialect; and
- (c) the Muslim Gypsies (Roma) (Zenginidis, 1994).

Despite their ethnic differences, however, these groups have acquired a common identity, because of their common religion, the influence of Turkey and the Turkish culture, and due to the fact that they have been treated as a single group by the Greek state (Poulton, 1991; Dede, 1975; Sotiriou, 1991).

The Turkish-Muslim community has always been in an economically disadvantaged situation vis-a-vis the Greek Orthodox community of the region. Muslim villages and towns are poorer than predominantly Greek ones (*The Economist*, 3/2/1991, p.46) and the predominantly Muslim county of Rodhópi is less developed than the predominantly Greek-Christian Xanthi and Evros<sup>2</sup>. The economic development of the last decade, financed chiefly by the European Union funds, has improved the living conditions in the region, but the Greeks have benefited more from this development than the Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1996, p.1), however, asserts that "there are nearly 150,000 ethnic Turks" in that region.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed account of these three counties' economic situation can be found in "Η Οικονομική Γεωγραφία της Ελλάδας του 1999" [the Economic Geography of Greece of 1999; in Greek], *Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος*, April 15, 1999 pp. 32-33, 84-85, 94-95.

### Inter-Communal Relations and Life in the Cities and Villages of Western Thrace

Muslims are thought to constitute the majority of Komotini residents, and a near-majority in the city of Xanthi. Alexandroupolis has only a small and marginal Minority population. There are some ethnic differences in the composition of the Minority population in these three cities: In Komotini, most Muslims are ethnically Turkish, in Xanthi, ethnically Pomak, and in Alexandroupolis, ethnically Gypsy/Roma, though Turkish-speaking.<sup>3</sup>

There is (still) some de facto segregation between the Muslim-Turkish and Christian-Greek populations in Thrace, albeit much less than in the past. The trend toward integration (which is rather recent) and toward modernization (which is at least half a century old) in the Muslim community, has weakened considerably its members' reluctance to intermingle with Greeks. On the other hand, Greeks' prejudices about, and fears of, Muslims have only very recently began to die down, after having peaked in the late eighties and early nineties (because of the inter-communal tensions which I will describe later in this dissertation).

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<sup>3</sup> Alongside the Greeks and Turks/Muslims, Thrace also has several other smaller communities:

(a) The "**Russo-Pontians**" (Rossopontioi – Ρωσσοπόντιοι): Immigrants from the former Soviet republics, most of whom are ethnically Greek and descendants/former members of Greek communities in the Black Sea area. They are also known as Palinnostountes (Παλιννοστούντες), or the "repatriating" (Greeks). They began coming to Greece in the late eighties, and the government encouraged them to settle in Thrace (due to demographical and political considerations that will be analyzed in the following chapters). Their number in Thrace is estimated to be around twenty thousand.

(b) A tiny **Armenian** community, which is very well integrated into the Greek society. Most Armenians in Thrace regard themselves as practically part of the Greek community.

(c) An even tinier **Jewish** community. The number of Jews living in Thrace used to be larger, but their community was decimated during the German-Italian-Bulgarian occupation in WWII.

In addition to these three, one could mention a few other small-sized groups, all Greek-Orthodox, like the *Gagauz* (whose mother tongue is Turkic), and the *Sarakatsans*, but these tend to consider themselves, and are considered, part of the local Greek majority.



In the towns and cities, there are still exclusively Muslim and exclusively Christian neighborhoods, but many mixed neighborhoods as well<sup>4</sup>. Muslim neighborhoods, with their mosques, their one-story single family homes and their narrow and serpentine streets, usually have a more traditional and middle-eastern appearance<sup>5</sup>. Greek-Christian neighborhoods, with their wider streets, Orthodox, Byzantine-styled, churches, multistoried, bland apartment buildings, have a modern appearance, and are almost indistinguishable from neighborhoods in any other Greek city. The coexistence of Greeks and Muslim-Turks in the cities has been, with just a few exceptions in the last eighty years, peaceful, but there is still some psychological distance between the two groups. Inter-group interactions are mainly business and commercial transactions, and intermingling at the social or cultural level does not happen very often. Inter-marriages are rare and still socially discouraged. The poorest neighborhoods, the slums, in the cities usually are the Gypsy/Roma-populated districts. The Thracian Greeks, and, to a lesser extent, the Thracian Turks and Pomaks, too, tend to keep the Gypsies isolated.

In the rural areas we observe exclusively Greek villages, mainly in the southern part of Thrace, exclusively Muslim-Turkish villages, mainly in the north of Thrace, and mixed ones in the middle part of the region.

The villages in the northernmost section of the region bordering Bulgaria, in the Rhodope mountain range, are almost exclusively inhabited by Pomaks, who tend to be socially quite conservative and devout Muslims. This mountainous part of Thrace is the poorest in the region --

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<sup>4</sup> One of these ethnically mixed urban areas is the Old Town of Xanthi, that still maintains the atmosphere of a 19th Century Ottoman city. The whole Old Town was recently renovated with EU financial assistance.

<sup>5</sup> However, a quite recent and interesting distinguishing characteristic of Muslim-inhabited homes is the almost ubiquitous presence of satellite dishes on the roofs or in the balconies, for almost all Muslims in Thrace prefer to watch Turkish television channels broadcast through satellite, rather than Greek channels than can be received with an ordinary antenna.

and the most isolated, due to a low-quality and inadequate infrastructure (roads, phone lines, public transportation, etc.). Life in these mountain villages is very difficult, forcing many Muslims to migrate to the cities. The only Greeks in the mountain area are, almost without exception, people who represent the Greek State or the government: Law-enforcement officials, soldiers, health officials who come only for a few hours a day and not every day, and Greek teachers, appointed by the government, who teach there for only a limited time and then are sent somewhere else.

In the plains, the Muslim villages are inhabited mainly by ethnic Turks<sup>6</sup> rather than Pomaks. These villages are more prosperous, though in a visibly worse shape than the Greek ones.

### **The History of the Conflict.**

Western Thrace was part of the Ottoman Empire until the Balkans Wars, when, in 1913, it was occupied by Bulgaria. This country annexed the region and ruled it for about six years. The Muslims of the area, Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies alike, never accepted the Bulgarian rule and resisted it, nonviolently in most cases and with violence in some. In response, the Bulgarian government used very oppressive methods to eliminate their resistance (Perin, 2000 and Batibey, 1979).

Western Thrace was acquired by Greece in 1920 (Vakalopoulos, 1996), after the defeat of Bulgaria in W.W.I., and a brief transitional period during which the region was administered by the French. The Muslim community was not really supportive of the annexation of Western

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<sup>6</sup> The Pomaks tend to call the ethnically Turkish Muslims living in the plains "çitak".

Thrace by Greece, but, by and large, it showed acquiescence<sup>7</sup>. At the time of the Greek takeover, the Greeks were only the third largest group in the region. Muslims were by far the largest group, followed by Bulgarians (Kurtulus, 1979). The Greek State then launched radical policies to change the ethnic composition of Western Thrace: First it signed an agreement with Bulgaria concerning the “voluntary exchange of population” according to which all Bulgarians living in Greece were ‘strongly encouraged’ to go to Bulgaria, and vice versa, Greeks living in Bulgaria ‘chose’ to go to Greece. Tens of thousands of Bulgarian Greeks were settled in W. Thrace (Poulton, 1991).

Three years later (in 1923), after the debacle of the Greek invasion into Turkey, Greece signed the Lausanne Peace Treaty with the new nationalist Turkish government. The treaty, among other things, ordered a “compulsory exchange of populations”, which meant that all Greek Orthodox Christians living in Turkey had to go to Greece and that all Turkish Muslims living in Greece had to leave for Turkey<sup>8</sup>. Greeks living in Istanbul (the center of the Greek-Orthodox culture) and on the islands of Imvros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) (where they

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<sup>7</sup> For a number of influential Muslim leaders of the time, Greek rule in Thrace was a better option than the region becoming a French protectorate – and certainly better than the return of the Bulgarians. It is true that almost all Thracian Muslims would have preferred that their region be given back to the Ottoman Empire, but, given that the Ottomans were among the defeated powers at the end of WWI, that was out of the question. Annexation by Greece, therefore, was in the eyes of many Muslims, the best among the available bad options. They thought that Greece, as a nation smaller and weaker than France, would or could be forced to compromise on the sovereignty of Western Thrace under the pressure of a reconstituted Turkish or Ottoman government. It was for this reason that, in the early 1920, in the convention of representatives of the communities in Western Thrace, organized by the French administration, most Turkish-Muslim representatives voted with the Greek one for the Greek annexation option (Batibey, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> For a critical examination and evaluation of this compulsory population exchange, see Kalliopi Koufa & Constantinos Svolopoulos, "The Compulsory Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey: The Settlement of Minority Questions at the Conference in Lausanne, 1923, and its Impact on Greek-Turkish Relations", in Paul Smith (ed.) *Ethnic Groups in International Relations* (Volume V, Chapter 12), New York, NY: New York Unive. Press & Dartmouth & European Science Foundation, 1991; pp. 275-308.

constituted the majority), and the Turks living in W. Thrace (the only region in Greece that was still predominantly Muslim Turkish) were exempted from this "exchange obligation" (Oran, 1986, pp. 15-17). With the same treaty each country recognized and promised to uphold the cultural, educational and religious rights of the minorities that would remain where they lived. The Lausanne treaty, however, introduced what could be interpreted as a relation of *reciprocity* between the treatment of the minorities by each government. In other words, according to the Greek interpretation, Greece was obligated to respect the rights of the Turkish minority, *as long as* Turkey would do the same for its Greek minority, and, according to the Turkish interpretation, vice versa (Lausanne Tr., Articles 37-45; See: T.C. Disisleri B., 1973, pp. 184-187). As a result, each minority in a sense became the hostage to ensure the good treatment of the other minority.

After the treaty, thousands of Greeks who came from Turkey were settled in W. Thrace. The proportion of Muslims was consequently reduced, and eventually the region lost its predominantly Muslim character (with the exception, of course, of Rodhopi County).

The Second World War was another very painful and turbulent period for this region. In 1941, Greece was occupied by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but Western Thrace was given to Bulgaria, an ally of these two axis powers. Bulgaria attempted to "bulgarianize" the region not just by bringing Bulgarian settlers and forcing Greeks to leave, but also by "bulgarianizing" the Pomak population, forcibly changing their names, and encouraging them to convert to Christianity. Many Minority families chose to escape from the harsh conditions and the oppression of the occupation and emigrated to Turkey. This second Bulgarian rule ended in late 1944, when Thrace was returned to Greece.

But the *status quo ante* (the situation as it was before the war started) was not established there immediately; a period of turmoil and lawlessness caused by the Greek Civil War

(1943/1946-1949)<sup>9</sup> followed the Bulgarian occupation. Thrace witnessed many battles and clashes between leftist/communist armed groups and the pro-West, pro-Monarchy Greek armed forces, usually helped by militia friendly to the government. Minority members, perhaps with some exceptions, did not take sides in the civil war. That did not stop, however, both Communists and pro-government forces from harassing them and particularly from terrorizing remote Muslim villages in many instances. So, the large-scale migration of Minority members to Turkey that started with the Bulgarian occupation continued throughout these years of insecurity (De Jong, 1980).

Both in the interwar years (1923-1941) and in the first six years after the civil war (1949-1955) the respect Greece and Turkey showed toward the rights of their respective minorities left a lot to be desired, but the limitations and restrictions faced by the Minorities were not serious enough to be considered a problem (Andreádis, 1956). The situation started to seriously deteriorate, however, in the '50s (See, Helsinki Watch, 1990 and 1992), mainly because of the tensions between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. The worsened treatment of the minorities by both governments led to a slow-paced migration of minority Greeks to Greece and of W. Thrace Turks to Turkey. Due to the high birth rate of the Turkish-Muslim minority, however, the slow migration did not decrease its size. On the contrary, its size increased in the last sixty years by about ten thousand. On the other hand, migration reduced the Greek minority in Turkey, whose birth rate was much smaller, to just a few thousands (Helsinki Watch, 1990).

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<sup>9</sup> Historians who studied the Greek Civil War usually agree that it took place in three phases. The first phase began while Greece was under occupation, in 1943, when left-wing and right-wing armed groups, while fighting occupation forces, also fought each other. The most important phase of the civil war, however, was the third one, also characterized as "the civil war proper". That phase started in March 1946, when communist guerillas attacked Litohoron, on the eastern slopes of Mt. Olympus. (See Amikam Nachmani, "Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece: 1946-1949", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25 (1990); pp. 489-522.)

While this deterioration was taking place, the Turkish minority became more and more dependent on Turkey, and on its efforts to pressure Greece to stop the violation of their rights. The Turkish minority's pro-Turkey and nationalistic sentiments were reinforced and solidified. The Turkish-Muslim community became increasingly estranged from the rest of the society, and refused to integrate or assimilate. It gradually became a group full of suspicion toward Greece and Greeks and open to manipulation by Turkey (Chidioglou, 1991).

Restrictions imposed on the rights and freedoms of the Thracian Turks/Muslims reached their peak during the period of military junta (1967-1974). It was during these years of dictatorship that many oppressive measures, especially the ones doing away with the self-administration of Minority institutions (like religious foundations) were introduced. What was worse, however, was the fact that the military government had no tolerance for any protest, or any activity that would indicate mass discontent.

With the return of democracy in 1974, and particularly in the 80s, and early 90s, the increasingly frustrated minority was mobilized by a group of nationalistic, pro-Turkey leaders against the Greek governmental policies in that region. These leaders organized a series of nonviolent protests, such as group petitions, boycotts, and sit-ins (Soyutürk & Saglam, 1996; Dede, 1988; Stathi, 1997; Reuters, 1997).

The worsening of the situation seems to have stopped in the early nineties, when the Greek government began to introduce a set of policies aimed at improving the conditions of the minority (US Dept. of State, 1996 & 1997). These policies include: an economic revitalization program for Western Thrace (Ministry of For. Affairs of Greece, 1996); an "affirmative action" program (Onsunoglu, 1997) for the admission of Muslim minority students to Greek higher education institutions (Ministry of For. Affairs of Greece, 1996); a more tolerant attitude toward

the minority's access to Turkish newspapers, radio and TV channels, and the partial opening up of the 'Restricted Zone' -- a narrow strip of land along the Greek-Bulgarian border, almost entirely inhabited by Pomaks and Turks (US. Congress, 1996).

Since the beginning of the introduction of these measures, one can observe a noticeable decrease in the popularity and influence of the pro-Turkey, nationalistic minority leaders. This development appears to have taken place not just because of the government reforms, but also because of the death of Sadik Ahmet, the main nationalistic leader (*Cumhuriyet*, 8/13/95, see also: Onsunoglu, 1995), and the inherent inability of the political party advocating his ideas to reach the recently-imposed 3% national vote threshold in the 1993 and 1996 elections (*Yeni Yüzyil*, 8/26/96).

This dissertation is about the latest era in Government-Minority relations, that is, the one that started in 1974, with the reinstatement of democracy. And, as we see in the above paragraphs, there are two distinct periods in this era: one of rising tensions and deterioration of Government-Minority relations, and one of gradual improvement. The shift from worsening to improvement appears to have happened in the early nineties. In the following chapters I will attempt to provide some explanations as to why there was tension in the first period, why the shift occurred in the early nineties, and what dynamics in the second period resulted in changes in government policies and in improvement in the situation of the Minority.

### *3. A Brief Evaluation of the Literature on the Western Thrace Conflict*

Although a great deal has been written and published in Greece and in Turkey on the situation of the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace – especially since the early seventies, this conflict has attracted little attention in the rest of the World.

Naturally, then, most of the books and articles on the Western Thrace conflict are in Greek and in Turkish; there is only a very small number of publications on this topic in other languages. Even the Greek and Turkish publications on the Western Thrace communal issues begin to appear only in the late 50s and early 60s (see, for instance, Andreadis, 1956).

Not coincidentally, the mid-fifties is also the time when Greek-Turkish relations enter an era of deterioration because of Cyprus. Alarmed or influenced by the inter-ethnic tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Greek and Turkish politicians, researchers, and the public opinion in these two neighboring countries began to show more interest in the other two regions where communities from these two nations still coexisted: Western Thrace in Greece on the one hand, and Istanbul and the islands of Gökçeada and Bozcaada in Turkey, on the other. Since the early sixties, then, we observe an exponential rise of publications about the Western Thrace Minority in these two countries.

Outside Greece and Turkey, interest (be it scholarly or political) in the Thracian Muslims was very low until the late eighties: The total number of publications in Western Europe and in



the United States, for instance, does not exceed five or six for the sixties, seventies, and early eighties combined<sup>1</sup>

It was during, and almost certainly as a result of, the organized Minority protests and the high tension in Western Thrace that "outsiders" (i.e., non-Greeks and non-Turks) began to pay attention to what was going on in that region and the problems the Minority faced. Naturally, the most frequent type of publications prepared by "outsiders" were reports, pamphlets, and books issued by Human- and Minority-rights organizations<sup>2</sup>.

The publications on the Western Thrace ethnic problems can be examined in five categories, each category corresponding to a distinct perspective through which the various issues of this conflict are seen and interpreted.

These five categories are: (1) Greek nationalistic points of view, (2) Turkish nationalistic points of view, (3) Minority points of view, (4) Outsider's points of view, and (5) Non-nationalistic, "impartial" points of view.

Let us now examine these categories one-by-one:

### **(1) Greek nationalistic points of view.**

I place most of the Greek publications in this category (particularly those that appeared in the sixties, seventies and eighties). Although the publications with this point of view vary

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<sup>1</sup> Among these publications, only the book by De Jong (1980) is easily available at the university libraries.

<sup>2</sup> This is what a high-ranking Greek advisor to the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, whom I interviewed had to say on this topic:

"In addition to NGOs and IGOs, in the late eighties, foreign researchers, too, began to pay attention to the problems of the Muslim Minority. The most influential of them was Hugh Poulton, who first visited Greece to learn about the minority in 1989. Through him and his writings, the Minority Rights Group also became interested in that minority."

significantly in terms of sophistication and rigour, as a common denominator, they all contain these basic assumptions and arguments:

- Turkey is the most serious threat Greece is facing (see Gheorghiou, 1994; Dokos, 1999; Paresoglou, 1995).
- The Minority, under the current conditions, is a potential or real threat to the Greek national integrity and the Greek sovereignty over Thrace, because this group of people is manipulated by Turkey (see, for instance, Gonatas & Kidoniatis, 1985; Sotiriou, 1991; Chidiroglou, 1991).
- The situation of the Muslim Minority in terms of living conditions and human rights is relatively good, or good *enough*, especially in comparison with the situation of the Greek Minority in Turkey (see IKTATh, 2001; also Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, 1996).
- The complaints of Minority members are unjustifiable, coordinated by the Turkish government, and intended to damage Greece's reputation internationally (see Sgouridis, 2000).
- The Muslim Minority is *not* Turkish. Or rather, it cannot call itself Turkish. Those among the Minority who claim that they *are* Turkish are either paid by, or influenced by, or misled by Turkey (See Karaiskos, 1999). There are two distinct ethnic groups within the Minority, the Pomaks and the Roma/Gypsies, and the government should encourage the cultivation of the unique cultural characteristics of these two groups (Zengin, 1988 & 1994; Varvounis, 1999; Liapis, 1995).
- The Greek State has not implemented a well structured, systematic set of policies with regard to the Minority. These policies changed frequently; they have been inconsistent and ineffective (see Kipouros, 1994).

- The Greek State has generally been too lenient and too gullible when dealing with the Minority (see, for instance, Vakalopoulos, 1996. See also various articles that appeared in *Στόχος/Stochos*, an extreme right wing newspaper, but also in *Χρόνος/Chronos*, a right-wing newspaper published in Komotini, Thrace.)
- The Greek State has to formulate a tougher, stricter set of policies aimed primarily at eliminating Turkey's influence on the Minority, and reducing the power of the pro-Turkey leaders (see, Sarris, 1995).
- Moreover, to secure the Greekness of Thrace, the government should also work to increase the percentage of Greek Christians in this region (see Kipouros, 1994, Papagiannakis, 1995).

As it will become clearer later in this dissertation, the basic assumptions, assertions, and suggestions in this category of publications are almost identical to the *inputs* of the Greek Nationalist Circles sent to the Greek Government. This is because the authors who write from a Greek nationalistic point of view have been – by definition—themselves members and representatives of the Greek Nationalistic Circles.

## **(2) Turkish Nationalistic Points of View**

The vast majority of the Turkish publications written on Western Thrace-related issues fall into this category. Their authors are mostly intellectuals (scholars, lawyers, journalists, etc.) or bureaucrats representing the Turkish Nationalist Circles.

In addition, there is also a significant number of members of the *Western Thrace Turkish diaspora* who have approached the conflict from a Turkish nationalistic perspective (The journal *Bati Trakya'nın Sesi*, published by the Association for Solidarity with the Western Thrace Turks, is

the most important periodical representing the nationalistic views of the diaspora). The reason I place the latter group into this category is because, as we will see in the coming chapters of this dissertation, the more politically active diaspora members are, the more nationalistic and anti-Greek they tend to be. The goal of Turkish nationalistic diaspora members, therefore, is to show the World and the Turks of Turkey that their brethren in Greece are oppressed and to generate indignation against Greeks (see, for instance, Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1995). In the works and statements of nationalistic diaspora members, improving the situation of the Minority, as an objective, has been eclipsed by the anti-Greek and pro-Turkey fervour.

The main points repeated in every publication in this category are the following:

- Greece and Greeks have been, since the early 19th Century, inimical toward the Turks (see, Kalpakçioğlu, 1994).
- The Western Thrace conflict should be seen as a part of a larger conflict between the Greek and the Turkish nations. The situation in Western Thrace cannot and should not be separated from all the other disputes between Greece and Turkey (Kurtuluş, 1979; Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1995).
- The Minority in Western Thrace is unquestionably **Turkish**. Anyone who doubts this fact has been influenced by, or participating in, Greek propaganda (Aydınlı, 1971; Kurtuluş, 1979).
- The rights of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace have been violated and their freedoms severely restricted (see, for instance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 1996).
- The Greek State wants ultimately either to force the Turks of Western Thrace to leave their homeland or to assimilate (Hellenize) those who would decide to stay (see, Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1995).

- Western Thrace was a predominantly Turkish region both in terms of population and in terms of land ownership. Leaving this region to Greece (in 1923) was a necessary but painful concession for the Turkish nation. The Greeks should have recognized the Turkish character of Western Thrace and they should have maintained it. All policies to turn Western Thrace into a predominantly Greek province have been a grave injustice to the Turkish community there (and, indirectly, to the Turkish nation in general) (see, Aydınlı, 1971; Batıbey, 1979; Demirbaş, 1996; Perin, 2000).
- The Greek State should recognize --or be forced to recognize-- the Turkish Minority as a *national minority*. There should be no restrictions or thresholds<sup>3</sup> preventing this community's leaders to run for office as Turkish nationalists, if they choose to do so. More importantly, The Greek government should abandon any policy that violates the Minority's rights and freedoms, including its collective religious<sup>4</sup> and ethnic rights. Moreover, since the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace is part of the Turkish Nation, the Greek Government should not stand in the way of the forming of stronger ties between the Minority and Turkey, the Minority's "motherland" (*anavatan*)(see, Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1995).
- At the same time, however, the Greek State should help the Minority, because its members are also Greek citizens. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 1996)
- Since the Greek State is unlikely to do all of the things mentioned above, unless it is forced to do so, the Turks and the Turkish Government should support the struggle of the Turkish

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, the 3% national vote threshold in general elections, which any party must pass to gain representation in the Greek Parliament.

<sup>4</sup> For Turkish nationalists the most serious issue pertaining to religious freedoms since 1990 has been the selection/election of Muftis by the Minority, instead of their being appointed by the Government.

Minority to have its rights recognized. Turkey needs also to help the Minority at the international level (*Batı Trakya'nın Sesi*, 1998).

- The case of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots is a legitimate and appropriate reference point for the Minority in their struggle, particularly if they face a Greek backlash (Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1995).
- Reciprocity (*mütekabilliyet* in Turkish), or 'tit for tat', is an appropriate principle in Minority issues. To force Greece into ending its oppression of the Western Thrace Minority, it is justifiable for Turkey to limit the rights of, or put pressure on, the Greek<sup>5</sup> Minority in Turkey. The Greeks of Turkey, despite the fact that they have not been loyal and that they betrayed Turks in the past, have enjoyed too many rights and freedoms, anyway – certainly, they have been better-off than the Turks of Western Thrace (see, for instance, Kalpakçioğlu, 1994).

Many of the assertions and demands of the Turkish Nationalists have been accepted by the Turkish government and the Turkish policies toward the Minority have reflected -- in part -- this hard-line nationalistic point of view. The Turkish government of course had to take into account other considerations as well, such as compliance with international law, and the eagerness for Turkey to project the image of a non-aggressive, non-expansionist country. Turkey had to adjust, in other words, its minority-related policies to other high-priority national goals that include, among other things, joining the European Union.

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that, in publications written in Turkish, the Turkish nationalists never refer to the Greek Minority as "Greek" (*Yunan* or *Hellen*). They refer to this community as "*Rum*" or "*Rum-Ortodoks*" (Roman or Roman-Orthodox) -- fossil terms that have remained from the Ottoman or even pre-Ottoman times, before the emergence of nationalism in Greece and Turkey and the redefinition of the identities in these two countries.

### (3) Minority Points of View

Books and articles written by members of the Muslim Minority who (still) live in Thrace (in other words, who are not part of the diaspora) begin to appear in the 70s (see, for instance, Abdurrahim Dede, 1975). Though there are more books and articles written by Minority intellectuals in the last twenty-five years, their number is still significantly smaller than that of other categories. Nevertheless, this community has had its own (Turkish-language) newspapers and periodicals since the first decade of the 20th Century. The Minority newspapers and periodicals, naturally, have dealt with Government-Minority and Majority-Minority relations extensively and on a regular basis. These newspapers and periodicals, therefore, are the most important group of publications representing the Minority point of view. (Currently, the most important of Minority newspapers and periodicals are: *Gündem*, *İleri*, *Trakya'nın Sesi*, *Aile-Birlik*, *Rodop Rüzgârı* and *Hür Hakka Davet*.)

Whereas there are a lot of common points between the Turkish nationalistic and Minority points of view, a very significant difference between the two is that while Turkish nationalists see the Western Thrace conflict as part of "the big picture" between Greece and Turkey, and they examine it asking themselves "What is good for the Turkish nation?", the ones who approach this situation from a Minority point of view are interested first and foremost in the well-being of the Turkish-Muslim Minority (see Ömeroğlu, 1994, 1998 and 2000).

These publications frequently criticize the Greek Government and occasionally ascribe some sinister motive to its policies (see Abdurrahim Dede 1988; Galip, 1998). At the same time, however, the policy changes and actions that would benefit the Muslims of Thrace are

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acknowledged and commented on positively (see Paçaman, 1999, and articles that appeared in the last five years in *Gündem*, *Trakya'nın Sesi*, and *Aile-Birlik*).

Many of the assertions that can be found in publications with a Turkish nationalistic point of view are echoed in Minority publications, though in a more reserved and careful fashion. In addition, such assertions are almost always accompanied by statements of allegiance to Greece. One of the points repeated very often in Thracian Muslim publications is that Turkish-Muslim Minority members are discriminated against *despite the fact* that they are loyal and law-abiding Greek citizens (Galip, 1998).

Another interesting characteristic of the publications with a Minority point of view is that there is extensive mention of intra-communal disagreements with regard to how to respond to Greek and Turkish governmental policies. While Turkish nationalistic publications treat the Minority as a monolith, and Greek nationalistic publications either emphasize the ethnic differences within the Minority or paint a picture of a constant conflict between the pro-Greece Muslim leaders versus the pro-Turkey ones ("Turkish agents"), in Minority publications one can find a much more complex depiction of intra-Minority agreement and disagreement (see, for instance, Ömeroğlu, 1994 and 2000, Paçaman, 1999).

#### **(4) "Outsider's points of view"**

These points of view can be found in publications written by people who are not Greek or Turkish, and who do not overtly sympathize with either nation.

As I mentioned before, the conflict in Western Thrace and the problems of the Muslim Minority there had attracted hardly any attention outside Greece and Turkey until the eighties,



and only limited attention since then<sup>6</sup>. As inter-communal and government-minority tensions rose in Western Thrace in the eighties, European and North American human-rights activists became interested in what was going on in that region. Groups of monitors and researchers began visiting W. Thrace, listening to the Minority's grievances and to the Greek government's justifications of the policies in effect. Beginning in 1990, we see detailed reports on the situation in Thrace, published by such organizations as the Helsinki Watch (1990) and the Minority Rights Group (Poulton, 1991). We also see a small number of social researchers going to the region and conducting field research there (see, Poulton, 1997 and Aarbakke, 2001). Later in the same decade, European intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Union start paying attention to the events in Western Thrace and some reports are published by bodies of such organizations as well<sup>7</sup>.

Most of these recent NGO and IGO publications concentrate, predictably, on the human-rights violations committed and on the social, economic, and political problems this community has been facing.

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<sup>6</sup> However, one should also mention that "outsiders" in the more distant past were more curious about the ethnicities and inter-ethnic relations in Thrace – especially at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Century, when this region and Macedonia was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. There are some very well written travelogues and thorough studies, written in that period by Western Europeans and Americans, that describe in detail all the interethnic relations and rivalries, as well as the socioeconomic situation of the Ottoman Balkans.

Another group of "outsiders" who were keenly interested in Western Thrace at the same period, and until the end of WWII, were the Bulgarians. Many Bulgarian scholars, international law experts, journalists and diplomats wrote about Western Thrace, in support of the nationalist Bulgarian position that Western Thrace should be under Bulgarian sovereignty. In these Bulgarian publications, however, the conflict in Western Thrace is presented as one between Greece and Bulgaria, while the presence of the Turkish-Muslim community is treated like a minor detail.

<sup>7</sup> It is around the same time that the Annual Human Rights Reports of the US Department of State begin to mention the problems of Thracian Muslims. Since then, the situation of this Minority has been extensively mentioned in every annual report (see US Department of State, 1996 through 2003).

These publications, therefore, are (if indirectly) sympathetic toward and supportive of the Minority, and, of course, critical of the Greek Government<sup>8</sup>. With the exception of just a few scholarly studies, like doctoral dissertations (such as Aarbakke's, completed in 2001), almost all the publications written by "outsiders" simply identify the problems or the issues of the conflict, give detailed descriptions of discriminatory policies, but avoid or prefer not to provide any causal explanations for them.

Finally, the vast majority of such publications make, explicitly or implicitly, recommendations for the Greek Government, for other governments, and for international organizations (though practically never for the Minority leaders), as to what they should do to eliminate the problems identified and described in the publications (see, for instance Human Rights Watch, 1999). Sometimes, the recommendations are stated very forcefully, in which case they take the form of demands (Amnesty International, 1998).

More recent publications by "outsiders", more specifically the ones that have appeared since the mid-nineties do mention the changes in the Greek policies and in government-Minority relations, but they still give emphasis on what has yet to be done, rather than what has been done. In this sense, they provide "mixed-positive" or "mixed-negative feedback" to the government (see, for instance Human Rights Watch, 1999 and Gil-Robles, 2002).

##### **(5) The "Non-Nationalistic"/Impartial Points of View**

In the mid eighties, as the tensions in Western Thrace rose, and the public opinion in both Greece and Turkey began to be more interested in the developments there, many Greek and

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<sup>8</sup> The publications of IGOs are more neutral toward the Greek government.

Turkish intellectuals (scholars, journalists, political activists, etc.), mostly with a non- or anti-nationalistic, liberal or left-wing orientation, became dissatisfied with the dominant discourse used in both countries to describe and explain the situation of the Thracian Turkish-Muslim Minority. They concluded, that the nationalistic perspective in almost all publications and in the audio-visual media, through which the Government-Minority tensions in the region was presented was inadequate, misleading, or –worse— an exacerbating factor in the conflict (see Soltaridis, 1990; Dodos, 1994; Tsitselikis & Hristopoulos, 1997; Heraclides, 2001, The whole issue April-June 1997 issue of *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* [Current Issues]).

It was necessary, they thought, to examine the situation from an impartial, or less biased (and more scientific) point of view, avoiding judgements on who is right and who is wrong and listening what to all sides have to say. (The best examples of such works published in Turkey are Oran's, 1986 and 1991). The objective of such an approach would be not to produce arguments to enhance the official position of either Turkey or Greece, but to show to all involved parties to this conflict the more tangible issues and the possibilities for mutually satisfactory solutions (see, for instance, Akgönül, 1999; Zolotas et. al, 1995; Anagnostou, 1999; Asimakopoulou & Hristidou, 2002).

Now, some of these dissatisfied intellectuals, instead of striving for neutrality, thought it would be more effective and more honest to criticize the official or nationalistic positions, exposing their weaknesses, their inconsistencies and their false assumptions (see, for instance, Terlexis, 1989; Apostolidis, 1989, 1995, 1996, and 1997; Troumbeta, 2001, and Heraclides, 2001). The ones who adopted that more partial perspective in Greece, accompanied their anti-nationalistic point of view with pro-Minority sentiments (this is especially true for the publications issued by Greek human rights organizations, particularly by the Greek Helsinki

Monitor). These intellectuals argued that recognizing and respecting the rights of the Turkish-Muslim Minority would benefit Greece more than the oppressive or restrictive policies implemented by the Greek Government. The non-nationalistic but partial intellectuals in Turkey, on the other hand, suggested that a more flexible and less nationalistic approach would be more beneficial to the W. Thracian Turks-Muslims about whose well-being the Turkish Government was concerned (Oran, 1991).

The publications with this non-nationalistic point of view pointed to many issues that were previously ignored or dismissed by the Greek and Turkish authorities (see, for instance the series of articles written by Bayer in *Hürriyet* from 12 to 14 of February 2003) and gradually lessened the influence of nationalistic publications on government officials in charge of the Turkish-Muslim Minority. As for the public opinions in both countries, one could say that this new approach has influenced it only indirectly; by changing the views of many members of the political and intellectual elite, who, in turn, began presenting their public with a different picture of the conflict in Thrace.

The relevant literature on the Western Thrace conflict is only one part of the literature one needs to review for this dissertation. One must also take a look at the more general and theoretical literature on identity formation, on nationalism, on minorities, and on government-minority relations. This I will attempt to do in the following chapter.

#### ***4. Group Identity, Nationalism, and Government-Minority Relations: An Overview of Relevant Theories***

The situation in Western Thrace cannot be fully understood without a basic knowledge of such concepts as group identity, nationalism, national cohesion, assimilation, integration, and accommodation. How does a group of people become a national minority? Why are national minorities often seen as a problem? Why is it that government-minority relations are frequently conflict-prone? And how can a government-minority conflict be handled constructively? Below I present an overview of some theories that try to provide answers to these questions.

##### **Identity and Group Identity**

"Who am I?" and "Who are we?" Human beings have asked and answered these two questions in thousands of different ways since they first appeared on Earth. Each answer to these questions can be characterized as "an identity". For human beings that lived together, a few of these answers, over time, became more important than the others, and led to the formation of "group identities". And quite often, human beings decided to come together and form groups *because* they gave the same answer to these two questions. In other words, they formed groups based on a shared identity. That identity was the basic "group identity" and what they formed was "identity groups" (see mainly Isaacs (1975)).

### The Need for Cohesion in Identity Groups

According to many social psychologists (most notably Sherif, 1953: 185-191, a pioneer in the study of the emergence of group norms), in both small and large groups there is a need for cohesion which leads to demands and pressures for conformity. Any group, in order to survive as a distinct entity, has to maintain a certain level of internal cohesion. The norms of the group, therefore, strongly encourage conformity and discourage deviance. The group, and especially its leadership, requires of the members to conform, i.e. to comply with the norms. Those who do not abide by the group rules, traditions, and values are in trouble: Depending on the extent to which they deviate from the norms they are scolded, punished or ostracized.

Yet, just as the groups have an intrinsic need for cohesion, most individuals have an equally basic need to belong (Berlin, 1982: 338). Membership to groups gives them security and meaning. They thus are willing to sacrifice part of their individuality in order to conform. By giving up part of their distinctiveness they become similar, they voluntarily assimilate to the group. As long as the group's demand for conformity is met by the members' desire to assimilate, the group-member relationship is a mutually beneficial one.

Very often, however, some members do not comply with the group's attempt to achieve cohesion, and, vice versa, certain individuals' desire to become members of a group is met with resistance. It is in these cases that conflict between the group's leadership (and often its majority) and certain members occur. Several sociologists and social psychologists (see, for instance, Sherif, 1953: 161) emphasize the frequent incongruence between one's '*reference group*' and '*membership group*': A reference group is a group to which the individual relates him/herself as a member, or to which he/she aspires to relate him/herself psychologically. A membership group, on the other hand, is a group of which the individual is (in actuality) willingly or unwillingly a member. Quite

frequently, some people's reference group happens to be different from their membership group. In that case, they are considered troublemakers by the latter, for they behave according to the norms of the former. The loyalty of such individuals lies with their reference group, and, hence, they are distrusted by their membership group.

This incongruence can be observed in almost every conflict between a nation-state and an ethnocultural minority.

### **The Emergence of Nations, Nationalisms, and Nation-States and the Need for Homogenization.**

Nations, being large identity groups, have very similar characteristics to the smaller groups examined by social psychologists. But unlike those smaller groups, they are "Imagined Communities" (Anderson, 1983: 15), because the members of even the smallest nation do not know most of their fellow-members, they will never meet them, they will never even hear of them, and yet, in the mind of each member of a nation lives the idea (or the ideal) of national togetherness.

Cohesion and conformity is a very important need for nations, as it is for any other group. However, nations require an extreme form of cohesion, that is, homogeneity. This more profound need for unity and integrity has to do with the historical developments that accompanied the rise of the nation, and nation-state:

The formation and rise of nation-states (from the 15th to the 20th Century, first in the West and later in other parts of the World) occurred simultaneously with, and as a result of the gradual emergence of capitalism, the growth in commerce, the beginning of industrialization, the

spread of literacy, the development of communications, population explosion, and urbanization. (Gellner, 1983: 19-62 & Anderson, 1983: 75).

All these developments together characterize the advent of Modernity. Nations, nation-states, and nationalisms (that is, ideologies that led to the formation and legitimization of such states) are typically modern phenomena (Hobsbawm, 1990: 14). Nations, therefore, are a large-scale and a relatively new manifestation of the very old human trait to form identity groups.

The social, political and economic conditions of modernity demanded standardization, uniformity, and homogeneity: Custom duties within countries were abolished, transportation systems were improved, highway and railroad systems were built to bring remote and isolated regions into easy contact with markets and metropolitan centers (Weber, 1976), national currencies and uniform units of measurement were adopted, mail services became systematic, buildings, streets and roads were given numbers, detailed censuses started to be conducted; small regional economies were transformed into inter-dependent parts of a larger, presumably more efficient, single 'national' economic system... Moreover, in most countries, citizens of the newly-formed nation-states were forced to speak the same language; they were even encouraged to speak the standard dialect of that language with the 'correct' accent<sup>1</sup>. And, basically through the education-system and mass media, either state-run or state-controlled, the ruling nationalist elites launched a social engineering project to metamorphose the heterogeneous populations of their countries into a unified community having the same historical symbols, deriving from the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, French schoolchildren in rural France after the revolution started to be taught in 21e-de-France French; British schools taught the "King's English;" education in German schools, since the 19th Century has been in "Hochdeutsch;" and after the nationalist revolution of 1911, Mandarin Chinese, a dialect spoken by Chinese bureaucrats, became China's official dialect.



same ancestors, and, irrespective of social inequalities and class differences, pursuing the same 'national' interests (see, Anderson, 1983: 80-128, and Hobsbawm, 1990: 80-100).

During this period, most modern states had to resolve a paradox: The dominant nationalist ideology claimed that within the national boundaries there was one integral, indivisible nation, while at the same time the governments were trying to do away with diversity in order to establish this integrity, indivisibility and homogeneity. In other words, what was presented as a fact was actually a goal to be achieved, and the ruling nationalistic elites were trying to turn the myth of one, "indivisible", nation into a reality.

#### **Different Paths toward the Achievement of Homogenization**

In almost every country there were ethnocultural minorities, and for every attempt at homogenization they posed a problem that had to be 'solved.'

Most social scientists and thinkers of the 19th and early 20th Century, including Marxist or socialist ones, did not regard the 'problem' of minorities as a major one (Stone, 1985). They argued that racial and ethnic divisions and identities were going to wither away as a result of economic and technological development (Berlin, 1982: 339-340). They particularly emphasized the impact of industrialization, and suggested that as societies became increasingly industrialized, the dynamics this process was creating was inevitably going to break down barriers between racial and ethnic groups. Industrialism was promoting effectiveness and positivist thinking in the societies; it was transforming society, by facilitating social mobility and urbanization, and, consequently, by undermining the traditional segments, where ethnocultural identities were valued the most. According to those social theorists, the process of industrialization, accompanied by the rise of capitalism and the values attached to it, and

facilitated by the 'nation-building' policies, was gradually creating an undiversified society; social stratification and social relations were increasingly dictated by the needs and logic of industrial capitalism (e.g., employees versus employers) (Stone, 1985: 84-85).

However, ethnocultural identities, differences, and minorities proved more resistant. They were not going to wane that smoothly. Industrialization and urbanization generated widespread frustration, insecurity, and anxiety among the members of traditional segments of society, forcing them to cling even more tightly to their culture (Stone, 1983: 90). By the same token, many ethnocultural minorities that were exposed to modernization, not only did they not lose their distinct identity, but they sought security by emphasizing it even more than before (Eriksen, 1993: 8). It is partly because of this resistance that states launched their 'nation-building' and homogenization projects.

During the homogenization process in each country, nation-states developed different approaches for different minorities:

Some ethnocultural minorities were considered 'integrable,' or '*assimilable*,' that is, capable of becoming integrated into the nation, or incorporated with the majority. These minorities were either encouraged to assimilate voluntarily, or were subjected to forced assimilation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For example in France, the state has until recently implemented policies of assimilation of minorities such as Bretons, Provençals and Catalans. It encouraged them to become French, so that they would achieve equal rights, and improve their standing. In addition, it has "mercilessly" insisted on the use of the French language, which it has promoted as "emancipating" and necessary for social mobility (Weber, 1976).

Other minorities were viewed as 'non-integrable, that is *'inassimilable,'* not capable or not worthy of becoming part of the nation<sup>3</sup>. The policies adopted to deal with them were cruel: Ejection (forced migration), segregation (keeping minorities separate and unequal; Gurr, 1993: 306), oppression, ethnic cleansing, massacres, genocides<sup>4</sup>...

What are the criteria used by the states to classify minorities as assimilable or non-assimilable? If there are any well-defined or permanent criteria I have not been able to discern them. The categorization of minorities on the basis of their 'assimilability' appears to depend on the social, political, and economic circumstances in a certain country, in a certain period, on the beliefs, aspirations, and suspicions of the ruling elites, on the attitudes of the minorities --but especially of their leadership toward the nation-state and the government--, on the degree of racial, ethnic, or religious congruence between the minority and the ruling elite, etc. As all of these factors change over time, so does the 'integrability' of a minority. A minority can be treated by a government as an assimilable one, and then, when a new (say, a racist) government comes to power, the same group may start to be regarded as non-assimilable. Or, economic conditions might change, the country might enter a period of depression, and a government that hitherto regarded a minority as assimilable, now in search of a scapegoat, might start treating the same minority as the enemy, thus as a non-assimilable one<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Some examples for non-assimilable minorities are: The Native Americans (American Indians) in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Gypsies (Roma) in eastern Europe, Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, particularly during and immediately after W.W.I, and, of course, Jews during the Nazi Germany.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed and radical explanation of the reasons why and the conditions under which the nation-states resort to such violent strategies to do way with ethnocultural minorities, see van den Berghe, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> The Jews of the Pale, from the time Russia conquered the eastern part of Poland up until the 1870s, were regarded as a foreign, dirty and dangerous element that should be prevented from spreading throughout the empire. The Jews could not travel beyond the formerly Polish provinces, they were not allowed to engage in certain occupations, to lease land, to manage certain businesses, to employ Christian workers, to

### The Dangers Faced by "Non-Assimilable Minorities"

Non-assimilable minorities usually fulfill a special psychological function for the majorities: They become "Suitable Targets for Externalization" (or projection) of the majority population's negative feelings and images (Volkan, 1988: 28-32). In other words, not only do such minorities attract majority's hatred, suspicion, and rage because of their own characteristics, they also become reservoirs of the majority's negative *self-* images. Volkan argues that people and groups of people externalize or project the "unwelded" positive and negative images about themselves into certain people and objects of the outside world. This, he claims, is necessary in order for them to maintain the cohesion and integrity of their self (and group-self, i.e. group identity, when it is the groups that do the externalization/projection). Thus, people or groups that are targets of positive externalized images and representations are seen as allies, friends, leaders, etc.... On the other hand, people or groups that are reservoirs of unintegrated bad images are regarded as enemies, or worse (Volkan, 1988: 31).

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attend universities, to locally govern themselves etc. They were forbidden even to wear their traditional clothing, and later, when the government started to instigate or organize pogroms the Jews were forbidden to even defend themselves (Rubenstein, 1994: 5-6).

During the reign of Alexander II, the government adopted a strategy to modernize Russia. That strategy, among other things, included a partial emancipation of the Jewish community. Thus, the government's approach toward this ethnic group changed significantly: Now the Jews were encouraged, often forced to assimilate, to "fuse" with the Russian population. Most of the restrictions mentioned above were lifted, and some opportunities for the Jewish population to join the mainstream of the society were created (Rubenstein, 1994: 7-8).

The assassination of Alexander II, however, led to a radical change of the status of the Jews. First, they were held responsible of the murder, and the government encouraged a wave of pogroms. Later, the extreme nationalist Alexander III, who succeeded Alexander II, gradually curtailed their rights and began treating them as non-assimilable again: Jews started to be expelled from big cities, from schools and universities, they were barred from certain professions, and many of them were forced to return to the Pale (Rubenstein, 1994: 13-14).

The status of the Jews would change for yet another time with the Russian Revolutions (March-November 1917), after which they would be regarded as assimilable again.

But there is another, more dreadful psychological dynamic that can often be observed in minority-majority relations: Relations between the non-assimilable minority and the majority or the nation-state government become even more strained if that minority is linked to a state or nation that in the past inflicted a deep trauma upon the majority group; so painful a trauma that cannot be "mourned" (Volkan, 1988). In that case, and after the balance of power changes in favor of the majority, the minority may be seen as so dangerous, so contaminated, that it should be eliminated. The government supported by the majority group might intend to "purify" the society from its dirty and harmful elements. These perceptions and intentions can pave the way for policies of "ethnic cleansing," for mass expulsions, massacres, even for genocides. Such policies, or strategies to deal with non-assimilable minorities, according to Volkan, are "malignant forms of purification rituals" (Volkan, 1992: 13-14).

Nevertheless, violence and oppression against ethnocultural minorities cannot entirely or necessarily be explained by psychological dynamics. There usually are some sheer political reasons behind brutal and discriminatory policies directed against a minority group. Governments frequently play the "minority card" when, for example, they are losing popularity or legitimacy and find it convenient "to wrap themselves in a cloak of nationalistic, racial, or religious rhetoric" (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 2).

### **The Gradual Prevalence of Democracy and Human Rights**

After the end of the Second World War with the defeat of Nazism, Fascism and Japanese militaristic nationalism, and with the worldwide shock and horror caused by the Holocaust, it became significantly more difficult for the nation-state governments to implement violent and brutal policies of oppression against minorities. With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

and with other mainly regional documents and conventions emphasizing Human Rights (for instance, OSCE's Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter) the principle of non-discrimination and the right of free association are now accepted as global norms. In addition, the concepts of 'minority rights' and 'cultural rights' gained widespread acceptance<sup>6</sup>. This does not mean, of course, that these rights and principles are not or cannot be violated. They are, but the governments that violate human rights or minority rights feel the need and the pressure to present excuses; and if they are not persuasive, they often have to face sanctions. That was not possible in the 19th or in the first part of the 20th Century.

Moreover, since the eighties, and especially since the end of the Cold War, democracy based on liberal values and principles has gained an unprecedented popularity. Today more countries enjoy a democratic regime than ever before. Although not impossible, it is certainly more difficult and less acceptable to violate minority rights in a democratic regime. Establishing or maintaining national cohesion is still a very basic goal and principle for every national government, but today it has to coexist with the principles of democracy and human rights.

### **Toward the End of Modernity, and How to Deal with Minorities in an Information (Post- Modern) Era**

The recent rapid and impressive developments in technology, in transportation, in the telecommunications signify that the era of modernity is coming to an end. Some analysts have argued that information has become the most important element of today's world, and that

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<sup>6</sup> This widespread acceptance was reflected, for instance, in 1966, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which required that minorities should not be denied the right to practice their religion, to use their language and enjoy their culture (Article 27; Williams, 1981: 48).

industrial societies, or even non-industrial societies, are gradually being transformed into information societies (see, Naisbitt, 1982: 1-33). Due to this transformation, together with the old technologies, the centralized, homogenizing, standardizing, modern nation-state is rapidly becoming obsolete. Parallel to that, or as a consequence, the whole world is experiencing two seemingly contradictory, but mutually reinforcing trends (Isaacs, 1975: 215. See also, Barber, 1992): *Globalization* and *Fragmentation*. Economy and information exchange is gaining global dimensions, rendering national borders either meaningless or, at least, porous. On the other hand, ethnocultural and religious groups are asserting the distinctiveness of their identities and they are trying to separate themselves from the larger national units of which they constitute a component.

All these trends and changes are forcing the governments to reexamine their policies toward ethnocultural minorities. How can governments deal with ethnocultural minorities in this new era?

*\* In Authoritarian Regimes:*

The trends I described above are pushing dictatorial or authoritarian governments towards liberalization and democratization. No matter what mechanisms these governments use, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for them to control the content and the amount of information their citizens are getting (particularly from abroad). Today, the leaders and intellectuals of ethnocultural minorities (and not only them) are aware of and are closely following the developments in other parts of the world. They know about the struggles of other minorities, they know about the global trends favoring democracy, and they also know that they can internationalize their problems and their agenda much more easily than before. It is therefore almost impossible for any government to oppress a minority or suppress its demands, without

creating international reaction. Authoritarian governments, then, have basically two choices: They can either violate the rights of their minorities and face international outcry or isolation, or often sanctions (e.g. Burma, Zimbabwe, even China, to a certain extent), or they can negotiate with the representatives of those minorities with a view to recognize their rights. But they cannot just improve the situation of the minorities and ignore the majority of the population. If an authoritarian government agrees to improve the situation of a minority, the majority is inevitably going to demand the same improvements. This demand will probably lead to a conflict between political groups representing the majority and the authoritarian regime, which sooner or later will result in its overthrow. So, a better choice for those governments is to initiate a process of general democratization, and to start respecting the human rights of every citizen. If it is they who initiate the process, it is more likely that they will be in control throughout the transition, and perhaps even after the transition.

*\* In Democratic Regimes:*

For such regimes there is a need to implement "a politics of recognition of differences" alongside "a politics of equal dignity" (Taylor, 1994: 39).

The politics of equal dignity are based on the assumption that human beings, just because they are human, have a dignity. Human dignity, according to that assumption is the same for every human being. No-one has more dignity than others (Taylor, 1994: 27). Jefferson expressed a very similar idea in the American Declaration of Independence when he wrote "all men are created equal." It is these assumptions that led to such concepts as 'human rights,' 'one man - one vote,' equal rights to participate in government, and equality before the law (Singh, 1996: 22). For if human beings are created equal and have the same dignity, they must also have certain rights -the same rights- and they must be able to have a say, an equal say in the decision-



making process. Yet, even though these concepts are essential for democracy, they do not wholly satisfy the identity needs of minorities, because they want their differences as a group to be recognized and respected. As Hegel (Taylor, 1994: 36) and Burton (Sandole, 1993: 14) have pointed out, recognition is a basic need for a group, as well as for a person.

The principle of "recognition of differences" derives from the works of Johann Gottfried Herder, a proto-nationalist German historian and philosopher. Herder argues that each of us has an original way of being human. In other words, we have a distinct way, our own way to actualize ourselves. Therefore we should not imitate, we must not be forced to imitate others. We should find our own original way of self-actualization, and we should not give up until we are sure we have found it. If we do give up and choose someone else's way, we miss the point of our lives; we miss what being human is for us. We should be true to ourselves by being true to our originality. Herder, then, leaps from the level of individuals to the level of groups and asserts that just like individuals, an ethnocultural group (a "Volk"), too, should be true to itself, that is, its own culture. Only through its own culture can an ethnic group actualize itself. Thus, Herder concluded that Germans should not try or should not be compelled to try to imitate the French (Berlin, 1992: 244- 246). If they do, they can only become second-rate French. He also suggested that European colonialism should be rolled back to give colonized people the chance to be themselves without any impediment (Taylor, 1994: 30-31)

About one and a half century later, Frantz Fanon, one of the most important thinkers of anti-colonialism, expressed the same or very similar ideas: He claimed that the colonized peoples, in order to be free, must first of all purge themselves of the image colonizers imposed on them. Subjugated peoples, he proposed, should develop their own self-image relying upon their own culture (Taylor, 1994: 65).

If governments accepted the ideas and suggestions of Herder and Fanon, they would have to abandon all their policies of assimilation, even those that are not coercive. And in a democratic regime based both on human rights and on minority rights, members of minority would have equal rights with the members of majority, but, in addition, they would be given the opportunity to express, and preserve their own culture<sup>7</sup>.

### **Managing/Settling/Resolving State-Minority Conflicts**

#### **'Accommodation without Assimilation,' Consociationalism, Federalism, and Secession**

If one rules out the option of assimilation as a state policy, as well as all the other brutal and coercive techniques to be implemented toward the minorities, and considering that there must be some kind of peaceful coexistence between the nation-state governments and ethnocultural groups, perhaps the best option among those that remain is what Margaret Gibson calls "*accommodation without assimilation*" (Gibson, 1988)<sup>8</sup>. What could be the basic elements of this option?

\* First of all, it is a progressive-conservative option, because its goal is both the improvement of the social, economic, and political condition of minorities and the preservation of their culture with their values, their communal structure, and their traditions (to the extent they do not contradict with the basic human rights).

\* Second, it requires of the minority members to affirm their cultural identity, while at the same time to recognize the need to develop certain skills (for instance, to become bilingual) that

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<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in a regime based on human rights, people should have the right to abandon their culture, and assimilate with another one, if, they freely choose to do so.

<sup>8</sup> The same option has also been discussed by Tajfel (1981: 335) who calls it simply 'accommodation,' and by Gurr (1993: 309-310) who calls it 'pluralism.'

would enable them to peacefully interact and cooperate with the majority (Mehan et al., 1994: 105). That is to say, minority members should try to accommodate themselves to the mainstream, dominant culture, while maintaining their own culture<sup>9</sup>.

\* And, third, it requires of the state to accommodate itself to the needs of the minority.

The state should facilitate minorities' efforts to preserve their identity and culture.

This third requirement often is achieved by granting special economic, political and cultural rights to disadvantaged minorities, in order to address inequities (Gurr, 1993: 309). Such a policy, however, may lead to a perpetual competition between the majority and minority communities, or to a backlash by the dominant group, thus creating communal tensions, which may result in violent ethnic conflict (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 7 and Gurr, 1993: 310). So, it is by no means a panacea.

The option of 'accommodation without assimilation' may not satisfy a minority, especially when it constitutes a significant proportion of the society and that society is deeply divided, that is, there are serious differences in the culture, identity and interests between minority and majority. Such a society is more likely to be held together peacefully through a "*consociational*" or power-sharing system of government.

Consociation is a form of government based on the cooperation among political elites of the segments of a divided society, within an institutional framework. Its immediate aim is to turn a society with a "fragmented political culture" into a stable democracy and to maintain the "national unity" (Lijphart, 1969; Gurr, 1993: 310-311). It has been implemented with a remarkable

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<sup>9</sup> According to Gibson (1988: 25), that is exactly what the Sikhs in California managed to do.

success in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Colombia, and Malaysia, and with a satisfactory degree of success in Belgium. (Nevertheless, it failed in Lebanon and in Cyprus.)

Consociationalism has four basic and indispensable characteristics: *a power-sharing coalition, proportionality, mutual veto, and segmental autonomy* (Lijphart, 1969: 216-221).

In order for consociationalism to be implemented successfully, (a) the political leaders from the rival segments should have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of their own community and they must have an effective control over it. (b) They should be able to transcend cleavages and to work jointly, to cooperate to a great extent with the elites of the rival segments. (c) They should be committed to the continuance of the system and to its stability. (d) Finally, the elites should understand the perils of political fragmentation (Lijphart, 1969: 216).

As can be seen, consociationalism is an elitist system, because its establishment and success depends almost completely on the willingness of the political elites to cooperate. And it requires wise segmental leaders, "more tolerant than their followers," capable of understanding the importance and the benefits of inter-elite cooperation, as well as capable of creating solutions to the political problems of their countries (Horowitz, 1985: 573). If the elites are not willing to make the system work, consociationalism breaks down, leading usually to violent interethnic conflicts. A *federal structure* may increase the effectiveness of consociational politics, provided that there is a large number of federated units not designed according to the geographical distribution of the ethnocultural groups (such as in Switzerland) - thus preventing domination of one unit by a single ethnic group, and enabling shifting coalitions to take place (McGarry & O'Leary, 1990: 269). If each federated unit corresponds to an ethnic group (such as in former Czechoslovakia and former Yugoslavia), then the partition of this country is more likely than its continuance.

For many minority groups, even a federal-consociational arrangement might not be deemed satisfactory. The only solution such groups can accept is *separation / secession*: They want to establish their own nation-state where they will no longer be a minority, but a majority (Wellman, 1995). But secession rarely solves the minority problem: Where there is one nation-state and one minority, it creates (at least) two nation-states and two minorities, because it is practically impossible to concentrate all the members of an ethnic group in a certain territory and extremely difficult -not to mention unacceptable- to 'purify' or 'cleanse' a territory of unwanted ethnic groups (Singh, 1996: 20)<sup>10</sup>.

### Conclusion

We can conclude, therefore, that, as far as government-minority relations are concerned, there are no perfect options or solutions. Each of the above has certain strengths but also some weaknesses. If there were a perfect solution, relations between minorities and states probably would not be that conflict-ridden.

Yet there are several clearly wrong options: Oppression is wrong; ethnic cleansing and genocide are wrong; segregation is wrong; assimilation, if forced, is wrong. Unfortunately,

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<sup>10</sup> Singh (1996: 20) mentions the case of India-Pakistan: When the Indian Territory was divided into a state for Muslims (West and East Pakistan) and a state mainly for Hindus (India), tens of millions of Muslims had to migrate from India to Pakistan leaving most of their properties behind. These immigrants, who call themselves "Mahajirs" (immigrants), were not able to get fully integrated into the Pakistani society, and they are still regarded by the native population as foreigners. On the other hand, many Muslims chose to remain in India (the Muslim population of India is slightly larger than the total population of Pakistan), and thus the conflict (and violence) between Hindus and Muslims went on. Therefore, neither the partition of the territory nor the mass migration of a significant proportion of Indian Muslims achieved its objective, namely to terminate the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. On the contrary, these two measures added an inter-state dimension to the conflict: The rivalry between Pakistan and India, primarily due to the status of Kashmir. There have been three wars between these two countries since they gained their independence. Now that both of them have obtained nuclear capabilities, a fourth war would be a major threat to the global security.

despite the global changes and the new worldwide trends, many governments still consider such brutal strategies and policies within their range of choices. Let us hope that some day governments will realize that these are not solutions, but the very core of the problem.

## ***5. The formation of the Modern Greek Nation and Nationalist Homogenization***

The theoretical perspective on identity-groups, nations, nationalism, homogenization, and assimilable versus non-assimilable minorities, which I have tried to formulate above, can be instrumental in helping us understand the government-majority-minority dynamics in Western Thrace.

The process through which the modern Greek nation was formed basically followed the pattern I outlined above, though with a few peculiar characteristics. Just like any other nation-building process, in the Greek case, too, a number of people living in a certain region (in the Ottoman Empire, but primarily in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula) despite their different ethnic backgrounds, despite their different mother-tongues, and despite significant class differences, under the influence of ideas formulated by intellectuals, increasingly imagined themselves as one big and distinct community, in other words, a nation, the Greek nation (Blinkhorn & Veremis, 1990).

Homogenization was an extremely important goal for the Greek Government and nationalist intellectuals, but it was only the Greek-Orthodox population groups that were accepted as "assimilable". Muslim groups whether Slavic, Albanian, or Turkish were seen, even in

the early phases of Greek nationalism as "non-assimilable"<sup>1</sup>. In other words, Greek Nationalism, in part because within the framework of the Ottoman Millet system, defined its community along religious-denominational lines. And the Muslims, the Turks (these two terms were used interchangeably) were outside this community. They were the "out-group" (Legg & Roberts, 1997)<sup>2</sup>.

In fact, Muslims became the "suitable target for externalization" for Greek hatred and contempt. Muslims, for nationalist Greeks were not just "the other"; they were "the enemy". They saw the Muslims as the descendants of those who kept the Greek nation "enslaved" for four centuries, and as potential allies of the most serious enemy – "the Turk". Some Greek nationalists even regarded the Muslims as an "impurity" that reminded them of their nation's the dark recent past (Legg & Roberts, 1997).

Therefore, while there were programs and policies in Greece and in Ottoman provinces to "Hellenize" Bulgarian-speaking Albanian-speaking, Vlach-speaking, and Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox communities (Blinkhorn & Veremis, 1990), for Muslims the policy was to keep them segregated, obedient, under strict control, and gradually to force them to "go back" to Turkey.

The Muslim groups for the most part did not protest against the Greek policies, but they preferred themselves to migrate to Turkey (to use Hirschman's (1970) term, they chose "exit"). There were very violent ethnic clashes in several regions of the Ottoman Balkans between Greeks/Christians and Turks/Muslims (primarily in Macedonia and on the island of Crete) but

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<sup>1</sup> Jews in Greece were also regarded as non-assimilable, although many Jews did try to assimilate into the Greek society, by mastering Greek, by changing their names, etc.

<sup>2</sup> I must also add here that only a negligible number of Muslims showed any interest in integrating into the Greek society.



the clashes did not continue after these regions were ceded by the Ottomans to Greece. The Muslim communities, defeated, demoralized, and intimidated, decided to leave their lands and to move to still Ottoman-controlled lands (Mazower, 2002).

In short, the homogenization strategy of the Greek nationalism was "Hellenize the Orthodox, but segregate the Muslims and reduce their size".

This homogenization strategy was implemented in every new territory Greece acquired. There was little resistance from the populations in these territories, with the single exception of "Bulgarians"<sup>3</sup> in Macedonia. Moreover, after WWI, with the voluntary exchange of populations with Bulgaria, and the compulsory exchange of populations with Turkey, Greece got rid of the largest portion of its "non-assimilable" ethnic groups.

But Western Thrace was different. As I stated in previous chapters of this dissertation, this was a region with a majority Muslim population, and was ceded to Greece (irrevocably in 1923, with the Lausanne Treaty) under special circumstances. The Muslim population in Thrace was given extensive minority rights and would pose the most difficult challenge to the Greek nationalist homogenization strategy.

The events in Government-Muslim relations in Western Thrace after this region became part of Greece are briefly described in the Introduction to Western Thrace, and the developments since 1974 will constitute, of course, the core of this dissertation, and will be analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

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<sup>3</sup> These were speakers of South-Slav dialects who had acquired a Bulgarian national identity. But what made them Bulgarian was their allegiance to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (the Bulgarian Exarchate). So, even in this case the imagined line separating Greeks from non-Greeks was drawn along religious lines.

## 6. *Nonviolent Struggle – A Theoretical and General Overview*

One of the most important features of the Western Thrace conflict is the fact that the Turkish-Muslim minority of the region has struggled to achieve its goals exclusively through nonviolent means. To better understand why minority members preferred nonviolent struggle to a violent one, in other words, to understand the advantages a nonviolent struggle can give to a relatively powerless minority vis-à-vis the state, one has to examine nonviolent action theoretically and in general. That is what I intend to do in this section of my dissertation.

Nonviolent struggle is a set of techniques of socio-political action for exercising power in a conflict. Such techniques consist of many specific methods of psychological, social, economic, and political nature, and their most significant characteristic is that they preclude the use of physical violence (Sharp, 1999). The objective of nonviolent protest methods, therefore, is not to avoid conflict but to avoid physical violence and bloodshed. Nonviolence is a way of waging a struggle with less likelihood of it sliding into a cycle of violence and civil war. (Crist, 2002, p.2)

Nonviolent action can take the form of:

(a) *acts of omission* -- that is, the participants refuse to perform acts which they usually perform, are expected by tradition to perform, or are required by law to perform; or

(b) *acts of commission* -- i.e., the participants conduct acts that they usually do not perform, are not expected traditionally to perform, or are forbidden by law from performing; or, finally,

(c) a *combination of both*. (Sharp, 1999)

Nonviolent struggle includes a large number of specific methods that are grouped by Gene Sharp (1973, 1999) (one of the most important students of nonviolence) into three main categories:

(1) *nonviolent protest and persuasion*, (2) *non-cooperation*, and (3) *nonviolent intervention*.

I will try to briefly describe each of these categories below. But first, I will explore the theory behind nonviolent action:

Nonviolent action is a way to use power to confront the power of opponents. It is a set of techniques of waging active conflict and pursuing certain objectives in a conflict, and in that it is an alternative to both submission and to physical violence.

Nonviolent struggle is usually employed when less confrontational types of action, such as negotiations, conciliation, arbitration, persuasion, etc., are not expected to be effective, or have failed to resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of at least one of the parties. When a group of people that is in conflict usually with a more powerful party, determines that the time for open struggle has arrived, it may choose whether to use forms of violent conflict or nonviolent conflict. That is why nonviolent action, in its stronger forms of noncooperation and intervention, is considered the alternative to violent action.

Nonviolent resistance or struggle is not exactly the opposite of war or violent struggle. Because, while it is based on the rejection of the use of physical violence, it shares many features with its violent counterparts:

- It has a psychological and moral objective and effect;
- it operates against the morale of the opponents;

- it is more likely to be successful when it is conducted with a well thought-out strategy<sup>1</sup> and realistic goals (Crist, 2002);
- it requires courage, dynamism, energy, capacity to endure fatigue and suffering, self-sacrifice, self-discipline, and even heroism; thus, it provides the participants with an opportunity of service for a large cause and for glory (Gregg, 1944).

Nonviolent resistance and protest has taken place in many parts of the world in recent history, with a significant degree of success. Therefore, it is fair to say that this kind of struggle should receive more attention and more appreciation from the world community, or at least as much as violent struggles do (Crist, 2002).

This broad phenomenon of nonviolent action has variously been referred to by such terms as nonviolent resistance, *Satyagraha* (in Gandhi's philosophy), passive resistance, positive action, nonviolent direct action, and civilian resistance. Sharp prefers the term "nonviolent struggle", and I agree with him, for "struggle" implies a process, and a set of consecutive actions, thus it is more accurate than "action". "Nonviolence" may also mean a way of life, or a philosophy that includes more than just the way of waging a conflict, but in that special sense nonviolence is not really relevant to the conflict in Western Thrace.

A group in conflict chooses to use nonviolent action not only because they believe it to be the most suitable to achieve their objectives, but also because the ones who choose this technique often do not have the resources to wage a strong violent struggle, especially as their opponent is in most cases a regime with vast military capacity. Moreover, the activists may see that the

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<sup>1</sup> An in-depth examination of this characteristic can be found in Ackerman & Kruegler 1994.

nonviolent technique will likely avoid much of the negative consequences of the use of violence. So, nonviolence is basically a pragmatic choice. However, it must be stated that in many cases, the pragmatic basis for the choice of nonviolent means is accompanied by a moral, religious or cultural preference for nonviolence (Freedman & McClymond, 1999).

### **The Methods of Nonviolent Action**

About 200 specific methods of this technique have been identified<sup>2</sup>, but clearly there must be many more and new ones are continually being invented. All of these specific methods can be classified under three broad categories.

I. The mildest of these techniques fall under the category of *nonviolent protest and persuasion*.

This type of action involves symbolic acts, and not simply words, that are intended to express displeasure and protest against some action, policy, or condition. These include such methods as distribution of flyers and similar written documents, holding vigils, conducting a march, and maintaining silence. These are relatively weak methods of nonviolence, but, depending on the situation and on how they are conducted, they have the potential to make a significant impact on the conflict.

II. The second category, "*noncooperation*", consists of more powerful techniques. In other words, through the methods of noncooperation a party can apply more pressure on its more powerful opponent. Noncooperation, in this situation, means withholding (usually temporarily) certain forms of cooperation that enabled the social, economic, or political relationships to function as they did previously. It is important to remember that governments – *all* governments -- rely on

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<sup>2</sup> Ackerman and Kruegler (1994) on p.6 of their book provide a list of the most frequently used nonviolent methods. For a detailed list of 198 such methods, see also Sharp (1973).

routine compliance and obedience from their populations. When movements employing this type of nonviolent struggle convince a sufficiently large portion of the people to stop acquiescing, the government's efforts to maintain its sway over the society become much more difficult. (Crist, 2002; p.1). This refusal to cooperate usually makes a more substantial impact on the conflict than do the purely symbolic acts (of the first category). The slowing or halting of the previous cooperation can be disruptive or even paralyzing for the (more powerful) opponent.

According to Sharp (1999), there are three basic types of noncooperation:

- (a) *Social noncooperation* means ceasing to cooperate on the social level, by engaging in such actions as social boycotts, in other words, boycotts of social occasions and functions. The impact of social boycotts is primarily psychological, especially on those boycotted. Such boycotts may also have a symbolic impact, when, for instance, a party refuses to attend ceremonies and occasions sponsored by the government.
  - (b) *Economic noncooperation* includes both economic boycotts and labor strikes. Their impact depends on such factors as the number of people participating, the significance of their economic roles in the society, and the relation of those roles to the opponents.
  - (c) *Political noncooperation* consists of many methods by which groups, or individuals, refuse to cooperate in political matters with an opponent group, usually a government. The specific methods of political noncooperation vary widely, and they include boycotting rigged elections, walking out of government bodies, civil disobedience, and a work stoppage by civil servants, etc. Again, as with economic noncooperation, the impact of such methods will largely depend on the number of people and groups engaging in noncooperation: On a small scale the action maybe
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merely symbolic but with widespread participation and on a large scale such action may paralyze a political system.

III. The third broad category is *nonviolent intervention*. These are methods that are aimed at disrupting the normal functioning of the system. The intervention may take psychological, physical, social, economic, and political forms. The strength of these methods depends in large degree on the scale on which they are practiced. The discipline and persistence of the practitioners is another -- equally important -- factor for their effectiveness. The wide spectrum of nonviolent intervention methods include hunger strikes, sit-ins, creating new social, economic, or political institutions, establishing new forms of social behavior, and setting up a parallel government. Some of these methods of action, such as sit-ins, may make a strong impact by a relatively small number of people. Other methods, however, such as forming new institutions and a parallel government, require the support of large numbers of participants.

Because they challenge the system directly, these methods often are met with severe repression. That is why they require highly disciplined behavior, and a cohesive group of activists, especially when they have a highly disruptive effect.

The formation of a parallel government, or, at least, of some parallel institutions, that work alongside, but independent of, the official or governmental ones and take care of certain social needs of the aggrieved segments of society (like health, education, and practice of religion) is probably the most dramatic challenge to an oppressive government, and happens when a

government clearly loses its legitimacy in these segments<sup>3</sup>. Parallel institutions also help to establish a strong bond between the nonviolent movement and the "common", "regular" people, or the "fence-sitters". (Crist, 2002; p. 6)

A nonviolent movement that establishes parallel institutions usually aims to replace the oppressive and no-longer legitimate regime with a democratic government – in the whole country or maybe in one part of it. But the overthrow of the oppressive regime may not signify the end of such a movement's role: Even when the regime is overthrown, a difficult transition period should be expected. The dangers come not only from the remnants of the old regime, but also from other, unexpected, sources. During the time of uncertainty and the shift of authority, serious efforts are required to prevent a small clique from conducting a coup and from imposing a new oppressive regime.

As we saw in the three broad categories examined above, nonviolent struggle consists of a wide variety of actions, small-scale or large-scale, symbolic or substantial, mild or forceful. It is important to reiterate that this technique of waging conflict is defined by what it is and what it does, and not by the simple rejection of violence. The absence of violent action can also be an indication of passive submission and acceptance of the status quo. But those are *incompatible* with the use of nonviolent action and must not be confused with it.

### **Mobilizing and Undermining Power**

How does nonviolent struggle operate effectively against otherwise powerful opponents

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<sup>3</sup> One of the most characteristic examples of setting up a parallel government during a non-violent struggle is the case of Kosovo from 1991 to 1998. The Albanians in this Yugoslav region during this period managed to establish and sustain a parallel state with its own educational, health-care, and financial institutions.



and established regimes? Sharp begins to answer this question by arguing that nonviolence empowers people because it provides them with techniques of group action that they can use as an *alternative* to military capacity. The strength of the mobilized group can then be targeted to undermine the power of the opponents. This targeting is possible, because nonviolent struggle can affect the *sources* of the opponents' power.

The basic source of power of all governments, according to Sharp's theory (1973), is legitimacy, or authority. Legitimacy is perhaps the most important single source of power, since belief in the regime's right to rule helps to provide other important sources of power.

Sharp (1973) identifies five additional sources of power:

1. *Human resources*: The number of people and institutions that obey, work with, and assist the regime.
2. These people and institutions provide *skills and knowledge* that are indispensable for the smooth functioning of the regime.
3. *Intangible factors* involve the population's habits, customs, and attitudes toward obedience, loyalty, and submission.
4. *Material resources* are the natural and financial resources, the economic system, communication, and transportation.
5. Finally, the regime inflicts *sanctions* (punishments) by police and military action to enforce obedience.

If the regime receives an *adequate supply* of legitimacy and these five sources of power, it remains strong. Oppressive regimes, however, frequently lack legitimacy (Crist, 2002), and to compensate for this vulnerability they rely more on the other sources of power, more characteristically on sanctions.

Sharp argues that nonviolent action can be targeted to undermine the supply of each of these sources of power. The regime is weakened when the supply of these is clogged. And when the supply is completely cut, the regime is paralyzed or falls apart.

If those in power do not receive sufficient acceptance of their right to rule, if the needed skills and knowledge are not available, if the needed support of institutions and the civil service is not there, if the regime does not retain control of economic resources (including finances, communications and transportation), if the population does not submit even under repression, if the police and troops do not obey orders efficiently, then the regime's power is gone.

Sharp maintains that the ability of the population to conduct nonviolent struggle and to weaken or remove the sources of power is highly dependent upon the existence and strength of non-state social groups and institutions in the society. These he calls *loci of power* (places where power is located and can be exercised). These may be families, social classes, religious groups, cultural and nationality groups, occupational groups, villages, towns, cities, provinces and regions, smaller governmental bodies, voluntary organizations, and political parties. Most often these are traditional, established, formal social groups and institutions, but sometimes they may be less formal and even created or revitalized in the course of nonviolent resistance.

The loci of power can turn resistance into an organized group activity, as distinct from acts by individuals. For example, a labor strike led by a trade union is more powerful than the refusal of an individual to continue work. When there is no resistance (and/or no *need* for resistance), these loci of power may supply needed sources of power to the established order. They are then called, in Sharp's terminology, *pillars of support*. Examples of those in the political system may include the civil servants and bureaucracy, religious institutions, economic institutions, the police and the armed forces, political parties, etc. When these same groups and

institutions shift allegiance and become opposed to the status quo, they can restrict or block the supply of particular sources of power. This action, therefore, can become potentially highly coercive or even cause the collapse of a given regime.

### **Mechanisms of Change**

Nonviolent action may thus be not only coercive (by forcing the regime to accept changes it does not wish to make), but it can also disintegrate a once highly repressive regime even if its top officials remain determined to stay in power. Nonviolent *coercion* and *disintegration* are the most powerful mechanisms of change by nonviolent struggle (Sharp, 1999). In some situations, nonviolence may also function with milder mechanisms: Nonviolent struggle may induce the opponents to compromise. This Sharp (1999) calls *accommodation*, with both sides only partly achieving their objectives. Accommodation often occurs in labor strikes for economic grievances and claims, for example. In a few instances, the emotions or minds of the key persons in the opponent group may be strongly moved by the tenacity and nonviolent suffering of the resisting or struggling group. Or, members of the opponent group may change their opinions about the merits of the issues, and agree to accept the claims of the nonviolent group. This, in Sharp's classification, is called *conversion*. He stresses, however, in his works (1973, 1999) that this outcome does not occur easily or frequently.

As Boserup and Mack (1974) and Crist (2002) indicate, gaining the support of the domestic and international public opinion, thus creating *domestic* and *international pressures* on the dominant group to at least seek accommodation, is a crucial factor in a successful nonviolent struggle. To secure this support, nonviolent activists often provoke their opponents to use repressive or violent methods, to react, in other words, in "predictably stupid" (Crist, 2002; p.8)

ways. The activist, therefore, deliberately "amplify" their "suffering".

Of course, not all cases of nonviolent struggle are successful.

- If the requirements for effectiveness are absent,
- if the resistance collapses under severe repression
- if some groups of the population resort to violence,
- if the potential resisters or activists are too weak or frightened to act strongly, and
- if a poor strategy has been selected or there is none (Crist, 2002)<sup>4</sup>,

then success is unlikely, unless or until those conditions change.

#### **Nonviolent Struggle and Pacifist Religious/Moral Views**

The use of these nonviolent methods, as mentioned briefly at the beginning of this section, does not require the presence of moral or religious principles that prohibit the use of violence. Nonviolent action is a technique of conflict and thus it can be independent of creeds of moral, ethical, or religious nonviolence. In other words, nonviolent action can be --and very often has been-- employed by people who do not share such beliefs and may have used or considered using violence in the past. These nonviolent responses to conflict do not require the practitioners to achieve a higher level of moral development. Indeed, for the most part, nonviolent resistance and struggle owes more to stubbornness and perseverance than to religious commandments to love one's enemy or to practice *ahimsa* (non-injury and non-killing in Hindu and Buddhist be-

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<sup>4</sup> In a conference on nonviolence, organized by the US Institute of Peace, all participants unanimously concluded that the most important requirement for a successful nonviolent movement was **the formulation of a flexible strategy with well-defined and realistic goals** (Crist, 2002; p.3).

liefs)<sup>5</sup>.

### **Nonviolent Struggle and Charismatic Leadership**

The use of nonviolent action does not require a charismatic leader. Yet, many people associate nonviolent struggle with such leaders as Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi<sup>6</sup> and Martin Luther King, Jr. It is often thought that a leader with supposedly saintly or charismatic qualities is needed to inspire and guide a large-scale nonviolent action. Sharp, however, in his works (1973, 1999) emphasizes the fact that -- irrespective of whether that characterization of Gandhi and King is justified or not -- in numerous successful cases of nonviolent action, the leader or leaders had no such attributes. At times, it was difficult or impossible to even identify a specific leader or group of leaders in a mass movement. At other times, in his view, the attribution of extraordinary qualities to a leader in nonviolent action has even had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the struggle. Sharp maintains that as the knowledge of the needed skills and behavior required in applying nonviolent action techniques have to be shared by a large number of people, there is reduced need for strong leaders -- whether charismatic or not<sup>7</sup>.

### **Origins of Nonviolent Struggle Methods**

The methods of nonviolent action have quite a long history. Although they began to

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<sup>5</sup> For a description of how these religious concepts contribute to, or become the basis of, nonviolent struggle, see Freedman & McClymond, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Gregg, 1944 and Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994 provide detailed descriptions of the nonviolent struggle in India led by Gandhi, and of the principles on which it was based.

<sup>7</sup> However, nonviolent activists who participated in the above-mentioned US Institute of Peace conference insisted that a movement needed **skilled and strategically thinking leaders** to turn a government's vulnerabilities into an advantage (Crist, 2002; p. 5).

attract systematic scholarly attention with the struggle in India for independence led by Mahatma Gandhi, these methods have been used at least for centuries, if not for millennia. Little is known about the early history of this form of struggle, but it is clear that it has undergone significant refinement at least from the final decades of the 18th century and particularly in the 20th century (Sharp, 1999).

For centuries, symbolic protests, withholding of cooperation, and disruptive activities -- all without physical violence, have occurred widely in numerous types of social conflicts. These are basically simple, and, in a sense, commonsensical, responses to specific conflicts. No great philosophical sophistication was and is required to develop such methods of resistance and action.

#### **Widespread Occurrence**

Nonviolent techniques have been utilized in widely differing cultures, periods of history, and political conditions, even in those of extreme oppression and repression. Nonviolent struggle has occurred in "the West" and in "the East", in both industrialized countries and non-industrialized countries. It has been practiced under conditions of constitutional democracy and under empires, foreign occupations, and dictatorial regimes. Nonviolent struggle has been waged on behalf of a wide variety of causes and groups, and even for objectives that many people would reject. In many cases the objective of nonviolence was to change the status quo, but in other cases it has been used to prevent any changes.

Moreover, the techniques of nonviolent action have been applied in quite diverse conflicts. These include not only conflicts between citizens and the ruling regime, but social and

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economic conflicts that have little or nothing to do with the government, such as in cases that involve efforts to resist pressures for social conformity, in employer-employee conflicts, in intra-religious<sup>8</sup> or inter-religious conflicts, and between students and university administrations. Nevertheless, because conflicts between the civil population and people who control the state apparatus have had a significant impact for the entire society (and not just for certain segments of them, as is the case in other types of conflicts mentioned above), most scholarly analyses of nonviolence have focused on this variety of conflicts.

As regards conflicts that involve entire societies, the techniques of nonviolent struggle were widely used, from the late-18th century onwards, in such diverse conflicts as colonial rebellions, international political and economic conflicts, religious conflicts, and antislavery resistance. Nonviolent action has been aimed to secure workers' right to organize, universal suffrage first for all men and then for women, and gender equality. It has also been used to gain national independence, to bring about economic gains, to resist genocide, to undermine dictatorships, to gain civil rights, to end segregation, and to resist foreign occupations and *coups d'etat*.

### **Well-known Examples of Nonviolent Struggle**

The 20th century, the most violent one in human history, is also full of cases of nonviolent struggle: It was in this century that in various countries the growing trade unions

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<sup>8</sup> A very characteristic case of intra-religious conflict where a nonviolent form of protest was employed is the one that took place in a Catholic Church in Washington, DC on the issue of the ordination of women. For several years, the protesters stood up throughout the mass to express their objection to the refusal of Catholic Church to ordain women. A detailed and moving account of this protest was written by Jim Naughton (1996) in *the Washington Post Magazine*.

began to widely use the strike and the economic boycott. Chinese boycotts of Japanese products occurred in 1908, 1915, and 1919. Germans used nonviolent action against the Kapp *Putsch* in 1920 and against the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Indian nationalists used nonviolent action under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in their struggles against British rule.

From 1940 to 1945 democrats in various European countries resisted Nazi occupation and rule by nonviolent struggle, especially in Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Bulgaria. Nonviolent action was used to save Jews from the Holocaust in Berlin, Bulgaria, Denmark, and elsewhere.

The American civil rights nonviolent struggles against racial discrimination and segregation changed laws and long-established policies in the U.S. South, especially in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1968 and 1969, following the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion, citizens of Czechoslovakia resisted occupiers for 8 months with improvised nonviolent struggle and refusal of collaboration. From 1953 to 1990, people in communist-ruled countries in Eastern Europe, especially in East Germany, Poland, Hungary and the Baltic republics, repeatedly used nonviolence for greater freedom, which they eventually achieved. The Solidarity struggle in Poland began in 1980 with strikes undertaken to support the demand for a legal free trade union and concluded in 1989 with the end of the communist system. Finally, the attempted hard-line coup d'etat in Moscow in 1991 was defeated by noncooperation and nonviolent defiance.

Nonviolent protests and mass resistance were highly important in undermining the



apartheid policies and white domination in South Africa, especially between 1950 and 1990.<sup>9</sup>

The Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines was destroyed by a nonviolent uprising ("People Power") in 1986.

In July and August 1988, thousands of Burmese protested the actions of the military regime with marches and defiance, brought down three governments, but finally succumbed to a new military coup d'etat and mass slaughters.

In 1989, Chinese students and others in approximately 60 cities, including in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, conducted symbolic protests against government corruption and oppression, which finally collapsed following massive military killings.

In Kosovo, Yugoslavia, the Albanian population has conducted a non-cooperation campaign against repressive Serbian rule, which, however, was shadowed by the guerrilla warfare that intensified in 1998. Starting in November 1996, Serbs conducted daily parades and protest in Belgrade and other cities against the autocratic governance of the then president Milosevic and secured correction of electoral fraud in mid-January 1997. And it was again a largely nonviolent struggle, which involved strikes and street protests, that led to the final uprising of the Yugoslav people and the collapse of the Milosevic regime in October 2000.

These are only a few examples from a much larger list of cases that took place during these decades. They illustrate, however, how widespread the practice of nonviolence has been. It appears that the use of these techniques has expanded in political significance, and become more frequent during the 20th century.

Violence often *has* occurred alongside nonviolent struggle. But such violence has often

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<sup>9</sup> One should note, however, that these nonviolent actions were accompanied with some ANC-led military and violent actions.

been practiced to the detriment of the effectiveness of the nonviolent action; indeed the opponents have often deliberately sought to provoke violence in order to help to defeat a strong nonviolent movement. Leaders of these movements have often gone to considerable lengths to prevent such violence because they had recognized how counterproductive it could be.

### **From Improvised Nonviolence to Planned, Systematic, Strategic Nonviolent Struggle**

Past uses of the technique of nonviolent action have mostly been improvised to meet a specific immediate need and were not the result of long-term planning and preparations, nor were they based on a uniform philosophy. However, the planned and prepared substitution of nonviolent action for violent means has been recommended in certain types of intense conflicts (see Sharp, 1999), not just on moral grounds, but on practical grounds as well. Thus, although it may seem counterintuitive at first glance, systematic and well-organized nonviolent struggle is considered just as effective as a violent struggle, if not *more* effective, for the following purposes (Sharp, 1999);

- Conducting severe interethnic conflicts with "no compromise" issues;
  - Producing fundamental social change to correct oppressive social, economic, or political conditions;
  - Resisting a dictatorship or attempting to disintegrate it;
  - Deterring and resisting coups d'etat;
  - Deterring and resisting a foreign invasion; and
  - Deterring and resisting attempts at mass violence and planned massacres.
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There have been unplanned, improvised, cases of the application of nonviolent struggle for all these purposes. Recent studies suggest, however, that advance analysis, planning, and preparations can increase the capacity of this technique to be effective even under the extreme conditions mentioned above.

**Key elements of a well-prepared strategy** and a strategy-guided process include:

The identification of goals, that have to be based on unanimity or near-unanimity among the participants (Crist, 2002; p, 3).

- The presentation of goals to the wider public through simple, consistent messages (Crist, 2002; p.4).
- Giving the movement **flexibility** so it could adjust to the changing conditions of the social and international environment.  
Flexibility may mean the movement's ability to shift priorities, compromising on some goals, and sometimes determining new ones. It also means that the movement does not reject negotiations completely, and that is open to building alliances with other groups sharing the same goals or enemies.
- An assessment of the strategic resources that can be employed by a nonviolent movement; (Crist, 2002; p.4).  
These resources range from material resources like money to intangible resources like cultural values.

- Identifying and examining of the vulnerabilities of the opponents. (Crist, 2002; p.5)

Every government, no matter how controlling or authoritarian, has vulnerabilities. Each such vulnerability can be an advantage for the nonviolent movement. The most obvious vulnerability of a government using oppressive tactics to control a population usually is lack of legitimacy. And it is this lack of legitimacy that opens the door for a nonviolent movement. Other types of vulnerability could be the government's recent loss of a war, its low prestige internationally, its dependence on foreign assistance, internal divisions, and loss of government's credibility in the eyes of the populace.

- Seeking out societal and international allies.

The success of a nonviolent movement frequently depends on how big and strong a social coalition, or even an international coalition it is able to form around its basic goals or by pointing to a common enemy, the oppressive government.

- Identifying and neutralizing informants, infiltrators and collaborators with the "enemy".

- Defending against the government's "divide and rule" tactics ;

Many oppressive regimes who face a legitimacy crisis try to deal with public discontent by exploiting ethnic diversity and by adopting "divide et impera" (divide and rule) strategies (like favoring one group over another) aimed at creating ethnic tensions out of ethnic differences. Ethnic groups then direct their discontent and anger not to the government but to the "rival" ethnic group. When such strategies are successful, a

nonviolent movement with participants and supporters drawn from more than one ethnic group, finds it difficult to retain its cohesion. So, it often splits along ethnic lines, and loses its effectiveness. (Crist, 2002; p. 8). One way for nonviolent movements formed in societies with "exploitable" ethnic differences, to protect themselves such divisive tactics, is to adopt a structure of an inter-ethnic alliance, in other words to acknowledge and internalize the ethnic differences and appeal to every ethnic group equally. Such a structure might also increase the movement's legitimacy in the society at large. (Crist, 2002; p. 8)

- Focusing the anger and opposition on key leaders or policies rather than making general and sweeping condemnations of the government and alienating potential sympathizers within it. Not everyone in an oppressive government is necessarily an opponent. (Crist, 2002; p.9)

In assessing the viability of nonviolent struggle in extreme circumstances, it is also important to examine critically the adequacy and problems of the alternative, i.e., of applying violent means. Such an examination almost invariably shows that a violent struggle is not as effective as it initially appears to be.

Sharp, in his works (1974, 1999) also speculates that expanded knowledge gained through scientific studies and strategic analyses and its spread in popularized forms is likely to make substitutions of nonviolent struggle for violent action easier and likelier. Although knowledge of its techniques has expanded, nonviolent struggle still merits additional careful attention by scholars in various disciplines and policy analysts and also policy makers dealing

with internal and international conflicts.

### **When is Negotiation an Option for a Nonviolent Movement ?**

Maximalism in the pursuit of goals can be a serious mistake for a nonviolent movement. Successful movements are the ones who were more realistic with respect to the achievement of their goals and "knew when to declare victory" (Crist, 2002; p. 9). It is usually wiser for a nonviolent movement to shift from protest to negotiation when the government makes some concessions, while refusing to fully accept the movement's demands. Sticking inflexibly to the initial goals and to the protest strategy may even render the movement unable to survive. (Crist, 2002; p. 10)

Negotiations, especially talking *directly* with representatives of government gives a great amount of legitimacy and credibility to the nonviolent movement and its leaders. And this is exactly why governments facing nonviolent protests are usually reluctant to negotiate with the leaders of these protests (Crist, 2002; p.10). So much so, that in some cases governments are even willing to make concessions about democratic reforms unilaterally rather than as a result of negotiations with protesters. A critical examination of the recent nonviolent movements suggests, however, that, no matter how they are made, any concessions that would result in a freer and more democratic regime should be considered a success for the movement and be accepted -- not dismissed, just because they come short of the maximum goals.

### **The Crucial Role of External Allies**

The international community has played a significant role in the success of nonviolent movements (Crist, 2002), in several ways:

(a) Transnational NGOs, foundations headquartered in democratic and well-off countries, and governmental or quasi-governmental institutions of such countries, have provided nonviolent movements with financial support;

(b) International (inter-governmental) organizations have imposed coercive sanctions, such as international boycotts;

(c) Big media organizations have brought the nonviolent struggle and the government's oppression to the attention of the world public opinion<sup>10</sup>;

(d) Many international, non-governmental or governmental organizations have disseminated the ideas and principles of democracy and a free political system in societies that are heavily controlled by authoritarian, oppressive authorities.

(e) International supporters of a movement have also been useful to nonviolent struggles by appealing to international law, treaties ratified by the government, and widely accepted principles as an "objective" basis for recognizing rights. Such appeals have been an additional pressure on the governments.

### **Nonviolent Action for "wrong" Objectives**

Concerns have been voiced that nonviolent action could be used by certain groups for "wrong" objectives, for purposes, in other words, that would generally be regarded as morally wrong. To illustrate such cases, Sharp (1999) gives the examples of the Scottish, English, and U.S. factory owners combating trade union activities in the 19th century, who sometimes shut down

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<sup>10</sup> Gandhi, too, "believed in 'arousing the world', which is only possible if the world gets a chance to hear what you are doing." (George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi", from Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds.), The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950, Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1980; p.529)

operations in a lock-out, of Nazis who organized economic boycotts of Jewish businesses in the 1930s, and of Southern segregationists in the United States who resorted to social and economic boycotts of civil rights activists in the 1960s. Comparable cases are likely to occur in the future.

Proponents of nonviolent struggle respond to the doubts based on these situations by stating that the use of nonviolent action for those purposes is preferable to those groups continuing to apply violence for the same purposes: Having to face an economic boycott is preferable to being lynched, for example.

In acute conflicts the contending groups are unlikely to abandon or even compromise their beliefs, objectives, and positions. However, there sometimes is a possibility that such a group might shift to other means of conducting the conflict. Sharp (1999) argues that the real question is not, therefore, whether one would prefer that these groups change their beliefs and goals (since that is almost certainly not going to happen), but whether one prefers that they struggle for those same goals by violent or by nonviolent means. The target group of those applications of nonviolent action would need to decide how to resist the "wrong" objectives, whether by violent repression, educational efforts, or counter-nonviolent action.

### **Concluding Remarks**

From the above discussion, one can easily conclude that nonviolent action, that is, conducting social, economic, and political conflicts without the use of physical violence, is as intuitive a way of struggle as an armed struggle, it is practical for a weaker party, especially when confronting an opponent with a huge capability of using force, it is usually considered morally preferable, it is applicable in almost any type of society, and, finally, if well-planned and well-organized, it is quite likely to be successful.



## *7. The Non-Violent Struggle of the Western Thrace Muslims in the 1980s and early 1990s*

The Western Thrace Muslims have a rather long history of organized non-violent protests:

\* The nationalist section of the Western Thrace Muslims organized a mass demonstration in May 1919, to protest the decision to join Greece, taken by the elected representatives of the communities in that region (four out of five representatives of the Muslim-Turkish community voted in favor of that decision). According to an account, about seven or eight thousand people participated in this loud, angry, though still nonviolent demonstration (Batibey, 2000; p. 113). The organizers of that demonstration the same day also sent telegrams to the leaders of the allied countries that won the First World War to express their opposition to efforts to make Western Thrace part of Greece (Batibey, 1979 p. 36).

\* After receiving the news on March 1, 1919, that the Allies in the Paris peace negotiations decided to give Western Thrace to Greece, the Muslim Turks in the region, particularly the Turkish nationalists among them, protested the decision by hoisting and hanging black flags in their houses (Batibey, 2000; p. 40). That was a well organized, non-disruptive, but rather symbolic mass protest.

\* At the end of World War I, a large section of the Muslims in Western Thrace then under Bulgarian occupation, protested the elections organized in the region by the occupying forces by dropping envelopes with corn leaves, instead of ballots into the ballot boxes. The Bulgarians

arrested right after the elections the leaders of the Muslim community and later exiled them to Sofia. (Batibey, 2000; p. 43)

\* In early 1919, when the traditional-Islamist leaders of the Muslim Community declared the willingness to accept the Greek rule rather than the French "mandate" rule, which was the favorite option of the Turkish nationalists in the Western Thrace Muslim community, there were a few nationalists who advocated violence and intimidation against their Islamist opponents. However, this option was quickly dismissed by the rest of the nationalist leadership and the idea of a non-violent persuasion campaign prevailed. (Batibey, 2000; p. 66)

\* When Xanthi was occupied by Greek troops, in early 1919, the Turkish-Muslim residents of the city, under the leadership of Young Turk nationalistic activists, showed their displeasure and discontent by hanging and hoisting black flags all over the city, and by staying home for three days. All Muslim-owned shops remained closed during this period. (Perin, 2000; p. 268).

We can therefore conclude from the above examples that non-violent action was not something foreign to the Muslims of Western Thrace when they were considering how to react to the Greek government's increasingly oppressive policies in the seventies and eighties.

#### **Nonviolent struggle tactics in the period 1974-1993/4:**

In 1982, when large plots of Muslim-owned land was expropriated near the town of Inhanli (Eulalon) in Xanthi county, almost the entire Muslim population of that town began a sit-down protest in the city of Xanthi in front of the county government building, that lasted for several months, The protest ended only after the Government officially promised to revise the expropriation decision (Dede, 1988).

In 1988, when the decision of the Greek High Court ordering the dissolution of several Minority associations because of the word "Turkish" in their names was announced, about ten thousand Minority members demonstrated against it simultaneously in many cities and towns of Western Thrace. That was the largest protest action taken by the Minority since Thrace became part of Greece. Police broke up the demonstration with force, and many protesters were beaten and injured. Twenty were taken to the hospital; three were seriously injured (Whitman, 1990; p. 17).

In the mid-eighties there were several campaigns to collect signatures from Minority members for petitions submitted to international organizations, like the Council of Europe. The petitions listed the policies of the Greek Government that violated the human rights of the Thracian Muslims. In one such signature campaign, in 1986, a group of Minority activists led by Dr. Sadık Ahmet collected 15,000 signatures in six months by going from village to village, for a document that, among other things, protested Greek policies of "assimilation" and "forced emigration" toward the Turkish Minority (Whitman, 1990; p. 22).

In the late eighties, when the Education Ministry prepared Turkish textbooks without consulting with the Minority and distributed them to all Minority schools, the Minority leaders decided to ask parents not to send their children to school unless these books were recalled. Almost all Minority parents and schoolchildren participated in this school boycott. Some Minority teachers, on the other hand, engaged in their own protest, one involving burning all the new Ministry-prepared textbooks sent to a school. After a few months, the Education Ministry declared that it would no longer require but only recommend Minority teachers to use these books.

In 1991, when the Greek government appointed a Mufti in the city of Xanthi, despite the

objections of the Minority community and despite their demand that the Mufti be elected by the community, the leaders of the Minority together, with the imams and other religious functionaries, asked all the Muslims in Thrace not to attend any mosque for one month. The vast majority of Muslims participated in this mosque boycott. Nevertheless, the appointed Mufti did not resign and the Government did not change its policy.

These are only a few examples of the many non-violent actions undertaken by Minority Members. Although the members of the Muslim Minority did not have any theoretical or comparative knowledge of non-violent action, they proved quite adept to this form of struggle, probably because of the long history of such actions in Thrace and because of the intuitive nature of non-violence in a democratic political system, where the government is responsive to demands expressed through mass protests.

The only shortcoming of this strategy, was its negative effect on inter-communal relations. The local Greeks, although not really the target of the Minority's discontent, nonetheless felt threatened by this mass mobilization and the more nationalistic of the local Greeks began treating Minority members as enemies. As tensions grew, local Greeks organized counter-protests that culminated with the anti-Minority riots in 1990. One could argue however, that it was not the non-violent protests per se that made local Greeks feel insecure and threatened. The jingoistic, pro-Turkey, rhetoric that accompanied the Minority's mass mobilization was probably more detrimental to intercommunal relations than the protests themselves.

As the Government began to introduce policy changes aimed at improving the social, political

and economic situation of the Minority, and as the Minority started to feel that their demands were not dismissed but taken seriously, the non-violent protest gradually subsided and had practically stopped by 1994.

We will see in Chapters 10 through 13, that the non-violent struggle of the Minority was, if not the most important, at least an essential factor in persuading the Greek government to change its anti-Minority policies.

**8. Methodology:**  
***A Description of Data Gathering and Data Analysis Methods  
Used in This Research***

My research on the Western Thrace Minority is basically a *case study*. Studying this case, I have tried to find out what factors (*independent variables*) lead to changes in laws and government policies, changes in minority–government relations, and minority-majority relations (all three being the *dependent variables*).

I saw the *case study* as an appropriate research strategy<sup>1</sup> for examining the conflict in Western Thrace, for three basic reasons:

(1) This strategy has the potential to "contribute uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena" (Yin, 1989; p. 14). And that was exactly my goal when I embarked on my research on Western Thrace. Analyzing this specific set of phenomena in that specific region was a means to deepen our understanding of a conflict "**intrinsically interesting**" to people involved in government-minority relations and/or inter-ethnic conflict and cooperation. Moreover, the situation in Western Thrace is equally interesting to anyone concerned about the past, present, and future of Greek-Turkish relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Another name for this type of strategy is the "*monographic* approach" (see Jacques Hamel, S. Dufour & D. Fortin, *Case Study Methods*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993).

(2) As I emphasize in the introduction of my dissertation, the Western Thrace conflict is a case of a "triadic ethnic conflict". I knew, therefore, that through a rich and meticulous description of the conflict in Western Thrace, I could reach generalizable conclusions, generate hypotheses or theoretical propositions that could – potentially, at least -- apply to other triadic ethnic conflicts. To put it differently, I could engage in what Yin (1989; p.21) calls "*analytic generalization*".

(3) My guide in this research has been *Easton's model on political systems*. Employing the case study strategy in doing research on the Western Thrace conflict was also a good way to *test* the applicability of the Eastonian model, at least on the government-minority dimension of this conflict. As Yin (1989; p. 47) indicates, case studies are frequently used to "confirm, challenge, or extend" a theory. A single case can help "determine whether a theory's propositions are correct, or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (Yin, 1989, p. 47)<sup>2</sup>.

Looking at the Western Thrace case through the Eastonian framework, I have identified the independent variables as *inputs* and as *changes in actors* that send these inputs from the environment of the system to the authorities, or the government. Also based on this model, I have named the changes in laws, government practices, and policies "*outputs*", and the changes in social relations "*outcomes*".

This case study, therefore, can help us understand how government outputs and outcomes are connected to, and indeed caused by, inputs from actors. Van Evera (1997; p. 54) has shown that "inferring and testing explanations that define how the independent causes the dependent variable are often easier with case-study than large-n methods," mainly because in a case study we can easily *trace* "the process whereby initial case conditions are translated into case

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Van Evera, in his research methods book (1997) reaches the same conclusion about the usefulness of a case study in theory testing.

outcomes" (Van Evera, 1997; p.64). We can thus see why a hypothesis or an explanation does or does not hold.

I have looked at the minority-government and minority-majority relations in Western Thrace, in two different periods, 1974-1990 and 1990-2003. This has allowed me to do "multiple within-case comparisons" (Van Evera, 1997; p. 61)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, I was able to compare the input from each actor in the first period with the input from the same actor in the second period. I also compared the nature and behaviour of the actors in the first versus in the second period, and, of course, the outputs in the first period with those in the second period. Because of the clear and very significant differences in each variable between the periods, the Western Thrace case can be characterized as one with "large variation of values", and therefore a "good test laboratory" for a theory (Van Evera, 1997; p. 62).

I have gathered the data to use in this research in two ways:

(a) I read *primary and secondary sources* on the inter-communal and government-minority relations in Western Thrace, both during the period I examine and before, sources published and unpublished, written in Greek, Turkish, English, and French.

The primary sources were laws, treaties, directives and other official documents, and also proceedings from international and local meetings.

The secondary sources were books, articles, dissertations, news-clippings, and other items appearing in the mass media (including the Internet), plus NGO reports.

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<sup>3</sup> "Multiple within-case comparisons" is, according to Van Evera (1997), a "congruence procedure type 2", which can be used to test a theory.



(b) I conducted 26 *in-depth interviews* with 'key informants' from the main "actors" in the Western Thrace conflict: Members of the (Turkish-Muslim) Minority leadership and intelligentsia, members of the local (Greek) Majority leadership and intelligentsia, representatives of various segments of the Greek Government who had been involved in Minority affairs, representatives of Greek human-rights NGOs, and representatives of Greek liberal circles<sup>4</sup>. All of the interviewees had either participated in, or, at least, directly witnessed the events and processes that changed the Government-Minority and Majority-Minority relations – in both periods. Consequently, they could tell me what they saw, what they did, and *why* they did what they did. They could, therefore, help me "trace the process" linking the changes in the independent variables with the changes in the dependent variables.

The interviews had a flexible structure, or, in other words, they were "*semi-structured*" (Bernard, 1995). Through them I gathered information on five basic topics: The situation of the Minority in the '70s and '80s; the government policies in that period and the rationale behind them; the policy changes in the '90s and the reasons why such changes took place; the role of important and external and internal actors (Turkey, European organisations, the local majority, the nationalist circles, the NGOs, etc.) in the changes; and, finally, the response of the Minority and other actors to these policy changes.

The questions I asked<sup>5</sup> were tailored to the experience and background of each interviewee. As a result, they differed somewhat from interview to interview, and the sequence

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<sup>4</sup> The interviews were conducted between October 1998 and June 2000.

<sup>5</sup> For more details about those, see my interview schedules in the Appendix.

of the topics discussed in each interview was not exactly the same. Nevertheless, the five basic topics were always the same, and were carefully dealt with in each interview.

One of my objectives in conducting these interviews was to "mine the views" of these participants; to listen to their interpretations of their experiences; to pay attention to their memories (faulty though they may be) and also to their judgements. In other words -- to use a scientific term -- I tried to apply the "Delphi Method", which is very useful in tracing a "causal process" (Van Evera, 1997; p. 70).

The interviews were about 45-minute- to one-hour-long. They were conducted in Greek or in Turkish.

I did not tape-record the interviews, but I did take detailed notes during each of them. It was clear to me that the presence of a tape recorder would push most interviewees toward the "official" discourse, and would lead to their reciting or repeating the well-known arguments and positions one is expected to hear from the typical representative of the group they are a member of. Whereas the absence of the tape recorder made them feel less under-pressure, and less guarded, thus helping them to be more sincere and more personal in their responses. In other words, a tape-recorder would have been an obstacle to establishing solid rapport with the interviewees <sup>6</sup>.

I later translated the notes I took during the interviews from Greek and Turkish into English as faithfully as I could and categorized them according to the five topics I mentioned above.

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<sup>6</sup> Irving Seidman, in his book entitled Interviewing as Qualitative Research (2nd Edition, New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 1998; p. 79), argues that the interviewer-interviewee relationship should be an "I-Thou" relationship, as it was defined and described by Martin Buber. It was this kind of a relationship that I wanted to establish with the people I interviewed.

Throughout my research and in this dissertation, I have chosen not to reveal the names of the people I interviewed, so as to eliminate completely any worries of possible vulnerability in the minds of interviewees. However, to help the reader understand the point of view of each person who talked to me for this research, I do mention his or her ethnicity, gender, and profession.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I also had the chance to conduct *long, unstructured conversations* with a smaller number of experts that included a representative of the European Union, a representative of the Turkish government; an intellectual/academic involved in the shaping of the Turkish government policies with regard to the Thracian Muslim Minority, and a member of the Greek nationalist circles.

To ensure *replicability*, and, therefore, to enhance *reliability* (see Yin, 1989; p. 45), I have documented the procedures I followed, the people I interviewed, the questions I asked, and the answers I received, and also catalogued most of the documents I used, as thoroughly as I could.

The sequence of the sections in the chapters where I present and analyze the situation in Western Thrace basically follow the logic of the Eastonian model: Each section "unravels a new part of the theoretical argument being made" (Yin, 1989; p. 139). More specifically, actors in the environment send inputs to the authorities (the government); government organs send withinputs; the government produces outputs; actors in the environment respond to the outputs by sending feedback, and so on.

To conclude, one could say that this case study meets most of the criteria, set by Van Evera (1997; p. 77), that makes a case-study worth conducting:

- (1) There is plenty of available data;
- (2) There is "large within-case variance in values" (between the first and the second period);

(3) The case is "intrinsically" important for the researcher;

Moreover, as described in the introduction and elsewhere in this dissertation,

(4) there are many cases in the world that are of the same category (that is to say, "triadic ethnic conflicts"); and, finally,

(5) Since the manifestations and consequences of triadic ethnic conflicts constitute an important problem for international relations, and for the foreign policy of many countries, learning more about the dynamics of such conflicts through a representative case is worth the effort.

### **Data Analysis**

Before I began a thorough analysis of the data I collected through the publications I read and the interviews I conducted, I had decided to take one very obvious, easily observable trend in the developments in Western Thrace as a "given". It was clear, and almost universally accepted, that the Government-Minority and Minority-Majority relations in western Thrace had first gone through a period of deterioration and crisis, which was followed by a period of improvement and de-intensification. My analysis therefore would not examine *whether* there was an improvement after a deterioration, but how and why relations first deteriorated and then improved.

However, before moving to an examination of "how and why", I had to demarcate, or to determine, when exactly the first period ended and the second period started. Although it is difficult to say that one single event can end a period and start another, there are some events in history that are so significant, that they are described by researchers as "turning points" and are designated, in part heuristically, as markers of the end of a period and the start of another. So, the question for me was: What was the **turning point** when Government-Minority and Majority-

Minority relations began to move from deterioration to improvement? From my initial look at the events in Western Thrace, it was clear that the anti-Muslim Komotini riots in early 1990 were a very significant event that shocked the Government into realizing that its policies were producing very undesirable outcomes. Therefore, I decided to designate these riots as the turning point – as the end of the first period and the beginning of the second.

The basic guide that I employed throughout the process of analyzing the data has been David Easton's "Systems Analysis of Political Life" (1965). It is necessary, therefore, to present the reader with a summary of this theoretical model:

**A Summary of the Theory of Political Systems Analysis  
as formulated by David Easton**

Easton views the authorities, that is **the Government**, or the State, with all its branches, and with its entire bureaucratic apparatus, as a system that produces and implements political decisions -- decisions that are considered authoritative, or binding, by the society<sup>7</sup>. That system, Easton calls the "**political system**" of the society.

Easton's claim is that his theory is applicable to any political system, modern or traditional, democratic or authoritarian. Nevertheless, his theory is most suitable for analyzing modern democracies where the government and its (three) branches are well defined, and the

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<sup>7</sup> "**Authorities**" is the more generic term Easton uses in his book entitled *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, NY: Wiley & Sons, 1965) where he revises and further develops his theory. Authorities include members of a system who "engage in the daily affairs of a political system", who "are recognized [...] as having the responsibility for these matters", and, above all, whose "actions are accepted as binding most of the time by most of the members" of the system (ibid., p.212).

borders between the state and society can be more clearly delineated. In addition, interactions between state and society are easier and freer in a democratic regime.

The political system is situated in a vast **environment** and is open to its influences. That environment includes not only the society and the country in general with all its other systems (i.e., the economic system, [the civil society?], and the ecological system), but also the extra-societal systems, the most characteristic of which being the international system, and the political systems of other countries.

The various actors, or structures, located in the intra- and extra-societal environment continuously influence the political system by sending **inputs**. By "inputs" Easton means all types of **demands** (often manifested in the form of pressures) and **support**, which can be either conditional and issue-specific, or "**diffuse**" and generalized. Loyalty to the state in the form of patriotism is the most characteristic example of diffuse support. Such support is essential for the persistence of a political system, for it provides it with a reservoir of support and legitimacy and enables the government to take some unpopular decisions that would still be considered binding by the society and be abided by.

The constituent parts of the political system itself, through the interactions among them, also provide input, often independent of the demands and support received from the environment. Easton calls this type of input "**withinput**".

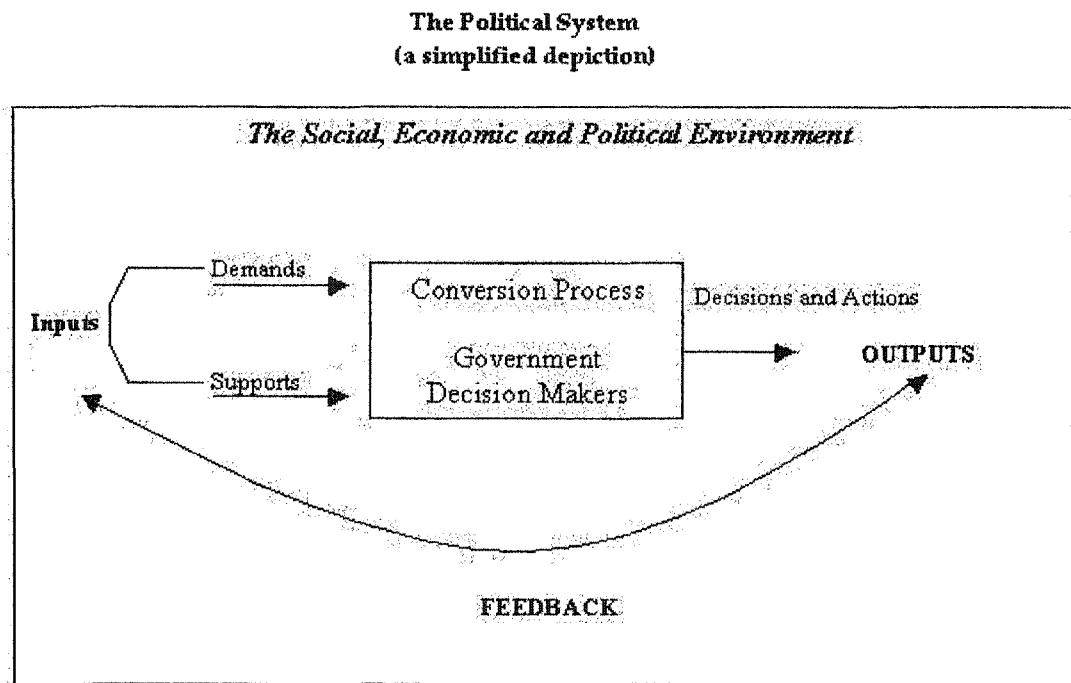
The political system processes all these inputs, and arrives at *binding decisions*, often in the form of laws, policies, executive orders, court decisions, etc. In other words, **inputs are converted into outputs**. The way this conversion process works depends on the character of the system (for example, the "conversion" in a democracy is different than the "conversion" in a dictatorship). The objective of an output is to address a demand, or to respond to support (often

by rewarding it in some way). Outputs do that either by modifying the conditions of the environment or of the system so that what caused the demand no longer exists, or by simply *giving the impression* in the minds of the members of society that their concern is addressed.

Taking coercive measures to silence a demand is a third type of output. (However, as we will see below, this type of output tends to increase discontent, to reduce support, and to exacerbate the stress).

Outputs, i.e., binding decisions, **flow back** to the environment. The various actors in the environment, both those who made the demand, or gave the support, that is addressed by the output, and those who had nothing to do with it respond to that specific output. They respond to it, and they direct their response back to the political system. So, through this process, both the environment and the political system receive **feedback** for their actions. In other words, there is a "**continuous feedback loop**" between the political system and its environment. Based on this feedback, certain environmental demands may be dropped, if they are satisfied, support may continue, if it is rewarded, or, conversely, demands may intensify, if they are not adequately addressed, and support may decrease if not responded to properly. Again based on these feedback processes, the political system may decide to keep a certain output unaltered, if the feedback is positive, or it may change another output (it may resort to "corrective policies") if the feedback for the environment is negative [It is important to mention here, however, that how a feedback is perceived and evaluated depends on the government's "ideology, prejudice, indifference, or ability" or lack thereof to get and assess information]. "Feedback" is perhaps the most crucial element of Easton's theory, for it shows that the political process is dynamic and provides a plausible explanation of how interaction between the Government and its social and international environment can change the social or international demands and the governmental

policies. It also shows that, ultimately, a change in this interaction can lead to changes in the structure of the government itself or in the structure of the actors in the environment.



**Figure 8.1: The Political System in D. Easton's Theory.**

An unchanging society is an increasingly rare phenomenon. Societies change, and often do so rapidly. As conditions in the society and the extra-societal environment change, so do the inputs received by the political system. To describe significant changes in the environment, Easton uses the term "**disturbance**". When a disturbance in the environment occurs, the system often receives totally new demands, or it may receive the same demands but in more intense way. And sometimes the system may receive so high a number of demands in so big a volume



that it may face "demand overload". Parallel to that, societal support for the political system may decrease significantly. All these changes in demands and support create some disturbance in the political system. The more severe disturbances, whose impact on the political system, in this theory, is termed **stress**, threaten to render it unable to make any decisions or unable to make its decisions binding, that is abided by.

The political system copes with these disturbances and stress by influencing the environment through outputs. By changing the outputs, and through the feedback process, the system attempts to change the inputs, especially the stress-causing demands, and thus it tries to eliminate the stress. In the most severe forms of stress, the output required can only be produced if the system itself changes. So, in order to survive, the political system changes its structure (for instance, from democratic it becomes authoritarian, or vice versa), and only then can it send to the society the radically different output that would eliminate the stress.

If the political system, for any reason, resists meeting certain demands with appropriate outputs, this leads to a high degree of discontent in the segment of society that makes those demands. That, in turn, creates a certain type of stress, called by Easton "**output failure**". Separatist violence is a typical way output failure manifests itself in political life.

According to Easton, perhaps the most common form of stress faced by political systems is **demand overload**, which takes place when a political system is incapable to meet all the demands, because they are too many. But this type of stress rarely results in system collapse, for most political systems are capable of changing their structure in such a way that they can reduce the stress. Cultural restraints, synthesis and homogenization of demands into a simplified program, proliferation of political structures, are some of the methods developed to cope with

this problem. Eventually, though, from among the variety of demands the political system tends to focus on only on a limited number of them.

In short, Easton presents us with a dynamic model of a political system -- a system that is self-regulating, self-transforming, and creatively adaptive. And it presents a rather accurate picture of the reality -- simplified though it may be -- for it assumes that human beings, and groups of human beings, both in the political system and in the society are capable of anticipating, evaluating, and acting purposefully to cause or prevent disturbances in the system or in the environment.

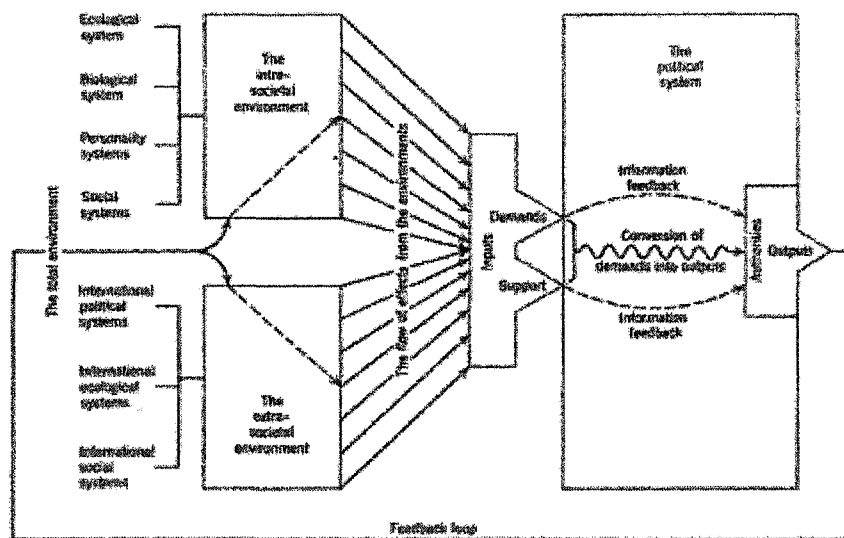


Figure 8.2: A Detailed depiction of a Political System according to D. Easton

(Source: D. Easton. *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, NY: Wiley & Sons, 1965), p. 30)

Relying upon the terminology and theoretical assumptions of the Eastonian model, I derived a number of questions and I went through the data to find every possible answer to each of these questions. All these questions were "asked" separately for each of the two periods.

The questions I used in my analysis were:

- Who were the "**actors**" in the Greek political environment that were influential or more relevant on issues pertaining to the Muslim Minority in Thrace?

The actors in this case were all the groups, organizations, institutions and communities that were actively involved in the affairs pertaining to the Muslim Minority.

- What were the **inputs** sent to the government (or the "authorities", as Easton would prefer to call the decision making bodies) by each of these actors?
- Of these inputs, which ones were **demands**, and which specific demands were stated by each of the actors?

I categorized as demands all statements from representatives of each actor in which they expressed *what they wanted the Greek government to do*. Expressions similar to demands, such as recommendations, requests, suggestions, specific complaints, and even proposals were also treated as demands.

- Which inputs were in the form of **support** and how each actor specifically showed or did not show, increased or withdrew, its support for the government, the State, and/or the entire Greek political system?

All statements of support, of praise, and of approval were considered to be "support".

Withdrawal of support was a little harder to detect. Apart from statements where withdrawal of support is clearly mentioned, I had to look at the actions and behavior of some actors. I characterized actions such as nonparticipation in the political process, boycotts, and voting for parties at the margins of the system as withdrawal of support.

- What were the bodies, institutions, or agencies *within the government* that dealt directly with issues pertaining to the Muslim Minority? What were the **withinputs** these governmental bodies produced with regard to Minority-related policies -- especially in the form of demands and support?

Withinputs were relatively more difficult to find in publications. The interviews with current and formal government officials, their account of the events in both periods were crucial in determining withinputs. It was mainly these government officials who described what each governmental institution proposed, what policies it supported and which ones it opposed, and what changes it recommended. Statements about all these were characterized as withinputs.

- Given all these inputs and withinputs, what specific **outputs** did the Greek government, or the Greek "authorities", produce on issues pertaining to the Muslim Minority?

Outputs were all the laws, decrees, executive orders, policy statements, court decisions issued by institutions that are part of the Greek State. Finding the documents containing these "outputs" was relatively easy. In addition, during the interviews, all statements that described such outputs were also treated as outputs.

- What were the specific responses of each relevant actor in the environment to these outputs?

In other words, what kind of **feedback** did these actors send to the government?

Given the cyclical nature of the model that I use, it is very difficult to distinguish between a "feedback" and an input. Most inputs inevitably have to make some reference to a previous governmental output, and most "feedbacks" include demands for change, if they are negative, or statements of support, if they are positive. In this research, feedback was "operationalized" as every response or reaction to outputs that were produced only in the first or the second period. Responses to previous outputs were treated as inputs. Statements that contained responses to outputs produced in the first period (pA) were classified as feedback in pA, and responses to outputs of the second period (pB) were characterized as feedback in pB.

There were clearly positive and negative responses to the outputs and these were described, with little hesitation, as positive and negative feedback respectively. However, there were also complex or compound responses to governmental outputs – responses that contained both acknowledgement or appreciation for the positive elements of an output, and demands for further changes, or statements of displeasure about other parts of outputs. These responses I called "mixed-positive" feedback, if the positive part of the response was more pronounced, or "mixed-negative" feedback, if the negative part was given more emphasis.

- What kind of changes did this cyclical input-output-feedback process result in the Majority and Minority communities in Thrace, or indeed the entire Greek society? In other words, what were the larger **outcomes** of this process?

As outcomes I refer to statements, whether made by interviewees or found in publications, that describe developments and changes *not* related to government-minority relations, but to

conditions within the Minority community, within the Majority community, or to Majority-Minority relations.

After gathering all the answers I could find in my data to the above questions, I separated the "answers" related to Period A from the ones having to do with Period B. Then, I processed the "answers" for each period separately, taking the following steps:

First, I listed all the demands and support according to the actors from which these originated. I tried to notice which demands were repeated more frequently by different actors, which ones were stated more forcefully, what types of policies or actions received the most support by the largest number of actors, and which actors withdrew support.

I then listed the withinputs based on the governmental organs that "sent" or "emitted" them.

Next, I proceeded with the listing of all the outputs produced by various governmental bodies during the first period. It was important to detect the degree these outputs corresponded to the strongest demands or the strongest support.

Subsequently, I listed all the feedback according to the content-based categories I developed (i.e., positive, negative, etc.). I tried to determine which actors sent positive feedback, which ones sent mixed-positive feedback, which ones mixed-negative, and which ones negative. I also tried to determine which type of feedback, sent by what actor, was more pronounced.

Finally, for each period, I listed all the outcomes, the developments and changes in inter-communal relations, and within the Muslim Minority as well. The changes within the Majority community had little to do with Minority-related policies, so I did not dwell on them.

Throughout this exercise, the most important thing was to detect which inputs were dominant in the first period, which ones in the second period, and to discover all possible connections between the inputs and the outputs.

If we know the inputs the government received and the outputs it produced in a certain period, it is easy to determine what outputs were produced to satisfy what input sent by which actor. It is also easy to take the next logical step and to conclude that there is a causal relationship between a specific set of inputs and a certain output, that a certain output was produced *because* the government received a certain input.

Therefore, the detailed analysis that follows is not just descriptive but also explanatory, albeit at a rudimentary level.

## ***9. Adapting Easton's Framework to the Greek Political System and To its Decision-Making Process for Minority-related Policies***

The way the body politic in Greece functions can easily be explained and analyzed through the "systems analysis" model formulated by David Easton. And, given the fact that Greece has had a free-democratic regime [though with some serious shortcomings] since 1974 – a regime open to societal and outside influences and pressures – examining the Greek *political system* using the "Eastonian" framework is especially appropriate.

Because my research has mainly to do with government-minority relations, and with the policies designed and implemented by the government for the minority, it is not necessary to engage in a general and detailed analysis of the whole political system. Instead, it would make more sense to briefly describe how I view the Greek political system from an Eastonian perspective, and to focus my analysis on the processes through which policies towards the Minority are formulated in this system.

True to the Eastonian model, I place the **Greek Government** with its three branches and its entire bureaucratic apparatus at the **center of the Greek political system**.

The Greek Government is situated in a large **environment**, and is influenced by it. That environment consists of the Greek society, the Greek economic system, the ecological system and other such systems that function in the society and or within the geographical boundaries of Greece. The environment of the political system also includes extra-societal systems, such as the



international system, the European system of inter-governmental organizations, and the political systems of other countries (like those of Greece's neighbors).

There are various **structures, or actors**, in the environment within and outside Greece, that continuously influence the political system by sending **inputs**. Their inputs are either in the form of **demands** (that frequently take the form of **pressures**<sup>1</sup>), or in the form of **support**.

When speaking of demands, it is important to state that the actors do not necessarily raise demands concerning their own self-interest or self-benefit. They may demand things or actions from the government that would benefit some other actor in the political system's environment. This is particularly pertinent when we examine the demands posed by international organizations, or NGOs such as the ones whose mission is the protection of human and minority rights.

As regards **support** for the political system, it can be **conditional** and issue-specific, or generalized and **diffuse**. Some actors choose to provide support for the government because they like a certain policy, while many others provide "generalized" support in the form of patriotism and loyalty to the country and its government, irrespective of the policies being implemented<sup>2</sup>.

There are countless actors in the environment of the Greek political system, but only a small number of them influence the decision-making process for Minority policies in a meaningful or significant [non-negligible] way. Therefore, it is only these actors that I take into

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<sup>1</sup> By the term "pressure", I mean all types of actions taken and statements made (publicized or not publicized) by an actor, in order to make another actor's behavior compatible to the former's goals. In Easton's framework, pressure could be considered a synonym for demand.

<sup>2</sup> These two categories of support are parallel to the way Herbert Kelman has categorized system legitimacy. Kelman has discerned two types of legitimacy: "Instrumental" and "sentimental" (see J. Rosenau (ed.), International Politics and Foreign Policy (2nd edition), 1969.

consideration in my analysis, and only these actors do I include in my version of the Eastonian model.

Through a thorough examination of the available literature on the relations between the Turkish-Muslim minority and the Greek government, and after my field research and more than two-dozen interviews, I have come to the conclusion that it is the following actors whose inputs have – over the period 1974-2001 – had a significant influence on the Greek Political system's decision making process for the minority policies [not necessarily in the order of importance]:

*Intra Societal environment*

- the Turkish-Muslim Minority in Thrace
- the local Greek majority in Thrace
- Greek Human-Rights NGOs
- the Greek nationalist Circles
- the Left/Liberal, Non-nationalist Circles
- the Orthodox Church of Greece

### *Extra-societal Environment*

- Turkey (the Turkish political system – mainly its government)
  - The Turkish Western-Thracian Minority ex-patriate/diaspora Organizations
  - The European Union
  - OSCE
  - The Council of Europe
  - International Human-Rights NGOs
  - The U.S. Government
- } → The European System of Inter-governmental organizations

Let us see these actors one-by-one:

**The Turkish-Muslim Minority.** For the purposes of my model I treat this minority as a single actor. This is a simplification, of course, but one that is necessary. I have decided that I can resort to this simplification without damaging my analysis, and without being unfair to the Minority, because I have observed that its overwhelming majority agrees with the set of basic demands expressed by the Minority leaders and elites<sup>3</sup>, regardless of diverse political opinions that can be found in the Muslim community.

The Minority's main conflict has been with the Greek Government (and the local bureaucracy representing the government). Many of minority's rights recognized by the Lausanne Treaty,

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<sup>3</sup> Many of these demands are currently expressed in a quasi-official way by the "Minority Advisory Council" that consists of the vast majority of elected minority officials and minority association presidents, but is under the control of the nationalists.

international conventions, the Greek constitution and other laws, were either violated or seriously restricted in the period I examine (1974 – 2001).

The Minority frequently and regularly complains to the central and local government **demanding** improvement of their situation.

It also simultaneously is in touch with Greek civil/human rights NGOs and asks them to make their problems known not only to the government but to Greek public opinion as well.

In addition, the minority regularly states its problems with the Greek government to the Turkish government, whom it regards as the government of the "motherland" and the minority's protector. The Muslims ask for Turkey's support in their struggle for the recognition of their rights. In other words, they enhance the demands the Greek government receives from Turkey.

The minority has also brought its complaints to the European intergovernmental organizations, (the European Union, the Council of Europe, and OSCE) and has achieved some tangible results by doing so. Verdicts from the European Court of Human Rights in favor of minority members and against the Greek government have contributed to a considerable extent to the policy change in the second period.

The Minority has maintained a relatively peaceful, but distanced coexistence with the Greek majority. The two communities are in constant touch as far as business and economic activity is concerned but their social-cultural lives are very different and separate. In periods of Turkish-Greek crises or of intercommunal tension in the region, the Minority has felt threatened not only by the government but also by the majority.

**The Local Greek Majority:** About two-thirds of the population in Thrace is Greek and Christian. The vast majority of local Greeks consider Thrace a region vulnerable to a Turkish

attack, and they feel threatened by Turkey. The nationalists among them consider themselves the first line of defense against a possible Turkish invasion. They have maintained relatively peaceful relations with the minority, and have cooperated with it in the realms of business and economics. Many regard Muslims as a potential or even actual fifth column, but there are sharp differences in the views on how to eliminate that perceived threat. These views range from further cooperation and constructive engagement with the Minority, encouraging its integration into the mainstream society, to forced deportation of any minority member who would express their sympathy with or affiliation to the Turkish nation.

One of the problems between the two communities is the majority's reluctance to acknowledge the Turkish identity of the minority. It is very difficult for most local majority members to understand how a Greek "citizenship identity" (with which most minority members are very happy) can coexist peacefully with a Turkish national identity <sup>4</sup>.

Groups from local Greek majority complain to the Greek Government about their situation vis-à-vis the Minority, and they pressure it to take measures that would result in making them feel more secure. The minority's struggle for its rights --albeit not directed at the local majority per se -- which is accompanied by Turkish nationalistic rhetoric and assertion of Turkishness, has been a major source of insecurity for the local majority.

The Majority's relations with the Greek human rights NGOs have not been of significance, and they have usually been negative, for these organizations are seen as being on the side of the minority on every issue.

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<sup>4</sup> This problem is actually quite common in "triadic" ethnic conflicts. For example, the Irish identity of the Catholic "tradition" of Northern Ireland has been somewhat difficult to be reconciled with the British "citizenship identity", especially in the minds of ardent Unionists.

The nationalists among the local majority have very close ties with Greek nationalist circles in the rest of the country, and are greatly influenced by the nationalist intelligentsia in Athens. There is regular cooperation between the local nationalists and the nationalists of the center. Many of the local majority's complaints are made to the nationalist intelligentsia and they, in turn, amplify them and convey them to the government.

**The Greek Human Rights NGOs:** These organizations began to focus on the problems of the Turkish minority only in the 90s, after the tense climate created in Thrace made the problems impossible to ignore.

Due to their constant contact with international human rights NGOs and regular cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, every human rights or minority rights violation they observe in Western Thrace becomes almost immediately known throughout the world, particularly throughout Europe. Thus they have the power to embarrass the Greek government in the international arena. So this is the main leverage they use when they demand of the government to improve the human- and minority-rights situation in Thrace. Their effectiveness in the national arena, the intra-societal environment, is less impressive. The widely shared suspicions, fears, and prejudices regarding the minority considerably limit these organizations' ability to influence Greek public opinion<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Nationalist media also fuel suspicions regarding the *funding sources* of Greek human rights NGOs. For instance, the fact that GHM is financially supported by the Open Society/Soros Foundation was interpreted by some journalists as an indication that GHM is an instrument of foreign (American and international-capitalistic) interests in Greece.

**Greek Nationalist Circles.** This term refers to a large group<sup>6</sup> of politicians from every party (from far left to far right), bureaucrats, military officers, clergymen, university professors, journalists, lawyers, singers, composers, writers etc. Because their views are regularly and frequently published or broadcast by the media, they have the power to shape Greek public opinion, and to insert the issues they care the most about into the national agenda. They have easy access to the policy makers; as a matter of fact, some of them are policy makers themselves. That is why the government always has to take their views and demands into account. Although they are a very diverse group, these nationalist intellectuals have the same set of opinions on Greek-Turkish relations and on what they call "National Issues" (*Εθνικά Θέματα -- Ethnika Themata*): They believe that Greece is constantly threatened by Turkey and Turks, whom they often tend to demonize. Furthermore, they tend to be anti-American, anti-Muslim, anti-Protestant, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, and in some instances anti-European and anti-Jewish, but at the same time they claim Greeks are more tolerant, more benevolent and more hospitable than any other nation. Historically rooted negative prejudices of the Greek society toward anyone considered "the other" are rationalized and intellectualized by the nationalistic intelligentsia. What is more, the nationalist intellectuals encourage the masses to maintain these biased views, and they make it socially acceptable to openly express them. It is, therefore, the Greek nationalist circles --and their input, sent to the government -- that constitute the main obstacle to the Muslim Minority having its rights and freedoms recognized.

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<sup>6</sup> One could call such a group a *societal coalition*.

**The Left/Liberal Non-Nationalist Circles:** This is another group of politicians, academics, artists and other intellectuals who have opposed their nationalistic counterparts, and supported or pushed for non-nationalistic policies that would improve the conditions and freedoms of minorities, immigrants and other socially disadvantaged groups. In addition, through their works, their statements, and their actions, these intellectuals have tried, with limited success, to disseminate and popularize in the Greek society such ideas as multiculturalism, and social pluralism.

Even though Greece has always had a large number of intellectuals with a left/liberal point of view, only a small portion of them has disassociated themselves from Greek Nationalism. And, as far as this smaller group of intellectuals is concerned, it is only in the late '80s and early '90s that they began systematically to pay attention to Minority affairs. Until then, leftist non-nationalists (most of whom had adopted some version of socialist internationalism) had given priority to other issues of social injustice, and such international topics as the Cold War and anti imperialism. The dominant opinion among the Greek non-nationalist left was that ethnocultural differences were not important and that, in a modern industrial society, such differences were going to be transcended and thus become irrelevant, anyway. As a result, examining and handling ethnic minority issues were, for a long time, in the monopoly of nationalists.

Compared to the nationalistic circles, the non-nationalistic ones are less organized in Greece. And, with respect to issues related to the Muslim Minority, their power to influence the government or the public opinion is significantly more limited. But this situation is slowly changing. When we look at the younger generation of intellectuals (many of whom educated in Western Europe and North America) we see a wider endorsement and a stronger interest of such ideas as multiculturalism, the promotion of diversity, and respecting the rights of minorities.



Moreover, this younger generation is in close contact and cooperation with a relatively new type of pro-European-integration, liberal politicians, dubbed the "modernizers" (*εκσυγχρονιστές*), who are gaining influence in both the center-left and the center-right of the Greek political spectrum.

**The Orthodox Church of Greece.** This is one of the most important and most powerful institutions in the Greek society. Because 97% of the Greek population are (at least nominally) Greek-Orthodox, and because the Constitution of Greece recognizes Greek-Orthodox Christianity as the "prevalent" religion, the Church of Greece can and does influence to a large degree the political decision making process in that country. At the same time, due to its autonomy, its hierarchical and theocratic structure, the Church is open only to a limited degree to influences from the public opinion or from the government.

As far as Minority affairs are concerned, the Church has generally been an ally of the Greek Nationalist circles. It has treated the Muslim minority with suspicion and a local bishop went so far as to call the Muslim-Turks "the enemy in our midst"<sup>7</sup>. Members of the Church hierarchy have often expressed their fear that Muslims, because of their rapid population growth, will gradually become the majority in Thrace, that they will use the minority rights given to them in order to establish political control in the region, and that, in the long run, Greece will "lose" Thrace to Turkey.

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<sup>7</sup> Bishop of Maroneia & Komotini, Damaskinos, in his speech at the Third World Meeting of Thracians. Πρακτικά Τρίτου Παγκοσμίου Συνεδρίου Θρακών (1996) [Minutes of the Third World Meeting of Thracians] [in Greek]. Komotini, Greece: The Municipality of Komotini and Paratiritis Publications, 1998. (p.24)

The Church has demanded more say in decisions regarding the building and repair of mosques, it has pushed for measures to encourage Christian population growth in Thrace (like an extra stipend to Christian families with three or more children), it has asked to be consulted in the formulation of the education policies for the Minority, and has expressed opposition to most decisions aimed at expanding the rights of the Minority.

#### *Extra-Societal Environment*

**The Turkish Government.** It considers itself as the protector of the Turkish minority, but it also wants to keep it under its control in order to use it as a destabilizing factor in Greece, when it deems it is necessary to do so.

It regularly receives complaints from the Minority and raises them in international fora, and (as demands) in Greek-Turkish diplomatic talks <sup>8</sup>.

The Turkish government is very sensitive to pressure coming from Turkish nationalist circles <sup>9</sup> (and not just on the issue of the minority), since the official ideology of the state has a

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<sup>8</sup> It must be mentioned here that the Greek government is doing basically the same thing with respect to the Greek minority in Turkey (which is much smaller in size than the Muslim-Turkish minority of Thrace, due to the Greeks' mass emigration from Turkey in the last forty years, the expulsions of 1964, and the low birth rate of those who remained.). Demands and complaints raised by Turkey for the Turkish minority are countered with similar complaints and demands raised by Greece for the Greek minority – or vice versa.

<sup>9</sup> **Turkish Nationalist Circles.** Like their Greek counterparts, they comprise intellectuals, politicians, military officers, and bureaucrats that share as a common denominator a set of nationalistic ideas. Unlike the Greek nationalistic circles, however, the Turkish ones, in addition to having representatives in every political party, also include at least two political parties in their entirety. One of them, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), is the second largest in the country. The Turkish nationalists, while supporting and justifying a policy of homogenization and Turkification that regards any ethnic difference *within the borders of Turkey* as a problem to be dealt with, want to protect the ethnic distinctiveness of every Turkic group *outside this country*. Their interest in "outside Turks" is usually characterized by latent --and in some instances overt-- irredentism.

The Turks of Western Thrace are only one of those outside Turkic groups, and by no means the most important one.

strong nationalist component. It tries to respond to these pressures by defending its policies from a nationalistic point of view and by sharpening its nationalistic rhetoric.

The Turkish government has a strong two-way relationship with the Western Thracian expatriates. On the one hand, it financially supports the organizations established by the expatriates; on the other hand it receives pressure from these organizations to pursue more radical policies regarding the Muslim minority.

**Western Thracian Expatriates.** These are Muslim-Turks who decided to emigrate from Western Thrace (mainly to Turkey, but in some European Union countries, as well) in search of a freer, better life. Those in Turkey have made considerable efforts to persuade the Turkish government to give priority to the problems of the Muslim minority. The expatriates have formed diaspora organizations<sup>10</sup> that are in close touch with nationalist circles both within and outside the government, and have also tried to mobilize Turkish public opinion by pointing to the human rights violations in Western Thrace often using exaggerated and inflammatory rhetoric. These organizations have also been quite influential in the politics of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace.

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These circles have exerted intense pressure on the Turkish government, especially in the late 80s, to pursue an aggressive policy with regard to the Minority in Thrace. The minority then was under the leadership of a group of people that had the same worldview as the Turkish nationalist intelligentsia. The Turkish nationalist circles had persuaded themselves that the then minority leadership, with enough Turkish governmental support, could achieve its declared goals and perhaps could go beyond that, turning Western Thrace into "another Cyprus." In other words, their thoughts were parallel to the Greek nationalists', only what the latter considered "the worst-case scenario" was for the former one of the most desired outcomes.

<sup>10</sup> The most important of them is called the "The Association for the Solidarity with the Turks of Western Thrace" (Batı Trakya Türkleriyle Dayanışma Derneği – BTDD)

### **The European Intergovernmental System –**

**The EU, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE:** Each of these organizations has certain mechanisms and certain legal documents whose aim is to improve the conditions of ethnic minorities and to protect their collective rights.

By constantly scrutinizing the human and minority rights practices of the Greek government, by becoming a forum where the Muslim minority 's grievances could be voiced, by the verdicts of the European Court of Human Rights in favor of applicants from the minority, they virtually became powerful allies of the minority in its conflict with the Greek government. The Greek government, on the other hand, because of its desire to fully integrate into the European politico-economic system, and because of the need to maintain a positive image in order to achieve that goal, had to adjust its policies according to European standards, recommendations, and criticisms, despite its negative rhetorical reactions to them.

**International Human Rights NGOs:** They began to pay special attention to Muslim minority's problems only in the 90s and thanks to the Greek NGOs. By publicizing throughout the world human and minority rights violations in Thrace, they have often embarrassed the Greek government and forced it to revise the policies that had created this embarrassing situation. For instance, it wasn't until it became internationally embarrassing that the Greek government decided to abrogate Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code, based on which Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnicity could lose their citizenship if they left the country "with no intention to return".

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**The US Government:** The most visible tool employed by the US in exerting pressure on the Greek government has been the annual human rights reports issued by the State Department. These reports are taken very seriously in Greece and each unflattering comment in them generates a great deal of negative public reaction. Lately, US diplomats in Greece began to pay special attention to the minority problems in Thrace<sup>11</sup>. The US general councilor in Thessaloniki visits the region regularly and meets with Minority representatives and local government officials. In addition, Thrace this year has twice been visited by the US ambassador as well.

The following diagrams show, in a simplified way, how all the actors described above are situated vis-à-vis the Greek Government, how they send their inputs, how they receive the outputs produced by the Greek government and how they respond to these outputs by feedback:

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<sup>11</sup> The US policy-makers, since the early nineties, have been especially concerned about the possibility of a "hot" incident, or an armed conflict, between Greece and Turkey. They have, therefore, made extra efforts to prevent any escalation in the Greek-Turkish disputes. The State Department, influenced by think tanks like the RAND Corporation, has seen Western Thrace as a "hot spot", as an especially vulnerable place, where the possible outbreak of intercommunal violence may quickly lead to an all-out Greek-Turkish war. According to one hypothetical scenario included in a book titled Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century, published by RAND (edited by Z. Khalilzad & I. Lesser, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998; pp. 321-322) a violent crackdown of protests by the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace, in 2003, leads, within a couple of days, to a large-scale war between Greece and Turkey in many fronts.

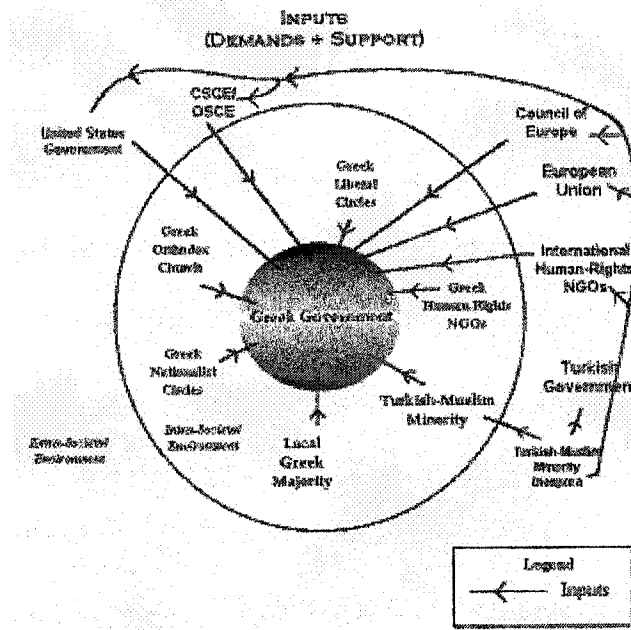


Figure 9.1: Inputs (Demands and Support) in the Greek Political System

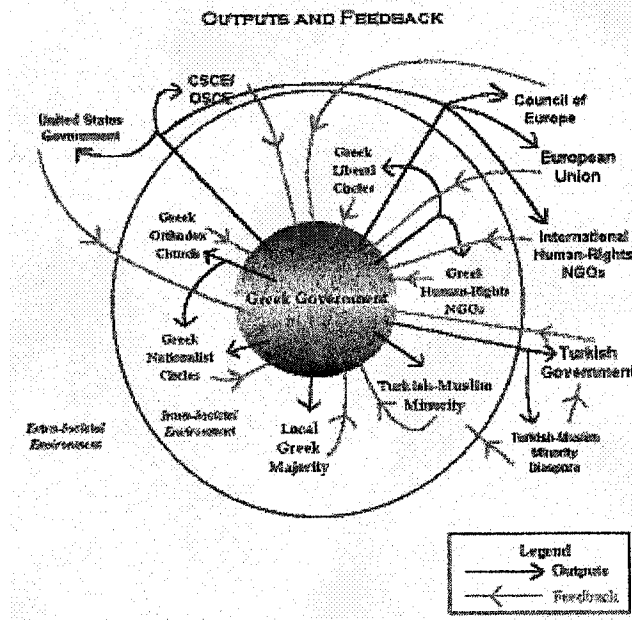


Figure 9.2: Outputs and Feedback in the Greek Political System

### Withinputs

In addition to the inputs the Greek government receives from the environment, it also is influenced by "**withinputs**" – inputs from within the government, from the constituent parts, or subdivisions, of the government. With regard to the Minority policies, these are the most important sections of the government whose withinputs have influenced to a significant degree the decision-making process [again, not in the order of importance]:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- The Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces,
- The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs,
- The National Intelligence Service (EYP),
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry),

And recently,

- The Citizen's Advocate Office (the National Ombudsman)

Furthermore, the *branches of these governmental subdivisions in Thrace* usually influence the Minority policy making process through their own withinputs that are different than –and sometimes contradictory to – those originating from these subdivisions' center.

Let us now examine the kinds of withinputs these segments of the government produce in more detail:

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** Since the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, Minority Affairs have been considered directly related to foreign affairs, and, as a result, the Foreign Ministry has

played a crucial role in the shaping and implementation of Minority policies. Through its Bureau of Political Affairs in Thrace – chaired by a top-ranking diplomat, often at the ambassador level – the Foreign Ministry has coordinated and overseen the relations between the various governmental bureaucracies and the Minority.

In this ministry, like in every ministry in the Greek government, the minister and the top bureaucrats, particularly those in charge of Minority Affairs, can influence the decision-making process with **their own withinputs**, usually deriving from their ideological point of views, their sensitivities or obsessions with certain topics, etc.

Withinputs also are provided by the local offices of the Foreign Ministry in Thrace, which sometimes contradict the withinputs of the top echelons of this ministry. Withinputs from the Thracian branch, that is the Bureau of Political Affairs, can be based not just on its bureaucrats' perception of the issues or direct experience with the local actors, but also on these bureaucrats' desire to maintain or increase their authority and their say in Minority affairs. [See interviews]

**The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces:** Because Thrace is a border region and considered vulnerable to an external attack and sensitive, the Defense Ministry has always had a big influence in the formulation of Minority Policies.

A significant part of Western Thrace, a 20- to 30-mile wide and about 100-mile long zone alongside the Greek-Bulgarian borders has been, since the 1930s, a "restricted" or "military surveillance" zone (*επιτηρούμενη ζώνη – epitiroumeni zoni*), under the control of the 4th Army Corps. This zone, a mountainous area, contains many town and villages inhabited almost exclusively by Muslims, mainly of Pomak origin. Until 1995, the Military controlled, through checkpoints, all the main entries and exits of the **restricted zone**, and required of all zone



residents to carry special permits to let them move in and out of it. Foreigners and Greek citizens who were not zone residents had to obtain a special permission from the Office of the Army Chief of Staff, in Athens, to visit this area. No one without that permission, and, in some cases, no resident who could not produce his or her special permit was allowed to enter. Also no-one was allowed to move in or out of the zone during the curfew period that started at midnight. In November 1995, the Ministry of Defense removed the checkpoints, abolished the permit policy, and made it possible for every Greek citizen – but not for foreign citizens – to freely enter and exit the zone<sup>12</sup>.

The 4th Army Division has seen the Muslims living in this mountainous zone as under its own jurisdiction. It has supported measures aimed at keeping them isolated from the rest of the minority and from the rest of Greece. In the early '90s, the Army was involved in efforts to develop and emphasize the Pomak identity of the restricted zone residents, and, therefore, to differentiate them from ethnic Turks who live in the rest of Western Thrace, mainly in the plains. Such efforts included commissioning a Pomak-Greek dictionary, developing a special alphabet, based on the Greek one, for the Pomak dialect, and facilitating research on the Pomak culture, particularly on its similarities with the current Greek one and the ancient Greek one of Macedonia. At the same time, the 4th Army Corps has attempted to improve its image in the eyes of the Minority residents of the "Restricted zone" through such gestures as sending periodically military physicians to the villages to check the health problems faced by the residents.

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<sup>12</sup> For the way this decision was presented by the Greek Government and the reactions of the Turkish government, see "Greece 'unsurprised' by Turkish opposition to development plans for Thrace", *Athens News Agency*, Nov. 30, 1995 (<http://www.ana.gr>).

As for the Minority in general, the Armed forces and the Defense Ministry has perceived it as a potential threat, and they supported policies ( they sent "withinputs") that would treat the Muslims as such. For instance, until very recently, no Muslim could become a military officer. Today, this policy has changed and a few Muslims, all of Pomak origin, *have* become military officers.

**The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs:** This ministry plays a crucial role in the formulation and supervision of minority education.

For a long time, this ministry seemed undisturbed with the low quality of teachers appointed to Minority schools and the low quality of education being given there. The lack of efforts on the part of the Ministry to improve this situation (despite repeated demands from the Minority) was probably, in part, influenced by the idea that the less educated the Minority was, the less dangerous it would be.

The very controversial policy in the late '80s to prepare Turkish textbooks and to impose them on Minority schools seems to have been initiated as a withinput from the high ranks of the Education Ministry bureaucracy. It was only when this policy met intense resistance from Minority teachers and parents (in other words, they sent negative feedback), that it was quietly discontinued. A large number of Minority parents and some teachers, with their protests, showed that they totally withdrew their support from the Minority education system, and, thus, that it had lost its legitimacy in the Minority's eyes.

More recently, efforts to add a multiculturalist dimension to the Minority education, and the introduction of a new method of teaching Greek as second language, also seem to have been initiated from a Ministry withinput. (Because the Minority demand was for high quality of Greek

education and for more hours devoted to teaching Turkish, though not for a multiculturalist education or for a new teaching method per se.)

**The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry):** The most important role this ministry played in the shaping of Minority policies, was in the nineties, when it led and coordinated the Government's efforts for the decentralization of the administrative system and the empowerment of local governments.

With a law that was put into effect in 1994, the prefectures, or county governments (*nomoi*, in Greek), were given additional powers to deal with intra-county issues. This increased power was accompanied with the provision that the chief executive of the county, the *nomarch* (a position akin to a governor's) would be elected by the voters and no longer appointed by the central government. The law was generally welcomed by the public, yet one strong objection was raised by a coalition of groups led by the Greek nationalistic circles: It would be dangerous to apply this law in Western Thrace. The Minority, as a beneficiary of decentralization, would gain too much power, its leaders could be elected local governors or they could dominate the local administrations, and, as a result, the Rhodope and Xanthi counties (where Muslims comprise about 55 and 40 percent of the population respectively) would fall under Minority, and thus under Turkish control. The pressure (or the demand) from these circles was so intense that the government was unable to ignore it. At the same time, however, it was unwilling to exempt Western Thrace from the decentralization law, for that would mean that this region was under a special restrictive regime (a situation unjustifiable in a democratic country that faces no local violent revolt). This problem was solved through a proposal developed by the Home Ministry (something that can be considered a withinput), according to which two "*supra-counties*" were

created, as a second tier of local self-government <sup>13</sup>: The western one included Drama, Kavala, *and* Xanthi, the Eastern one Evros *and* Rhodope. Thus, by somehow merging the "problematic" counties with neighboring ones, whose population is overwhelmingly Greek-Christian, the potential influence of the Muslim voters was significantly reduced. In addition, eight months later, with an amendment to the decentralization law, many issues directly related to Government-Minority relations were put under the jurisdiction of the Regional (or Periphery) administration of Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace [see interviews]. This body is under the direct control of the Home Ministry and is led by a chief bureaucrat appointed by the central government.

In 1998, the Home Ministry began implementing the "Kapodistrias Plan", a wide-scale restructuring of municipalities. The basic objective of this plan was to create bigger, more efficient, and financially stronger municipalities, with more administrative autonomy, by merging smaller adjacent municipalities. The impact of this plan on Thrace was overwhelmingly seen as positive by the residents of the region, Christians and Muslims alike. Nevertheless, many Muslims asserted that some other smaller and ineffectual municipalities in predominantly Minority areas could have been merged to create a few more "Kapodistriac" municipalities, but instead were left as they were, possibly as a concession to those who worried that the Minority could have gained too much power and too much financial strength [see interviews].

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<sup>13</sup> Together with the supra-counties in Thrace, a third supra-county was established, as a second layer of local administration, over the metropolitan area of Athens, the county of Piraeus, and the rest of Attica. But the *raison d'être* for this supra-county was totally different; it was because of the huge population in this area, the multifaceted interdependence among these three administrative units, and the complexity and large number of public works spread throughout this area, that a second tier of local administration was deemed necessary.

**The National Intelligence Service (EYP):** Just like the Defense Ministry, this institution, too, saw the Minority as a potential threat or as a group of people that can be manipulated by Turkey to destabilize Thrace. EYP's suspicions of the Minority intensified when Minority members began to protest systematically against the restrictions on their rights imposed by the government. Throughout the eighties and until the mid-nineties, hundreds of Minority members -- especially the leadership -- was put under constant surveillance, and every minority-related activity was closely monitored. Foreign visitors to Thrace, human rights monitors, journalists and researchers were followed everywhere they went in this region.

When the government began introducing reforms in its Minority policies, reforms that aimed at extending their freedoms and improving their situation, the high-echelons of the intelligence service and its local operatives demonstrated some significant resistance. Personal information (like address, license plate number, daily schedule) about some Minority leaders, researchers, and human rights activists was leaked to extreme-right-wing newspapers<sup>14</sup> thus making them easy targets for a possible vigilante attack. In fact, the "para-state" that functioned in Thrace, a coalition of bureaucrats, military officers, intellectuals, clerics, and journalists who, independent of the central government, shaped and implemented their own oppressive and restrictive Minority policy, was suspected to enjoy EYP support. The "para-state" approach to Minority affairs involved, among other things, slowing down reforms by raising bureaucratic obstacles, and encouraging organized groups of young right-wing men to occasionally harass Muslims.

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<sup>14</sup> Like the newspaper Stochos (Στόχος).

**The Citizen's Advocate Office** (*Συνήγορος του Πολίτη*), or **the Office of the National Ombudsman**: This is an independent administrative authority that began operating on 1 October 1998. It investigates "individual administrative actions or omissions or material actions taken by government departments or public services that infringe upon the personal rights or violate the legal interests of individuals or legal entities"<sup>15</sup>. The office accepts complaints from Greek citizens, resident aliens and legal entities that have had a problem with a government body, tried to resolve it by coming into contact with it, but failed.

The National Ombudsman basically mediates between public services and the complainants, monitoring whether the law is implemented correctly, investigating whether human and citizens' rights are respected, and helping the government combat maladministration. Most of the complaints received by the Ombudsman's office have to do with violations of law by government officials, excessive delays, discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, etc., refusal to provide information, and administrative irregularities and omissions. In its relations with the administration, this office's aim is not necessarily to engage in confrontation, but to solve the complainants' problems by cooperating with the relevant administrative bodies. An indirect goal of the Ombudsman is to restore the citizen's shaken confidence in the state.

Although the National Ombudsman is appointed by the cabinet, his (or her) and his office's actions are not subject to control by any governmental or other administrative authority. As a result, this office has been able to exercise real control over the administration. If it determines that a complaint has merit, the Ombudsman sends recommendations to the government service concerned. How the case will proceed from then on depends on the extent to which these

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<sup>15</sup> See the Greek Ombudsman web-site at <http://www.synigoros.gr>.

recommendations are, or are not, adopted. If that government service does not respond in a satisfactory manner, the Ombudsman sends a report (a "withinput") to the relevant government minister, while also informing the complainant. The Ombudsman may set deadlines by which the administration should adopt the recommendations. If the relevant administrative body continues to ignore the Ombudsman, this office can also publicize this administration's negative stance by informing the mass media. Also, if, during the course of an investigation, the administration refuses to co-operate or there are indications of illegality, the Ombudsman may call for disciplinary measures to be taken against those responsible.

The Minority members saw the Ombudsman as a potential ally against the government's illegal and arbitrary actions, since the very beginning of the office's operation. The Ombudsman's office, although unable by law to become their advocate (the office's official name notwithstanding), did take most Minority complaints seriously and investigated them, resulting in the resolution of many individual problems between a Minority member and a government body. The Ombudsman's office has spent extra efforts to reach out to the Minority members and make itself more accessible to them. It is important to note here that in 2001 the Ombudsman himself and a team of experts visited Western Thrace and received complaints from Minority citizens directly. In addition, in its annual reports, the Ombudsman criticized the "arbitrariness, impunity, indifference and partiality" which prevented in many cases the bureaucracy from dealing properly with the problems of the Minority.

### **Outputs**

The (binding) decisions taken by the Greek government, and the policies formulated on Minority Affairs, are the result of all the inputs sent by the actors in the environment (which I

described above), plus the relevant withinputs produced by the various ministries and bureaucracies (also described above). The Government processes all these inputs, and converts them into **outputs**, that usually have the form of laws, presidential decrees, guidelines sent to bureaucracies, public pronouncements, etc. [Even court rulings could be considered outputs in my adaptation of the "Eastonian" model.]

Of course, when being processed, each input is given a different value by the government; some inputs are viewed as much more important than others. The way a government assigns significance to inputs depends, as Easton mentions, albeit fleetingly, in his book, very much on the ideology, prejudices, perceptions, and values of the ruling cadre, or personnel in the government<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, if the policy-makers and the people at the high ranks of bureaucracy change, then the values, perceptions, and other cognitive criteria through which inputs are assigned values are also likely to change. And a type of input that was disregarded or ignored in the past is then likely to be considered worth paying attention to by the new cadre and the new decision-makers. And, vice-versa, some other kinds of inputs that used to be taken seriously in the past may just be ignored after the change of decision-makers. For instance, in the case of the Muslim Minority affairs in Greece, a demand from nationalist circles regarding what they see as a major threat is likely to be taken more seriously by the government, if the policy makers are nationalistic, whereas a pro-European, pro-multiculturalism, cadre of policy-makers may just dismiss it.

Through outputs, then, the government responds to the combination of those demands and support it sees as significant. As far as demands are concerned, the outputs may have one of

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<sup>16</sup> This is further explored in Robert Jervis's work Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976) and in Janis's Groupthink (1982).



these three objectives: (a) to modify the conditions of the environment so that the situation that generated the demand no longer exists (satisfying the demand entirely); (b) to satisfy the demand, in part, or to just give the impression to the actors making that demand that their concern is addressed, and, finally, (c) to silence the demand, by taking coercive measures.

### **Feedback**

All outputs **flow back** to the environment. The various actors in the environment (not just those who made the demand, but also those who were merely interested observers or those who had nothing to do with it) receive the outputs and respond to them. And their response goes back to the political system. The outputs, therefore, can be considered **feedback** for the demands and support sent by the environmental actors to the government. By the same token, but somewhat more important to the Eastonian model, the **actors' response to the outputs is feedback** for the decisions made by the government. Of course, due to the circular nature of the model, actors' feedback should be considered a new set of inputs as well.

So, there is a continuous feedback loop between the government and the actors of the environment. The actors can thus assess how their inputs are received, how effective they are, and the government can evaluate the success or popularity of its decisions. It is through this mechanism that the actors decide to maintain, modify, or drop their demands and support, and the government can decide whether to keep or change its policies.

Easton's framework, and therefore my model, assumes that the Government's actions are practically determined by the input (plus withinput) and feedback it receives. Then, to understand the changes in government policies, I have to detect what input/feedback was more

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important than the rest, and how inputs/feedback changed over time. Once I accomplish that, then exploring the reasons behind the input changes will become easier.

Another thing I have to examine is whether there were any changes in the *structure* of the political system and that of the actors. Easton, in his framework, focuses on **disturbances** in, and **stress** on, the system that –caused by certain intense demands – may result in its inability to function, and, indeed, in its disintegration. With regard to the Greek political system and the Minority policies, we do not see any disturbance or stress of such severity. It is true that demands regarding the extension of Minority rights and the reluctance of the government to meet them did cause some disturbance in the functioning of the system, but that disturbance was far from threatening the system's existence or survival. Nevertheless, the disturbance was serious enough to require some changes not only in the outputs, but also in the structure of the bureaucracies that deal with Minority affairs.

The Government, through certain outputs did try – to a limited extent – to change the structure of several actors making demands (for example, the leadership of the Minority), but the main goal of most outputs was to make the actors change or drop their demands and increase their support. And, as far as the extra societal actors are concerned, the ability of the government to change their structure was (and is) negligible or non-existent anyway.

## *10. Applying Easton's Framework to Explain Policy Changes in the Western Thrace Conflict*

We have seen above that, according to the "political systems model" formulated by David Easton, *changes in "outputs"* happen primarily because of *changes in "inputs"*. In other words, changes in policies, in laws, or in any type of binding governmental decisions, are the result of changes in demands and support from actors in the environment. As a response to an output, actors may send new inputs, or they may reduce or increase the intensity of their previous inputs.

Moreover, usually independent of the input-output-feedback loop, but sometimes in relation to it, new actors can emerge in the environment. These new actors would have their own demands and their own capacity to show support. In that case, the government, the center of the political system, when making a decision, would have to take these additional inputs into account, *together* with those sent by the "older" actors. Consequently, policies, i.e., outputs, would change to accommodate *both* the modified or new inputs coming from the older actors, *and* the inputs coming from the newer actors.

It is through this model, that I will attempt below to explain the recent policy changes in Greece with respect to Government-Muslim Minority relations. In order to do that I have to (heuristically) divide the period I examine, that is 1974-2001, i.e., from the re-establishment of Democracy in Greece to, roughly, "the present day", into two sub-periods.

- The first sub-period (hereinafter referred to as **period A** -- *pA*) is from 1974 to 1990.
- The second sub-period (which I will call **period B** -- *pB*) is between 1990 and 2001.

What I designate as "the sub-period changing event", or the turning point <sup>1</sup>, is the crisis in the late January and early February of 1990, when the most important Minority politician Dr. Sadik Ahmet was sent to prison, which was followed by widespread protest demonstrations of the Minority, which, in turn, was followed by riots, in fact a small-scale pogrom, in the city of Komotini against Muslims by a large group of local nationalist Greeks. This was the most serious violent event between the two communities in Thrace throughout the entire period under examination.

Having divided the 1974-2001 period into two sub-periods, *pA* and *pB*, I will now examine the political system dynamics in each one separately. These are the questions I will try to answer:

What kinds of inputs were sent in each sub-period to the government,  
and by what actors?

What were the outputs?

How were these outputs received and what was the feedback?

And, more to the point, what was different in *pB* from *pA*?

What were the *changes* in the actors, in the inputs, and what *changed* in the structure and composition of the government?

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<sup>1</sup> Using Easton's terminology, one might also characterize this as a "disturbance" in the system.

What is implied in this analysis is that I treat the changes in actors, in inputs, and in the structure/composition of the government as *independent variables*, and the changes in the outputs, that is the changes in Minority policies, as *dependent variables*.

In the following chapters I examine each period in more detail.

## 11. pA: *The Period of Intensification, or Deterioration*

This period starts with the collapse of the military dictatorship (the *Junta*) and the restoration of democracy in Greece, in 1974.

Who were the actors in this period and what type of inputs did they send to the government?

### **The Turkish-Muslim Minority**

Among the intra-societal actors, this is the one that should be examined first.

These were the main **demands** of the Minority:

- *Equal treatment and an end to discrimination*: An end to the policies of systematic restrictions, and discriminatory administrative measures imposed during the dictatorship.

During the dictatorship (before 1974), the Muslims of Thrace, like the vast majority of Greek citizens, experienced some severe limitations and violations of their civil and political rights.

However, the Muslim Minority -- unlike the Greek citizens of Greek ethnicity -- also suffered restrictions on their cultural and collective rights, or their minority rights, in other words, the rights each member of the minority can exercise "in community with other"<sup>1</sup> members:

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<sup>1</sup> This is the expression used in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted by the Council of Europe, in 1995.

The government during the dictatorship stopped giving Muslims permission to repair or extend their mosques, or build new ones, it imposed new regulations for Muslim religious foundations that did not allow for any democratic procedures, and it adopted increasingly strict limitations on Minority members' right to use the word "Turkish" to identify themselves. The Minority's rights were also curtailed in the socio-economic sphere of their lives with certain restrictive administrative measures, applied *exclusively* to Muslims, against buying property, having basic transactions with the banks, getting a driver's license, etc. (Anagnostou, 1999). Yet, the level of repression in that era was so high, and the tolerance level of the regime towards any complaint so low, that the Minority avoided expressing its discontent. The conflict remained latent.

While the new regime extended the rights and freedoms of the Greek citizens, it initially did very little to improve the situation of the minority, mainly due to the intense anti-Turkish climate resulting from the Cyprus war. The laws and policies regulating minority affairs that were adopted during the dictatorship era remained essentially the same:

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

The Greek government decided to minimize what it saw as the threat coming from the minority by taking repressive and oppressive measures against us. Even after the reinstatement, or return, of democracy, in 1974, repression did not stop.

Many of the people I interviewed in Thrace and in Athens, irrespective of the group they belong to or of the institution they represent, told me, without hesitation, that the Muslim Minority had indeed suffered from discriminatory policies in the pre-1990 years. Here, for instance, are some of their statements on this issue:

[Consultant/Researcher at the Min. of Foreign Affairs and professor at Panteion University; Greek; Female]

It is impossible to deny that the minority was treated like second-class citizens; that, for more than three decades, there was discrimination against the minority.

[Senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]  
 Things were tragically bad for the minority in the late eighties.

[Member of the Xanthi County Assembly, attorney; M-T minority member; Male]  
 The conditions of the minority were pretty good in the early fifties. The government treated us with respect and we were loyal to the government. We had a certain autonomy in that period; at least in education.

Then, totally unnecessarily, the government began to gradually toughen its approach. As the government grew more and more repressive, government-minority relations deteriorated.

It may be true that the government began to have some worries about what the minority might do, but such worries had no justification.

[High-school teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; currently an activist; Minority member; male]

Until very recently, the minority had to deal with many restrictions to their rights. Even getting a driver's license for a car or for a tractor was a problem. You could not get it without a hefty bribe. Often even a bribe would not work.

What is more, many bureaucrats that were in charge of minority-related issues during the dictatorship were kept in their position, and some of the newly appointed ones adopted without reservation the old, oppressive, approach to the Muslims:

[A professor of Turkish Language and Literature, researcher at the Academy of Athens; involved in the preparation of Turkish textbooks for minority elementary school children; Greek; female]

[...]

The directors of the Bureaus of Cultural-Political Affairs, Mr. Gandas<sup>2</sup> in Xanthi and Mr. Pavlidis in Komotini, who were appointed by the military dictatorship before 1974, are known to have had close ties with EYP. Democratically elected governments kept them in their position, mainly because of their ability to keep the minority under tight control.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

[...] The local bureaucrats working for the Central Government abused the wide discretion they had been given on such issues as registering title deeds in real-estate

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Emmanouil Gandas is no longer the chief of the Xanthi bureau. He was replaced by a younger bureaucrat in 1998.



transactions. One of the oppressive and discriminatory measures of the Central Government was to deny registration for 90% of title deeds, in which at least one party was a Minority member, but to accept 10% of them. Whose application would fall within this 10% was determined by the local bureaucrats. The bureaucrats would use this power given to them to receive bribes or to torment the applicants by first giving them hope and then disappointing them.

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

[...] For instance, in 1974, the new government appointed Panayiotis Photeas governor of Rhodope County. Photeas was a widely respected person, and was known as a man of honor, but, for seven years, from '74 to '81, he oppressed the minority in a nearly sadistic way!

The foreign ministry bureaucrats in charge of minority affairs, particularly the heads of the so-called bureaus of Political Affairs, Gandas in Xanthi and Pavlidis in Komotini, were not any different in the way they approached the minority. They were convinced that the only way to deal with us was through repression and intimidation. The Ministry allowed these two bureau chiefs such leeway, they became autonomous. They could make their own decisions and they did not have to account for their actions.

One of the local Greeks I interviewed went so far as to put almost the entire blame for the oppression of the Minority on these corrupt, nationalistic local bureaucrats:

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

[...]

Those [discriminatory] policies were not really based on laws. Almost all the laws regarding Minority affairs were fine. They were not discriminatory. What was going on was that a small number of powerful local bureaucrats would interpret these laws in a distorted way, they would act arbitrarily and would often ignore what they did not like in the laws. These bureaucrats were fervent nationalists who would justify their behavior on nationalistic grounds, and so the central government was reluctant to challenge them. So, these bureaucrats, with the tacit approval of the central government, would implement a set of discriminatory measures against the Minority. The goal was to toughen the living conditions of the Muslims so they would consider emigrating. But while the local bureaucrats were tacitly given the permission to apply these discriminatory measures, they were also given the discretion not to enforce them in cases they deemed it appropriate not to. Having been given such wide discretion and with no accountability, the local bureaucrats, not surprisingly, would abuse their discretion by making it a means to collect bribes. So, the discriminatory measures were never enforced 100%.

That the deterioration in Greek-Turkish relations --mainly due to the conflict in Cyprus-- have had a very negative impact on the Government-Minority and Minority-Majority relations in Western Thrace is also a widely accepted and undisputed view:

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

Though the Greek and Turkish governments have always purported to defend the rights and interests of the Minorities, in actuality both have seen them as pawns in the acrimonious Turkish-Greek chess game. In this sense the worries of the Greek government concerning the Minority were not exactly unfounded.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

With the first signs of deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations, Greece has shaped all aspects of her national security policies around the assumption that Turkey is the "main threat". And, since the mid-seventies Greece's defense dogma is based on the premise that Turkey is pursuing an expansionist policy, that Turkey is trying to expand her influence and even her territories at the expense of Greece. I believe this premise is wrong, and, therefore, I think Greece's defense dogma and national security strategies are misguided.

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

The Greek policies for the Minority have admittedly been guided by fear; fear of Turkey, and fear of losing Thrace; not a completely unjustified, but certainly an exaggerated fear. And fear is never a good guide. We are dealing with Minority affairs with a calmer, more rational approach now, but the fear is still there.

[Community activist, former teacher at a minority high school, laid off by the government; Turkish-Muslim minority member; male]

The Cyprus issue has of course has a negative impact on the government-minority relations. Moreover, the way Greek-Turkish disputes are presented in the media (the jingoistic tone, the distortions) has affected the inter-communal climate very negatively.

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

The tension between Greece and Turkey is still a very serious problem for the minority. This tension is reproduced/reflected at the local level between Greek and Minority extremists – Greek hyper-nationalists and Turkish hyper-nationalists. But, fortunately, these are marginal groups; they do not represent the majority of either population.

Having observed the dramatic improvement of the Greek majority's situation since the re-establishment of democracy, as far as civil and political rights were concerned, the Minority began to expect and **demand** that its situation, too, be improved. The relative deprivation

Muslims had always felt vis-à-vis the majority became even more intense, and the frustration resulting from this deprivation more difficult to contain<sup>3</sup>. Parallel to this development, the expression of discontent became easier after the restoration of democracy. Thus minority members began to complain and demand changes more frequently either as individuals or in the form of organized protests.

- *Development* -- another demand reinforced by "relative deprivation": Improvement of the Minority's socioeconomic situation and its education, and an equitable distribution of development aid, of government funds, and --eventually-- of wealth, between local Greeks and local Muslims:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The efforts to bring economic development to Western Thrace were initiated in the '80s, but these should not be considered among the measures to improve the conditions of the Minority. The governments gave loans, with extremely generous terms, to Greek businessmen – and *only* to Greek businessmen – to invest in Thrace, and, as a result, there has been some economic development in the region. This development, however, had little impact on the Minority. It benefited the Majority, as its actual objective was to stop its emigration to other parts of Greece or abroad.

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

As regards economic conditions, there is a huge gap between the Minority and the Majority. All the wealth in this region is concentrated in the hands of Greeks. There are no industrial plants, for instance, owned by Turks. And, if you visit the coast, you'll see that all the villas there are owned by Greeks. No Turk can afford such a villa.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a variant of what Ted Gurr calls in his book *Why Men Rebel* (1970) "aspirational deprivation": The "value expectations" of the Muslim minority increased dramatically after the restoration of democracy, while government policies kept this group's "value capabilities" at the same level. According to Gurr, those who experience this kind of deprivation do not "anticipate or experience significant loss of what they have; they are angered because they feel they have no means for attaining new or intensified expectations" (1970; p.50).

Muslims overall were poorer and significantly less educated than the Greek-Christian majority. Also, the predominantly Muslim neighborhoods and towns had a less developed infrastructure or one that was in bad shape, compared to the predominantly Christian towns and neighborhoods. As for the education, the poor quality of teaching, the inadequate number of classrooms, and the shortage of educational material in Minority schools were acknowledged even by people who were once involved in the government's Minority education programs:

[A professor of Turkish Language and Literature, researcher at the Academy of Athens; involved in the preparation of Turkish textbooks for minority elementary school children; Greek; female]

A special and deliberately low-quality, retrogressive educational policy had been established for minority kids. It was as if the government wanted to keep the youth and children of this community uneducated and with very little knowledge of Greek.

- *Demands connected to the Muslim community's status as a Minority:* Full implementation of the articles in the Lausanne Treaty regarding the protection of Minorities -- religious, cultural, and educational rights -- without regard to Turkey's record of complying with the same articles (in other words, without taking account the principle of reciprocity).

Combined with these demands was the desire of the Muslim Minority to have a high degree of autonomy in its religious, cultural, and educational affairs (election of muftis by the community, self-government for the religious foundations, a say in the curriculum in the Minority schools, etc.)

- *Nationalistic and identity-related demands:* Free expression of Turkishness <sup>4</sup> and the government's recognition of the Minority's Turkish identity.

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<sup>4</sup> This falls within *the right to self-identification* -- a right currently (but not during pA) recognized by the Council of Europe and the European Inter-governmental system.

Since the 1930s, the minority has been guided by a Turkish-nationalist leadership. However, until the early 80s, the leadership had preferred to act prudently and to avoid open confrontation with the government. The new generation of minority leaders, however, in addition to being more nationalistic, was also keener to employ confrontational tactics in the struggle for their community's rights. These leaders organized a series of nonviolent protests <sup>5</sup>, such as group petitions, boycotts, and sit-ins (Soyutürk & Sağlam, 1996; Dede, 1988; Stathi, 1997; Reuters, 1997), and obtained the full support of Turkey, upon which the minority is to a significant degree dependent, culturally and economically.

So, many Minority demands were influenced, to a significant extent, by Turkish nationalism -- which made them even more difficult for the government to receive favorably. The desire of the Muslim Minority to assert its Turkishness was unavoidably linked in the minds of Greek government officials with the general perception of the "Turkish Threat":

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

The more Turkey was considered a threat and an enemy, the more restrictions were imposed upon our right to declare and celebrate our Turkish national identity. No Greek who is even the least bit familiar with our community can doubt the fact that we are Turks and that we "feel" Turkish. I believe that the unwillingness of Greece to recognize our national identity is the direct result of the thought that Turks are the enemy and a threat to Greece. So, while struggling to have our human, civil, and cultural rights recognized, we should also try to show our Greek friends that we are not their enemy, and that neither Turkey is the enemy of Greece.

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<sup>5</sup> These nationalistic minority leaders can be described as -- to borrow Charles Tilly's terms (1978) -- "political brokers" or "political entrepreneurs". Political brokers, according to Tilly (1996), manage to mobilize their communities by promoting a "bottom-up nationalism" which is often an antithesis and a reaction to the "top-down nationalism" promoted by the government.

Minority leaders consistently put on the top of their list of demands the ones related to their community's national identity. They wanted to express their and their ethnic group's Turkishness, freely:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Among the several oppressive policies, the one that was most insulting to the Minority was the government's playing with our identity, and interference with our expression of our identity – our Turkishness.

They also demanded that the Minority's Turkish identity be officially recognized by the government, even if the Lausanne Treaty did not put Greece under the obligation to do so:

[Member of the County Assembly, attorney; M-T minority member; Male]

While it is true that the Lausanne Treaty refers to our community as the "Muslim" minority, the preference of religion over ethnicity in identifying us was due to the Ottoman millet system. The Lausanne treaty was signed over the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and, therefore, the legal terms of the Ottoman system had to be used. But now that this empire is part of distant history, and given that both Greece and Turkey are nation-states, the insistence on identifying this minority in religious terms is obsolete and anachronistic. It has to change. It is past time that we were considered a national minority.

[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

The minority rights framework provided by the Lausanne treaty was and is satisfactory to our community. There is just one problem with this Treaty, however: We are referred to as the "Muslim minority", which makes it legitimate for Greece to consider us a religious and not a national minority.

In the negotiations leading to the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkish government preferred the recognition of minorities on religious and not on national criteria, because, among other things, that was the only way to prevent the recognition of Kurds as a minority.

Because these demands by and large remained unmet during this period, we see a reduction of the Minority's **support** for the Government and the Greek political system as a whole. More specifically, we observe:

- Reduced diffuse support due to alienation toward the political system: The government's loss of legitimacy<sup>6</sup> in Minority's eyes.

Muslims in Greece, who, as a minority, always had a stronger predisposition for alienation, now indeed began to feel alienated: They developed the impression that the Greek state was not "theirs, too", that the political system of the country, was not "for them, too".

- Reduced support for the major political parties: The establishment of independent -- essentially minority-only -- political formations, like the political "lists" of *Güven* in Rhodope County, and *İkbal* in Xanthi County. These formations obtained the vast majority of Minority votes in the elections in 1989 and 1990.

Some of the nationalistic-exclusionist positions these political movements advocated have later (when the situation cooled down) been characterized, by Minority leaders themselves, as extreme:

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

Beginning in 1967, when the military junta took over the government, State policies regarding minority affairs became increasingly oppressive, and, as a result, pushed the Minority to extreme positions.

- Reduced support for governmental organizations, for the judicial system, and for government-appointed functionaries and representatives, including the muftis, leading to the emergence of some non-legal formations, like the High Council of the Minority, non-legal

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<sup>6</sup> "[Legitimacy] involves persuading those who seem to be doing poorly in the short run that they will do better, even much better, in some longer run, precisely because of the structure of the system, and that consequently they should support the continued functioning of the system and its decision-making process." (I. Wallerstein, *Utopistics Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century*, New York, NY: The New Press, 1998; p. 4).

representatives, like the "elected" muftis, and non-legal methods of expression of demands and discontent (civil disobedience).

- Complete withdrawal of support via emigration ("exit")<sup>7</sup> and transfer of wealth from Thrace to Turkey and other countries.

### The Local Greek Majority in Thrace

#### Demands:

- Improvement of the region's socio-economic situation, bringing it closer to level of developed regions of Greece: Extra inducements to attract business and industry, some preferential treatment of the Thrace residents to help them close the gap with the rest of Greece.
- Repression of the Minority's Turkish-nationalistic mobilization.

The nationalistic rhetoric that accompanied the Minority's organized protests, a rhetoric that was often anti-Greek, was quite threatening to the Greek majority, and detrimental to inter-communal relations:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Majority-Minority relations were good until the protests and the turmoil caused by them started. With the protests and the mobilization of the Minority, relations between the two communities got tense and perturbed.

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<sup>7</sup> "Exit" is a term used by Alfred O. Hirschman in his book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (1970) to describe, among other things, actions like flight and emigration of people who are extremely dissatisfied and unhappy with the government. Those who choose the "exit" option, according to Hirschman's model, have, by definition, concluded that opposition and protests is not going to improve their situation, and find it impossible to show loyalty ("diffuse support") to a government that is disrespectful or unresponsive to their needs.



It was this perception of threat that made it morally justifiable for many local Greeks to demand the repression of their Muslim neighbors.

- Constant reassurance from the Greek government that Thrace will be protected and defended in case of an attack from Turkey.

Fear and suspicion of Turkey's intentions and ties with the Minority have been nearly universal among the Local Greeks. Even progressive Thracian Greeks have not been immune of these sentiments:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Turkey does not seem to know what it is that she wants to do with the Minority. She *has* tried to use the Minority here as a leverage to put pressure on Greece – that is for sure, but is that all she is trying to do? It is not clear.

- Constant reassurance that Thrace will maintain its predominantly Greek character, despite any increase of the Muslim population.

#### **Support:**

- Increased support for government measures to repress the Minority's demands --particularly the nationalistic ones, to stop its organized protests, and to silence its discontent.
- Increased diffuse support in the form of Greek nationalism.

#### **Greek Human Rights NGOs**

These organizations were just being formed in pA, i.e., the first period. They were not a well-established actor yet, especially so with respect to the issues regarding the Muslim minority. In

other words, those who were already active had not focused on Western Thrace yet. Therefore this actor's impact on the Government in this period has to be considered negligible.

### **Greek Nationalist Circles**

#### **Demands:**

- Constant vigilance and readiness in order to confront any act of Turkish expansionism and provocation.
- Complete crackdown of the Muslim Minority's organized expression of discontent.
- Close surveillance of the Minority's nationalistic leadership and elite.
- Measures to sever the Minority's ties with Turkey, thus "freeing" the Muslims of Thrace from Turkish influence. Such measures should include the shutdown of the Turkish general consulate in Komotini.
- Enhancement of all of the Minority's ethnocultural identities (such as Pomak and Roma) that could be a rival to the Minority's Turkish identity.
- Measures to increase the Greek population of Thrace by settling in this region ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union who immigrated to Greece.

Also, providing financial and other incentives for Greek families to encourage them to have three and more children.

- Improvement of the socio-economic situation of the Greeks in Thrace, so as to reduce emigration and encourage Greeks from other parts of the country to move into this region.
- Basing the Muslim Minority's human-rights situation on the principle of negative reciprocity between Greece and Turkey.

More specifically, the adoption by the Greek government of measures that would limit the Minority's human and cultural rights to such extent as to make them the same as those of the Greek Minority in Turkey.

**Support:**

- Full support and justification for the Government's repressive and discriminatory policies toward the Muslim Minority.
- Increased diffuse support: Efforts to enhance Greek "patriotism" throughout the society.
- Full support for the Military and its special role in Thrace.

**The Left/Liberal, Non-Nationalist Circles**

During pA the groups and people that collectively form this actor were not focused on issues related to the Muslim Minority. The "Turkish threat" was a concern for them as well, but they concentrated their efforts and energy on improving the social and political rights of workers, of farmers, of civil servants, of the retired, and of women. Economic issues were more important to

them, but also in their actions the implied assumption was that the Greek society was ethnically homogeneous.

### **The Orthodox Church of Greece**

#### **Demands**

The Church in pA was a close ally of the local Greek majority and the Nationalist Circles. As a result, most of the Church's demands from the government pertaining to Minority issues were identical to the ones stated by these two actors.

A Greek Majority member I interviewed acknowledged that there was some sort of an alliance among the Nationalist Circles, the Church, and a segment of Thracian Greeks and referred to it as the "Greek Lobby", a grouping formed, in his view, *in reaction to* Turkish nationalism of the Minority and the influence of the Turkish Consulate:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

There are two nationalistic centers in Thrace that have always been the source of intercommunal tension:

(A) The Turkish Consulate and the Minority activists it supports, and

(B) The Greek nationalistic lobby.

[...]

The other nationalistic center is the Greek Lobby. The leading voices and most important representatives of this center are the Church<sup>8</sup>, particularly its local leadership, and especially the Bishop of Maroneia & Komotini, Mr. Damaskinos, the newspapers Chronos and Patriada, and the Association of immigrants and refugees from Imbros, Constantinople, Tenedos, and Eastern Thrace (IKTATH).

The Church's main concern with respect to Western Thrace seemed to be the maintenance and perpetuation of the Greek and Christian character of the region.

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<sup>8</sup> In Greece, when people refer to "the Church" they mean the Greek Orthodox Church of Greece, whose predominant or "prevailing" status is recognized even by the Constitution (1975, Section II, Art. 3).

The alliance of the Church with the Greek nationalists, and the leading role played by the local bishops in this alliance had, predictably, a detrimental effect in Muslim-Christian relations in Thrace:

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The Orthodox Church, I am sorry to say, has been poisoning inter-communal relations, especially in Rhodope County, and has been contributing to tension and enmity. While I respect the Church as an institution, I have no respect whatsoever for Bishop Damaskinos. With his statements and actions he has worsened our problems and deserves no respect from any Minority member

One thing the Church expressly demanded of the Government was a say and *a veto power for the bishops over any government decision to approve applications from minority Muslim communities to build, extend or repair mosques*. Actually, that was a demand with a legal basis: An "advisory" role on these matters had been given to the Greek Orthodox bishops by two laws introduced in 1938 and 1939 during the Metaxas dictatorship <sup>9</sup>.

### Support

With regard to support for the Government on Thrace-related issues, the Church's position was, again, almost identical with that of the Nationalist Circles and the Greek majority in that region.

The Church of Greece, since its establishment in the 1830s, has held the view that every Greek-Orthodox, in order to be a good Christian, also had to be a good patriot. For Greeks, loving their

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<sup>9</sup> Under the laws 1363/1938 and 1672/1939, the building of any non-Orthodox place of worship is subject to authorization by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and "by the recognized ecclesiastical authority", which is interpreted as the local Orthodox bishop (See the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the case of Manoussakís and others v. Greece [1996], at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/>).

nation and their homeland, fighting and sacrificing their lives – if necessary – for Greece and the Hellenic nation was, according to this Church, a sacred requirement. For this reason, the Church of Greece has always been supportive of the Greek military – even as members of the clergy have been exempt of military service.

### *Extra-Societal Environment*

#### **Turkey**

#### **Demands**

Most of Turkish government's demands were very similar to the ones posed by the Turkish-Muslim Minority. What Turkey repeatedly demanded in international meetings and bilateral contacts or negotiations with Greece was:

- Equal treatment of the Minority;
- Full implementation by Greece of the articles in the Lausanne Treaty <sup>10</sup> regarding the protection of Minorities -- regardless of Turkey's record of complying with the same articles:

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

Turkey has always claimed to be the "protector country", the "mother country" for the Minority and has based its claims on the Lausanne Treaty and other agreements and protocols concluded subsequently between Greece and Turkey.

It is impossible to deny that the Lausanne Treaty and those other agreements give Turkey some say on issues related to the Muslim minority. They do not give her the role of the "protector country", but they make it possible for Turkey to be involved in Minority affairs.

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See also the US Dept. of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999, Greece, Section I ([http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/irf/irf\\_rpt/1999/irf\\_greece99.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_greece99.html))

<sup>10</sup> These are articles 37 – 44, which are about the protection of the Non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, and article 45, which says that Greece is under the obligation to accord the Muslim minority in Western Thrace exactly the same rights as the ones recognized by Turkey for its non-Muslim minorities.

The Lausanne Treaty, signed in 1923, is not only about the Minorities. It is *the* document that gives the current Turkish State international legitimacy. According to a Minority lawyer, this fact makes it more important for Turkey to see to it that Greece abide by the treaty:

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

Turkey's Western Thrace policy has always been basically the same; apart from a few nuances it has not changed and has always been focussed on the Lausanne treaty. One of Turkey's basic aims is to keep the Lausanne treaty, the foundation of its international legitimacy, alive and functional, and to do everything it can to protect and preserve it. Putting pressure on Greece to respect that treaty is just one of those things that it does toward this goal.

The interests and well-being of the Minority have always been of secondary importance.

(This argument does not explain, however, why the Turkish State has been unwilling to fully implement the articles of the Lausanne Treaty that pertain to the Greek minority in Turkey.)

- Free expression of the Minority's Turkishness and the recognition by Greece of the Minority's Turkish identity.
- More Turkish education at Minority schools and an improvement of the conditions at these schools: more classrooms, more teachers, a larger quota for teachers sent from Turkey, a relaxation of the criteria used to scrutinize books sent from Turkey, etc.

### **Support**

With respect to Western Thrace, throughout this period, Turkey provided no support, no positive input whatsoever to the Greek government. In fact, due to the very tense relations between these two countries during pA, the Turkish government was reluctant to make any positive statements

on *any* issue regarding Greece. But even in the brief times of Greek-Turkish thaw, like in late 1980, when Turkey approved (i.e. did not veto) Greece's re-entry into NATO's military wing, and in 1988, after the Ozal-Papandreou meeting in Davos, Turkey's negative stance on the Western Thrace minority question remained unchanged <sup>11</sup>.

### **The Turkish Western-Thrace Diaspora Organizations**

#### **Demands**

The demands of these organizations are almost the same as the ones of the Minority. Just like the Turks in Western Thrace, their kin in diaspora ask for equal treatment of the Minority, full respect for the minority rights delineated by the Lausanne Treaty, improvement of the Minority's socio-economic situation, and, more importantly, and more vocally, free expression and recognition of the Minority's Turkishness.

This last demand is often accompanied with a nationalistic interpretation of the Western Thracian history, with references on the Turkish predominance in the region for more than five hundred years, and with special emphasis on a fifty-two-day period in 1913, during the Balkan Wars, when the Turkish-Muslim community of this region, under the influence of local (nationalist-modernist) "Young Turks", established the "Turkish Republic of Western Thrace" <sup>12</sup>. This "first

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<sup>11</sup> The only Turkish response that could be described as a positive input is the very low-key reaction of the government in Turkey to the rough way a Muslim mass demonstration was dispersed by the Greek police in Western Thrace, one day before the Ozal-Papandreou meeting.

<sup>12</sup> Actually this is a name given to that quasi-state decades later, by nationalist historians, diaspora and Minority activists who reinterpreted that historical event from a nationalistic and Kemalist perspective. The authentic name of that formation was "Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Müstakile", i.e. The Independent Government of Western Thrace. (Batibey, 2000; p. 51 & p. 119)



republic ever established by Turks anywhere on Earth" was not recognized by any nation and quickly disintegrated (Batıbey, 2000; p. 73). The flag of this republic, however, reappeared in pA and was used frequently in diaspora meetings, alongside the Turkish flag.

The nationalistic nature of the demand for the recognition of the Minority's Turkishness, and the implied secessionism in the way it was expressed, made it impossible to be received with understanding by the Greek government. Instead, it caused anger, and resulted in the dismissal by the Greek leaders and policy-makers of *all* the demands made by diaspora organizations.

And that is mainly why these organizations followed a different strategy in targeting their demands: Rather than addressing the Greek government *directly*, Diaspora groups of Western Thrace Turks generally attempted to put pressure on it *indirectly*, through the European organizations (with very limited success), and through the Turkish government (with more success). In other words, their demands were more often directed at these two actors than at the Greek government itself.

### **Support**

Diaspora organizations during pA showed no support whatsoever for the Greek government. In fact, although a large number of their members were Greek citizens, we observe a complete withdrawal of support for this country's government, even the minimum diffuse support expected of a citizen.

## The European System of Inter-governmental Organizations

### The European Union

Unlike the OSCE and the CoE, the European Community (also known as the "Common Market", or the European Union, as it was renamed in 1992) has been much less engaged in minority-related issues. The Community's primary focus, especially until the nineties, has been the *economic* integration process of its member states. Therefore, harmonizing the policies of the member states toward their ethnic minorities or improving the rights or conditions of these minorities was seen, throughout pA, as mainly outside this organization's scope.

In fact, until the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 (which I will examine in the second period), there was not a single European Union treaty provision concerning the protection of ethnic or national minorities. Before this treaty, the most significant legal basis for the small number of measures adopted by the EC/EU organs was Article 49 of the European Community Treaty (of Rome), which was about the free movement of workers: For instance, a few directives based on this article stated that member states had to abolish all forms of discrimination, because, among other things, they hindered the mobility of workers.

This does not mean however, that issues related to ethnic minorities were totally ignored or neglected by this organization's various bodies. There were some decisions and resolutions, mainly of a normative approach, adopted by the European Parliament. There were some measures taken by the European Commission and the European Council that were of a financial nature. In addition, the issue of minorities came up quite a few times in EU's relations with non-member countries. How the issue of minorities was handled in the Community's foreign relations

did have an effect, albeit an indirect one, on the Community's approach toward "its own" minorities. Last, but not least, the Community dealt more extensively with a series of social issues, such as human rights, combating racism, asylum and refugees, that were quite related to minority issues.

Among the Community's organs the one that showed the most interest in issues concerning ethnic or national minorities in pA was the European Parliament. Before 1990, the Parliament adopted a number of resolutions on the rights and treatment of minorities, more specifically on the instruction of minority languages, on the protection of regional cultures, on broadcasting in minority languages, but these were all of non-binding nature and therefore lacked real practical effect<sup>13</sup>.

### **Demands**

In the first half of pA, Greece was not a member of EU. This country was instead a candidate, negotiating accession to this organization. The negotiations were centered on economic issues. Issues pertaining to democratization and human rights were also being dealt with, and it was mainly due to the European Community's demand that Greece adopted the International

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<sup>13</sup> For a very thorough legal analysis on how the various European Union organs approached or dealt with issues pertaining to ethnocultural minorities, see Gabriel Toggenburg, "A Rough Orientation through a Delicate Relationship: The European Union's Endeavors for (its) Minorities." *European Integration Online Papers* (an Internet journal by the EC Studies Assoc. of Austria), 2000, vol. 4, No. 16, <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-016a.htm>

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)<sup>14</sup>, but Minority rights received little attention.

The Common Market's demands from Greece had to do with economic restructuring, adjustment of Greek laws, especially economic and business regulations, to the European legal framework and further democratization. But there was no demand that specifically mentioned the Muslim Minority.

After Greece became a member of the European Community, in 1981, the demands did not change in character, but became less negotiable: Greece was now *under the obligation* of complying with many of them. Yet even then, the Community showed little interest in Minority rights in Greece, or in the situation of the Muslims in Thrace. The Greek government's claims that the Minority's situation was good and that it received equal treatment were accepted without much skepticism by the EC.

### **Support**

Getting support from the European Union is very important for its members, because it has the ability to show it in financial terms, that is, by providing money. So, government projects can be accomplished much faster and more easily if they receive EU support. The Union is especially

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<sup>14</sup> This convention was incorporated into the legal system of Greece through the Law 927, passed in 1979, which was amended and extended by the Law 1419, passed in 1984. These laws did indeed protect all persons present in Greece from different forms of racial and religious discrimination, but no provision was made for violations of the principle of equal treatment. (Anti-Discrimination Legislation in EU Member-States, a report prepared by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). Vienna, Austria: EUMC, 2000; p.8)

committed to supporting projects intended for regions in member-countries that lag behind in development.

As far as Greece is concerned, the most important financial support given by the EU in this period was from the Structural and Regional Development Funds <sup>15</sup>. A large amount of that was received in the "first Delors Package", the first Community Support Framework (1989), which involved several billion dollars to be spent for infrastructure development projects throughout Greece, including Thrace, the poorest part of the country, at that time. Yet only a small portion of the package was spent in Thrace. Most of the money was spent to improve the public transportation and traffic situation in Athens and in other big Greek cities <sup>16</sup>.

In addition to concrete and tangible types of support, such as the above, the EU has also provided intangible, or unquantifiable support for the Greek political system. For instance, the accession of Greece into the EU was an international recognition that the political regime of this country was now a stable, consolidated democracy. In other words, by making Greece its member, the Community supported -- in fact, rewarded -- the free-democratic practices of this country's government.

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<sup>15</sup> For a concise description of the objectives, allocation, and results of these funds, see Working for the Regions: European Union Regional Policy, a brochure prepared by the Directorate-General of Regional Policy. Luxembourg: Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> For a description and a critique of the Greek government in the way it allocated the funds from the "Delors packages", see the speech of Konstantinos Gatsios titled "Δίκτυα Υποδομής – Μεγάλα Έργα" (Webs of Infrastructure – Big Works) [in Greek], in Πρακτικά Τρίτου Παγκοσμίου Συνεδρίου Θρακών (1996) [Minutes of the Third World Meeting of Thracians] [in Greek]. Komotini, Greece: The Municipality of Komotini and Paratiritis Publications, 1998; pp. 145-153.

## The CSCE

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), was established in Helsinki, in 1975. It did not become a full-fledged organization (the **Organization** on Security & Cooperation in Europe -- OSCE) until the nineties. Before then, diplomats used to describe CSCE as a "process", and referred to it as the "Helsinki Process". The documents adopted within the framework of this Conference in its first fifteen years, the most significant of which being the Helsinki Final Act (1975), deal extensively with individual human rights, but only briefly and parenthetically mention the rights of ethnic minorities in signatory countries. Accordingly, the first "human dimension" meetings of CSCE, where human rights issues were discussed, were focused on *individual* civil and political rights, particularly in the "Socialist block" countries.

As a result, the role of CSCE in the Western Thrace conflict during pA can be characterized as insignificant – if not negligible.

## The Council of Europe (CoE)

Human rights have always been the primary area of specialization for this organization <sup>17</sup>. The Council has prepared and passed several conventions on human rights that have been integrated

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, according to its website at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Communication\\_and\\_Research/Contacts\\_with\\_the\\_public/About\\_Council\\_of\\_Europe/An\\_overview/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Communication_and_Research/Contacts_with_the_public/About_Council_of_Europe/An_overview/) the Council declares its aims as follows:

- " The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organization which aims:
- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
  - to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity;
  - to seek solutions to problems facing European society (discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, environmental protection, human cloning, Aids, drugs, organized crime, etc.);

into the legal system of every member-state which ratified them. (The most important of these documents is the "European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms", signed in 1950).

One CoE organ that has been especially important when it comes to the Minority issues in Western Thrace is the **European Court of Human Rights**. Citizens of member-states who allege that their human rights were violated by the government can, after exhausting all domestic legal means, bring their case before this Court. The Court may rule in their favor, and impose hefty fines, or financial punishments, on the government. Member-state governments are under treaty obligation to abide by the Court's rulings. The Court can also recommend that the government change the laws or decisions or practices that caused the specific human rights violations involved in the case.

After this introduction, let's see the demands and support of CoE directed at the Greek Government in pA:

#### **Demands**

- Full compliance with the Council's conventions ratified by Greece (especially the European Convention for Human Rights).
- Implementation without delay of all the rulings of the Court of Human Rights, and, more generally,

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- to help consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform. "

- Maintenance of human-rights standards that are appropriate for a free, democratic, European country.

Lawyers in the Muslim community of Thrace, just like most other Greek citizens, were not well informed, during pA, about the legal avenues the CoE could provide for their clients whose rights were violated. After all, these were very recent legal developments in this period: Greece was readmitted to the Council only after the fall of dictatorship and its citizens gained the right *individually* to bring the cases to the Court of Human Rights only in 1975<sup>18</sup>. The benefits and opportunities provided by the Council and its organs were still very new to the citizens of this country. So few lawyers in Greece, and even fewer in the Minority, were familiar with the required procedures and the steps to be taken that would enable this Court to accept their clients' cases and give them full consideration. The result of this was that very few cases were taken all the way to the European Court of Human Rights in pA. The Court and the Council, therefore, was much less effective in the Western Thrace conflict than it could have been.

### **Support**

The most noteworthy type of support the Council of Europe can provide to its member-states is international legitimacy. It provides it by approving their policies, by accepting their actions, by finding some restrictive laws or measures in these countries justifiable, and by dismissing criticisms or complaints against the member-states.

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<sup>18</sup> Before then, i.e., in the period 1950-1967 and 1974-1975, Greece did not accept the competence of the Court to receive applications from Greek individuals, non-governmental organizations or groups of individuals. Accepting the competence of the Court for such application was at that time left to the decision of each member-country.



With respect then to the European Court of Human Rights, if the case of the plaintiff(s) is dismissed, it becomes extremely difficult for them to still claim that their human rights were violated or denied unjustifiably. This gives enormous legal support for the government to continue its practices that gave rise to the case.

### **International Human-Rights NGOs**

International non-governmental organizations fighting human-rights violations did not play a significant role in the Western Thrace conflict during pA. The Minority leaders in this period were not enthusiastic about asking the help of these organizations regarding the problems of the Thracian Muslim community. Rather, they preferred to inform the world about human rights violations almost exclusively through Turkey, that is to say, through Turkish diplomats.

In addition, international NGOs for human rights at that time were only beginning to establish links with Greek NGOs, which, as mentioned above, were not well-informed about the problems in Thrace, anyway.

Despite these serious limitations, it may still be useful to examine these international NGOs' demands and support in this period in somewhat more detail:

### **Demands**

Aside for demanding in general terms that Greece comply with all the human rights requirements specified in the treaties it ratified, it is hard to say that these organizations did or stated anything related to the Muslim Minority in pA. The first detailed and specific report on

this Minority's situation prepared by an international NGO was published only in 1990, by Human Rights Watch <sup>19</sup>.

### **Support**

Compared to the severe human-rights violations and the restrictions to various freedoms during the dictatorship, Greece was a much freer country in pA, that is, in the first years of democracy. There were significant improvements with respect to human rights. Most International NGOs took note of that and praised Greece in their reports, thus showing their support for the human-rights policies of the Greek government. Thus, from the ample praise and little criticism coming from the NGOs, the government got the message that its human-rights policies was in compliance with international standards and that no further improvements were called for.

### **The United States Government**

The US State Department began to systematically deal with human-rights issues only in the late seventies, during the Carter administration. In fact, the first annual human-rights report of the State Department was published in 1979. But even after human rights became part of the American foreign policy, the administrations were reluctant, at least initially, to criticize human-rights practices and to meddle with minority problems in allied countries. As a result, Greece received little criticism from the US as far as the problems of the Muslim Minority are concerned. The first criticisms on this issue that bothered Greek diplomats and that required an official reply were the ones included in the reports of 1990 and '91.

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<sup>19</sup> Lois Whiting, Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Turks of Greece, A Helsinki Watch Report, New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, August 1990.

Before then, the rights of the Muslim Minority was not an issue in Greek-American negotiations, so, it would not be meaningful to talk about demands and support from the US government in pA.

### **Actors within the Government**

**And**

### **Their Demands and Supports as *Withinputs***

#### **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

This Ministry and its diplomats in this period were generally in favor of the *status quo* in Minority issues and against any change.

#### **Demands**

Both high-ranking diplomats and the ones located in Thrace who coordinated the policies for the Muslim Minority had these demands from the Greek government:

- that issues on the Muslim Minority be considered within the general framework of Greek-Turkish relations;
- that the principle of *reciprocity* be applied on every decision about the Muslims by always taking into consideration the situation of Greeks in Turkey (in other words, since there is no improvement in the conditions of the Greeks in Turkey, there is no need to improve the conditions of the Muslims/Turks in Greece);
- that, since there is little international criticism, , the current situation in Thrace be maintained as it is, despite the human-rights violations and restrictions, because these keep the Minority under tight control;
- that the government keep a close eye on Turkish nationalist Minority leaders in Thrace and in diaspora, and try to prevent minority efforts to mobilize and organize the Muslim community along nationalistic lines;

- that the Muslim Minority (despite the linkage of its issues with the Greek-Turkish relations) continue to be recognized only as a *religious* minority (as opposed to a *national*, i.e., Turkish minority), and that no right in addition to the ones delineated in the Lausanne Treaty be given to the Minority (i.e., maintenance of the legal status quo).

### **Support**

As can be deduced from the above demands, the Foreign Ministry officials supported the legal status quo, mainly because they thought it was necessary in minimizing any dangers coming from the Minority and also because they considered any improvements in the situation of the Muslim Minority to be a unilateral concession in Greek-Turkish relations, which, in turn, could be construed by Turkey as a sign of weakness.

### **The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces**

In the wake of the war in Cyprus and the restoration of democracy in 1974, there were two significant changes in the thinking and perception of the defense bureaucracy and the armed forces of Greece:

First, Turkey was now designated as the most serious military threat for Greece, and as unquestionably the main enemy. From the Greek Civil War until the Cyprus war, the Greek defense establishment had focused on the "the threat from the north", in other words, the threat from the socialist bloc countries. For the Greek military the major enemy was communism and communists outside the country, and also inside the country. They did consider Turkey to be a threat, but after all it was also an ally, a member of NATO a country with whose military they could cooperate in the struggle against communism. After the fall of the fervently anti-

communist dictatorship and the war in Cyprus, this perception changed radically. In the eyes of the Greek defense establishment, communism now was still a threat, but a small one compared to the Turkish expansionism that prevailed in Cyprus<sup>20</sup>. And, just as in the struggle against communism communist Greeks were seen as the internal enemy, in the struggle against Turkish expansionism the Muslim-Turks in Thrace were now seen, much more than before, as the enemy within.

Second, after having lost its popularity during the dictatorship and after having been disgraced and humiliated because of its ineptitude during the Cyprus war, the military, after 1974, decided to subordinate itself to civilian control. It accepted a much-reduced role in the political system, and refrained from expressing its views on issues not related to defense. In addition, the political leadership used its newly-gained power over the military to remove or discharge the officers who would not accept the new role of the military in post-dictatorship Greece.

Nevertheless, because the topic of the Muslim Minority was intrinsically connected to the national security and, more specifically, to the "Turkish threat", the political leadership did recognize a special role for the military in Thrace. The "restricted zone" in the north of this region, first established as a defensive measure against Bulgaria, was kept intact and under the jurisdiction of the Military, now with the not-openly-expressed purpose of keeping the (overwhelmingly Pomak) Muslim residents of the zone under tight control. In addition, the

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<sup>20</sup> The fact that both Greece and Turkey were members of NATO did not prevent a war in Cyprus and a quasi-war situation between the two neighboring countries. Thus, disappointed that NATO failed to stop Turkey from invading Cyprus, Greece withdrew from the military structure of the organization in 1974, but it re-entered in 1980, only after receiving some minimal assurances from NATO regarding its security.

government paid a special and deferential attention to the minority-related withinputs coming from the armed forces.

### **Demands**

The specific demands of the Military with regard to the Muslim Minority were the following:

- Because the Minority members in Thrace have the potential of becoming a "fifth column", the government should make sure that they have *no access* to weapons. Therefore, Muslims should *not* be granted hunting licenses or licenses to carry a gun.
- Thracian Muslim males should *not* do their military service in Thrace, but in other regions of Greece.
- Muslim males cannot have an equal chance with Christian Greeks to become military officers. That would mean giving too much power and access to a potential enemy within the military.
- Given the Greek-Turkish enmity, the courts and the central defense bureaucracy should be lenient in cases of harsh treatment of Muslim males while doing their military service, especially if they demonstrate a provocative attitude by insisting on their Turkishness.
- To the extent that it is legally possible, Pomak Muslims should be treated as an ethnic group that is different from the Muslims of Turkish origin. It is important to emphasize the distinctions between Turks and Pomaks.

### **Support**

The Military was in general supportive of all the restrictive policies against Muslims implemented by various governmental institutions. It was in favor of measures that would make the Minority a more controlled, less powerful, and less dangerous group of people.

### **The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs**

This ministry overall had few withinputs, in pA, for the other bodies of the Greek government.

Rather, it carried out the policies designed by other governmental segments, without raising any demands for modification or enhancement.

The only significant minority-related withinputs originating from the Education Ministry during this period were on the issue of the teaching of Turkish.

### **Demands**

More specifically, this ministry's demands on this issue were the following:

- The government should fully endorse the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki -- an institution set up exclusively to train Minority members to become teachers of Turkish in Minority schools. Graduates of this academy, who are usually of Pomak origin, should be preferred over teachers from other schools or universities, and especially over teachers from Turkey. The need to exchange teachers between Greece and Turkey, which is regulated according to an agreement signed in 1951, for the Minority schools of both countries, should be gradually eliminated.
- (A withinput/demand raised in the late eighties) Given the constant problems about the content and appropriateness of Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey <sup>21</sup>, the education ministry should form a committee consisting of Greek scholars of the Turkish language and prepare its own Turkish textbooks. These books would be fully compliant with the standards and

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<sup>21</sup> A Greek-Turkish protocol signed in 1968 sets forth the conditions according to which the two governments could send textbooks to "their" minorities in the neighboring country.



regulations of the Greek educational system and would not contain any Turkish-nationalistic or fanatical remarks.

### **Support**

Throughout pA this Ministry supported the Minority-related policies conducted by other bodies of government and made sure that its own approach to the Muslim Minority was in full agreement with the other ministries'.

### **The National Intelligence Service (EYP)**

EYP, also known as KYP <sup>22</sup>, has always been suspicious of the Muslim Minority, particularly of its educated elites. Its suspiciousness only deepened after 1974. The main withinput, therefore, this organization sent to the government was that Muslims should be under tight control and that they should be deterred from engaging in organized protests:

[A professor of Turkish Language and Literature, researcher at the Academy of Athens; involved in the preparation of Turkish textbooks for minority elementary school children; Greek; female]

[...]

KYP/EYP has always followed minority activities very closely and with suspicion. In fact, until a few years ago, the intelligence service used to keep an eye on almost every activity and initiative, even state-sponsored ones, that had to do with minority. I, myself, with my own eyes, observed that, when I was in Thrace for a minority-related conference. The directors of the Bureaus of Cultural-Political [...] who were appointed by the military dictatorship before 1974, are known to have had close ties with EYP.

More analytically, these were EYP's main demands and support:

### **Demands**

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<sup>22</sup> The acronym for the former name of the Greek intelligence service – Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών (Central Intelligence Service). The service was reorganized into an organization more compatible with a democratic regime and was renamed in 1986 (see <http://www.nis.gr>). After the passage of this law, the PASOK government brought EYP under the government's control by assigning party officials to it. (See "Reforming EYP", editorial in *Kathimerini*, September 21, 2002). Thus, Kostas Tsimas, a former anti-dictatorship activist and a leading member of PASOK was appointed director of this service.

- The activities of the Minority leadership and elite should be under constant surveillance.
- Every minority-related meeting must be monitored.
- EYP should be allowed to penetrate into the Minority elite and, through informers, it should collect intelligence "from inside".
- Minority members should be deterred from organizing protests, if necessary by intimidation, because the ultimate goal of such actions is to destabilize Thrace, and their motive is to dispute Greek sovereignty over the region.
- Turkey should be prevented from exerting influence in Thrace through the Consulate in Komotini and through Turkish agents in the Minority.

### **Support**

EYP was generally supportive of all the governmental policies that restricted the freedoms of Minority members and that impeded their ability to complain or protest. What is more, to make its support more effective, it cooperated with actors in the society that had a similar opinion of the Minority and similar demands from the government: EYP provided these actors with intelligence and expertise in organizing and mobilizing.

### **The Ministry of Internal Affairs**

The only significant withinput of this Ministry in Minority Affairs was on the issue of Article 19 of the citizenship code, based on which thousands of Muslim Minority members lost their citizenship because they left Greece (or were only mistakenly thought to have left Greece) "with no intention to return".

### **Demands**

The Internal Affairs Ministry, throughout pA, advocated for the vigorous application of this Article. Other than this issue, this ministry faithfully carried through the policies formulated by other governmental bodies.

### **Support**

The Ministry supported the general strategy of the Government toward the Minority. Again on the issue of Article 19, it was deliberately unhelpful to Minority members stripped of their citizenship<sup>23</sup>.

### **Ombudsman**

This organization began to function only in 1998. It was, therefore, not present in pA.

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<sup>23</sup> According to an unpublished report entitled "A Struggle for Re-Entry: The Case of Stateless Turkish Minority Members in Western Thrace, Greece" written by Aysel Zeybek, the former representative of the Greek Helsinki Monitor in Thrace, and a victim of Article 19 herself, many Muslim Minority members who were stripped of their citizenship "chose to send a petition to the Internal Affairs Ministry for each case of citizenship removal, demanding that the Ministry revoke the action taken. The Ministry would reply to these petitions very belatedly, after the sixty-day period [provided by law to appeal the decision] had expired, and would indicate that only the Supreme Administrative Court could invalidate these actions. And applications sent to this Court after the expiration of the sixty-day period would invariably be rejected."

### "Outputs" in the First Period (pA)

We can see from the detailed descriptions in the previous section that most demands and support the Greek government received from its environment with regard to its policies for the Minority during pA (1974-90) could be met *only* with outputs<sup>24</sup> that restricted the freedoms and violated the rights of the Thracian Muslims. The aim of these outputs (that is to say policies, laws, measures, practices, etc.) seems to be the minimization of the perceived threat coming from the Thracian Muslims/Turks<sup>25</sup>. The government would minimize the Minority threat by reducing the size and proportion of that community in Thrace (by making Muslims' life in Thrace difficult and thus inducing them to emigrate<sup>26</sup>), by loosening their connection with Turkey, and by forcing them into becoming a less vocal, more "obedient" group.

That these were indeed the objectives of the policies designed and implemented in pA is a view currently held almost universally by the Minority in Thrace (though not necessarily by the Majority too). Here are two typical statements by Minority members on this topic:

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<sup>24</sup> One could also examine the "outcomes" of outputs, that is to say, the consequences and long-term changes caused by government policies, particularly in the Minority and Majority. The distinction between outputs and outcomes is presented analytically in D. Easton's *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1965); pp. 351-352. I will deal with the "outcomes" in Thrace, in some detail, when I focus on "feedback".

<sup>25</sup> Easton discusses in his book (*ibid.*, pp. 416-417) the effects of delays, or "time lags" between the moment an input is received and an output is produced. In the case of Western Thrace, such time lags did not have a noticeable effect: Outputs were produced shortly after "important" inputs were received. Therefore, and in order not to overcomplicate my analysis, I have decided to examine the dynamics of the Greek political system with respect to the Thracian Minority affairs as if there were no time lags.

<sup>26</sup> As Evangelos Damianakis, the general secretary of the Periphery of East Macedonia and Thrace in 1990, said to Helsinki Watch monitors, "if they [Minority members] are not happy in Greece, they can go back [*sic*] to Turkey" (Whitman, 1990; p. 34).

[Member of the Greek parliament, cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The government's objective was to make the life of minority members difficult, through a set of discriminatory policies; so difficult, that they would decide to leave Greece. And once they left, many Muslims would lose their citizenship, because of Article 19 of the citizenship code. That was one of the biggest weapons used against the minority.

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

The Greek government decided to minimize what it saw as the threat coming from the minority by taking repressive and oppressive measures against us. Even after the reinstatement, or return, of democracy, in 1974, repression did not stop.

Demands for extending the Minority's rights, and support for initiatives or policies that would improve the Muslims' conditions were not strong enough or significant enough (at least from the Government's point of view) to overpower demands and support for restrictive and discriminatory policies.

The result of this situation was a set of policies that led to the gradually increasing discontent of the Minority, and, therefore, to the gradually rising tensions in Government-Minority and Majority-Minority relations in Thrace. (I will examine that in more detail in the "feedback" section.)

More specifically, these were the most problematic Minority-related governmental outputs<sup>27</sup>:

- Denial of the Minority's ethnic and/or national identity, in other words, its "Turkishness".  
(Policies aimed at de-Turkification)

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<sup>27</sup> A detailed list of all the Greek policies that were discriminatory and repressive toward the Muslim Minority in the period 1974-90 can be found in Lois Whitman's Helsinki Watch report entitled Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Turks of Greece ( New York: Human Rights Watch, 1990).

In the past, referring to the Muslims of Thrace as the "Turkish minority" had been tolerated. More interestingly, in the early fifties, the term "Turkish Minority" was officially accepted and Greek government officials were even encouraged to use it (Whitman, 1990; p. 15).

Throughout pA, however, the Greek government, in every statement and action regarding the Muslim Minority, adamantly insisted that there were no "Turks" in Western Thrace. According to the Greek interpretation of the Lausanne Treaty, the Muslims of Thrace constituted a religious and *not* a national minority. Calling the Muslims of Thrace "Turkish" was, in the government's view, to imply that they were, in fact, a national minority. There was a general agreement in the government that even the de facto recognition that the Minority members had a Turkish national identity, would turn the Minority into an even bigger threat to Greece, and would allow Turkey to claim an even larger say in the decisions regarding this group. Therefore, invoking the terminology used in the Lausanne Treaty, the Greek government referred to the Minority members as "Greek Muslims", "Hellenic Muslims", or the "Muslim Minority" but never as the Turkish Minority.

Moreover, for the first time in the history of Greece, the government decided to criminalize the use of the word "Turkish" when it refers to the Minority.

Here are a few examples of this category of outputs:

\* In November 1977, the use of Turkish geographical names (names of towns, mountains, rivers, districts, etc.) in official documents, in petitions, and in the media (even in brackets

following the Greek geographical name) was prohibited (De Jong, 1980), and penalties of fines and even imprisonment were introduced for those who would violate this prohibition.

\* The Greek High Court in 1988 upheld a 1986 decision by the Court of Appeals in Western Thrace in which several Minority associations (most notably the Komotini Turkish Youth Union and the Xanthi Turkish Union) were banned from organizing any activities, unless they stop identifying themselves as "Turkish". They were ordered to either remove the adjective "Turkish" from their names or to completely cease their functions and dissolve themselves. The word "Turkish", according to the court judgement, could refer only to citizens or associations of Turkey, and its use to describe Greek Muslims had the intention to create confusion and tension in Thrace, and it could thus endanger public order.

The then director of the Xanthi Turkish Union had this to say on her organization and the severe restrictions it faced:

[Director of a Minority association; Muslim-Turkish minority member; Female]

The *Turkish* Union of Xanthi was established in 1927. It has always been a social and cultural organization that promoted the national culture in the minority community of Xanthi, especially its youth. Part of its mission was to play the role of a "friendship and peace bridge" between the Turkish and Greek cultures. It functioned along these lines without many problems until the eighties. Its best period, when it enjoyed the most freedoms, was in the early fifties.

Today, what the organization wants is to return to the conditions of that good and free period of the early fifties. But, unfortunately, the Greek State has been very hostile to this organization since in the last fifteen years: It took down (removed) its signs, including the one at the main entrance, just because we used the adjective "Turkish". It used such tactics that led to the disconnection of our organization's phones, and banned most of our activities.

The Turkish Union of Xanthi, to protect itself, its identity and its rights, has chosen the legal avenue. It has been fighting the government at the courts for almost fifteen years and it is determined to go all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, if necessary.

An executive committee member of the Turkish Youth Association of Komotini gave a more detailed account of the trials and tribulations his organization had been going through since the early eighties:

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The Turkish Youth Association of Gümülcine (Komotini) has been one of the primary targets of the Greek policy to ban the use of the term "Turkish". This ban was introduced in the early '80s, and, in our case, was upheld by the country's highest appellate court, the Areios Pagos, in 1987. The court ruled that we either had to change our name or the government would shut us down. The strange thing is, however, that we never received an official and formal notification of this ruling – which gives us some legal room to remain open and continue to function, to a limited extent, of course. So, in other words, we are in a legal state of limbo: On the one hand, we are considered illegal, and, on the other hand, it is still legally possible for us to remain active. The Government appears to be tolerating this situation and law enforcement authorities rarely bother us. A few years ago, we received an official letter from the prosecutor's office asking us to complete our dissolution and liquidation process within a "reasonable period" of time. Because no specific deadline was set by the prosecutor, we set a "reasonable deadline" ourselves: The year 2500! That is how we defined the reasonable amount of time for our dissolution. We realize that this is absurd, of course, but we wanted to make clear our intention to remain open and to function until they shut us down by force.

Since this period of limbo started, we have been denied some basic services by the government – services that are indispensable for the functioning of an association. For example, our phone lines were disconnected and we no longer receive any mail through the postal service. OTE [the State-owned Telecommunications Company]

After the Areios Pagos ruling began sending the phone bills to the "Muslim" Youth Association, and we sent those bills back, for there is no such organization in this address. After several months, our phone service was terminated. As for EL.TA. [the Greek Postal Office], they refuse to deliver any mail addressed to the "Turkish" Youth Association, and return it to sender with the remark "there is no such address". While these measures have seriously disrupted our activities, they were not able to stop them altogether, for, all of us, the executive committee, have our own cell phones and we can still receive mail at our personal mailing addresses.

Another restriction we face is that we are not allowed to do any repairs in our building. When the police notice that we have repaired something, they come and demand a fine, and in that case we pay the fine without any resistance.

\* Two Minority leaders, Sadık Ahmet and Ibrahim Şerif, were convicted in January 1990, for repeatedly and exclusively using the term "Turkish Minority" throughout their 1989 election campaign. They were found guilty of violating Article 192 of the Penal Code by "inciting citizens to violence or creating rifts among the population at the expense of social peace" because of the use of the word "Turkish". The court further concluded that the two politicians were trying "to create political destabilization, national, racial, and religious contest, which if allowed to



continue, would result in creating some sort of separatist movement in Western Thrace."<sup>28</sup> Each was sentenced to 18 months in prison, and they began to serve their sentence immediately after the trial. (Whitman, 1990; p. 18)

- Attempts to reduce/minimize the influence of Turkey on the Minority (The other leg of the de-Turkification policies).

As an example of this category of policies one could mention the following:

A few days after the anti-Minority riots in Komotini, the Turkish consul in this city was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from Greece. Among the reasons given for this decision was that he interfered with the regional politics in Thrace, and that he referred to the Turkish-Muslim minority as his "kinsmen" (*soydaşlarımız* in Turkish).

Also, as will be mentioned below, in the "freedom of expression" section, The Minority's access to the mass media of Turkey (newspapers, magazines, other publications, radio and TV programs) was made very difficult.

- Outright deprivation of citizenship, through the Article 19 of the Greek citizenship code (law no. 3370, enacted in 1955).

This article states that

"a person of non-Greek origin [αλλογεννής – allogennis] leaving the country with no intention to return may be declared as having lost Greek nationality. This also applies to

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<sup>28</sup> From a document provided to Helsinki Watch by the Greek Press and Information Office in New York, and quoted in Whitman, 1990; p. 20.

a person of non-Greek origin born and resided abroad. (...) The Minister of Internal Affairs decides in these matters with the concurring opinion of the National Council."

[Whitman (1990); p. 11]

Thousands of Muslim Minority members lost their citizenship because of this law. Many did indeed have no intention to return and a large number of those were not interested in remaining Greek citizens. However, there was also a large number of Minority members who had left Greece only temporarily and had every intention to return. Moreover, there were hundreds of cases of Muslims who lost their citizenship despite the fact that they had *not* left Greece.

Article 19 was one of the very few instances where the Greek law overtly discriminated against Greek citizens of non-Greek origin (in violation of the Greek Constitution, according to many lawyers), and established a special category of lesser citizens, based on ethnic-racial criteria.

The article itself was not an output of the first period, but its frequent, broad, and "careless" application *was*. In fact, the use of this article was so rampant in pA that a number of Minority members told Helsinki Watch monitors that they were afraid to leave the country, lest their citizenship could be taken away (Whitman, 1990; p. 13).

- Various efforts to encourage the assimilation of at least the Pomak segment of the Minority with the Greek mainstream.
  - Expropriations of large chunks of Minority-owned land.
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Throughout pA large pieces of land, usually used for agriculture, were expropriated from Muslims, for the construction of public buildings. The land taken from ethnic Greeks for similar projects was minimal compared to the land taken from the Minority.

\* Among these expropriations, the one that was the most painful happened in 1978: To build a vast campus for the Democritus University of Thrace, outside Komotini, the government confiscated more than 3,000 acres of Minority-owned agricultural land. Many Muslim tobacco farmers and other families were dispossessed as a result, and most of them emigrated to Turkey (Whitman, 1990; p. 35). Some Greek-owned land was also expropriated, but that comprised only 15% of the total land taken by the government for the construction of the campus.

\* Between 1976 and 1980, the Greek government confiscated another 3,000 acres of land, this time for the construction of an industrial park, about eight miles outside Komotini. Ninety percent of this land was taken from Minority members (Whitman, 1990; p.35).

\* Another, very controversial expropriation of nearly 6,000 acres of very fertile Muslim-owned land had been planned (though, as we will later see, never implemented) for the construction of an open-air prison near the town of Sappes, in Rodhopi county. For the Turkish-Muslim community this would have had two negative consequences: First, although the government would pay for the expropriated land, the Muslim owners, mostly farmers, due to the restrictions in buying new land and real estate (see below), would not be able to continue farming. They then would probably choose to emigrate to Turkey. Second, the open-air prison would bring felons to a predominantly Turkish-Muslim area, it would make them feel insecure, and would probably reduce their quality of life (Whitman, 1990; p. 36):

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

While we were beginning to shape our response to the government policies, the government came up with yet another decision that would be damaging to our community: A huge open-air prison was to be built in Thrace, on large chunks of agricultural land, more than 90% of which owned by Minority members, that were to be expropriated.

This was, clearly, a measure to seize our land and to put dangerous criminals in our vicinity. It was absolutely unacceptable, and an issue on which protests could easily be organized.

\* Expropriations of Muslim-owned lands were, in some instances, an exploitation tactic: The Greek government would confiscate land from Muslim-Turks and then lease it back to them, who then would continue to farm it (Whitman, 1990; p.36).

- Denials of the Minority members' right to buy and sell land or houses.

Buying and selling of real estate had to be approved by the Governor's office. While getting a permission to buy or sell a house was a mere formality for ethnic Greeks that could be taken care of in a single day, for ethnic Turks that became very difficult in pA. Minority members' applications for permission to buy or sell would face a number of bureaucratic obstacles; they would remain unanswered for months, they would often be lost, when they were replied they would be deemed incomplete due to the lack of certain documents, etc. (Whitman, 1990; p. 32)

- Denials of the Minority members' right to set up businesses.

There were many instances of Minority members who, despite repeated attempts, could not obtain permission to buy or start businesses. The bias against Muslims was especially striking in the pharmacy business, where there was not a single Muslim-owned pharmacy, and not one licensed Minority pharmacist (Whitman, 1990; p. 36).

- Systematic refusals of Greek Banks to give credit or loans to Minority members.

Human Rights groups detected that Muslims were systematically discriminated against when applying for loans or credit to Greek banks. In addition, three state-owned banks seemed to enforce an old decision based on which they would provide credit to Thracian Greeks that would be used *only* to buy Minority-owned land and real estate (Whitman, 1990; p. 39).

- Difficulties in getting tractor and driver's licenses.

Given the fact that most Thracian Minority members worked in the agricultural sector, obtaining tractor licenses was crucially important. Yet, in pA, only a few Muslims were able to obtain these licenses. There was a sharp rise in the rate of failure of Muslims (and not of Greek Christians) in the exams for getting such a license, which was an indication of a deliberate policy of bias against the Minority.

The same bias, but to a lesser extent, could be observed in the exams for ordinary driver's licenses. Those too became difficult to obtain for Muslims, but it was a widely shared belief in the community that such difficulties could be circumvented by bribes (Whitman, 1990; p.37).

- Restrictions and Obstacles in the education of Minority children.

The increase of the number of students in Minority schools required the construction of new schools, and the extension of the existing ones. Yet, the government was very reluctant to give permission even for the repair of the old schools, let alone for new construction. Thus, the Minority had to make do, for instance, with only two high schools, one in Xanthi and one in

Komotini, whose capacity was adequate in the fifties, but totally unable to accommodate the number of Minority students demanding secondary education in the eighties. As a result, the schools had to accept only a small number of the children who applied. Most of the children who could not enter these schools were sent by their parents to Turkey, often never to return to Thrace (Whitman, 1990; p. 40).

Another education-related problem in this period was the freeze in the appointment of new Minority teachers, with the exception of the graduates of the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki. As a result, applicants who were graduates of universities of Turkey would be rejected.

The exchange of teachers between Greece and Turkey in order to facilitate the education of the Minorities in the two countries continued throughout pA, but because of the tense negotiations between Greek and Turkish officials, it was usually several months after the start of the school year that teachers were allowed to start working.

The same tensions and problems in Greek-Turkish negotiations were also the reason for the continuous rejection of the importation of textbooks from Turkey to be used in Turkish-Muslim Minority schools (and the importation of Greek textbooks to be used in Greek Minority schools in Turkey). Consequently, Minority schoolchildren had to use old, out-of-date, and worn-out textbooks (Whitman, 1990; p.41).

- Restrictions on the Minority members' freedom of expression and information.

The most severe restrictions were on media coming from Turkey: The Greek authorities banned the entry of any newspapers and magazines from Turkey to Thrace<sup>29</sup>. Allowing books from Turkey to enter Greece from the Greek-Turkish border crossing was up to the discretion of the customs officials, but certainly no bookstore in Thrace was given permission to import and sell books from that country. In addition, Turkish television and radio broadcasts were sometimes (in times of crisis between Greece and Turkey) jammed.

Now, as regards the right of Minority members to issue newspapers, magazines, and own or operate media outlets, it was generally respected by the Greek government. The Minority newspapers and magazines in Turkish that had been established before 1974 were allowed to operate, but starting up a new periodical publication, or (in the last years of the first period) a privately owned Turkish-language radio station for the Minority became very difficult. Local authorities resisted giving the necessary permits for new Minority media outlets, unless they received pressure from members of Parliament; and such pressure was only partially effective.

During pA, criticisms published in Minority media were frequently led to prosecutions. Minority journalists, publishers, and writers were taken to court with the accusation that they were spreading lies about the Greek State (Whitman, 1990; p. 25).

- Restrictions of the Minority members' freedom of movement.

The Minority's freedom of movement faced two significant types of restrictions during pA:

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<sup>29</sup> Toward the end of the first period, some Turkish newspapers (most notably *Hürriyet* and *Türkiye*) did manage to get permission to be distributed and sold in Athens, though not in Thrace.

(a) *Seizures of passports.* The police seized, without giving any reason, the passports of more than fifty Turkish Minority members, particularly of influential and outspoken ones, thus making it impossible for them to travel abroad. In most cases the passports were returned between two and eight months later, again with no explanation. In a few extreme cases the police kept the passports for ten months. One reason why these passports were seized was perhaps to prevent their holders from attending certain Minority-related meetings or activities in other countries, especially in Turkey.

(b) *Restricting the free movement of Muslim residents in the Restricted Zone.* The large restricted military zone in the northern part of Thrace, along the Greek-Bulgarian border, was (and is) home for about thirty-six thousand Muslims. Inhabitants of this military area were severely restricted in their movements. They could enter and exit only with a permit issued by the Fourth Army Corps, and non-residents could enter the zone only if they received a permission form the Office of the Army Chief of Staff. In addition, no entries and exits were allowed during the curfew time, between midnight and 5:00 AM. (Whitman, 1990; p. 14). As a result the inhabitants of the restricted zone were to a large extent isolated from the rest of the Minority community, and the rest of Greece, for that matter.

- Restrictions of the Muslim Minority's freedom of religion, more specifically, the free exercise of their religious duties.

The most serious problems Thracian Muslims faced during pA regarding this issue were on getting permission to repair old mosques or to build new ones, on being allowed to choose their muftis (chief religious functionaries) through traditional elections, on being able to choose the

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boards of directors for their religious foundations (*vakıfs/wakfs*) and on being able to run them with a certain autonomy.

On the repair of mosques, Minority members would apply for permission, but the local bureaucracy would not process it, or it would in a very slow pace. In a few cases Minority communities would have to wait more than a decade before they get a proper reply. It was only in the pre-election periods that a few licenses to repair mosques would be given.

In perhaps the most controversial case, the government demolished a 600-year-old mosque, in 1989, and, though it declared its intention to rebuild it, there were no signs that it was going to do so (Whitman, 1990; p. 27).

With respect to building new mosques, the most serious problem was the requirement imposed by the government (due to a misinterpretation of the laws 1363/1938 and 1672/1939) on the Muslim applicants to get the written consent of the local bishop for the new mosque (see also the section on the Greek Orthodox Church.)

On the issue of muftis, the government's policy was to ignore the law 2345 of 1920 according to which the muftis were to be elected. The law had never really been implemented even before pA; the government, specifically the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, would usually appoint a mufti, instead of allowing the Muslim community to elect one, but at least there was some sort of understanding between the community leaders and the government officials with regard to who would be appointed. The government would appoint to that position the person

favored by the Minority leadership. That understanding broke down toward the end of pA. The people favored by the leaders of the Minority for the mufti positions were outspoken critics of the government, and therefore the Ministry was determined not to appoint them. The Minority leaders then managed to mobilize most of the Minority members and began in 1990 to demand the election of Muftis by the Muslim community, as it was provided for by the Law 2345/1920. The reaction of the government officials to this demand was their decision to change the law and to begin drafting a new bill that would legitimize the appointment of Muftis. That bill would become a law at the beginning of the second period.

As for the control of the religious foundations, the government passed a law in 1980 (law no. 1091) that would practically eliminate their self-government: The administrators of these foundations would be appointed by the local governor, who was also given the power to approve the foundations' budget (Whitman, 1990; p. 29):

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The law on the management of our religious foundations (our *wakfs/wakfs*), adopted in the early '80s – a law which, for all practical purposes, did away with their self-management and autonomy, was perhaps "the straw that broke the camel's back". It was after the passage of this law that the High Council of the Minority<sup>30</sup> was formed, and the leaders of our community began to plan a set of firm responses to the oppressive policies.

- Obstacles to the free exercise of the Minority members' right to vote.

Right after the establishment of the Minority's own political movements, that is, toward the end of pA, the government took some measures to limit the number of votes these movements would

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<sup>30</sup> It was later renamed "Advisory Council of the Minority".

get from members of the Minority – particularly the ones who lived outside Thrace. Such measures included:

- \* Closing the Turkish-Greek border crossings shortly before the elections (in the guise of a customs employees' strike);
- \* Blocking air connections between Thrace and Athens throughout the week before the elections;
- and
- \* Cancellations of bus services to Thrace.

There were also certain voting irregularities and problems like early closings of polling places in Minority districts, and one instance where Minority members were not allowed to vote until late in the afternoon, in order to give priority to government officials and servicemen (Whitman, 1990; p. 30).

- Degrading treatment of ethnic Turks by government officials, for instance by the police or while they were serving in the military:
- \* Greek security forces frequently called in for interrogation members of the Minority who have helped outside observers as guides or interpreters.
- \* The police would often threaten to beat outspoken Minority members and would tell them to keep quiet.
- \* Offices of a few Minority lawyers involved in human rights cases were searched, with the suspicion that they were receiving money from Turkey. (Nothing incriminating was found).

- Attempts to encourage the dispersion of the Muslim Minority throughout Greece, thus reducing its size in Thrace.

\* A Greek policy that began in 1985, for example, made it easier for Thracian Muslims who were willing to leave Western Thrace to settle in other parts of Greece. While buying real estate was severely restricted for Minority members in Thrace, there were *no* such restrictions for those who moved, in search of employment, to Athens, Crete, Kavala or in other parts of Greece, especially if they were willing to take along their families, to give up residence in (Western) Thrace, and to vote in the area where they now resided. In the areas outside Thrace, however, the Muslims could not benefit from the minority rights accorded to them by the Lausanne Treaty (for example, the right for Minority children to be taught in Turkish in special Minority schools).

- Refusal of the government to give Muslim Minority members jobs in the civil service and the government sector.

At the end of 1989, the application of this policy was so complete, that, for instance, of the thousand government employees in Xanthi county, none was a Minority member (Whitman, 1990; p. 38).

Another illustrative example of this policy was the refusal of the government-run hospitals to hire Minority physicians in Thrace<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> It has been widely reported that, Sadık Ahmet, an MD and the main leader of the nationalistic Minority movement that organized protests and struggled against the violation of the rights of the Turkish-Muslim community, became politically active and began to oppose the government after he was rejected by a public hospital in Komotini. He had applied for a surgeon position, and there was only one applicant – Dr. Ahmet. And yet, the hospital rejected his application and filled the position two months later with a Majority Greek doctor (Whitman, 1990; p. 37).

This refusal to hire Muslim-Turks in government jobs appeared to be a policy applied only in Thrace, for in other parts of Greece, for instance in Athens, there *were* a few Minority Muslims working as unskilled government employees.

- Government's neglect of overwhelmingly Minority areas in providing public goods and services.

Unlike the villages with majority Greek inhabitants, the Muslim-Turkish villages of Thrace were visibly neglected by the government: A disproportionately large number of them had unpaved roads, and in many of them water and electricity was not supplied (Whitman, 1990; p. 33).

- Parallel to these anti-Minority outputs, the only output that could be seen as at least indirectly beneficial for the Muslims in Thrace in pA, were the policies, pursued in the eighties, that were aimed at encouraging economic development in the region. The scope of these policies, however, was limited, and their results not satisfactory at all. In addition, because these policies disproportionately favored the Majority (see the demands section for the Muslim Minority), ended up exacerbating the discontent of the Muslims.

A Greek Majority member I interviewed considered these policies worth mentioning, but he also conceded the fact that they were unsuccessful -- without however acknowledging their skewed nature:

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

In addition to [repressive] measures, the only other policy aimed at addressing the Minority problem, until 1990, was encouraging economic investment in Thrace. The assumption was that economic progress would reduce inter-communal tensions and that it would make Minority members content with their situation. That assumption, of course, proved to be false, and these economic policies never had the desired result. Instead, the discontent of the Minority continued, and was exploited by people like Sadık Ahmet and other demagogues.

## Feedback

The outputs, i.e., the policies, the laws, the decisions of the government and their implementation by all the governmental institutions produce *responses* and *reactions* from the actors in the environment. In the systems theory, these responses and reactions are called *feedback*. Let me reiterate here that it is feedback that makes the system *circular*: Every feedback also produces its own responses, and those responses produce further responses...and so on. Moreover, each feedback can also be considered an input, and each input can actually be seen as feedback to a previous output.

Some actors respond positively and express their satisfaction with the government's output. Such feedback we could characterize as *positive*, which is virtually – and for all practical purposes – indistinguishable from *positive input*, better known as *support*.

Other actors respond negatively to policies, laws or various kinds of governmental action, thus expressing their discontent, sometimes even their outrage. A negative reaction to an output is, of course, *negative feedback* for the government, but it can also be considered a *demand*, for the unhappy or angry actors would almost invariably add to their response a demand for either the discontinuation or the radical change of the output<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> There are a few exceptions to this generalization, especially when the negative feedback or input comes from from unorganized groups, such as in the case of a riot: A riot is certainly a negative input for the government but what the rioters demand is usually not clear.

There is also a vast amount of feedback that cannot be described either as fully negative or fully positive, but is somewhere in-between these two well-defined categories. An actor may react to a certain policy in such a low-key or tepid way that the government can easily ignore or dismiss its feedback. In many cases, the government regards weak negative feedback to a certain policy as reason enough to carry on with that policy.

But how can one differentiate *strong* negative feedback from *weak* or *low-key* negative feedback?

The strong kind of negative feedback is different from the low-key kind in two ways:

First, the former manifests itself in the form of protests, condemnations or denunciations expressed in a more active, more vigorous, and more intense way than the ones included in the latter, and it involves actions intended to force the government into reconsidering a certain output.

Secondly, and more characteristically, with respect to its content, the strong negative feedback includes not just a demand for a radical change in or discontinuation of a targeted output but also a *demand for punitive sanctions*<sup>33</sup> against the ones responsible for that output.

After an output intended to meet a certain actor's demands is produced, the targeted actor may continue to press for the same demands with the same intensity, thus showing that the output had no noticeable effect. *No change in demands* after an output is produced, can therefore be considered a feedback in itself. This type of feedback is often formulated as a 'yes...but' statement

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<sup>33</sup> Of course, as Easton points out, "[t]he way in which the authorities will react to feedback response will in part hinge on the kinds of sanctions that the [actors] might be able to exercise in pressing their points of view upon the authorities" (Easton, 1965; p. 435). In other words, the more painful the sanctions an actor might impose, the more that actor's feedback will be paid attention to.

characterizing the output as positive yet inadequate or insufficient. Since such feedback contains at least some acknowledgement that the governmental institutions have paid attention to previous demands and tried to address them, albeit unsuccessfully, I would describe it as *low-key positive*, or rather *mixed-positive feedback*.

Throughout pA the Greek Government received feedback of all these types from its environment on issues related to Western Thrace. In this section I will try to show specifically what kinds of feedback the government received from the actors I examined in the previous section.

#### *Positive and Mixed-Positive Feedback*

Most of the local Greeks in Thrace showed their support and satisfaction with the Government's policies on restricting the rights and freedoms of the Muslim Minority, on loosening its ties with Turkey, and on reducing its size in the region. The most nationalist groups among the local Greeks even encouraged the Government to intensify these policies, which were seen as an appropriate response to the fears of the local majority that Thrace is a vulnerable region in danger of being lost to Turkey. Their positive response to anti-Minority policies, however, was an important factor in a serious "outcome", that is, a significant societal change: The rise of inter-communal tensions. By siding with the government on the issue of the repression of the local Muslims' rights and freedoms, they contributed to the addition of an inter-communal dimension to what was basically a government-minority conflict.

With respect to the economic policies of the Government in Thrace, the local Majority's feedback was clearly mixed-positive: The local Greeks did acknowledge that the central government was



paying more attention to the economic problems in Thrace, but they continued to express their unhappiness with the still underdeveloped socio-economic situation they were in.

The Greek Nationalist Circles and the Greek Orthodox Church were also quite supportive of the Government's anti-Minority policies. While the Church was very pleased with the say it was given on the issue of mosque-building and saw the other measures as adequate to confront the Turkish threat in Thrace, the Nationalist Circles regarded these only as the bare minimum of what the Government could or should do. In other words, their feedback was rather mixed-positive, for they also sent input regarding what more should be done to eliminate the vulnerability of the region.

#### *Low-Key Negative Feedback*

This type of feedback came mostly from the extra-societal environment, that is to say, from foreign or international actors. The European organizations -- the EEC, the Council of Europe, and the CSCE -- and, in an even less pronounced way, the US government, did not welcome the anti-Minority policies of the Greek government, but they did not consider it as a serious issue, either.

Similar feedback also was provided by Greek and international human rights organizations and the Greek liberal circles. Because none of these actors really paid any attention to what was going on in Thrace, however, their feedback was too low to be taken into account by the Government.

### *Negative Feedback*

The most forceful negative feedback to the government's outputs on Minority Affairs came, predictably, from the Turkish-Muslim Minority itself. As I describe in the Nonviolence section of this dissertation, Minority members throughout the first period organized a large number of protests in the form of demonstrations, boycotts, "sit-downs", acts of civil disobedience, hunger strikes, petition drives and letter campaigns to denounce Greece at the international level.:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

We planned demonstrations, marches, mass "sit-downs", in other words, types of protests that were within the limits of legality and frequently used by other groups in other occasions in Greece as well as in other European countries.

Yet, that our protests were lawful did not really matter to the police. They tried very hard to prevent every protest that we organized. Of course they could not stop all our activities, but in many instances they did not hesitate to violate the laws restricting their power in order to hinder our legal protests.

All these actions were accompanied by a Turkish nationalist discourse and a set of strong demands that the government abandon its discriminatory and oppressive policies.

The continuous protests of the Minority and the nationalist rhetoric of its leaders made the local Greeks feel even more threatened and became another factor in the rise of inter-communal tensions in the region.

The other actor whose feedback was extremely negative was the Turkish government. In addition to condemning the Greek government, directly or through international organizations, for its policies toward the Minority, the Turkish government enhanced its negative feedback with three counter-policies:

First, Turkish officials made it clear that Turkey would be, to the extent that it could, an obstacle to Greece, at the international level, from achieving its goals on other issues, as long as the anti-Minority policies remained in effect.

Second, the Turkish government linked the Minority issue to other Greek-Turkish issues of dispute, thus making progress in these issues conditional upon a change in Greece's anti-Minority policies.

Third, resorting to negative reciprocity, the Turkish government designed and implemented restrictive and discriminatory policies toward the Greek minority in Turkey, that were comparable to the ones implemented by Greece toward the Muslims in Thrace.

The Thracian Turkish-Muslim Diaspora's feedback was very negative as well. The association of this group worked hard throughout the first period to inform the world public opinion – but mainly the Turkish and European public opinion—of the worst aspects of the Greek policies about the Minority, and condemned Greece at every opportunity they obtained. However, just like their input, diaspora associations' feedback too was not exactly directed at the Greek government. It was rather directed at the Turkish government, the international organizations and the human-rights NGOs. The objective of the Thracian Minority Diaspora was to put pressure on Greece indirectly, by prompting the extra-societal actors of the system to become more active and to intensify their demands and their negative feedback to the Greek policies.

After examining the feedback the Greek government received in the first period, we could conclude that, overall, the negative and low-key negative feedback was not effective or strong enough to counterbalance the positive feedback, let alone outweigh it.

## 12. *Moving to the Second Period (pB)*

Having analyzed how the Greek Political System functioned with respect to Minority affairs during pA, I should now try to explain how this period came to an end and a new period with new and different characteristics began.

The dynamics of the system in pA, the inputs the Greek Authorities received, the outputs they produced, and the feedback these outputs generated, had resulted in a situation that was close to what can be called a state of equilibrium. At first glance, there did not seem to be anything in the system that would cause a "disturbance"<sup>1</sup> or a "stress"<sup>2</sup> serious enough that would necessitate a substantial change. Upon deeper examination, however, one could notice that one "outcome" produced by the dynamics of the system was very problematic and worrisome. That outcome was the one I briefly mentioned in the feedback section: *Inter-communal tensions*.

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<sup>1</sup> "Disturbances [are] those influences from the total environment of a system that act upon it so that [the system] is different after the stimulus from what it was before." (Easton, *A System Analysis of Political Life*, 1965; p. 22).

<sup>2</sup> *Stress* occurs when, because of the number and the intensity of inputs or the lack of support, the *essential variables* of political life (namely, the allocations of values for a society and the degree of compliance with them) are pushed beyond their critical range, and, therefore, the political system is or becoming unable to perform its essential functions. (Easton, *A System Analysis of Political Life*, 1965; p. 24).

Discriminatory and oppressive government policies toward the Muslim Minority were intensifying this community's frustration and anger. As a result, the struggle and protests of the Thracian Muslim/Turks was becoming more radical, and their rhetoric more nationalistic. In addition, given the fact that the local Greeks were generally supportive of the Government's anti-Minority policies, part of the Minority's anger was now directed at the Majority community. This consequently made the local Greeks, who had already been perceiving the Muslims as a threat, to regard their fears as justified and to develop some acrimony toward the Minority community. The radical discourse of the Greek Nationalist Circles, colored with anti-Turkish sentiments and with fear became more popular among the Thracian Greeks than ever before.

As one person I interviewed observed, local Greeks began to use the nationalist terminology about the Minority even in their casual conversations:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The deterioration in the inter-communal relations has had a detrimental impact on Muslims' identity-recognition issue: In the past, local Greeks had no reservations, no hesitation, regarding using the words "Turk, Turkish" for the Minority members in casual conversations. Now they do, and they prefer to call them just "Muslims".

The peaceful coexistence of Greeks and Muslims/Turks in Thrace was being replaced with mutual suspicion, mutual enmity, and mutual anger. The situation was very likely to trigger an explosion, or, at least, some violent incidents.

This is how a Turkish-Nationalist leader of the Minority explains the tensions of these volatile times:

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[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Until the '80s, we did not really have any problems with the Christian<sup>3</sup> citizens in Thrace. Then, some fanatic groups from the Christian community made us the target of their hatred and their rage.

Not surprisingly, the Turkish nationalists of the Minority, the ones who were emotionally the most involved in the conflict, had no problem observing the threatening developments in the "other side", but could not or would not link these developments to their own actions.

The feared explosion did happen in late January 1990. Intercommunal tensions reached their peak at that time, primarily because of the trial of two Turkish nationalist Minority leaders, Dr. Sadık Ahmet and Ibrahim Şerif. They were tried and convicted, among other things, because they referred to their community as "the Turkish Minority" [see "Outcomes" and Soltaridis (1990)].

Their conviction generated the largest Minority protest demonstrations ever held in the city of Komotini – larger than even the ones held two years before, in 1988, whose second anniversary coincided with this crisis<sup>4</sup>. But the post-conviction protests resulted in the local Greeks feeling even more threatened by, and more indignant at, the Minority community's behavior. Local

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<sup>3</sup> The term "Christian" here is used interchangeably with the term "Greek". They both refer to the same community, the same group of people.

<sup>4</sup> On January 29, 1988, a large number of Muslim Minority members participated in a demonstration organized by the "High Council of the Minority", to protest the Supreme Court of Appeals decision that no Minority institution could call itself "Turkish". That demonstration was violently dispersed by the police, as a result of which dozens of protestors were injured (See Simeon Soltaridis, Η Δ. Θράκη και οι Μουσουλμάνοι: Τι Ακριβώς Συμβαίνει? [Western Thrace and the Muslims: What Exactly is Happening?]. In Greek. Athens, Greece: Nea Synora, 1990; p. 163).

Greek nationalists, with the support of the Church leadership, cultivated and enhanced this indignation by organizing counter-protests.

While, on a Sunday, the largest of the counter-protests was going on, the protesters had received the news that at a hospital in the city, a Turkish-Muslim patient killed a Greek patient while quarrelling about the inter-communal situation (Soltaridis, 1990; p. 156). This news further exacerbated the tense atmosphere and the counter-protest turned violent. In fact, it turned into some sort of pogrom: The protesters were smashing the windows and doors of minority-owned shops, they were entering them and breaking everything they could in them. They were also chasing Minority members they noticed in the streets and beating up the ones they could catch. The police officers were unwilling or unable to stop the Greek protesters-turned-rioters. It took many hours until the police managed to bring the situation under control, but by then almost all the Minority-owned businesses in the center of Komotini were damaged or destroyed. Several dozens of Muslims were injured, but, thankfully, no-one was killed (Soltaridis, 1990; pp. 158-160).

The Greek nationalists who stirred the rioters up also attempted to add some historical dimension to these events, justifying them as the revenge for the 1955 pogrom against the Greeks of Istanbul:

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

[The Greek fanatic] groups, and their sympathizers, justified violent incidents against the Turkish minority as retaliation for what Turkey did to Greeks in the past. That is particularly true in the case of the events of 1988, and the pogrom of 1990, against our Community in Komotini. They rationalized these atrocities as the revenge for the 1955 September incidents in Istanbul against the Greek community there.

The Komotini riots made it clear to the central Government that, in Thrace, the Greek State was having serious trouble fulfilling its essential functions. To use Easton's terminology, the political system in Thrace was under "stress", because the authorities were failing to "allocate values *authoritatively*": In addition to the extreme displeasure of the Minority with the government policies, now a section from the Majority was taking the law in its own hands. It appeared that the government had lost its effectiveness and legitimacy.

Taken aback by the riots, the authorities were awakened to the fact that they had to make fundamental changes in their policies regarding the Minority to prevent the system from a total breakdown in Thrace. With this realization a new period began in the Government-Minority relations.



### 13. pB: *The Period of Gradual Improvement*

On the 31st of January, 1990, the leaders of the largest political parties in Greece<sup>1</sup>, the Prime Minister of the "ecumenical" coalition government, the ministers of foreign affairs and of defense met to discuss and design immediate, medium- and long-term measures with regard to Minority issues<sup>2</sup> [see Poulton, 1997].

In this meeting, the participants first discussed the dangerous trends in Thrace and what other troubling developments might occur in the near future.

They agreed that the most worrisome among the trends were the demographic ones, which were in favor of the Muslim Minority. Muslims already constituted 54 % of the population in Rhodope County, and their proportion in the other two counties of Thrace was rising steadily<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, the center-right New Democracy, the center-left PASOK, and the Marxist-Socialist SYN.

<sup>2</sup> An internal memo written on 01/31/1990 by the then secretary-general of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Ioannis Tzounis, summarizing the discussions in this meeting and the decisions reached was leaked to the press several years later (see Appendix B). This section is largely based on the contents of this memo.

<sup>3</sup> The figures that lead to this conclusion might be somewhat distorted or exaggerated. According to Aydın Ömeroğlu, an economist who is a member of the Turkish-Muslim Minority, The proportion of the minority in the entire Western Thrace rose from 31 % in 1951 to only 33 % in 1991 (Aydın Ömeroğlu, Batı Trakya Türkleri'nin Bölge Ekonomisindeki Yeri ve Geleceği [The Situation and the Future of the Western Thrace Turks in the Economy of the Region], in Turkish, Istanbul, Turkey: Diyalog Yay., 1998; p. 37).

Another worrisome trend was the emigration of Greeks from Thrace to other regions in Greece or to other countries <sup>4</sup>.

The rise of the percentage of the Minority population in the Evros County, which borders Turkey, was seen as especially dangerous. If the size of the Muslim population in this county became as big as the other two counties of Thrace, some sort of "territorial continuity" would be established between the Minority-inhabited areas and Turkey. If that happened, Turkey might pursue its irredentist goals much more easily. Just like it did in the case of Cyprus, where the Turkish population was no more than 18 %, and in the case of the Alexandretta-Antioch region (the Hatay province)<sup>5</sup>, where the Turkish population was only 30%, the Turkish State might actively and openly try to seize Western Thrace, stating as a pretext the protection of the rights of their oppressed kin.

The increasing control of the Turkish Consulate in Komotini over the Thracian Muslims was another troubling development. If the Consulate were to extend its control into the Minority's religious foundations through people loyal to Turkey, then its financial domination over the Minority would be complete.

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<sup>4</sup> The emigration of Muslims from Thrace, which was also in large numbers (as I described it in the previous section) was obviously not considered a worrisome development.

<sup>5</sup> This province was part of Syria until 1938. That year, the Turkish community of Hatay, with the support of Turkey, transformed the province into an "independent" State, which, a year later, through a not-so-free-and-fair referendum decided to become part of Turkey.

The participants in that high-level meeting also stated with concern that the political movement of the Minority, which was dominated by Turkish nationalists and was independent of all Greek political parties, was consolidating itself, gaining further support, and was likely to turn into a Minority-only political party. That would result in a serious loss of influence of the Greek national political parties in Thrace; it would enhance ethnic divisions in the region, and would result in the election of pro-Turkey nationalists not just for the Greek Parliament (which was already the case) but in many offices at the local level, as well.

Finally, the participants acknowledged that all the restrictive and discriminatory measures, all the administrative annoyances inflicted upon the Muslims for more than two decades (during the dictatorship and the first fifteen years of the democracy) did not achieve their goal, namely the reduction of the threat coming from the Minority. To the contrary, all these policies and actions made the Muslim community angrier, more alienated, more influenced by Turkey, and more of a threat to Greece. Moreover, these policies had started to become the target of international criticism and condemnation.

After reaching a consensus on the general features of the crisis in Thrace, the political leaders of Greece who participated in the meeting agreed, in principle, to formulate a new set of policies on Minority-related issues. The main parameters of this set would be accepted as "national", and would be followed not just by the then government, but also by all future governments, irrespective of their ideological inclinations.

The new set of Minority-related policies would incorporate the following policy recommendations:

- Enhancing the *presence and prestige of the State* in the region. Defiance of the laws or vigilantism had to be eliminated, or at least minimized.
- Paying special attention to the *economic development* of Thrace. Developing this region was to be among the priorities of every economic and financial decision of the Greek government. It was particularly important that the Muslims' standards of living be improved. Better economic conditions in Thrace would result in a decrease of emigration of Greeks and also a fall in birth rates among Muslims.

The real concerns and worries behind the government's emphasis for economic development in Thrace were easily detected by Minority members:

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The government has recently given emphasis on economic development . It has encouraged investments in Thrace, and it has subsidized companies that built industrial plants here. But the main motive for this policy has been the fear that "Greece is losing Thrace". Not concern and empathy for the difficult conditions here, but fear was the motivating force.

- Developing *plans to settle ethnic Greek immigrants* from the Soviet Union (also known as "Pontians") in Thrace, particularly in the Evros and Rhodope counties. This would increase the proportion of Greeks and reduce the influence of Muslims in the region.
- *Encouraging the urbanization of the Muslims*, and taking measures to facilitate the creation of a strong, *sizeable middle class* in their community. Middle class or "bourgeois" people

living in urban areas tended to be less isolated, less traditional, and more inclined to integrate into the mainstream society.

Urbanization could be accelerated through the buying of Muslim-owned agricultural lands, and by making it easier for Minority members to be hired by the government sector, and by privately owned industrial companies.

It was also crucial to improve the quality of the education the Muslims received.

- Establishing *a democratic way of managing the Muslim religious foundations* and their assets, thus diminishing the influence of the Turkish Consulate on them.
- *Reducing the social role and significance of the Muftis* in the Minority community by gradually eliminating their adjudicatory functions and by transferring them to the Greek courts, which would be authorized, if necessary, to use principles of the Islamic law in civil cases among Muslims <sup>6</sup>, thus remaining true to the spirit of the Lausanne Treaty.
- Lastly, and more importantly, *canceling or abrogating all discriminatory administrative measures against the Minority*, and ending all bureaucratic annoyances and intrusions Muslims face when dealing with the government.

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<sup>6</sup> This policy recommendation has a very serious flaw. In the Islamic law it is essential that the judge be a *believer* of the Muslim religion. Since there were no Greek judges who were Muslim at that time (and there are still no Muslim judges in Greece), the recommendation makes no sense. Those Minority members who would opt for the Greek courts instead of the Mufti, would do so because of their preference for the *secular* (and modern, and European) law to religious law. And those Minority members who would prefer that their case be handled according to the Islamic law would never accept a non-Muslim as a judge anyway. They would most probably want the Mufti to adjudicate their case.

It was clear, then, that, at the beginning of pB, the authorities were already inclined to change their outputs and be more receptive of some demands they had ignored or dismissed in the first period, including several of the Minority's demands.

The importance of the "ecumenical government"s role in changing the general approach of the Greek State toward the Thracian Muslims is recognized by many minority and majority members in the region. For instance, a Greek journalist living in Thrace had this to say about the basic decisions made by the "ecumenical fgovernment":

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

It was the "ecumenical government", the wide-based, multi-party coalition government of 1989-90, that first came to the realization that the Greek State's approach to the Minority has to change radically. The leaders of the largest political parties, PASOK [the Socialists], New Democracy [the conservatives], and KKE [The Communist Party of Greece] came up with the general framework of a new Minority policy. All policies since then to improve the conditions of the Minority, to expand its freedoms and, more importantly, to reform its education, came as a result of this new framework.

In addition to realizing the problems and dangers related to the Muslim Minority and inter-communal tensions, the Greek State in general, and the Ecumenical Government in particular, also understood that Thrace, due to its strategic location, had a *very significant potential for economic development in the Post-Cold-War era* that had just begun:

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

After the end of the Cold War and the opening-up of Eastern Europe, the "ecumenical government" also saw that Thrace, as a region and as a location, had gained a huge economic and strategic potential; a potential that would be beneficial not just for the residents of Thrace, but for the entire Greece.

But Thrace had to have stability; in other words, it had to be free of troubles, and free of tensions, to use this potential. So the Minority problem had to be addressed in such a way that would satisfy all the involved parties. The then government decided, correctly in my view, that for the good of Thrace, for the good of Greece, for a bright, prosperous future

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for both the region and the whole country, Minority discontent, inter-communal tensions, and government-minority disputes should end, or, at least, they should subside significantly. The research and analyses that lead to this conclusion were presented, in a very effective and concise way, in a book published in 1995 by the Academy of Athens<sup>7</sup>. The best way to achieve this objective would be by encouraging the Minority's integration to the mainstream society. Integration had to be made easier and more attractive for Thracian Muslims.

Let us now examine each actor's demands, and support in this period and how they differed from those of pA.

### **The Turkish-Muslim Minority**

#### **Demands**

The Minority's demands in this period were practically the same, but they were now expressed with more frustration, and, particularly at the beginning of pB, with a more jingoistic rhetoric.

Among all the demands, the nationalistic ones now were the most emphasized.

Muslims in Thrace continued to demand:

- Equal treatment and an end to discrimination;

There were still a number of discriminatory practices against the Muslims in Thrace, and Minority members wanted these policies to change.

The remaining discriminatory practices were relatively less known or less publicized, and, thus, they managed to survive in the second period:

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<sup>7</sup> X. Zolotas, A. Angelopoulos & I. Pesmazoglou (editors). Η Αναπτυξη της Θράκης: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές. [The Development of Thrace: Challenges and Prospects], Athens: An Academy of Athens Publication, 1995. (Xenophon Zolotas, the main editor of this book, was the Prime Minister of the "ecumenical government).

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

One problem, not widely known outside Thrace, is the discrimination we face in our loan applications. When giving loans, the banks systematically favor Greeks over Turks. Another lesser-known problem has to do with pharmacists in our community. Minority pharmacists find it harder to get a license to operate pharmacies. Greek pharmacists put pressure on the municipal and county government not to give licenses to our pharmacists, because they know they would lose their Turkish clientele to Turkish pharmacists. And for those pharmacists who got their licenses, getting permission to work on Sundays, when almost all Christian pharmacies are closed, is even more difficult.

In addition, a number of Minority members pointed to the fact that the Greek government institutions were still unwilling to hire Thracian Muslims, thus creating a disadvantage against this community:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The very small number of Minority members employed by the public sector or by the Government as civil servants is another problem, both economic and political. The State institutions, and the public sector in general, constitute a large portion of the economy in this region. Because they are reluctant to hire Minority members, we end up having an unemployment rate much higher than the Majority. Now, for those who migrated to Athens it is easier to get a job there in the public sector. But, on the other hand, the Minority members who reside in Athens are not covered by the minority-protection articles of the Lausanne Treaty. According to the Greek government's interpretation, these articles apply only in Thrace. As a result, those Minority Turks who move to another region of Greece in effect forfeit their minority rights.

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

[T]here is hardly any Minority member employed by the government, working either as a civil servant or, more importantly, as a police officer;

One Minority leader I interviewed expressed this demand in much more general terms, arguing that the problem his community faces stems from the lack of democracy and justice:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

What we want from the State and the government is basically democracy and justice.

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The Greek State calls itself a Democracy<sup>8</sup>, and we do not argue with that, but the governments – the current as well as the previous ones – did not apply even the "d" of democracy on minority-related affairs.

Government policies regarding the Minority have nothing to do with the concept of "justice" either. What justice are we talking about when the legal process for compensations for the victims of the 1990 pogrom is still going on, and there is no sign that it will conclude soon?

- Improvement of the Minority's socio-economic situation

(including improvements in infrastructure in Minority-inhabited areas):

[Member of the Myki Municipal assembly; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

Another problem for the minority villages in the mountains is the bad quality of the roads connecting them to the cities. There have been some improvements recently to make these villages more connected to the rest of Greece and to the World (for example, phone connections have improved, and most of that region is within the cell-phone covering area), but a lot needs to be done, especially in transportation.

Several Minority members I interviewed complained about the economic gap between the Minority and the Majority in Thrace, and expressed their demand that the bad conditions, especially in the Minority villages in the mountains, be improved:

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

The economic gap between the majority and minority is still a serious problem. In terms of income and economic well-being the minority is way behind the majority. The government's economic policies in Thrace, even those of the last ten years, have done nothing to close this gap. While the government spent DRS. 7 billion for Thrace, only DRS. 580 million of this amount was spent in predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

When examining our economic problems, one first has to look at the regional development programs coming from the EU. These aid programs could have bridged the inter-communal economic gap, but they were not used for this purpose. Instead, European financial assistance went overwhelmingly to projects and investments that would benefit the Greek majority. The Minority benefited very little from them. As for the investments coming from Greek sources, the picture there is even more skewed, as 99% of these went to the Greek majority.

[An influential elder in Ehinis, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

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<sup>8</sup> The official name of Greece is "Elliniki Dimokratia".

Concerning unemployment, it is important to say that here, in the mountain villages, unemployment, especially of young men, is much higher than that in the plains. Apart from agricultural jobs, there is practically nothing else to do – with the only possible exception of having a taxicab and working as its driver. That's why young people move to the city and to the plains. But even there they have difficulty finding a decent job. Some of them tell us they are not hired even as toilet cleaners!

In terms of healthcare-related problems, our main complaint is the inadequacy of our health center in Ehinós/Sahin. The doctor comes from the city just a few days a week and the walk-in hours only from noon to 2:00 PM.

The lack of investments, public and private, is another serious problem. Private companies and entrepreneurs clearly avoid investing in the mountain region and prefer the plains. Public services and infrastructure are also much more developed in the plains. The government spends more money there than here.

The most important public expenditure should be on roads and road maintenance. Some roads still need to be paved with asphalt, some need to be widened, some need to become suitable for cars and trucks, and, throughout the winter, our roads need to be kept open, for, otherwise, we are cut off the rest of the country.

Even local Greeks agreed that the economic situation of the Minority needed some improvement.

The group that was in the worst shape were the Muslim Roma/Gypsies of Thrace, and therefore it was them, according to these Greeks, that needed to receive the most attention and help:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Most of the recent positive changes have yet to touch the Roma/Gypsy segment of the Minority community. Their living conditions and their economic situation are still terrible.

Finally, not unrelated to socio-economic demands, one Minority leader I interviewed pointed to a lesser-known problem, the growing popularity of casinos and nightclubs among Minority men, which he characterized as "*moral decline*". He partly blamed the government for this trend, and he demanded that such businesses not be located near Muslim-inhabited areas:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

[T]here is a moral decline among many Minority men, who are constantly tempted by casinos and gambling, as well as by bars and nightclubs where Eastern European women perform. Such casinos and bars are purposefully located in areas where they are very easily accessible by Minority peasants, and are exploiting the naivete of uneducated men from our community.

- A *better education* (better schools and better teachers); Also, more say in the shaping of that education;

This is how Minority members I interviewed expressed their education-related demands:

[Member of the Myki municipal assembly; Journalist; Minority member; Male]

The educational level of the minority is very low, compared to the Greek residents of Thrace. That's why improvement in education must be the primary and most important goal of any new general approach to our community.

But, in order to improve the educational level of the minority, you have to improve the quality of teachers, and the quality of education the teachers receive. The Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki has never been able to prepare teachers with adequate knowledge and skills. The graduates from this academy are supposed to be able to teach Turkish, but they cannot teach Turkish or any subject in Turkish. They don't know enough Turkish to begin with. The academy tends to accept students who graduated from medreses (madrasahs – Muslim religious schools), where Turkish is not taught well. The institute's preference for medrese graduates has an ulterior motive; they don't want teachers to be able to teach our kids Turkish well. Teachers of Turkish classes and of subjects taught in Turkish must be graduates NOT of a "special" academy, but of a full-fledged, regular, department of Turkish Language and Literature – just like the ones in Turkey. Incidentally, the graduates of such departments in Turkey should also be accepted, without any reservation based solely on the fact that they studied in Turkey. In addition, many of the existing primary and secondary schools should be expanded. New buildings and new classrooms should be added to them. In their current state schools are too small to adequately serve the student population. This is especially true and visible in my village, in Kentauros (Ketenlik in Turkish). The school is way too small for the number of students there.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

With regard to education, we see that many of our problems stem from the policies of the Greek Ministry of Education. While it is true that the Ministry is currently trying to introduce some reforms for the Minority education, we notice that it is still reluctant to take bold steps; not much has been done so far. Moreover, some of the steps the Ministry *has* taken under the banner of reform were just steps in the *wrong* direction. Because of the bitter experiences of the past, our Community has developed a deep suspicion toward any policy changes originating from the Ministry of Education. And the recent, timid steps, and the occasional wrong steps, certainly cannot help the Minority overcome that suspicion.

One specific, bold, but easy step to take, without many complications is this: Music and Physical Education should be taught by Turkish teachers in Turkish. English also should be taught by a Turkish teacher. I believe that such a change, that is a reduction of classes taught in Greek and thus achieving parity in the number of classes taught by Turkish and Greek teachers, would be perceived as a clear indication that the Education Ministry was no longer using Minority education as an assimilation tool, and would be welcomed by Minority parents and children alike.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

[T]here are still some problems in Minority education, which the government is reluctant to touch. The most serious of them, in my opinion, is the issue of the Turkish teachers, educated by the Greek government at the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki (EPATH). This academy recruits students from religious schools (medreses/ madrassas), where Turkish is poorly taught, and prefers Pomak-speakers to Turkish-speakers. So, students whose Turkish is inadequate in the first place receive low-quality education at EPATH and then are appointed as Turkish teachers at Minority schools. They, therefore, and not surprisingly, cannot teach Turkish well to our kids. This whole system has to change, and it has to change radically.

[ High-School teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; minority activist; Minority Member; Male]  
One problem we face is the issue of teachers who are not being appointed or who were fired: While we have a shortage of teachers at our schools, we also have a large number of teachers who are not allowed to work. I, for instance, was laid off in 1992, but have yet to be re-hired since PASOK came to power [in 1993].

Education-related demands have generally not been controversial. Both government officials and some representatives of the Thracian Greek Majority have acknowledged publicly that the quality of education provided to the Muslim Minority needed substantial improvement.

For instance, a government official I interviewed admitted that several additional reforms needed to be done to improve the teaching of the Turkish language to the Minority kids:

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

There is still a lot that can be done in the area of education. For example, the Turkish language could be taught at every public school in Thrace, in every grade, as an elective class. Schoolchildren who want to learn Turkish, irrespective of their ethnicity, would be able to take these classes. Such a move could reduce the importance of Minority schools and could convince more Muslim parents to send their kids to public schools, and, thus, it could facilitate the integration of the new generation of the Minority into the Greek society.

But such a reform could only work if Turkish was taught well at public schools. That means that the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki, which – let's face it – is a failed institution, should be replaced with a real academy that provides high quality education to future teachers who can speak Turkish well and are enthusiastic about teaching Turkish.

And a local Greek journalist I interviewed went further than even some minority members in identifying the steps that needed to be taken to improve Minority education:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

For the Minority as a whole, there still needs a lot to be done to improve its conditions, especially in the area of education. And not just primary or secondary education, but higher education as well. The "proportionality" system is a good step in the right direction, but not sufficient. The Democritus University of Thrace also needs to undergo some "mentality" changes. This university, the most important higher education institution in Thrace, should develop a more welcoming, more accommodating attitude toward the Minority. Currently this university is too much influenced by racist worldviews like that of Prof. Xyrotyris.

Now, with respect to the Muslim community's demand for autonomy in educational issues and less government control, there were a few Minority members who recognized that this was incompatible with all the other demands that could only be achieved with an increase of government funding. More government funding would inevitably bring more dependence on government and more government control. One Minority member, for instance, suggested that accepting more government control was a reasonable concession if that would be accompanied by a better funded education:

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

What the Minority basically wants is to have an autonomous educational system; but that is not possible economically. The Minority could not sustain a sound educational system without the economic and financial support of the Greek government. It does not have enough resources to be able to do so. And by supporting our educational institutions economically, the government, whether we like it or not, gains a say in our education.

- The lifting of all restrictions in the exercise – with substantial autonomy – of the Minority's religious and cultural rights.

One specific and very frequently cited demand related to the free exercise of religion was the Muslim community's desire to choose its own *Muftis* (and the governing boards of religious foundations – *wakfs*) through some sort of *election*. Most Minority members did not want these chief religious functionaries to be appointed by the government; many would not recognize the

muftis appointed by the government and, moreover, wanted the government to recognize the muftis who were "elected" by the community through a hastily arranged procedure:

[Member of the Greek Parliament; Cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

Since the early nineties, the Greek Government has been appointing the Muftis, instead of respecting the choice of the believers. Also, in the last two decades, even those who run the religious foundations (the vakifs/waqfs) , i.e. the foundations' boards of directors, are appointed.

This is one more indication that the Greek State does not trust the Minority. It does not trust the choices the Minority would make; it does not trust the will of the Minority.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

The non-recognition of the elected Muftis is the source of some of the most important problems our Community is facing today.

Accompanying the mufti-related demands was, of course, the minority's opposition to the constant prosecutions against the activities of the "elected" Muftis:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The government insists on approaching the issue of Muftis through legal prosecution. As a result, there are dozens of indictments against our Muftis, for many of their actions and statements. The trials against the Muftis drag on for years.

On this mufti issue, one Minority intellectual I interviewed did blame the Greek State and demanded a change of the law regulating the selection of Muftis, but also was critical of the "election" method devised by the Thracian Muslim leaders:

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

Yes, the new policy regarding the appointment of Muftis is based on a new law passed by the Parliament, but that does not make it legitimate in this community's eyes. There is a saying in Turkish: "Whoever can steal a minaret can also prepare a sheath for it"<sup>9</sup>.

Enacting laws and regulations without consulting with us and without taking into account the principles and traditions of Islam is no way to solve the Mufti problem. The best way to handle this issue is by devising a formula that would be congruent to the Islamic law and traditions.

The Minority, in coordination with the government could choose an assembly of elders highly respected in the community and well versed in the Islamic law. This assembly, in turn, could select the mufti, possibly from among its members.

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<sup>9</sup> To steal a minaret is an extremely difficult thing to do; it is almost impossible. For someone capable of doing that, preparing a sheath for a minaret is no big deal.

Yet, instead of pushing for such a solution that would be both reasonable to the government and in congruence with Islam, the Minority leaders and their followers have opted for a pseudo-election method which is undemocratic, against the Greek law, and, more importantly, against Islamic law. Unfortunately, the Turkish government has supported this strange election method and encouraged Minority members to endorse it. If it were not for the support of Turkey, the silliness of this method would be obvious to our community.

Although the mufti problem is a dispute about an Islamic practice, international Islamic organizations have chosen not to be involved in it. They even avoided expressing any opinion about it.

It must be added that these criticisms of the "election method", though not widely accepted, are nevertheless shared by a sizable portion of the Minority.

On the issue of cultural and religious rights, some members of the Minority preferred to put their demand in more general terms by invoking the lausanne Treaty and its articles guaranteeing special rights to their community:

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

The Minority is entitled to demand and enjoy the full implementation of the Lausanne Treaty's articles on minorities. These provide an adequate legal framework for the protection of our collective and cultural rights, but the problem is that they have never been fully implemented. Now they are being implemented better than in the past, yet still not fully.

- And, of course, perhaps above all, recognition by the Greek government and free expression of the Minority's "Turkishness":

[Member of the Myki Municipal assembly; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

One of these most crucial issues is Identity, and the right to freely express and declare one's identity: The right to self-identification. Greece is willing to recognize this right only in part. There are still some serious limitations to the Minority's right to self-identification.

It is important to note here, that even though the overwhelming majority of Thracian Muslims agreed on the above list of demands, there were internal disputes as to which of the demands were more important and which ones had to be met more urgently. There was an increasingly

vocal group of Minority members that did not agree with the importance given by their leadership to the Turkish-identity-related demands at the expense of all others. These disputes had begun in the first period but they were conducted quietly until the early nineties. By the mid-nineties, however, the nationalist leaders had to confront very harsh and accusatory criticisms from their less nationalistic, more liberal opponents.

For instance, one anti-leadership Minority intellectual I could make this very negative assessment about the actions and statements of the Turkish-Nationalist Minority leaders led by Dr. Ahmet, in the late eighties and early nineties:

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

It is unfortunate that the late Sadik Ahmet became the symbol and the central figure of our community's struggle. Dr. Ahmet, with the support he received from the Ozal government, the right-wing nationalists<sup>10</sup> of Turkey, and even the United States, adopted extreme positions and a jingoistic discourse. He did indefensible things. He raised excessive demands. He, therefore, had a negative, rather than positive, impact in our struggle.

In addition, he and his team became a very authoritarian group of leaders, intolerant to opposition. There are also some credible rumours that Dr Ahmet was used by CIA, MIT [The Turkish National Intelligence Organization] and EYP [the Greek National Intelligence Service] – all at the same time! – and I have little doubt that he had ties with some infamous people, like Abdullah Catli, who were the connecting links of the Turkish organized crime world and the deep, dark forces of the Turkish State. According to another rumour, Catli visited Western Thrace in the early 90s and was Dr. Ahmet's guest when he was here. That the frustrated Minority was mobilized by Sadik Ahmet and his team was our misfortune.

Not only were our leaders the wrong kind of people to lead our protests, but they were also motivated by the wrong kind of ideology. Promoting Turkish nationalism in Western Thrace is just like promoting Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. It is inappropriate, because it inevitably prompts too negative a reaction both from the government and from the majority community.

Nowadays, on the other hand, we have a leadership that has sold out; one that is eager to please both Greece and Turkey, and, at the same time, both nationalists and progressives.

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<sup>10</sup> The so-called "Idealists" (Ülkücüler), supporters and members of the Nationalist Action Party (its Turkish acronym is MHP).



Another significant development that happened simultaneously with the intensification of internal disputes was the gradual loss of cohesion within the Minority leadership, mainly due to inter-personal conflicts (Akgönül, 1999; pp. 118-126).

Growing disagreements between the Government of Turkey and the Minority leadership is another development of this period that has to be taken into account. While the Nationalistic Minority leadership's actions (like the formation of a Minority-only political party) were leading to the Muslim community's further isolation from the Greek society and politics, the Turkish government made it increasingly clear that it wanted the Minority to remain an integrated part of both. An integrated Minority, in the Turkish government's point of view, would be better off socially and economically, and more influential politically <sup>11</sup>. It was partly as a result of this divergence of views that the Turkish Consulate's support for the nationalists declined, and the measures Turkey took to discourage intra-Minority opposition to the nationalist leaders were relaxed <sup>12</sup>. That, in turn, weakened the leaders' sway on the Minority significantly.

Because of all these developments, and after the further weakening and fragmentation of the Minority's nationalistic leadership following the death of Dr. Sadık Ahmet in 1995, the demands

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<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with the Turkish Consul in November 1998.

<sup>12</sup> The most infamous of those measures was the "black-listing" of Thracian Muslims who expressed their opposition to their leaders and/or to Turkey's policies [see interviews]. Minority members whose name was added in a "black list" compiled by the Turkish Consulate were barred from entering Turkey, from doing business or conducting any type of transaction with Turkish companies and organizations, and they would be excluded from any activity organized by the Turkish government. From '93 -'94 onwards, the Consulate gradually reduced the number of people in this list, and, by the end of the nineties, blacklisting had been practically abandoned.

regarding "Turkishness" lost some of their weight, thus allowing the other demands to be expressed with more emphasis and more urgency.

### **Support**

With regard to the kinds of support provided by the Turks/Muslims for the Authorities and the Greek political system, we see a significant change starting in the mid-nineties. This change, however, is to a large extent, a response to governmental policy changes and, therefore, it will be analyzed more thoroughly in the "feedback" section.

At the beginning of the second period, the level of the Turkish-Muslim Minority's support to both the Government and the political system of Greece was at its lowest. The Minority in general had withdrawn their diffuse support from the Government, which they regarded as their oppressor than as a set of institutions that could help with their problems.

Most Thracian Muslims had also withdrawn their support for, and their participation in, the Greek political system, and chose to support Minority-only political formations and later a Minority-based political party, even when it was clear that these formations were being shunned and isolated by the national political parties, and the party that was set up in 1991 was never going to win any seats in the Greek Parliament. In other words, instead of choosing representatives that would work to improve their conditions *from inside the system* through bargaining and negotiations, Minority members preferred to register their displeasure with the system and their anger with the government by supporting a group of leaders who basically *rejected the system* and, in turn, were ostracized by it.

The significant loss of legitimacy of the Greek State in the eyes of most Muslims had a negative impact in every interaction between them and every government-related institution. Most Thracian Muslims were already suspicious of Greek state institutions, but, at the beginning of pB, their trust and support, for example, in the Greek courts, in the Greek educational system, and in government appointees in charge of Minority affairs had either totally evaporated or become minimal.

Their distrust in the Greek government had reached such a point that, school textbooks in Turkish prepared by the Greek education ministry were rejected by most Minority parents simply because of the fact that they were prepared by Greeks. Or, in the case of the Mufti of Komotini, even though almost every Muslim of the city saw him as someone well qualified to be a religious leader, his authority was not recognized by many of them, simply because the Mufti was appointed by the government.

Another, and arguably clearer, indication that many Thracian Muslims had completely withdrawn their support from the Greek political system was the large number of Minority members who emigrated from Greece to Turkey and other countries in the early nineties. Having lost hope that things would get better for them in Greece, they chose the "exit" option.

That the "exit" option the Minority chose manifested itself in the form of emigration and **not** in the form of secessionism is very noteworthy. Even when the Minority's support for the Greek political system was at its lowest point there was very little support for secessionist actions:

[Member of the Xanthi County Assembly; Leading member of the Minority Association of College Graduates; attorney; Minority Member; Male]

I agree that the Greek Government may have been afraid of the consequences of our using our rights to their full extent; but this fear is unjustified: Even if we were to exercise not just the rights recognized by the Lausanne Treaty, but rights that go beyond that framework, for instance the right to self-determination, yes, even then the Greek government would have nothing to fear, for we have never pursued secessionist goals.

It was when the Muslim community's level of support was this low that the Greek government started to introduce reforms in its Minority policies. And as the Greek government's policies gradually changed, and the authorities became more responsive to the Minority's demands, its support for the Greek political system began to grow. It is important, however, to point out that the new and rebuilt support the Muslims have been showing for the Greek government and the political institutions of the country is, just like before the intensification of the crisis, basically *conditional* and *issue-specific*. In other words, were the government to change its approach to the Muslim community, were it to return to the old policies, it would again lose its legitimacy in the eyes of most Thracian Muslims. In this sense one could say the Minority's current support is qualitatively different than the diffuse, unconditional support provided by most ethnically Greek citizens of Greece, which manifests itself in the form of nationalism or patriotism.

It is necessary to add here that some nationalist Minority leaders have had a problem reconciling in their minds the anger and resentment they felt toward the Greek State and the deep respect they had toward the "State" as a concept. The right-wing ideas they were influenced by put a very high value to the State, whereas their Turkish nationalism and their experiences with the Greek authorities make them feel contempt and anger toward the Greek government<sup>13</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup> This is not the case with respect to the Turkish State. There is no conflict between these leaders Turkish nationalism and their high regard for the Turkish State.

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Despite all the oppressive policies implemented in the past and all the injustices we suffered, we still have confidence in the Greek State, because we respect the concept of the "State" as an almost timeless entity, one that is beyond short-term changes, beyond petty, narrow, interest-based politics, or ephemeral ever-changing policies. But we do not trust the current government, nor did we trust the previous governments, for their approach on minority affairs was shaped without any input from our community.

Some maintain that many of the problems we are facing are caused not by the State, but by the "para-state" (parakratos). I know nothing about that shadowy, mysterious para-state. And it would not help me to acknowledge the existence or the role of a para-state, for it is only the State that I can deal with; it is only the State that I can hold accountable.

From the mid-nineties onward, the Minority has demonstrated its support for the government by voting in large numbers for the candidates of the governing party, PASOK, in both local and national elections. Muslims also began to participate more actively in public affairs in Thrace, and to respond favorably, and with a lively interest, to the policies and programs aimed at improving their conditions, such as the "proportionality" measure to facilitate Minority students' entry to Greek universities.

Moreover, and more importantly, there has been, since the mid-nineties, a dramatic decrease in the rate of Muslim emigration from Thrace. In fact, a small number of Muslims who had emigrated chose to return:

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

In the past, most of those who migrated to Turkey were young people with a college degree. They would go to Turkey to study, and they would choose to settle permanently there after graduation. As a result, we had –and still have– a shortage of educated people in our community. Now some of them are coming back and we are glad that they are.

### **The Greek Majority in Thrace**

At the beginning of pB, not unlike the Minority, this group's discontent with the central government (or "the government of Athens", *το κράτος των Αθηνών*, as it is known in Thrace) and their dissatisfaction even with the whole political system had also reached its highest level.

### **Demands**

The local Greeks had basically the same demands as the ones they did in the first period, but now they voiced them with a higher intensity.

The most important of their demands were the following:

- Improvement of the socio-economic situation of Thrace.

Most local Greeks felt, even more than before, neglected by the central government.

One Greek diplomat who had spent several years in Thrace had this to say about how local

Greeks saw their socio-economic situation:

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

It is not only the Muslims who are unhappy with the social and economic conditions in Thrace. Since the beginning of inter-communal tensions, and despite the recent thaw, many Thracian Greeks have emigrated from the region, too.

The economic conditions in Thrace are quite bad compared to other regions of Greece. In fact, all the official pronouncements notwithstanding, the Thracian economy is kept alive with "injections".

- Repression of the Muslim Minority's Turkish-nationalistic mobilization.

Even some progressive, left-liberal local Greeks were very suspicious and critical of this mobilization, because they had no doubt in their mind that it was controlled by Turkey and that the nationalist Muslim leaders were silencing alternative voices. Among the people I interviewed, one progressive Greek journalist from Komotini had this to say on this topic:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

These protests were led by a Turkish nationalistic center, in the core of which was, and is, the Consulate. Around the Consulate orbit the Minority leaders who receive its support and are, to a large extent, dependent on it, financially and ideologically. On Minority issues, these leaders generally reflect and promote the positions that were formulated in Turkey. However, it would be a mistake to describe them as totally controlled by Turkey. After all, they are more familiar with Minority issues than some bureaucrats in Ankara, and we could presume that the official Turkish positions are shaped with the heavy input and influence of these nationalistic Minority activists. There is a so-called "Advisory Commission" in the Minority, a commission composed of many of the influential and pro-Turkey Minority leaders: Mayors, members of the Greek Parliament, newspaper owners, Minority association presidents, etc. This Commission determines the "official" Minority position on issues, speaks with one voice, and its voice becomes the main voice of the Muslim community. Alternative voices are often too weak to compete with this "official" voice.

I don't think that the protests these Minority leaders organized and the social turbulence they created in the '80s and early '90s contributed favorably to the recent changes and improvements. On the contrary, one could argue that if these protests had not taken place, the changes would have happened more quickly and more smoothly.

- Perpetuation, or maintenance, of the predominantly Greek character of W. Thrace, and of the Greek numerical majority of the region's population.

This did not necessarily mean that the settlement of "Russo-Pontians", that is Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union, in Thrace was a popular policy among the local Greeks. As it became clear that this group of new residents had a different culture and many social problems, including a higher-than-average criminality and alcoholism, many local Greeks grew weary of them.

- Better (military) protection of Thrace against a possible attack from Turkey.

During crises between Greece and Turkey, Thracian Greeks felt especially vulnerable.

### **Support**

At the beginning of pB, local Greeks' support for the discriminatory and repressive governmental policies against the Muslim Minority had reached its peak. In the following years, as the Minority's protests began to fade away because of the policy changes introduced by the government, the Greek Majority's support for the remaining discriminatory measures also faded away. In the nationalist segment of the local Greek population<sup>14</sup>, though, support for anti-minority policies remained strong. Yet, since the policies were changing, their support gradually turned into *a demand to return to the old policies*.

The high diffuse support among local Greeks, in the form of Greek nationalism did not change significantly in pB, but, as inter-communal tensions subsided, this type of support gradually came down to the "normal" level of nationalism manifest in the rest of Greece.

### **Greek Human Rights NGOs**

While the impact of these organizations in the first period was negligible, in pB they play a very important role, because they collectively are a well-established and vocal actor now:

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human rights NGO; Greek, Female]

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<sup>14</sup> The most prominent representatives of this segment were Bishop Damaskinos of Maroneia and Komotini, the Association of Immigrants from Imbros, Constantinople, Tenedos and Eastern Thrace, also known as *IKTATH (IKTAΘ)*, and a few newspapers like *Patrida* and *Chronos*, although the latter has recently striven to be more impartial.



NGOs and civil society organizations that advocate pluralism -- pluralism even on "national issues"-- have emerged just recently, but began to have an influence on political debates. They have made their views heard.

Among them<sup>15</sup>, the organization that has shown the most active and consistent interest in the issues concerning the Muslim Minority has been the *Greek Helsinki Monitor*<sup>16</sup>, which is also the representative in Greece of the transnational NGO called Minority Rights Group:

[Researcher on Greek-Turkish relations at a center affiliated with the Academy of Athens; Greek; Female]

The only Greece-based human-rights NGO that has had some influence on the decision-makers in minority affairs is the Greek Helsinki Monitor. The reports and alerts issued by this organization and distributed throughout Europe and the world are a cause for concern for the government.

It is important to note that the overly critical discourse used by the Greek human-rights organizations, the fact that they were a very new type of social actor in Greece, and the intense interest of these organizations which were mainly composed of ethnic Greeks, in Minority issues, *not* from a Greek-nationalistic, but from a pro-Minority viewpoint, created some suspicion and negative reaction -- primarily among Greeks and government officials, but also, to a lesser extent, among Thracian Muslims as well.

Not surprisingly, the responses I received from the people I interviewed on whether these organizations have contributed effectively on the recent changes in Western Thrace were more negative than positive.

A few people had good things to say about the human-rights NGOs:

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<sup>15</sup> Three other Greek NGOs and civil-society organizations that have dealt extensively with issues concerning the Muslim Minority are: The *Greek branch of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly*, the "*Front of Logic against Nationalism*" (I obtained information about these two from a founding member of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly), and the *Center for Research on Minority Groups (KEMO)* (<http://www.kemo.gr/en/index.asp>).

<sup>16</sup> For further information visit its web-site at <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]  
The pressure from the NGOs, especially Greek NGOs, was undeniably helpful.

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human rights NGO; Greek, Female]  
[NGOs like] the Helsinki Citizens Assembly have been active since the early 90s, and influential, especially among intellectuals.

However, most interviewees had a rather negative view about these NGOs and their contribution:

[Consultant/Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professor at Panteion University; Greek, Female]  
The role of domestic NGOs in pressuring the Greek government into changing its minority policies has been very small -- their exaggerated claims notwithstanding.

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]  
One has to be very careful when one assesses the role of NGOs in Western Thrace. Some Human Rights NGOs that have shown interest in the situation here have been receiving money from questionable sources and may even be controlled by the CIA. I am very suspicious of Helsinki Watch, for example.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]  
NGOs like the Helsinki Watch did have an effect on the policy changes, but their effect was too small to be compared to the impact and influence of the European inter-governmental organizations.

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]  
The Greek human rights NGOs, especially the Greek Helsinki Monitor, with their exaggerated, overblown criticism of government policies have actually done more harm than good to the Minority. How can they justify mentioning the killing of dozens of people and the forced evacuation of thousands of villagers in Turkey in only a couple of pages in their reports -- without even giving the names of those killed or displaced, while describing with all the minute details, in dozens of pages, every minor incident, like harassment at the border or refusal of a license, that takes place in Greece? They have access to all this information and they can publicize it *because* we are a democratic and free country.  
Because of the Greek Helsinki Monitor's exaggerations, we [the Foreign Ministry] are no longer receptive to their criticisms. And they are losing their credibility abroad. I wish they had a more constructive approach, because then we could work together on some problems of the Minority. Then the minority could really benefit from their human right monitoring.

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## **Demands**

In the conflict between the Greek Government and the Thracian Muslims these NGOs have firmly allied themselves with the latter. Naturally, therefore, these organizations' demands are parallel to the ones raised by the Minority. Nevertheless, human rights organizations give less emphasis on economic issues, for these are seen as rather outside their purview. Also, they express their demands using a human-rights jargon, not a nationalistic one as many leaders of the Minority do.

Greek Human Rights NGOs, in pB, have had two main demands:

- *Equal treatment of the Muslim Minority and an end to every type of discrimination against it.*

They pursued this demand by focusing initially on the most obvious policies of discrimination, such as the implementation of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code. The content of this article was clearly against international law, and, in addition, even against the Greek Constitution. The Greek Helsinki Monitor engaged in a long and intense campaign on this issue, demanding the repeal of the article. It was partly thanks to this campaign that the government first decided, in 1997, to issue special identity cards for Minority members who were stripped of their citizenship, though still residing in Thrace. Then, in 1998, the government, again partly because of the pressure from the Monitor and similar groups, abolished Article 19, though not retroactively. And finally, in 1999, the government declared that it would be willing to give citizenship to those Minority members who lost their citizenship due to that infamous article, still living in Thrace, and who chose to apply to become citizens again.

- *The recognition by the government of the Turkish identity of the Minority in Thrace, and the free exercise of this group's identity-related rights.*

Because this was a more controversial, or more resistance-generating, demand, Greek NGOs preferred to delay focusing on this one until they had achieved some concrete results with respect to the first demand. Even though they did mention in their reports and publications the restrictions imposed by the Greek government on the Turkish-Muslim Minority's identity-related rights, it was not before 1999 that they placed this issue on the top of their agenda and began organizing activities to raise this demand and to attract the society's attention to it.

Greek Human Rights NGOs have been effective and managed to generate significant pressure *only to the extent* that they were able to disseminate their views and observations in the global and national public opinion, and also *to the degree* that they had developed ties with international, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations -- including foundations that could provide them with substantial financial support. They have been quite successful in developing such ties and influencing the section of global public opinion that is interested in human rights. However, as far as the Greek public opinion is concerned, their success has been limited. In fact, in some instances, they prompted intense reaction from nationalist circles, which made a large portion of the Greek society more supportive of the nationalistic, anti-Minority, positions. But even in these cases they managed to bring minority-related issues to the forefront and initiated public debates or dialogues on them. In the past, including in pA, such issues were generally considered too sensitive to be discussed and scrutinized in the media, and the government rarely felt the need to justify its policies toward the Muslim Minority to the society at-large.

### **Support**

While these organizations have been very vocal in asserting their demands, and aggressively critical toward the government, they showed only tepid support for the policies they approved of. And their support was almost always qualified; it was always accompanied with comments pointing out the steps that have not been taken yet by the government.

As the Greek government gradually changed its policies and adopted measures to improve the human-rights situation of the Muslim Minority, the support of these NGOs for the government increased, but never became strong.

One could say that Human Rights NGOs are by their very nature unable to show strong or enthusiastic support for government policies they consider positive or in their right direction. Their primary function is to detect, publicize, condemn and combat human rights violations, and, it is almost exclusively the government that commits human rights violations. Nevertheless, this inability has been one of the most significant factors that weakened the effectiveness of Human Rights NGOs in influencing the Greek Government's policies toward the Muslim Minority.

### **Greek Nationalistic Circles**

Like in pA, in pB too, this aggregate of people and organizations has been a vocal and influential actor on issues related to the Minority, although, as we will see below, its influence on the formulation of governmental policies has decreased.

## **Demands**

The demands of the Nationalistic Circles from the Greek government in this period were almost identical to the ones they raised in pA. More specifically, this actor demanded:

- *Constant vigilance and readiness in order to confront any act of Turkish expansionism and provocation.*

Greek nationalists have always maintained that Turkey, due to historical, socioeconomic, and demographic reasons could not help but have an expansionistic national strategy, and that Greece, being militarily weaker than Turkey, was an obvious target for Turkish territorial greed<sup>17</sup>. Western Thrace, which borders Turkey and has a significant Muslim population, is, in the view of this group, one of the most vulnerable parts of Greece.

Nationalist circles have advocated that Greece had to increase its military strength, that it had to outspend Turkey in military expenses, that it had to be uncompromising and unflinching in its foreign policy, because only a strong Greece, which would also project a strong image, could deter its eastern neighbor's expansionism.

Greek nationalist theoreticians believe that a mere defensive policy with regard to Turkey is not enough of a deterrent. They push for a defense strategy that would make the Greek military capable of hitting Turkey back, and hitting it severely, in case of a Turkish attack<sup>18</sup>. Some of

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<sup>17</sup> This view dominates most of the publications issued by an organized network of nationalist intellectuals named Diktyo 21 (see its web-site: <http://www.diktyo21.gr>).

<sup>18</sup> The basic tenets of this strategy proposal are described in a small book written by four of the most famous theoreticians of the Greek nationalist circles: Stelios Papatthemelis, Hristodoulos Yialouridis, Panayiotis Ifestos and Athanasios Platias, Εθνική Στρατηγική: Προτάσεις Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής [National Strategy: Proposals for External Policy – in Greek], Athens, Greece: Malliaris, 1994.

them (like the late Panayiotis Kondylis), in the early nineties, even suggested that the Greek armed forces, to avert a Turkish aggression, should be ready for a "first-strike" or a surprise attack on Turkey<sup>19</sup>, possibly from Western Thrace. They claimed that unless Greece faced the Turkish danger pre-emptively, it would, in the medium-term, be forced to become Turkey's satellite, and to cede parts of its territory to that country.

- *Government intervention to deter the Muslim Minority's organized expressions of discontent (i.e., protests, demonstrations, etc.).*
- *Close surveillance of the Minority's nationalistic leadership and elite.*
- *Measures to weaken the Minority's ties with Turkey, thus reducing Turkish influence on the Muslim community and on Thrace.*

One necessary step to achieve this objective would be the shutdown of the Turkish general consulate in Komotini – a constant demand regularly stated by nationalist circles.

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<sup>19</sup> Kondylis details his views on Greek-Turkish relations in his last book titled *Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War -- in Greek] (Athens, Greece: Themelio, 1997). A cogent critique of the theory developed by Kondylis and other nationalist academics, can be found in a book written by Alexis Heraclides (one of the most visible representatives of the Non-Nationalist/Left-Liberal circles) titled *Η Ελλάδα και ο << Εξ' Ανατολών Κίνδυνος >>* [Greece and the "Danger from the East" -- in Greek] (Athens: Polis, 2001). See also the same author's article entitled "Γεωπολιτική, Machtropolitik και ένας Ελληνοτουρκικός Πόλεμος: Μια Κριτική Προσέγγιση" [Geopolitics, Machtropolitik (power-politics) and a Greek-Turkish War – in Greek] *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* [Contemporary Issues] n. 66, Jan-March, 1998.

- *Enhancement of the Minority's all ethnocultural identities, other than, and at the expense of, the Turkish one (such as the Pomak and Roma/Gypsy identity of some portions of this community).*

Supporters of this demand tend to refer to the Muslim population in Thrace as the 'Muslim Minorities' (plural), rather than "Muslim Minority".

- *Measures to increase the size and proportion of the Greek population of Thrace.*

To achieve this objective, according to the nationalist circles, the Government should

- Settle in this region ethnic Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and
- Encourage Greek-Christian families, through financial and other incentives, to have three or more children.

- *Improvement of the socio-economic situation in Thrace and of the Greeks living there, so as to reduce emigration from this region and encourage Greeks from other parts of the country to move into Thrace.*

- *Close adherence by the Greek government of the "reciprocity principle" when dealing with the Muslim Minority.*

In other words, Greek nationalist circles demanded the adoption by the government of additional measures that would (further) limit the Minority's human and cultural rights, thus bringing them to the same level as that of the rights recognized to the Greeks of Turkey.



Some intellectuals from the Greek nationalistic circles have gone so far as to say that the "numerical balance" between the minorities in these two countries, as it was established in the Lausanne Treaty was severely disrupted due to the shrinking of the Greek minority in Turkey, and that the current imbalance was against the Greek interests. They, therefore, have argued that Greece could (perhaps should) have used the principle of reciprocity and it could have expelled the Turkish-Muslim population in the fifties and sixties, when the Greeks of Turkey were being oppressed, attacked or expelled <sup>20</sup>. A few of these intellectuals have suggested that Greece should not rule out the option of "correcting the balance", that is to say the possibility of expelling Muslims who identify themselves as Turks <sup>21</sup>.

The Greek Nationalist Circles, because of their constant worry that Greece is in danger, and especially because of their obsessive fear of Turkey, have been dubbed by their critics "the constantly worried" (*οι συνεχώς ανησυχούντες*). One Minority intellectual I interviewed identified this group as one of the biggest threats to their newly improved situation:

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]  
 One serious threat the Minority is facing is coming from the "constantly worried", a group of media-savvy intellectuals and journalists who keep agitating the Greek public opinion

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, two articles published in *Nea Koinoniologia* [New Sociology]: Meletis Meletopoulos, "Δυτική Θράκη: Η Αιχμή του Δόρατος του Τουρκικού Εθνικισμού" [Western Thrace: The Head of the Spear of Turkish Nationalism – in Greek], *Nea Koinoniologia*, n. 29, year 13, period B, Winter 1999-2000; pp. 9-20. Thanos Dokos, "Η Τουρκική Πολιτική στο Ζήτημα της Ελληνικής Θράκης" [The Turkish Policy in the Question of the Greek Thrace – in Greek], *Nea Koinoniologia*, n. 29, year 13, period B, Winter 1999-2000; pp. 34-42.

<sup>21</sup> This view is openly advocated in a speech by Neoklis Sarris, a sociology professor and one of the most prominent representatives of the Greek nationalistic circles, at the First World Congress of the Thracians, organized in Feres, in 1994: Neoklis Sarris, "Οριοθετώντας την Οικουμενικότητα του Ελληνισμού από τη Θράκη" [Delimiting the Ecumenical Character of Hellenism from Thrace – in Greek], *Endohora*, n.2, February 1995; pp. 33-38.

against us. They keep saying that Greece is in danger, that Turkey has eyes for Western Thrace, and that our community is not to be trusted.

### **Support**

As we see the abandonment one-by-one of the anti-minority policies in pB, we also observe the frustration and discontent of the Nationalist Circles and, as a result, the gradual decrease of their support for the Greek government.

It is clear that the inputs of actors favoring improvement in the conditions of the Muslim Minority, increased in this period in quantity and importance, have managed to neutralize, and indeed to reduce, the influence of Nationalistic Circles over the Government.

Notwithstanding their reduced influence, however, the nationalists did provide support and justification for all the remaining repressive and discriminatory policies toward the Thracian Muslims, and resisted, albeit without much success, the initiatives to replace such policies with pro-minority ones.

With respect to the Greek society in general, the Nationalistic Circles used all the means at their disposal, particularly through the mass media, to enhance Greek Nationalism with more intensity than before. From the nationalistic point of view, the "name" dispute between the FYR of Macedonia and Greece, the disagreements in Greek-Albanian relations mainly on issues related to the Greek Minority in southern Albania, and, of course, the numerous crises in Greek-Turkish relations were all clear indications that Greece was surrounded by hostile neighbors; that it received threats from many directions. Nationalists wanted the Greek nation to set political

differences aside and to unite, to become more cohesive, and, by developing a strong sense of national pride and self-confidence, to confront all these threats, no longer just defensively, but aggressively. They were quite successful at this objective in the early nineties, though not so much in the second half of that decade.

The Nationalist Circles, therefore, showed diffuse support and enhanced societal diffuse support not necessarily for the government, but for the Greek State, for the political system at large, and for the Greek Nation.

Within the government, it was the Military whose threat perception was closest to that of Nationalistic Circles. Not surprisingly, then, the Armed Forces were the only institution that received uncritical and unconditional support from nationalists. They supported the special part the Army played in Thrace and in minority affairs in that region, and they exhorted that it expand its social and educational initiatives for the Pomaks in Thrace.

#### **Left-Liberal Non-Nationalist Circles**

This group of people, comprising mostly academics, lawyers, artists, and a few politicians and bureaucrats, appears to be better organized and more active in pB with respect to Minority affairs. Just like their nationalistic counterparts, they are dispersed in many political parties, from the center-right to far-left section of the political spectrum. More than in the previous period, they act like a single actor whose demands and support are capable to somewhat counter-balance those of the Nationalists.

As the tensions in Thrace grew, the left-liberal intellectuals have become more aware of, and more interested in, what was going on in that region. Publications that represent their point of view <sup>22</sup> began to host articles criticizing Greek anti-Minority policies and asking for an end of discriminatory practices against Muslims. Academics began to do research and publish works challenging the widely-accepted governmental positions on the situation of the Minority. This increased activity of Left-liberals was partly a reaction to the repeated assertions of Nationalists regarding the potential threat the Muslims posed on Greece that were widely published in the mainstream media.

Moreover, members of Non-nationalist circles became active in the field of human and minority rights, setting up, joining, or helping NGOs in monitoring and reporting on the government's Minority policies. In fact, these two actors of the political system, the Non-nationalistic circles and the Human Rights NGOs, are so tightly connected in pB that one would liken them to conjoined twins.

In addition to being more active, more vocal, and better organized, the Non-nationalists have obtained better access to the people in government in this period. Some political leaders and high-ranking bureaucrats were replaced by ones that are personal friends with Non-nationalists, or, indeed, who are themselves members of these circles.

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<sup>22</sup> Such as the newspaper *Αυγή* (Dawn), and the magazines *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* (Current Issues), *ο Πολίτης* (The Citizen), *Αντί* (Anti-, or Opposed), etc.

In short, although still not as influential as the Nationalist circles, the Non-nationalist ones have become an actor whose input on Minority affairs the Greek government takes much more seriously than before.

### **Demands**

The demands of this actor are, predictably, almost identical to the ones stated by Human Rights NGOs:

- *Equal treatment of the Muslim Minority and an end to all discriminatory policies against it.*
- *The recognition by the government of the right to self-identification, which would allow Muslims freely to identify themselves as Turks, first individually, and then collectively.*

When raising their demands, however, Non-Nationalists use expressions that are more general and less specific than the ones used by NGOs. To put it differently, the Non-Nationalist circles, particularly the intellectuals among them, are more concerned with the "pig picture". They are not so much interested in specific incidents of human rights violations in Thrace. They place Minority affairs into a greater perspective that includes Greek-Turkish relations, the economic development and future prospects of Greece, and especially of Western Thrace, the relations between Greece and European institutions, the role of Greece in the Balkans, etc. Thus, when they advocate an end to discrimination against the Muslim Minority and the recognition of this community's right to self-identification, they do so not just based on moral principles, but because they think that such a change in policies would improve Greek-Turkish relations, that it would strengthen Greece's image and role in the Balkans, that it would help Greece defend the rights of Greek minorities in neighboring countries (in Albania and in Turkey) with more

credibility, that it would facilitate Greece's full integration into Europe, and that it would make Thrace a safer, more peaceful region with a more conducive environment for foreign investments and for economic development.

### **Support**

In showing their support for the government, the Non-Nationalist circles have been more active and more vocal than the Human Rights NGOs. Unlike these organizations, Non-nationalists are not encumbered with an inherent predisposition to criticize a government. Nevertheless, non-nationalist support for the government has always been conditional and policy-specific: It was only to the extent that the Greek government adopted and implemented policies non-nationalists approved of, that they provided their support. In this sense, their support was qualitatively different from the diffuse support that is usually given by the Nationalist Circles.

Non-Nationalists have demonstrated their support by defending policy changes in Minority affairs in the mass media, in the public arena and in academia, and usually by countering the arguments and criticisms raised by the Nationalist circles. Non-Nationalists have also worked hard to inform the international public opinion of the improvements in the situation of the Muslim Minority, and have helped the government present the policy changes to the Greek society in a more palatable form.

### **The Orthodox Church of Greece**

The demands and positions of the Church with regard to the Minority affairs in this period have been basically the same as the ones in the first period. The top ranks of the Greek Orthodox

clergy continued their alliance with the Greek Nationalist circles and with the most nationalistic segment of the Local Greek majority in Thrace. The role of the Church of Greece in this conflict, according to the top clergymen, both local and national, was to protect and preserve the Greek-Christian character of Thrace and support its Thracian "flock" against the Turkish threat.

The most important change that happened in the Church in pB was the death of Archbishop Seraphim and his succession by the outspoken and unabashedly nationalist Archbishop Hristodoulos, in 1998. While Seraphim preferred to keep a rather low profile and rarely expressed his opinion on controversial political issues, Hristodoulos, the current archbishop, quickly developed a high profile: He has made himself available to the media on a daily basis, stating his position on many issues, giving a special emphasis on political, social, and international ones. He has not hesitated to openly confront the government when he disagreed with its policies. He thus came to be seen by a large section of the Greek nationalist circles as their spiritual leader or even their potential political leader.

Born in Xanthi, Thrace, Hristodoulos has been keenly interested in the problems of this region. While some of his comments on the Minority have a partially conciliatory character, the Archbishop's approach to their issues and to Greek-Turkish relations in general has been consistently anti-Turkish and anti-Turkey. For instance, in a visit to his hometown, in 1998, in speech that he made following a meeting with the government-appointed mufti he stated that local Greeks "should embrace those Muslim brothers and sisters who are not controlled by Turkey". Moreover, the Archbishop has in many instances expressed his irredentist wish that "the unforgettable fatherlands" now under the control of Turkey would one day be liberated, and

that Greeks would return to them. This bold nationalistic discourse of the main leader of the Greek Church has encouraged and solidified the anti-Minority attitude of the local clergy in Thrace.

With respect to the three local bishops, while none has disputed the basic positions of the Church with respect to the Muslim Minority, we can still see some differences in the way they have approached the Minority and inter-communal relations: The bishop of Xanthi, for instance, has by and large refrained from exacerbating inter-communal tensions; the bishop of Alexandroupolis has rarely made any statement in favor or against the Minority; the bishop of Maroneia and Komotini, however, has consistently depicted the Minority as a major threat and has been a major opponent of their efforts to have their rights recognized and respected.

The new, more assertive, approach of the Church to political issues soon resulted in an open clash with the left-of-center, and relatively secular, PASOK government. The Church strongly opposed, for example, government initiatives to extend the religious freedoms of non-Orthodox Christians<sup>23</sup>. More significantly, in 2000, Church leaders launched a large-scale campaign against the government's decision to remove the notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. The position of the Church was that there *should* be a section for religious affiliation in the ID cards, and that each citizen should be free to choose whether or not to declare his/her religious affiliation in his/her card. Despite the wide popular support the Church received, the

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<sup>23</sup> An brief account of the resistance of the Church to these initiatives can be found in the International Religious Freedom Report 2002, section on Greece, issued by the US Department of State on October 7, 2002; it can be accessed on <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13935pf.htm>



demonstrations that attracted hundreds of thousands of pro-Church Greeks, and the petition drive that gathered millions of signatures, the Government did not change its initial decision on the ID card issue: In 2001, it began issuing the new identify cards with no religious affiliation at all<sup>24</sup>. The ruling cadre's own values and ideology, plus the pressure it received from European organizations and the US seems to have proved more decisive than the campaign and objections of the Church.

The failure of the Church to influence the Government on the ID-card policy has weakened its political role considerably. It has been much easier for the Government since then to move forward with policies that were opposed by the Greek Orthodox Clergy.

This setback notwithstanding, the Church of Greece and its bishops in Thrace still played an important role in Minority Affairs, throughout pB.

### **Demands**

In the second period, the Church continued to demand:

- *A veto power for any government decision on applications from Muslim congregations to build, extend, or repair mosques.*

For example, in the late nineties, the Church demanded, and succeeded to be included, in the negotiations on whether or where to build a mosque in Athens.

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<sup>24</sup> This too is described in the International Religious Freedom Report 2002, section on Greece.

The Church leadership and the local bishops in Thrace based this demand on a stretched interpretation of two laws in effect since 1938 and 1939 <sup>25</sup>.

- *A say in decisions regarding the education of Muslim schoolchildren.*

The Church wanted the Ministry of Education to at least listen to the suggestions and proposals of Church officials of the education of the Minority. The justification these officials provided was that this was an "issue of national importance" and that the Church of Greece, being *the* church of the nation, had the right to be involved on every issue that concerned the nation.

- *Financial and moral support for Greek-Christian families in Thrace with three or more children.*

In Greece, there already was a government program for providing financial support and certain privileges (like a reduction in the length of compulsory military service) to parents of three or more children. However, that program applied to all such parents, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. The Church in 1999 proposed a program, to be administered by the Church itself, but at least partially financed by the government, that would distribute a stipend *only* to Greek-Christian families in Thrace. This program was intended as a measure to boost the population growth of Greeks in the region, thus minimizing the danger arising from the Muslim population growth, regarded, inaccurately, as "too rapid".

The government declined to support this proposal, but the Church went ahead anyway, providing the stipends from its own resources.

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<sup>25</sup> For more information on these laws, see the section on Orthodox Church demands in pA.

## **Support**

In pB, with regard to "national issues" in domestic and foreign policy, the Church strongly supported the Government when it adopted a nationalistic position <sup>26</sup>, but it withdrew its support when the Government changed its position making it more pragmatic or moderate.

The Church continued to enhance diffuse support for the Greek Nation (which it defined as the sum of Greeks who adhere to the Greek Orthodox Church) in the form of patriotism and nationalism. It has also provided unqualified support for the military.

Predictably therefore, the Church leaders, while expressing their pleasure with the relatively good atmosphere in inter-communal relations, have nonetheless been supportive of minority-related policies designed to minimize the perceived "Turkish danger". Their stated position concerning the treatment of the Muslim Minority usually has been that this Minority has been treated "well enough", considering the "Turkish danger" and the oppression endured by the Greek minority in Turkey. Any policy to improve the Muslims' condition, then, was unnecessary, risky, and not worthy of support.

### *Extra-Societal Environment*

#### **Turkey**

One of the most interesting developments in pB has been the change of the Turkish government's policy toward the problems of the Thracian Muslims. The hard-line, inflexible and

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<sup>26</sup> Like in the Macedonian "name conflict" in the early nineties.

uncompromising approach of Turkey in support of the Turkish-Muslim Minority and against Greece has, from 1993-94 onwards, gradually been replaced by a more moderate and more constructive approach; one that recognizes and acknowledges the improvements in the conditions of the Minority, but still points out the remaining problems with a condemning tone. As a result of this shift in Turkey's approach, we also observe that this country's government has somewhat distanced itself from the most radical leaders of the Minority in pB, and that it has improved its relations with the non-nationalistic Minority leaders. For instance, the Turkish Consulate has gradually reduced the number of "black-listed" Minority intellectuals<sup>27</sup> throughout this period, and, by the end of the nineties, this practice of "black-listing" Minority members because of their views and activities had for all intents and purposes been abandoned.

The obvious question that arises from this observation is: Why and how did this important shift in Turkish positions happen?

The shift can be seen, in part, as a response or a reaction to the changes in the Greek government's policies for the Minority. And to the extent it is such a response, this shift could be characterized as *feedback* to governmental outputs. This aspect of the changes in Turkey's approach will be examined later, in the feedback section of pB.

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<sup>27</sup> Intellectuals or prominent people from the Thracian Muslim Minority who expressed their disagreement with the policies of Turkey toward their own community, the ones who criticized the regime in Turkey for its lack of democracy or for its violations of human rights, and also those who opposed the nationalistic leaders of the Minority supported by Turkey, had been "black-listed" by the Turkish Consulate in pA.

Yet the shift is also the result of other developments directly related to Turkey; of changes in Turkey's general foreign policy; and of the increased importance of the relations of this country with European institutions. More specifically, the severe criticisms the Turkish government received, throughout the nineties, with regard to the mistreatment of the Kurdish minority made the politicians and bureaucrats of this country more vulnerable internationally and less able to accuse Greece of denying the rights of the Muslim Minority in Thrace. Another significant development that took place in the nineties, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes, was the intensification of Turkey's relations with the Turkic and Muslim groups in former Soviet republics and in the former Yugoslavia. The Turkish-Muslim Minority of Western Thrace had now become only one, a small one, among *many* communities of "outside Turks" (*Dış Türkler*) with whose problems, well-being, and potential the Turkish government and the Turkish nationalist circles were interested in<sup>28</sup>. In other words, the relative importance – and relative strategic value – of the Western Thrace Muslims in the eyes of the government and nationalists of Turkey decreased considerably. Finally, because Turkey made full integration into the European state-system (and especially accession into the EU) the primary objective of its foreign policy, it came to the realization that it had to adopt a less nationalistic and more conciliatory approach with respect to Greece. This happened relatively late in the second period, in 1999, after a series of crises in Greek-Turkish relations, and following two earthquakes, a devastating one in Turkey and a smaller one in Greece. These two disasters and the help each

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<sup>28</sup> For a concise analysis of the rising importance of the Turkic communities in the former Soviet republics in Turkey's foreign policy, see David Kushner, "Self-Perception and Identity in Contemporary Turkey", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32, No.2, April 1997; pp.219-233 – especially pp.227-228.

nation provided to the other improved Greek-Turkish relations at all levels and created a conducive environment for a rapprochement between governments.

### **Demands**

The Turkish government's demands are similar and parallel to those of the Minority, as these were formulated and stated by its nationalistic leadership. Naturally, then, Turkey has put more emphasis on Turkish-identity-related issues.

Just like in the first period, in this one too Turkey demanded:

- *Free expression of the Minority's Turkish identity and the recognition by Greece that the Minority is, in fact, "Turkish".*

One of Turkey's more specific identity-related demands was the lifting of all restrictions on Minority associations identifying themselves as Turkish.

- *Equal treatment of the Minority.*
- *Full implementation by Greece of the articles in the Lausanne Treaty – plus treaties signed before Lausanne – regardless of Turkey's record of complying with the same articles.*

In pB, the Turkish government, when confronting Greece in international and bilateral meetings citing the Lausanne Treaty, has mainly focused on the Minority's freedom of religion guaranteed by that treaty. The reason for this focus was the appointment of Muftis (by the Greek government), instead of their election by the community, which, in Turkey's view, was a major

violation of that freedom. By also invoking the Treaty of Athens, concluded in 1913, between Greece and the Ottoman Empire <sup>29</sup>, Turkey specifically demanded in 1990 that Greece allow the election of Muftis by the Muslim Minority through a method of the community's choosing <sup>30</sup>. Later, after the elections did take place, despite they were deemed illegal by Greece, Turkey demanded repeatedly that Greece recognize the "elected" Muftis as the legitimate ones.

Turkey, vulnerable because of its own violations of the rights of the Greek minority, has been careful to avoid any mention of reciprocity while making the above demands in international meetings and conventions.

One of the former Greek diplomats I interviewed was present in one such meeting, and here is what he remembers about the demands raised there by Turkey:

[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

The OSCE meeting in Warsaw in 1993 was very important in the development of the new approach toward the Minority. Turkey, in that meeting, attacked Greece by severely criticizing its treatment of the "Turkish-Muslim" minority: It raised

- the problem regarding the appointment of Muftis;
- the problems in Minority's education, especially the unilateral decision of the Ministry of Education to prepare Turkish textbooks and impose them on minority primary schools;
- the Article 19 of the Greek citizenship code, and the problem of "stateless people";

and, of course,

- the issue of identity, and Greece's reluctance to recognize the "Turkishness" of the minority.

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<sup>29</sup> For more information about the Treaty of Athens, which, when it was signed, Thrace was not part of Greece, see Baskin Oran, Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu [The Western Thrace Problem in Turkish-Greek Relations; in Turkish] (second edition) Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1991; p. 101. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that this treaty is still valid. (See, for instance the judgement of the case of *Agga v. Greece* – 17 October 2002, available at <http://echr.coe.int>).

<sup>30</sup> For a well-documented account of this controversial election process see Aydın Ömeroğlu, Batı Trakya Türkleri ve Gerçek -1- [The Western Thrace Turks and The Truth -1-; in Turkish] İstanbul, Avci Offset, 1994.

## Support

As Greece changed its approach toward the Muslim Minority, we also see the Turkish government and its representatives making some positive and supportive statements for these changes and for the new policies. It is true that these statements have always been expressed alongside severe critiques on the remaining problems, but even that is a remarkable change compared to the situation in the first period when a statement supporting a Greek policy would have been inconceivable.

An important characteristic of Turkey's policy in the second period is that it has been actively encouraging Minority members to integrate into the Greek society -- without of course abandoning their Turkish identity. As a result, we notice Turkish officials and diplomats speaking approvingly of Greek policies aimed at facilitating the integration of the Minority, such as the improvements in the way Muslim schoolchildren are taught Greek, and the proportionality system favoring Muslim students in the higher education entry examinations.

The Muslims of Thrace have generally been happy with the new, more constructive, approach of Turkey toward their problems. For instance, here is how a Minority member described the new approach adopted by the Turkish Consul in Komotini:

[Chairwoman of a minority cultural organization; Minority Member, Female]

The current Turkish consul general [Sakir Ozkan Torunlar] has a very constructive approach to the problems of the minority and to minority-majority relations. His is a people-friendly approach emphasizing [Turkish-Greek] friendship. And this approach is apparently in full agreement with Turkey's new policy for the Turkish Minority.

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Even Minority members who are known as critics of their community's pro-Turkey leadership have expressed approval and satisfaction with the changes in Turkey's approach to the Muslims of Thrace:

[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

Up until a few years ago, the Consulate, by supporting and legitimizing the then community leaders, had a negative impact on our community; because that leadership, with this explicit support from the Consulate, had established a tight, oppressive, almost fascistic, system of social control in the Minority. So, in the recent past, not only were we being oppressed by the Greek government, but we were also under the yoke of an authoritarian group of community leaders. The names of those who dared to express their displeasure with this situation and who opposed this leadership were put on a "black list" by the Consulate, and thus they were not allowed to enter Turkey. So they had to suspend all the economic ties they had with this country, they could not see their relatives who lived there, they could not even send their kids to study there.

There is **no longer a "black list"** (I know, for my name was on that list as well), which is a **very positive development**. [Emphasis added]

The end of "black-listing" of Minority dissidents by the Turkish Consulate is in fact a very important and positive development in pB. A few pro-Turkey leaders of this community, nevertheless, still have trouble publicly acknowledging even the existence of such a list. For instance:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Some say the Consulate has a "black list". I don't think that such a list exists or that it has ever existed. I, for one, have never seen or sensed anything that might indicate the existence of that list.

Inevitably, however, the change of the Turkish government's approach to the Muslim Minority issues, has confused, puzzled, and perhaps even disappointed some members of that community.

For example, one Thracian Muslim leader I interviewed interpreted the recent changes in the Turkish approach not as a new policy, but as lack of coherence and consistency:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

In the last two years, Turkey's approach to the Western Thrace Minority is characterized not by a new policy, but rather by a lack of a coherent policy. Turkey's recent actions and statements lack consistency and often have contradicted each other.

Members of the Greek local Majority, on the other hand, have noticed the change of the Turkish (and the Turkish Consulate's) approach and, although still mistrustful, see it as a rather good development:

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The policy of Turkey with respect to the Muslim Minority in Thrace has changed recently. It appears that Turkey is now encouraging the Minority's integration to the Greek society, while in the past the Turkish government used to encourage self-segregation.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

While the role of the Consulate is still the same, it must be said, however, that the current consul-general is trying a new approach. He does intervene in the affairs of the Minority, and he intervenes substantially, yet he maintains a low profile. He has indeed cancelled the infamous "black list", and this has made him popular even among Minority members who speak and act independently. But there must still be a file at the Consulate for each dissident. If necessary, a new black list could be created instantly. The current situation may be just a temporary relaxation of the tough anti-dissident approach.

Turkey's new policy toward the Thracian Muslims is seen as a generally positive development by the Greek government officials as well. Here is what a Greek diplomat had to say on this topic:

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

Yes, there has indeed been a change recently in the Turkish policy toward the minority; and that change has had a positive effect. Turkey now is emphasizing economic investments in Thrace. It wants to establish some access to Thrace, other than mere political and diplomatic. Many Turkish businesses find Thrace conducive for investments, for building industrial plants, etc.

I described in the previous sections of this chapter that the Turkish-Muslim Minority, as a community, is quite dependent on Turkey. So much so, that, before responding to a Greek government action or policy, a large number of Muslims first want to learn Turkey's position on it, and then try to harmonize their moves with the official Turkish position. For this reason,

Turkey's support, qualified and faint though it may be, is very important for the success of a minority-related Greek policy.

Overall, starting in 1996, the Turkish government and its diplomats in Greece have been acknowledging publicly that the situation of the Minority is getting better, but at the same time describing these improvements as insufficient. And since the beginning of the Greek-Turkish détente following the earthquakes, Turkey has apparently been careful not to exacerbate the remaining problems and disputes between the Minority and the Greek government.

#### **The Western-Thrace Turkish Diaspora/Expatriate Organizations**

In contrast to the shift in Turkish government's policies, we do not see any softening in the stance of these organizations in pB. What we observe, in the early nineties, is rather an intensification of their enmity towards Greece, in part as a result of the dangerous deterioration in government-minority and inter-communal relations, as demonstrated by the small pogrom of 1990 in Komotini. The leaders of diaspora organizations continued to have the most hard-line nationalistic positions with regard to the problems of the Muslim Minority<sup>31</sup>. Until the late nineties, they either ignored the changes in Greek policies or dismissed them as immaterial and insignificant. In some cases these organizations characterized the policy improvements as a "trap", into which the Minority should not fall. It was only in late 1999, and with the pressure of the Turkish government, after the Greek-Turkish rapprochement began, that the diaspora

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<sup>31</sup> It must be noted here that it is very common for any nation's or ethnic group's diaspora to be more hard-line and more nationalistic than their brethren in the "homeland" are. In other words, the stance of the diaspora/expatriate organizations of Western Thrace Turks is not at all unusual.

associations moderated some of their positions, yet they did that in a very tentative or grudging way. In the first signs of a new Greek-Turkish tension, there were statements made and articles published in these organizations' publications that reflected the old hard-line position.

The economic dependence of the diaspora/expatriate organizations on the Turkish government continued throughout the second period. In addition, the government has had some administrative control over them, even over the ones located outside Turkey. The Turkish government tends to treat these diaspora associations, and not just them but also similar associations of other groups of Balkan Turks, as quasi-governmental agencies helping in the implementation of Turkey's "outside Turks" policies. An indication of this treatment was the way the government pressured in 1998 all the diaspora organizations of Balkan Turks in Turkey to gather under an umbrella federation called the Federation of Balkan ("*Rumeli*") Turkish Immigrants.

The Thracian Turkish diaspora organizations are not just influenced by the Turkish government, but they can also influence it in return: They lobby usually for more hard-line policies and they ask for the government's attention for some "neglected" issues, either concerning the expatriates themselves, or, more frequently the Turks "back home".

The diaspora organizations have also exerted influence on the Minority leadership within Western Thrace, whose stance on the government-Minority issues they have tried to "sharpen" or radicalize. These organizations have, especially in the second period, organized several strategy-planning conventions for the Minority as a whole, and invited all the Minority leaders to

participate in them. The agendas of these meetings, and the statements issued at the end of them, reflected the radical approach of the diaspora leaders rather than the more cautious and moderate approach of the leaders *in* Western Thrace.

Finally, diaspora organizations try to be active in international forums, lobbying on behalf of their brethren in Western Thrace.

A former Greek diplomat I interviewed was present in one such forum, and had to deal with the accusations of diaspora organizations directed at Greece:

[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

[In 1993] at the parallel meeting<sup>32</sup> of NGOs or civil-society organizations, Greece received harsh criticism from Western Thrace Minority ex-patriate/diaspora organizations, namely from the Organization of Solidarity with the Western Thrace Turks, and the Western Thrace Turkish Association of Germany.

### **Demands**

The demands of these organizations, therefore, are directed (as I mentioned in the section for pA) at the Turkish government, and, to a lesser extent, at international organizations. It is only *indirectly* that they attempt to influence the Greek government.

- The most important demands of diaspora organizations in pB have to do with *the expression of the Minority's Turkish identity*. They have asked, in every opportunity, of both Turkey and of international organizations to push hard for the lifting of all restrictions put by Greece on the free

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<sup>32</sup> This meeting took place parallel to the OSCE summit in Warsaw.

expression of the Minority's Turkishness. They have also demanded, again in an indirect way, that Greece recognize the collective Turkish identity of the Thracian Muslims.

- *Unhindered exercise by the Muslims of their religious rights and freedoms.*

Among the religious rights, the one that was emphasized the most was the right of the faithful to elect their religious leaders, the Muftis, through whatever method they see fit. Diaspora organizations were vehemently against the new Greek law (no. 1920/1991; see Soltaridis, 1997) that gives the local governors the power to appoint the Muftis<sup>33</sup>.

In addition to their demands about Turkish identity and religious freedom, diaspora organizations also wanted to see:

- *Full compliance by Greece to all international treaties concerning the Muslim Minority, but particularly to the Lausanne Treaty;*
- *An end to every type of discrimination against the Minority; and*
- *A substantial improvement of the education for Minority children, through better textbooks, better teachers, and the closure of the low-quality Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki.*

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<sup>33</sup> To demonstrate its outrage to the new law and to pressure the Greek government into changing it, the main Thracian Turkish diaspora organization in Turkey, the Association of Solidarity with Western Thrace Turks – BTDD, chose, yet again, an indirect target: The Ecumenical Greek –Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, which is the supreme religious institution of the Greek Minority in Turkey. (And by doing so it showed that it adhered to the principle of negative reciprocity with respect to the treatment of minorities.) In 1991, soon after the appointment of a Mufti in Xanthi, Greece, a large number of Turks in Istanbul, led by members of BTDD, surrounded the Patriarchate compound and besieged it blocking entries and exits for anyone and anything. They demanded that the Patriarch express his support for the free of Muftis, as he himself had been elected by the Holy Synod (conveniently forgetting that this election result would have been null and void had it not been approved by the governor of Istanbul). This protest action, supported and protected by the Turkish government and the police, lasted for about a month, and ended after the Patriarch issued an ambiguous statement to the effect that he "understood" their complaints, and a

### **Support**

The Western Thrace Turkish Diaspora organizations supported none of the Greek government policies. They, in fact, refused to express even the qualified support, like other actors did, for the changes aimed at improving the conditions of the Minority.

The only positive input sent from these organizations in pB was their grudging expression of support for the Greek-Turkish thaw in late 1999, after the earthquakes. And this came apparently after pressure from the Turkish government.

### **The United States Government**

The US government has been much more interested in the situation of the Thracian Muslims in pB. American officials, since the early nineties, have seen the problems of this Minority both as a human-rights issue, and, perhaps more importantly, as a Southeast European security issue.

The State Department began to pay special attention to ethnic minorities and ethnic conflicts, since, right after the end of the Cold War, it appeared as if they were erupting all over the world, particularly in former socialist countries.

It was partly as a consequence of this increased attention, that, in 1990, for the first time, the annual State Department report on human rights depicted in minute detail a large number of human-rights violations in Greece, and was especially critical of this country's treatment of its

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declaration by the leader of the diaspora association that they had made their point and that they had informed the whole world of the violation of the Turkish Minority's religious rights.

ethnic minorities. The angry reaction of the Greek government to this report had virtually no effect on the State department, for the report issued in 1991 contained the same criticisms and the same expressions about Greece:

[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

After the publication of the 1991 State Department Human Rights Report, which was extremely critical of Greece with respect to the situation of the Muslim minority, it became clear to the Greek foreign ministry that the "Minority Problem" would be a major headache at every international forum. The Minority Problem was clearly "bad for our image".

Also, the rising inter-communal tensions in Thrace, the worst manifestation of which being the anti-Muslim riots in 1990, led many American officials to believe that this region had the potential of becoming the starting point of a Greek-Turkish war<sup>34</sup>, with terrible consequences for NATO and the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean area, thus putting the US in a very difficult position.

Therefore, American diplomats in Greece began to follow closely what was going on in Thrace<sup>35</sup>.

Since the beginning of pB they have visited the region a number of times, they have met with

<sup>34</sup> See "Φόβοι των ΗΠΑ απο την Τουρκική Προκλητικότητα" [USA fears of Turkish Provocativeness – in Greek], *Kathimerini*, October 30, 1993.

<sup>35</sup> The increased attention of the American government and diplomats to the situation in Thrace made many Greeks, especially members of the nationalist circles, very uncomfortable. See, for example, the following articles that appeared in Greek newspapers and magazines:

"Γιατί οι Αμερικανοί 'Ανακάλυψαν' τη Θράκη; Να Περιμένουμε Προβοκάτσια;" [Why did the Americans "discover" Thrace? Should we expect a provocation? – in Greek], *To Pontiki*, April 25, 1995.

Dimitris P. Dimas, "Ακουμπάει τη Θράκη Επιτροπή του Κογκρέσου" [A Congressional Committee "Touches" on Thrace – in Greek], *Eleutherotypia*, April 4, 1996.

Dimitris P. Dimas, "Αυτοψία ΗΠΑ στη Θράκη" ["Inspection" by US in Thrace – in Greek], *Eleutherotypia*, January 3, 1998.

Dimitris P. Dimas, "Επικίνδυνη Αναφορά Μίλερ για Θράκη" [Miller's (the American ambassador) Dangerous Report on Thrace – in Greek], *Eleutherotypia*, April 28, 1999.



local politicians, with Minority leaders, and with Greek bureaucrats in charge of Minority affairs to discuss the developments in government-Minority and Minority-Majority relations.

### **Demands**

The demands of the American government are not that different from the ones stated by the European organizations. What American government officials <sup>36</sup> wanted to see taking place in Thrace is:

- *An end to every kind of discrimination against the Minority;*
- *Full recognition by Greece of the Minority's cultural rights (though they have not insisted on the recognition of this community's Turkish identity);*
- *Better implementation of minority-related treaties that Greece has signed and ratified.*

The US government has also pushed for *better relations between Greece and Turkey*, which would undoubtedly have a beneficial effect on the situation of the Muslim Minority.

### **Support**

US diplomats in Greece and the State Department in its reports have used a very supportive language when referring to the Greek policy changes aimed to extend the freedoms and improve the life of the Thracian Muslims. And, unlike the human-rights organizations, US officials, since

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<sup>36</sup> And some politicians, i.e., elected representatives, as it became clear in several congressional committee hearings on Western Thrace.

the mid-nineties, when criticizing the treatment of the Muslim Minority, have been very careful to couple their negative comments with some praise of the recent improvements.

American diplomats, especially in their visits to the region, have also made encouraging statements with regard to the business opportunities Thrace provided for American companies. It was partly thanks to this encouragement that a small number of American companies decided to invest in this region and some joint ventures with American participation were launched there in the last ten years.

#### **International Human-Rights NGOs**

These organizations have played a much more important role in pB than they did in pA. The human-rights NGOs (the most prominent among them being the *Human Rights Watch* – formerly known as Helsinki Watch, the *International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights*, *Amnesty International*, and the *Minority Rights Group*) strongly cooperated with, and reinforced, the work of the mostly newly-formed Greek NGOs. The same international NGOs showed an increased and more intense interest in the problems of the Thracian Muslims. They repeatedly sent their representatives to the region to monitor the situation on site and to listen to Minority members (thus managing to gain their confidence). And, finally, by disseminating worldwide the findings of their representatives and the reports prepared by their Greek counterparts, they exerted significant pressure on the government of Greece.

## Demands

Due to the cooperation between the international human-rights NGOs and the Greek ones, the former have raised practically the same demands as the latter. More precisely, international NGOs urged the Greek government to <sup>37</sup>:

- *End all types of discrimination against the Muslim minority, and guarantee this community equal rights and equal access to public good and services;*

On the issue of discrimination, these NGOs have particularly demanded the complete and retroactive abolition of Article 19 of the citizenship code, which openly discriminated against Muslims going abroad (The article was finally repealed in 1998, though not retroactively).

- *Eliminate all obstacles preventing Minority Members from fully exercising their right to vote;*

(The presence of outside observers from International Human Rights organizations, like the Helsinki Committees of Denmark and Norway, contributed significantly to the smooth and complaint-free conduct of the April 1990 elections in Thrace. In these elections, unlike the two previous ones, there were practically no violations of the Turkish-Muslim Minority members' right to vote.)

- *Comply fully with all the minority-related treaties ratified by Greece, both bilateral (concluded between Greece and Turkey) and international ones;*

International NGOs also pressured Greece to become a party to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, a treaty formulated within the framework of the Council of

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<sup>37</sup> A more detailed list of recommendations or demands made by international human rights organizations can be found in the Human Rights Watch report entitled The Turks of Western Thrace, New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Europe; (The Greek government did sign this treaty in 1997, but the parliament has yet to ratify it.)

- *Recognize and guarantee the Minority's freedom of expression,*

by stopping any harassment of their intellectuals and journalists for criticizing the Greek policies, and by lifting any extra restrictions imposed in the members of this community to set up new media outlets (newspapers, radio stations, etc.);

- *Respect the Muslims' freedom of religion,*

especially by allowing them to build or repair mosques and also by giving them some autonomy with respect to the way they select their Muftis, and the way they manage their religious foundations;

- *Readjust the administrative structure in Thrace so as to give the Minority more access to the decision makers and more say in the decisions concerning their community;*<sup>38</sup>
- *Improve the education Minority children receive, but, at the same time, give more autonomy to the Minority on education-related decisions; and*
- *Finally, but very importantly, recognize the right of the Minority members to call themselves, individually and collectively, "Turkish".*

### **Support**

Just like the Greek human-rights NGOs, the international ones too, have given very tepid and qualified support to the Greek government when it changed its policies to improve the situation

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<sup>38</sup> One such readjustment would be the return of the power to make decisions about the Minority's daily dealings with the Government from the state-appointed secretary general (*periferiarchis*) of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace province to the governors, who are elected by the people.

of the minority. And their supportive statements were always followed by criticisms about the problems still remaining. These organizations, by nature, tend to emphasize the negative, the violations committed or the restrictions imposed by government agencies, rather than the positive, for example the recognition of some rights or the lifting of some restrictions.

Nevertheless, these organizations, in their reports, did acknowledge the improvements in government-minority relations. This acknowledgement proved important, because it has weakened considerably the effect of accusations about the treatment of the Minority, laid by Turkey and by the Minority diaspora organizations, and pushed these two actors later to recognize -- albeit reluctantly -- that things in Thrace have somewhat improved.

### **European Inter-governmental Organizations**

#### **OSCE/CSCE**

It was in 1990, right after the end of the Cold War, that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), then known as the CSCE (*Conference for CSE*)<sup>39</sup>, began to play an active role in World politics. In its first fifteen years (1975-1990) CSCE was just a forum where countries of the Eastern and Western bloc came together to discuss security and human-rights issues. Since 1990, however, CSCE/OSCE has been transformed into an organization with its own bodies that specialize, among other things, in human rights (like the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, established in 1990) and minority rights (like the Office of the

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<sup>39</sup> The name was changed from CSCE to OSCE in 1995.

High Commissioner on National Minorities, established in 1992<sup>40</sup>). OSCE can now be seen as an actor in international affairs with its own positions, its own objectives, and its own apparatus to make the former known and pursue the latter.

In the last 13 years, we see several important agreements, charters, declarations, and treaties formulated and accepted within the structure of OSCE that deal with and promote minority rights, or rather rights of "people belonging to national minorities". It must be noted, though, that in none of these documents is the term "national minorities" defined in a way that is clear-cut or applicable in every member state. The main minority-related OSCE documents are:

-- The *Vienna Concluding Document* of 1989, in which the signatory states accept to

"take all the necessary legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures and apply the relevant international instruments by which they may be bound, to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons belonging to national minorities within their territory"

and to

"protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory"<sup>41</sup>

-- The *Copenhagen Document* (June 29 1990) prepared in the second conference on the "human dimension" of the CSCE, in which the signatory governments recognize a number of rights of "people belonging to national minorities", such as:

"freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For more details, see the OSCE web page at <http://www.osce.org>

<sup>41</sup> The document's full text is available at [http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1973-1990/follow\\_ups/vienn89e.htm](http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1973-1990/follow_ups/vienn89e.htm)

-- The *Paris Charter* (November 21, 1990), in which the members of CSCE

"...affirm that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities will be protected and that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law."<sup>43</sup>

and

-- The *Helsinki Summit Declaration* of 1992, which establishes, among other things, the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities <sup>44</sup>.

Greece, a CSCE/OSCE member since 1975, has signed and ratified all of the above documents, and is therefore bound by them.

This fact is acknowledged by the Greek Government:

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, in the division of "intercultural education"; Greek, female]

With respect to minority affairs, Greece has faced, since the early 90s, an intense external pressure. Plus, Greece has signed several international treaties that broadened the rights and freedoms of the minority groups in this country.

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<sup>42</sup> The document's full text is available at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/hd/cope90e.htm>

<sup>43</sup> The document's full text is available at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/paris90e.htm>

This charter also includes a decision to hold "a meeting of experts on national minorities". That meeting, held in 1991 came up with a number of general and non-binding recommendations for member states ranging from more effective participation of people belonging to national minorities in public affairs to territorial autonomy given to a minority in some cases.

<sup>44</sup> The document's full text is available at <http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999/summits/hels92e.htm>

Nevertheless, Greece recognizes the Thracian Muslims only as a religious minority, not as a "national" one, and thus it has argued repeatedly that all of the above documents do not, or "do not exactly" apply to the case of the Muslim minority.

Although its documents are more important than its organs, OSCE, with its mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the compliance of the member states to these documents can exert considerable pressure on the governments. OSCE's strongest penalty is suspension from membership, which is used in the most extreme cases, like in the case of Yugoslavia in 1991. Suspension of a country's membership leads to international isolation, as that country is banned from practically all other Euro-Atlantic organizations as well.

The most important control mechanism with respect to compliance with minority rights is, of course, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, but there are also the periodic "human dimension" implementation meetings, in which NGO representatives participate alongside diplomats from member-states, and can confront these diplomats with specific instances of minority-rights violations committed by their government. In the early nineties, Greek diplomats, unable to justify or explain away the minority-rights violations in Greece presented by NGOs, felt exposed and were very upset during these meetings.

One of the experts I interviewed, a former Greek diplomat who participated in OSCE meetings, said that one additional and important reason why the Greek Government had engaged in pro-Minority reforms was its desire to minimize or neutralize the attacks, during such meetings, concerning human and minority rights violations in Greece:



[Professor of international relations at Panteion Univ. and former Foreign Ministry employee; Greek, male] OSCE and the processes within its framework, together with the conventions and other documents signed by the member-states, including Greece, played an important role as a source of external pressure on this country. This pressure prompted the government to change its minority policies. Several of the policy changes were adjusted and scheduled taking into account the meeting of OSCE, and the motivating factor for the changes was to avoid embarrassment or harsh criticism at these meetings. The "human dimension" meetings, and the NGO meetings held parallel to the intergovernmental ones were especially instrumental in applying pressure on Greece.

Another OSCE-based pressure mechanism is the OSCE parliamentary commissions in each member country, which can examine the situation in any other country member of this organization. These commissions can hold hearings, issue reports, and send policy recommendations to their own country's government (see, for instance, the activities of the US Congressional OSCE Commission)<sup>45</sup>

A negative evaluation by any of these mechanisms could not only expose a country internationally, but it also would diminish its ability to criticize other countries on human-rights issues.

It is easy, therefore, to understand why the OSCE, with all its binding documents, pressure mechanisms and intense interest in minority rights, has become, in the second period, an actor that the Greek government had to take quite seriously when formulating its policies toward the Muslim Minority.

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<sup>45</sup> Reports on its activities can be found at <http://www.osce.org/helsinki/cfm>

The significance of the pressure on Greece exerted through the OSCE mechanisms, treaties, and organs, did not go unnoticed by the local population of Thrace (even though the demands and pressure from all European organizations were apparently meshed together in the minds of non-experts):

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Greece had been criticized in the international for a regarding its minority policies so many times that the Government must have realized it had to do something to correct this situation. In addition, Greece signed and ratified several new European treaties, and complying with them necessitated some significant improvements in the Minority's human and cultural rights situation.

### **Demands**

The OSCE's demands, or rather expectations, from the Greek government (expressed primarily by the High Commissioner on National Minorities <sup>46</sup>, but in "human dimension" implementation meetings as well) have been the following:

- *Full compliance with all CSCE/OSCE documents that Greece has ratified;*
- *Respect for human rights and adherence to democratic principles, both in general and in particular when dealing with every problem having to do with minorities;*
- *Respect for the right of Muslim Minority members to "self-identification", which they are entitled to exercise not just individually but also "in community with others".*

Something to keep in mind, however, is that, compared to members from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Greece has received only muted criticism from OSCE, and the above demands were not stated as persistently or intensely.

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<sup>46</sup> See for instance the High Commissioner's statement on national minorities in Greece, issued on August 23, 1999 ([http://www.osce.org/news/show\\_news.php?id=283](http://www.osce.org/news/show_news.php?id=283))

## **Support**

Just as a negative evaluation from OSCE organs weakens or damages the legitimacy of a government policy, a positive evaluation enhances it. It enhances that policy's legitimacy both at the international level, but also in the eyes of the citizens, be they from the majority or the minority.

With regard to Greece, OSCE has recognized the increase of freedoms enjoyed by the minorities in the last few years. However, just like its criticisms, OSCE's praises for Greek policies have also been mild and few and far between.

## **European Union**

### **a. EU's Heightened Interest in Minority Rights**

In the nineties, in contrast to seventies and eighties, the European Union has been more interested and more active on issues related to ethnocultural minorities. We observe this heightened interest in all the organs of this institution.

For example, In the nineties, the European Parliament's actions with regard to minorities became more substantive: In 1994, it passed a "Resolution on Linguistic Minorities in the European Community" that significantly reinforced the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL: an organization affiliated with the EC, established in 1982) and made it possible for this

bureau to receive a much larger amount of funding from the European Community<sup>47</sup>. It thus became possible for EBLUL to conduct substantial projects aimed at improving the quality of instruction of regional or minority languages and at encouraging the use of these languages in the media, the arts, and the sciences. Also, in 1997, the Parliament declared that for countries whose governments did not respect fundamental human rights and the rights of minorities an accession to the European Union was out of the question.

The Greek government, because of its predisposition to consider any issue pertaining to ethnic minorities as a potential or actual threat to Greece's national integrity and to its claim of homogeneity, was very reluctant to support even these minimal measures on minorities. For instance, Greece was one of the only two countries in the European Community where EBLUL did not or could not organize.

The European Commission, the executive organ of the Community, although less inclined before the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) to deal with minority issues, did, nevertheless, finance several studies on the situation of ethnic and linguistic minorities in the member-states<sup>48</sup>. And these studies included Greece.

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<sup>47</sup> The European Community's contribution to EBLUL rose from 100,000 ECU in 1983 to 4,000,000 ECU in 1995-1996.

<sup>48</sup> Of these studies the most important was the one conducted within the framework of EUROMOSAIC, in 1996, with the objective to reach a comparative understanding of the situation of the various language groups with the borders of the European Union.

It was primarily thanks to the European Union's prospects for an "eastern enlargement", after the end of the Cold War, that the Union's various organs began to pay attention to the political and legal dimensions of minority issues. Most, if not all, the prospective members-states in Eastern Europe had minority problems, and it was impossible, therefore, for the Union to continue its low interest in such issues. And inevitably, high interest in *future* members' minority issues had to be accompanied with *current* members' minority issues. Yet the shift from low interest to high interest, not surprisingly, did not happen quickly or immediately. It happened in several phases:

The first phase began with the Maastricht Treaty <sup>49</sup>, in 1992. With this treaty the European Community officially declared itself not just an economic but also a *political union*. The Community also acknowledged (by implication) in the treaty document that all member states are culturally heterogeneous, and it declared that it would respect each member's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

One interesting development in the post-Maastricht phase was the linking of trans-regional and cross-border cooperation with the issue of minorities. The idea that minorities would benefit from cooperation between regions in and around the EU gained popularity (Toggenburg, 2000).

The Union still preferred, in this phase, to justify its interest in minorities through economic arguments: Discrimination produced social exclusion, which, in turn, resulted in economic costs, such as unemployment, inadequate access to public and private services and wasted talents.

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<sup>49</sup> The full text of this treaty is available at the EU web site, at [http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/C\\_2002325EN.000501.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/C_2002325EN.000501.html)

Similarly, in an instruction on how the structural funds should be spent, the Commission stated that special attention should be paid to the needs of ethnic minorities with a view to promote their integration into the labor market. And, again, one of the first initiatives pertaining to the minorities that was financed by the Commission was the Ethnic Minority Business Network whose objective has been to promote the role of ethnic minority-owned businesses in the economies of the member-states (Toggenburg, 2000).

In its foreign relations, the European Union has had a more assertive position on the protection of ethnic minorities. References to human rights have been an indispensable element in most agreements signed by the EU with non-EU countries (like the Lomé agreements) since the mid-eighties, and references to clauses on ethnic and national minorities of OSCE and the Council of Europe have been increasingly common in such agreements since the nineties (like the Pact on Stability in Europe, signed in 1995). One characteristic example of the importance given to the issue of minorities in foreign relations was the mention of minority rights among the criteria for the EU recognition of the former Yugoslav republics.

The issue of national or ethnic minorities has been especially important in the relations of the European Union with prospective member countries. For instance, the Union Parliament and Commission made it clear to Turkey (in 1989), that it could not become a EU member, unless the Turkish government recognized some of the cultural rights of the country's Kurdish minority. And since the summit meeting held in Copenhagen in June 1993, "respect for and protection of minorities" has been a standard condition to be met by a candidate country in order to be

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accepted to the Union. All the countries (primarily from Central and Eastern Europe) that applied for membership in the nineties were asked to adjust their legal structure according to the "Copenhagen Criteria", in other words, to adopt specific changes in their legislation and its policies so as to improve the situation of their ethnic minorities.

This high emphasis on minority rights in the European Union's foreign relations and the low importance it attached on the same issue in its internal affairs was seen as "double standards" and was criticized by many<sup>50</sup>. Critics, both from inside and outside the Union, characterized its concern for minorities as "an export article not intended for domestic consumption".

And yet, despite these criticisms, the European Union continued to show some unwillingness to develop laws on minorities that would be binding for its member states. Even in the Amsterdam Treaty, in 1997, when all the Copenhagen criteria for admitting new members were elevated into primary law, the criterion on minority protection was treated as of secondary importance with regard to the countries that already were members.

Notwithstanding the reluctance of at least some member- states to make minority protection part of the Union law (or, more specifically, to include it in the *aquis communautaire*), it is now widely

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<sup>50</sup> Human and Minority rights organizations continued to raise that criticism even in 2003. For instance, the Minority Rights Group International (MRG), headquartered in London, in a press release it issued on April 15, 2003, titled "EU Accession Exposes Double Standards on Minority Rights" pointed out the fact that while the EU was putting pressure on candidate countries to ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on National Minorities, many countries who *were* members of the union had still not ratified the same treaty. (The release was posted on MRG's web-site at <http://www.minorityrights.org>). Amnesty International also accused the EU, in a European Parliament public hearing, of applying double standards on human rights issues (see Amnesty's press release of April 24 2003, available on the web at <http://www.amnesty-eu.org/>).

accepted that protection of the minorities has become one of the general principles that guide legislation in the Union.

While the Amsterdam Treaty introduced no provision for the protection of national or ethnic minorities, it did include an article, Article 13 TEC, which authorized the Commission and the Council (the two most powerful organs of the European Union) to "take appropriate action to *combat discrimination* based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."<sup>51</sup>

Article 13 TEC, in which the word "to combat" was intentionally used instead of a more conventional word like "to prohibit", allows a large number of actions directed against discrimination, from relatively innocuous programs aimed at creating public awareness, to far-reaching proactive measures. Nevertheless, positive discrimination favoring ethnic minorities seems to go beyond the scope of this article. Also, it should be noted that in order to take action based on this article, the EU organs have to act unanimously; and unanimity is rather difficult to achieve.

To facilitate the implementation of Article 13, the European Union established in 1997 the *European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia* (EUMC)<sup>52</sup>. This Center's task is to collect data on incidents and practices of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the EU

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<sup>51</sup> The full text of the treaty is available at <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/amsterdam.html>

<sup>52</sup> For more information visit the Center's web-site at <http://eumc.eu.int>



countries and inform the EU bodies and the member country governments of these incidents, in order to help them formulate more effective policies to combat such phenomena. The Center also undertakes research on these issues, examines cases of good practice, formulates conclusions and publishes reports – an annual one for the whole EU as well as reports for each member country.

Two years after the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty, in 1999, the European Commission prepared, based on Article 13, a general package to create a common level of protection against discrimination throughout the EU. The package consisted of three sections:

- (1) a directive for equal treatment in employment (prohibiting discrimination on all grounds, including disability, age etc.);
- (2) a directive for equal treatment of "all persons", irrespective of racial and ethnic origin; and
- (3) a decision to set up a five-year (2001-2006) action program to combat discrimination.

Of this package, the section that is the most important to ethnic, national, and racial minorities is the second one (Council Directive 2000/43/EC), which was dubbed "the Race Directive"<sup>53</sup>. It was adopted by the European Council (i.e., all the heads of governments of the member states) in June 2000. It applies to a large range of discrimination types, and has been interpreted in such a way as to include "direct" and "indirect" discrimination, plus ethnic or racial harassment (Toggenburg, 2000).

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<sup>53</sup> The full text of the directive is available at [http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=32000L0043&model=guichett](http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=32000L0043&model=guichett)

Unlike the general tendency of European Union decisions, treaties, and policies, this directive goes far beyond the area of employment and covers such fields as social security, healthcare, education, housing, and other social goods and services available to the public. More strikingly, however, the directive is intended to apply not only to the laws, regulations and administrative practices of every member country, but also to any provision included in contracts, collective or between individuals, in agreements, in internal rules and regulations of non-profit associations, etc (Ch. IV, Art. 14 of the directive).

The directive requires of the member states to ensure that judicial, administrative, and conciliation mechanisms are available to all persons who claim to be victims of ethnic or racial discrimination. The only exceptions allowed by the "Race Directive" for racial or ethnic preferences are cases where there are "genuine and determining occupational requirements".

While broadly prohibiting ethnic and racial discrimination, this directive leaves the door open for Member States to adopt, if they deem it necessary, specific measures to "compensate for disadvantages linked to racial and ethnic origin". In other words, it does not outlaw "reverse" or "positive" discrimination that would favor disadvantaged ethnic or racial minorities.

This directive makes it necessary for the member states to establish or designate a governmental body for the promotion of equal treatment on a racial or ethnic basis. These bodies would provide assistance to the victims of discrimination in their complaints; they would conduct independent surveys and publish reports on various topics pertaining to ethnic and racial

discrimination in each member country; and they would make recommendations to the government on how to tackle issues of discrimination<sup>54</sup>.

As can be seen, the "Race Directive" is the most important minority-rights initiative so far, originating from European Union bodies. It is clear that, in this organization, concern about issues and problems regarding ethnic and racial minorities, both inside and outside the Union, has increased over time, especially in the last ten years. In fact, the adoption of such an EU directive would have been unimaginable in the seventies or eighties. The rise of concern about minorities has a lot to do with the intensification of the EU ties with Eastern European countries after the end of the Cold War, and with the process of integrating these countries to the Western part of Europe. It also has to do with the increase of immigrants from Third-World countries in almost all EU countries.

#### **b. EU's Financial/Economic Support for Thrace**

##### **And its Beneficial Impact on Government-Minority Relations**

Thrace, one of the poorest regions in the European Union, has received a large amount of financial support from the structural funds<sup>55</sup> and the Cohesion Fund of the European Union. If

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<sup>54</sup> These functions in Greece are fulfilled by the National Ombudsman and by a national office of human rights, both of which began working in 1998, two years before the adoption of the "Race Directive". Other EU countries also had similar institutions by the time the "Race Directive" was adopted.

<sup>55</sup> Structural funds are given to programs in member-countries through an elaborate process that generally ensures that these funds are spent efficiently, fairly, and according to the basic principles of the European Union. Here are the most important steps of the process through which member-states receive structural funds:

\* The European Commission prepares a general proposal for all the Union, which takes its final form after being approved by the European Parliament.

not so much the first, then certainly the second and the third Community Support Framework agreed between the EU and Greece<sup>56</sup> included many projects in Thrace aimed mainly at developing its infrastructure, facilitating its "structural adjustment" to the rest of the EU, combating unemployment, and improving the living conditions of this region's inhabitants -- majority and minority alike<sup>57</sup>.

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\* The European Council decides on the budget for the structural funds and the basic rules and objectives regarding their use.

\* The authorities at the national and regional level prepare the plans and programs.

\* They consult the partners.

\* They finalize their plans and submit it to the European Commission

\* On the basis of this plan, the Commission "in collaboration with the member-state" draws up and adopts a "Community Support Framework".

\* The Commission and the Member States negotiate the content of the Community Support Framework, of the major projects and global grants and their financing plans.

\* The Commission adopts the final form of the Community support framework and other plans; it approves or rejects the major projects the major projects and global grants within the programs.

\* The Commission commits the first annual installment when it adopts the programming document.

\* Thereafter, the Commission commits the annual installments by the 30th of April of each year.

\* The implementation of the programs is monitored by the Monitoring Committee.

\* The Commission automatically decommits the parts of commitments not implemented at the end of the second year after the year of commitment.

(See Structural Actions 2000-2006, (Luxembourg: Office of the Official Publications of the European Communities, 2000).

For more information on how the EU supports the regions of the Union that are in bad economic shape, see Working for the Regions, (A brochure)(Luxembourg: Office of the Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001

I would also like to thank Dr. Marios Camhis, for the information he provided in our lengthy conversations.)

<sup>56</sup> The First Community Support Framework was for the period 1989-1994, the second for 1995-1999, and the third one is for the period 2000-2006.

<sup>57</sup> For a general description and analysis of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, see Structural Actions 2000-2006.

Rural development support, that includes, among other things, start-up assistance for young farmers, professional training, early retirement support, compensatory support for deprived areas or those subject to environmental constraints, has also been crucial to Thrace<sup>58</sup>.

Again within the framework of structural funds, the European Union has supported, particularly with funds included in the Third Community Support Framework (2000-2006) a number of "community initiatives" in Thrace, whose objective has been to improve cross-border cooperation ("*Interreg*" programs), to develop the rural areas ("*Leader+*" programs), to "combat discrimination and inequalities in connection with access to the labor market" ("*Equal*" programs), and to contribute to the social and economic regeneration of towns and urban neighborhoods in crisis ("*Urban*" programs)<sup>59</sup>.

In addition to these structural funds, Thrace has also benefited from the Cohesion Fund, which finances projects relating to the environment and Trans-European transport networks in less affluent member states of the EU<sup>60</sup>. One project supported by the Cohesion Fund, the *Egnatia Highway* and its "vertical extensions", is going to be the main highway system in Thrace and is going to dramatically improve the connections of this region to Eastern and Western Europe and also to Turkey. Moreover, the *Egnatia* project is going to reduce the isolation of some Minority-

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<sup>58</sup> The annual rural development budget for the entire Greece is about € 130 million (see [http://www.3kps.gr/Page\\_1\\_En.htm](http://www.3kps.gr/Page_1_En.htm)). Approximately ten percent of this amount goes to East Macedonia and Thrace.

<sup>59</sup> See *Structural Actions: 2000-2006*, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> See *Structural Actions: 2000-2006*, p. 110.

inhabited areas, thus making any remaining policies restricting the rights of this community very difficult to enforce:

[Consultant/Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professor at Panteion University; Greek, Female]

When the "Vertical Highways" to Egnatia Highway are completed, this restricted zone and the whole policy of restrictions in that area will be obsolete and irrelevant. . In addition to the East-West connections, Thrace and especially its parts with predominantly minority population are going to have an easy and important North-South connection. Better and wider roads will improve the connection of these parts of Thrace with the rest of Greece and with Bulgaria. And this, in turn, will facilitate the integration of the minority into the Greek society and into the European society.

The contribution of the Structural funds and the Cohesion Fund to the Greek economy is extremely important: In the period covered by the Third Community Support Network, 2000-2006, Greece is scheduled to receive around € 25 billion<sup>61</sup>. Of this amount about € 735 million will go to Eastern Macedonia and Thrace<sup>62</sup>. The programs supported by EU funds in the last decade<sup>63</sup> lead to a considerable economic development in these two regions: While in 1988 the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace was 52.2 % of the EU average, in 1998 the per capita GDP of these two regions had risen to 55.4 % of the EU average<sup>64</sup>. While this increase may seem minimal at first glance, one should take into account the fact that in 1996

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<sup>61</sup> € 21 billion from the Structural funds, € 568 million for Interreg programs, € 172 million for Leader+ programs, € 98 million for Equal programs, € 24 million for Urban programs, and € 3 billion from the Cohesion Fund (*Structural Actions: 2000-2006*, p. 19 and p. 110). It must be mentioned, however, that these amounts are only the EU contribution of the programs supported by the structural funds, and not their total cost. While Structural Funds have provided about 80% of the financing for these programs, the remaining 20% was financed by the Greek national budget.

<sup>62</sup> For a more detailed presentation of the programs to be financed and the Community financing for each of the programs included in the Third Community Support Framework, see <http://www.hellaskps.gr>

<sup>63</sup> Greece received € 15.2 billion in 1995-1999 (<http://www.3kps.gr>).

<sup>64</sup> See *Working for the Regions*, p. 30.

three prosperous countries, Sweden, Finland, and Austria, joined the EU pushing the average upwards.

The European Union has undoubtedly been a crucial extra-societal actor of the Greek political system in pB -- an actor that, because of its increased concern about minorities, has had a very important influence on the government, when the latter engaged in actions or produced policies pertaining to the Muslim Minority.

With all this information in mind, we could say that these were the demands and support of the EU in pB that have influenced the policies of the Greek government for the Muslim Minority:

#### **Demands**

- An end to all types of discrimination against the Minority, and ensuring for this community full equality of access to the labour market, and the market in general.
- Broader recognition by the Greek government of the cultural heterogeneity in the country, and fuller respect for the cultural rights of the Muslim Minority.
- Improvement of the social and economic conditions of the Muslims and the areas where they are concentrated.
- Inclusion of Minority members, companies, and organizations in initiatives to develop Thrace<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> According to Dr. Marios Camhis, a former member of the Monitoring Committee that oversaw the projects in Greece, minority inclusion was an important criterion used by EU bureaucrats in evaluating ("ex-ante", "mid-term", and "ex-post") and monitoring the implementation of the EU-financed projects in Thrace.

Most of the people I interviewed, local Greeks, Turks-Muslims, and Greek Government officials alike, acknowledged and indeed emphasized the role of the European Union's pressure and incentives in the policy changes. Some even insisted that EU's part was more important than the one played by other European organizations:

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of a human rights NGO; Greek, Female]

Greece now wants to achieve full integration into the EU, and intends not to fall behind while EU is moving toward the next steps of integration.

To accomplish this, it is imperative to raise its standards of human rights protection to a level acceptable to the EU. Greece has to take care of all the remaining problems pertaining to human rights.

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

When examining the recent changes, it is important to note the influence of the European Union, for, of all the European inter-governmental organizations it is the EU whose pressure on the government and whose incentives and programs was the most beneficial to us. The weaknesses of the Greek government's approach to the Minority became clear within the European framework, and the EU helped Greece correct its policies. EU's role is particularly important in the economic improvements that took place in the last decade. The role of the other organizations, such as OSCE and CoE, was insignificant compared to the EU's.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Why did the Greek State decide to change its Minority policies? Well, the primary reason for this change is the pressure that came from the European Union, and, to a lesser extent, from OSCE and CoE. I think that the reason why these organizations applied pressure on Greece is their approach to the candidate-states from Central and Eastern Europe.

European organizations strongly demanded that these former socialist countries improve their human and minority rights situation in order to be accepted. It would have been hypocritical if they did nothing when a State that is already a member violated the human and minority rights of a group of its citizens in such a flagrant way.

High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

Just as in many other issues, on the issue of minority rights as well, Greece had to adjust its policies to the treaties and conventions of Europe to which she had acceded.

Continuing the old policies would have been a violation of those treaties.

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The future of the Minority depends very much on Europe and the European Union. And, given the attention paid by the EU to the protection of minority rights, I can say that the future is good for our community. Better days are ahead for us.

We have not seen or have not been shown the Greek civilization and democracy, but now we are looking forward to seeing the European civilization.



However, there were a few people who thought that EU's influence was not that important. To them, national sovereignty, national interests, and bilateral treaties were much more powerful factors in determining the minority policies of Greece:

[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The reforms in Greece's minority could not have happened without the pressure from the European Union. Greece has signed many international treaties that extend the human rights and cultural rights of its citizens. It has put itself under the obligation to implement these treaties. And if it did fulfill that obligation, most problems concerning our community would be resolved.

Nevertheless, these treaties and what they provide for are in conflict with the national policies and with what Greece perceives as its national interest. So, the government is trying to implement these treaties only to the extent that it would not endanger "the national interest". When these treaties clash with the national interest or national policy, the latter always wins.

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

Notwithstanding all the international commitments of Greece, notwithstanding the new conventions and treaties signed by the Greek government, the State-Minority relations are still regulated by the Lausanne treaty. All these other documents are of marginal importance. There is not really a new legal order in the relations between the Minority and the Government.

Actually, this is not necessarily a bad thing, for the Lausanne Treaty's articles on Minorities provide an adequate legal framework for the protection of our collective and cultural rights. The real problem is that these articles have never been fully implemented. Now, they are being implemented better than in the past, yet still not fully.

## Support

The European Union supported all the policies – economic, political, cultural -- formulated in pB by the Greek government to improve the situation of the Muslim Minority. In fact, if it was not for the financial support from the EU structural and cohesion funds, many of these policies could not have been implemented. Furthermore, the EU required the cooperation of Minority members and organizations with the Greek government in order to fund these programs, and therefore, it contributed significantly to the improvement of government-minority relations. In other words, in order to receive the money from the EU, the Minority had to overcome its alienation from the

Greek government and break its isolation, while the government had to include the Minority in its projects aimed at improving the socioeconomic situation in Thrace. EU funding became, as Muzafer Sherif (1966) would say, a *superordinate goal*<sup>66</sup> for both the government and the Minority.

A significant portion of the money received from the EU went

- to the building of schools in remote Minority villages,
- to the improvement of education (through, for instance, "intercultural" programs aimed at teaching Greek as a second language and more effectively),
- to the expansion of health services, to the construction of additional roads that would connect Minority-inhabited isolated areas with the main cities,
- to training programs that would increase the "employability" of young Minority members,
- to agricultural programs that would improve the efficiency of Minority farmers and would diversify their production,
- to the development of urban neighborhoods populated by Minority members, and finally,
- to the organizing of cultural activities (like festivals, fairs, etc.)<sup>67</sup>.

### **Council of Europe**

The role played by this organization in the change of the Greek government's minority-related policies has been equally important as that of the EU. Because minority issues became the

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<sup>66</sup> For an in-depth examination of this concept, see Muzafer Sherif, *In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1966, especially p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> For a very detailed list of *all* the programs and projects supported by the EU in Thrace visit the Community Support Framework section of the Greek Ministry of National Economy web-site, at <http://www.mnec.gr>

number-one priority for this organization after the end of the Cold War, Greek policies toward the Muslim minority received more attention and more scrutiny by the Council's organs in pB:

[Senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]  
 The Council of Europe has focused its activities on minorities much more in the Post-Cold War era than before. It has become the number one issue of this organization. As a result, the issue of the Muslim minority in Greece has recently come up more frequently in the organs of CoE than it did in the past.

Three organs of the Council of Europe contributed to this change:

- i. *The European Court of Human Rights*, with its judgements/decisions on cases involving members of the Muslim Minority;
- ii. *The European Commission Against Racism and Discrimination (ECRI)*, with its reports and the visits of its representatives to Thrace; and
- iii. *The Parliamentary Assembly*, where the Greek delegation faced severe criticisms about the treatment of the Muslim minority from other countries' delegates, especially from Turkish delegates.

Let us now examine the role these organs in the affairs of the Muslim Minority in more detail:

- i. *The European Court of Human Rights*: In pB, unlike in pA, a considerable number of cases having to do with the discriminatory policies and practices of the Greek government toward the Thracian Muslims were brought before this court<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> It must be stated however that "the appeals from Muslim minority members to the European Court of Human Rights have been very few in number compared with the total number of cases handled by this court" [Interview with a senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male].

There are three developments that account for the higher number of cases in the second period:

- (a) Minority members became more aware of this legal avenue; in other words, when they did not get what they thought they should in the Greek courts, Muslim plaintiffs now knew that they could apply to the European Court of Human Rights.
- (b) Lawyers in Thrace, particularly the ones of the Minority community, gradually and through trial and error increased their expertise in the process of bringing cases to this court; and
- (c) Turkey provided the Minority plaintiffs/applicants with lawyers <sup>69</sup> and legal help (and probably with financial support as well).

With the exception of cases that were deemed inadmissible on technical grounds (mainly because of the "non-exhaustion of domestic legal means"), the Court of Human Rights has consistently ruled in favour of Minority members. The Greek government, in addition to paying damages to the plaintiffs, also felt compelled to modify its practices (though not its laws, as yet) to prevent any similar cases from reaching the ECHR again.

Some of the cases decided by ECHR had a very significant impact on Minority issues <sup>70</sup>.

-- The decisions/judgements in the cases of *Şerif v. Greece* (1998) and *Agga v. Greece* (2002) in favour of the "elected" muftis (Muslim religious leaders) have forced the Greek government to re-examine its policy with respect to the Minority's religious affairs. The Government decided to

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<sup>69</sup> Many of the Thracian Muslim applicants were represented by Tekin Akallıoğlu, a lawyer practising in Ankara, Turkey (see, for instance, the decision in the case of Raif v. Greece).

<sup>70</sup> The texts of all European Court of Human Rights decisions can be found at this institution's web-site at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/>

stop prosecuting these "elected" muftis every time they performed functions as "muftis", which, by law, can only be performed by Muslim religious functionaries appointed by the state.

-- The decisions in *Raif v. Greece* (1996) and *Raif Oglu v. Greece* (1999) in favour of the applicants made it extremely difficult for Greece to unreasonably prolong bureaucratic processes like licence or permit granting, a tactic frequently used in a discriminatory way against Muslims to prevent them from practising certain professions, such as that of a pharmacist.

The concrete results achieved by the Minority using legal means all the way to the European Court of Human Rights should be seen as an important factor in the de-intensification of their non-violent struggle that included acts of civil disobedience and mass protests. These results also helped Thracian Muslims develop some trust in the Greek and European "systems", judicial but also political: they concluded that these systems *could* be responsive to the Minority's problems if its members knew how to navigate in them.

ii. *The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)*: This is a body of the Council of Europe (CoE) established in 1994 to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, and intolerance in every member-state of the Council<sup>71</sup>. ECRI has adopted a "country-by-country" approach and it examines, through regular visits of its representatives, the situation in each member-country as regards racial or ethnic discrimination and intolerance. For each country visited and monitored,

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<sup>71</sup> Further information on ECRI can be found in its web-site at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/human\\_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/)

ECRI publishes a report describing the problems its staff observed and making suggestions and proposals as to how to tackle these problems.

ECRI has issued two reports on Greece in pB: One in 1997<sup>72</sup> and a second one in 1999<sup>73</sup>, both prepared with the consent and partial cooperation of the Greek government. The two reports contain very frank and critical observations about the problems in government-minority relations and also about the Greek society's perception of the minorities and other vulnerable groups<sup>74</sup> in this country. The reports also contain a set of recommendations on how to improve the status of the Muslim Minority, that include changes in laws, more effective implementation of certain policies, improvements in the quality of education received by the Minority children, and "public awareness" programs that emphasize the benefits of cultural diversity and promote respect for the ethnically or religiously different.

The ECRI reports were taken seriously both by the Greek government and by the Greek Human Rights NGOs. The government considered it necessary to issue a detailed response (written in a rather defensive tone) that answers point by point the criticisms of each of these reports. The government's response was subsequently added to the original report as an appendix. As for the Human-Rights organizations, they saw the ECRI reports as validation or vindication of their own

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<sup>72</sup> Report no. CRI (97) 52, available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/human\\_rights/Ecri/5-Archives/1-ECRI's\\_work/1-Country\\_by\\_country/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_1.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/5-Archives/1-ECRI's_work/1-Country_by_country/Greece/Greece_CBC_1.asp#TopOfPage)

<sup>73</sup> Report no. CRI (2000) 32, available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/human\\_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country\\_approach/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_2.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Greece/Greece_CBC_2.asp#TopOfPage)

<sup>74</sup> The Turkish-Muslim Minority is only one among several ethnocultural groups whose situation in Greece is examined in the reports.

criticisms and used their own means to make the public aware of these reports and their conclusions.

Alongside the criticisms, though, one should mention that the ECRI reports, particularly the second one, also include some positive comments. The second report acknowledges the steps Greece has taken to combat discrimination and praises the government's initiatives to address the problems of the Muslim Minority, especially the ones pertaining to education. In other words, the reports are not just lists of criticisms and *demands*, but also documents of *support* for certain policies.

iii. *The Parliamentary Assembly*: This is a parliament-like forum to which each member-country sends a delegation composed of legislators from that country's parliament <sup>75</sup>. Human rights and minority rights are two of the most frequently debated topics in this Assembly, which is a very suitable venue for delegates of one country to raise issues (in the debates or in the form of written questions) about violations of these rights being committed by the government of another country.

Greek delegates in the Parliamentary Assembly have received a great deal of criticisms about the treatment of the Thracian Muslim Minority. Most of these criticisms were made, not surprisingly, by Turkish delegates, but a few delegates from other countries were critical toward Greece as

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<sup>75</sup> For more information about the Parliamentary Assembly visit its web-site at <http://assembly.coe.int>

well <sup>76</sup>. Until the nineties, delegates from Greece responded to these criticisms usually by making counter-accusations (especially when the attacks came from Turkish delegates) or by trying to explain the problems mentioned in the criticisms away. Despite the efforts of the Greek delegates, however, the attacks in the Parliamentary Assembly did expose Greece internationally and became an additional source of pressure for policy change. Since 1991, Greek delegates, to their relief, have also been able to describe the positive changes that were taking place in Thrace, and to mention the new initiatives that were being planned to further improve the well-being of the Minority. This more constructive way of responding to criticisms led to a significant reduction of their intensity.

As a result of the discussions about the Minority situation in Thrace, the Parliamentary Assembly also sent groups of delegates (or specialist groups) to this region for field visits and fact-finding missions <sup>77</sup>. The reports of these groups describing the problems they detected, and the statements made individually by members of the Assembly visiting Thrace as members of these groups, added to the pressure for pro-Minority policy changes <sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the "motion for an order" presented on Feb. 12, 1997 by Mrs. Lydie ERR, a member of the Luxembourg delegation, and others. The motion (Doc. 7759; available at <http://assembly.coe.int>) is entitled "State of human rights in Greece, and particularly in Thrace" and, after listing the most important violations of the Muslim Minority's rights, asks for "an information mission to Thrace to carry out an on-the-spot investigation into the truth behind often contradictory claims and, after its visit, report back to it."

<sup>77</sup> One of the most recent such visits was conducted on 26-29 September 1999 by Mr. Contestabile, an Assembly member from Italy, and Mr. Solonari, from Moldova. The two members of the Assembly made a presentation about their visit before the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, on 27 January 2000 (see Synopsis No 2000/026, available at <http://assembly.coe.int>).

<sup>78</sup> A very interesting and clear-cut example of how such pressure can produce changes is this set of activities conducted within the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly's Monitoring Committee:



[Senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]  
 The CoE Assembly periodically sends parliamentarians to Thrace for fact-finding and to examine the conditions there. The visiting parliamentarians later submit a report to the Assembly describing their observations. We were quite please to see that the new report prepared by Glotov and Err, regarding the Muslim minority is very positive. It talks of "great improvement".

## **Demands**

The Council of Europe, as a whole, but through the three bodies described above, demanded from Greece the following:

- Maintenance of high human-rights standards in full compliance with the Council's conventions ratified by Greece, especially the European Convention of Human Rights.

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After Mrs. Err and her colleagues submitted their motion on the situation of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace (Greece), the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights consulted the Monitoring Committee. Then

"The Committee appointed two co-rapporteurs "for inquiry". It determined that their "written opinion" should state whether there were sufficient grounds to justify the opening of a procedure. An exchange of views was held with the Greek parliamentary delegation on 22 June 1997 - on the basis of a written report by one co-rapporteur and an oral statement by the other. The Committee decided to authorize the co-rapporteurs to visit the region in order to verify matters in situ and to finalise a draft "written opinion" for the Bureau.

The co-rapporteurs visited Western Thrace and Athens 5 - 8 October 1997. One of the issues raised in the Motion was Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code, criticised as discriminatory vis-à-vis persons of non-Greek ethnic origin.

The draft opinion drawn up by the co-rapporteurs was presented for a first reading on 5 November 1997. It was agreed to revert to the question at the Committee's meeting on 29 January 1998. *Six days beforehand, on 23 January 1998, the Greek government (Council of Ministers) agreed to repeal Article 19 and to present draft legislation to Parliament to this effect.* [emphasis mine]

The Committee agreed [with the draft] opinion on 29 January 1998 and transmitted it to the Bureau for decision on whether a monitoring procedure should be opened. The experience may be interpreted as showing that democratic changes can be promoted through constructive dialogue, in the frame of a consultation procedure, even without or before the opening of monitoring."

( From Doc. 8057: "Progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedures (April 1997 – April 1998)" -- available at <http://assembly.coe.int/> --issued on 2 April 1998.)

- Full implementation of other treaties pertaining to Minorities and ratified by Greece, in particular, the Lausanne Treaty.

- An end to any type of discrimination against minorities (not just the Muslim Minority);

More specifically:

(a) abolition of Article 19 of the Greek citizenship code:

[Advisor to the Foreign Minister and political science professor at Panteion Univ., Greek, Female]

The Council of Europe (CoE) played a very crucial role in government's decision to abrogate Article 19 of the Greek Law on Citizenship. Greece had to unburden itself from this problem before assuming the rotating presidency of the CoE, in 1998.

External pressure has generally been very important in changes of this nature

(b) the removal of any reference of religion from identity cards.

(c) removal of the obligation of non-Greek Orthodox communities to require the approval of the Orthodox Church for establishing their own houses of worship). Accompanying this demand, penalties for and public condemnation of public officials and employees who did discriminate.

- Recognition of the right of Muslim Minority members to identify themselves as Turks, or, at least, de-criminalization of such identification.
- Full recognition of the Muslim Minority's right to manage autonomously its religious foundations.
- Ratification of treaties that were signed by Greece, most notably the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

- Implementation without delay of all the rulings of the Court of Human Rights.
- Avoidance of rhetoric advocating excessive nationalism or ethnocentrism and public condemnation of any displays of xenophobia; also, recognition of the value of diversity and encouragement by the governmental bodies and social institutions of tolerance and respect for minorities and other disadvantaged groups. And
- Improvement of the quality of education for the children of the Muslim Minority.

### **Support**

We know that the policy changes implemented by Greece since 1990 met most of the above demands. The bodies of the Council of Europe issued supportive statements after every change that would satisfy these demands. For example, the second report of ECRI mentioned all the improvements that took place in Greece with regard to the situation of minorities since the publication of the first report, and the monitoring committee suspended the procedure to send a team to Greece in 1998, noting with approval the fact that the Greek government had decided to do away with Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code. These supportive and approving statements provided the policy changes in Greece with international legitimacy and with an additional incentive for the Greek government to proceed further with its reforms.

## **Withinputs**

### **(Demands & Support from Actors *within* the Government)**

The Governmental bodies that dealt with Minority affairs in the second period (pB) have been the same as in the first – with one addition: The Office of the Ombudsman.

Here I will examine each of these governmental bodies and try to detect how they influenced the policies about the Muslim Minority.

### **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

While the officials in this Ministry were in favor of the anti-Minority status quo in pA, in pB we see an increasing unease with the status quo among the diplomats, particularly among the younger ones. In the early nineties, a large number of Greek diplomats had grown tired of having to defend, in a large number of international forums and organizations, the policies that were oppressive or discriminatory against the Muslim Minority. In fact, almost the entire Ministry had realized that the image of Greece was being damaged by the constant accusations of violation of minority rights:

[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

The main question asked [in the Ministry] was:

"How can we project a better image internationally as far as the Western Thrace minority is concerned?"

That was exactly how the question was put. In other words, the problem was regarded NOT as a civil-rights issue, nor as an ethical, moral, humanitarian issue, but merely as an image issue.

Moreover, the Foreign Ministry staff had seen that the anti-Minority policies in Greece were indirectly limiting the effectiveness of the Greek government in defending the rights of ethnic

Greek minorities in other countries, especially in Turkey and in Albania. It was for these reasons that many diplomats began systematically to push for changes in policies and for the lifting of at least some of the restrictions imposed on Thracian Muslims. Gradually the pro-reform diplomats managed to convince their superiors (in 1991-92), the top bureaucrats of the Foreign Ministry, and eventually (in the mid-nineties) the deputy minister and the minister himself that things had to change, and change quickly and substantially:

[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

A special task-force was formed under the supervision of the NATO-OSCE desk at the foreign ministry. The main goal of the task-force was to formulate solution proposals. These were to be ready by July '91, when the OSCE Human Dimension meeting was to take place.

Greece had already signed the OSCE Paris Charter in November 1990. That Charter emphasized, among other things, respect for human and cultural rights to people belonging to national and ethnic minorities.

The then foreign minister of Greece, Andonis Samaras, though reluctantly, had accepted that Greece had to adjust its image and policies to the Paris Charter.

The task force prepared a paper and presented it to the foreign minister. The newly-appointed deputy foreign minister, Virginia Tsouderou, who was in charge of minority policies, was also briefed by the task force.

Upon her decision, the paper was distributed to ambassadors at the most important foreign missions, and was also given to Zaharakis the then chief diplomat in charge of Minority Policies.

The main conclusion of the task force, accepted by every person briefed, was that there had to be some substantial changes at the policies concerning the minority; changes that would be accepted internationally as significant and positive.

At that time, one journalist, Kyra Adam, who had reported extensively on the problems of the Minority had started emphasizing the minority's ethnic diversity, describing it as "the aggregate of three ethnic groups": People of Turkish origin, Pomaks, Gypsies/Roma.

The then Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor, Loukas Tsillas (also newly appointed), showed a special interest in this issue. In the meetings he held with Foreign Ministry officials, he suggested that this description be a part of the official Greek position.

In these meetings three options were discussed:

- (a) To continue with the old policy of limiting human rights for the minority and keeping it under tight control;
- (b) To make some marginal changes in that policy that would improve Greece's image abroad;
- (c) (the option proposed by the task force for the minority policies) to radically change the minority policies and adopt a new approach, that would be based on these two concepts:  
     Isonomia → Equality before the law  
     Isopoliteia → Equal citizenship rights.

This change was necessary, it was suggested, in order to stop the dangerous process through which the Minority was becoming a tool, a pawn, of the Turkish government.

The Turkish government should not be able to use the Minority problems in the international forums to embarrass Greece and neutralize its criticisms regarding human rights violations in Turkey.

This third option prevailed in these meetings and subsequently was adopted, together with the new approach to the Minority's composition, as the new official policy.

[...]

The most substantial changes to the Minority policies began as soon as Simitis won the elections of 1996 and appointed Mr. Rozakis as deputy minister in charge of minority affairs.

The Isonomia-Isopoliteia approach became the unequivocal and only approach of the State. Although the government did have to make some concessions to nationalistic critics (like "Network 21"<sup>79</sup>), by sacrificing Rozakis, it managed to introduce most of the necessary changes that were required in order for "Isonomia-Isopoliteia" to prevail.

## Demands

Here are the most important demands of the pro-reform diplomats:

- Some of the policies pertaining to the Minority are demonstrably discriminatory (such as Article 19, restrictions in buying and selling real estate, refusal to give driver's licenses, etc.). These policies should be replaced with ones based on the principles of *isonomía* (ισονομία – equality before the law) and *isopoliteía* (ισοπολιτεία – equal citizenship rights).
- Blanket denials of the Minority's Turkish identity have no credibility whatsoever. They are regarded by the international community as ridiculous. The government should adopt a more subtle, more complex approach to the problem of ethnonational identity of the Muslim Minority. Greek officials should be able to say that there *are* ethnic Turks in Thrace, but then point out that these ethnic Turks are only *one component* of the tri-ethnic Muslim Minority. The Minority should be characterized as a community consisting of Pomaks, Roma/Gypsies *as well as* ethnic Turks.

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<sup>79</sup> An association, functioning like a think tank, advocating an introvert nationalistic policy and an unyielding and assertive approach to Turkey, "the main threat to Greece". The members of this network are nationalists from every hue of the political spectrum, and from various professions. Some of its members are quite influential in the media and academia.

- Prosecuting Minority leaders because they stated they were Turks is impossible to defend internationally. Such actions place Greece in the same category with Turkey whose regime denies the existence of a Kurdish Minority and punishes those who assert their Kurdish identity.
- On minority rights, Greece can no longer rely *only* on the Lausanne Treaty and the principle of reciprocity that this treaty establishes by implication. There are numerous new international treaties and conventions that deal with minority issues and Greece cannot ignore them, especially given the fact that that the Greek government has signed most of them.
- For the Greek government to defend effectively and convincingly the rights of Greek minorities in other countries, it has to improve the conditions of the Muslim Minority *within* Greece:

[Professor of International relations at Panteion University; former employee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Greek; Male]

In that period, especially in '92 - '93, Greece was very concerned about, and paying a great deal of attention to the conditions of the Greek minority in Albania. Greeks in that country were also engaged in a political struggle to have their rights recognized and respected by the Albanian government. In order for the Greek government to be convincing and effective in the international fora when it raised the issue of the Albanian Greeks, it had to show that it was respectful of minority rights within Greece.

### **Support**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in pB, has generally been supportive of all policy changes aimed at improving the situation of the Muslim Minority and extending their rights. Many officials from this Ministry have argued that such changes would strengthen Greece's position internationally, particularly vis-à-vis Turkey, which is very vulnerable on minority issues. These pro-reform

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diplomats also maintained that changes in the government's policies for the Muslims, to the extent that they diffuse the tensions in government-Minority relations, would also reduce any danger this Minority poses on the country's integrity and stability.

### **The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces**

This ministry was perhaps the least enthusiastic about the changes in the government's approach to Muslim Minority affairs.

Bureaucrats in this ministry and high-ranking military officers continued to see issues related to the Muslim Minority as tightly connected to the "Turkish threat". In their view, if not the whole minority, then certainly some "elements" in it (that is to say, the Minority's nationalist leaders and their followers) were a tool of Turkish expansionist schemes, and were used to destabilize Thrace.

On the other hand, Communism in the nineties was no longer seen by the defense establishment as a threat to Greece. Communist regimes in the neighboring Balkan countries had collapsed (or "recycled" themselves) and the new regimes – even that of the FYR of Macedonia's – were trying to improve their relations with Greece. Post-Communist Bulgaria was not an enemy anymore, but a friendly country with a high potential of opportunities for economic, political, and military cooperation. Thus, the official *raison d'être* for the "Restricted Zone" along the Greek-Bulgarian border (an area inhabited by tens of thousands Muslim Minority members) had disappeared. So, even the usually very cautious 4th Army Division in Thrace finally signaled the government that it would be acceptable to open up the Restricted Zone, though the military officers in the region did insist on the continuation of some restrictions for foreign citizens.



In the fall of 1995, the Ministry of Defense opened up the Restricted Zone to all Greek citizens (including Minority members), removed all checkpoints, but decreed that foreign citizens still needed to get permission from the Army General Staff to visit this area.

The Defense Ministry and the Armed forces also softened their stance toward the Minority on the issue of employing Muslims as military officers. In pB a few Minority Muslims did become Military officers, though all of them were of Pomak origin, which the Military has always considered more "assimilable" than the Minority members of Turkish origin.

The Military, especially the 4th Army Division, appears to have followed throughout the nineties a policy of favoring Pomaks and the Pomak identity at the expense of ethnic Turks and the Turkish identity. For instance, this Division helped with health-related problems in Pomak towns and villages in the "restricted zone" by dispatching military physicians, and, with regard to the Pomak culture, the Division even commissioned the first ever Pomak-Greek dictionary, where for Pomak the authors used the Greek, and not the Cyrillic, alphabet.

In all the other Minority-related issues, the defense bureaucracy did not send any pro-reform input and continued to support the policies aimed to restrict the rights of the Minority members and designed to keep them under strict control.

## **Demands**

The Defense and Military establishment in pB has demanded basically the same things as it did in pA – though with a few small changes. The main demands stated by the Defense Department and the Military in this period have been the following:

- The Minority's access to firearms, even for hunting purposes, should continue to be severely restricted. Given the potential of the Muslim Minority to become a "fifth column" for Turkey, it would be reckless to let them have easy access to such weapons.
- Minority males should do their military service in regions *other than* Thrace.
- While Muslims, especially Pomaks, *should* be given a chance to become military officers, it is still unwise to give them an equal chance with Christian Greeks in this field.
- Pomaks should be considered an ethnic group that is different from the Turks, and the distinct characteristics of the Pomaks should be emphasized. The government should be supporting efforts to maintain and enhance the Pomak culture. And, the Pomaks who choose to embrace their own culture at the expense of the Turkish one should be rewarded for that.

## **Support**

While the Defense establishment was overall supportive of the remaining restrictive policies against Muslims in Thrace, in pB it did support a few policy changes as well. For instance, it favored the opening up of the "restricted zone" to the rest of Greece, and it also favored efforts to break the isolation of the Muslim Minority from the mainstream Greek society. In addition, the high ranking Military officers have made serious efforts to prevent the harsh treatment of Muslims by the Military and especially of young Muslim males while doing their military service.

### **The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs**

The education bureaucracy in pB paid much more attention than in pA to the problems and deficiencies of the education that Thracian Muslim schoolchildren received. The Ministry realized that the status quo in Minority education was untenable, and concluded that improving the quality of education for the Muslim children would be in the interest not just of that community, but of the entire Greece, as well.

The Education ministry sponsored or commissioned a number of studies and research projects in the second period, all aimed at finding out what exactly the causes for the main weaknesses of the Minority education were, what problems had to be tackled most urgently, and what solutions could work most efficiently<sup>80</sup>.

The common conclusion of these studies was that the existing system for Minority schoolchildren contributed to the Minority community's marginalization and isolation from the mainstream society. The studies also found out that Muslim children began primary education with practically no knowledge of the Greek language, and that when they graduated from primary school their Greek was still inadequate.

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<sup>80</sup> For a detailed description and critical review of these studies, see Foteini Asimakopoulou and Sevasti Hristidou-Lionaraki, Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Θράκης και οι Ελληνοτουρκικές Σχέσεις [The Muslim Minority of Thrace and the Greek-Turkish Relations (in Greek)], Athens, Greece: Livanis, 2002; pp. 305-340.

Greek teachers in Minority schools were using the methods designed to teach Greek to children who are native Greek speakers, and such methods, predictably, did not work for children who had to learn Greek as a second or third<sup>81</sup> language. In fact, the educational material used in Minority schools totally ignored the distinct cultural characteristics of that community, and the multicultural reality of Thrace.

Moreover, most of the Muslim primary school pupils had serious difficulties reading and writing even in Turkish. Another, and already known, problem with the classes taught in Turkish was that they relied on very old, outdated, textbooks printed in Turkey. Newer editions of these books were available in Turkey, but the Greek Education Ministry would not allow them to be used in Minority schools due to their Turkish-nationalistic content.

Having detected all these problems, bureaucrats at the Education Ministry decided that a major restructuring of the Minority education was in order. They, therefore, launched several reform initiatives in the nineties, two of which are especially important:

The first of these two important educational reforms involved the teaching of Turkish in Minority schools. Actually, that reform had been conceived at the end of pA, as a response not just to the shortcomings of the Muslim Minority education, but also to the demands that the Greek government curtail Turkey's cultural influence over this community. The Greek Ministry of Education formed, in 1991, a committee, composed of linguists, philologists, and educators -- all

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<sup>81</sup> For ethnic Pomaks and Roma, Turkish is their second and Greek their third language.

ethnic Greeks but with some expertise in the Turkish language – whose objective it was to prepare Turkish textbooks for primary education<sup>82</sup>. No Turkish-Muslim Minority member was included in the committee, and, what is more, Minority teachers repeatedly expressed their reluctance to help in this textbook preparation process. The books that were prepared by the committee were distributed to the Minority primary schools, but were almost universally rejected by the Turkish teachers who were supposed to use them in their classes. Minority parents (encouraged by the Turkish Consulate that was squarely against this initiative) also voiced their opposition to the use of these books who were prepared by the Greek government, and by Greek experts, with little input from the Muslim community. In fact, many Minority parents organized protest actions that involved collectively not sending their kids to school for rather long periods like a month, and a few public demonstrations one of which ended with the public burning of the new textbooks. As a result of this vehement reaction, the Ministry of Education had, by the mid-nineties, discontinued this initiative and stopped pushing for the adoption of these committee-prepared textbooks.

Although this initiative roughly corresponds to the demand of the Minority for newer and up-to-date textbooks, it is, nevertheless, a *withinput*, for Minority members never demanded that such books be prepared by the Greek government. Their demand rather was that such books be allowed to be imported from Turkey.

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<sup>82</sup> The most prominent and most controversial member of this committee was Dr. Eustratios Zenginīs, a Greek who was born in Imbros, Turkey and migrated/fled to Greece at young age. The textbooks he prepared for the first grade, full of Greek nationalistic references, were criticized even by his colleagues in the committee.

For a detailed "insider's" account of the preparation of these Turkish textbooks, see: Penelope Stathi, "Τα Τουρκικά Εγχειρίδια στη Θράκη" [the Turkish Textbooks in Thrace (in Greek)], *Syghrona Themata* (Current Issues), Period B, Year 19, Issue 63, April-June 1997; pp. 65-67.

Now, the second important educational reform initiative had to do with the teaching of the Greek language in Muslim Minority schools. Although not corresponding to a Minority demand either, this initiative has enjoyed wide acceptance and high popularity in the Thracian Muslim community. Bureaucrats at the Education Ministry started, in 1997, a project -- largely financed by the EU structural funds -- to develop methods and produce educational material aimed at teaching Greek to Minority pupils as a *foreign* language, and in such a way that would take into account their native culture and their "intercultural" interaction with Majority Greeks<sup>83</sup>. The project took four years to be completed, and the methods and material produced have been in use since 2001.

In my interviews, the "intercultural education" reform was described by Greeks and Minority members alike as a significant achievement:

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human Rights NGO; Greek, Female]

Another significant step (that is being taken) has to do with the introduction of multicultural/intercultural education at the elementary schools.

The government has now begun to appoint teachers familiar with the basic tenets of "intercultural" education to Minority schools. In addition, a new curriculum based on intercultural education has been prepared for minority kids.

[Professor at the Education Dept. of the University of Athens; a framer of the new "intercultural" program for Minority children; Greek; Female]

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<sup>83</sup> This initiative was headed by Dr. Anna Frangoudaki, a professor of education, known for her liberal and anti-racist views. See, for instance the book she co-wrote with Thaleia Dragona, entitled Τι είναι η Πατρίδα μας; Εθνοκεντρισμός στην Εκπαίδευση [What is our Homeland? Ethnocentrism in Education (in Greek)], Athens, Greece: Alexandria Press, 1997.

The new educational policies for Minority kids, adopted by the Ministry of Education, are based on the principle of interculturalism (we do not use the term "multiculturalism"), and anti-racism, as formulated by Barry Troyna<sup>84</sup>.

We have noticed with pleasure that the Turkish consulate is in favor of these new policies and supportive of them. Unlike its approach in the past, when it used to encourage self-isolation for the Minority, Turkey now apparently is encouraging Muslims to integrate into the Greek mainstream, but without being assimilated.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

Also, the Ministry has adopted a program, developed by Dr. Anna Frangoudaki and her team, according to which Greek will be taught to Turkish children as a second language and in a more culture-appropriate way. Currently Greek is taught to Turkish kids the same way it is taught to Greek kids. But Turkish kids begin school with very little knowledge of Greek, whereas Greek kids already know at that age how to speak Greek, and some of them even how to write in Greek. Frangoudaki's program is going to be very beneficial to our children and we strongly support it.

In addition to the initiatives of this Ministry for the Minority's *primary* education, one should also briefly mention a special legislation to facilitate young Minority members' entry into *higher* education. The legislation, passed in 1995, introduced the "proportionality" (ποσοστωση) method, according to which, every year 0.5% of the university slots would be reserved for Minority applicants who would take the national university entrance exams, that are, by the way, administered by the Education Ministry. This measure was deemed necessary, because there was only a very small number of the Muslim Minority members studying at Greek universities. It was very difficult for Muslim high-school graduates to gain enough points to be admitted into a university, because of the poor education they received and their inadequate knowledge of the Greek language. Many preferred to go to Turkey for higher education, while most young Minority members -- especially females -- would give up on higher education altogether.

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<sup>84</sup> Barry Troyna is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Warwick, and a leading theoretician on anti-racist education.

Several representatives of the Greek Government and the Majority that I interviewed talked proudly about the "proportionality" provision and clearly saw it as an important reform:

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human Rights NGO; Greek, Female]

The quota, or "proportionality", system that would help the Minority applicants in the university entrance exams has been a very important step forward.

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education working in the bureau of "inter-cultural education"; Greek; Female]

The Quota or "Proportionality" ("Posostosis", in Greek) System, according to which 0.5 % of the nation-wide number of students to be accepted in state-run universities after the entrance exams is reserved for the Muslim Minority, has already rendered positive results. It is working.

In 1997, there were 334 positions reserved to Muslims; there were 126 minority applicants and 114 of the entered college.

In 1998, there were 464 positions reserved to Minority students; there were 124 applicants and 112 of them entered college<sup>85</sup>.

This doesn't seem impressive at first glance, but it is a big improvement in comparison to the pre-proportionality situation, when there were ZERO students from the Minority attending Greek universities.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The educational reforms, especially the "proportionality" system at higher education, aim at the Minority's integration to the mainstream society. Having realized how tough it would be to overcome all the social obstacles, suspicions, and other problems that separates Minority adults from the mainstream society, Greek policymakers decided to focus their integrationist efforts on Minority kids and Minority youth.

This "proportionality" legislation could be considered a *withinput*, because it was devised by the education bureaucracy and was not exactly a response to minority demand. The Muslim Minority had never really asked for a special quota in university admissions. They did demand wider access to Greek higher education, but only as a result of better primary and secondary education.

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<sup>85</sup> More details are provided in the Education Ministry internal document, given to me by this interviewee.



A smaller policy change associated with this Ministry has to do with the Minority's freedom of worship. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, as its official name indicates, is also in charge of relations between the government and religious communities. Many bureaucratic tasks related to the opening or functioning of houses of worship are conducted by this Ministry. As far as religion-related issues are concerned, a significant withinput of this Ministry pertained to the implementation of the laws on the establishment of new non-Orthodox and non-Christian houses of worship or the expansion or repair of the existing ones<sup>86</sup>. The laws give an "advisory" role to the local Greek Orthodox bishop on these matters. However, starting in the mid-nineties, the Ministry, when it concerned Muslim mosques in Thrace<sup>87</sup>, began to disregard this aspect of the law or, in some cases, to dismiss the "advice" of the local bishops.

Having described these significant withinputs of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in Minority issues, let me now summarize the other demands and support of this governmental institution:

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<sup>86</sup> These are the laws 1363/1938 and 1672/1939. More information about these laws can be found in the section on the Greek Orthodox Church in pA.

<sup>87</sup> The Ministry still defers to the opinion of the local bishops on matters that have to do with non-Orthodox Christian denominations, and still takes into account the worries of the Greek Orthodox Church on establishing mosques in Greek regions other than Thrace. (See, for instance, the US State Department's Religious Freedom Report for Greece – 2002, available on the web, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13935.htm>.)

### **Demands**

- Minority education problems need *more government attention*. And, with more attention should come *more money*: Improving the education the Muslim Minority children receive would inevitably require more government spending.
- It is in the interest of the Greek government to build more schools, or to expand the existing ones, and to send more and better qualified teachers to Minority-inhabited areas. However, it also makes sense *first* to focus on improving the conditions of the *public* schools in these areas (where education is conducted exclusively in Greek), rather than the conditions in the Minority schools (where education is conducted in Greek and Turkish). Better public schools would attract more Minority students and thus facilitate the integration of the young generation of Muslims into the Greek society.
- The government should continue to support the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki – a public institution that trains only Minority members to become teachers of Turkish in Minority schools. In fact, this academy should be upgraded (from "special") to a "normal" institution of higher education. Graduates of this academy should be preferred over teachers from, or educated in, Turkey.

### **Support**

The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs was generally supportive of the policy changes and pro-Minority reforms introduced by other institutions of the Greek government.

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### **The National Intelligence Service (EYP)**

At the beginning of pB, when Government-Minority and Majority-Minority tensions were at their peak, so were the suspicions and mistrust of this organization toward the Minority leadership. It was primarily this mistrust that resulted in EYP being against most policy changes that would result in the improvement of the Minority's living conditions and human-rights situation. Giving the Minority more freedoms would also mean giving pro-Turkey Minority leaders more power and more leverage. EYP saw the mobilization and the protests of the Muslim Minority as a national security threat directly related to the general "Turkish threat" against Greece. The root causes of the Minority's discontent was of little interest to the intelligence bureaucracy. Their opinion was that, if it was not for Turkey's incitement, Thracian Muslims would be quiet and generally content with their situation.

### **Demands**

Despite the improvement in Government-Minority relations, the withinputs/demands sent by the Intelligence to the other governmental institutions on this matter remained basically the same.

EYP continued to insist that

- The activities of the Minority leaders should be under surveillance,
- Minority-related meetings and initiatives should be monitored,
- Informers should be allowed to penetrate into (infiltrate) the Minority "inner circles" and collect intelligence "from inside",
- Minority members should be deterred from (ab)using their civil rights in a way that would destabilize Thrace and endanger Greek control over the region,

And, more importantly,

- That Turkey should be prevented from keeping the Minority under control through the Consulate in Komotini, and its agents.

In addition to these demands, what was new in pB was EYP's demand that no changes in Minority policies should be implemented if they were deemed by EYP itself, to be risky.

### **Support**

While EYP officially did not resist any policy changes, and grudgingly went along with them, its agents in Thrace showed few indications of support for the new policies. In fact, it is widely believed [see interviews] that in some cases EYP agents, in cooperation with other anti-Minority actors, have tried to slow down or block the implementation of the new policies that would favor the Muslims. The collusion of some EYP agents with the anti-Minority forces was instrumental in the formation of what is known as the "*parakrátos*" (para-state) in Thrace.

### **The Ministry of Internal Affairs**

Two important reforms in pB were prepared and implemented by the bureaucracy of this Ministry. Both had to do with decentralization of government, or, in other words, with the strengthening and further democratization of the local administrations (the city governments, the municipalities, and the county governments). These reforms would empower the local administrations through the transfer of some functions and responsibilities from the center to the periphery.

As far as Thrace is concerned, these reforms were beneficial both to the local Greek Majority and the Turkish-Muslim Minority. Local elected leaders, especially the mayors (of Minority and Majority areas alike), gained more powers and a more substantial budget and were able to do a number of works that had a direct effect on the improvement of both communities' everyday life.

The first of these reforms took place in 1994 and involved the counties, officially known as *prefectures (nomoi or νομοί)*. The Greek Parliament passed a law (no. 2218/1994) on prefectural self-government, which transformed the prefecture/county from a centrally-controlled administrative unit to a directly elected body. The prefect<sup>88</sup>, or the county governor, and the county council began to be elected by the people of that county. The same law also supplied the nomòs/county government with a significantly larger amount of funds: According to Anagnostou (1999, p. 94), in 1993-95, the overall amount of funds almost tripled in the three counties of Thrace. Many functions previously fulfilled by the ministry bureaucracies in Athens (like developmental planning, public investment decisions, etc.) were now the responsibility of the prefect/governor and the prefectural (county) council. Both the governor and the council were now accountable to a local electorate; and in the three counties of Thrace, in Xanthi, Rhodope, and Evros, 40, 50 and 10 percent of the electorate respectively was Muslim. Moreover, Muslims could now directly participate in the making of these decisions through their elected representatives in the municipalities and in the county councils<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Also known as the *nomarch (νομάρχης)*.

<sup>89</sup> One should mention, however, that the proportion of Muslim representatives in the county councils was less than their community's proportion in the county population (see Anagnostou, 1999; p. 95).

The 1994 reform, however, was not implemented in Thrace exactly as it was initially planned. The idea of Muslim Minority local government leaders, especially governors/prefects, with a lot of power and a big budget was deemed potentially very dangerous by the Greek nationalist circles. Also, the possibility of a largely Muslim electorate, influenced by Turkey, imposing its will on the local governments, even if they are led by Greeks, was seen as "nationally perilous" (Anagnostou, 1999; p. 98).

To pre-empt this possibility, and in partial response to the demands of nationalists, the Internal Affairs Ministry came up with two additional withinputs:

The first was the formation of "*supra-counties*" (υπερνομαρχίες) in Thrace and Eastern Macedonia by combining the heavily Muslim counties with heavily Christian-Greek ones and thus creating another layer of local administration that could not really be controlled by Muslim leaders and voters<sup>90</sup>.

The second was the transfer, in early 1995, of many Minority-related functions from the county governments to the Regional Department (Periphereia – Περιφέρεια) of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, which is directly controlled by the central administration.

Nevertheless, even with these two modifications, one could conclude that 1994 reform put the Minority in more direct touch with the decision-making process as that pertains to their everyday life. In other words, the reform empowered the Minority somewhat, compared to what their situation was before.

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<sup>90</sup> For a more detailed description of the creation of supra-counties, see p. 20 of this chapter.

This is how the reform and the two withinputs were perceived by a Minority leader I interviewed:

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

The local administration reform of 1994, which extended decentralization and enhanced self-rule at the county level, although intended for the entire Greece and not just for the Minority, was nevertheless of significant benefit to our community. We were given a say on who the local governors would be, and, in turn, the governors would have to take our concerns into account if they wanted to be elected or remain in office.

But that did not last long: Eight months after the elected governors took office, all issues having directly to do with the Minority were taken away from the governors' jurisdiction and were given to the "Peripheriarchis", the chief bureaucrat of the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, who is appointed by the Center, and implements the policies designed by the Center. So we were once again disempowered.

The second local administration reform took place in 1998: It was named the *Kapodistrias* plan, after the first ruler/president of Greece and a major reformer himself. This plan involved a nationwide restructuring of the municipalities (demoi – δήμοι). With this reform, the Government created bigger, financially stronger, more autonomous, and hopefully more efficient municipalities by merging smaller adjacent ones. Most Thracian residents, not just Christians, but Muslims, too, accepted the Kapodistrias plan enthusiastically, with the hope that the new structure of local administration would be much more capable of dealing with the everyday problems of the region's inhabitants.

Yet, this reform, just like the one introduced in 1994, was not implemented unreservedly in the Minority-dominated areas of Thrace: Many Muslims complained that some smaller and ineffectual municipalities in predominantly Minority areas could have been merged to form one or two additional "Kapodistriac" municipalities. The smaller municipalities were left as they

were, arguably as a concession to the nationalistic circles that were apprehensive about the possibility that Muslims would gain too much power and financial strength.

Several Minority leaders whom I interviewed had this to say about the Kapodistrias plan:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

A recent nation-wide reform that had an impact on the Minority is the implementation of the Kapodistrias plan. This plan, put into effect in 1998, restructured the local administration system in Thrace as in the rest of Greece. And, at first glance, it seems to have been beneficial to the Minority. Upon more thorough examination, however, we notice some problems: For instance, in the past there were 2 municipalities and 36 sub-districts [sub-municipalities] in the Rhodope County. In 13 of these administrative divisions the Minority population was predominant and the elected local administrators (mayors and sub-district chief executives) were Minority members. Today, after the implementation of the Kapodistrias plan, there are 9 municipalities in the same county and 3 sub-districts. The local governments at the sub-district level are weaker under the new plan, whereas the municipalities have been given more power and more resources. Of the nine new municipalities only three are predominantly Turkish. The three sub-districts are all predominantly Turkish. This is a little unfair, because at least one or two of these sub-districts could have easily been upgraded to municipalities, given that the criterion is population size. They were not, *because* they were predominantly Minority areas.

[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The reorganization of municipalities in accordance with the Kapodistrias Plan has overall been beneficial to the minority. The municipal governments now have more power, can receive financial support from the EU for development projects and can engage in bigger, bolder initiatives. And yet, the number of new municipalities formed in predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas is not proportional to the number of municipalities set up in the predominantly Greek areas of Thrace. There are three municipalities created in the predominantly minority parts Rhodope county and one in such areas of Xanthi county. Predominantly Greek areas have more municipalities in both counties.

## **Demands**

So, the two types of Minority-related withinputs the Internal Affairs Ministry sent in pB to the other governmental bodies were the following:



- In Thrace, as in the rest of Greece, administration should be decentralised; local governments should be given more power, more autonomy, and a bigger budget, so they can deal with the daily problems of the citizens in a more direct and effective way.
- Because of the presence of the Muslim Minority in Thrace and the "sensitive" situation in that region, some special measures should be taken when implementing local administration reforms. While the reforms should help Minority members too, and improve their life, it would be dangerous to allow them to gain too much political or financial power through these reforms.

### **Support**

The Internal Affairs Ministry worked, by and large, harmoniously with the other governmental institutions throughout pB on Minority-related issues, and supported the new policies.

One important example for this relatively smooth cooperation is the way the government has handled the problem of "stateless" Minority members: After the Greek Parliament revoked Article 19, hundreds of the Minority members whose citizenship had been taken away demanded to be given their old status back. Although the revocation of Article 19 was not retroactive, it became very difficult for the government to ignore the demands of these "stateless" people and their supporters, in Greece and abroad. And it was through the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, the Public Order Ministry, and the Internal Affairs Ministry that a somewhat accommodating response to these demands was formulated: The "stateless" Minority members would have to apply for citizenship, just like an immigrant would, and their application would

be accepted if an investigation by officials from these three ministries showed that the applicants posed no danger to Greece<sup>91</sup>.

### **The Office of the National Ombudsman**

This institution, which did not exist in the first period, played quite an important role in pB, in favour of policy reforms in Minority affairs.

### **Demands**

- Since its establishment in 1998, one withinput/demand the Ombudsman's office has repeatedly sent to the government is the message that the Greek bureaucratic-administrative system has to become more open, more receptive and responsive to the complaints of the public – and more efficient in handling them.
- In addition, the Ombudsman has identified the need for legislative amendments and administrative reforms in a number of areas and has informed the government about that. Moreover, the office has submitted a few extra reports cataloguing the Ombudsman's experiences with maladministration and non-observance of the laws by local government authorities.

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<sup>91</sup> If the police records showed that a "stateless" applicant was arrested in the past, for whatever reason, that could be – and was— enough to disqualify him or her from being granted citizenship, as in the case of Hüseyin Zeybek (in 2000). [Personal communication from his daughter].

**Support**

This institution has been one of the most ardent supporters of the new policies toward the Minority, especially the ones aimed at improving the relations between the Greek Government and the Thracian Muslims. By dealing with individual cases of maladministration and violation of Minority individuals' rights, the Ombudsman's office has also contributed to the better and smoother implementation of these new policies.

### Outputs in the Second Period (pB)

It is basically *the new demands and support*, some of which coming from new actors, that led to *new outputs* in pB. We can clearly see in the long and detailed description in the previous section, that in the second period (1990-2002/3), while the Greek government continued to receive the demands and support from some actors in its environment that could be met with restricting and/or violating the rights of the Turkish Muslim Minority, it also received new and intense inputs from other actors that induced policies in favour of the Minority.

So, the outputs of the Greek government in this period can be characterised both by a positive and a negative approach toward the Minority; that is, both by the goal to improve the conditions and extend the freedoms of the Muslims in Thrace, and, at the same time, by the belief that this Minority is still potentially dangerous and that, manipulated by Turkey, it can threaten the Greek sovereignty over Thrace.

On the fear of Turkish influence, an interviewed Greek intellectual had this to say:

[Researcher at the Academy of Athens; Professor of Turkish; Greek; Female]

The current approach of Greece toward Turkey is to state that it has a conflict with the *regime* of Turkey, not its people, not the Turks per se.

The Turkish influence over the Minority is recognized by Greece, but regarded as a troubling fact, a serious problem. Therefore, many measures taken by the Greek government in recent years aim directly or indirectly at reducing this influence.

The positive approach, however, has by far been the more dominant one in pB.

Let us take a look at some specific positive steps taken by the Greek government since 1990:

- The Parliament adopted a comprehensive law (no. 1892, passed in 1990) on the development of Thrace, and for the promotion of industrial production and investment in the region.

According to this law, the Government would provide certain incentives to Greek businesses that would establish production facilities in Thrace. Among other things, the Government would pay up to 12% of the salary of each person employed by private companies and businesses in Thrace<sup>92</sup>.

- In the one-year period between 1991 and 1992, we see a gradual lifting of the "administrative restrictions" that had been imposed by the Greek government in the seventies and eighties,

On buying and selling houses and land,

On repairing houses,

On obtaining car, truck, and tractor drivers' licences,

On opening new shops and other places of business<sup>93</sup>.

[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

There is a significant improvement in some of our problems created by the past policies of the Government: For instance, getting a driver's license is much easier now. Getting a permit to repair a house or to add an extension has also become easier recently.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

There are some improvements on the issue of licenses for Minority physicians and pharmacists. It is easier now for a Turk to get such a license. Plus, I have been informed that some Turkish-owned pharmacies are now allowed to be on night-duty or open on Sundays. It has not been easy to reach this point, but I am glad that we *have* reached it now.

- Expropriations of minority-owned land, a serious problem in pA, was also discontinued by the mid-nineties.

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<sup>92</sup> For more details about this law, see X. Zolotas, et. Al. (eds.), *Η Ανάπτυξη της Θράκης: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές* [the Development of Thrace: Challenges and Prospects – in Greek], Athens, Greece: Academy of Athens, 1995.

<sup>93</sup> For further details, see the Human Rights Watch report written by Christopher Panico and entitled "The Turks of Western Thrace" (January 1999, vol. 11 no. 1), available at <http://www.hrw.org>

- Also in 1991, the Greek government publicly admitted for the first time that some of the Minority-related policies followed in the past were wrong, and that the Greek State had made "mistakes" when dealing with the Muslims of Thrace in the past. (It is important to note, though, that this acknowledgement was not accompanied by an apology.)
- Moreover, the then Prime Minister of Greece, C. Mitsotakis, in 1991, in a visit to Thrace, officially declared that the Government's approach to the Minority would from then on be based on the principles of *isonomía* (equality before the law) and *isopoliteía* (equal citizenship rights):

[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

A clear sign of the policy changes was the visit of the then prime minister Mitsotakis to Thrace in 1991, and the conciliatory statements he made in that visit.

- In 1994, with the first local administration reform (see Withinputs: Internal Affairs Ministry), local governors/prefects -- now elected by the people -- and county assemblies became more accountable to and more directly involved in Minority affairs.
- In early 1995, the Government instituted a quota ("proportionality" provision) in the university entrance exams for Muslim Minority students (see Withinputs: Ministry of Education).
- In October 1995, restrictions for entry into the Muslim-Pomak inhabited quasi-military zone along the Greek-Bulgarian border were abolished for all Greek citizens (see Withinputs: Ministry of Defense):

[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

There are no longer checkpoints controlling entry and exit to this area [Ehinós is within the so-called "Restricted Zone], and this is one of the most visible changes that happened recently.

- Beginning in 1996, The Ministry of Education and Religious affairs became more receptive to the demands of the Minority community for repairing or extending schools. In addition, with regard to the demands for repairing or upgrading mosques, the objections of the Orthodox Church leaders began to be increasingly dismissed.
- In 1997, the Ministry of Education initiated an EU-funded program to improve the teaching of the Greek language in Minority schools and to produce culturally sensitive textbooks that introduce Greek as a second language (see Withinputs: Ministry of Education).
- In June 1998, the infamous Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law was revoked<sup>94</sup>, though not retroactively (see Inputs: Greek Human Rights NGOs).
- In 1999, for the first time since the fifties, new Turkish textbooks, sent from Turkey, were distributed in Minority schools, thus ending a policy of rejecting educational books from Turkey due to their Turkish-nationalistic content (see also Withinputs: Ministry of Education):

[High-school teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

The new approach of the Greek State toward minority education has also had an impact on the issue of Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey: Turkey has responded constructively to this new approach by sending textbooks that did not include anything Greek officials would find offensive or inappropriate. And the Greek Ministry of Education did not reject these new books outright, but decided to examine them carefully and it will hopefully distribute them to our schools in the near future. This is a very significant improvement when you think that a few years ago the Greek State tried to force upon us Turkish textbooks prepared by Greeks in Greece.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

It is true that the government has taken some constructive steps in the area of Minority education.

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<sup>94</sup> The Government had actually expressed its intention to abolish it in 1991, when the conservative New Democracy was in power, but the article was revoked in 1998, by the Socialist PASOK government. The Greek authorities opted for doing so not immediately, but at some future time, "when conditions are ripe enough". This is probably what David Easton calls "*Output Procrastination*". For a detailed description of this term see Easton, 1965; pp. 442-443.

For example, the Education Ministry approved on March 10, 1999, the Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

With respect to the Turkish textbook issue, the Turkish and the Greek government have to comply with the 1968 protocol. This protocol only *recommends* that the two governments accept textbooks sent by the other government for Minority education. It does **NOT** require it. The governments are under **NO** obligation to accept and endorse textbooks prepared by the other government. If this recommended method, for whatever reason, does not work the very important need for textbooks at Minority schools could be met by other methods.

This does not mean, of course, that we do not want the recommended method to work. We do; and when both governments recognize each other's sensitivities, the method of receiving minority education textbooks from the neighboring country does work. The last books sent from Turkey were more reasonable than the ones sent in the past. There are still a few minor problems to be taken care of, and, as soon as they are, the textbooks will be distributed to the Minority schools<sup>95</sup>.

- Most of the bureaucratic impediments preventing the appointment of Turkish teachers were lifted in mid-nineties and a large number of such teachers were appointed in Minority schools:

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

Together with the recent educational reforms we have also seen an increase in the number of Turkish teachers appointed to our schools: Our schools had only eleven Minority teachers in 1990, while in 1998 they had thirty-six. This is a welcome development.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

There is also some progress in the issue of the appointment of minority teachers. Some have already been appointed recently, and there are signs that the Education Ministry nowadays respects prospective Minority teachers' rank on the national list ["Epetirida", in Greek] of teachers to be appointed at public schools. When their turn comes, it seems that they are appointed now.

- The Greek Government also gave up its policy of very rarely recognizing the degrees and diplomas of Minority members received at higher education institutions outside Greece (mainly at universities in Turkey):

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

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<sup>95</sup> The books were indeed distributed to the Minority schools at the beginning of the fall semester of 1999.



Another improvement in the area of education has taken place in the foreign university degree recognition process. Minority members who completed their studies abroad, just like all other Greek citizens, have to submit their diplomas and all relevant documents to DIKATSA<sup>96</sup> to be recognized. In the past the process would move too slowly for Minority members, or DIKATSA would simply reject their application. Now this process appears to have become less painful and faster for Minority applicants, compared to the situation before, of course.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

Now, as regards college education, we have observed that the government has accelerated and facilitated the recognition process for degrees and diplomas acquired abroad, a process which is managed by a governmental organization called DIKATSA. This is especially important for the minority youth, many of whom has studied and is studying at universities in Turkey. After a long struggle that involved hunger strikes, a struggle I actively participated in years ago, we can now say that the Greek government has gotten the message and responded appropriately.

Parallel to these pro-Minority outputs, however, the Greek government also produced some other outputs that reflected the distrustful, negative, approach described above. Among these outputs are the following:

- The introduction, in 1990, of the 3% national vote threshold in general elections. Only parties that would manage to get at least 3% of the votes nation-wide would be allowed to be represented in the Greek Parliament. This new provision that was included in the law on elections was designed, if not entirely, at least in part, to curtail the influence of the Muslim Minority's political formations, and the then newly formed Minority-only Party of Friendship Equality, and Peace (Dostluk, Eşitlik ve Barış Partisi – DEB), and to force Muslim politicians to cooperate with the national parties.
- The adoption and implementation of a new law, in January 1991, based on which the Muftis would be appointed by the Government, and the abolition of the old law that provided for the election of the Muftis by the Muslim community through a system of their choosing:

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<sup>96</sup> The Inter-University Center for the Recognition of Foreign Degrees.

A Greek government official I interviewed sounded irritated by the appointed Muftis' lack of legitimacy, but did not hint on any policy changes in the future:

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Another, more serious, problem in the Government-Minority relations is the Muftis issue. But this problem arises from the unwillingness of some minority members and some Minority centers of influence to recognize the legality and legitimacy of the duly appointed Muftis. This should not go on like that. The doubts around the legitimacy of the Muftis create uncertainty, internal division in the Minority community, and many civic and religious functions and activities can no longer be performed smoothly. Those who support the so-called "elected Muftis" should understand that they are hurting NOT the government but their own community.

- The increased emphasis by several Greek governmental institutions (and non-governmental actors) on the distinct ethnic identities of the Pomak and Roma members of the Muslim minority, at the expense of the prevailing, overarching Turkish "national" identity of the entire Minority in Thrace:

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

Since the early nineties, the Greek government has gradually recognized, although not explicitly, that the minority members have several parallel identities: A religious identity (Muslim) PLUS an ethnic identity. We see three distinct ethnic identities in the minority population: Turkish, Pomak, Roma. In other words, we see that the Muslim minority consists of people with these three distinct ethnic backgrounds.

Among these ethnic identities the one that was emphasized and supported the most, was the Pomak identity. Several governmental bodies developed initiatives to enhance the Pomak culture (for instance, by commissioning a Pomak dictionary), and to encourage the Pomaks to cling on their Pomak identity while gradually de-emphasizing their Turkishness:

[Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; professor at Panteion University; Greek; Female]

The Pomak dictionary was financially supported and maybe commissioned by the 4th Army division in Thrace, but it was prepared by Pomaks -- two Pomak teachers. Such an initiative can be regarded as an early indication that some Pomaks are emphasizing their difference.

But the Pomak dictionary issue also shows something else: That there is bureaucratic infighting, or rather inter-agency disagreements, in the framing and designing of minority policies. The ministry of Defense has a different vision or perception, and different

concerns than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also the Church of Greece has its own policy and its own perception of the minority. It is pursuing a policy that corresponds with its concerns and perception, shaped independently of the State. (For example, the new Church policy of financial support for every Christian family who has three or more children.)

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, in charge of the "intercultural" education program; Greek; Female]

There are quite a few Pomaks who want to emphasize and celebrate their Pomak identity, and the Greek government intends to support them. This is going to be part of the government's minority policy, at least in the short and medium term.

- The insistence on the *denial* of the "Turkishness" of the Minority, and on the position that the Muslims of Thrace, *as a group*, are a religious and not a national minority.

A Foreign Ministry official I interviewed described the official position of the Greek government on this issue as follows:

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Yet another problem in the Government's relations with the Minority is, of course, the Identity issue. We recognize that there is a problem created by the difference in the way a large part of the Minority identifies itself and the way the Government is obliged to officially identify this group of people. But one has to examine the Identity issue within a big set of issues that include education, economic development, etc. As improvements on those other issues bring tangible results, the Identity issue will likely lose its salience. We cannot recognize a "Turkish" national identity for the Minority. That is unacceptable from the legal point of view. Since we have to abide by the Lausanne Treaty and the framework it built for minority rights, we cannot jettison the official terms employed in this treaty. And the Minority in Thrace in this treaty is referred to as "the Muslim Minority".

It is important to add, though, that in pB this denial of the Minority's national identity was relaxed somewhat: (a) The government no longer prosecuted in this period Minority individuals, because they publicly asserted their Turkishness. And (b) The Greek authorities also declared, in 1997, that each citizen had the right to freely identify himself or herself, including in ethnic terms (the right to *self-identification* – *autoprosdiorismós* /

αυτοπροσδιορισμός). Nevertheless, the authorities rejected the argument that this right extended to groups; in other words, they did not recognize *the right to collective self-identification*:

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Now, as regards other international treaties and agreements that Greece has signed and/or ratified, for example, the Framework Agreement for the Protection of National Minorities or the OSCE documents pertaining to national minorities, the Government's position is clear: As far as Greece is concerned, citizens have only the right to *individual* self-identification. In other words, self-identification, the right of a person to call himself or herself Greek, Pomak, Turk, etc., is an *individual human right*, NOT a *collective right*. So these European treaties do not give some minority members the right to call the whole Minority "Turkish", although they may identify themselves – and only themselves – as "Turkish".

- The encouragement of ethnic Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union to settle and live in Thrace (in order to increase the proportion of Greeks in Thrace).

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## Feedback

As I tried to explain in the feedback section of the first period, I categorize feedback, based on their approval content, into four types: *Positive, Mixed-Positive, Low-Key Negative and Strong Negative*.

In the second period, as I will try to show below, the Greek government has been able to keep up with reforms in Minority-related policies, mainly because the positive and mixed-positive feedback it received in response to these policies decisively outweighed the strong or and low-key negative feedback.

### *Positive, Mixed-Positive, or Mixed-Negative Feedback*

Almost all positive feedback the Government received from actors in its environment for Minority-related "outputs" in pB has been of the mixed-positive ("yes...but") type. The actors who were supportive of the changes in Government-Minority relations did acknowledge the positive steps taken by the government, but also pointed to the problems yet to be tackled, or to the insufficiencies of each new policy.

Sometimes the things to be done, or the problems yet to be dealt with, were emphasized more than the things accomplished (in other words, the "but" section of the response was stronger than the "yes" section). This kind of feedback I would characterize as "mixed-negative" – a weaker version of mixed-positive feedback.

The actors that sent mixed-positive feedback to the government throughout pB were:

- The Muslim Minority itself (the gradual diminution of organized Minority protests and the slow-down of emigration of Minority members to Turkey, despite the continuation of their complaints, was also perceived as mixed-positive feedback),
- the Liberal Non-Nationalist circles,
- the domestic and international human-rights NGOs,
- the European organizations, namely the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE,
- also the US Government, and finally, and
- more interestingly, even the Turkish Government.

Eight of the people I interviewed in Greece, one of them a government official, six of them Minority members, and one local majority member, attested to the mixed-positive response of the Thracian Muslims to the recent policy changes, though their explanation as to why these changes took place varied<sup>97</sup>:

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

The minority has had a mixed response to the policy changes. This we can discern from the results of the 1998 local elections in the predominantly minority towns and municipal districts: While some of the elected mayors and city assembly members are hard-line, pro-Turkey nationalists, there were quite a few elected members of minority who are in favor of constructive cooperation with the State.

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

The response from the minority to the recent changes has generally been positive. One interesting indication for this positive response is that we now see some Thracian Turks coming back to Thrace from Turkey, whereas in the past there was only *emigration* from Thrace to Turkey.

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

It is true that the government has softened its approach to the Minority recently. There are several reasons for that:

First, government officials realized that if Greece wanted to be a regular member of the European Union, it was necessary to improve its policies for the Minority. Otherwise

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<sup>97</sup> Incidentally, none of the 26 people I interviewed denied that the situation of the Minority had improved.

Greece would have to face constant criticism and even condemnation. It would have been more difficult for Greece to be included in the next stages of European integration.

Second, the policymakers evaluated the past policies from a rational perspective and concluded that these policies had not yielded the desired results.

Third, they realized how harmful it could be if they let the policies be influenced by national chauvinism.

Besides, discrimination against, and repression of, the Minority was never beneficial to the interests of the central government in Athens. It never served the *national* interest. What it served was the *local* interest of some *local* centers of power. There never was any justification for the worries of the Greek government regarding the Minority. But the representatives of these local interests in Athens – like certain members of the Greek Parliament<sup>98</sup> from Thrace – and people who make a living by nationalistic fearmongering try to keep these worries alive.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

When we want to find out what the Minority's response to a policy is, we inevitably have to pay attention to the positions of, and statements issued by, the so-called "Advisory Council of the Minority". Although not legally recognized, this Council clearly dominates intra-minority politics, and its positions – for all intents and purposes – could be considered *the* position of the Minority. So, whether we like it or not, we have to recognize the fact that the "Advisory Council" is involved in all minority-related politics, and can steer the Minority toward whatever direction it wants. The positions of the Council to the recent changes, while not entirely constructive, have been rather positive.

The fifth person who expressed his opinion about this topic was a member of the most nationalistic, pro-Turkey group of Minority leaders. Even he had to acknowledge that there had been some improvements, although he insisted that they were insufficient:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

What we have seen in the recent years is that the level of government oppression and terror dropped from, say, 13 to 8. That, of course, is not enough. All terror and oppression must stop completely.

As to why the government reduced the level of terror and oppression, I believe the reason why they did that is that they want us to accept and openly declare that the conditions are better, more comfortable for us now. It is an action-reaction thing, I guess: They took a positive action, because they wanted us to respond with a positive reaction. Yet they need to do a lot more before they get the reaction they expect.

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<sup>98</sup> He implies the deputy speaker of the Greek Parliament, Mr. Sgouridis (PASOK) from Xanthi.

Nonetheless, this same interviewee's response for the educational reforms was more negative, colored by suspicion:

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

What is actually going on since 1991 is that, behind the façade of reforms to improve education, the governments have been implementing a set of policies aimed at undermining the Minority's autonomy in education.

On the issue of education, the sixth person, another Minority member, also made a mixed-negative (rather than mixed-positive) assessment of the new policies:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

As regards education, [...] while it is true that the [Education] Ministry is currently trying to introduce some reforms for the Minority education, we notice that it is still reluctant to take bold steps; not much has been done so far. Moreover, some of the steps the Ministry *has* taken under the banner of reform were just steps in the *wrong* direction. Because of the bitter experiences of the past, our Community has developed a deep suspicion toward any policy changes originating from the Ministry of Education. And the recent, timid steps, and the occasional wrong steps, certainly cannot help the Minority overcome that suspicion.

The seventh person, on the other hand, another Minority leader, simply argued that the reforms were just insufficient (without totally opposing them, however):

[Member of the Myki Municipal assembly; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The recent policy changes have not been deep enough, or substantial enough, to address the most crucial issues. And, because of that, they are like aspirin taken by a patient who has a serious illness: They may be able to temporarily address the symptoms, but not the causes.

Finally, the eighth person, yet another Minority member, gave an overall rather negative evaluation of the policy changes, while at the same time conceding that some of these changes were "undeniably beneficial" to his community (thus his feedback can still be described as "mixed"). His mixed-negative interpretation of the policy changes was due to his deep distrust toward the Greek government, and because of his complete rejection of assimilation:



[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

What has changed is not the basic government strategy toward the Minority, but the way it is pursued. The ultimate and primary objective of the Greek government has not changed. That objective is and has always been assimilation, or basically reducing our community's size and strength here to the point that we just disappear. (The more we assimilate the more we become part of the majority society, which indirectly means reduction of the size and strength of our community)

[...]

[T]he Greek government appears no longer to want minority members to leave Thrace.

That is no longer necessary, for, as far as our community's proportion in the whole population of the region goes, we are not seen as a serious threat anymore.

But, although the goal to make us leave may have lost its significance, for those of us who insist to remain here, the Greek government's goal to assimilate us is still as important as it was in the past.

[...]

Even the government's recently adopted policies that are --undeniably-- beneficial to the minority can be easily attributed to the goal to assimilate us: For instance, the new attempts to improve education, to bring development and modernity to predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas, and initiatives like these -- though better than the old policies of, say, intentionally providing low quality education -- are all aimed at assimilating the Minority into the Greek society.

The same person, later in the interview, added:

The Turkish-Muslim community has always been respectful of Greece and the laws of the land. Minority members have always been law-abiding citizens. In fact, despite the poverty, the limited education, and the obstacles set against our youth to find a job, the crime rate in the minority is and has always been lower than that of the majority.

So, I believe the Muslims deserve better treatment by our government and *they respond favorably* when they get better treatment.

The fact that the same type of feedback (mixed-positive or in its weaker form, mixed-negative) with basically the same content was received from this many actors had a *cumulative effect*: These "feedbacks" were received simultaneously and built on each other, therefore they strengthened each other, and collectively they became more effective.

The Greek government was *both* encouraged by this feedback *and* was pushed into making further changes in the same direction.

For instance, Greek government official had this to say about the need for further reforms:

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Despite all the reforms and the new policies we [the Government] introduced in the last few years, we see that we were unable to eliminate the distrust of the Minority toward the government. In the future, it is this still very strong distrust on which the government should concentrate its efforts. We have to defeat the Minority's distrust toward the Greek State. We have been trying to earn the trust of this group of our citizens, but I guess we should be trying harder.

An illustrative example of how mixed-positive feedback resulted in step-by-step changes is the case of Article 19:

In 1991, in response to the intense *demands* from the Muslim Minority and international actors, the Greek government signaled its intention to change this article of the Greek citizenship law (*output*), based on which thousands of Minority members had lost their citizenship.

The actors that were insisting on the abolition of Article 19 saw, with some satisfaction, that their demands were being taken into account, but were of course not happy with an indefinite promise that the article would change some time in the future (*mixed-positive feedback*). So they continued their pressure for a real and tangible change. In 1997, domestic Human-rights NGOs joined the other actors and added to the pressure on the Government to revoke Article 19 (*intensified demand added to mixed-positive feedback*).

The Greek authorities responded to this intensified pressure by promising to give special identity cards to those Muslim Minority members who lost their citizenship while being in Greece and were thus victims of an unfair and arbitrary application of Article 19 (*output*):

[Chief Advisor to the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on Minority issues; Greek; Male]

[Problems] stemming from Article 19 and its negative consequences have now been taken care of. Every stateless Minority member who lives in Greece and applied for a special identity card has now obtained it. With that card stateless people can now enjoy the rights given to them by international treaties.

The decision to give these cards were seen as a positive move by the Minority, the human-rights and international organizations, but they continued their campaign against Article 19 (*mixed-positive feedback/demand*).

In January 1998, the Greek government declared its intention to abolish Article 19, and announced that it would no longer be enforced (*output*).

But that declaration, while, engendering some positive reaction from the anti-Article 19 coalition, did not ease the pressure either (*mixed-positive feedback*). On the contrary, it resulted in more intense *demands* for a quick vote in the Greek parliament to revoke once and for all the article.

That vote took place in July 1998, and Article 19 was revoked – but not retroactively (*output*). The opponents of Article 19, did express their satisfaction, but did not end their struggle<sup>99</sup>. This time they began demanding the correction of all the mistakes and injustices committed because of Article 19 (*mixed-positive feedback/demand*). There were some clear cases of injustice having to do with the abusive or arbitrary enforcement of this article<sup>100</sup>. The anti-Article 19 coalition focused its demands on these "obvious" cases:

[Human Rights Activist; representative of an NGO; Minority Member; Female]

Although Article 19 was abrogated, there are still hundreds of stateless people living in Greece and thousands abroad who lost their citizenship because of this article.

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<sup>99</sup> One Minority leader I interviewed attributed the repeal of Article 19 not so much to the Minority's struggle, but to the demographic changes in Thrace after the influx of ethnic Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union:

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority member; Male]

With the settlement of tens of thousands of ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union in Thrace, the Muslims here are no longer seen as a big threat with respect to their proportion in the region's population. So, such a severe and unjust and unjustifiable measure as Article 19 had become unnecessary, and it's easy to understand why they abrogated it now.

<sup>100</sup> As I described in previous sections of this dissertation, there were Minority members who lost their citizenship *without* having left Greece.

These Muslim minority members did nothing to deserve such a punishment. They are now deprived of many of their rights, and are denied of many services and benefits ordinary citizens take for granted. The special identity cards many – but not all– of them were given recently have enabled them to regain some their basic human rights, but the main injustice has not been addressed. The government now recognizes their rights as stateless people, but that's not enough. They should be given their citizenship, and all the rights that come with it, in other words, their civil rights, back. Those were taken away from them unfairly in the first place.

Article 19's abrogation does not apply retroactively. The only way for the stateless people living in Greece to regain their citizenship is to apply for citizenship as if they were immigrants. And even then, it is not guaranteed that their application will be accepted. A small blemish in their backgrounds, a previous arrest, may be enough for denial.

In response to these new demands, the government first insisted that the problem was "taken care of", and that the "special identity cards" given to the "stateless" should be sufficient:

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

One problem that we dealt with successfully is the "stateless people" issue, that is the problem regarding Muslims who lost their citizenship, who still live in Greece and who are now "stateless". Their number proved to be much smaller than initially estimated. There are only a few hundred Minority members in this status, and their situation is significantly better than it used to be: Most of them have obtained a special identity card, through which they can enjoy most rights, freedoms, and benefits a citizen can. In addition, by abrogating Article 19 of the Citizenship code, the Government made sure that no more Minority members would lose their citizenship.

That was far from satisfactory to the anti-Article 19 coalition. The pressure continued at full intensity, until the Government declared, in 1999, that those who had lost their citizenship, but who still resided in Greece could apply for citizenship as if they were immigrants and that their applications would be examined expeditiously (*output*). Starting in 2000, the Government began to give citizenship to "stateless" Muslim Minority members, residing in Thrace, who applied for naturalization like an immigrant (*the second part of the same output*).

This new policy considerably eased the pressure on the Government regarding this issue, but did not eliminate it. Minority members and human-rights organizations expressed their happiness with this new development, they scaled-down their campaign, but at the same time

they drew the Greek government's attention to a larger number of "stateless" Minority members who lived abroad, mainly in Turkey, and who desired to regain their citizenship, or, at least, to be allowed regularly to visit Thrace and their relatives there<sup>101</sup> (*mixed-positive feedback, though more positive than the previous ones*).

On this topic, here is how a Minority member I interviewed expressed both his pleasure *and* his dissatisfaction:

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The abrogation of Article 19 is a very good development. Now it is only those Greek citizens who *decide* to renounce their citizenship, and who *explicitly declare* their demand to be stripped of it, that lose their citizenship.

But, we must not forget that a large number of Minority members suffered a lot because of this Article, and that nothing is being planned to address this past suffering.

Having examined the Minority's mixed-positive feedback to the Greek Government's policies in pB, I have to mention one exception: The only policies that generated *clearly negative* feedback from the Minority were the ones designed to cultivate and emphasize the different ethnic identities (especially the Pomak identity) within the Muslim community.

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<sup>101</sup> In early September 2003, there was the case of Erdoğan Hekim Ahmet, a Thracian Muslim Minority member permanently residing in Turkey, who had lost his citizenship in 1992 due to Article 19. Ahmet applied for a visa at the Greek consulate in Edirne in order to visit his mother, still living in Thrace, who was gravely ill and in her deathbed. His visa request was either denied or was not processed quickly enough (it is not clear in the news reports which of these two was the case) for Ahmet to see his mother before she died. Ahmet protested this decision of the Greek officials by starting a "sit-down" at the entrance of the Consulate. However, the Turkish police intervened and arrested him because he was protesting without a permit.

(See the press release of the Association for the Solidarity with the Western Thrace Turks – BTTDD at <http://www.btddd.org>, issued on September 8, 2003).

It is interesting that this case received little attention by the Greek or international human-rights organisations, and that it was only briefly mentioned in the Minority media in Thrace. Ahmet received the enthusiastic support of the Turkish Minority diaspora organisations, whose feedback has always been negative.

The responses I received on this issue from Minority members I interviewed show that many of them are contemptuous toward such policies. Many Minority members see them as attacks to their identity – to their "Turkishness", as attempts to "divide and rule" them, and they thus feel threatened by governmental attempts at redefining their ethnicity:

[Journalist and Newspaper owner; Minority human rights activist; Minority Member; Male]

The Greek government policy toward the Pomaks is an exception, in fact, the only exception, to its general homogenizing policies toward the population in Greece. The policy towards Pomaks is designed and shaped by institutions and centers that do not normally engage in social policy. Take, for instance, the Armed Forces -- the 4th Army division in Thrace. Or consider the role of the wealthy businessman, Prodromos Emfietzoglou, the chairman and CEO of Mihaniki [a conglomerate in the construction sector].

In addition, the academic community in Thrace, more specifically the faculty of Democritus University, has a peculiar approach toward the Pomaks. Not only does the academia support nonsensical theories about the origins of Pomaks, but the University has given money to "anthropological" research that involves analyses of the Pomaks' blood type and DNA and comparing the results to those of the Turks. This is done to "prove" that Pomaks are not ethnically or racially related to the Turks. This research was conducted primarily by Professor Xirotyris.

The next step of this research, or the implication of its conclusions would be to demonstrate that Pomaks are "pure-blooded" Greeks!

[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

This insistence on our Pomak identity has recently become quite annoying. They have bought a few people from our area, the mountain villages – people who were apparently eager to sell themselves out and to prostitute themselves in the first place – and, with the financial support of certain nationalistic businessmen, they are trying to project to the world a distorted picture of our identity: They are saying that we are not Turks but Pomaks. This is not going to work, though; we are not going to give up our national identity, our Turkishness.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The efforts to divide our Community along ethnic lines are not limited to initiatives for over-emphasizing the Pomak identity. There are similar efforts intended for Gypsies as well: There are programs that try to present the Gypsies in Western Thrace as separate from Turks – which is inaccurate. These are all very dangerous efforts. They engender resentment and indignation in the Minority.

It appears that behind these efforts is the "Para-State" ("parakrátos" in Greek), or rather, people associated with the Para-state. But, institutions of the "real" State, and primarily the Armed Forces, are also responsible for initiatives for meddling with our identity, because they have provided them with critical support in several instances.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The recent emphasis and repeated mention of the three distinct identities is, perhaps paradoxically, a tactic to make assimilation easier: It is easier to assimilate a fragmented group, one divided into small parts, than one unified national minority.

The CoE, the OSCE, and the US government mentioned in their documents the positive steps taken by the Greek government, but they continued to press for further changes.

The economic policies of the Greek Government aimed at the development of Thrace received more positive support, especially from the local Greek Majority. Minority members have generally acknowledged that their living conditions have improved through these policies but they also stressed that the local Greeks have benefited from the policies much more than the Minority has.

The European Union also supported these policies when they were at their planning stage and provided the necessary funds to make their success possible and tangible.

On the policies having primarily to do with the Muslim Minority, the local Greek Majority's feedback has overall been mixed-positive. Local Greeks were especially happy that the mobilization and organized protests of the Muslims have subsided and eventually ended, due to the new policies. The position stated by most local Greeks was that they did not oppose efforts to improve the situation of the Minority but that the government should also see to it that these efforts were not abused by Turkish-nationalist Minority leaders.

Turkey's feedback for the new Greek policies for the minority has been negative in the first five or six years, but mixed-positive since 1996. Initially the positive portion of this feedback was just the acknowledgement that some oppressive policies were being abandoned or changed. Until the post-earthquake Greek-Turkish détente, Turkey was careful to put most of its emphasis on the negative, on the things that have not been done or on the remaining problems, rather than on the positive. Since 1999, however, the Turkish government's approach has become a little more constructive, by toning down its criticisms and by recognizing more openly the improvements that have taken place in Thrace.

The more constructive and softer Turkish approach did not go unnoticed by the Greek government. Greek government officials resisted any temptation to dismiss this change as a ploy and responded constructively.

For example, a Greek diplomat I interviewed made the following evaluation with respect to Turkey's rather positive response on the textbook issue:

[Former councilor-general of Greece to Istanbul; diplomat formerly in charge of Muslim Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

[T]he Turkish government has finally got the message that the textbooks it sends to Greece must be free of Turkish nationalistic propaganda, for, otherwise, they will not be approved. That Turkey got this message is quite a welcome development. And [...] Greece is ready to respond constructively to a constructive move from the Turkish side.

#### *Low-Key Negative Feedback*

The Greek government did not receive much of this type of feedback in pB.

One could say that the only actor that sent low-key or tepid negative feedback on some, but not all, of the new Minority-related policies has been the local Greek majority. For instance, some local Greeks expressed their objection to measures of "positive discrimination" in favor of the



Minority. It is true that a small segment of the Local Greek Majority, the most fervent anti-Turkish Greek nationalists, have reacted with indignation to the new Minority-friendly approach of the Greek government and attempted to show their indignation in an organized way, but this segment should rather be considered a part of the Greek Nationalist circles, whose response I will examine below.

*Strong Negative Feedback*

The actors that supported the oppressive and discriminatory anti-Minority policies of pA, sent, predictably, strong negative feedback in the second period when and to the extent that these policies changed.

Those who opposed most strongly the Greek government's Minority-related outputs (policy changes) in the second period were: The Greek Nationalist Circles and their extension within the Local Greek Majority, the Greek-Orthodox Church, and, for different reasons, the Minority Diaspora organizations.

This is what a Greek government official had to say about the negative reaction the Greek government receive, especially from nationalist circles:

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]  
 The policy changes have led to harsh reactions from nationalist circles in the Greek population of Thrace. For instance, the IKTATh (the Association of Refugees from Imbros, Constantinople, Tenedos, and Eastern Thrace), an organization always suspicious of the minority leaders and their actions, has started complaining and protesting more loudly.

The Greek Nationalists and the Church offered basically two justifications for their negative reaction:

(a) Improving the freedoms and the living conditions of the Muslim Minority in Thrace is very *dangerous*. The Minority is under the control of Turkey and a Turkish-Nationalistic leadership. The ultimate goal of Turkey and the Turkish nationalists is to take over Thrace. Greece is in danger of losing Thrace to Turkey. Every additional freedom that would be given to the Muslims and every policy improvement would be seen as a concession and as a sign of weakness by the Turkish nationalists and the Turkish government. Moreover, new freedoms and new opportunities provided to the Muslims would be used by their leaders as a tool to eliminate Greek control over Thrace. Also, improving the life of Muslims in Thrace would result in the end of their emigration from their region, and they will soon become the majority in the region. Thrace will then lose its Greek character. This type of argumentation in Greek is called *kindynologia* (κινδυνολογία- "dangerology").

(b) Given the continuing mistreatment of the Greek Minority in Turkey by the Turkish government, the Greek government should not improve the freedoms and the living conditions of the Muslims in Thrace. A positive policy change toward the Muslims would be a unilateral concession and it would be against the principle of reciprocity. Until or unless the Turkish regime treats the Greeks in its country with dignity and respects their rights, Greece should not do anything to improve the conditions of the Muslims in Thrace. This line of reasoning can be called "negative reciprocity".

Therefore the Greek nationalists and the leadership of the Church decried the policy changes in pB and accused the government of being either foolishly naïve or worse, of indirectly helping Turkey.

There has even been a very small number of Greek nationalist extremists in Thrace who felt so angry and threatened by the pro-minority policy changes, that they went as far as forming para-military groups:

[Radio Journalist and investigative reporter in Thrace; Greek; Male]

With respect to the inter-communal relations, one should also pay attention to a darker, lesser-known, and not much investigated way some extreme nationalist Greeks have responded or reacted to the recent changes: I am talking about the formation of some militia groups like the "Falcons", the "Raiders of Kapantzoglou" who have some retired military officers in their ranks, and the "Golden Dawn", the neo-nazi thugs. Reporters and researchers are reluctant to touch this issue because they do not want to become targets of these groups' wrath and scare tactics. Such groups have so far attracted only a small number of young local Greek males and have not yet engaged in a flagrantly violent incident, but they are a potential danger.

Some minority members, not surprisingly, attributed this harsh reaction to rather malevolent, and not openly stated, reasons. For instance:

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

There are certain powerful groups in the Majority Greek community that are used to benefit disproportionately from government and international investment in Thrace, at the expense of the Minority. That was tantamount to stealing from us. Those who are used to stealing from us are now unwilling to share the resources of the region and the economic opportunities with us.

This strong negative feedback of the Greek Nationalists proved to be not effective enough to outweigh the mixed-positive feedback sent to the government by many more actors. However, it did influence the Greek public opinion to a certain extent and the Greek authorities could not dismiss or ignore it. As a result, some of the reforms were watered down and some extra

measures were added to them to prevent any possibility of the Minority gaining political control over Thrace.

As the reforms were implemented and none of the terrible predictions made by the Greek Nationalists and the Church leaders came true, the negative feedback from these two actors subsided somewhat. And, more importantly, the influence of this feedback on the society and the government diminished significantly.

The Turkish Minority Diaspora organisations, always more nationalistic and more hard-line than the Minority itself, was another actor that sent strong negative feedback. These organisations either refused to acknowledge the improvements in the Minority's situation in pB, or, when they did grudgingly acknowledge them, they attributed them to ulterior and sinister motives. They characterised the policy reforms, for instance, as a subtle plan for assimilating the Turks of Thrace, or as a charade aimed at fooling the Europeans and the international community. Their feedback was generally dismissed or ignored by the Greek government, but this government was not the real audience of the diaspora organisations, anyway. The Diaspora groups' primary goal was to convince the Turkish government, the European organisations, and the NGOs that the situation in Thrace was as bad as it was before 1990, and that despite some superficial changes, the Minority was still being oppressed. The feedback of the Minority diaspora could have only an indirect effect, if any, on the Greek government.

Having examined the different types of feedback sent in pB to the government, one could say that the positive has been much more powerful than the negative, yet the former did not

completely prevail over the latter it. And it was this combination of positive and negative that made it possible for the Greek government to proceed with the next steps of the reforms.

### Outcomes

The outputs of the Greek Government throughout pB, *both* the ones aimed at improving the situation of the Muslim Minority *and* the ones dealing with this community as part of the Turkish threat, plus the generally mixed-positive response to these outputs have resulted in a series of important changes in the intercommunal relations in Thrace. These changes are what Easton would call the "**outcomes**" of the input-output-feedback circle.

Arguably the most important outcome of the policy changes in pB and the rather positive response they received has been a **marked improvement in Majority-Minority relations** in Western Thrace. As a consequence, Minority members began to see the Majority no longer as enemies but as neighbors who were in many respects not that different from their own community:

[Chairwoman of a minority cultural organization; Minority Member; Female]

In Xanthi, there has been a thaw in the relations between Greeks and Turks recently. We have good and sincerely warm relations with a lot of Greeks. Having friends from the other community is necessary. Besides, our cultures are not that different. We are alike in many ways.

It became easier for Minority members to notice and recognize the fact that not every local Majority member was against them. In fact, one Minority leader I interviewed did not hesitate to express his gratitude for Greeks who helped them in the struggle to have their rights recognized:

[General secretary of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

We are pleased with the contribution and participation of some local Greeks to the recent efforts to improve the conditions of the Minority. For example, it was thanks to a Greek

lawyer from Komotini, Sotiris Poupouzis, that one Turkish-Muslim pharmacist got a license to open a pharmacy, and thus paved the way for other Minority pharmacists. Poupouzis not only fought for that in courts, but also was instrumental in getting the support of the governor.

However he did not neglect to add:

On the other hand, there are some Greeks who see us as targets for retaliation to every action taken by Turkey that they don't like.

The improvement in intercommunal relations has been noticed by the Greek Majority as well. A local Greek I talked to also acknowledged that there had been an improvement in majority-minority relations recently, but he did not think that this improvement went deep enough:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Now that the results of the new policies regarding the Minority are becoming visible, and the Minority is generally responding favorably to the changes, we see a *détente*, a thaw in the inter-communal relations. Although not as peaceful as before the protests started, relations are not as bad as they used to be, say, ten years ago. I suspect, though, that this *détente* is superficial. There are no institutions in the Western Thracian society to deal with inter-communal conflict effectively. There are no tension reduction mechanisms, either.

The recent improvement, however significant, has not fully done away with the outcomes produced by the tensions and enmity of the first period:

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Despite the *détente*, or the abatement of tension, that we have seen in the last years, we can still observe the damage the period of crisis has done to the inter-communal relations. For instance, in this city [in Komotini], neighborhoods are much more strictly separated along ethnic-religious lines now than they were ten or fifteen years ago. Also, the behavior of Christians toward Muslims and Muslims toward Christians appears to have undergone a change: Members from the two groups tend to keep a clear distance now when they interact; it is as if relations are colder now and more colored with suspicion and caution.

For a Greek diplomat I interviewed the persistence of mutual suspicion and the negative effects of the crisis in pA were more important than the impact of the recent improvement. He argued that the recent economic boom was not significant enough to keep the local Greek population

happy. In his opinion, the Muslims-Turks were more satisfied with the new situation than the Greeks, and, as a result, many local Greeks were choosing to leave Thrace and go to other more prosperous regions with a safer future. In other words, his conclusion was that the "outcomes" of the governmental "outputs" in the second period were a lot more beneficial to the Minority than the Majority. What is more, the Minority community had realized that and had begun actively to use this outcome to its advantage:

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

[The relatively] bad economic conditions, accompanied by a general sense of insecurity stemming from the possibility that the conflict may escalate again, and also by a lack of prospects for the region, have resulted in the emigrations of thousands of local Greeks. The Russian-Pontian Greeks are also generally unhappy with their situation in Thrace. And, despite being encouraged by the government to stay there, they, too, are leaving the region and moving to more prosperous parts of Greece.

This situation and its demographic consequences show that the Muslims of Thrace can play an increasingly important role in the region. And this role could be even more significant if they manage to integrate into the mainstream society; if they become active participants in more social and political activities. I think most Muslims have started to realize that.

That the members of the Minority are more willing now to stay in Western Thrace and to attach their future to this region can also be supported by the fact that emigration of Muslims-Turks to Turkey has declined significantly.. In fact, even a reverse trend has emerged, according to one Minority activist I talked to. Turkey is no longer as attractive to them as it used to be:

[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

Another thing that must be said about Turkey is that her importance and attractiveness as an alternative homeland, where Minority members could go in search of a better life, has diminished somewhat in the last few years. There are even some Western Thracian Turks who sold their real estate in Turkey and came back here.

Finally, as one Minority interviewee stated, the decline of emigration to Turkey, the realization that the Minority can be more influential and a more active player in Greek and regional politics, and the outcomes of the integration of Greece into the European Union, show that the minority is

going to be even more assertive, less dependent on "outside protectors", but more difficult for the Greek government to displease in the near future:

[Member of the Municipal Assembly of Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

Many young people from the Minority studying at Turkish and European universities are going to come back to Thrace. And they will probably find the current legal-social structure here asphyxiating.

The young generation is more familiar with Europe. Also, they have a more activist approach to politics. They want to participate in the decision-making processes.

The Western Thracian Turks now, for the first time, want to be actively involved in the politics of this region, and are less interested in having a protector taking care of their interests for them.

In other words, the input-output-feedback process is likely to continue producing good outcomes for the Minority, and --very importantly-- with less pressure or fewer inputs from Turkey – a development that would probably reduce the threat perception of the Greek majority and government.



## 14. *Conclusions*

### **(1) Regarding the Conflict**

The first and most obvious conclusion one can draw from this research is that the nature and content of the dominant inputs the Greek government received from its environment were by far the most important factor in determining its policies toward the Minority.

In the first period (1974-1990), the strongest inputs the government received from the actors in its environment were the ones emphasizing threat and danger associated with the Muslim Minority, and demanding restrictions of the rights of this of this community, measures to decrease Turkey's influence over the Minority, a policy of "negative reciprocity" whereby the rights of the Muslims in Thrace would be denied as a retaliation to Turkey's mistreatment of its Greek minority, and, in general, anti-Minority executive actions that would make the life of Thracian Muslims difficult so they would be induced to leave Greece.

The Greek Nationalist Circles and the Greek Orthodox Church, which had an easy access to the Greek authorities, intensely sent anti-Minority inputs and supported every anti-Minority governmental action. As tensions in Thrace grew, Local Greek Majority joined these other two actors and demanded, often as intensely as the other two, policies against the Minority.

Pro-Minority inputs (an end to discrimination, equal rights, recognition of identity, respect for cultural and religious rights, etc.) in the first period were too weak to compete with the anti-Minority ones or they were sent by actors toward whom the Greek government was negatively predisposed. Demands from the Muslim Minority expressed through non-violent

protests were seen as proof that the Minority needs to be clamped down, demands from Turkey were dismissed angrily, demands from the Thracian Minority Diaspora were ignored, and demands from international organizations were so tepid they were not taken seriously. Other actors that could send pro-Minority inputs did not in this period, because they were either not paying attention to the situation in Western Thrace or they were just being established: The European Union was mainly an economic organization in the first period and did not get involved in Minority-related issues; the Council of Europe was mainly concerned about human rights as individual rights and was reluctant to focus on Minority rights; the CSCE was more interested in relations between the Western Bloc and the Socialist Bloc, and in arms reduction efforts; the US government was reluctant in this period to criticize the human-rights and minority-rights situation of its allies; the Transnational Human-Rights NGOs had stopped paying attention to Greece after democracy was re-instituted in that country and a liberal constitution was adopted; the Greek Liberal Circles were more concerned about nation-wide issues like labor relations, gender equality, and general international issues, and were not well informed about the tensions in Western Thrace; finally, the Greek Human Rights NGOs were just being formed in this period.

The result was a series of anti-Minority outputs.

The Table below summarizes the situation in the first period:

**Table 14.1: Period A (1974-1990)**

**1. Actors sending Pro-Minority Inputs (demands and/or support)**

An end to discrimination  
 Equal rights  
 Recognition of Identity  
 Respect for Cultural and Religious Rights  
 Etc.

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Input Strength</b>
<i>Turkish Government</i>	<b>strong negative input</b> pro-Minority but anti-Greek
<i>W. Thrace-Turkish Diaspora</i>	<b>strong negative input</b> not necessarily directed at Greek Gov.
<i>T- Muslim Minority</i>	<b>very strong input</b> demands through non-violent mass mobilization
<i>Greek Human Rights NGOs</i>	<b>negligible input</b> just emerging
<i>Greek Liberal Circles</i>	<b>very weak input</b> not paying attention to Thrace
<i>Transnational Human Rights NGOs</i>	<b>very weak input</b> not paying attention to Thrace
<i>European Union</i>	<b>weak input</b> not focused on minority rights, not paying attention to conflict in Thrace
<i>Council of Europe</i>	<b>weak input</b> not enough attention to the Minority situation in W. Thrace
<i>CSCE</i>	<b>weak input</b> minority initiatives not yet launched
<i>U.S. Govt.</i>	<b>negligible input</b> not paying attention to Thrace

- 2. Actors sending Anti-Minority Inputs** (demands and/or support)
- Keep Minority under tight control
  - Induce them to leave Thrace
  - Negative Reciprocity
  - Cut their ties with Turkey
  - Etc.

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Input Strength</b>
<i>Local Greek Majority</i>	<b>strong input</b> apprehensive of Minority Mobilization
<i>Greek Nationalist Circles</i>	<b>very strong input</b> Very influential, anti-Turkish
<i>Greek Orthodox Church</i>	<b>very strong input</b> Anti-Turkish tendencies, fearful of the Turkification of Thrace

### Outputs

#### **Overwhelmingly Anti-Minority**

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Discriminatory Practices,  
Denial of Identity,  
Deprivation of Citizenship,  
Land Expropriations,  
Etc.  
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Partly due to the prevalence of anti-Minority inputs

This input-output cycle produced, as an "outcome", a very serious deterioration of inter-communal relations. In early 1990, inter-communal tensions had become so severe that anti-Minority riots took place in the city of Komotini. The government agencies seemed no longer able to control the situation or to provide order and to enforce the laws. To use Easton's terminology, the Greek authorities showed signs of losing their ability to "allocate values" "authoritatively" in

Thrace. The Greek political system, at least as far as Thrace was concerned, was facing a serious "disturbance" and was under "stress". It was for this reason that the Komotini riots constituted the turning point from deterioration to improvement in this conflict. The Greek government realized that it needed to change its policies on Thrace and the Minority radically and toward a pro-Minority direction to cope with this disturbance and the stress. Thus started the second period.

In this period (1990-2003/4), in addition to the predisposition of the Government toward the minority, the balance of inputs has changed as well. Inputs associating the Minority with the Turkish threat and characterizing this community as a problem to be dealt with, were *countervailed* and *shadowed* by inputs emphasizing minority-rights, demanding improvement in the conditions of the Minority and the entire region of Western Thrace, and making a better image for Greece in the international environment conditional upon an end to its anti-Minority policies. In other words, the anti-Minority inputs continued to be sent by the same three actors that were sending them in the first period, but now the pro-Minority inputs were just as intense and strong and the Greek government could not ignore or dismiss them.

The Greek Nationalist Circles were still ardently anti-Turkish and anti-Minority, but their influence was somewhat neutralized by the Greek Liberal Circles. Be that as it may, they were still successful in convincing the Greek government that the Minority was still a potential threat and that some measures to weaken their ties with Turkey and to keep them under control were necessary.

The Greek Orthodox Church continued to send anti-Minority inputs, but, due to the increasingly secular mindset of the socialist PASOK government (1993-2004), the inputs of the Church no longer had the same effect as they did in the first period.

And the Local Greek Majority gradually reduced the intensity of its anti-Minority inputs as the mass mobilization of the Thracian Muslims subsided, and focused its attention on demands for the economic development of Thrace.

As for the pro-Minority inputs, we see now that they are being sent by more actors and with more emphasis:

The inputs from European Institutions, particularly from the European Union, have played a crucial role in this period. The EU has now become a supra-national organization, which is concerned about the rights of minorities living in member-states. With regard to Greece, the EU not only demanded improvement of the situation of Muslims, but it contributed to this improvement substantially by financially supporting a large number of projects that would improve the economic situation in Thrace and would facilitate the integration of the Minority into the mainstream economy.

The Council of Europe, with its renewed focus on human rights in member-states, with its monitoring activities, with the conventions it prepared, and with the European Court of Human Rights, which has become like a supreme court for most of Europe, became a very important actor whose input had to be taken seriously by Greece in this period.

And the OSCE, with its High Commissioner on National Minorities, the charters accepted by all members of this organization, and with its treaty implementation meetings, increased its role and input in the Western Thrace conflict significantly.

The Turkish government continued to send pro-Minority inputs in the second period, but, gradually, as the Greek government began to change its policies toward the Muslim Minority, the Turkish government inputs acquired a mixed-positive character; they included some acknowledgement of improvement, and became less anti-Greek.

The inputs from the Thracian Turkish Diaspora did not change in this period. The Diaspora organizations maintained their fervently anti-Greek stance, were very reluctant to acknowledge any positive change in the situation of the Minority, and continued their attempts to influence, not necessarily the Greek government, but other actors who may then in turn put pressure on Greece to introduce further changes. The unchanged intensity of the Diaspora's inputs notwithstanding, they lost most of their effectiveness, for the arguments accompanying these inputs were no longer persuasive.

Another actor who was involved much more in the situation in Western Thrace in this period than in the first one was the US Government. Due to the rise of intercommunal tensions in this region, and the increased interest of the US Government in human rights, the American government began to pay close attention to the problems of the Muslim Minority. The violation of their rights was mentioned frequently in the State Department reports, and US diplomats regularly visited Thrace to obtain first-hand information about the situation there.

Yet another actor that began to pay more attention to this region, again because of the rise of tensions and the anti-Minority riots of 1990, was the Transnational, or International, Human Rights NGOs. They began sending monitors to Thrace and issuing reports detailing the violations of the rights of Thracian Muslims, and demanding radical policy changes.

In coordination with their transnational counterparts, the Greek Human Rights NGOs, now well-established, became in this period one of the most vocal defenders of the rights of Muslim Minority. They relentlessly pressed the government for further improvements in the situation of this community.

The Greek Left/Liberal Circles, also alarmed by the intercommunal tensions in Thrace, began to examine the situation there more carefully. Incrementally, with their publications and their

activities, they became a counterbalancing force to the Nationalists, and influenced the government by expressing views sympathetic toward the Minority.

Finally, the Turkish-Muslim Minority itself, continued in the second period to press for further changes and for the recognition of all their rights that were denied or restricted in the first period. As the Government became more responsive to their demands and began to change its policies, the mass mobilization of the Minority subsided. However, the leaders and the elite of this community were now more experienced in, and better informed on, the uses of judicial and political means for the pursuit of Minority rights and the improvement of their socio-economic situation. They therefore used such means with more frequency than before and more effectively.

The result of all these inputs, and the prevalence of the pro-Minority inputs over the anti-Minority ones, was a gradual replacement of the old policies with ones aimed at extending the Muslim Minority's rights and freedoms and improving their socio-economic conditions. Some anti-Minority outcomes, however, such as the denial of the Minority's Turkish identity, the encouragement of other identities within the Minority at the expense of their Turkish identity, and limitations on the autonomy of their religious institutions, were still produced in the second period.



The Table below summarises the situation in the second period:

**Table 14.2: Period B (1990-2003/4)**

**1. Actors sending Pro-Minority Inputs (demands and/or support)**

An end to discrimination  
 Equal rights  
 Recognition of Identity  
 Respect for Cultural and Religious Rights  
 Improvement in Minority's Education  
 Etc.

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Input Strength</b>
<i>Turkish Government</i>	<b>strong mixed-positive input</b> less anti-Greek, acknowledging improvement
<i>W. Thrace-Turkish Diaspora</i>	<b>strong negative input</b> very little change in pB
<i>T- Muslim Minority</i>	<b>very strong input</b> Gradual end of mass Mobilization; Less nationalistic demands expressed through political and judicial means
<i>Greek Human Rights NGOs</i>	<b>very strong input</b> vocal defender of Minority's rights
<i>Greek Liberal Circles</i>	<b>strong input</b> very interested in Thrace, sympathetic toward the Minority Thrace
<i>Transnational Human Rights NGOs</i>	<b>strong input</b> high interest in Thrace.
<i>European Union</i>	<b>very strong input</b> Interested in the minority-rights situation, financially supporting Thrace's development
<i>Council of Europe</i>	<b>very strong input</b> Demanding improvements in Minority's situation; ECHR decisions
<i>CSCE</i>	<b>strong input</b> demanding compliance to its Minority-rights regime
<i>U.S. Govt.</i>	<b>very strong input</b> frequent mention of Minority situation in human rights reports; regular visits of US diplomats

**2. Actors sending Anti-Minority Inputs** (demands and/or support)

Keep Minority under tight control  
 Induce them to leave Thrace  
 Negative Reciprocity  
 Cut their ties with Turkey  
 Etc.

Actors	Input Strength
<i>Local Greek Majority</i>	<b>strong input</b> <hr/> less apprehensive of Minority nationalism. More focused on economic demands.
<i>Greek Nationalist Circles</i>	<b>very strong input</b> <hr/> Their influence countervailed by the Greek Liberal Circles. Still anti-Turkish. Demands expressed with more fervor due to frustration.
<i>Greek Orthodox Church</i>	<b>very strong input</b> <hr/> Anti-Turkish tendencies, fearful of the Turkification of Thrace. Somewhat less influential.

**Outputs**

<p><b><u>Mainly Pro-Minority</u></b></p> <p>End of Discriminatory Practices,            Equal Citizenship Rights            Improvement of Education            Improvement of Economic Conditions            Opening-up of the Restricted Zone            Abolition of Article 19            Etc.</p> <hr/> <p>Partly due to the prevalence of pro-Minority inputs</p>	<p><b><u>Some Anti-Minority</u></b></p> <p>Continuing to Deny National Identity            Appointment of Muftis by the Government            Emphasizing Ethnic differences within the Minority            Etc.</p> <hr/> <p>Partly due to anti-Minority <i>withinputs</i></p>
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When we look at the *withinputs* -- the demands and support (and also initiatives) that originated from within the government -- we notice a substantial and qualitative difference between the two periods: In the first period, all government bodies that were involved in Minority affairs had, despite some minor details, basically an anti-Minority bias. There was little disagreement among these government institutions that the Muslim Minority was a threat which needed to be dealt with policies that would restrict their freedoms and deny some of their rights. As a result, almost all Minority-related withinputs in the first period were inimical toward the Minority. In the second period, we no longer see this anti-Minority consensus within the government. Bureaucrats in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Internal Affairs, and of Education begin to soften their approach toward the Minority and even to advocate that some pro-Minority policies would serve the national interest better than the anti-Minority ones implemented up to that time. Moreover, the newly-established National Ombudsman, on Minority issues has quickly become an institution that conveys the Minority's concerns to other governmental bodies, and that genuinely tries to address the complaints from members of this community. Only the Defence Ministry and the Intelligence Agency maintain in this period their anti-Minority attitude, and continue to defend the anti-Minority policies. Nevertheless, these two institutions do not put up much of a fight against the changes introduced by other governmental bodies.

The following table summarizes this difference in withinputs between the two periods:

Table 14.3: Withinputs in Periods A and B

<p><b>Period A (1974-1990)</b></p> <p><b>Governmental Bodies Directly Involved in Minority Issues in Thrace</b></p> <p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, The National Intelligence Service (EYP), The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry)</p> <hr/> <p><b>All sending Anti-Minority Withinputs</b></p>
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<p><b>Period B (1990-2003/4)</b></p> <p><b>Governmental Bodies Directly Involved in Minority Issues in Thrace</b></p> <table> <tr> <td><b>Pro-Minority Withinputs</b></td> <td><b>Mixed-Withinputs</b></td> <td><b>Anti-Minority Withinputs</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>-- The Citizen's Advocate Office (the National Ombudsman)</td> <td>-- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, -- The Ministry of Education &amp; Religious Affairs, -- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry)</td> <td>-- The Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, -- The National Intelligence Service (EYP)</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Pro-Minority Withinputs</b>	<b>Mixed-Withinputs</b>	<b>Anti-Minority Withinputs</b>	-- The Citizen's Advocate Office (the National Ombudsman)	-- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, -- The Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, -- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry)	-- The Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, -- The National Intelligence Service (EYP)
<b>Pro-Minority Withinputs</b>	<b>Mixed-Withinputs</b>	<b>Anti-Minority Withinputs</b>				
-- The Citizen's Advocate Office (the National Ombudsman)	-- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, -- The Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, -- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (or the Home Ministry)	-- The Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, -- The National Intelligence Service (EYP)				

- As far as feedback is concerned, *Mixed-positive feedback* was found to be the most useful type of feedback. The Greek authorities responded most constructively if the feedback included some acknowledgement of the positive steps taken and demands or recommendations about the changes that had yet to be made.

## (2) Regarding Easton's Model

- This dissertation has shown that Easton's model is indeed applicable to the conflict in Western Thrace, although it had to undergo some modifications and some refinements to achieve full applicability. The most notable changes I introduced to this model were the following:

\* The concept of *actors* ("producers of inputs"), which is only implied in Easton, needed to be concretized and clearly introduced.

\* Feedback was categorized according to its content: Negative, mixed-negative, mixed-positive, positive.

\* More attention had to be paid to the concept of "*outcomes*" (changes in social relations as a result of the cyclical process of inputs-outputs-feedback) which is only briefly touched upon in Easton's work.

To examine how different governmental bodies approached the Minority-related issues and what actions they took or recommended, I used Easton's concept of "withinputs" extensively. Incidentally, in large part thanks to this "withinputs" concept, Easton's model does allow for an analysis of intra-governmental dynamics that convert inputs to outputs. The criticisms, therefore, that in Easton's system analysis the government is just a "black box" into which inputs stream and out of which outputs emerge (see, for instance, Susser, 1992), are unfair.

- Given the ease with which I used the systems analysis model in the Western Thrace conflict, I can naturally draw the inference that this modified version of the model can help analyze other similar conflicts as well. The Eastonian systems analysis would enable us to acquire a dynamic understanding of such conflicts, as it did for Western Thrace.

### (3) Regarding the "triadic ethnic conflict" category

- Triadic Ethnic conflicts, especially in the European context, are no longer triadic. There is always a fourth set of actors, mainly extra-societal actors – specifically in this case the European intergovernmental institutions – that are involved, and their input is crucial.

This is certainly the case in the Western Thrace conflict, but it appears to be the case in other similar conflicts in Europe as well.

I started my research assuming that the Western Thrace conflict was triadic. Yet now, at the end of my research, although I still see that the nexus among the Greek Government, the Turkish-Muslim Minority and the Turkish government is very important, I can conclude that any analysis that would neglect or exclude the role of European institutions would be inadequate and misleading.

### (4) Regarding the Role of the European Institutions vis-à-vis other actors

- The inputs and feedback of this fourth set of actors – the European institutions -- contributed to "conflict reduction", or improvement in Thrace<sup>1</sup>. It is important to state that these inputs were not just demands and/or pressure, but they also included rewards, incentives, and economic support.
- Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to attribute the shift from deterioration to improvement

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<sup>1</sup> This is congruent with the general conclusion reached by Ted Robert Gurr in his book Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 2000). After analyzing the general trends since the mid-nineties in more than 200 ethnic conflicts throughout the world, Gurr concluded that, in large part due to international pressures, in most of these cases governments were persuaded "to improve their treatment of minorities in ways that vary from cosmetic to substantive" (p. xiv).

to the contribution of one single set of actors. It was *the interaction of all actors* examined in the dissertation that resulted in this change. More specifically, the change happened thanks to the combination of all inputs and feedback the Greek government received from the Minority, the European institutions, the US government, the human-rights NGOs (both domestic and transnational), the non-nationalistic circles in the Greek society, the Turkish government, and, of course, the withinputs sent by some key governmental agencies. The change was also due to the realization that there was a serious stress, a serious disturbance, in Western Thrace as regards the functioning of the political system.

It is difficult to imagine how the shift from deterioration to improvement would have taken place if one of the above components were missing.

#### **(5) Regarding the nature of Group Identities**

- From the case of Western Thrace we can draw some interesting conclusions pertaining to group identities and their multi-layered nature. The members of the Muslim Minority in this region have many layers of group identity:
  - They have their *ethnic* identity, which may be Turkish, Pomak, or Roma,
  - they have their *religious* identity, which is Muslim for almost all the members of this minority,
  - they have their *national* identity, which is Turkish, again for the overwhelming majority of this community,
  - and they have their *citizenship* identity, which is Greek, for virtually all of them.

Each of these layers of identity is not inherently in conflict with the other; and, certainly, the existence of one does not necessarily negate the other. Nevertheless, because of the government's tendency to deny the Minority's Turkish *national* identity, and to emphasize their other identities, we see most members of this community responding to the government policy by de-emphasizing, disregarding, and sometimes even denying these other identities, and clinging to their national identity which they are not allowed to express freely or fully. This situation confirms Volkan's (1992) "ethnic tent" hypothesis: Volkan argues that if a group identity, which he likens to a big tent, is challenged, "disturbed or shaken.... all the individuals under the tent collectively become preoccupied with trying to make the tent strong again" (p. 8) neglecting even their personal identities. Just like in many other cases of identity denial policies pursued by a government (see, for instance, the Turkish policies toward the Kurdish minority in Turkey until the 1990s, in Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997), the denial of the Muslim Minority's national identity has reinforced that identity instead of weakening it.

#### **(6) Final and General Concluding Remarks**

- Finally, and perhaps more importantly, this dissertation shows that in a democratic political system, where the Government is open and responsive to inputs and feedback coming from its intra- and extra-societal environment, government-minority and inter-ethnic disputes, though a major problem, can nevertheless be addressed constructively and without degenerating into violence and bloodshed.



## 15. Recommendations

### (A) Recommendations for further research

- More case studies of triadic ethnic conflicts (currently going on or ones that took place in the past) should be conducted using the same model to determine whether the Eastonian model is a useful tool of analysis *generally* and not for the Western Thrace case specifically.
- Since this dissertation has relied mainly upon the views of elites, i.e. of leaders, policy-makers, bureaucrats, politicians, intellectuals, etc., it may have overlooked some trends and sentiments that are prominent at the grassroots level. The conflict, but especially the trends in majority-minority relations in Western Thrace should be examined using other research methods, preferably survey research based on randomly chosen but significantly larger samples. The results of this dissertation can serve as a guide in preparing the questionnaires in a survey research to be conducted in Western Thrace.
- The non-violent character of the Muslim Minority's struggle to have its rights recognized is very interesting and needs to be further examined. Despite the fervent nationalist rhetoric of their leaders during the height of the crisis, why is it that Thracian Muslims-Turks did not use any violent methods (sabotages, arsons, bombings, assassinations, etc.) to promote their cause?

-- Is there any cultural or historical explanation for 'Thracian Muslims' aversion of violence?

-- Or is this the result of the democratic functioning of the Greek political system, where the Authorities are open and responsive to inputs from the environment?

The case of Western Thrace should attract the attention of cultural anthropologists and students of non-violent action.

### **(B) Recommendations for the Main Actors of the Conflict**

This dissertation shows that not all actors involved in the Western Thrace conflict are genuinely interested in the further improvement of the Minority's situation (both in terms of human and minority rights and in terms of economic conditions). However, to the extent that the principal actors of this conflict *are* interested in that, and if they sincerely want to eliminate the remaining problems in a mutually satisfactory way, there are certain steps, actions, or policies that can be recommended to each of these actors. Some of these recommendations are the following:

#### **(1) For the Minority**

- Efforts to integrate into the Greek society and to become a bona fide actor of the Greek political system have produced very positive results. Such efforts should continue.
- There are actors in the political system, such as European organizations, Human Rights NGOs, and the Non-nationalist Circles, whose inputs have been instrumental in the improvement of the Minority's situation. The Minority should cooperate with them more systematically and perhaps even coordinate its actions with some of these organizations.

- While it is natural for the Minority to have strong ties with Turkey, the members of the Thracian Muslim community should be less reticent to criticize the Turkish government publicly when they disagree with its policies. By doing so, they would reduce Greek suspicions that the Minority is just a tool of Turkey. Moreover, a less reverential attitude toward the Turkish State may make that actor more responsive to the inputs from the Minority. Turkey, in other words, should be seen as an ally, not as a protector.

## (2) For the Greek Government

- Greece should ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (which it signed in 1997) and pass the necessary laws to make it part of its domestic legal system. If this treaty, prepared by the Council of Europe, became the law of the land in Greece, the importance of the Lausanne Treaty as the sole document that defines and legitimizes the rights of the Muslim Minority would be reduced – which, in turn, would mean a decrease in Turkey's influence in the affairs of the Minority. Moreover, the ratification of this Convention would improve Greece's standing or prestige in Europe.
- The Greek government should try to establish systematic negotiations with Minority leaders (at least with the democratically elected ones) on how to find a solution on the issue of Muftis and also on the management of religious foundations. With regard to the Muftis, until a solution is reached, Greece should take into account the European Court of Human Rights decisions in *Serif v. Greece* and *Agga v. Greece*, thus stopping every prosecution of the "elected" Muftis, and dismissing all charges in the pending cases.
- The "elected" muftis and many imams in Thrace have had strong ties with the Turkish State, and these ties make Greek authorities feel apprehensive about them. This is understandable,

but the Greek officials must also take into account the fact that, apart from Turkey, the only other nation that has shown intense interest in the Muslims in Greece has been Saudi Arabia. In fact, it is Saudi Arabia that is going to fund the building of the first big mosque and the only Islamic cultural center in the Athens metropolitan area<sup>1</sup>. Given the propensity of Saudi-influenced institutions to promote the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, which frequently leads to the formation of fundamentalist-extremist groups organized around such centers, the influence of the Turkish State (which has always been against Islamist extremism) over the religious leaders and functionaries of the Thracian Muslims may not be such a bad thing.

- The fact that the overwhelming majority of Western Thrace Muslims-Turks (even those whose ethnicity is Pomak or Roma) have a Turkish national identity, that they do not consider themselves members of the Greek nation, but, at the same time, that they are happy being citizens of Greece should be recognized and taken seriously. The Greek State should explore the option of negotiating a comprehensive "charter" or "contract" with elected representatives of the Muslim Minority, which would :
  - (a) Systematize or solidify all the recent changes in the Government-Minority relations;
  - (b) Revisit and reaffirm all the still relevant international treaties and other legal documents that directly deal with the rights and obligations of the Muslim Minority;
 and
  - (c) Include at least some kind of acknowledgement of the Minority's Turkish identity, but accompanied by a pledge by the Minority for continued loyalty to the Greek State.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the plans to build this Islamic Center and the mosque, as well as the resistance of the local Greeks to this plan, see Helena Smith, "Villagers try to block Athens mosque plan", in *The Guardian*, September 16, 2003 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion/Story/0,2763,1042924,00.html>)

If this recommendation is seen as too big a step for the Greek government to take, then the least the Greek Government should do is recognize that each Muslim Minority member can exercise his or her right to self-identification "in community with others", i.e. with other members of his or her community – so that Minority groups, agencies and organizations could freely call themselves "Turkish".

- The Greek government should be willing to grant citizenship expeditiously to all Minority members currently residing in Greece and whose citizenship was taken away due to the now defunct article 19 of the citizenship law.
- The decisions and recommendations of the National Ombudsman with regard to Minority members should be fully respected and implemented. This would increase the Minority's trust and support for the Greek political system.

Another governmental, though autonomous, agency, The Greek Committee of Human Rights could be given more powers and more funds and could pay more attention to the human-rights-related complaints of the Muslim Minority.

- The Greek government should adopt some special measures to encourage or facilitate the hiring of Minority members as police officers, and the appointment of Minority lawyers as judges or prosecutors.

The Muslim Minority has gained adequate or close-to-adequate representation in the legislative (the Parliament and local county and municipal assemblies), and the executive (mayors) branches of the government. However, with regard to the judiciary branch and law enforcement, the Muslims' representation is almost non-existent.

- The reforms in Minority education introduced in the nineties, particularly the ones pertaining to affirmative action (or "proportionality") on university entry, the new, culturally sensitive

approach in teaching Greek to Minority schoolchildren as a second language, and the more tolerant policy for Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey, have already begun to produce beneficial results. Greece should continue in the same vein and tackle the remaining problems in Minority education. Among the things that need to be done are:

(a) Upgrading the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki from a "special" to a "normal," four-year, and high-quality higher education institution<sup>2</sup>. This state-run Academy trains (exclusively) Muslim Minority members who want to become teachers at Minority elementary, middle and high schools.

(b) Introducing Turkish as a foreign language to be taught at public schools in Thrace.

That would alleviate some of the fears of Muslim parents of their children's possible assimilation/"hellenization" if they sent them to a public school, and it might even contribute to the integration of the younger generation of the Minority into the mainstream Greek society.

(c) Facilitating the transformation of the Minority school system so as to provide nine years of compulsory and free-of-charge education, instead of six years that it does now.

- The Greek government has done a lot in the last decade to improve the infrastructure (building roads, providing water, telephone services, etc.) of the Muslim-inhabited towns and villages. Yet, the infrastructure of these areas is still visibly inferior to the towns and villages inhabited by Greeks. This visible difference should be minimized.

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<sup>2</sup> The need to upgrade this Academy has in fact been recognized by most political parties in Greece, and was stated as an election promise to the Minority during the campaign for the 2004 national elections. See, for instance, the speech of Kostas Karamanlis, delivered in Komotini before a mixed, Minority-Majority, audience, on January 27, 2004 (<http://www.nd.gr/logoi.asp?epipedo=001T01009001038>). Karamanlis and his party, New Democracy, won the plurality of votes and the majority of parliamentary seats in the elections, both nationwide and in Thrace.

- Finally, the central Greek government should fight the local "*para-state*": Local government officials and bureaucrats, who ignore, undermine or purposefully and systematically slow-down the implementation of the new Minority-related policies need to be disciplined and/or dismissed. The resistance of the local bureaucrats to the new policies is even more worrisome when we consider the apparent association of some of these officials with right-wing nationalist organizations. The "*para-state*", i.e., this informal alliance of nationalist bureaucrats with nationalist militant groups, is a serious danger to the smooth functioning of the Greek political system. If members of this alliance see themselves as successful in undermining the pro-Minority reforms, they will likely attempt to expand their influence and undermine other policies they consider unpatriotic or irreligious, in domestic and foreign affairs.

### **(3) For the Turkish Government**

- The Turkish Government should continue to encourage the Minority's integration into the Greek Society.
- The Turkish authorities should realize the effectiveness and constructiveness of "mixed-positive" feedback sent to the Greek Government. In other words, when demanding further improvements for the Minority, they should always acknowledge the improvements already achieved.
- Turkey should prefer to maintain its influence over the Muslims of Thrace through rewards, not through threats and punishments (as with the now discontinued practice of "black listing"). The Turkish authorities should try to be a "benign" ally, not a "strict boss".

**(4) For the Human Rights NGOs**

- Although, admittedly, criticising the government is an inherent feature of their job, these organizations should also be able to recognize -- a little more emphatically than they do now -- the positive steps taken by the government, and they should even publicly support the pro-Minority policies. In other words, they would be more effective insofar as their feedback was mixed-positive rather than negative.

**(5) For the European Union**

- The projects funded by the EU in Thrace, that were part of the Second and Third Community Support Frameworks have contributed significantly to the improvement of the Muslim Minority's economic situation.

One issue the EU should pay more attention to in the coming years is the heavy dependence of the Thracian Muslims on tobacco farming. As tobacco consumption is in decline in Europe, tobacco farmers may soon lose the EU subsidies provided to them. It is imperative, therefore, for the EU to encourage and fund programs that would help Muslim farmers shift from growing tobacco to growing other, equally lucrative, crops.

More generally, however, the EU should continue to demand, encourage, and support efforts by the Greek government aimed at improving the economic and socio-political situation of the Minority.



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**APPENDIX A:  
Translated  
Interview Questions and Answers**

**1. Why did Greek-Turkish Relations deteriorate, starting in the mid '50s?  
What were the worries of the Greek Government, how did it affect  
the Minority?**

[Consultant/Researcher at the Min. of Foreign Affairs and professor at Panteion University; Greek; Female]

It is impossible to deny that the minority was treated like second-class citizens; that, for more than three decades, there was discrimination against the minority.

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[Senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Things were *tragically* bad for the minority in the late eighties.

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[Member of Greek Parliament and cardiologist; Muslim-Turkish minority member; Male]

The Greek State has always had a distrust toward the minority. It has always approached them with suspicion.

---

[Member of the Xanthi County Assembly, attorney; M-T minority member; Male]

The conditions of the minority were pretty good in the early fifties. The government treated us with respect and we were loyal to the government. We had a certain autonomy in that period; at least in education. Then, totally unnecessarily, the government began to gradually toughen its approach. As the government grew more and more repressive, government-minority relations deteriorated.

It may be true that the government began to have some worries about what the minority might do, but such worries had no justification.

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[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

Though the Greek and Turkish governments have always purported to defend the rights and interests of the Minorities, in actuality both have seen them as pawns in the acrimonious Turkish-Greek chess game. In this sense, the worries of the Greek government concerning the Minority were not exactly unfounded.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

With the first signs of deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations, Greece has shaped all aspects of her national security policies around the assumption that Turkey is the "main threat". And, since the mid-seventies Greece's defense dogma is based on the premise that Turkey is pursuing an expansionist policy, that Turkey is trying to expand her influence and even her territories at the expense of Greece. I believe this premise is *wrong*, and, therefore, I think Greece's defense dogma and national security strategies are misguided.

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[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

The Greek policies for the Minority have admittedly been guided by **fear**; fear of Turkey, and fear of losing Thrace; not a completely unjustified, but certainly an exaggerated fear. And fear is never a good guide. We are dealing with Minority affairs with a calmer, more rational approach now, but the fear is still there.

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## ***2. The Cyprus Issue – What were its consequences for the Muslim Minority?***

[Community activist, former teacher at a minority high school, laid off by the government; Turkish-Muslim minority member; male]

The Cyprus issue has of course has a negative impact on the government-minority relations. Moreover, the way Greek-Turkish disputes are presented in the media (the jingoistic tone, the distortions) has affected the inter-communal climate very negatively.

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## ***3. Muslim Minority's "Turkish" identity and its organizations' use of the "Turkish" name. What was the Government's approach to this issue? How did it affect the Minority?***

[Newspaper owner and chief editor; Muslim-Turkish minority member; Male]

The "Turkish" identity of the Minority has been a major problem for the Greek government in the last forty years. The general policy of the Greek State toward ethnically non-Greek population has always been "homogenization". This approach was applied *to some extent* on the Muslim minority as well.

But the Pomaks [Muslim Minority members whose mother tongue is Bulgarian] have been subject to a different type of policy (see answer to question Q2j).

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[Director of a Minority association; Muslim-Turkish minority member; Female]

The *Turkish* Union of Xanthi was established in 1927. It has always been a social and cultural organization that promoted the national culture in the minority community of Xanthi, especially its youth. Part of its mission was to play the role of a "friendship and peace bridge" between the Turkish and Greek cultures. It functioned along these lines without many problems until the eighties. Its best period, when it enjoyed the most freedoms, was in the early fifties.

Today, what the organization wants is to return to the conditions of that good and free period of the early fifties. But, unfortunately, the Greek State has been very hostile to this organization since in the last fifteen years: It took down (removed) its signs, including the one at the main entrance, just because we used the adjective "Turkish". It used such tactics that led to the disconnection of our organization's phones, and banned most of our activities.

The Turkish Union of Xanthi, to protect itself, its identity and its rights, has chosen the legal avenue. It has been fighting the government at the courts for almost fifteen years and it is determined to go all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, if necessary.

[Member of the County Assembly, attorney; M-T minority member; Male]

While it is true that the Lausanne Treaty refers to our community as the "Muslim" minority, the preference of religion over ethnicity in identifying us was due to the Ottoman millet system. The Lausanne treaty was signed over the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and, therefore, the legal terms of the Ottoman system had to be used. But now that this empire is part of distant history, and given that both Greece and Turkey are nation-states, the insistence on identifying this minority in religious terms is obsolete and anachronistic. It has to change. It is past time that we were considered a national minority.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The deterioration in the inter-communal relations has had a detrimental impact on Muslims' identity-recognition issue: In the past, local Greeks had no reservations, no hesitation, regarding using the words "Turk, Turkish" for the Minority members in casual conversations. Now they do, and they prefer to call them just "Muslims".

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Among the several oppressive policies, the one that was most insulting to the Minority was the government's playing with our identity, and interference with our expression of our identity – our Turkishness.

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The Turkish Youth Association of Komotini/Gümülcine has been one of the primary targets of the Greek policy to ban the use of the term "Turkish".

This ban was introduced in the early '80s, and, in our case, was upheld by the country's highest appellate court, the Areios Pagos, in 1987. The court ruled that either we had to change our name or the government would shut us down. The strange thing is, however, that we never received an official and formal notification of this ruling – which gives us some legal room to remain open and continue to function, to a limited extent, of course.

So, in other words, we are in a legal state of limbo: On the one hand, we are considered illegal, and, on the other hand, it is still legally possible for us to remain active. The Government appears to be tolerating this situation and we are rarely bothered by law enforcement authorities. A few years ago, we received an official letter from the prosecutor's office asking us to complete our dissolution and liquidation process within a "reasonable period" of time. Because no specific deadline was set by the prosecutor, we set a "reasonable deadline" ourselves: The year 2500! That is how we defined the reasonable amount of time for our dissolution. We realize that this is absurd, of course, but we wanted to make clear our intention to remain open and to function until they shut us down by force.

Since this period of limbo started, we have been denied some basic services by the government – services that are indispensable for the functioning of an association. For example, our phone lines were disconnected and we no longer receive any mail through the postal service. OTE [the State-owned Telecommunications Company]

After the Areios Pagos ruling began sending the phone bills to the "Muslim" Youth Association, and we sent those bills back, for there is no such organization in this address. After several months, our phone service was terminated. As for EL.TA. [the Greek Postal Office], they refuse to deliver any mail addressed to the "Turkish" Youth Association, and return it to sender with the remark "there is no such address". While these measures have seriously disrupted our activities, they were not able to stop them altogether, for, all of us, the executive committee, have our own cell phones and we can still receive mail at our personal mailing addresses.

Another restriction we face is that we are not allowed to do any repairs in our building. When the police notice that we have repaired something, they come and demand a fine, and in that case, we pay the fine without any resistance.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

The more Turkey was considered a threat and an enemy, the more restrictions were imposed upon our right to declare and celebrate our Turkish national identity. No Greek who is even the least bit familiar with our community can doubt the fact that we are Turks and that we "feel" Turkish. I believe that the unwillingness of Greece to recognize our national identity is the direct result of the thought that Turks are the enemy and a threat to Greece. So, while struggling to have our human, civil, and cultural rights recognized, we should also try to show our Greek friends that we are not their enemy, and that neither Turkey is the enemy of Greece.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Yet another problem in the Government's relations with the Minority is, of course, the Identity issue. We recognize that there is a problem created by the difference in the way a large part of the Minority identifies itself and the way the Government is obliged to officially identify this group of people. But one has to examine the Identity issue within a big set of issues that include education, economic development, etc. As improvements on those other issues bring tangible results, the Identity issue will likely lose its salience.

We cannot recognize a "Turkish" national identity for the Minority. That is unacceptable from the legal point of view. Since we have to abide by the Lausanne Treaty and the framework it built for minority rights, we cannot jettison the official terms employed in this treaty. And the Minority in Thrace in this treaty is referred to as "the Muslim Minority".

Now, as regards other international treaties and agreements that Greece has signed and/or ratified, for example, the Framework Agreement for the Protection of National Minorities or the OSCE documents pertaining to national minorities, the Government's position is clear: As far as Greece is concerned, citizens have only the right to *individual* self-identification. In other words, self-identification, the right of a person to call himself or herself Greek, Pomak, Turk, etc., is an *individual human right*, NOT a *collective right*. So these European treaties do not give some minority members the right to call the whole Minority "Turkish", although they may identify themselves – and only themselves – as "Turkish".

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***4. What policies were designed by the Greek Government in response to its worries regarding the Minority?***

***-- What were the goals of such policies?***

***-- Which ones were successful?***

[A professor of Turkish Language and Literature, researcher at the Academy of Athens; involved in the preparation of Turkish textbooks for minority elementary school children; Greek; female]

A special and deliberately low-quality, retrogressive educational policy had been established for minority kids. It was as if the government wanted to keep the youth and children of this community uneducated and with very little knowledge of Greek.

All minority affairs were under the supervision and partial control of the so-called Bureaus of Political Affairs (Grafeia Politikon Ypotheseon), which were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, they were in closer cooperation, and more frequent interaction, with KYP (the Greek Central Intelligence Service) – later renamed EYP (National Intelligence Service) – than with the Foreign Office. KYP/EYP has always followed minority activities very closely and with suspicion. In fact, until a few years ago, the intelligence service used to keep an eye on almost every activity and initiative, even state-sponsored ones, that had to do with minority. I myself, with my own eyes, observed that, when I was in Thrace for a minority-related conference. The directors of the Bureaus of Cultural-Political Affairs, Mr. Gandas<sup>1</sup> in Xanthi and Mr. Pavlidis in Komotini, who were appointed by the military dictatorship before 1974, are known to have had close ties with EYP. Democratically elected governments kept them in their position, mainly because of their ability to keep the minority under tight control.

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[High-school teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; currently an activist; Minority member; male]

Until very recently, the minority had to deal with many restrictions to their rights. Even getting a driver's license for a car or for a tractor was a problem. You could not get it without a hefty bribe. Often even a bribe would not work.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Emmanouil Gandas is no longer the chief of the Xanthi bureau. He was replaced by a younger bureaucrat in 1998.

[Member of the Greek parliament, cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The government's objective was to make the life of minority members difficult, through a set of discriminatory policies; so difficult, that they would decide to leave Greece. And once they left, many Muslims would lose their citizenship, because of Article 19 of the citizenship code. That was one of the biggest weapons used against the minority.

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[Member of the Xanthi County Assembly; Leading member of the Minority Association of College Graduates; attorney; Minority Member; Male]

I agree that the Greek Government may have been afraid of the consequences of our using our rights to their full extent; but this fear is unjustified: Even if we were to exercise not just the rights recognized by the Lausanne Treaty, but rights that go beyond that framework, for instance the right to self-determination, yes, even then the Greek government would have nothing to fear, for we have never pursued secessionist goals.

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[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

The Greek government decided to minimize what it saw as the threat coming from the minority by taking repressive and oppressive measures against us. Even after the reinstatement, or return, of democracy, in 1974, repression did not stop. For instance, in 1974, the new government appointed Panayiotis Photeas governor of Rhodope County. Photeas was a widely respected person, and was known as a man of honor, but, for seven years, from '74 to '81, he oppressed the minority in a nearly sadistic way! The foreign ministry bureaucrats in charge of minority affairs, particularly the heads of the so-called bureaus of Political Affairs, Mr. Gandas in Xanthi and Mr. Pavlidis in Komotini, were not any different in the way they approached the minority. They were convinced that the only way to deal with us was through repression and intimidation. The Ministry allowed these two bureau chiefs such leeway, that they became autonomous. They could make their own decisions and they did not have to account for their actions.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Until the late '80s, the Greek government was following a strategy of gradually increasing the pressure and restrictions on the Minority.

Among the several oppressive policies, however, the one that was most insulting to the Minority was the government's playing with our identity, and interference with our expression of our identity – our Turkishness.

The Minority was initially reluctant to protest loudly to these policies, but they kept getting more and more oppressive.

The law on the management of our religious foundations (our *wakfs/wakfs*), adopted in the early '80s – a law which, for all practical purposes, did away with their self-management and autonomy, was perhaps "the straw that broke the camel's back". It was after the passage of this law that the High Council of the Minority<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It was later renamed "Advisory Council of the Minority".

was formed, and the leaders of our community began to plan a set of firm responses to the oppressive policies.

I, as the chief executive of a minority-inhabited subdistrict at the time, became one of the first members of this High Council. The government was opposed to the formation of the Council and tried to dissuade Minority leaders from joining it. In my case, for example, they attempted to remove me from my position, but they did not succeed.

While we were beginning to shape our response to the government policies, the government came up with yet another decision that would be damaging to our community: A huge open-air prison was to be built in Thrace, on large chunks of agricultural land, more than 90% of which owned by Minority members, that were to be expropriated.

This was, clearly, a measure to seize our land and to put dangerous criminals in our vicinity. It was absolutely unacceptable, and an issue on which protests could easily be organized.

We planned demonstrations, marches, mass "sit-downs", in other words, types of protests that were within the limits of legality and frequently used by other groups in other occasions in Greece as well as in other European countries.

Yet, that our protests were lawful did not really matter to the police. They tried very hard to prevent every protest that we organized. Of course they could not stop all our activities, but in many instances they did not hesitate to violate the laws restricting their power in order to hinder our legal protests.

In addition, the local bureaucrats working for the Central Government abused the wide discretion they had been given on such issues as registering title deeds in real-estate transactions. One of the oppressive and discriminatory measures of the Central Government was to deny registration for 90% of title deeds, in which at least one party was a Minority member, but to accept 10% of them. Whose application would fall within this 10% was determined by the local bureaucrats. The bureaucrats would use this power given to them to receive bribes or to torment the applicants by first giving them hope and then disappointing them.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

Beginning in 1967, when the military junta took over the government, State policies regarding minority affairs became increasingly oppressive, and, as a result, pushed the Minority to extreme positions.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

With respect to Minority issues, the policies that were employed by the Greek government until the early nineties were **wrong**. There is no other way to put it. They were wrong both for moral reasons and for practical reasons.

Those policies were not really based on laws. Almost all the laws regarding Minority affairs were fine. They were not discriminatory. What was going on was that a small number of powerful local bureaucrats would interpret these laws in a distorted way, they would act arbitrarily and would often ignore what they did not like in the laws. These bureaucrats were fervent nationalists who would justify their behavior on nationalistic grounds, and so the central government was reluctant to challenge them.



So, these bureaucrats, with the tacit approval of the central government, would implement a set of discriminatory measures against the Minority. The goal was to toughen the living conditions of the Muslims so they would consider emigrating. But while the local bureaucrats were tacitly given the permission to apply these discriminatory measures, they were also given the discretion not to enforce them in cases they deemed it appropriate not to. Having been given such wide discretion and with no accountability, the local bureaucrats, not surprisingly, would abuse their discretion by making it a means to collect bribes. So, the discriminatory measures were never enforced 100%.

In addition to these measures, the only other policy aimed at addressing the Minority problem, until 1990, was encouraging economic investment in Thrace. The assumption was that economic progress would reduce inter-communal tensions and that it would make Minority members content with their situation. That assumption, of course, proved to be false, and these economic policies never had the desired result. Instead, the discontent of the Minority continued, and was exploited by people like Sadik Ahmet and other demagogues.

### *5. What lead the Greek Government to adopt a new set of policies since 1990-91?*

[Advisor to the alternate foreign minister on Greek-Turkish relations and minority affairs; leading member of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly; Greek; Female]

PASOK<sup>3</sup> had a nationalistic orientation throughout the 70s and 80s. Although not totally against the European Union, and the inclusion of Greece in it, PASOK's position on Europe was ambivalent; it was inconsistent.

Now, however:

PASOK has endorsed an unequivocal "European Orientation". This is the general consensus not only within PASOK, but among the vast majority of Greek citizens, as well.

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education in charge of "intercultural" programs, including minority education; Greek; Female]

The will and determination of George Papandreou, both when he was Minister of Education, and currently as alternate foreign minister, to improve the conditions of the minority and reduce its problems played a crucial role in the recent policy changes.

Also, the resistance coming from the Greek majority to such reforms diminished significantly recently. The "Turk" is no longer the number-one enemy.

<sup>3</sup> PASOK: Panhellenic Socialist Movement; founded by Andreas Papandreou in 1974; came to power in 1981 after a huge election victory.

The "Albanian" is seen as more dangerous, as a more serious threat to most people's security and safety right now.

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[Professor of international relations at Panteion University; former employee at the ministry of foreign affairs; Greek; Male]

After the publication of the 1991 State Department Human Rights Report, which was extremely critical of Greece with respect to the situation of the Muslim minority, it became clear to the Greek foreign ministry that the "Minority Problem" would be a major headache at every international forum. The Minority Problem was clearly "bad for our image". A series of meetings and discussions took place at the ministry to examine this issue and to decide how to handle it.

The main question asked was:

"How can we project a better image internationally as far as the Western Thrace minority is concerned?"

That was exactly how the question was put. In other words, the problem was regarded NOT as a civil-rights issue, nor as an ethical, moral, humanitarian issue, but merely as an image issue.

A special task-force was formed under the supervision of the NATO-OSCE desk at the foreign ministry. The main goal of the task-force was to formulate solution proposals. These were to be ready by July '91, when the OSCE Human Dimension meeting was to take place.

Greece had already signed the OSCE Paris Charter in November 1990. That Charter emphasized, among other things, respect for human and cultural rights to people belonging to national and ethnic minorities.

The then foreign minister of Greece, Andonis Samaras, though reluctantly, had accepted that Greece had to adjust its image and policies to the Paris Charter.

The task force prepared a paper and presented it to the foreign minister. The newly-appointed deputy foreign minister, Virginia Tsouderou, who was in charge of minority policies, was also briefed by the task force.

Upon her decision, the paper was distributed to ambassadors at the most important foreign missions, and was also given to Zaharakis the then chief diplomat in charge of Minority Policies.

The main conclusion of the task force, accepted by every person briefed, was that there had to be some substantial changes at the policies concerning the minority; changes that would be accepted internationally as significant and positive.

At that time, one journalist, Kyra Adam, who had reported extensively on the problems of the Minority had started emphasizing the minority's ethnic diversity, describing it as "the aggregate of three ethnic groups": People of Turkish origin, Pomaks, Gypsies/Roma.

The then Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor, Loukas Tsillas (also newly appointed), showed a special interest in this issue. In the meetings he held with Foreign Ministry officials, he suggested that this description be a part of the official Greek position.

In these meetings three options were discussed:

(a) To continue with the old policy of limiting human rights for the minority and keeping it under tight control;

- (b) To make some marginal changes in that policy that would improve Greece's image abroad;
- (c) (The option proposed by the task force for the minority policies) to radically change the minority policies and adopt a new approach, that would be based on these two concepts:

Isonomia → Equality before the law

Isopoliteia → Equal citizenship rights.

This change was necessary, it was suggested, in order to stop the dangerous process through which the Minority was becoming a tool, a pawn, of the Turkish government. The Turkish government should not be able to use the Minority problems in the international forums to embarrass Greece and neutralize its criticisms regarding human rights violations in Turkey.

This third option prevailed in these meetings and subsequently was adopted, together with the new approach to the Minority's composition, as the new official policy.

There was an OSCE meeting in July 1991 in which Greece participated with a large group of officials. That meeting was the perfect opportunity for Greece to announce the new minority policy. And that is exactly what the Greek delegation did, and received a very positive response from the other participants. Greece's image had started to improve.

In September (or October) 1991 there was another OSCE meeting in Russia. There, Tsouderou, who already had a good reputation in Europe, openly accepted the view that governments could criticize each other on human rights issues.

In that meeting, civil society groups from the Muslim minority also sent a high-profile delegation, led by Dr. Sadik Ahmet, a member of the Greek Parliament, and the nationalistic leader of the Minority at that time. It was a "common secret" (widely known but never explicitly admitted) that his delegation had received financial support from Turkey to go to the meeting. Dr. Ahmet in the meeting said that despite the announcement of the new policy, the conditions in Thrace for the minority deteriorated since Tsouderou was appointed. Thrace, he said, was being turned into a "repressive police state".

This came as a surprise to the foreign ministry officials in the Minority policy task force. They inquired into the conditions in Thrace, and found out that the local government officials were not only following the old policy, but that they had intensified some restrictive, repressive measures, probably with the tacit support of Mrs. Tsouderou.

Mr. Tsillas asked for an exhaustive catalogue of problems that the minority faces in Thrace. The "secret funds" for the task force were raised from DRS. 2 million to 50 million.

The secretary-general of the Ministry, Mr. Zaharakis, had a very nationalistic approach to the minority issues. And as someone who had collaborated with the military dictatorship in the past, he did not have the background that was conducive for a radical rights-and-freedoms-extending change in the minority policies. He, therefore, decided to adopt a policy of only minor changes.

Meanwhile Mrs. Tsouderou had developed an interest in the social situation of women in the minority. She was thinking that by giving more rights to minority women, by introducing programs that would improve their situation in the family and in their community, the minority's traditional isolation would be replaced by a more open attitude. The minority thus would modernize and it would more easily integrate into the mainstream society. The problem with this idea was that it did not take into account the suspicion and distrust of the minority toward any measure imposed by the Greek government, without first consulting with minority leaders; or even minority women intellectuals, in this case. A plan was being developed about the women of the minority without involving anyone representing them in the process.

The OSCE meeting in Warsaw in 1993 was very important in the development of the new approach toward the Minority. Turkey, in that meeting, attacked Greece by severely criticizing its treatment of the "Turkish-Muslim" minority: It raised

- the problem regarding the appointment of Muftis;
  - the problems in Minority's education, especially the unilateral decision of the Ministry of Education to prepare Turkish textbooks and impose them on minority primary schools;
  - the Article 19 of the Greek citizenship code, and the problem of "stateless people";
- and, of course,
- the issue of identity, and Greece's reluctance to recognize the "Turkishness" of the minority.

At the parallel meeting of NGOs or civil-society organizations, Greece received harsh criticism from Western Thrace Minority ex-patriate/diaspora organizations, namely from the Organization of Solidarity with the Western Thrace Turks, and the Western Thrace Turkish Association of Germany.

The most substantial changes to the Minority policies began as soon as Simitis won the elections of 1996 and appointed Mr. Rozakis as deputy minister in charge of minority affairs.

The Isonomia-Isopoliteia approach became the unequivocal and only approach of the State. Although the government did have to make some concessions to nationalistic critics (like "Network 21"<sup>4</sup>), by sacrificing Rozakis, it managed to introduce most of the necessary changes that were required in order for "Isonomia-Isopoliteia" to prevail.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

What has changed is not the policy itself, but the way it is implemented. The ultimate and primary objective of the Greek government has not changed. That objective is and has always been assimilation, or basically reducing our community's size and strength here to the point that we just disappear. (The more we assimilate the more we become part of the majority society, which indirectly means reduction of the size and strength of our community)

The basic parameters for this recent superficial change was decided in late 1989, during the "Ecumenical" coalition government. It was about the same time that ethnic Greeks, the Black Sea/Pontian Greeks, from the Soviet Union had started migrating to Greece in large numbers. The same government decided to settle a significant number of these ethnic Greeks (known as "Palinnostountes" -- people returning to their homeland -- and "Rossopontioi" -- Russian Pontians) to Thrace, apparently in order to reduce the proportion of Turks in the Thracian population. This is another indication that the Greek State does not trust the Minority and seeks to weaken or neutralize it.

Since then, the Greek government appears to no longer want minority members to leave Thrace. That is no longer necessary, for, as far as their proportion goes, they are not seen as a serious threat anymore.

<sup>4</sup> An association, functioning like a think tank, advocating an introvert nationalistic policy and an unyielding and assertive approach to Turkey, "the main threat to Greece". The members of this network are nationalists from every hue of the political spectrum, and from various professions. Some of its members are quite influential in the media and academia.

But, although the goal to make us leave may have lost its significance, for those of us who insist to remain here, the Greek government's goal to assimilate us is still as important as it was in the past.

The recent emphasis and repeated mention of the three distinct identities is, perhaps paradoxically, a tactic to make assimilation easier: It is easier to assimilate a fragmented group, one divided into small parts, than one unified national minority.

Even the government's recently adopted policies that are --undeniably-- beneficial to the minority can be easily attributed to the goal to assimilate us: For instance, the new attempts to improve education, to bring development and modernity to predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas, and initiatives like these, are all aimed at assimilating the Minority into the Greek society.

[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

A clear sign of the policy changes was the visit of the then prime minister Mitsotakis to Thrace in 1991, and the conciliatory statements he made in that visit.

But why did he feel the need for that visit? Perhaps because he needed the support and the votes of the Minority in the next election? In a close race between New Democracy<sup>5</sup> and PASOK Minority votes would matter a lot. They could determine the winner.

Greece's policy for the minority has been a "state policy", a national policy, a policy above party differences. Thus, the change of government in 1993 did not change the minority policy.

The socialists in Greece have introduced and implemented policies that have nothing to do with socialism. PASOK's approach to the minority after 1993 was no exception.

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

It is true that the government has softened its approach to the Minority recently. There are several reasons for that:

First, government officials realized that if Greece wanted to be a regular member of the European Union, it was necessary to improve its policies for the Minority. Otherwise, Greece would have to face constant criticism and even condemnation. It would have been more difficult for Greece to be included in the next stages of European integration.

Second, the policymakers evaluated the past policies from a rational perspective and concluded that these policies had not yielded the desired results.

Third, they realized how harmful it could be if they let the policies be influenced by national chauvinism.

Besides, discrimination against, and repression of, the Minority was never beneficial to the interests of the central government in Athens. It never served the *national* interest. What it served was the *local* interest of

<sup>5</sup> Nea Demokratia (New Democracy) is the most important right-of-the-center, conservative party in Greece. In 1991 New Democracy was in power and led by Mr. Mitsotakis.

some *local* centers of power. There was never any justification for the worries of the Greek government regarding the Minority. But the representatives of these local interests in Athens – like certain members of the Greek Parliament<sup>6</sup> from Thrace – and people who make a living by nationalistic fearmongering try to keep these worries alive.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The positive changes did not start in 1990, but in 1993-94. At least that was when these changes, and their positive effect, began to be felt in the region.

One factor that is often overlooked when examining the recent changes in the Minority policies is the political worldview and personal mentality of the current Prime Minister, Costas Simitis. He was educated in Germany, spent a big portion of his life there, and has apparently internalized some values of the German and European way of life. He has adopted a European approach to problem-solving. In addition, unlike some of his leftist-populist colleagues, he is a true social-democrat. He truly values democracy and human rights and freedoms.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

It was the "ecumenical government", the wide-based, multi-party coalition government of 1989-90, that first came to the realization that the Greek State's approach to the Minority has to change radically. The leaders of the largest political parties, PASOK [the Socialists], New Democracy [the conservatives], and KKE [The Communist Party of Greece] came up with the general framework of a new Minority policy. All policies since then to improve the conditions of the Minority, to expand its freedoms and, more importantly, to reform its education, came as a result of this new framework.

After the end of the Cold War and the opening-up of Eastern Europe, the "ecumenical government" also saw that Thrace, as a region and as a location, had gained a huge economic and strategic potential; a potential that would be beneficial not just for the residents of Thrace, but for the entire Greece.

But Thrace had to have stability; in other words, it had to be free of troubles, and free of tensions, to use this potential. So the Minority problem had to be addressed in such a way that would satisfy all the involved parties. The then government decided, correctly in my view, that for the good of Thrace, for the good of Greece, for a bright, prosperous future for both the region and the whole country, Minority discontent, inter-communal tensions, and government-minority disputes should end, or, at least, they should subside significantly. The research and analyses that lead to this conclusion were presented, in a very effective and concise way, in a book published in 1995 by the Academy of Athens<sup>7</sup>.

The best way to achieve this objective would be by encouraging the Minority's integration to the mainstream society. Integration had to be made easier and more attractive for Thracian Muslims.

<sup>6</sup> He implies the deputy speaker of the Greek Parliament, Mr. Sgouridis (PASOK) from Xanthi.

<sup>7</sup> X. Zolotas, A. Angelopoulos & I. Pasmazoglou (editors). *Η Ανάπτυξη της Θράκης: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές*. [The Development of Thrace: Challenges and Prospects], Athens: An Academy of Athens Publication, 1995. (Xenophon Zolotas, the main editor of this book, was the Prime Minister of the "ecumenical government").

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**6. What was the role of European international/inter-governmental organizations?**

**--EU --OSCE --Council of Europe**

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of a human rights NGO; Greek, Female]

Greece now wants to achieve full integration into the EU, and intends not to fall behind while EU is moving toward the next steps of integration.

To accomplish this, it is imperative to raise its standards of human rights protection to a level acceptable to the EU. Greece has to take care of all the remaining problems pertaining to human rights.

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[Advisor to the Foreign Minister and political science professor at Panteion Univ., Greek, Female]

The Council of Europe (CoE) played a very crucial role in government's decision to abrogate Article 19 of the Greek Law on Citizenship. Greece had to unburden itself from this problem before assuming the rotating presidency of the CoE, in 1998.

External pressure has generally been very important in changes of this nature.

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[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, in the division of "intercultural education"; Greek, female]

With respect to minority affairs, Greece has faced, since the early 90s, an intense external pressure. Plus, Greece has signed several international treaties that broadened the rights and freedoms of the minority groups in this country.

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[Professor of international relations at Panteion Univ. and former Foreign Ministry employee; Greek, male]

OSCE and the processes within its framework, together with the conventions and other documents signed by the member-states, including Greece, played an important role as a source of external pressure on this country. This pressure prompted the government to change its minority policies. Several of the policy changes were adjusted and scheduled taking into account the meeting of OSCE, and the motivating factor for the changes was to avoid embarrassment or harsh criticism at these meetings. The "human dimension" meetings and the NGO meetings held parallel to the intergovernmental ones were especially instrumental in applying pressure on Greece.

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[Senior assistant to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

The Council of Europe has focused its activities on minorities much more in the Post-Cold War era than before. It has become the number one issue of this organization. As a result, the issue of the Muslim minority in Greece has recently come up more frequently in the organs of CoE than it did in the past.

But the appeals from Muslim minority members to the European Court of Human Rights [a CoE organ] have been very few in number compared with the total number of cases handled by this court.

The CoE Assembly [another organ] periodically sends parliamentarians to Thrace to do fact-finding and to examine the conditions there. The visiting parliamentarians later submit a report to the Assembly describing their observations. We were quite please to see that the new report prepared by Glotov and Err, regarding the Muslim minority is very positive. It talks of "great improvement".

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[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The reforms in Greece's minority could not have happened without the pressure from the European Union. Greece has signed many international treaties that extend the human rights and cultural rights of its citizens. It has put itself under the obligation to implement these treaties. And if it did fulfill that obligation, most problems concerning our community would be resolved.

Nevertheless, these treaties and what they provide for are in conflict with the national policies and with what Greece perceives as its national interest. So, the government is trying to implement these treaties only to the extent that it would not endanger "the national interest". When these treaties clash with the national interest or national policy, the latter always wins.

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[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

Notwithstanding all the international commitments of Greece, notwithstanding the new conventions and treaties signed by the Greek government, the State-Minority relations are still regulated by the Lausanne treaty. All these other documents are of marginal importance. There is not really a new legal order in the relations between the Minority and the Government.

Actually, this is not necessarily a bad thing, for the Lausanne Treaty's articles on Minorities provide an adequate legal framework for the protection of our collective and cultural rights. The real problem is that these articles have never been fully implemented. Now, they are being implemented better than in the past, yet still not fully.

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[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

When examining the recent changes, it is important to note the influence of the European Union, for, of all the European inter-governmental organizations it is the EU whose pressure on the government and whose incentives and programs was the most beneficial to us. The weaknesses of the Greek government's approach to the Minority became clear within the European framework, and the EU helped Greece correct its policies. EU's role is particularly important in the economic improvements that took place in the last decade. The role of the other organizations, such as OSCE and CoE, was insignificant compared to the EU's.

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[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Greece had been criticized in the international for a regarding its minority policies so many times that the Government must have realized it had to do something to correct this situation. In addition, Greece signed and ratified several new European treaties, and complying with them necessitated some significant improvements in the Minority's human and cultural rights situation.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Why did the Greek State decide to change its Minority policies? Well, the primary reason for this change is the pressure that came from the European Union, and, to a lesser extent, from OSCE and CoE. I think that the reason why these organizations applied pressure on Greece is their approach to the candidate-states from Central and Eastern Europe. European organizations strongly demanded that these former socialist countries improve their human and minority rights situation in order to be accepted. It would have been hypocritical if they did nothing when a State that is already a member violated the human and minority rights of a group of its citizens in such a flagrant way.

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[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The future of the Minority depends very much on Europe and the European Union. And, given the attention paid by the EU to the protection of minority rights, I can say that the future is good for our community. Better days are ahead for us.

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[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

The international treaties and agreements that Greece has signed and/or ratified recently, for example, the Framework Agreement for the Protection of National Minorities or the OSCE documents pertaining to national minorities, put the Government under the obligation to accept that citizens have only the right to self-identification, but only *individual* self-identification. In other words, self-identification, the right of a person to call himself or herself Greek, Pomak, Turk, etc., is an *individual human right*, NOT a *collective right*. So these European treaties do not give some minority members the right to call the whole Minority "Turkish", although they may identify themselves – and only themselves – as "Turkish".

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[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

Just as in many other issues, on the issue of minority rights as well, Greece had to adjust its policies to the treaties and conventions of Europe to which she had acceded. Continuing the old policies would have been a violation of those treaties.

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### *7. What was the role of Greek (and transnational) NGOs, especially of Human Rights Organizations?*

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human rights NGO; Greek, Female]

NGOs and civil society organizations that advocate pluralism, pluralism even on "national issues", have emerged just recently, but began to have an influence on political debates. They made their views heard.

Take for instance "The Front of Logic against Nationalism" (It includes journalists, writers, academics, and former diplomats). This is a group that often confronts the "Network 21", a nationalist organization.

The Helsinki Citizens Assembly is a transnational European NGO that has been active since the early 90s, and influential, especially among intellectuals.

The Assembly is sponsoring a multiculturalism-based project called "Minorities in the Balkans" that involves"

(a) Cultural "Bridge-building" activities; and

(b) Efforts to understand minorities in their own context, and vis-à-vis their constant relationship with the majority – not examining their culture "in the abstract", i.e. without paying attention to this relational aspect.

[Consultant/Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professor at Panteion University; Greek, Female]

The role of domestic NGOs in pressuring the Greek government into changing its minority policies has been very small, their exaggerated claims notwithstanding.

[Researcher on Greek-Turkish relations at a center affiliated with the Academy of Athens; Greek; Female]

The only Greece-based human-rights NGO that has had some influence on the decision-makers in minority affairs is the Greek Helsinki Monitor. The reports and alerts issued by this organization and distributed throughout Europe and the world are a cause for concern for the government.

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs; a specialist on minority issues; Greek; Male]

In addition to NGOs and IGOs, in the late eighties, foreign researchers, too, began to pay attention to the problems of the Muslim Minority. The most influential of them was Hugh Poulton, who first visited Greece to learn about the minority in 1989. Through him and his writings, the Minority Rights Group also became interested in that minority.

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates)<sup>6</sup>; Minority member; Male]

The associations and organizations of the Minority, though small in number, have played quite a significant role in mobilizing it. They are also playing a role in educating the community on some important issues and in improving its cultural level.

Among minority associations the Association of College Graduates is arguably the most important. That is because:

- (1) It is the only association that is recognized by the government and that can organize activities legally. The other associations, due to the name issue, cannot legally be engaged in any activities.
- (2) Its members are the most educated and most influential people of our community.

We have a little more than 300 members – a very small number for a community of more than 100,000. And not all of them are graduates of a regular, four-year university. The ones who *are* are about 250.

We have two subsidiary organizations: The Women's Branch and the Team of Young Academics, our youth branch. We also have a kindergarten team that consists of volunteers who take care of and educate children at kindergarten age, a children's club and a knitting, sewing and needlework class.

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

One has to be very careful when one assesses the role of NGOs in Western Thrace. Some Human Rights NGOs that have shown interest in the situation here have been receiving money from questionable sources and may even be controlled by the CIA. I am very suspicious of Helsinki Watch, for example.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The pressure from the NGOs, especially Greek NGOs, was undeniably helpful.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

NGOs like the Helsinki Watch did have an effect on the policy changes, but their effect was too small to be compared to the impact and influence of the European inter-governmental organizations.

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

The Greek human rights NGOs, especially the Greek Helsinki Monitor, with their exaggerated, overblown criticism of government policies have actually done more harm than good to the Minority. How can they justify mentioning the killing of dozens of people and the forced evacuation of thousands of villagers in Turkey in only a couple of pages in their reports – without even giving the names of those killed or

<sup>6</sup> The name of that association in Turkish is *Yüksek Tahsilliler Derneği*. "Yüksek tahsil" means higher education. So the literal translation of the association's name would be "The association of those who received higher education".

displaced, while describing with all the minute details, in dozens of pages, every minor incident, like harassment at the border or refusal of a license, that takes place in Greece? They have access to all this information and they can publicize it *because* we are a democratic and free country.

Because of the Greek Helsinki Monitor's exaggerations, we [the Foreign Ministry] are no longer receptive to their criticisms. And they are losing their credibility abroad.

I wish they had a more constructive approach, because then we could work together on some problems of the Minority. Then the minority could really benefit from their human right monitoring.

### ***8. What was the role of the Developments in the Balkans?***

[Professor of International relations at Panteion University; former employee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Greek; Male]

In that period, especially in '92 - '93, Greece was very concerned about, and paying a great deal of attention to the conditions of the Greek minority in Albania. Greeks in that country were also engaged in a political struggle to have their rights recognized and respected by the Albanian government. In order for the Greek government to be convincing and effective in the international fora when it raised the issue of the Albanian Greeks, it had to show that it was respectful of minority rights within Greece.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

After the end of the Cold War and the opening-up of Eastern Europe, the "ecumenical government" also saw that Thrace, as a region and as a location, had gained a huge economic and strategic potential; a potential that would be beneficial not just for the residents of Thrace, but for the entire Greece.

But Thrace had to have stability; in other words, it had to be free of troubles, and free of tensions, to use this potential. So the Minority problem had to be addressed in such a way that would satisfy all the involved parties.

### ***9. What was the role of the protests (and struggle) of the Minority members?***

***What was "behind" it?***

***What were their goals?***

[Researcher on Greek-Turkish relations at a center affiliated with the Academy of Athens; Greek; Female]

The political mobilization of the minority was, of course, a significant factor. The minority was mobilized as a whole – it was a total mobilization—and the government had to pay attention to them.

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

It is unfortunate that the late Sadik Ahmet became the symbol and the central figure of our community's struggle. Dr. Ahmet, with the support he received from the Ozal government, the right-wing nationalists<sup>9</sup> of Turkey, and even the United States, adopted extreme positions and a jingoistic discourse. He did indefensible things. He raised excessive demands. He, therefore, had a negative, rather than positive, impact in our struggle.

In addition, he and his team became a very authoritarian group of leaders, intolerant to opposition. There are also some credible rumors that Dr Ahmet was used by CIA, MIT [The Turkish National Intelligence Organization] and EYP [the Greek National Intelligence Service] – all at the same time! – and I have little doubt that he had ties with some infamous people, like Abdullah Catli, who were the connecting links of the Turkish organized crime world and the deep, dark forces of the Turkish State. According to another rumor, Catli visited Western Thrace in the early 90s and was Dr. Ahmet's guest when he was here. That the frustrated Minority was mobilized by Sadik Ahmet and his team was our misfortune.

Not only were our leaders the wrong kind of people to lead our protests, but they were also motivated by the wrong kind of ideology. Promoting Turkish nationalism in Western Thrace is just like promoting Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. It is inappropriate, because it inevitably prompts too negative a reaction both from the government and from the majority community.

Nowadays, on the other hand, we have a leadership that has sold out; one that is eager to please both Greece and Turkey, and, at the same time, both nationalists and progressives.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

These protests were led by a Turkish nationalistic center, in the core of which was, and is, the Consulate. Around the Consulate orbit the Minority leaders who receive its support and are, to a large extent, dependent on it, financially and ideologically. On Minority issues, these leaders generally reflect and promote the positions that were formulated in Turkey. However, it would be a mistake to describe them as totally controlled by Turkey. After all, they are more familiar with Minority issues than some bureaucrats in Ankara, and we could presume that the official Turkish positions are shaped with the heavy input and influence of these nationalistic Minority activists. There is a so-called "Advisory Commission" in the Minority, a commission composed of many of the influential and pro-Turkey Minority leaders: Mayors, members of the Greek Parliament, newspaper owners, Minority association presidents, etc. This Commission determines the "official" Minority position on issues, speaks with one voice, and its voice becomes the main voice of the Muslim community. Alternative voices are often too weak to compete with this "official" voice.

I don't think that the protests these Minority leaders organized and the social turbulence they created in the '80s and early '90s contributed favorably to the recent changes and improvements. On the contrary, one could argue that if these protests had not taken place, the changes would have happened more quickly and more smoothly.

<sup>9</sup> The so-called "Idealists" (Ülkücüler), supporters and members of the Nationalist Action Party (its Turkish acronym is MHP).

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The law on the management of our religious foundations (our *wakfs/wakfs*), adopted in the early '80s – a law which, for all practical purposes, did away with their self-management and autonomy, was perhaps "the straw that broke the camel's back". It was after the passage of this law that the High Council of the Minority<sup>10</sup> was formed, and the leaders of our community began to plan a set of firm responses to the oppressive policies.

I, as the chief executive of a minority-inhabited subdistrict at the time, became one of the first members of this High Council. The government was opposed to the formation of the Council and tried to dissuade Minority leaders from joining it. In my case, for example, they attempted to remove me from my position, but did not succeed.

While we had begun to shape our response to the government policies, the government came up with yet another decision that would be damaging to our community: A huge open-air prison was to be built in Thrace, on large chunks of agricultural land, more than 90% of which owned by Minority members, that were to be expropriated.

This was, clearly, a measure to seize our land and to put dangerous criminals in our vicinity. It was absolutely unacceptable, and an issue on which protests could easily be organized.

We planned demonstrations, marches, and mass "sit-downs", in other words, types of protests that were within the limits of legality and frequently used by other groups in other occasions in Greece as well as in other European countries.

Yet, that our protests were lawful did not really matter to the police. They tried very hard to prevent every protest that we organized. Of course they could not stop all our activities, but in many instances they did not hesitate to violate the laws restricting their power in order to hinder our legal protests.

In the case of the open-air prison, the protests worked: Even though the government never admitted that it changed its plan, the construction of the prison stopped. There has been no sign in the last few years that the government intends to complete the construction.

### ***10. What is your opinion regarding the opening of the "Restricted Zone"?***

[Consultant/Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professor at Panteion University; Greek, Female]

When the "Vertical Highways" to Egnatia Highway are completed, this restricted zone and the whole policy of restrictions in that area will be obsolete and irrelevant.

[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

<sup>10</sup> It was later renamed "Advisory Council of the Minority".

There are no longer checkpoints controlling entry and exit to this area [Ehinos is within the so-called "Restricted Zone], and this is one of the most visible changes that happened recently.

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### ***11. What do you think about the recent educational reforms for the Minority?***

[Advisor to the Alternate Foreign Minister and founding member of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, a human Rights NGO; Greek, Female]

The quota, or "proportionality", system that would help the Minority applicants in the university entrance exams has been a very important step forward.

Another significant step (that is being taken) has to do with the introduction of multicultural/intercultural education at the elementary schools.

The government has now begun to appoint teachers familiar with the basic tenets of "intercultural" education to Minority schools. In addition, a new curriculum based on intercultural education has been prepared for minority kids.

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[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education working in the bureau of "inter-cultural education"; Greek; Female]

The Quota or "Proportionality" ("Posostosis", in Greek) System, according to which 0.5 % of the nation-wide number of students to be accepted in state-run universities after the entrance exams is reserved for the Muslim Minority, has already rendered positive results. It is working.

In 1997, there were 334 positions reserved to Muslims; there were 126 minority applicants and 114 of the entered college.

In 1998, there were 464 positions reserved to Minority students; there were 124 applicants and 112 of them entered college.

*[More details are provided in the Education Ministry document]*

This doesn't seem impressive at first glance, but it is a big improvement in comparison to the pre-proportionality situation, when there were ZERO students from the Minority attending Greek universities.

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[Professor at the Education Dept. of the University of Athens; a framer of the new "intercultural" program for Minority children; Greek; Female]

The new educational policies for Minority kids, adopted by the Ministry of Education, are based on the principle of interculturalism (we do not use the term "multiculturalism"), and anti-racism, as formulated by Barry Troyna<sup>11</sup>.

We have noticed with pleasure that the Turkish consulate is in favor of these new policies and supportive of them. Unlike its approach in the past, when it used to encourage self-isolation for the Minority, Turkey now apparently is encouraging Muslims to integrate into the Greek mainstream, but without being assimilated.

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[High-school teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

The new approach of the Greek State toward minority education has also had an impact on the issue of Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey: Turkey has responded constructively to this new approach by sending textbooks that did not include anything Greek officials would find offensive or inappropriate. And the Greek Ministry of Education did not reject these new books outright, but decided to examine them carefully and it will hopefully distribute them to our schools in the near future. This is a very significant improvement when you think that a few years ago the Greek State tried to force upon us Turkish textbooks prepared by Greeks in Greece.

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[Member of the Myki municipal assembly; Journalist; Minority member; Male]

The educational level of the minority is very low, compared to the Greek residents of Thrace. That's why improvement in education must be the primary and most important goal of any new general approach to our community.

But, in order to improve the educational level of the minority, you have to improve the quality of teachers, and the quality of education the teachers receive. The Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki has never been able to prepare teachers with adequate knowledge and skills. The graduates from this academy are supposed to be able to teach Turkish, but they cannot teach Turkish or any subject in Turkish. They don't know enough Turkish to begin with. The academy tends to accept students who graduated from medreses (madrassas – Muslim religious schools), where Turkish is not taught well. The institute's preference for medrese graduates has an ulterior motive; they don't want teachers to be able to teach our kids Turkish well. Teachers of Turkish classes and of subjects taught in Turkish must be graduates NOT of a "special" academy, but of a full-fledged, regular, department of Turkish Language and Literature – just like the ones in Turkey. Incidentally, the graduates of such departments in Turkey should also be accepted, without any reservation based solely on the fact that they studied in Turkey.

In addition, many of the existing primary and secondary schools should be expanded. New buildings and new classrooms should be added to them. In their current state schools are too small to adequately serve the student population. This is especially true and visible in my village, in Kentauros (Ketenlik in Turkish). The school is way too small for the number of students there.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

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<sup>11</sup> Barry Troyna is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Warwick. Amongst his publications in the field of antiracist education are *Racism, Education and the State* (Croom Helm, 1986) which he wrote with Jenny Williams; *Racial Inequality in Education* (Tavistock, 1987); and with Bruce Carrington, *Education, Racism and Reform* (Routledge, 1990). His latest book *Racism in Children's Lives* with Richard Hatcher is published in 1992 by Routledge.



The new policy aimed at improving the quality of education for the Minority, though better than the old policy of intentionally providing low quality education, has, I suspect, the unmentioned objective of assimilating our kids.

Now, as regards college education, we have observed that the government has accelerated and facilitated the recognition process for degrees and diplomas acquired abroad, a process that is managed by an governmental organization called DIKATSA. This is especially important for the minority youth, many of whom has studied and is studying at universities in Turkey. After a long struggle that involved hunger strikes, a struggle I actively participated in years ago, we can now say that the Greek government has gotten the message and responded appropriately.

Another significant step that needs to be taken in the area of higher education in Greece is allowing the establishment of private universities<sup>12</sup>. My party is in favor of that and has included it in its platform. Such universities would further facilitate the higher education not only of minority youth but of the young people of the whole country. It is because of sterile partisan politics that such a reform is not introduced in the parliament.

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

Together with the recent educational reforms we have also seen an increase in the number of Turkish teachers appointed to our schools: Our schools had only eleven Minority teachers in 1990, while in 1998 they had thirty-six. This is a welcome development.

[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

What the Minority basically wants is to have an autonomous educational system; but that is not possible economically. The Minority could not sustain a sound educational system without the economic and financial support of the Greek government. It does not have enough resources to be able to do so. And by supporting our educational institutions economically, the government, whether we like it or not, gains a say in our education.

[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

For the Minority as a whole, there still needs a lot to be done to improve its conditions, especially in the area of education. And not just primary or secondary education, but higher education as well. The "proportionality" system is a good step in the right direction, but not sufficient. The Democritus University of Thrace also needs to undergo some "mentality" changes. This university, the most important higher education institution in Thrace, should develop a more welcoming, more accommodating attitude toward the Minority. Currently this university is too much influenced by racist worldviews like that of Prof. Xyrotiris.

<sup>12</sup> Even though there are many private institutions that provide higher education in Greece, they are called "Colleges", have a lower status than universities, and their degrees are inferior to those of state universities.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

As regards to education, we see that many of our problems stem from the policies of the Greek Ministry of Education. While it is true that the Ministry is currently trying to introduce some reforms for the Minority education, we notice that it is still reluctant to take bold steps; not much has been done so far. Moreover, some of the steps the Ministry *has* taken under the banner of reform were just steps in the *wrong* direction. Because of the bitter experiences of the past, our Community has developed a deep suspicion toward any policy changes originating from the Ministry of Education. And the recent, timid steps, and the occasional wrong steps, certainly cannot help the Minority overcome that suspicion.

One specific, bold, but easy step to take, without many complications is this: Music and Physical Education should be taught by Turkish teachers in Turkish. English also should be taught by a Turkish teacher. I believe that such a change, that is a reduction of classes taught in Greek and thus achieving parity in the number of classes taught by Turkish and Greek teachers, would be perceived as a clear indication that the Education Ministry was no longer using Minority education as an assimilation tool, and would be welcomed by Minority parents and children alike.

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

What is actually going on since 1991 is that, behind the façade of reforms to improve education, the governments have been implementing a set of policies aimed at undermining the Minority's autonomy in education.

[Former councilor-general of Greece to Istanbul; diplomat formerly in charge of Muslim Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Another important step recently taken by the Greek government was the approval of Turkish textbooks sent by Turkey. These books will be distributed to the Minority schools this summer [summer of '99] and they will begin to be used in the fall semester.

This development indicates two things:

- (1) That the Turkish government has finally got the message that the textbooks it sends to Greece must be free of Turkish nationalistic propaganda, for, otherwise, they will not be approved. That Turkey got this message is quite a welcome development. And
- (2) that Greece is ready to respond constructively to a constructive move from the Turkish side.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

It is true that the government has taken some constructive steps in the area of Minority education.

For example, the Education Ministry approved on March 10, 1999, the Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey.

Also, the Ministry has adopted a program, developed by Dr. Anna Frangoudaki and her team, according to which Greek will be taught to Turkish children as a second language and in a more culture-appropriate

way. Currently Greek is taught to Turkish kids the same way it is taught to Greek kids. But Turkish kids begin school with very little knowledge of Greek, whereas Greek kids already know at that age how to speak Greek, and some of them even how to write in Greek. Frangoudaki's program is going to be very beneficial to our children and we strongly support it.

There is also some progress in the issue of the appointment of minority teachers. Some have already been appointed recently, and there are signs that the Education Ministry nowadays respects prospective Minority teachers' rank on the national list ["Epetirida", in Greek] of teachers to be appointed at public schools. When their turn comes, it seems that they are appointed now.

Another improvement in the area of education has taken place in the foreign university degree recognition process. Minority members who completed their studies abroad, just like all other Greek citizens, have to submit their diplomas and all relevant documents to DIKATSA<sup>13</sup> to be recognized. In the past, the process would move too slowly for Minority members, or DIKATSA would simply reject their application. Now this process appears to have become less painful and faster for Minority applicants, compared to the situation before, of course.

Notwithstanding these positive steps, however, there are still some problems in Minority education, which the government is reluctant to touch. The most serious of them, in my opinion, is the issue of the Turkish teachers, educated by the Greek government at the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki (EPATH). This academy recruits students from religious schools (medreses/ madrassas), where Turkish is poorly taught, and prefers Pomak-speakers to Turkish-speakers. So, students whose Turkish is inadequate in the first place receive low-quality education at EPATH and then are appointed as Turkish teachers at Minority schools. They, therefore, and not surprisingly, cannot teach Turkish well to our kids. This whole system has to change, and it has to change radically.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The educational reforms, especially the "proportionality" system at higher education, aim at the Minority's integration to the mainstream society. Having realized how tough it would be to overcome all the social obstacles, suspicions, and other problems that separates Minority adults from the mainstream society, Greek policymakers decided to focus their integrationist efforts on Minority kids and Minority youth.

One additional step taken in the area of Minority education recently, which has not been well publicized, was the Education Ministry decision to make 4 [out of 10] the minimum passing grade for Muslim schoolchildren who go to Greek public schools. [The normal minimum passing grade for a class in these schools is 4.5 out of 10.] This is another measure that can be characterized as positive discrimination.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

With respect to the Turkish textbook issue, the Turkish and the Greek government have to comply with the 1968 protocol. This protocol only *recommends* that the two governments accept textbooks sent by the other government for Minority education. It does NOT require it. The governments are under NO obligation to accept and endorse textbooks prepared by the other government. If this recommended method, for

<sup>13</sup> The Inter-University Center for the Recognition of Foreign Degrees

whatever reason, does not work the very important need for textbooks at Minority schools could be met by other methods.

This does not mean, of course, that we do not want the recommended method to work. We do; and when both governments recognize each other's sensitivities, the method of receiving minority education textbooks from the neighboring country does work.

The last books sent from Turkey were more reasonable than the ones sent in the past. There are still a few minor problems to be taken care of, and, as soon as they are, the textbooks will be distributed to the Minority schools<sup>14</sup>.

[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

There is still a lot that can be done in the area of education. For example, the Turkish language could be taught at every public school in Thrace, in every grade, as an elective class. Schoolchildren who want to learn Turkish, irrespective of their ethnicity, would be able to take these classes. Such a move could reduce the importance of Minority schools and could convince more Muslim parents to send their kids to public schools, and, thus, it could facilitate the integration of the new generation of the Minority into the Greek society.

But such a reform could only work if Turkish was taught well at public schools. That means that the Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki, which – let's face it – is a failed institution, should be replaced with a real academy that provides high quality education to future teachers who can speak Turkish well and are enthusiastic about teaching Turkish.

## *12. What is your opinion on the abrogation of Article 19?*

[Chief Advisor to the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on Minority issues; Greek; Male]

This problem stemming from Article 19 and its negative consequences have now been taken care of. Every stateless Minority member who lives in Greece and applied for a special identity card has now obtained it. With that card stateless people can now enjoy the rights given to them by international treaties.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority member; Male]

With the settlement of tens of thousands of ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union in Thrace, the Muslims here are no longer seen as a big threat with respect to their proportion in the region's population. So, such a severe and unjust and unjustifiable measure as Article 19 had become unnecessary, and it's easy to understand why they abrogated it now.

[Human Rights Activist; representative of an NGO; Minority Member; Female]

<sup>14</sup> The books were indeed distributed to the Minority schools at the beginning of the fall semester of 1999.

Although Article 19 was abrogated, there are still hundreds of stateless people living in Greece and thousands abroad who lost their citizenship because of this article.

These Muslim minority members did nothing to deserve such a punishment. They are now deprived of many of their rights, and are denied of many services and benefits ordinary citizens take for granted. The special identity cards many – but not all– of them were given recently have enabled them to regain some their basic human rights, but the main injustice has not been addressed. The government now recognizes their rights as stateless people, but that's not enough. They should be given their citizenship, and all the rights that come with it, in other words, their civil rights, back. Those were taken away from them unfairly in the first place.

Article 19's abrogation does not apply retroactively. The only way for the stateless people living in Greece to regain their citizenship is to apply for citizenship as if they were immigrants. And even then, it is not guaranteed that their application will be accepted. A small blemish in their backgrounds, a previous arrest, may be enough for denial.

[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The abrogation of Article 19 is a very good development. Now it is only those Greek citizens who *decide* to renounce their citizenship, and who *explicitly declare* their demand to be stripped of it, that lose their citizenship.

But, we must not forget that a large number of Minority members suffered a lot because of this Article, and that nothing is being planned to address this suffering.

There are some who claim that Article 19 would not have been *this* damaging to the Minority if mayors and other local government leaders from the Minority refused to collaborate with the Greek State. They say that if we had not signed a document certifying the intention of a Minority Member not to return to Greece, that Minority member would not have lost his/her citizenship. But what these critics do not understand is that we would have been removed from office or we would have been punished if we had opted for insubordination and resistance. We would have clearly violated the law. The mayor of Ehinós/Şahin, for example, refused to sign such a document once and was forced to pay a very heavy fine.

By the time the removal-from-citizenship process reached the local government official, the Central Government had already decided to strip a Minority member from his/her citizenship. Our function was to rubber-stamp that decision. It was the local bureaucrats, working for various ministries, who are to blame first and foremost for the arbitrary and excessive use of Article 19: They had been given too much leeway on such issues and they abused it frequently.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

One problem that we dealt with successfully is the "stateless people" issue, that is the problem regarding Muslims who lost their citizenship, who still live in Greece and who are now "stateless". Their number proved to be much smaller than initially estimated. There are only a few hundred Minority members in this status, and their situation is significantly better than it used to be: Most of them have obtained a special

identity card, through which they can enjoy most rights, freedoms, and benefits a citizen can. In addition, by abrogating Article 19 of the Citizenship code, the Government made sure that no more Minority members would lose their citizenship.

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***13. What is your opinion about other changes in Greece's policies for the minority?  
(e.g. lifting of administrative restrictions  
regarding drivers licenses, repair permits, etc.)***

[Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professor at Panteion University; Greek; Female]

The significant economic development in Thrace in the last decade, being the cause of many social changes, is a very important factor.

As economic development occurred in Greece and in Thrace (though, of course, to a significantly less degree), urbanization gained prominence. People from rural areas migrated in large numbers to urban centers. That is the case for the Minority as well. Minority members from villages are now moving to the cities in Thrace. This started late in the minority community but it's gaining speed.

Together with urbanization, we see another phenomenon, which I would call "bourgeoisisation". The proportion and importance of an educated middle class is rising. Minority members are moving from agriculture to the industrial and service sector. They become more educated, more aware of their rights and more aware of what is going on in the world and around this region.

This social shift is going to be even more visible and will touch even the most remote areas of the region, as the "perpendicular axes, or extensions to the Egnatia Highway are being built. In addition to the East-West connections, Thrace and especially its parts with predominantly minority population are going to have an easy and important North-South connection. Better and wider roads will improve the connection of these parts of Thrace with the rest of Greece and with Bulgaria. And this, in turn, will facilitate the integration of the minority into the Greek society and into the European society.

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[Researcher at the Academy of Athens; Professor of Turkish; Greek; Female]

It is only recently that Greece, the Greek Government in particular, has felt the need to address issues regarding groups of people in this country with "other" cultures: "Respect for multiculturalism" is a very new concept in Greece. Programs for foreigners, for immigrants, for "returnees" [ethnically Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union], and, of course, for the Muslim Minority have only recently begun to be considered, planned, and developed. In a booklet published by the EU on xenophobia, in 1993, based on data collected by each member state's official agencies, there was no reference whatsoever with regard to Greece, as if Greece had no foreigners.

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[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

Since the early nineties, the Greek government has gradually recognized, although not explicitly, that the minority members have several parallel identities: A religious identity (Muslim) PLUS an ethnic identity. We see three distinct ethnic identities in the minority population: Turkish, Pomak, Roma. In other words, we see that the Muslim minority consists of people with these three distinct ethnic backgrounds.

But the most important realization for the Greek government was that in order for the Muslims to feel part of the Greek society, they have to be given opportunities; social and economic opportunities; if necessary, extra opportunities. The underlying assumption of the government's current approach to the minority is that the Muslims would be better citizens, NOT if they're scared, but if they are satisfied economically.

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[An influential elder in Ehinios, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

There is a significant improvement in some of our problems created by the past policies of the Government: For instance, getting a driver's license is much easier now. Getting a permit to repair a house or to add an extension has also become easier recently.

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[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The reorganization of municipalities in accordance with the Kapodistrias Plan has overall been beneficial to the minority. The municipal governments now have more power, can receive financial support from the EU for development projects and can engage in bigger, bolder initiatives. And yet, the number of new municipalities formed in predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas is not proportional to the number of municipalities set up in the predominantly Greek areas of Thrace. There are three municipalities created in the predominantly minority parts Rhodope county and one in such areas of Xanthi county. Predominantly Greek areas have more municipalities in both counties.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The government has recently given emphasis on economic development. It has encouraged investments in Thrace, and it has subsidized companies that built industrial plants here. But the main motive for this policy has been the fear that "Greece is losing Thrace". Not concern and empathy for the difficult conditions here, but fear was the motivating force.

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[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

The local administration reform of 1994, which extended decentralization and enhanced self-rule at the county level, although intended for the entire Greece and not just for the Minority, was nevertheless of significant benefit to our community. We were given a say on who the local governors would be, and, in turn, the governors would have to take our concerns into account if they wanted to be elected or to remain in office.

But that did not last long: Eight months after the elected governors took office, all issues having directly to do with the Minority were taken away from the governors' jurisdiction and were given to the "Peripheriarchis", the chief bureaucrat of the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, who is appointed by the Center, and implements the policies designed by the Center. So we were once again disempowered.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

A recent nation-wide reform that had an impact on the Minority is the implementation of the Kapodistrias plan. This plan, put into effect in 1998, restructured the local administration system in Thrace as in the rest of Greece. And, at first glance, it seems to have been beneficial to the Minority. Upon more thorough examination, however, we notice some problems: For instance, in the past there were 2 municipalities and 36 sub-districts [sub-municipalities] in the Rhodope County. In 13 of these administrative divisions, the Minority population was predominant and the elected local administrators (mayors and sub-district chief executives) were Minority members. Today, after the implementation of the Kapodistrias plan, there are 9 municipalities in the same county and 3 sub-districts. The local governments at the sub-district level are weaker under the new plan, whereas the municipalities have been given more power and more resources. Of the nine new municipalities, only three are predominantly Turkish. The three sub-districts are all predominantly Turkish. This is a little unfair, because at least one or two of these sub-districts could have easily been upgraded to municipalities, given that the criterion is population size. They were not, *because* they were predominantly Minority areas.

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[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The efforts to bring economic development to Western Thrace were initiated in the '80s, but these should not be considered among the measures to improve the conditions of the Minority. The governments gave loans, with extremely generous terms, to Greek businessmen – and *only* to Greek businessmen – to invest in Thrace, and, as a result, there has been some economic development in the region. This development, however, had little impact on the Minority. It benefited the Majority, as its actual objective was to stop its emigration to other parts of Greece or abroad.

Another policy designed by the Greek government recently with the Turkish Minority in mind is the settlement of Russian-Pontian Greek immigrants in Thrace. The government is bringing them here, because it wants to keep the Greeks in majority vis-à-vis the Turks.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

There are some improvements on the issue of licenses for Minority physicians and pharmacists. It is easier now for a Turk to get such a license. Plus, I have been informed that some Turkish-owned pharmacies are now allowed to be on night-duty or open on Sundays. It has not been easy to reach this point, but I am glad that we *have* reached it now.

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#### ***14. What is your position/opinion on the issue of the appointment of Muftis?***

[Member of the Greek Parliament; Cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]



Since the early nineties, the Greek Government has been appointing the Muftis, instead of respecting the choice of the believers. Also, in the last two decades, even those who run the religious foundations (the vakifs/wakfs), i.e. the foundations' boards of directors are appointed.

This is one more indication that the Greek State does not trust the Minority. It does not trust the choices the Minority would make; it does not trust the will of the Minority.

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[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

Yes, the new policy regarding the appointment of Muftis is based on a new law passed by the Parliament, but that does not make it legitimate in this community's eyes. There is a saying in Turkish: "Whoever can steal a minaret can also prepare a sheath for it"<sup>15</sup>. Enacting laws and regulations without consulting with us and without taking into account the principles and traditions of Islam is no way to solve the Mufti problem. The best way to handle this issue is by devising a formula that would be congruent to the Islamic law and traditions.

The Minority, in coordination with the government could choose an assembly of elders highly respected in the community and well versed in the Islamic law. This assembly, in turn, could select the mufti, possibly from among its members.

Yet, instead of pushing for such a solution that would be both reasonable to the government and in congruence with Islam, the Minority leaders and their followers have opted for a pseudo-election method which is undemocratic, against the Greek law, and, more importantly, against Islamic law. Unfortunately, the Turkish government has supported this strange election method and encouraged Minority members to endorse it. If it were not for the support of Turkey, the silliness of this method would be obvious to our community.

Although the mufti problem is a dispute about an Islamic practice, international Islamic organizations have chosen not to be involved in it. They even avoided expressing any opinion about it.

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[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The government insists on approaching the issue of Muftis through legal prosecution. As a result, there are dozens of indictments against our Muftis, for many of their actions and statements. The trials against the Muftis drag on for years.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

The non-recognition of the elected Muftis is the source of some of the most important problems our Community is facing today.

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<sup>15</sup> To steal a minaret is an extremely difficult thing to do; it is almost impossible. For someone capable of doing that, preparing a sheath for a minaret is no big deal.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Another, more serious, problem in the Government-Minority relations is the Muftis issue. But this problem arises from the unwillingness of some minority members and some Minority centers of influence to recognize the legality and legitimacy of the duly appointed Muftis. This should not go on like that. The doubts around the legitimacy of the Muftis create uncertainty, internal division in the Minority community, and many civic and religious functions and activities can no longer be performed smoothly. Those who support the so-called "elected Muftis" should understand that they are hurting NOT the government but their own community.

### ***15. What is your opinion regarding the emphasis on the Pomak identity and language?***

[Member of the Greek parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The recent emphasis and repeated mention of the minority's three distinct identities (Turkish origin<sup>16</sup>, Pomak, Roma/Gypsy) is, perhaps paradoxically, a tactic to make assimilation easier: It is easier to assimilate a fragmented group, one divided into small parts, than one unified national minority.

[Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; professor at Panteion University; Greek; Female]

The Pomak dictionary was financially supported and maybe commissioned by the 4th Army division in Thrace, but it was prepared by Pomaks -- two Pomak teachers. Such an initiative can be regarded as an early indication that some Pomaks are emphasizing their difference.

But the Pomak dictionary issue also shows something else: That there is bureaucratic infighting, or rather inter-agency disagreements, in the framing and designing of minority policies. The ministry of Defense has a different vision or perception, and different concerns than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also the Church of Greece has its own policy and its own perception of the minority. It is pursuing a policy that corresponds with its concerns and perception, shaped independently of the State. (For example, the new Church policy of financial support for every Christian family who has three or more children.)

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, in charge of the "intercultural" education program; Greek; Female]

There are quite a few Pomaks who want to emphasize and celebrate their Pomak identity, and the Greek government intends to support them. This is going to be part of the government's minority policy, at least in the short and medium term.

<sup>16</sup> The Greek government officially avoids calling "Turkish" even those members of the minority whose mother tongue is Turkish. Government officials --and nationalist Greeks-- prefer calling these Muslims "Tourkoyenneis" (of Turkish origin). The official justification for this is that the adjective "Turkish" refers to someone and something from Turkey, belonging to Turkey, while the minority members are Greek citizens; they are not from Turkey, nor do they belong to Turkey.

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[Journalist and Newspaper owner; Minority human rights activist; Minority Member; Male]

The Greek government policy toward the Pomaks is an exception, in fact, the only exception, to its general homogenizing policies toward the population in Greece.

The policy towards Pomaks is designed and shaped by institutions and centers that do not normally engage in social policy. Take, for instance, the Armed Forces -- the 4th Army division in Thrace. Or consider the role of the wealthy businessman, Prodromos Emfietzoglou, the chairman and CEO of Mihaniki [a conglomerate in the construction sector].

In addition, the academic community in Thrace, more specifically the faculty of Democritus University, has a peculiar approach toward the Pomaks. Not only does the academia support nonsensical theories about the origins of Pomaks, but the University has given money to "anthropological" research that involves analyses of the Pomaks' blood type and DNA and comparing the results to those of the Turks. This is done to "prove" that Pomaks are not ethnically or racially related to the Turks. This research was conducted primarily by Professor Xyrotiris.

The next step of this research, or the implication of its conclusions would be to demonstrate that Pomaks are "pure-blooded" Greeks!

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[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

This insistence on our Pomak identity has recently become quite annoying. They have bought a few people from our area, the mountain villages -- people who were apparently eager to sell themselves out and to prostitute themselves in the first place -- and, with the financial support of certain nationalistic businessmen, they are trying to project to the world a distorted picture of our identity: They are saying that we are not Turks but Pomaks. This is not going to work, though; we are not going to give up our national identity, our Turkishness.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

The efforts to divide our Community along ethnic lines are not limited to initiatives for over-emphasizing the Pomak identity. There are similar efforts intended for Gypsies as well: There are programs that try to present the Gypsies in Western Thrace as separate from Turks -- which is inaccurate. These are all very dangerous efforts. They engender resentment and indignation in the Minority.

It appears that behind these efforts is the "Para-State" ("Parakratos" in Greek), or rather, people associated with the Para-state. But, institutions of the "real" State, and primarily the Armed Forces, are also responsible for initiatives for meddling with our identity, because they have provided them with critical support in several instances.

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**16. What, in your opinion, was  
the response of the Minority to those changes?  
How did they respond or react?**

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

The minority has had a mixed response to the policy changes. This we can discern from the results of the 1998 local elections in the predominantly minority towns and municipal districts: While some of the elected mayors and city assembly members are hard-line, pro-Turkey nationalists, there were quite a few elected members of minority who are in favor of constructive cooperation with the State.

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[Municipal assembly member in Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

The minority's approach to problems in the past had not really or usually gone beyond complaining about them. But now the Turkish community in Thrace has realized that it can play a more active role in the politics. They, particularly the minority youth, want to participate in the decision-making process and they are less interested in having a protector taking care of their interests for them.

Because the minority youth are eager to participate, there is an increasingly higher number of young people from our community in the election lists of our political movements. For instance, most candidates from the "Democratic Change List" [which is led by the interviewee] were young; younger than 40.

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[Member of the Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

The Turkish-Muslim community has always been respectful of Greece and the laws of the land. Minority members have always been law-abiding citizens. In fact, despite the poverty, the limited education, and the obstacles set against our youth to find a job, the crime rate in the minority is and has always been lower than that of the majority.

So, I believe the Muslims deserve better treatment by our government and they respond favorably when they get better treatment.

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[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

The response from the minority to the recent changes has generally been positive. One interesting indication for this positive response is that we now see some Thracian Turks coming back to Thrace from Turkey, whereas in the past there was only *emigration* from Thrace to Turkey.

In the past, most of those who migrated to Turkey were young people with a college degree. They would go to Turkey to study, and they would choose to settle permanently there after graduation. As a result, we had—and still have—a shortage of educated people in our community. Now some of them are coming back and we are glad that they are.

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[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

What we have seen in the recent years is that the level of government oppression and terror dropped from, say, 13 to 8. That, of course, is not enough. All terror and oppression must stop completely.

As to why the government reduced the level of terror and oppression, I believe the reason why they did that is that they want us to accept and openly declare that the conditions are better, more comfortable for us now. It is an action-reaction thing, I guess: They took a positive action, because they wanted us to respond with a positive reaction. Yet they need to do a lot more before they get the reaction they expect.

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[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

When we want to find out what the Minority's response to a policy is, we inevitably have to pay attention to the positions of, and statements issued by, the so-called "Advisory Council of the Minority". Although not legally recognized, this Council clearly dominates intra-minority politics, and its positions – for all intents and purposes—could be considered *the* position of the Minority. So, whether we like it or not, we have to recognize the fact that the "Advisory Council" is involved in all minority-related politics, and can steer the Minority toward whatever direction it wants. The positions of the Council to the recent changes, while not entirely constructive, have been rather positive.

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[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

Despite all the reforms and the new policies we [the Government] introduced in the last few years, we see that we were unable to eliminate the distrust of the Minority toward the government. In the future, it is this still very strong distrust on which the government should concentrate its efforts. We have to defeat the Minority's distrust toward the Greek State. We have been trying to earn the trust of this group of our citizens, but I guess we should be trying harder.

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### *17. What are the problems of the Minority today?*

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, at the Office of "intercultural education"; Greek; Female]

One of the problems in the minority that cannot be easily dealt with is the fact that there are not enough, that there are, in fact, very few college graduates in the community. This means that there are few intellectuals, and that intellectual and cultural activities are inadequate, or disproportionately small given the size of the minority.

Also, many of the minority schools are in disrepair and in a bad condition. As a result, the growing bourgeois class, or middle class, of the minority, that is gaining importance and strength nowadays, are

sending their kids to Greek public schools, while at the same time being resentful of the fact that they are forced by the circumstances to do so.

The training and education of teachers has to be improved. Too many of them are of a very low quality – not really qualified to teach.

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[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

The tension between Greece and Turkey is still a very serious problem for the minority. This tension is reproduced/reflected at the local level between Greek and Minority extremists – Greek hyper-nationalists and Turkish hyper-nationalists. But, fortunately, these are marginal groups; they do not represent the majority of either population.

In addition, and on the other hand, there is an increasing cooperation between the Majority and the Minority members, which mitigates to a significant extent the tension.

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[ High-School teacher dismissed from his job for political reasons; minority activist; Minority Member; Male]

One problem we face is the issue of teachers who are not being appointed or who were fired: While we have a shortage of teachers at our schools, we also have a large number of teachers who are not allowed to work. I, for instance, was laid off in 1992, but have yet to be re-hired since PASOK came to power [in 1993].

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[Member of the Myki Municipal assembly; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

Some of the problems of the Minority today have to do with the social change it's been experiencing. The Minority is undergoing a process of modernization. It is opening up to the World. It cannot be satisfied with the old legal status anymore. And the restrictions that did not bother our community too much in the past, are now considered unbearable.

The recent policy changes have not been deep enough, or substantial enough, to address the most crucial issues. And, because of that, they are like aspirin taken by a patient who has a serious illness: They may be able to temporarily address the symptoms, but not the causes.

One of these most crucial issues is Identity, and the right to freely express and declare one's identity: The right to self-identification. Greece is willing to recognize this right only in part. There are still some serious limitations to the Minority's right to self-identification.

Another problem for the minority villages in the mountains is the bad quality of the roads connecting them to the cities. There have been some improvements recently to make these villages more connected to the rest of Greece and to the World (for example, phone connections have improved, and most of that region is within the cell-phone covering area), but a lot needs to be done, especially in transportation.

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[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

The economic gap between the majority and minority is still a serious problem. In terms of income and economic well-being, the minority is way behind the majority.

The government's economic policies in Thrace, even those of the last ten years, have done nothing to close this gap. While the government spent DRS. 7 billion for Thrace, only DRS. 580 million of this amount was spent in predominantly Muslim-Turkish areas.

[An influential elder in Ehinós, a mountain town in Xanthi county; Minority member; Male]

The main problems are community faces are high unemployment, substandard education, limited access to healthcare, lack of investments, bad quality of roads and poor road maintenance, and, finally, the government's and certain groups' and individuals' insistence on our Pomak identity *at the expense of our Turkishness*.

Concerning unemployment, it is important to say that here, in the mountain villages, unemployment, especially of young men, is much higher than that in the plains. Apart from agricultural jobs, there is practically nothing else to do – with the only possible exception of having a taxicab and working as its driver. That's why young people move to the city and to the plains. But even there, they have difficulty finding a decent job. Some of them tell us they are not hired even as toilet cleaners!

In terms of healthcare-related problems, our main complaint is the inadequacy of our health center in Ehinós/Sahin. The doctor comes from the city just a few days a week and the walk-in hours only from noon to 2:00 PM.

The lack of investments, public and private, is another serious problem. Private companies and entrepreneurs clearly avoid investing in the mountain region and prefer the plains. Public services and infrastructure are also much more developed in the plains. The government spends more money there than here.

The most important public expenditure should be on roads and road maintenance. Some roads still need to be paved with asphalt, some need to be widened, some need to become suitable for cars and trucks, and, throughout the winter, our roads need to be kept open, for, otherwise, we are cut off the rest of the country.

As for the insistence on our Pomak identity, this has recently become quite annoying. They have bought a few people from our area, the mountain villages – people who were apparently eager to sell themselves out and to prostitute themselves in the first place – and with the financial support of certain nationalistic businessmen they are trying to project to the world a distorted picture of our identity: They are saying that we are not Turks but Pomaks. This is not going to work, though; we are not going to give up our national identity, our Turkishness.

[Secretary-general of a Minority association (the Association of College Graduates); Minority member; Male]

One problem, not widely known outside Thrace, is the discrimination we face in our loan applications. When giving loans, the banks systematically favor Greeks over Turks.

Another lesser-known problem has to do with pharmacists in our community. Minority pharmacists find it harder to get a license to operate pharmacies. Greek pharmacists put pressure on the municipal and county government not to give licenses to our pharmacists, because they know they would lose their Turkish

clientele to Turkish pharmacists. And for those pharmacists who got their licenses, getting permission to work on Sundays, when almost all Christian pharmacies are closed, is even more difficult.

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[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

One serious threat the Minority is facing is coming from the "constantly worried", a group of media-savvy intellectuals and journalists who keep agitating the Greek public opinion against us. They keep saying that Greece is in danger, that Turkey has eyes for Western Thrace, and that our community is not to be trusted.

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[Journalist and publisher of a monthly newspaper; economist; Minority Member; Male]

Our printed press is shamefully underdeveloped. For instance, there isn't even one single daily newspaper in the Minority community. All newspapers are either weekly or monthly, while the 3,000-people-strong tiny Greek community of Istanbul has two newspapers published five times a week! There are many able journalists in our community, but their egos are so big, they don't want to cooperate. As a result, we have many small, weak and inadequate newspapers. If we, the minority journalists, could cooperate, I am sure we would be able to set up a daily newspaper, and I think there is more than enough demand in the community to sustain it.

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[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Most of the recent positive changes have yet to touch the Roma/Gypsy segment of the Minority community. Their living conditions and their economic situation are still terrible.

As for the Minority as a whole, there still needs a lot to be done to improve its conditions, especially in the area of education. And not just primary or secondary education, but higher education as well. The "proportionality" system is a good step in the right direction, but not sufficient. The Democritus University of Thrace also needs to undergo some "mentality" changes. This university, the most important higher education institution in Thrace, should develop a more welcoming, more accommodating attitude toward the Minority. Currently this university is too much influenced by racist worldviews like that of Prof. Xyrotiris.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

Our current problems fall into three categories: Economic, political, and education-related. In these three areas, there is a serious gap separating the Minority from the Majority, and the Turks here are significantly worse-off than the Greeks.

When examining our economic problems, one first has to look at the regional development programs coming from the EU. These aid programs could have bridged the inter-communal economic gap, but they were not used for this purpose. Instead, European financial assistance went overwhelmingly to projects and investments that would benefit the Greek majority. The Minority benefited very little from them. As for the



investments coming from Greek sources, the picture there is even more skewed, as 99% of these went to the Greek majority.

The very small number of Minority members employed by the public sector or by the Government as civil servants is another problem, both economic and political. The State institutions, and the public sector in general, constitute a large portion of the economy in this region. Because they are reluctant to hire Minority members, we end up having an unemployment rate much higher than the Majority.

Now, for those who migrated to Athens it is easier to get a job there in the public sector. But, on the other hand, the Minority members who reside in Athens are not covered by the minority-protection articles of the Lausanne Treaty. According to the Greek government's interpretation, these articles apply only in Thrace. As a result, those Minority Turks who move to another region of Greece in effect forfeit their minority rights.

Another political problem we are facing is the lack of dialogue between the Minority and Majority politicians. Establishing such a dialogue has proven especially difficult between leaders of the Minority and Greek politicians from the Nea Demokratia<sup>17</sup> party. The old, narrow-minded, right-wing worldview is unfortunately still dominant in the local branches of Nea Demokratia.

As regards education, we see that many of our problems stem from the policies of the Greek Ministry of Education. While it is true that the Ministry is currently trying to introduce some reforms for the Minority education, we notice that it is still reluctant to take bold steps; not much has been done so far. Moreover, some of the steps the Ministry *has* taken under the banner of reform were just steps in the *wrong* direction. Because of the bitter experiences of the past, our Community has developed a deep suspicion toward any policy changes originating from the Ministry of Education. And the recent, timid steps, and the occasional wrong steps, certainly cannot help the Minority overcome that suspicion.

One specific, bold, but easy step to take, without many complications is this: Music and Physical Education should be taught by Turkish teachers in Turkish. English also should be taught by a Turkish teacher. I believe that such a change, that is a reduction of classes taught in Greek and thus achieving parity in the number of classes taught by Turkish and Greek teachers, would be perceived as a clear indication that the Education Ministry was no longer using Minority education as an assimilation tool, and would be welcomed by Minority parents and children alike.

[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Three of the biggest problems we are facing today are:

- (a) that there is hardly any Minority member employed by the government, working either as a civil servant or, more importantly, as a police officer;
- (b) that there is a huge economic gap between the Minority and the Majority. All the wealth in this region is concentrated in the hands of Greeks. There are no industrial plants, for instance, owned by Turks. And, if you visit the coast, you'll see that all the villas there are owned by Greeks. No Turk can afford such a villa. And
- (c) that there is a moral decline among many Minority men, who are constantly tempted by casinos and gambling, as well as by bars and nightclubs where Eastern European women perform. Such casinos and

<sup>17</sup> The largest center-right party in Greece, and currently the main opposition party.

bars are purposefully located in areas where they are very easily accessible by Minority peasants, and are exploiting the naivete of uneducated men from our community.

Another problem our young men have to endure is bad treatment and humiliation during military service. Many get over it, but others return from military service full of resentment toward the government.

[Member of the Greek Parliament; civil engineer; Minority Member; Male]

The main problems of the Minority today fall into three categories:

- (1) Problems stemming from the non-recognition of the elected Muftis;
- (2) Problems concerning the management of our religious foundations (vakfs, or wakfs); and, of course,
- (3) problems regarding education.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

The sum of issues and problems pertaining to Majority-Minority relations in Thrace cannot, or, at least, can no longer be described as an ethnic conflict today. What we have in Thrace can, at most, be characterized as a set of disputes where parties pursue their goals in a usually confrontational way. It is important to make this distinction, because the disputes in Thrace are qualitatively different from what we usually have in mind when we use the term "ethnic conflict". Besides, in my opinion, the disputes in Thrace are of "intercultural" and not of "inter-ethnic" nature: There are more than one ethnic group both in the Minority Muslim "culture" and in the Majority Greek-Orthodox "culture".

Now, having clarified the Majority-Minority dimension of the disputes, let me move to their Government-Majority dimension: It is true that there are still some problems in the relations of the Minority with the Government, but those are fewer in number, and much less serious than the ones we had, say, five years ago.

One such problem is the "stateless people" issue, that is the problem regarding Muslims who lost their citizenship, who still live in Greece and who are now "stateless". Their number proved to be much smaller than initially estimated. There are only a few hundred Minority members in this status, and their situation is significantly better than it used to be: Most of them have obtained a special identity card, through which they can enjoy most rights, freedoms, and benefits a citizen can. In addition, by abrogating Article 19 of the Citizenship code, the Government made sure that no more Minority members would lose their citizenship.

Another, more serious, problem in the Government-Minority relations is the Muftis issue. But this problem arises from the unwillingness of some minority members and some Minority centers of influence to recognize the legality and legitimacy of the duly appointed Muftis. This should not go on like that. The doubts around the legitimacy of the Muftis create uncertainty, internal division in the Minority community, and many civic and religious functions and activities can no longer be performed smoothly. Those who support the so-called "elected Muftis" should understand that they are hurting NOT the government but their own community.

Yet another problem in the Government's relations with the Minority is, of course, the Identity issue. We recognize that there is a problem created by the difference in the way a large part of the Minority identifies itself and the way the Government is obliged to officially identify this group of people. But one has to

examine the Identity issue within a big set of issues that include education, economic development, etc. As improvements on those other issues bring tangible results, the Identity issue will likely lose its salience.

We cannot recognize a "Turkish" national identity for the Minority. That is unacceptable from the legal point of view. Since we have to abide by the Lausanne Treaty and the framework it built for minority rights, we cannot jettison the official terms employed in this treaty. And the Minority in Thrace in this treaty is referred to as "the Muslim Minority".

Now, as regards other international treaties and agreements that Greece has signed and/or ratified, for example, the Framework Agreement for the Protection of National Minorities or the OSCE documents pertaining to national minorities, the Government's position is clear: As far as Greece is concerned, citizens have only the right to *individual* self-identification. In other words, self-identification, the right of a person to call himself or herself Greek, Pomak, Turk, etc., is an *individual human right*, NOT a *collective right*. So these European treaties do not give some minority members the right to call the whole Minority "Turkish", although they may identify themselves – and only themselves – as "Turkish".

**18. What are the Minority's expectations of the Greek Government?  
And  
What are they entitled to get?**

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

Minority members are entitled to get more *opportunities*; more than they were given in the past. It is through more, and maybe extra, opportunities that their social and economic situation will improve. The government has realized this and is acting on this basis now.

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

The Minority is entitled to demand and enjoy the full implementation of the Lausanne Treaty's articles on minorities. These provide an adequate legal framework for the protection of our collective and cultural rights, but the problem is that they have never been fully implemented. Now they are being implemented better than in the past, yet still not fully.

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Despite all the oppressive policies implemented in the past and all the injustices we suffered, we still have confidence in the Greek State, because we respect the concept of the "State" as an almost timeless entity, one that is beyond short-term changes, beyond petty, narrow, interest-based politics, or ephemeral ever-changing policies. But we do not trust the current government, nor did we trust the previous governments, for their approach on minority affairs was shaped without any input from our community.

What we want from the State and the government is basically democracy and justice.

The Greek State calls itself a Democracy<sup>18</sup>, and we do not argue with that, but the governments – the current as well as the previous ones – did not apply even the "d" of democracy on minority-related affairs.

Government policies regarding the Minority have nothing to do with the concept of "justice" either. What justice are we talking about when the legal process for compensations for the victims of the 1990 pogrom is still going on, and there is no sign that it will conclude soon?

Some maintain that many of the problems we are facing are caused not by the State, but by the "Para-state" (parakrátos). I know nothing about that shadowy, mysterious Para-state. And it would not help me to acknowledge the existence or the role of a Para-state, for it is only the State that I can deal with; it is only the State that I can hold accountable.

***19. How would you compare the conditions of the Muslim Minority  
vis-à-vis the Greek Orthodox population in Thrace?  
[Today and in the past]  
How would you describe Minority-Majority relations,  
today and in the past?***

[High-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education, in charge of "intercultural education"; Greek; Female]

There has always been an economic competition and rivalry (sometimes open, sometimes latent) between the minority and majority. With the new reforms aimed at the improvement of minority's condition, the old balance favoring the majority has been seriously disturbed. Educational reforms are going to further change the balance, more in favor of the minority.

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

The policy changes have led to harsh reactions from nationalist circles in the Greek population of Thrace. For instance, the IKTATH, the Association of Refugees from Imbros, Constantinople, Tenedos, and Eastern Thrace, an organization always suspicious of the minority leaders and their actions, has started complaining and protesting more loudly.

[Chairwoman of a minority cultural organization; Minority Member; Female]

In Xanthi, there has been a thaw in the relations between Greeks and Turks recently. We have good and sincerely warm relations with a lot of Greeks. Having friends from the other community is necessary. Besides, our cultures are not that different. We are alike in many ways.

<sup>18</sup> The official name of Greece is "Elliniki Demokratia".

[Member of the Greek Parliament, cardiologist; Minority Member; Male]

Despite the bad economic conditions and the discrimination against them, the Muslims have always been law-abiding citizens of Greece. They have had a lower crime rate than the Greek population in Thrace, and much lower than the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, or the foreigners from Albania and other Balkan countries.

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[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

There are certain powerful groups in the Majority Greek community that are used to benefit disproportionately from government and international investment in Thrace, at the expense of the Minority. That was tantamount to stealing from us. Those who are used to stealing from us are now unwilling to share the resources of the region and the economic opportunities with us.

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[General secretary of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

We are pleased with the contribution and participation of some local Greeks to the recent efforts to improve the conditions of the Minority. For example, it was thanks to a Greek lawyer from Komotini, Sotitris Poupouzis, that one Turkish-Muslim pharmacist got a license to open a pharmacy, and thus paved the way for other Minority pharmacists. Poupouzis not only fought for that in courts, but also was instrumental in getting the support of the governor. On the other hand, there are some Greeks who see us as targets for retaliation to every action taken by Turkey that they don't like.

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[Consultant/Researcher at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professor at Panteion University; Greek, Female]

One additional factor that now has to be paid attention to in any assessment of intercommunal relations is the Russian Greek immigrants who have settled in Thrace. Their presence have added to the intercommunal tension.

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[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Majority-Minority relations were good until the protests and the turmoil caused by them started. With the protests and the mobilization of the Minority, relations between the two communities got tense and perturbed.

There are two nationalistic centers in Thrace that have always been the source of intercommunal tension:  
 (A) The Turkish Consulate and the Minority activists it supports, and  
 (B) The Greek nationalistic lobby.

The core of the first center is, as I mentioned, the Consulate around which orbit the Minority leaders who receive its support and are, to a large extent, dependent on it, financially and ideologically. On Minority issues, these leaders generally reflect and promote the positions that were formulated in Turkey. However, it would be a mistake to describe them as totally controlled by Turkey. After all, they are more familiar with Minority issues than some bureaucrats in Ankara, and we could presume that the official Turkish positions

are shaped with the heavy input and influence of these nationalistic Minority activists. There is a so-called "Advisory Commission" in the Minority, a commission composed of many of the influential and pro-Turkey Minority leaders: Mayors, members of the Greek Parliament, newspaper owners, Minority association presidents, etc. This Commission determines the "official" Minority position on issues, speaks with one voice, and its voice becomes the main voice of the Muslim community. Alternative voices are often too weak to compete with this "official" voice.

The other nationalistic center is the Greek Lobby. The leading voices and most important representatives of this center are the Church<sup>19</sup>, particularly its local leadership, and especially the Bishop of Maroneia & Komotini, Mr. Damaskinos, the newspapers Chronos and Patrída, and the Association of immigrants and refugees from Imbros, Constantinople, Tenedos, and Eastern Thrace (IKTATH).

But these two centers are not the sole determinant of intercommunal relations. There also are those who want and struggle for a rapprochement and cooperation between the Christian and Muslim communities. From the Muslim side Mustafa Mustafa [a member of the Greek Parliament from the Rhodope County], and from the Christian side Mr. Giorgos Papadriellis, the mayor of Komotini, are the two strongest and most eloquent representatives of this "peaceful togetherness" view.

Now that the results of the new policies regarding the Minority are becoming visible, and the Minority is generally responding favorably to the changes, we see a *détente*, a thaw in the inter-communal relations. Although not as peaceful as before the protests started, relations are not as bad as they used to be, say, ten years ago. I suspect, though, that this *détente* is superficial. There are no mechanisms or institutions in the Western Thracian society to deal with inter-communal conflict effectively. There are no tension reduction mechanisms, either.

Despite the *détente*, the abatement of tension, that we have seen in the last years, we can still observe the damage the period of crisis has done to the inter-communal relations. For instance, in this city [in Komotini], neighborhoods are much more strictly separated along ethnic-religious lines now than they were ten or fifteen years ago. Also, the behavior of Christians toward Muslims and Muslims toward Christians appears to have undergone a change: Members from the two groups tend to keep a clear distance now when they interact; it is as if relations are colder now and more colored with suspicion and caution.

This change in the inter-communal relations has had a detrimental impact on Muslims' identity-recognition issue: In the past, local Greeks had no reservations, no hesitation, regarding using the words "Turk, Turkish" for the Minority members in casual conversations. Now they do, and they prefer to call them just "Muslims".

[Radio Journalist and investigative reporter in Thrace; Greek; Male]

With respect to the inter-communal relations, one should also pay attention to a darker, lesser-known, and not much investigated way some extreme nationalist Greeks have responded or reacted to the recent changes: I am talking about the formation of some militia groups like the "Falcons", the "Raiders of Kapantzoglou" who have some retired military officers in their ranks, and the "Golden Dawn", the neo-nazi thugs. Reporters and researchers are reluctant to touch this issue because they do not want to become targets of these groups' wrath and scare tactics. Such groups have so far attracted only a small number of young local Greek males and have not yet engaged in a flagrantly violent incident, but they are a potential danger.

<sup>19</sup> In Greece, when people refer to "the Church" they mean the Greek Orthodox Church of Greece, whose predominant or "prevailing" status is recognized even by the Constitution (1975, Section II, Art. 3).

Yet, nothing is more dangerous and threatening for inter-communal relations than mutual distrust. It is such a distrust that creates the fertile environment for militia groups. We must, therefore, re-establish mutual trust between the two communities. We, as media people, should at least contribute to the re-building of mutual trust. This should be the most important and most immediate goal.

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[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Until the '80s, we did not really have any problems with the Christian<sup>20</sup> citizens in Thrace. Then, some fanatic groups from the Christian community made us the target of their hatred and their rage. These groups, and their sympathizers, justified violent incidents against the Turkish minority as retaliation for what Turkey did to Greeks in the past. That is particularly true in the case of the events of 1988, and the pogrom of 1990, against our Community in Komotini. They rationalized these atrocities as the revenge for the 1955 September incidents in Istanbul against the Greek community there.

The Orthodox Church, I am sorry to say, has been poisoning inter-communal relations, especially in Rhodope County, and has been contributing to tension and enmity. While I respect the Church as an institution, I have no respect whatsoever for Bishop Damaskinos. With his statements and actions he has worsened our problems and deserves no respect from any Minority member.

As regards economic conditions, there is a huge gap between the Minority and the Majority. All the wealth in this region is concentrated in the hands of Greeks. There are no industrial plants, for instance, owned by Turks. And, if you visit the coast, you'll see that all the villas there are owned by Greeks. No Turk can afford such a villa.

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[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

It is not only the Muslims who are unhappy with the social and economic conditions in Thrace. Since the beginning of inter-communal tensions, and despite the recent thaw, many Thracian Greeks have emigrated from the region.

The economic conditions in Thrace are quite bad compared to other regions of Greece. In fact, all the official pronouncements notwithstanding, the Thracian economy is kept alive with "injections".

These bad economic conditions, accompanied by a general sense of insecurity stemming from the possibility that the conflict may escalate again, and also by a lack of prospects for the region, have resulted in the emigrations of thousands of local Greeks.

The Russian-Pontian Greeks are also generally unhappy with their situation in Thrace. And, despite being encouraged by the government to stay there, they, too, are leaving the region and moving to more prosperous parts of Greece.

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<sup>20</sup> The term "Christian" here is used interchangeably with the term "Greek". They both refer to the same community, the same group of people.

This situation and its demographic consequences show that the Muslims of Thrace can play an increasingly important role in the region. And this role could be even more significant if they manage to integrate into the mainstream society; if they become active participants in more social and political activities. I think most Muslims have started to realize that.

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**20. What is your assessment of the relations  
between the Muslim Minority and the Turkish Government?  
What does the Minority expect of Turkey?  
What factors influence this relationship?**

[Researcher at the Academy of Athens; Professor of Turkish; Greek; Female]

The current approach of Greece toward Turkey is to state that it has a conflict with the *regime* of Turkey, not its people, not the Turks per se.

The Turkish influence over the Minority is recognized by Greece, but regarded as a troubling fact, a serious problem. Therefore, many measures taken by the Greek government in recent years aim directly or indirectly at reducing this influence.

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[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

Turkey's Western Thrace policy has always been basically the same; apart from a few nuances it has not changed and has always been focussed on the Lausanne treaty. One of Turkey's basic aims is to keep the Lausanne treaty, the foundation of its international legitimacy, alive and functional, and to do everything it can to protect and preserve it. Putting pressure on Greece to respect that treaty is just one of those things that it does toward this goal.

The interests and well-being of the Minority have always been of secondary importance.

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[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

Since the ratification of the Lausanne Treaty Turkey has shown an intense and legitimate interest in the situation of the Minority. This interest did not bother or annoy Greece in the 1930s, in the period of Greek-Turkish friendship initiated by Ataturk and Venizelos.

The minority rights framework provided by the Lausanne treaty was and is satisfactory to our community. There is just one problem with this Treaty, however: We are referred to as the "Muslim minority", which makes it legitimate for Greece to consider us a religious and not a national minority.

In the negotiations leading to the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkish government preferred the recognition of minorities on religious and not on national criteria, because, among other things, that was the only way to prevent the recognition of Kurds as a minority.



But, the imperfections of the Lausanne Treaty notwithstanding, I think Turkey should stick with it and keep it alive. Turkey should have done the same thing with respect to the 1930 Greek-Turkish Friendship Treaty as well: She should have kept it in effect. It is a pity that she chose not to do so.

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[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

One reason why Turkey is actively involved in the problems between the Turkish Minority and the Greek State is that it wants to keep the Lausanne Treaty active and alive. This treaty is extremely important for both countries, not just with respect to minority rights, but in every aspect related to Greek-Turkish relations. The treaty is more important for Turkey, however, for it provides the legitimizing basis of the current Turkish State at the international legal level.

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[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

Turkey does not seem to know what it is that she wants to do with the Minority. She *has* tried to use the Minority here as a leverage to put pressure on Greece – that is for sure, but is that all she is trying to do? It is not clear.

Also Turkey no longer seems to have full sway over the Minority. There are cracks, and increasingly more members of the Minority develop doubts regarding the role of Turkey and the community leaders she supports.

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[Former mayor of a small, predominantly Minority-inhabited town and currently municipal assembly member; Physician; Minority Member; Male]

In the last two years, Turkey's approach to the Western Thrace Minority is characterized not by a new policy, but rather by a lack of a coherent policy. Turkey's recent actions and statements lack consistency and often have contradicted each other.

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[ Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

It is difficult for me to comment about Turkey's role and policies. I live in Greece and it is the results of Greek policies that I encounter every day. As for Turkey's policies, I am not familiar enough with them to make a judgement.

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[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

Turkey has always claimed to be the "protector country", the "mother country" for the Minority and has based its claims on the Lausanne Treaty and other agreements and protocols concluded subsequently between Greece and Turkey.

It is impossible to deny that the Lausanne Treaty and those other agreements give Turkey some say on issues related to the Muslim minority. They do not give her the role of the "protector country", but they make it possible for Turkey to be involved in Minority affairs.

And, in my personal view – which is *not* the position of the Ministry – it is on this precise point that some radical changes need to take place. A minority-rights-protection model based on "kin countries" and on inter-governmental agreements is antiquated and anachronistic. Now that there are European standards and a Pan-European regime on the protection of minority rights, all the Turkish-Greek agreements on minorities have to be discarded; they have to become part of history.

I realize that it is very hard for Greece to abandon the Lausanne Treaty, but at least the bilateral protocols agreed upon in the last forty or fifty years should no longer be in effect. They represent an outdated understanding of international relations, according to which minorities are pawns in an inter-state chess game. We, i.e. those who care about the well being of minorities, should try to free them from this confining approach. And it is also time the Muslim minority considered freeing itself from the "our-mother-country-will-protect-us" way of thinking.

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## 21. *What is your opinion of the Turkish Consulate in Komotini?*

[Chairwoman of a minority cultural organization; Minority Member, Female]

The current Turkish consul-general [Sakir Ozkan Torunlar] has a very constructive approach to the problems of the minority and to minority-majority relations. His is a people-friendly approach emphasizing friendship. And this approach is in full agreement with Turkey's new policy for the Turkish Minority.

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[Member of Greek Parliament; cardiologist; Minority member; Male]

The consulate has naturally reflected the Turkish approach toward the minority. The ties of this minority with Turkey are vital, and, therefore, the consulate fulfills an extremely important function for us.

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[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

Up until a few years ago, the Consulate, by supporting and legitimizing the then community leaders, had a negative impact on our community; because that leadership, with this explicit support from the Consulate, had established a tight, oppressive, almost fascistic, system of social control in the Minority. So, in the recent past, not only were we being oppressed by the Greek government, but we were also under the yoke of an authoritarian group of community leaders. The names of those who dared to express their displeasure with this situation and who opposed this leadership were put on a "black list" by the Consulate, and thus they were not allowed to enter Turkey. So they had to suspend all the economic ties they had with this country, they could not see their relatives who lived there, they could not even send their kids to study there.

There is no longer a "black list" (I know, for my name was on that list as well), which is a very positive development.

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[Journalist and editor-in-chief of a local progressive newspaper in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The core of the Turkish nationalist center was, and is, the Consulate around which orbit the Minority leaders who receive its support and are, to a large extent, dependent on it, financially and ideologically. On Minority issues, these leaders generally reflect and promote the positions that were formulated in Turkey. However, it would be a mistake to describe them as totally controlled by Turkey. After all, they are more familiar with Minority issues than some bureaucrats in Ankara, and we could presume that the official Turkish positions are shaped with the heavy input and influence of these nationalistic Minority activists. There is a so-called "Advisory Commission" in the Minority, a commission composed of many of the influential and pro-Turkey Minority leaders: Mayors, members of the Greek Parliament, newspaper owners, Minority association presidents, etc. This Commission determines the "official" Minority position on issues, speaks with one voice, and its voice becomes the main voice of the Muslim community. Alternative voices are often too weak to compete with this "official" voice.

While the role of the Consulate is still the same, it must be said, however, that the current counselor-general is trying a new approach. He does intervene in the affairs of the Minority, and he intervenes substantially, yet he maintains a low profile. He has indeed cancelled the infamous "black list", and this has made him popular even among Minority members who speak and act independently. But there must still be a file at the Consulate for each dissident. If necessary, a new black list could be created instantly. The current situation may be just a temporary relaxation of the tough anti-dissident approach.

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[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

Some say the Consulate has a "black list". I don't think that such a list exists or that it has ever existed. I, for one, have never seen or sensed anything that might indicate the existence of that list.

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## ***22. What is your opinion of Other Turkey-related issues?***

[Journalist and owner of a monthly publication; Minority activist; Minority member; Male]

Another thing that must be said about Turkey is that her importance and attractiveness as an alternative homeland, where Minority members could go in search of a better life, has diminished somewhat in the last few years. There are even some Western Thracian Turks who sold their real estate in Turkey and came back here.

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## ***23. How could you characterize in general the policies of Turkey with respect to the Minority?***

[Psychiatrist; Minority activist and former parliamentary candidate; Minority member; Male]

Though the Greek and Turkish governments have always purported to defend the rights and interests of the Minorities, in actuality both have seen them as pawns in the acrimonious Turkish-Greek chess game. In this sense, the worries of the Greek government concerning the Minority were not exactly unfounded.

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**24. *Have there been any changes In Turkey's policies since 1955?  
If yes, why? If no, why?***

[Chief advisor to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, in charge of minority policies; Greek; Male]

Yes, there has indeed been a change recently in the Turkish policy toward the minority; and that change has had a positive effect. Turkey now is emphasizing economic investments in Thrace. It wants to establish some access to Thrace, other than mere political and diplomatic. Many Turkish businesses find Thrace conducive for investments, for building industrial plants, etc.

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[Former councilor-general of Greece to Istanbul; diplomat formerly in charge of Muslim Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

The recently-approved Turkish textbooks sent from Turkey indicate two things:

- (1) That the Turkish government has finally got the message that the textbooks it sends to Greece must be free of Turkish nationalistic propaganda, for, otherwise, they will not be approved. That Turkey got this message is quite a welcome development. And
  - (2) that Greece is ready to respond constructively to a constructive move from the Turkish side.
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[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The policy of Turkey with respect to the Muslim Minority in Thrace has changed recently. It appears that Turkey is now encouraging the Minority's integration to the Greek society, while in the past the Turkish government used to encourage self-segregation.

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**25. *How do you think the Minority-Government relations are going to change in the future?  
Near future? Distant future?  
For better or for worse?  
Based on what factors?***

[Member of the Municipal Assembly of Myki; journalist; Minority Member; Male]

Many young people from the Minority studying at Turkish and European universities are going to come back to Thrace. And they will probably find the current legal-social structure here asphyxiating.

The young generation is more familiar with Europe. Also, they have a more activist approach to politics. They want to participate in the decision-making processes.

The Western Thracian Turks now, for the first time, want to be actively involved in the politics of this region, and are less interested in having a protector taking care of their interests for them.

[Member of the County assembly; Attorney; Chairman of a Minority Association; Minority member; Male]

No matter what shape the New World Order eventually takes, I believe the Lausanne Treaty will survive. No current global trend is in conflict with the basic tenets of this treaty.

By the way, changing the Lausanne treaty or abrogating it would require the consent of a large number of countries, and not just Greece and Turkey. Unless the interest and intentions of a whole bunch of states changed, this treaty would not be in danger.

Western Thrace will never be another Kosovo, mainly because, despite all its problems, Greece is a liberal democracy, while Yugoslavia is an authoritarian dictatorship.

The most important goal should now be economic development. Economic development will bring prosperity, harmony, and, therefore, happiness to this region.

[Executive Committee Member of Komotini's Turkish Youth Association; Minority Activist; Minority Member; Male]

The future of the Minority depends very much on Europe and the European Union. And, given the attention paid by the EU to the protection of minority rights, I can say that the future is good for our community. Better days are ahead for us.

We have not seen or have not been shown the Greek civilization and democracy, but now we are looking forward to seeing the European civilization.

[Journalist specializing on covering Minority-related issues for a left-liberal national newspaper; Immigrant from Istanbul now living in Thrace; Greek; Male]

The most important objective for the government, for the near future, should be to develop a constructive and ongoing dialogue with the Minority, through which all problems would be discussed and solutions would be entertained. It is only through such a dialogue that the mutual distrust between the Government and the Minority (and also the one between the region's majority and minority) can be minimized. Currently, the biggest obstacle to the solution of the current problems in Minority-Government relations is this still very strong mutual distrust. All the recent policy changes show that the Government no longer distrusts the Minority as much as it used to, but the Minority's only marginally positive and lukewarm reception of the reforms is a clear indication that Muslims are still reluctant to trust the Government.

[High-ranking diplomat; second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry desk in Athens in charge of Minority affairs; Greek; Male]

In the future, it is the still very strong distrust of the Minority toward the Greek State on which the government should concentrate its efforts. We have to defeat the Minority's distrust toward the State. We have been trying to earn the trust of this group of our citizens, but I guess we should be trying harder.

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[High-ranking diplomat, formerly in charge of Minority Affairs, now at the Balkan desk of the Foreign Ministry; Greek; Male]

In my personal view – which is *not* the position of the Ministry – it is on the bilateral (Turkish-Greek) framework for the protection of minorities that some radical changes need to take place. A minority-rights-protection model based on "kin countries" and on inter-governmental agreements is antiquated and anachronistic. Now that there are European standards and a Pan-European regime on the protection of minority rights, all the Turkish-Greek agreements on minorities have to be discarded; they have to become part of history.

I realize that it is very hard for Greece to abandon the Lausanne Treaty, but at least the bilateral protocols agreed upon in the last forty or fifty years should no longer be in effect. They represent an outdated understanding of international relations, according to which minorities are pawns in an inter-state chess game. We, i.e. those who care about the well being of minorities, should try to free them from this confining approach. And it is also time the Muslim minority considered freeing itself from the "our-mother-country-will-protect-us" way of thinking.

Moreover, the migration of local Greeks and Russian-Pontians from Thrace to other parts of Greece, and its demographic consequences show that the Muslims of Thrace can play an increasingly important role in the region. And this role could be even more significant if they manage to integrate into the mainstream society; if they become active participants in more social and political activities. I think most Muslims have started to realize that.

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**Appendix B:****Internal memo**

written on 01/31/1990 by the then secretary-general of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Ioannis Tzounis, summarizing the discussions in the meeting of Ecumenical Coalition leaders on the tensions in Thrace and the decisions reached

## ΝΤΟΚΟΥΜΕΝΤΟ

### Οι πολιτικοί αρχηγοί για τη μειονότητα

Την επομένη επεισοδίων στο χώρο της μειονότητας, οι αρχηγοί των τριών πολιτικών κομμάτων που στήριζαν την οικονομική κυβέρνηση με πρωθυπουργό τον Σ. Ζολώτα συνεδρίασαν και ενέκριναν την ακόλουθη εισήγηση:

#### A. Διαγραφόμενοι κίνδυνοι

- 1) Μεταβολή της πληθυσμιακής σύνθεσης εις βάρος του ελληνικού στοιχείου. Ήδη εις τον νομό Ροδόπης οι μουσουλμάνοι απαρτίζουν το 54% του πληθυσμού και η γεννητικότητα των είναι μεγαλύτερα των Χριστιανών, οι οποίοι, σην τους άλλους, μεταναστεύουν.
- 2) Αποκατάσταση εδαφικής συνέχειας μεταξύ Τουρκίας και της περιοχής που κατοικείται από την μειονότητα. Ήδη εις τον άλλοτε ακραφινώς ελληνικό νομό Έβρου ο μουσουλμανικός πληθυσμός ανέρχεται εις το 7% (Εις την Αλεξανδρέτταν ήρκεσε το 30% και εις την Κύπρον το 18% ήνα να δημοιορηθούν προϋποθέσεις προσαρτήσεως). Παρατηρείται εγκατάστασις Πομάκων εις τα Β.Α. του Νομού και μουσουλμάνων Αβιγγάνων εις την περιοχήν της Αλεξανδρουπόλεως.
- 3) Επιβολή ενιαίας διαχειρίσεως των βακουφικών περιοσιών, η οποία τυχόν ελεγχόμενη από Γενικών Προξενίων της Τουρκίας θα καθίστατο ισχυρότατο όλο εις χείρας του.
- 4) Εμπέδωσις της χωριστής μειονοτικής πολιτικής οντότητος των μουσουλμάνων. Οι ανεξάρτητες μουσουλμανικές υποψηφιότητες θα μπορούσαν να μεταβληθούν σε μειονοτικό κόμμα αλότε δια του μηχανισμού των υπολοίπων να μπορούσαν ίσως να εκλέξουν και δεύτερον υποψηφίον. Εν πάση περιπτώσει δε θα επικρατήσουν εις τους μικτούς Δήμους και Κοινότητες άπου πλειοψηφεί το μουσουλμανικό στοιχείο.

#### B. Εφαρμοστέα πολιτική:

- 1) Διατήρησις και ει δυνατόν βελτίωσις της σημερινής πληθυσμιακής συνθέσεως δια:
  - (α) Εφαρμογή ειδικού αναπτυξιακού προγράμματος εις την περιοχήν, το οποίον αφ' ενός θα ανεβάσει το βιοτικό επίπεδο της μειονότητας (το υψηλότερο επίπεδο μειώνει την γεννητικότητα) και αφ' ετέρου θα συγκρατήσει το ελληνικό στοιχείο και θα προσέλκισι ίσους και νέους μετοίκους,

(β) Εγκαταστάσις Ποντίων προσφύγων, κατ' εξαρχήν εις τους Νομούς Ροδόπης και Έβρου.

Συνεπής εφαρμογή της πολιτικής εξαγωγής μουσουλμανικών αγροτικών γαιών και ενθάρρυνσις της αστικοποιήσεως της μειονότητας (οι αστοί έχουν μεγαλύτερη κινητικότητα από τους αγρότες) δια σειράς μετρων ως η αναβάθμισις του μορφωτικού επιπέδου, προσλήψει σε ωρισμένες δημοσίας υπηρεσίας, προσλήψει σε διομηχανίες εκτός μειονοτικής περιοχής κ.λ.π.

3) Δημοκρατική διαχείρισις υπό αμετρών επιτροπών των επί μέρους βακουφικών περιοσιών για να δυσχερανθή ο έλεγχος του Προξενείου.

4) Αποφύλωσις των μουσουλμάνων από των δικαστικών των καθηκόντων επί θεμάτων προσωπικής καταστάσεως και μεταβίβασις των αρμοδιοτήτων αυτών εις τα ελληνικά δικαστήρια τα οποία όμως θα κρίνουν πάντοτε επί τη βάση του ιερών μουσουλμανικών Νόμων, τηρουμένων αυστηρώς των διατάξεων της Συνθήκης της Λωζάνης.

5) Κατάργησις των διοικητικών ενσχλήσεων αι οποίαι όχι μόνο απεδείχθησαν ατέλεστοι αι επέτυχον αντίθετα αποτελέσματα των επιδιωκομένων και σιγά σιγά μας εκθέτουν διεθνώς.

6) Ενίσχυσις της παρουσίας και του κύρους του Κράτους.

Η ανωτέρω εισήγησις ετέθη υπό την Πολιτικών Αρχηγών κ.κ. Μηστούκη (Ν.Δ.), Παπανδρέου (ΠΑΣΟΚ), και Φλωράκη (ΣΥΝ) και του Πρωθυπουργού Σ. Ζολώτα εις την τακτική των συνεδριών της 31ης Ιανουαρίου 1990 παρουσία και των Υπουργών Εξωτερικών κ. Σαμαρά και Εθνικής Άμυνας κ. Τζαννετάκη και κατά την λεπτομερούς συζητήσεως ενεκήθη ομοφώνως ως κατενθνητήριος γραμμή της παγκύς εφαρμοστέας μακροπρόθεσμου εθνικής πολιτικής εις Δυτική Θράκη, αστέως της πολιτικής τοποθετήσεως των μελλοντικών Ελληνικών Κυβερνήσεων.

Εν Αθήναις τη 31η Ιανουαρίου 1990  
Ο Γενικός Διευθυντής  
Ιωάννης Τζαίνης



## CURRICULUM VITÆ

Dimostenis Yağcıoğlu was born on September 7, 1968, in Istanbul, Turkey, and is a Turkish citizen of Greek origin. He graduated from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul with a B. A. in Political Science and International Relations in 1991. He obtained a Master of Arts degree in International Peace Studies, in 1993, from the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana. As an undergraduate student, he participated in a number of initiatives organized by international student associations like AEGEE and AIESEC, aimed at improving Turkey's relations with Europe, and especially with Greece. As a graduate student, he cooperated with several grassroots-based Greek-Turkish Peace initiatives. He also worked for a while as a research assistant at the U.S. Institute of Peace, in Washington, DC. His research interests include interethnic conflict and cooperation in the Balkans, Greek-Turkish relations, nationalism and other group identity ideologies, and psychological explanations of minority-majority relations.