

**CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES
IN THE MINORITY POLICY OF GREECE:
THE CASE OF WESTERN THRACE**

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace by dwelling on the history of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace from the beginning of 1920s until today. Until the early 1990s, changes in the Greek policy of Western Thrace had not been observed. However, the year 1991 marks a turning point both in the attitude of Greece towards the Muslim Turkish minority and in the history of the Western Thracian minority. As a result of the change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace there has been developments in the living conditions of the Minority. It is the aim of this thesis to explore to what extent there has been occurring changes and to what extent problems continue to affect the members of the Minority. Moreover, this thesis aims to analyze the actors that played a quite significant role in the Western Thracian policy change of the Greek state. After evaluating the situation in Western Thrace in the pre-1990 and post-1990 period this thesis argues that while on the one hand it is the economic and social domains that changes have been observed, on the other hand continuities in the Greek policy of the Muslim Turkish minority regarding the political and educational issues keep on affecting the members of this Minority. The aim of this thesis is to show that as a result of such a ‘partial change’ today’s situation in Western Thrace is better than that of pre-1990s but some significant problems of the Minority still

remain unresolved due to the unaltered stance of the Greek state towards some issues of the Western Thracian Minority.

Keywords: Greece, Western Thrace, Minority, Muslim Turks, Continuity and Change

ÖZ

YUNANİSTAN AZINLIK POLİTİKASINDA SÜREKLİLİK VE DEĞİŞİMLER: BATI TRAKYA ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu çalışma Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk azınlığının 1920'lerden günümüze kadar olan tarihini irdeleyerek Yunanistan'ın Batı Trakya azınlık politikasını incelemektedir. 1990'ların başına kadar Yunanistan'ın Batı Trakya politikasında değişim gözlenmemiştir. Fakat, 1991 yılı hem Yunanistan'ın Müslüman Türk azınlığa karşı olan tutumunda hem de Batı Trakya Azınlığının tarihinde bir dönüm noktası oluşturmaktadır. Yunanistan'ın Batı Trakya azınlık politikasındaki değişim sonucunda azınlığın yaşam şartlarında gelişmeler olmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı değişimlerin ne derece olduğunu ve süregelen problemlerin azınlık üyelerini nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaktır. Dahası, bu tez Yunan devletinin Batı Trakya azınlığı politikasındaki değişimde önemli rol oynayan aktörlerin analiz edilmesini amaçlamaktadır. Tezde yapılan 1990 öncesi ve 1990 sonrası dönemlerdeki durum değerlendirmesi sonucunda bu tezde ileri sürülen argüman şudur; bir yandan ekonomik ve sosyal alanda değişimler gözlenirken diğer yandan politik ve eğitim meselelerinde Yunanistan'ın Batı Trakya azınlık politikasındaki süreklilikler azınlık üyelerini etkilemeye devam etmektedir. Bu tez, böyle bir 'kısmi değişim' sonucu Batı Trakya'daki bugünkü durumun 1990 öncekinden daha iyi olduğunu, fakat azınlığın bazı önemli problemlerinin Yunan devletinin Müslüman Türk azınlığın bazı

meselerine karşı deęişmeyen tutumu sebebiyle hala çözüme kavuşturulmadığının gösterilmesini amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yunanistan, Batı Trakya, Azınlık, Müslüman Türkler, Süreklilik ve Deęişim

To My Mother, Father, Sister and Brother

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INTRODUCTION

Western Thrace is a region, which extends on an area of 8575 square kilometers in the northeast of Greece. It is surrounded by the Maritza River, which marks the Turkish-Greek border, in the east; Nestos River in the west; Rhodopi Mountains in the north; and the Aegean Sea in the south. It is composed of three provinces: Xanthi in the west, Evros in the east and Rhodopi in the middle.¹

Since the beginning of 1920s, the existence of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace region of Greece has always been one of the most sensitive issues of the Greek state. In Greece, the terms ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim’ imply the opposite of the terms ‘Greek’ and ‘Christian’. The historical rivalries between Greeks and Turks and between Muslims and Christians actually affected negatively the Greek perception of the existence of a Muslim Turkish minority. From the beginning of 1920s until mid 1950s, Greece tried to preserve the Lausanne spirit in Western Thrace. However, starting from 1955, the situation started to worsen. For almost fifty years, the Greek administrations opted for a restrictive minority policy in Western Thrace and the Muslim Turks suffered from different kinds of human rights violations which made their lives unbearable.

Starting from the beginning of 1990s, in the era of globalization, the minority policy of the Greek state towards the Western Thracian minority started to change. By the introduction of the new minority policy under the Mitsotakis government in 1991, the Greek state started to adopt policies that aimed to make better the living conditions of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace. It is for this reason that the introduction of the new minority policy of the Greek state in 1991 marks a turning point in the history of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace.

However, after making a comparison between the conditions in Western Thrace in pre-1990 and post-1990 periods it comes out that the change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace has proven to be partially effective, not fully effective. Although some of the problems of the Muslim Turks have come to an end

¹ In Appendix A, see the general location of Western Thrace in the map of Greece. And, in Appendix B, see the map of Western Thrace.

and the members of the Muslim Turkish minority live a more democratic and better life compared to the pre-1990 period some of the problems of the Muslim Turks still remain unresolved. In that respect, the main argument of this study is that it is the economic and social domains in which the reflections of the change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace is observed while the stance of the Greek state has not changed towards the problems of the Minority in the fields of education and political matters.

This thesis will highlight to what extent there has been changes in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace and to what extent the problems continue to affect the lives of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace. Also, I will figure out what the internal and external reasons were for such a minority policy change by studying the roles of the domestic, international and supranational actors and their degrees of effectiveness in forcing Greece to change its traditional minority policy of Western Thrace.

Regarding the literature about the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace, there are a number of works dealing with the problems and the living conditions of the Minority members in the pre-1990 period. However, there is a lack of debate about the reflections of such a significant change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace that was introduced in 1991. Has the members of the minority witnessed its reflections in practice? Has something changed in favor of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace since the early 1990s? Do they live, today, in better conditions? And, what are the fields that the Greek state continues to apply its traditional minority policy in which changes are not observed in Western Thrace? By finding out answers to such kind of questions via making a comparison between the period of pre-1990 and post-1990, this thesis aims to contribute especially to the contemporary literature of the Western Thracian Minority.

Before mentioning the content of this thesis I have two important points to mention. The first point is that while identifying the Western Thracian minority there is a continuous terminological difference between Turkey and Greece. The Greek state officially uses the term 'Muslim minority' for the minority of Western Thrace while the Turkish state calls them as 'Turkish minority'. And, while attributing to the Western Thracian minority most of the Turkish and Greek academic circles generally

use the term that is officially used by their states. In this thesis, the term that I will continuously use for the minority members is ‘Muslim Turks’.² My reason of using this term is that after reading the materials about the minority of Western Thrace as well as my experiences in the region I concluded that both ethnicity and religion have played a significant role in the self and collective identification of the minority members. History shows us that with some exceptions most of the members of the Western Thracian minority have continuously identified themselves as ‘Muslim Turks’ of Western Thrace stipulating together their ethnic and religious characteristics. Being ethnically Turk, religiously Muslim and officially Greek citizens has always been pointed out by the members of the Muslim Turkish minority.

The second point is that, in this thesis, while mentioning the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace I prefer to use the term ‘Greek state’ rather than ‘Greek governments’ because when one dwells on the state-minority relations in Western Thrace it becomes quite obvious that the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace is a state policy. Throughout the history, the official policy of the Greek state towards the Muslim Turkish minority has not so much affected from the governmental changes in Greece. Therefore, the usage of the term ‘Greek state’ seems more appropriate while referring to the minority policy of Greece in Western Thrace.

Regarding the general framework of this thesis, in the first chapter, I will focus on the theoretical basis of the minority concept. I think that what we mean by referring to a minority and how this concept has been analyzed by different theoretical schools is necessary in order to have a conceptual background before dwelling analytically on the Muslim Turkish minority. Moreover, I will explain the three theories of ethnicity, their similarities and differences but I will apply them in the conclusion of this thesis after explaining continuities and changes in Western Thrace. Furthermore, after giving the conceptual framework I will focus on the protection of minority rights at the international level. Especially, by the globalization phenomenon, the international and supranational organizations started to deal with the human rights issues in both domestic and international level more effectively. They became one of the precipitating forces in the minority policy

² There are some scholars who use the term Turkish Muslims. For me, both the terms “Muslim Turks” and “Turkish Muslims” means and implies the same.

changes of the states. Considering that these organizations played one of the primary roles in the Greek minority policy change of Western Thrace, it seems that it will be fruitful to know the effectiveness of these organizations in the protection of minority rights.

In the second chapter, firstly, I will very briefly mention minority groups, other than the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace, living in Greece. Then, I will deeply focus on the history of the Muslim Turkish minority until the beginning of 1990s. In order to see the continuities and changes in the issues of human rights in Western Thrace and to make comparisons between the periods of pre-1990s and post-1990s, it is necessary to give the history of the Muslim Turkish minority. Indeed, the history of Muslim Turks is divided into two parts: The one before 1991 and the one after 1991 because the year 1991 marks the official change in the minority policy of the Greek state towards the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace.

After evaluating the history of the Muslim Turkish minority, in the third chapter of my thesis, I will analytically focus on the problems and human rights violations that had occurred in Western Thrace until the beginning of 1990s. I will explain each issue separately in order to give a clearer picture about the degree of significance of the problems and human rights violations in the region.

After giving the history and problems of the Muslim Turkish minority, in the fourth chapter, I will dwell on both the changes in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace and the continuities in the Greek stance towards the existing problems of the Muslim Turks in the region. This chapter will be about the post-1990 period. As in the third chapter, I will explain each type of problem separately. Also, in the last part of this chapter, I will explain the roles of the national, international and supranational actors in the policy change of the Greek state towards the Western Thracian minority in the post-1990 period.

In the conclusion of my thesis, I will question to what extent the basic premises of the three theories of ethnicity fit better while explaining continuities and changes in Western Thrace. Moreover, I will mention the integration-assimilation debate and its applicability for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. Finally, I will conclude my thesis with an overall evaluation of the continuities and changes in the

Greek minority policy of Western Thrace and its reflections in the region as well as my prospects about the future of the Muslim Turkish minority.

While making research about my case study, I used libraries both in Ankara and Komotini, and internet resources like articles from electronic journals, reports and declarations. Besides, I went through journals, newspapers and leaflets published by the Minority members in Western Thrace. In addition to the English and Turkish resources, I, also, used books and articles which are written in Greek by which the Greek perception of the existence of a Muslim Turkish minority became clearer in this thesis. Moreover, on 9 February 2005, I made two interviews. One with the President of the Consultation Council and the elected mufti of Komotini, İbrahim Şerif, and the other with Galip Galip, the former MP representing the Western Thracian Minority at the Greek Parliament.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE MINORITY CONCEPT AND THE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

1.1 Definition of the Minority Concept

The lack of definition for the term ‘minority’ has been a problem in international relations for a long time. There have been different definitions for this term. In the interwar era, the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) in its advisory opinion for the issue related with the emigration of Greco-Bulgarian communities defined the term minority as³:

...a group of persons living in a given country or locality having a race, religion, language, and tradition in a sentiment of solidarity, with a view to preserving their traditions, maintaining their form of worship, ensuring the instruction and upbringing of their children in accordance with the spirit and traditions of their race and mutually assisting one another.

Up until today, there is not a generally accepted definition of ‘minority’ in both national and international level. Despite the lack of a common definition, there are two definitions that are widely accepted and used for defining minorities. The first definition belongs to F. Capotorti⁴:

A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members -being nationals of the State- possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.

³ The Advisory Opinion of PCIJ quoted in Athanasia Spiliopoulou Akermark, *Justifications of Minority Protection in International Law* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1996) p.86

⁴ F Capotorti, *Monograph 23, UN Doc E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Add.1-7, UN Sales No.E.78* quoted in Eric Heinze, “The Construction and Contingency of the Minority Concept” in Deirdre Fotrtrell and Bill Bowring, eds., *Minority and Group Rights in the New Millenium* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1999) p.43

The second definition came from J. Deschenes⁵:

A group of citizens of a State, constituting a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that State, endowed with ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law.

My understanding of minority is in line with these two definitions, especially with that of Capotorti's. What can be derived from both these two definitions is that minority is composed of a group of people are citizens of a state. They are numerically less compared to the overall population of the country. Secondly, they have common religious, ethnic and linguistic characteristics that differentiate them from the majority of the state. Thirdly, they try to preserve their characteristics by displaying a sense of solidarity among themselves. Fourthly, they have a non-dominant position within the country. Having a numerical superiority does not always mean being the dominant group within the state. Sometimes, the majority can be dominated by the minority as in the case of the South Africa. Likely, some scholars argue that while giving a sociological definition of the term 'minority' we mean a group characterized by four qualities: identifiability (being identified by others), differential power, differential and pejorative treatment and group awareness.⁶

When we look to the European side for the definition of minority, the most significant organizations dealing with the minority issues have been the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The European Commission for Democracy Through Law, which is an advisory body of the CoE and also known as the Venice Commission, in the Article 2 of the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities drafted in 8 February 1991, defined the term 'national minority' as a group which is numerically less than the population of a state, being nationals of that state, having ethnical, religious or

⁵ J. Deschenes, *Proposal Concerning a Definition of the Term 'Minority'*, UN Soc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985 quoted in Kristin Henrard, *Devising An Adequate System of Minority Protection* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2000) p.22. I want to note that both Capotorti and Deschenes were special rapporteurs of the UN-Sub Commission.

⁶ Anthony Gary Dworkin and Rosalind J. Dworkin, *The Minority Report: An Introduction to Racial, Ethnic and Gender Relations* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999) pp.18-22

linguistic features different than the rest of the population and having the will to protect their traditions, culture, religion or language. Any group having these characteristics shall be treated as an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority and belonging to a national minority should be an individual choice from which no disadvantage should result from the exercise of this choice.⁷

Besides, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in 1993, adopted for an Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. According to this Additional Protocol, national minority is defined as a group of persons in a state residing on the territory of that state and being citizens of that state. They maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that state. They display different ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic characteristics. They are smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state but they are sufficiently representative. They are determined to preserve together which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language.⁸

When we look to the OSCE (formerly named as CSCE), it is widely agreed that the concept of minority is a ‘non-dominant group which constitutes a numerical minority within a state’⁹. Max Van Der Stoel, the first OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, defines the concept of minority as follows¹⁰:

First of all, a minority is a group with linguistic, ethnic, or cultural characteristics which distinguish it from the majority. Secondly, a minority is a group which usually not only seeks to maintain its identity but also tries to give stronger expression to that identity.

The attitude of the OSCE in defining the ‘minority’ concept is also interpreted to be pragmatic in a way that its definition of the concept of minority will

⁷ The definition of the Venice Commission quoted in Kristin Henrard, *op. cit.*, p.27

⁸ Article 1 of Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms quoted in Tamer Bacinoğlu, “The Human Rights of Globalization: the Question of Minority Rights”, *Perceptions*, no. 4, December 1998-February 1999

⁹ R.Zaagman, “The CSCE High Commissioner on Minorities..” in A. Bloed, ed., *The Challenge of Change: The Helsinki Summit of the CSCE and its Aftermath* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1994) p.113

¹⁰ A Lecture by Mr. Max Van der Stoel available at www.osce.org

be commonly accepted by its own member states.¹¹ We can see that there are some principles adopted in the CSCE Conferences in Copenhagen (1990) and Moscow (1991) that contain significant provisions for the rights of minorities and signifying minorities as one of the permanent features of nation states.¹² CSCE/OSCE argues that belonging to a national minority is an individual choice which will not work for the disadvantage of that individual.¹³

After evaluating the definitions on the concept of minority, it seems that despite the lack of a widely-accepted unique definition most of the definitions converge on some common characteristics of minorities like numerical inferiority, different ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic features. It seems that one of the main reasons of not having a generally accepted definition of this term is that most of the times minorities are seen as a group of people who are likely to claim for secessionist movements whenever they get the chance to do so. Minorities are generally accepted as the ‘agents’ of the kin-states and potential threats to unity of the states. Consequently, states try to have an effective control of the minorities living within its boundaries and they refrain from giving partial or full autonomy to their minorities because in case of such an autonomy is given to a minority group other minorities within that state can, also, incline more towards raising their own claims for autonomy which is likely to affect the unity of that state in a negative way.

Application of a general definition of minority can directly or indirectly lessen the control of the nation state on its minorities. Accordingly, states have been reluctant to accept a common definition. From this perspective, one can simply assert that states prefer to refrain from the general acceptance of this term because the absolute state sovereignty is damaged by the foreign intervention of other states, especially by the kin-states, to their internal affairs related with the issues of minorities. Especially, by the globalization phenomenon of the post-Cold War era governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started to intervene in

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Patrick Thornberry, “International and European Standards on Minority Rights” in Hugh Miall, ed., *Minority Rights in Europe* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994) p.18

¹³ For the set of the standards adopted by the OSCE see Richard Dalton, “The Role of the CSCE” in Hugh Miall, *op. cit.*, pp.100-102

the domestic affairs of the nation states. The issues related with the protection of minorities are one of the basic reasons for such interventions by which states lose their absolute control within their own national borders. Therefore, states generally refrain from accepting a common definition of minority.

1.2 The Minority Concept in the Modernist Theories

From a theoretical framework, minority issues have largely been ignored by social sciences. The emergence and the consolidation of the nation states especially after the French revolution have continuously been supported by modernist social science from the nineteenth century onwards. Modernists -both Liberals and Marxists- of the 19th and 20th century argued that enlightenment and modernization would have a loosening impact on ethnic attachments of the communities by which the minority communities could be incorporated into the majority communities primarily via assimilation. One example for such an understanding comes from the liberal school, John Stuart Mill¹⁴:

Nobody can suppose that it is not more beneficial for a Breton or a Basque of French Navarre to be a member of the French nationality than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of the past times. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish highlander to be a part of Great Britain.

The nineteenth-century liberals made a distinction between the ‘great nations’ such as France, Germany, England or Russia and ‘nationalities’ like the Slovaks, the Welsh, the Romanians and the Czechs. While they accepted the great nations as civilized and developed they adopted the small nationalities as primitive and undeveloped. The liberals of the nineteenth century supported the national independence of the great nations. However, they favored and endorsed coercive assimilation of nationalities within the great nations.¹⁵

Likely, the Marxists, for whom rather than ethnicity it was the class distinction central to the issues of nation states/nationalism, favored the assimilation of small minority communities. For the 19th century socialists the cultural criterias,

¹⁴ John Stuart Mill quoted in John Michael Keating and John McGarry, “Introduction” in Michael Keating and John McGarry, eds., *Minority Nationalism and the Changing International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p.2

¹⁵ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995a) p.53

whether linguistic, ethnic or religious were considered to be devices used by the economically powerful entities in order to divide people.¹⁶ For Marx and Engels, the small national communities incapable of constituting proper national states should vanish by being assimilated into more vital and progressive nations.¹⁷ They favored the great national subdivisions of Europe to independence. While they endorsed the unification of the great nations like France, Italy, Germany or Russia they simply rejected the independence of smaller nationalities like the Welsh, Czech and Romanians favoring their assimilation within the great nations.¹⁸ According to Marxism, ethnicity is a remnant of tradition implying us that in case of a need for class solidarity the significance of ethnicity disappears.¹⁹ Shortly, the general tendency in the modernist theories was to equate modernity with progress and the boundedness of the communities to their ethnic attachments as backwardness.

The modernist theories are generally criticized because they assert that it was the rise of capitalism that prepared the necessary ground for the formation and consolidation of nation states. One of the critiques, Anthony Smith, claims that modern nations and nationalism were grounded in pre-existing ethnic ties. He puts emphasis on the existence of ethnic issues rather than economic issues in the formations of nation states and nationalism. Rather than economic, it was the ethnic attachments of the communities that prepared the necessary ground for the formation of nation states.²⁰

Whether the reasons of nation state formations are economic or ethnic, what I argue is that Liberals and Marxists failed to see the relation between the consolidation of nation states/nationalism and the rise of ethnic attachments of the

¹⁶ Jan de Groof and Gracienne Lauwers, "Education Policy and Law: The Politics of Multiculturalism in Education", *Education and the Law*, Vol.14, No.1-2, 2002

¹⁷ Ephraim Nimni, "Marx, Engels and the National Question" in Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995b) p.63

¹⁸ Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, 1995b, pp.69-70

¹⁹ Messay Kebede, "Directing Ethnicity Toward Modernity", *Social Theory & Practice*, April 2001, Vol. 27, Issue 2, p.5

²⁰ Anthony D.Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) p.71. For more information about the underestimation of the concept of ethnicity in the modernist theories see Robin Cohen, "The Making of Ethnicity: A Modern Defense of Primordialism" in Erdwart Mortimer, ed, *People Nation and State* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999) pp.3-11

communities. Besides its ineffectiveness to cope with the minority issues, the individualistic understanding of the liberal thought promotes an assimilationist ideal by condemning and not respecting group-based rights of the smaller minority communities. The assimilationist ideal of the liberals envisions a society where a person's social group membership makes no difference for their position in the society.²¹

One of the reasons for the assimilation of minorities in modernist theories is the threat perception of minorities to the security of nation states. Especially, if the minority has ethnic, religious or cultural bonds with the neighbouring countries then such a notion of threat increases. As Kymlicka states, minority groups are generally accepted as a kind of 'fifth column', likely to be working for a neighbouring enemy.²² They are treated as the 'agents' of the neighboring country.

It is widely agreed that the existence of a minority enables the neighbouring country to intervene in the domestic politics of the country in order to protect the right of its minority. This process can, also, be called as the 'securitization' of interstate issues.²³ In case of such a securitization in relations between two countries, it is likely that the minority will be subjected to different kinds of discrimination. The state will not provide enough room for maneuver for the minority members and it will always tend to control their actions because the state security is of utmost importance for the survival of states. Thus, it seems that the threat perception of minorities in modernist theories went hand in hand with the securitization of interstate relations and the assimilation of minorities.

Modernization was equated with the strengthening of nation states regardless of the minority issues and rights. The necessary importance was not put on the issues of minorities. Rather, the modernist theoretical schools depicted that they favored a more cohesive and consolidated nation state just by letting aside the issue of

²¹ Iris Marion Young "Together in Difference: Transforming the Logic of Group Political Conflict" in Will Kymlicka, ed., (1995b) p.162

²² Will Kymlicka, "Multiculturalism and Minority Rights: West and East", *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 4/2002, p.19, European Center For Minority Issues, www.ecmi.de

²³ O. Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization" in Ronnie D. Lipschutz, ed, *On Security* (NY:Columbia University Press, 1995) pp. 65-71

minorities, democracy and freedoms, which is also called as the ‘benign neglect’²⁴ principle within the modernist theories. This line of thought within the theoretical schools started to change by the globalization phenomenon.

One of the pioneers who mentioned about the significance of rights of ethnic groups within states is Vernon Van Dyke. In 1977, he clearly criticizes the individualist understanding of the liberal thought. For him, the individualistic understanding of the liberal thought has not granted a status to the minorities as units who were somewhere between the individual and the state and thus this understanding failed to cope with the sufferings of the minorities by simply ignoring them. It is not rational to assert that only states, nations, and peoples are entitled to be treated as entities and that smaller groups are not. According to Dyke²⁵:

...it is illogical to jump from the state, nation or ‘people’ on the one side, to the individual level on the other, and to say that the ethnic communities that exist in-between do not deserve consideration.

Moreover, modernization played a significant role in the increase in the consciousness of the minority communities. The modernist ideology of ‘one language, one nation, one state’ has proven to be a failure.²⁶ Today, minorities became conscious of their positive and negative rights and more importantly they started to struggle for these rights. They started to demand equality before both the domestic and international law.

Indeed, what can be derived from the developments up until today is that rather than reducing its effectiveness, modernization helped for the strengthening of ethnic solidarity within communities. Likely, when we evaluate the globalization-ethnicity debate we can see that since the beginning of 1990s globalization has not resulted in the formation of a global village in which the ethnic, social and economic differences among the communities will lose their significance. Quite contrastingly, as I will mention now, globalization enabled the strengthening of their differences.

²⁴ Ibid. Kymlicka, 1995b, p.49

²⁵ Vernon Van Dyke, “The Individual, The State and Ethnic Communities in Political Theory” in Will Kymlicka, ed., (1995b), p.54

²⁶ Ibid. Kymlicka, “Multiculturalism and Minority Rights: West and East”, *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 4/2002, p.18

1.3 Globalization and Minorities

Globalization has directly affected the sovereignties of the nation states. States ceased to be the only political and economic actor on its national domain. J. Habermas defines two main processes for the effect of globalization on the nation states. The first one is the forces of globalization from the outside of state by which the power of state is transferred from national to supra-national level. And, the second one is the pluralization of societies from within the state by which the authority and the integrative capacities of the nation states are weakened.²⁷ Rather than the ending of the state sovereignties we witnessed a transformation of nation states under pressures from above, like the WTO and NAFTA in economics, NATO in defense and EU in politics and from below, like the rise of new social and political movements.²⁸

Actually, the borders of the national and international domains became blurred by the globalization phenomenon. Supranational, international and regional organizations like the EU, NATO and NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International started to put an end to the absolute sovereignty of nation states. Besides, in the era of globalization minorities started to claim their rights that were not given for years. They started to complain about the unjust attitude of their states towards themselves.

According to the arguments of the modernist theories, globalization is eroding differences. This is so because of their bias towards the minorities and their liberal, leftist and Marxist way of thought that put more emphasis on large majority nations.²⁹ I disagree with these arguments of the modernist school. I think that rather than homogenization, globalization has produced differentiation between different

²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “The European Nation-State—Its Achievements and its Limits: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship” in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, (London: Verso, 1996) pp.281-284 quoted in Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, “Challenging the Liberal Nation State? Postnationalism, Multiculturalism and the Collective Claims Making of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in Britain and Germany”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 105, No.3, November 1999, p.653

²⁸ Michael Keating, “Nations without States: The Accommodation of Nationalism in the New State Order” in Michael Keating and John McGarry, eds., (2001), pp.20-22

²⁹ Ibid. Keating and McGarry, p.8

ethnic, religious and linguistics communities.³⁰ As it is noted, contrary to widespread expectations, globalization contributed to increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in modern societies.³¹ Similarly, global trends serving to reemphasize ethnicity can be interpreted as a counterpoint to the de-emphasis of ethnicity through globalization.³²

In the post-Cold War era, a group of thinkers from within the liberal school of thought, labeling themselves as liberal culturalists, started to re-evaluate the basic principles of liberalism in order to explain the minority issues in the post-Cold War era. Liberal culturalists try to reconcile the minority rights with individual rights. As it is stated, liberal culturalism is a theory best suited to different forms of cultural association that are not located in a space-time segment and keeping few barriers to entry.³³ For liberal culturalists, the liberal-democratic states should not only uphold the set of common civil and political rights of citizenship protected in all liberal democracies. They should, also, give some group-specific rights for distinctive identities.³⁴

However, liberal culturalists are criticized for dwelling only on the cultural side of the ethnic minority issues and simply letting aside the significance of ethnic attachments of those issues. For some scholars, one should take care to synthesize liberalism with the practices of active ethnic communities, not just their passive cultural products.³⁵ Besides the liberal culturalists, there are some other scholars like Will Kymlicka who criticize the basic premises of the liberal school regarding the ethnic and national minority rights. In his book, *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, he aims to explain how the rights of minorities can coexist with the rights of the majority, how they are consistent with the individual human rights and to what extent

³⁰ John Hutchinson, "Nationalism, Globalism and the Conflict of Civilizations" in Umut Özkırıklı, ed., *Nationalism and its Futures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.77

³¹ Mitja Zagar, "Ethnic Relations, Nationalism and Minority Nationalism in South-Eastern Europe" in Michael Keating and John McGarry, eds., (2001) p.326

³² Alan B. Anderson, "The Complexity of Postmodern Identities: A Postmodern Reevaluation", *Identity: An International Journal of Theory And Research*, Vol.1 (3), p.220

³³ Eric Kaufmann, "Liberal Ethnicity: Beyond Liberal Nationalism and Minority Rights", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.23 No.6, November 2000, p.1088

³⁴ Will Kymlicka, "Immigrant Integration and Minority Nationalism" in Michael Keating and John McGarry, eds., (2001) p.66

³⁵ Ibid. Kaufmann, p.1090

the minority rights are limited by individual rights. For him, there are two basic constraints that limit the group-differentiated rights of the minorities. The first constraint is that the minority rights should not allow one group to dominate other group. And the second one is that the oppression within groups should not be allowed. Kymlicka calls the first group of constraints as 'internal restrictions' and the second group as 'external protections'³⁶

One of my reasons to apply the theories of ethnicity in this thesis is that in the modernist theories I evaluated above, it becomes obvious that ethnicity has always played a significant role in the formation and development of communities including majorities and minorities. The necessary significance that was not put on the issues of minority by the modernist theories has generally not affected the building blocks of ethnicity of the minority communities. As the ethnic attachments played a crucial role in the state formations, they played an important role against the assimilation of minority groups within the majorities. Unlike the arguments of the modernist theories, enlightenment, modernization and globalization have not resulted in the assimilation of minority communities. Quite the contrary, minorities are becoming more conscious about their ethnic attachments and they started to use these attachments in their claims for a better social, economic and political life. In other words, minorities started to engage in a form of interest group politics that seeks to improve the well being of the group members as individuals.³⁷

Secondly, when one speaks of a minority rather than religion and language it is the concept of ethnicity comes first to the mind. This is obvious in the studies of many political theorists where the concept of minority is generally equated with the label of 'ethnic group'.³⁸ Ethnicity differs from religion and language in such a way that it is easier for a person belonging to a minority to change his religion and language than his ethnic attachments. As it is argued, it is likely that ethnic identity

³⁶ Ibid. Kymlicka, 1995b, p.6, 35, 194

³⁷ The term 'interest group politics' of ethnic groups was used by N.Glazer and P.Moynihan quoted in Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Sage publications, 1991) p.19

³⁸ Ibid Kaufmann, p.1087

can incorporate religious consciousness and in some instances ethnic identity can even replace it.³⁹

Thirdly, ethnicity is one of the most essential glues of a community in order to keep the members of the group together. In the light of the essences of ethnicity for minority communities that I referred I will apply the theories of ethnicity in my thesis. There are three theories of ethnicity which are Primordialism, Circumstantialism/ Mobilizationism and Constructionism. In the coming section, I will explain the basic premises of these three theories and I will dwell on their similarities and differences.

1.4 Theories of Ethnicity

In the past section, I stated that assimilationist policies were widely applied for the (ethnic) homogenization of nation states up until the end of the Second World War. Primordial school emerged and developed as a reaction to the assimilationist school of thought. According to Cornell and Hartmann, two major world developments have served to interfere with an assimilationist viewpoint in global or comparative perspective⁴⁰:

The post colonial experience of ‘new nations’ where nationalistic conceptions were based on artificial boundaries. And, secondly, the experience of industrialized countries which started to become refragmented as a result of ethnic and racial reassertations within these countries.

Primordialists emerged in the second half of 1950s. They use the primordial attachments -a concept first used by Edward Shils (1957) and developed by Clifford Geertz (1963)-, like place of birth, kinship, myths, etc. in order to explain this survival and persistence against the assimilationist attempts. For them, these attachments are the fundamentals of a person who are born into them.

According to Isaacs, whether raised high or held low, history, mythology, folklore, art and religious beliefs, all being primordial attachments of a person, are

³⁹ E.Balibar and E. Wallerstein, *Phyli, Ethnos, Taxi (Race, Nation, Class)* (Athens: Politis, 1991) p.147 quoted in Anna Triandafyllidou and Anna Paraskevopoulou, “When is the Greek Nation: The Role of Enemies and Minorities”, *Geopolitics*, Vol.7, No.2 (Autumn 2002) p.91

⁴⁰ Stephen E.Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities In A Changing World* (California: Pine Forge Press, 1998) p.210

the idols of all our tribes.⁴¹ Primordial ties that form the basic identity of a person are the markers of humanity that come to the person at the earliest periods of socialization before the process of filtration via rejection or acceptance.⁴² The strength of primordial bonds differs from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. However, virtually for every person these bonds seem to flow more from a sense of natural/spiritual affinity rather than from social interaction.⁴³ Another significant figure of the Primordialist school, Van den Berghe, focused on the significance of biological relationship/kinship among the individuals of the communities in explaining the issues of ethnicity and race.⁴⁴

As it is mentioned, the concept of Primordialism contains three distinct ideas: The first idea is ‘apriority’: Primordial identities or attachments are given, a priori, and underived rather than sociological. The second idea is ‘ineffability’: Primordial sentiments are overpowering and coercive that cannot be analyzed in relation to social interaction. And, the last idea is ‘affectivity’: The primordial attachments are emotional and sentimental.⁴⁵ Moreover, there is a psychological and emotional need of people to belong to different communities. Generally speaking, people are inclined to belong to more than one collectivity or polity but the way and the intensity of their belonging can change from person to person.⁴⁶

Likely, for Primordialists, people living in minorities generally tend to belong to a group in order to feel himself/herself more secure and psychologically satisfied. One of the reasons for such a tendency is that in case of a non membership it is likely that they will become a ‘minority within the minority’ by which their sufferings are

⁴¹ Harold R. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989) p.40

⁴² Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) p.4

⁴³ Clifford Geertz, “Primordial Ties” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.42

⁴⁴ Pierre Van Den Berghe, “Does Race Matter” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., (1996) pp.57-63

⁴⁵ Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, “The Poverty of Primordialism” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., (1996) pp.45-50

⁴⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, “Belongings: in between the Indigene and the Diasporic” in Umut Özkırımlı, ed., (2003) p.130

likely to increase compared to the members of different groups. Regarding the emotional need to belong to a group, Sigmund Freud accepts that his own sense of Jewishness had nothing to do with religion or national pride. He was bonded to Jewishness by many emotional and obscure forces.⁴⁷ One of the basic criticisms made against the basic premises of the Primordialist school is their static understanding of identity, ethnicity and their negligence of contextuality.

Circumstantialists emerged against the arguments of Primordialists. Unlike Primordialists, Circumstantialists put emphasis on the contextuality of ethnicity. For them, in case of a contextual change the ethnic attachments of people can also change. They are not fixed. Also, they contend that ethnicity and primordial symbols are instruments used for the collective interest and attaining certain goals. It is noted that social groups result from and are maintained by the goal-seeking actions of individuals. When the cost of attaining individual goals increases they align themselves with a group having similar goals.⁴⁸ For them, it is not the primordial ties but the interest of a community that plays significant role in the enhancement of ethnic feelings of communities.⁴⁹

Constructionism has more in common with Circumstantialists than the Primordialists. Their main argument is that ethnic identities are socially and consciously constructed depending on the contextual changes. It has a dynamic and fluid characteristic of ethnic identity. They focus on both contextual changes and the social construction of identities by which they go one step further from the basic arguments of Circumstantialists. For Constructivists, people who are seen as belonging to the same ethnic group do not only differ in the strength of their ethnic

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud's translated extracts in Leon Poloakov, *The Agrarian Myth* (London, 1974) p.287 quoted in Walker Connor, *Ethno-nationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) p.203

⁴⁸ Michael Banton, *Ethnic and Racial Consciousness* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997) p.49

⁴⁹ For more information about the distinction between Primordialists and Circumstantialist see Francisco J. Gil-White, "How Thick is Blood? The Plot Thickens...: If Ethnic Actors Are Primordialists, What Remains of the Circumstantialist/Primordialist controversy?", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, , September 1999, Vol. 22, Issue 5. See also, Stephen E.Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities In A Changing World*, (1998)

attachments but they can have a very different and competing notions about the origin, history, culture and boundaries of the group.⁵⁰

Constructionists assert that ethnicity is something that is consciously constructed and can be redefined by the members of the same group depending on the contextual changes and the changing objective interests of the people. Actually, for Constructionists, ethnicity is a tool for further integration in the changing circumstances. However, there may be different visions of ethnic identity within the same group. In case of contextual changes, while some of the members of a group can keep their ethnic identities some other members of the same group can simply leave their identities behind and construct a new identity for self-identification.

Comparing these three theories, it becomes obvious that one of the basic differences is that Primordialists have a static understanding of ethnic identity while Circumstantialists and Constructivists have a fluid understanding depending on contextual or circumstantial changes. Regarding individual interests of people, Circumstantialists are generally criticized for giving a narrow definition of the collective interest. For Circumstantialists, ethnicity is rather used as a tool for mobilization of groups in their struggle for scarce resources.⁵¹ As a counterargument, it is argued that besides their individual economic and political interests, people also struggle for their ideal interests.⁵² On this debate between the personal/instrumental and ideal interests of the members of the ethnic communities some scholars suggested to reconcile these two interests. It was contended that it should be more reasonable if the instrumental thinking of the people is limited within a field of possibilities whose boundaries will be determined by a Primordialist psychology.⁵³

Moreover, Primordialist arguments about the unity and coherence within the ethnic groups are criticized by the Constructivist scholars. For them, the strength of

⁵⁰ Ibid. Cornell and Hartmann

⁵¹ Kebede, *op. cit.*, p.3

⁵² James McKay, "An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.5 No.4, 1982, p.400

⁵³ Francisco J. Gil-White, *op. cit.*, p.13. Also, for the matrix model approach to primordialism and mobilization developed by McKay in which he reconciles the viewpoints of these two approaches and inquires the extent to which they are both operative in varying degrees see James McKay, *op. cit.*, pp.402-413

the ethnic attachments of individuals from within an ethnic group may vary as well as their differing and competing notions about the boundaries of their group that affects the unity and coherence of their ethnic group.⁵⁴ It is not always common to see the same voices from a community of people sharing the same ethnic, religious and cultural characteristics as the Primordialists argue. For Constructionists, the boundaries that differentiate ‘us’ from ‘others’ are not given. These boundaries are constructed depending on how the members of a group consider the bounds within their group.⁵⁵

In order to see clearer the differences and similarities, we can also make an analogy between the theories of ethnicity. Suppose that there are different groups of stones in a stone wall. There are defined boundaries between these groups of stones and each group has its own characteristics and functions that do not change over time. This understanding is the Primordialist understanding of ethnic groups. However, for Circumstantialists and Constructivists, the outside surface of the stone wall covers an unstable structure.⁵⁶ Here, what Circumstantialists put forward is that the ethnic identities of communities can change in meaning and importance in case of contextual changes. For Constructionists, the existing identities not only can change in meaning but also they can be replaced by other identities as the context changes unlike the arguments of the Primordialist school about the unchanging boundaries of ethnic identities.

Considering the similarities and differences between these three theories of ethnicity, in the conclusion of this thesis I will focus on to what extent the Primordialist and Circumstantialist arguments fit more while explaining the continuities and changes in pre-1990 and post-1990 period in Western Thrace. While

⁵⁴ Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, “From Political Mobilization to the Politics of Consciousness” in Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997) p.15

⁵⁵ Joseph R. Gusfield, “Primordialism and Nationality”, *Society*, January/February 1996, Vol. 33, Issue 2, p.3. Also, for an anthropological view about the debate between the Primordialist and Constructionist thinking of ethnicity, see Tim Allen and John Ehade, “Anthropological Approaches to Ethnicity and Conflict in Europe and Beyond”, *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol.4, 1997, pp.217-246

⁵⁶ This example was given by Henry E.Hale, “Conceptualizing Ethnicity for Political Science Towards A More Rational National”, Indiana University, A Draft Paper Prepared For the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, April 2002, pp.2-3 www.ceu.hu/cps/bluebird/eve/state_building/hale.pdf

explaining so, I will not apply the Constructivists arguments mainly because their arguments about a redefinition of identity have not been witnessed in Western Thrace and the adaptation to the contextual changes has not resulted in a social construction of a new identity in the Western Thracian Minority.

Before applying for these two theories in the conclusion of my thesis, here, I want to note that explaining the continuities and changes in a minority community only by focusing on the Circumstantialist arguments and ignoring those of the Primordialist school is not a good methodology. If it is done so I think that the general picture can be missed or misinterpreted. Primordialism and Circumstantialism may be two competing theories but they are not mutually exclusive. Circumstantialists do not completely reject the significance of the building blocks of ethnicity. For example, Fredrick Barth, one of the pioneers of the Circumstantialist school, accepts the significance of primordial bonds by stating that “the ethnic membership is at once a question of source of origin as well as of current identity”⁵⁷

Circumstantialists warn that ethnicity should not be eliminated together or simply ignored because it is a byproduct and once it is assumed then it is not reasonable to eliminate it.⁵⁸ Regardingly, some scholars put emphasis on the necessity not to ignore the concepts of Primordialism in the way it is these attachments that ‘underline the importance of perceptions and beliefs in guiding human action’.⁵⁹ Actually, Circumstantialists are simply against the static and fixed understanding of the Primordialist interpretation of ethnicity. They do not totally reject all the arguments of the Primordialists. Therefore, in my thesis, my methodology will not be simply to ignore the basic assumptions and arguments of the Primordialist school and focus only on the assumptions of the Circumstantialists while explaining the continuities and changes of my case study.

⁵⁷ Fredrick Barth, “Introduction” in Fredrick Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, MA: Little Brown & Company, 1969) p.29

⁵⁸ Kebede, *op. cit.*, p.4

⁵⁹ Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2000) p.83

1.5 The International Protection of Minorities

1.5.1 The League of Nations

The emergence of the minorities goes back to the period of nationalism in Western Europe. Capotorti traces the history of minority protection back to the Treaty of Vienna of 1606 that had provisions relating to the treatment of the Protestant minority in Hungary.⁶⁰ By the development of the nationalism after the 1648 Westphalia Treaty, the minority protection started to be mentioned in the Western Europe. The first explicit recognition and international guarantee of the rights of national minorities are found in the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna.⁶¹ However, such an arrangement was peculiar only to the religious minorities.

The idea of nationalism, enlightenment and modernization had a direct effect on the minority communities. The national unity of the European states implied either the suffering of minorities or the elimination of the minorities from their territories either by assimilation or oppression. It was believed that the national unity of a state was hard if a minority regardless of its size and self-consciousness lived on the territory of that state. Not surprisingly, the new states emerging or enlarging after the First World War like Greece were strongly nationalist states. As Macartney contends, these states inevitably seized with both hands the opportunities to reduce the number of minorities living on their territories.⁶²

The 20th century became a turning point for the international protection of minorities. The outbreak of the First World War enabled the nationalist feelings to increase more throughout the European continent. By the Wilsonian fourteen-point principles, the national self-determination principle was re-emphasized. After the War, we can see many developments in the borders of the European countries as well as the collapse of big empires which brought the minority issues to the forefront in Europe. Minority rights tried to be more protected by the bilateral agreements

⁶⁰ F.Capotorti, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub 2/384 quoted in Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995) p.200

⁶¹ Inis. L. Claude, *National Minorities: An International Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) p.7

⁶² C.A Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968) p.387

between the European states. Compared to the pre-World War period, we can see differences regarding the concept and the protection of minorities.

First of all, the definition of minority was broadened. Not only the religious minorities but also the linguistic and national minorities were also included under the definition of minorities. Secondly, for the first time minorities were given the right for petition to an international organization, namely to the PCIJ (Permanent Court of International Justice). And, thirdly, although the Covenant of the League of Nations had not included a provision regarding minorities the League of Nations started to put more importance on the issues of protection of minorities, which was the first sign of the internationalization of the minority protection in the post-World War era. Here, the main aim was to achieve international peace and security and to promote international cooperation.

The minority issues were given importance in the League system mainly because minorities were seen as possible actors that would endanger the international peace and security and the League members were not in favor of another violence and war. Actually, the minority provisions constituted a significant part of the international peace structure. When oppression of minorities disturbed the international peace then intervention for protection of minorities was not regarded as an interference in the internal affairs of the concerned state.⁶³ For this reason, it was argued that treaties regarding protection of minorities ought to be applied by the nation states. By this way, minorities would become loyal to their states. As a result, peace and stability both in the national and international level would be achieved.⁶⁴

The League system actually hindered the oppression of minorities. Moreover, by taking the protection of minorities from domestic to international level, the mistreatment of minorities by nation more or less was prevented. Also, by treating the issues of minorities in the international level, it enabled a little room for the nation states to fight over the minority issues. Thus, the League, also, contributed to

⁶³ Akermark, *op. cit.*, p.113

⁶⁴ Macartney, *op. cit.*, p.279. For Baskın Oran, it was quite the opposite. The protection of minorities was bounded to the international peace and security. In case of a fragmentation in international peace and a possible war between states, it was the minorities who were accepted as a threat to the national security of those states. Baskın Oran, *Türk- Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1991) p.71

the world peace by diverting to itself many irritation, ill-will and disappointment of nation states. Otherwise, they were likely to cause harm between states that would damage international peace and order.⁶⁵

Besides its partial contribution on the minority issues, the League System is widely accepted as an ineffective and inadequate system for the protection of minorities. For Macartney, the League of Nations had not acted to solve the problems. Rather than trying to cure the diseases, the League system acted like an anesthetic against cases of preventable sufferings.⁶⁶ Generalization of the minority protection via the League system was not a favorable option for all states mainly because states accepted such an international protection as a threat to their territorial integrities and absolute sovereignties. Indeed, the League system depicts us how reluctant were the member states to accept the protection of minorities in the international level. Especially, the great powers made a deliberate effort to push the problem of national minorities back into the realm of domestic policy and bilateral negotiation. They actually rejected the internationalization of the problem.⁶⁷

In theory, it was significant for the Western European states to put emphasis on the minorities. However, minority obligations had been generally imposed only upon states which were weak, small and backward.⁶⁸ It was argued that in spite of some exceptional cases, generally it was the powerful and stable Western European countries that were imposing restrictions upon the weak and turbulent Eastern European countries regarding the obligations for protection of minorities⁶⁹ Such complaints by the weaker states continued in the League System. For some scholars,

⁶⁵ P. de Azcarate, *League of Nations and National Minorities*, 1945, p.67 quoted in Inis Claude, *op. cit.*, p.29

⁶⁶ Macartney, *op. cit.*, p.420

⁶⁷ Claude, *op. cit.*, p.124

⁶⁸ Sierpowski notes that only one-third of the League members and about a half of all European countries were subjected to the obligations of minority protection. Sierpowski quoted in Stephen Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.204

⁶⁹ Claude, *op. cit.*, p.7. For Oran, the protection of minorities under the League System was not universal. It was designed only for those countries who were defeated in the First World War and for the weak states. Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004) p.21 On the asymmetric obligations of the League system regarding the protection of minorities see also, Helmut Rittstieg, "Minority Rights or Human Rights", *Perceptions*, Vol.2, No.1, March-May 1997, p.5

those states who were suffering from the implementation of the League argued that the minority treaties infringed the principle of sovereign equality because some states had been forced to accept the treaties regarding minority protection while some others not.⁷⁰

Moreover, minorities started to be used by the nation states for expansionist aims during the League system. The kin states living in the neighboring countries started to find grounds to intervene in those countries which were generally weaker by putting forward the protection of its minority. The most obvious example for this issue is the Nazi Germany under Hitler which marked the beginning of inefficiency of the League system in the protection of minorities. As a result of the unwillingness of the Czech and Polish governments to meet the increasing demands of their German minorities the Nazi Germany, as the 'mother country' protecting its own minority, decided to attack these two countries. Here, the pretext for Nazi intervention was the existence of German minorities in the two neighboring countries of Germany. However, it is clear that Hitler used the German minorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland in order to justify his expansionist policies in the Central Europe.

Despite its deficiencies, it should be kept in mind that the partial success of the League of Nations in the internationalization of the minority protection is quite significant and it is much more acceptable than no protection for the minority groups. As it is stressed,⁷¹

...there could be no security for the rights of minorities in a lawless world, where the very concept of right was displaced by the concept of might as the criterion of state behaviour.

1.5.2 The United Nations

After the Second World War, the United Nations started to deal with the issues of minorities at the international level. In spite of the lack of a reference to minorities both in the UN Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the UN system tried to protect the rights of minorities under the auspices of

⁷⁰ Ibid. Ryan, p.204

⁷¹ Claude, *op. cit.*, p.50

individual human rights. The term ‘persons belonging to minorities’ started to be used in the UN documents and conventions. From such a statement, it is stressed that rights given to the minorities are based upon the understanding of individual rights not upon the collective rights. As Claude asserts,⁷²

...it had been the ideal of the League minority system to remove the minority problem from the sphere of bilateral negotiation, and to establish the principle that the problem was the concern of the organized international community. The great powers, after the Second World War, reversed this trend by handing the problem back to the states.

One of the main reasons to adopt an individualist approach to the human rights within the UN system is that the basic human rights that are attributed to the individuals are exercised by the all members within a community regardless of their ethnic or cultural differences. According to such a liberal understanding of minorities, in case of the protection of individual rights there is no need for further rights attributed only to certain minority groups.⁷³

The second reason may be that the self-determination principle can be used by some minority groups for secessionist aims that will threaten both the sovereignty of states and international peace. Therefore, the self-determination principle is respected only if its application by a collective group does not endanger the unity of the state. Also, the right for self-determination has not been included in the realm of minority rights. They are generally treated separately. This can be seen in the international documents in which self determination principle and minority rights are regulated separately.⁷⁴ Such a separation may be due to the individualist understanding of the liberal political leaders while drafting these international documents of the UN regime.

Until the end of the Cold War era, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted in 1966 and entered into force in 1976, was the most important UN document regarding the protection of the minority rights. According to this Article, in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic

⁷² Ibid., p.125

⁷³ Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, 1995b, p.3

⁷⁴ Naz Çavuşoğlu, *Uluslararası İnsan Hakları Hukukunda Azınlık Hakları* (İstanbul: Su Yayınları, 2001) pp.78-79

minorities existed, persons belonging to such minorities should not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion or to use their own language.⁷⁵ The Article 27 of the ICCPR stipulates the rights of persons belonging to certain minorities, a deliberate decision, designed to avoid giving to the groups an international personality that might be used in order to vindicate their rights at the international level.⁷⁶ Within the realm of international human rights law, this Article is the first regulation being universal in character and legally binding regarding minority rights.⁷⁷

On 18th of December 1992, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Compared with the Article 27 of the ICCPR, this text includes the ‘national minorities’ in the list of minorities. Although it does not give a definition of minorities, for Thornberry, it can be regarded as a new ‘international minimum standard’ for the protection of minority rights.⁷⁸ Also, it is the first UN declaration directly and exclusively dealing with the minority issues. In the Article 2 Paragraph 1 of this declaration it is stated that persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights, including those set forth in this declaration, individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination.⁷⁹

At the UN system during the Cold war era, we can see that the main importance was given to the individualist character of the minority rights. However, by the Article 2 (1) of this declaration it seems that the insistence of the UN on individual minority rights has more or less taken a softened shape. Besides the

⁷⁵ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights at www.unchr.ch. For a study specific to the interpretation of the Article 27 of the ICCPR see Ayşe Füsün Arsava, *Azınlık Kavramı ve Azınlık Haklarının Uluslararası Belgeler ve Özellikle Medeni ve Siyasi Haklar Sözleşmesinin 27. Maddesi Işığında İncelenmesi* (Ankara: SBF Basımevi, 1993)

⁷⁶ Abdulrahim P. Vijapur, “Minorities and Human Rights: A Comparative Perspective of International and Domestic Law” in D.L. Sheth and Gurpreet Mahajan, eds., *Minority Identities and the Nation State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.243

⁷⁷ Çavuşoğlu, *op. cit.*, p.23

⁷⁸ P. Thornberry, in Hugh Miall, ed., (1994) p. 16

⁷⁹ The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities available at www.unchr.ch

individual character, the collective side of the minority rights started to be mentioned by the UN members. But, the individualist understanding still continues to play the most significant role in the issues regarding the rights of minorities within the realm of the United Nations.

As a critique on the minority policy of the UN it is concluded that compared with that of the League system, minority policy of the United Nations has developed coincidentally not in an open and systematic way as that of the League.⁸⁰ However, this does not imply that UN simply ignores the minority issues. Rather than accepting or rejecting the proposals about minority rights, great powers in the United Nations simply tended to postpone them.⁸¹

1.5.3 The Council of Europe (CoE)

The European Convention on Human Rights was drafted in 1948 by the Council of Europe in which direct reference was not made to the rights of the minorities. It was only referred under the provision of non-discrimination in Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by stating that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.⁸²

Actually, the years of mid-1970s and the beginning of 1980s marks a beginning a new period for the human and minority rights especially in the European continent. The European Community (EC) started to put more emphasis on the human rights especially via the Council of Europe. The EC started to criticize the human rights violations within its member states in 1970s. However, it is useful to add that the EC/EU countries have usually been reluctant to accept the interventions by the institutions of the EC/EU in the human rights issues within their territorial boundaries.

⁸⁰ Arsava, *op. cit.*, (1993)

⁸¹ Claude, *op. cit.*, pp.164-206

⁸² Quoted from P.Thornberry in Hugh Miall, ed., (1994) p. 14

Considering the European level of the minority rights, I think that it is the Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that comes to the forefront. As it is mentioned, the 1993 Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms enables persons belonging to minorities to benefit from the only protection system of its kind in the world, the direct individual or collective petition to the European Commission and subsequently to the European Court of Human Rights. By this recommendation, the Parliamentary Assembly wants to guarantee not just non-discrimination by the Convention but also positive rights for the national minorities.⁸³

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which is widely accepted as first comprehensive convention for protection of minority rights, was approved by the Council of Europe and entered into force in 1998. This convention reflects us the pragmatic approach of the members of the Council of Europe by not giving a rigid definition of ‘minority’. Although the minority rights are given as individual rights the Framework Convention allows the individuals to use these rights collectively as well. According to the Article 3 Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention, ‘persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention individually as well as in community with others.’⁸⁴ Besides, the Council of Europe adopted the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, on 5 November 1992 by which it aims to protect the minority languages and the education of the minorities.

The Framework Convention has been criticized for its weak and vague wording as well as its lack of an effective control mechanism.⁸⁵ It is put forward that both the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework

⁸³ Klaus Schumann, “The Role of the Council of Europe” in Hugh Miall, ed., (1994) p.92

⁸⁴ The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, available at www.greekhelsinki.gr

⁸⁵ Akermark, *op. cit.*, p.231. See also Geoff Gilbert, “Minority Rights Under the Council of Europe” in Peter Cumper and Steven Wheatley, eds., *Minority Rights in the ‘New’ Europe* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1999) p.63

Convention are composed of broad principles for the recognition and protection of minority rights and their effective functioning is prevented with multiple qualifiers like 'where appropriate' or 'within the framework of national law'.⁸⁶ Besides, it is also argued that the State Report Mechanism of the CoE is the weakest system of international supervision to monitor principles and provisions.⁸⁷ Therefore, the members of the Council of Europe can easily manipulate their own country reports.

After evaluating the CoE regime for the protection of minority rights, what becomes obvious is that although the Framework Convention is generally respected by the EU members and even by non-EU members, the countries which adopted this convention generally put some reservations to this convention. They argue that they put such reservations in order to protect the unity of their own countries but it is these reservations that result in the ineffectiveness of this Convention. Although the Framework Convention is made by the members of the CoE it is the same members who make it less applicable and less effective by including their own reservations into the Convention.

1.5.4 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act was signed by the CSCE (renamed as OSCE, in 1995) members that gave the responsibility for the protection of minorities to the participating states. The third basket of this Act is about the cooperation in humanitarian issues, including those of minorities. In the Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act it is stated that 'the Participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect legitimate interests in this sphere.'⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Will Kymlicka, "Multiculturalism and Minority Rights: West and East", *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 4/2002, p.4, European Center For Minority Issues, www.ecmi.de

⁸⁷ Gerd Oberleitner, "Monitoring Minority Rights under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention" in Peter Cumper and Steven Wheatley, eds., (1999), p.83

⁸⁸ *Helsinki Final Act*, Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (Austria: OSCE, 1999) p.8

Besides, at the 1992 Helsinki Meeting of the CSCE/OSCE it was decided for the establishment of a High Commissioner on National Minorities who will be an “eminent international personality with long-lasting relevant experience from whom an impartial performance of the function may be expected.”⁸⁹ The mandate of the Commissioner is to intervene in the conflicts regarding the disputes between the participating states and their national minorities in the early stage and to solve them as earlier as possible by means of preventive diplomacy. Therefore, it can be said that the High Commissioner works not only as an ‘early warning device’ but also as an ‘early action maker’ of the CSCE/OSCE.⁹⁰

The Copenhagen Document (1990) of the CSCE/OSCE constitutes a significant step in the international protection of minority rights. According to Max van der Stoel, the first High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Copenhagen Document commits governments to provide persons belonging to national minorities the right freely to express, preserve and develop (individually or collectively) their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, to profess and practice their religion, and to establish and maintain organizations or associations.⁹¹ In the Copenhagen Document of 1990, as in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the CoE documents published in the post-Cold War era, one can recognize that as well as referring on the individual level of minority rights these organizations started to stress the collective usage of the minority rights in their documents.

While focusing on the CSCE/OSCE in the post-1990 period, one should mention the relations between the CSCE/OSCE and ex-Soviet Union newly independent states. The end of Soviet Communism and the dissolution of the Eastern

⁸⁹ Helsinki Decisions 1992 quoted in Rachel Brett, “The Human Dimension of the CSCE and the CSCE Response to Minorities” in Michael P. Lucas, ed., *The CSCE in the 1990s: Constructing European Security and Cooperation* (Hamburg: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, 1993) p.156

⁹⁰ For more information about the mandate of the High Commissioner visit www.osce.org

⁹¹ Max Van Der Stoel, *The Hague: OSCE High Commissioner Issues Statement regarding Ongoing Discussion On National Minorities*, April 23, 1999, available at http://www.florina.org/html/1999/1999_hague.htm.

Bloc implied a threat to the security of the European countries because there were possibilities that the national minorities can opt for their own independence or integration with their kin states that was likely to result in new conflicts by which the fragile situation in the newly-independent states would be worsened. Normally, a new applicant country for the CSCE should firstly improve the human rights conditions by complying with the CSCE commitments. But, in case of the newly independent countries of the ex-Soviet Union, the CSCE, in 1992, took a decision stating that all the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) would immediately be accepted in case they applied for the CSCE membership. As a result of this decision, all the applications of the CIS countries for CSCE membership were admitted in 1992.⁹²

At this point, one can notice that the initial aim of the CSCE was to keep them within the CSCE and maintain stability in the Europe because the improvement of human rights in these countries seemed possible only after keeping them within the sphere of influence of the CSCE. Furthermore, the CSCE membership was equally significant for the newly independent states. The main motivation under their application for the CSCE membership was their international recognition as an independent state by the international community.⁹³ In the end, it seems that the CSCE/OSCE was effective in providing membership for the newly independent states of Europe and Central Asia and, thus, maintaining peace and stability in Europe. However, in case of the improvements in the human rights conditions in these countries, it seems that both the OSCE and the CIS countries, still, have many things to do.⁹⁴

Compared with the UN and the Council of Europe, the CSCE/OSCE is widely accepted to be less effective in the protection of minority rights although the documents of the latter include significant statements for the protection of minority

⁹² Andrei V. Zagorski, "The New Republics of the CIS in the CSCE" in Michael P. Lucas, ed., (1993) pp.282-292

⁹³ Ibid., p.282

⁹⁴ Rather than the CSCE/OSCE, CIS countries are generally criticized for not giving the necessary importance for the improvement of human rights in their domestic spheres by "paying only a lip-service" to the CSCE/OSCE commitments. R. Dalton, "The Role of the CSCE" in Hugh Miall, ed., *Minority Rights in Europe* (1994) p.107

rights. The main reason for the ineffectiveness of the CSCE/OSCE in the protection of minority rights is that the commitments and the set of standards set by this Organization are not legally binding. Besides, there is a lack of an enforcement mechanism in the CSCE/OSCE. It is, also, claimed that the CSCE/OSCE instruments are generally progressive but they often lack internal consistency and are not free from the elements of regression.⁹⁵

Focusing on the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Copenhagen Document, the CSCE/OSCE, in theory, may seem to be an organization functioning quite effectively in the protection of minority rights. But, in practice, this is not the case. Compared to the CoE and UN, CSCE/OSCE has not been so effective in the protection of minority rights. However, it should be kept in mind that in spite of its less effectiveness CSCE/OSCE has proven to be a dynamic forum for dealing with minority protection⁹⁶ and the principles in its agreements and documents had an impact on the formation and adoption the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Person's Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1994).

In spite of some criticisms against the deficiencies in the current national and international protection of minority rights⁹⁷ my evaluation of the UN, CoE and OSCE regimes in this chapter, shows that they all started more effectively to deal with the issues of minorities in the post-Cold War era. Also, I think that rather than simply letting aside or ignoring the minority issues, a more pragmatic and flexible attitude preferred by both national and international bodies towards the issues of minorities. As it is asserted, the most important prerequisite for the protection of national minorities seems to be the flexibility and the willingness to differentiate between cases and needs because of the fact that the situation of minorities changes from country to country.⁹⁸ Besides the responsibilities of states towards their minorities, the UN, CoE, and OSCE, also, impose some rules and regulations on

⁹⁵ Thornberry in Hugh Miall, ed., (1994) p.18

⁹⁶ Akermark, *op. cit.*, p.54 and p.292

⁹⁷ Henrard, *op.cit.*, pp.208-209 and Patrick Thornberry, "Introduction: In the Strongroom of Vocabulary" in Peter Cumper and Steven Wheatley, eds., (1999), p.10

⁹⁸ James Mayall, "Sovereignty and Self-Determination in the New Europe" in Hugh Miall, (1994), p.12.

minorities to which minorities are obliged to obey. By this way, these organizations try to balance the reciprocity in the state-minority relations. To conclude, it seems that both these three organizations altogether contributed for the development of the protection of minority rights in both domestic and international level.

In this chapter, I focused on the definition of the minority concept. Later, I analyzed to what extent the rights of the minorities have been protected under the modernist theories. Besides, I mentioned the theories of ethnicity and their application to the protection of the minority rights. As well as giving the theoretical understanding of the minority regime I explained the protection of minority rights in the international level. In the next chapter, I will explain briefly the minorities living in Greece and then I will analytically dwell on the history of the Western Thracian minority. I believe that taking into consideration the theoretical understanding of the minority regimes and the protection of these regimes in the international level will help the reader to understand better both the history of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace and the developments that have been occurring in Western Thrace since the beginning of 1990s.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF THE WESTERN THRACIAN MINORITY

2.1 Minorities in Greece

In addition to the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace, there are also other religious ethnic and linguistic minorities⁹⁹ living on the Greek territory. One of the most significant differences of them from that of the Muslim Turks is that none of them are officially recognized by the Greek state. And, neither of them is protected by the bilateral treaties between Greece and other states. In the Greek constitution adopted in 1975, no mention was made to the minorities except the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace.

2.1.1 Slavo-Macedonians

There is not any official data from the Greek state about the number of the Macedonian minority living today in Greece. In 1928, 28.000 were detected to speak Slavic language in Greece.¹⁰⁰ However, today, it is estimated that in the Northern Greece, especially in the cities of Florina, Kilkis, Edessa and Kastoria, the number of the Slavo-Macedonians varies from 10.000 to 300.000.¹⁰¹ The Greek state have continuously denied the existence of a Macedonian identity within Greece. Rather, Greece have preferred to call them as Slavophone Greeks while Bulgaria claimed them to be Bulgarians.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Some of these minorities are Catholics, Old Calendarists, Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, Vlachs, Roma, Slavo-Macedonians and Albanians. For more information about the minorities in Greece, see Richard Clogg, ed., *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of A Plural Society* (London: Hurst and Company, 2002)

¹⁰⁰ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Milliyetler ve Sınırları: Balkanlar, Kafkasya ve Ortadoğu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994) p.37

¹⁰¹ Murat Hatipoğlu, "Yunanistan'ın Dış Politikası ve Balkanlar" in Ömer E. Lütem ve Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, eds., *Balkan Diplomasisi* (Ankara: ASAM, 2001) p.38

¹⁰² Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1991) p.175

On the 27th of November 1919 there was a population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria. Approximately, 70.000 Slavs left Greece and 25.000 Greeks left Bulgaria. Although Greece was obliged to protect its Slav minority according to the 1920 Sevres Treaty, the Greek governments were not caring these obligations. Especially under the Metaxas regime (1936-1941), the situation worsened for the Slav minority. As Karakasidou states, the Slav minority was depicted as a threat to the security of the Greek state because Greece feared that its northern neighbours, especially Bulgaria and Serbia, would use the Slav minority as a propaganda tool against the Greek state by which the newly-gained regions, Macedonia and Greece, would be eventually partitioned between Bulgaria and Turkey.¹⁰³

In the Second World War, Greece was defeated and occupied by Nazi forces. Siding with the Germans, Bulgaria occupied the eastern part of the Greek Macedonia in 1941. Bulgaria started to import Bulgarians to the region and started to apply for discriminatory or sometimes brutal policies that are reported by its German counterparts as “a regime of the Balkan terror.” One of the indications of such a Bulgarian policy is that alone in Kavala, over 700 shops and enterprises were expropriated and large numbers of Greeks were deprived of their fundamental rights and freedoms.¹⁰⁴

Since the civil war period, we can observe a continuous denial of the ‘Macedonian’ minority officially by the Greek governments. As in the case of Muslim Turks of western Thrace, almost no jobs were given to those who called themselves as ‘Macedonians’. In some cities, like Florina and Kastoria where the Slavic population was dense, Greek authorities requested to publicly confirm that they did not speak Macedonian.¹⁰⁵ The bad situation of the Slavic-Macedonian minority worsened by the military junta regime of 1967 as it was the case for all

¹⁰³ Anastasia Karakasidou, “Cultural Illegitimacy in Greece” in Richard Clogg, ed., (2002) pp.132-135

¹⁰⁴ Poulton, *op. cit.*, p.177. The events occurred in Kavala is one of the reasons for the hatred of Greeks towards a possible Bulgarian occupation. This hatred against the Bulgarians would be depicted again during the civil war era. The citizens of Greece had a very negative image of Bulgarian control. Actually, if one considers the two cases of the Bulgarian domination of Greece between the 1913-1919 and the 1941-1944 periods one can recognize easily how the Greek citizens, altogether, suffered under the Bulgarian dominations and why they have been so raged against a possible Bulgarian domination of the region.

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Ortakovski, *Minorities in the Balkans* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2000) p.179

minorities of Greece. An internal regulation passed which banned the usage of the Macedonian language and a constitutional act enabled the deprivation of their citizenship.¹⁰⁶ Besides, there were not any opportunities for the Slavo-Macedonians of Greece to teach and learn their own languages.¹⁰⁷ It is widely agreed that these drawbacks with which the Slavo-Macedonian minority came across helped their assimilation within the Greek society.

Regarding the assimilation of the Macedonian minority, it is significant to note that Christianity, being the common religion between the Greeks and the Macedonians, was one of the important factors that helped for the assimilation of this minority within the Orthodox Greek society.¹⁰⁸ As a result of the restrictive and assimilationist policies of the Greek administrations, a great number of Macedonians preferred to leave Greece and migrate to other countries, like Australia and Canada. Today, almost nothing has changed for the Slavo-Macedonians in Greece. They are not still officially recognized by the Greek state. One cannot easily declare himself/herself as Macedonian. And, most of them have been assimilated within the Greek society. However, since mid 1990s, some of the Macedonian minority members have been struggling under the Rainbow Party in order to gain some of their rights back.

In the international arena, Greece was also criticized by the international organizations because of its treatment to the Macedonian minority. Greece has generally refused to register the associations founded by the Macedonian minority as that of the 'Home of Macedonian Civilization' on the grounds that they pose a threat to the Greek territorial integrity. In 10th of July 1998, on one of the cases,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p.179

¹⁰⁷ The first ban on the usage of Slavic languages started with the Metaxas regime in 1936. Parallel to this ban, night schools also were set up in order to teach Greek to adults of the minority. The first fruits of this policy of 'educational assimilation' started to be collected after the Civil war period. As Karakasidou recalls, "it was only then that the assimilationist goals of the Greek national educational system came to achieve their intended results" Karakasidou in Clogg, ed., (2002) p.142

¹⁰⁸ Sharing the same religion generally has a positive effect in the assimilation of the minority groups within the majorities. When one applies this argument in the assimilation of the Western Thracian Muslim Turkish minority within the Orthodox Greek society he/she can see that the difference in religion of the minority stands as one of the main hindrances in front of the assimilation of these people within the society of Orthodox majority.

Sidiropoulos vs. Greece¹⁰⁹, ECHR concluded that such a Greek claim about a danger of the establishment of an association to the territorial integrity of Greece could not go beyond a mere suspicion. This decision of the ECHR against Greece can be accepted as the beginning of a new era for the protection of minority rights within the European framework.¹¹⁰

2.1.2 Vlachs, Albanians and Romas

Vlachs are one of the oldest communities of the Balkan Peninsula. They are an ethnically Latin community whose original home was the Northern Balkans. Vlachs, in Greece, live especially in the Pindus Mountains and in the city of Metsovo between the Epirus and Thessaly regions. They speak a form of the Romanian language. So, they are also called as ‘Aromanians’. Today, there are not any official figures about the exact population of the Vlach minority living in Greece. According to 1951 census, there were 39.855 Vlachs in Greece. However, the sources of Vlach émigrés point out that there are 600.000 Vlachs living in Greece while this number is put as 300.000 by the Federal Union of European Nationalities.¹¹¹

In the Ottoman period, they were shepherders and transporters of goods by caravans. Thus, they were controlling the overland trade in the Greek provinces of Ottoman Empire. They were living in today’s Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece.¹¹² Due to the linguistic similarity, the new Romanian state started to increase its relations with Vlachs living in different parts of the Balkans. It started to open Romanian schools and churches for the Vlach communities throughout Balkans.

¹⁰⁹ According to the decision of the ECHR, “the inhabitants of a region in a country are entitled to form associations in order to promote the region’s special characteristics . . . Even supposing that the founders of an association . . . assert a minority consciousness, the Copenhagen Document of the CSCE and the Charter of Paris – which Greece has signed – allow them to form associations to protect their cultural and spiritual heritage.” Quoted in Joseph Marko, “Minority Protection Through Jurisprudence in Comparative Perspective: An Introduction”, *European Integration*, 2003, Vol.25 (3), p.177

¹¹⁰ Roberta Medda-Windischer, “The European Court of Human Rights and Minority Rights”, *European Integration*, 2003, Vol.25 (3), p.250

¹¹¹ Poulton, *op. cit.*, pp.189-190

¹¹² For a historical understanding of the Vlach minority in Greece and Balkans see Tom J. Winniffrith, “Vlachs” in Richard Clogg, ed., (2002), pp.112-121

In 1913, the Greek state under Eleftherios Venizelos signed an agreement with the Romanian state for the opening of Romanian churches and schools for Vlachs living in Greece. Romania continued to finance these institutions until the end of the Second World War. By the end of the Civil War in 1949, some of the Vlachs tended to emigrate and those who stayed in Greece had not depicted nationalistic or separatist attitudes towards the Greek state and most of them, eventually, became assimilated within the Greek society. It may be for this reason that most of Vlachs in Greece, today, identify themselves as firstly Greeks and secondly Vlachs.¹¹³

Since the beginning of 1980s, Vlachs, unlike Muslim Turks and Slavo-Macedonians, have not been accepted as a threat against the Greek state. Even the cultural Vlach societies are supported by the Greek state. Every year, since 1984, an annual festival is organized for all Vlachs in Greece. Compared with the Muslim Turks and Slavo-Macedonians, Vlachs are not accepted as a threat to the unity of the Greek state. One of the main reasons is that no state today claims rights on the Vlach minority.¹¹⁴ Another reason might be their assimilation within the Greek society. Thus, they enjoy better conditions of life than the other two minorities.

There is not too much information about the exact number of the Albanian minority living in Greece. Today, most of the Albanians live in the regions along with the Albanian border, especially in the region of Epirus. However, in the past, there were Albanians living in different parts of the Greece like Boetica, Attica and Southern Euboea. For example, the Plaka district in Athens was the Albanian quarter of the city and in the courts of this district the Albanian language was used.¹¹⁵ The Muslim Albanians were living in the Epirus region. However, by the end of the Second World War, they were driven away from the region by General Napoleon Zervas, who was the leader of the National Republican Greek League (EDES) that had an effective control over the Epirus region, on the grounds that they had cooperated with the occupation forces during the Second World War.¹¹⁶ With the end

¹¹³ Ibid. Tom J. Winniffrith, "Vlachs" in Richard Clogg, ed., (2002), p.113

¹¹⁴ Yerasimos, *op. cit.*, p.38

¹¹⁵ Poulton, *op. cit.*, p.189

¹¹⁶ Hatipoğlu in Ömer E. Lütem ve Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, eds., (2001) p.39

of the War, some of the Orthodox Albanians started to migrate. Most of the Orthodox Albanians continued to live in Greece were gradually assimilated by the policies of the Greek state.

As for the assimilation of the Albanian minority, two points should be mentioned. One is that the Greek education system prevented the minority children to learn the Albanian language.¹¹⁷ And, the second one is the orthodox Christianity. The orthodox Albanians were easily assimilated within the Orthodox Greek society via the shared religion. Once more, we can witness to what extent the religion and the education system plays the most significant role in the assimilation of minority groups.

Today, rather than the problems of the Albanian minority, the Greek state has to deal with the problem of the immigrant workers coming from Albania.¹¹⁸ Some of these workers come legally but a great number of them illegally cross the Greco-Albanian borders in order to work in the big cities of Greece. Since the beginning of 1990s, Greece tries to prevent such an influx of the immigrant workers. Today, some of these workers who cannot find jobs incline towards illegal jobs or crimes or kidnappings. It is mainly for this reason that the term ‘Albanophobia’¹¹⁹ is quite rampant, recently, within the Greek society.

There is not enough information about the exact number of Roma living in Greece. But, according to outside sources it is estimated that there are approximately 140.000 or even 350.000 Romas in Greece.¹²⁰ Most of them live in the Northern Greece and in Western Thrace. Most of those living in Western Thrace are Muslims.

¹¹⁷ As in Vlachian and the Slav-Macedonian cases, it can be clearly observed that the education is very significant in the assimilation of minorities. The same tactic was also applied for the Turkish minority of Bulgaria. Höpken calls it as ‘silent assimilation’. In 1958, the first step of the Bulgarian state was to close the Turkish schools that reduced the Turkish-language instruction. In the late 1970s, any kind of Turkish education was forbidden by the Bulgarian state. Wolfgang Höpken, “From Religious Identity to ethnic Mobilization: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism” in Poulton and Taji-Farouki, *op. cit.*, p.68

¹¹⁸ Despite the lack of official numbers about the immigrants in Greece, most of the scholars agree that one-third of the 600.000 illegal immigrants in Greece are deemed to come from Albania. This information is Quoted from Anna Triandafyllidou and Mariangela Veikou, “The Hierarchy of Greekness”, *Ethnicities*, 2002, Vol.2 (2), p.190

¹¹⁹ Hatipoğlu in Ömer E. Lütem ve Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, eds., (2001) p.39

¹²⁰ Ortakovski, *op. cit.*, p.191

Others are Orthodox Christians. Most of the Roma living outside Western Thrace have been assimilated within the majority Greek society.¹²¹ While some of the Romas still continue to live a nomadic life most of the members of the Roma minority have usually been subjected to different kinds of ill-treatment and discrimination especially in police abuse, employment, education and housing.¹²² Such discriminatory attitudes of the Greek state have been criticized by minority rights groups both nationally and internationally.

As a result of the criticisms, the Greek state started to apply for different programs in order to enhance the living conditions of the Romas. For example, the Greek state, since 2002, applies for an Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Roma that aims the improvement of the housing conditions of the Romas and their access to the basic services of the Greek state.¹²³ Besides, another program was introduced by the Greek state for the period 2003-2008 in order to develop the social and economic conditions of the Roma minority.¹²⁴ In spite of the introduction of special programs, the pejorative treatment against Romas in Greece still continues to affect their lives in a negative way.

2.2 The Historical Framework until early 1990s

Western Thrace, which is composed of the Rhodopi, Xanthi and Evros provinces, is a region of Greece that has been inhabited since 2000 B.C. The earliest

¹²¹ Hugh Poulton notes that besides the shared Orthodox religion, the ‘nonterritorial’ minorities, i.e. Romas and Vlachs, those without a mother nation to provide support for them were more easily assimilated within the masses. Hugh Poulton, “The Muslim Experience in the Balkan States, 1919-1991”, *Nationality Papers*, Vol.28, No.1, 2000, p.52

¹²² As for the possible reasons of such a discrimination against the Romas, Alexandris notes two main reasons that are their colour and their nomadic type of living. Alexis Alexandris, “Religion and Ethnicity-The Identity issue of the Minorities in Greece and Turkey” in Renee Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean-An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (NY: Berghan Books, 2003) p.127

¹²³ This data is taken from Concluding Observations of the UN’s Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Thirty-Second Session, 26 April-14 May 2004. E/C.12/1/Add.97, p.2 available at www.unhchr.ch

¹²⁴ *Third Report on Greece*, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, Adopted on 5 December 2003 publicized on 8 June 2004, Strasbourg, available at <http://www.coe.int/ecri> Also, from 1997 to 2004, 1,682 prefabricated houses were given to 6,000 Roma living in huts, tents and shacks. *The Consideration of the Initial Report on Greece*, The Press Release of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights available at <http://www.unhchr.ch>

community living in Western Thrace was the Thracians. The region takes its name from this community. The strategic importance of Western Thrace has always been taken into consideration by both Greece and other countries which had aims to control this region. The security of the straits of Istanbul and Dardanelles are directly related this region due its closeness to them. Western Thrace is like a door for entering in the Dardanelles Straits. Also, it is a getaway for other Southern countries like Bulgaria that has not got direct entrance to the Aegean Sea.

The roots of the Muslim Turks go back to the fourteenth century. When this region came under the control of the Ottoman Empire in 1364 people from Anatolia were settled in this region. In time, the power of the Ottoman Empire started to weaken and the nationalist movements of the communities living on the Ottoman territories gained an impetus especially after the 1879 French Revolution. Ottoman Empire started to lose territories in the Balkans. From 1364 until 1878, Western Thrace had been under the control of Ottomans. However, the Ottomans were defeated to the Russians in 1877-1878 Russian-Ottoman War and the San Stefano Treaty was signed by which the control of this region passed to the Bulgarians. Thus, Bulgarians achieved to control the passage to the Aegean Sea.

As the Turkish population of Rhodopi was against the inclusion of their lands in the Bulgarian Principality they formed organized resistances against the Bulgarians and Russians.¹²⁵ They formed the ‘Temporary State of Rhodopi’ on 16th of May 1878. It lasted only for 8 years. In the end, Western Thrace was incorporated within the Bulgarian Principality.

Greece, after the Serbian revolt of 1804, was one of the countries that struggled and achieved to get its independence in 1830. Here, the foreign help for Greek independence is of great importance. Behind the Greek nationalist feelings and decline of the Ottoman dominance in the Balkans, there were two main elements that played the key role for the independence of Greece: The Greek intelligentsia and the Greek bourgeoisie composed of higher clergy, Phanariots, wealthy merchants and provincial notables.¹²⁶ The Greek intelligentsia accomplished to direct the peasant

¹²⁵ About the Turkish resistances against the Russians and Bulgarians in Thrace, See Ahmet Aydınlı, *Batı Trakya Faciasının İçyüzü* (İstanbul: Akın Yayınları, 1971) pp.149-169

¹²⁶ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.29

and middle-class Greeks to revolt against the Ottoman rule while the Greek bourgeoisie supported this movement in economic terms.

2.2.1 The 1830 Protocol and the 1881 Treaty of Istanbul

On the 3rd of February 1830, the London Protocol was signed in London by which Greece was declared to be an independent state composed of Mora and Attica regions. The Muslim minorities that remained within the Greek territories were to some extent protected under this protocol. According to the 5th principle of this Protocol there would be declared a general amnesty for those minorities who struggled against Greeks and there would not be harassed by the Greek state.¹²⁷

Greece enlarged its territories by the inclusion of Ionian Islands in 1864 and Thessaly region in 1881. By the inclusion of these regions, the treaty of Istanbul was signed in 1881 that protected the rights of the Muslim minorities in the enlarged Greece. Like the 1830 Protocol, it protected the rights of Muslims living within the enlarged territories of the Greek state.¹²⁸ The common point in both the 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaty was that they had nothing to do with Western Thrace. Both of them stipulated the protection of minority rights in the newly acquired regions of the Greek state. Until 1920, Western Thrace had not been within the Greek territories. Thus, the 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaty had no effect for situation in Western Thrace.

2.2.2 The 1913 Athens Treaty

The Athens Treaty is one of the most significant treaties regarding the rights of the Western Thracian Muslim Turks. It is a treaty signed between Greece and the Ottoman Empire that puts Greece under responsibility about the protection of minority rights. By this treaty, the Muslim communities within the boundaries of Greece would preserve their autonomous situations within the Greek society. The Greek state would not be included in the issues of pious endowments (wakfs), election of their religious leaders, the Muftis. Also, the control of the Muslims on

¹²⁷ Baskın Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.58 and Halit Eren, *Batı Trakya Türkleri* (İstanbul, Rebel Basım, 1997) p.46

¹²⁸ For more information about the provision of the 1881 Treaty see Eren, *op. cit.*, pp.46-47

their schools of the minorities would be respected by the Greek state. The school program would be in Turkish but the Greek language course would be compulsory.

Actually, the Athens Treaty gives both ‘negative (minority) rights’- the basic rights given to the majorities such as the right to life, religious and cultural practices- and ‘positive (minority) rights’- rights peculiar to the minorities such as the right to control their pious endowments, religious schools and the selection of the Muftis.¹²⁹ One of the most significant reasons to grant positive minority rights was to protect their differentiative factors, such as religion, culture, tradition, language, etc. and resist against the assimilation policies of the host states

The reference to the positive minority rights in this treaty has been very significant because even today in some disputed issues between the Greek state and the Western Thracian Minority, Muslim Turks of Western Thrace tend to attribute to the Treaty of Athens in order to make the Greek state give back some of their positive rights. Especially on the disputes regarding selection of Muftis and control of the pious endowments, Greece argues that the 1913 Athens Treaty protected the rights of minorities in the territories ceded to Greece before 1913 and so Western Thrace becoming a Greek territory in 1920 was exempted from the minority rights granted by this treaty.

According to the Article 2 of the Athens Agreement the Third Protocol of this treaty enables the applicability of minority rights not in the territories that were ceded to Greece but in all territories of Greece in which Western Thrace would be included in 1920.¹³⁰ However, according to the Greek Foreign Ministry, the Athens Treaty was replaced with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and the rights of minorities in Western Thrace have been under the control of the Lausanne Regime.¹³¹ The applicability of the 1913 Athens Treaty is still a debate between Greece and Turkey.

It seems obvious that one of the most significant reasons for Greece to refute the applicability of the 1913 Athens Agreement is that it gives much more positive

¹²⁹ Negative rights are the basic rights that states provide for all of their citizens regardless of their status within the society. However, positive rights are special rights provided by states for people having a different status within the society.

¹³⁰ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.103

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.102

minority rights to the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace than the Lausanne Treaty. In the next chapter, this assumption will be clearer when I will mention the problems in the area of religion between the Minority and the Greek state in which the Muslim Turks attribute some of their positive minority rights to the 1913 Athens Treaty.

2.2.3 Resistances against the Bulgarian Domination

Unrest in the Balkans since the second half of the 19th century paved the way for the establishment of three short-lived governments by the Turks in the region one after the other. As a result of the First Balkan War after which Ottomans had to withdraw from the Balkan Peninsula, the Treaty of Bucharest granted almost all the Western Thrace region to Bulgaria. However, a great number of inhabitants of Western Thrace were not in favor of a Bulgarian domination. They resisted against the Bulgarian control of the region by using guerilla tactics. It is argued that with the unofficial aid from the Turkish government those remained in Western Thrace, both Greeks, Muslims, Armenians and Jews rebelled against the Bulgarians.¹³²

Also, in the Greek newspapers *Neologo* and *Proodo* published in Istanbul, the representatives of Muslims, Greeks, Armenians and Jews clearly manifested: “We don’t want to be Bulgarian citizens. All of us, Greeks, Muslims Armenians and Jews have decided to die rather than giving in.”¹³³

As a reaction to the Bulgarian ill-treatment, Provisionary Government of Western Thrace (*Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Muvakkatesi*) was established in Western Thrace on 31 August 1913 under the leadership of Eşref Kuşçubaşı and Süleyman Askeri. Such a government disturbed both Istanbul and Sofia. Despite the warnings from Istanbul to abolish the Provisionary Government the leading figures of this government rejected such a decision from Istanbul and renamed their government as

¹³² Kalliopi Papathanasi-Mousiopolou, “Ο Αντίκτυπος Της Συνθήκης Του Βουκουρεστίου Στη Θράκη” (The impact of the Treaty of Bucharest on Thrace) in Συμπόσιο: *Η Συνθήκη Του Βουκουρεστίου και η Ελλάδα* (*Symposium: The Bucharest Treaty and Greece, 16-18 November 1988*) (Thessalonica: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1990) p.119

¹³³ Cited from Kalliopi, *op. cit.*, p.120

‘Independent Government of Western Thrace’ (*Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Müstakilesi*).¹³⁴

In the title of the government, the term ‘provisionary’ was converted to the term ‘independent’. It lasted only for 58 days. It was composed of the leaders of the region. It had its own flag. The black color represented the mourning, the crescent with a star represented the Turkishness, the green represented Islam, and the white symbolized the victory in the struggles which was waved in both Komotini, Xanthi and Alexandroupolis. By the time, it became even independent in monetary terms from Istanbul. However, according to the treaty signed on 29 September 1913 between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, the Istanbul Treaty, Western Thrace was granted to Bulgaria which marked the end of the first ‘Turkish Republic’ in the history. A second attempt against the Bulgarian control was another provisional Turkish government under the leadership of Fuad Balkan which had not lasted long.

From 1913 until the 1919 Neville Treaty, Western Thrace was under the control of Bulgaria. By the Neville Treaty, the territories of Bulgaria were lessened to one-third of her prior territories and Western Thrace passed under the control of the Allied Forces. The Bulgarian forces were replaced by the French ones led by General Charpy. During the French control, the Greek army started to intervene in Western Thrace. They firstly took Xanthi under control and gradually they achieved to control Komotini. For Demirbaş, the real aim of the French control was to transfer Western Thrace peacefully to the Greek army.¹³⁵ In the referendum of May 1920, it was signified that people were in favor of Greek control of the region.

In spite of the referendum results, resistance movements were raised against the Greek control of the region. Both the Turkish and Bulgarian gangs united and started to fight with guerilla tactics against the Greek army. They united against the Greek control and formed the Western Thracian Government in the Organi (*Hemetli*) municipality, a mountainous region of Komotini, on 25 May 1920 under the leadership of Peştereli Tevfik Bey. This would be the third and last attempt for an autonomous government. As the Greek forces took the control of this region it came

¹³⁴ For more information about the Independent Government of Western Thrace, see Şevket Kemal Batıbey, *Batı Trakya Türk Devleti (1919–1920)* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1979)

¹³⁵ H. Bülent Demirbaş, *Batı Trakya Sorunu* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1996) p.87

to an end. Despite the Greek dominance in the region, Turks attempted to form different types of resistances that were ineffective and had not lasted long.

One of the main reasons for the short-lived autonomous state formations and resistance movements of the Western Thracian Turks was mainly because of the negative attitude of Istanbul government towards such formations.¹³⁶ About the reason for such a negative stance from Istanbul towards the attempts for autonomy in Western Thrace, Aarbakke notes from the diary of the Grand Vezier Mahmut Şevket Paşa.

According to Şevket Paşa, Istanbul did not want to have a common border with Greece because while there was only a negligible number of Bulgarians in Eastern Thrace the Greeks who were more than 300.000 could disturb Ottoman-Greek relations. Also, he hoped for the differences between Bulgaria and Greece to continue, which would enable the Ottoman Empire to prolong the time of its existence.¹³⁷ It seems that the Ottomans wanted to form a buffer zone between the Ottoman Empire and Greece and not to include themselves to the disputes between Greece and Turkey over Western Thrace.

Related with this issue, the statements of M.Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, strengthened the plausible reason of the Turkish side for not favoring to control Western Thrace and not favoring autonomous Turkish formations in this region. Atatürk, in one of his speeches on 16-17 January 1923, stated that the effort spent for taking Western Thrace under control would not coincide with the benefits for controlling the region. The solution of this issue was to grant it to Greece. At the same time, Western Thrace would always be a case of dispute between Bulgarians and Greeks.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Aydınli, *op. cit.*, pp.187-192

¹³⁷ Mahmut Şevket, *Sadrazâm ve Harbiye Nazırı Mahmut Şevket Paşa'nın Günlüğü* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1988) pp.171-172 quoted in Vemund Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 2000) p.22

¹³⁸ The speeches of Atatürk for the first time quoted in Baskın Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp.300-301

2.2.4 The Sevres Treaty of 1920

The Sevres Treaty was signed on 10 August 1920. It is known as the treaty that put an end to the Ottoman Empire. However, this treaty actually is composed of three treaties. The first is about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The second one is about the protection of minorities in Greece. And, the last one is the treaty that officially gives Western Thrace to Greece. According to the second treaty, all the citizens of Greece were equal before the laws regardless of being a minority or majority. The difference in religion would not be accepted as a criterion for their selection for the governmental jobs. It also enabled the freedom of establishment of their own schools and usage of their own language freely in their schools.¹³⁹

The Sevres Treaty gives both negative and positive rights for the minorities living within the boundaries of Greece. However, it was not specifically dealing with the Western Thracian Minority as the Lausanne Treaty. Besides, as Oran notes, in the introduction of this Treaty there was an expression stating ‘the elimination of some responsibilities of Greece against other countries’ that could be interpreted in such a way that the responsibility of Greece regarding the minority rights stemming from the 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaty would come to an end.¹⁴⁰ Besides, in the introduction part of the Sevres Treaty, it was stipulated that the terms of this agreement would be applicable not only in the existing territories of Greece but also in the territories that might be gained in the near future.¹⁴¹ This statement implies us that the Sevres Treaty could be applied in the newly-gained regions of Western Thrace and Dodecanese Islands that became Greek territories in 1920 and 1947.

According to the Sevres Treaty, 10 August 1920, the control of Eastern and Western Thrace, the islands of Imbroz (*Gökçeada*) and Tenedos (*Bozcaada*) and a region around Izmir would have passed to the Greek control. Such a Greek control was widely interpreted as a signal of a massive step towards the fulfillment of the *Megali Idea*.¹⁴² However, the Sevres Treaty was never ratified. By 1920, while

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp.72-75

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.75

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.105

¹⁴² Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) p.114

Western Thrace started to be controlled by the Greek forces, during the Turkish War of Liberation (1919-1923), Eastern Thrace was incorporated to Turkey. Western Thrace was legally ceded to Greece by the Treaty of Lausanne at 24 July 1923.

On 1 November 1920, the first elections were made in the enlarged Greece and 20 MPs were elected from both Eastern and Western Thrace all of whom were from the Venizelist group.¹⁴³ Aarbakke notes that the reason for siding with Venizelos was ascribed to the anti-Bulgarian sentiments of the Minority.¹⁴⁴ Once more, it became obvious the anti-Bulgarian attitude of the Muslim Turks.

2.2.5 *The Lausanne Summit*

The Lausanne summit started on 20 November 1922 and lasted with the signing of the treaty of Lausanne in 24th of July 1923. At the Lausanne summit, Greece was represented by Eleftherios Venizelos and Dimitrios Kaklamanos. Turkey was represented by İsmet Paşa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rıza Nur Bey, Minister of Health Care and Hasan Bey, the former Minister of Finance. Lord Curzon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs represented England.

The population exchange between Greece and Turkey was proposed on 1 December 1922. In case of a possible exchange of populations Venizelos wanted the Greeks of Istanbul to be excluded from the exchange. İsmet Paşa proposed the border line between Greece and Turkey to remain the Meritsa River as it was agreed by the 1913 Istanbul Treaty and a plebiscite to be made in Western Thrace. One of the main reasons to favor a plebiscite in Western Thrace was the majority of Western Thrace to be Turks rather than Greeks.

¹⁴³ Πίπας Νικολακόπουλος, “ Πολιτικές δύναμης και εκλογική συμπεριφορά της μουσουλμανικής μειονότητας στη Δυτική Θράκη, 1923-1955”, (“Politics of power and election behaviour of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace 1923-1955”) *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* 8, 1990-1991, p.175

¹⁴⁴ Aarbakke, *op. cit.*, p.72

Table 1: The Population of Western Thrace Presented by Ismet Inonü in the Lausanne Conference

	Armenians	Turks	Greeks	Jews	Bulgarians
Komotini	360	59.967	8834	1007	9997
Xanthi	114	42.671	8728	114	552
Aleksandroupolis	449	11.744	4800	253	10.227
Soufli	-	14.736	11.542	-	5490

Source: Seha L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı, Tutanaklar, Belgeler* (Ankara: SBF, 1969) pp.54-60

In case of a plebiscite, Turks were likely to vote for incorporation with Turkey. However, the Turkish representatives in the Lausanne Summit had continuously stipulated that Turkey was not in favor of the incorporation of Western Thrace within Turkish territories. Besides, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Stambolijksi, mentioned that the process of giving back Eastern Thrace to Turkey necessitated the giving back of Western Thrace to Bulgaria or there should be established an autonomous or neutral zone under the domination of Great Powers.

Neither the Turkish claims for plebiscite nor the Bulgarian claims for a neutral zone were accepted. Rather, it was accepted that the border lines of Western Thrace defined with the 1913 Istanbul Treaty would not change and the borders of Thrace were defined: Western Thrace remained in Greece and Eastern Thrace in Turkey. The Meritsa River accepted to be the border line between the two parts of Thrace. And, it was decided for an exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey excluding the Turks of Western Thrace and Greeks of Istanbul, Imbroz and Tenedos.

2.2.6 The Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey

During this summit, the first treaty regarding the population exchange between Greece and Turkey was signed in 30th of January 1923 and started to be implemented on May 1923. The populations exchange was between the Turkish nationals of Greek Orthodox religion and the Greek nationals of Muslim religion.

The approximate number of Orthodox Greeks who left Turkey was 1-1.5 million and the approximate number for the Muslims who left Greece was 450.000.¹⁴⁵

After this exchange, the overall population of Greece from 1907 to 1928 rose from 2.631.952 to 6.204.674.¹⁴⁶ In Western Thrace, the number of Greeks constituted a mere %17 of the total population in the region in 1919 while this number increased to %62 in 1924 as result of the settlement of Greeks from the Asia Minor.¹⁴⁷ The Orthodox Greek inhabitants of Istanbul and the Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace were exempted from this exchange. The status of ‘*etablis*’ (settled) were given to these communities regardless of their places of birth and their dates of arrival.

According to the Article 2 of the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek-Turkish Populations (*Türk-Rum Ahalinin Mübadelesi Ahitnamesi*),¹⁴⁸

...all Greeks who were established before the 30th October, 1918, within the areas under the city of Constantinople, as defined by the law of 1912, shall be considered as Greek inhabitants of Constantinople... All Muslims established in the region to the east of frontier line laid down in 1913 by the Treaty of Bucharest shall be considered as Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace.

As a result of this convention some 110.000 Orthodox Greeks were allowed to live in Istanbul while some 120.000 Muslim Turks were allowed to live in Western Thrace. I want to note that at this Convention, while the ethnic, not the religious, criterion was used for those that would be exchanged and ethnic-religious criterion for the Minority in Istanbul the religious criterion was used for those living in Western Thrace because of the millet system of the Ottoman Empire in which religion had been used to distinguish different population living together. However,

¹⁴⁵ For H. Eren, the number of people arrived Turkey in the 1923-1933 period was 384.000. Halit Eren, “Balkanlarda Türk ve Diğer Müslüman Topluları ve Göç Olgusu” in *Balkanlar* (İstanbul: OBİV (Ortadoğu ve Balkan İncelemeleri Vakfı) Yayınları, 1993) p.297

¹⁴⁶ Constantine Tsoukalas, *The Greek Tragedy* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969) p.36 Footnote 4

¹⁴⁷ Clogg, 1986, *op. cit.*, p.121. Regarding the population of Orthodox Greeks in Western Thrace in the period before the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, I.Kamozawa notes that the number of the Greek villages in the region was not more than 7 or 8. Iwao Kamozawa, *Ethnic Minority in Regionalization-The Case of Turks in Western Thrace* (Tokyo: Mediterranean Studies Research Group at Hitotsubashi University, 1982) p.6

¹⁴⁸ The Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek Turkish Populations available at www.hri.org

in spite of this religious criterion, in *etablis*, people were identified not as ‘Muslims’ or ‘non-Muslims’ but as ‘Turks’ and ‘Greeks’.

2.2.7 The 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty

Articles from 37 to 45 of the Lausanne Treaty define clearly the rights of these two communities and oblige both Greece and Turkey to respect the rights of minorities of Istanbul and Western Thrace. These rights of the two minorities under the guarantee of the Lausanne regime are as follows: The right for full and complete protection of life and liberty without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion; free exercise of religion; full freedom of movement; the same civil and political, rights as other Greek citizens; equality before law; free use of language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind, at public meetings and in the courts; establish and control charitable, religious, and social institutions and schools; full protection for religious establishments and pious foundations; grant all facilities and authorization to pious foundations and to the religious and charitable foundations.¹⁴⁹

It is generally agreed that despite the applicability of the Sevres Treaty, the Foreign Ministry of Greece continuously rejects such an applicability for the protection of minority rights in Western Thrace and continuously attributes for the Lausanne Treaty. Actually the articles 1-16 of the Sevres Treaty were somewhat repeated in the articles 37-44 of the Lausanne Treaty. However, as it is referred, there may be possible reasons for the rejection of Sevres Treaty by the Greek side: The first one is that the Sevres Treaty was not based on the reciprocity principle unlike the Lausanne Treaty. It, also, refers to all minorities in Greece unlike the Lausanne that is specific for the Western Thracian Minority. The Sevres Treaty geographically deals with the minorities in allover Greece unlike the Lausanne which deals only with the Western Thracian Minority of Greece.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ For the Articles from 37 to 45 of the Lausanne Treaty see Appendix C

¹⁵⁰ Eren, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61 and B. Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.108

2.2.8 After the Population Exchange

Regarding the number of the Western Thracian Minority after the Lausanne Summit there are different numbers. While most of the scholars agree around 120.000, some give numbers around more than 150.000.¹⁵¹ The population exchange between Greece and Turkey was accomplished by the aforementioned 1923 Convention Concerning the Exchange. However, significant problems arose regarding the implementation of this Convention. In order to deal with the problems of this exchange process the Mixed Commission was formed and started to operate in November 1923.

In spite of the Articles 65 and 66 of the Lausanne Treaty stipulating that the properties of the non-exchanged populations would stay intact, Greece started to settle those Greeks of Asia Minor and Bulgaria in Western Thrace by violating the property rights of the Muslim Turks especially via land expropriations.¹⁵² As a response to the Greek violations of the 1923 Convention, Turkey started to expropriate the land of the Orthodox Christians in Istanbul.¹⁵³ Land implied both economic and political power¹⁵⁴ and it had always been one of the primary assets of the Muslim Turkish Minority because a great amount of the population was dealing with agriculture.

Actually, Greece had come across with the settlement of the 1.5 million Greeks of Asia Minor and Bulgaria which was a great number for the Greek state to accommodate. Therefore, some of the refugees from Asia Minor and Bulgaria were settled in Western Thrace which was contrary to the 1923 Exchange Convention. On 6 February 1924, in his letter to the Turkish government, the vice president of the

¹⁵¹ For example, Aydemir gives this number around 200.000. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1968) p.237. Or, the number 170.000 was stipulated by Ahmet Aydınli. Aydınli, *op. cit.*, p.2

¹⁵² Hatipoğlu notes that in the years 1923 and 1924 the number of the Minority families whose properties were expropriated by the Greek state was 8254. M.Murat Hatipoğlu, *Yunanistan' da Etnik Gruplar ve Azınlıklar* (Ankara: SAEMK, 1999) p.25

¹⁵³ Fuat Aksu, *Türk-Yunan İlişkileri* (Ankara: SAEMK, 2001) p.32

¹⁵⁴ I want to note that the two MPs of the Minority in 1930s, Hafız Ali Galip was a big landowner and Hamdi Fehmi was a tobacco merchant. P. Papadimitriou, *Οι Πομάκοι της Ροδόπης. Από τις εθνοτικές σχέσεις στους Βαλκανικούς εθνικισμούς (1870-1990)* (*The Pomaks of Rhodopi. From the ethnic relations to the Balkan nationalisms (1870-1990)*) (Thessalonica: Kyriakidi, 2003) p.54

Turkish committee in the Joint Exchange Committee, Hamdi Bey stated that the Greek government had settled a total of 200.000 immigrants in Western Thrace 80.000 of which had been settled only in Komotini generally in the houses of Turks.¹⁵⁵ Alexandris gives the total number of the refugees that were settled in the Greek Thrace as 145.000.¹⁵⁶

After this settlement, the number of Greeks increased to 189.000 which was the %62.1 of the total population of Western Thrace.¹⁵⁷ Such an attempt was criticized by the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace as well Turkey. One of the common criticisms was that the settlement of refugees had changed the balance between the Greek and Turkish population in Western Thrace in favor of the Greek side.

This settlement policy of Greece can, also, be interpreted as ‘Gradual Hellenization’ of Western Thrace that was reflected clearer in the Evros Prefecture. Greece saw the Muslim Turks living in this border region as a threat to its national security. More immigrants of Asia Minor were settled in this prefecture and pressures upon this people started to increase. As a result, most of the Muslim Turks in this prefecture were forced to leave their farms and houses and immigrate to Turkey. Due to their closeness to the border, immigration to Turkey was an easier task compared with the immigrations from the Xanthi and Rhodopi prefectures. It was noted that as a result of Greek policies the number of the Muslim Turks from the cities Feres, Soufli, Alexandroupolis, and Didimotihon and the villages of the Evros Prefecture was 38.556 during the period of 1923-1939.¹⁵⁸

Besides the refugee problem, the 1929 World Depression negatively affected the Greek economy. The prices of the main export goods of Greece like tobacco had drastically decreased with reduced demand for these products. Most of the Muslim Turks, being tobacco producers, were also directly affected from this depression but

¹⁵⁵ The Letter of Hamdi Bey quoted in Hikmet Öksüz, “The Reasons for Immigration From Western Thrace to Turkey”, *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, 2003, p.260

¹⁵⁶ Alexis Alexandris, *Οι ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις, 1923-1987. (The Greek-Turkish Relations, 1923-1987)* (Athens: ELIAMEP, 1988) p.64

¹⁵⁷ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.81

¹⁵⁸ Cengiz Orhonlu, *Türk Dünyası El Kitabı* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Entitüsü, 1976) p.1102

a wave of migration to Turkey had not been witnessed. Related with the issue of migration, Osman Nuri mentioned that until 1941 the main reasons for Western Thracian Turks to migrate to Turkey was emotional, related to the problems of adjustment to the Greek administration and the conviction that minority could not live in Greece.¹⁵⁹

2.2.9 The Kemalist-Conservative Dispute in Western Thrace

In the first years after the Lausanne Treaty, another dispute between Greece and Turkey was about the Kemalist/Reformist and Anti-Kemalist/Conservative leaders of the Minority. Mehmet Hilmi, a journalist, was the leading figure of the Kemalist group. He supported the implementation of the Kemalist reforms in Western Thrace. On the opposite side, there were the Conservatives under the leadership of the Mustafa Sabri, the last *Şeyhülislam* of Istanbul.

After the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate system (*Halifelik*) and the establishment of the new Turkish Republic a group of Conservatives, who are also called ‘*Yüz Ellilikler*’ (The Hundred and Fifty), fled Turkey and tried to find asylum in some Islamic and Western European countries like Greece, Syria, Bulgaria, France and Britain.¹⁶⁰ Among this group of Conservatives, 11 of them in the leadership of Mustafa Sabri settled in Western Thrace, one in Drama and one in Thessalonica.¹⁶¹

This Anti Kemalist group resisted against the Kemalist group who rejected the application of Islamic (*Sheria*) Law in Western Thrace. Some points of departure between these two groups were as the followings: the Conservative group was against the adoption of the Latin alphabet. Also, they wanted the Fridays as holiday and they were against the abolishment of the traditional wearings.¹⁶² Moreover, they

¹⁵⁹ Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu, “Göç ve Sebepleri”, *Trakya*, 3 August 1959, No.773

¹⁶⁰ İlhami Soysal, *150'likler, kimdiler, ne yaptılar, ne oldular?* (İstanbul, 1988) p.54 quoted in Simeon Soltaridis., *Η ιστορεία των μουφτείων της Δυτικής Θράκης (The History of the Muftis of Western Thrace)* (Athens: Nea Synora, 1997) p.197

¹⁶¹ Nathanail M. Panagiotidis, *Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα και Εθνική Συνείδηση (The Muslim Minority and the Ethnic Consciousness)* (Aleksandroupoli: Ekodosi Topiki Enosi Dimon ke Kinotiton N.Evru, 1995) p.150

¹⁶² F. Asimakopoulou, “Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Θράκης” in F. Asimakopoulou and Sevasti Christidou-Lionaraki, eds., *Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Θράκης και οι Ελληνοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (The Muslim Minority of Thrace and the Greek-Turkish Relations)* (Athens: Livanis, 2002) p.245

were supported by the Greek administration. For example, the Greek administration defended the traditional wearings, the usage of Arabic alphabet and the Koranic orders¹⁶³

The stance of the newly-established Republic of Turkey in this dispute was quite clear: Turkey wanted these conservatives to be ousted from Greece. In Western Thrace, people supported the conservatives mainly because religion has always played a significant role in the lives of these people. Most of them had organized their lifestyles on religious grounds. Therefore, at first, there was a strong support from the Muslim Turks to the Conservative group. Also, both the conservative and reformist groups tried to affect the minds of Minority members especially by using religion and newspapers. *Yeni Ziya*, for example, was the first newspaper published in Western Thrace from 1924 to 1926 by Mehmet Hilmi. After the change from Arabic to Latin letters in 1928, Hilmi became one of the staunchest supporters of publishing in Latin letters and the application of Kemalist reforms in Western Thrace.

On October 1931, during the negotiations between Venizelos and İnönü in Athens, İnönü asked from Venizelos to remove these anti-Kemalist conservatives from Western Thrace. Venizelos accepted the Turkish claims and decided to remove them from Western Thrace. In return, the Greek side requested from Turkey the removal of Papa Efthim from Istanbul.¹⁶⁴ For Tsioumis, Efthim was a renegade priest who in the 1920s had turned into some kind of anti-patriarch in the service of the Turkish nationalists. In time, the conservatives had disappeared and the reformists started to develop the ethnic Turkish identity of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace while Papa Efthim remained in his position.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Nikolakopoulos, *op. cit.*, p.181

¹⁶⁴ Divani, L. *Ελλάδα και Μειονότητες. Το Σύστημα Διεθνούς Προστασίας της Κοινωνίας των Εθνών (Greece and Minorities: The System of International Protection of the League of Nations)* (Athens: Nefeli, 1995) p.189

¹⁶⁵ K. A. Tsioumis, *Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Δυτικής Θράκης και η Ελληνοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (1923-1940)* (Thessaloniki: Aristotelio Panepistimio Pedagogiki Scholi Tmima Nipiagogon, 1994) quoted in V. Aarbakke, 2000, p.69

2.2.10 *The Role of Venizelos and Atatürk in the Cooperation Between Greece and Turkey*

In order to solve the problems of population exchange and prevent the escalation of conflict, Greece and Turkey accepted to sign three more treaties regarding the problem. Here, one should not underestimate the personal contributions of Atatürk and Venizelos for the development of Turco-Greek relations. Their personal relations reached to such a high point that Venizelos proposed Atatürk in 1934 as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. In one of his articles published in the Thrace-Macedonia Annual, Venizelos stated as follows¹⁶⁶:

The end results of the friendship and cooperation between Turkey and Greece will be so fruitful that even the founders of this cooperation cannot estimate from today. However, we have to water this friendship tree for the mutual benefit of the two communities not for the benefit of one side.

In addition to the friendship between the two leaders of Greece and Turkey, the Athens Treaty of 1926, the Ankara Treaty of 1930 and the Ankara Treaty of 1933 were signed stipulating that the lands of the Muslims confiscated by the Greek state would have to be returned back to whom they belonged. For those lands of the Minority, the Mixed Commission for the Exchange of Populations decided that these lands could not be given back. They would be state-owned lands and the Greek state would have to pay compensation for the prior Turkish owners of these lands.

It is mentioned that the Muslim owners were paid more than 3 times the price per acre than in Greek Macedonia as for compensation. The main reason to do so was not only the fertility of lands but the Greek sensitivity towards the Muslims and Turkey.¹⁶⁷ By the signing of these three agreements, most of the problems arisen

¹⁶⁶ Elefterios K. Venizelos, *Genuine Turco-Greek Friendship* (2) cited in Rıza Kırılı Dökme, “Türk-Yunan İlişkileri-16, *Gündem*, 20-01-1998

¹⁶⁷ J. Dalègre, “Populations et territoire en Thrace depuis 1878”, Tome 1: Texte. Tome 2: Cartes, documents, fiches statistiques, bibliographie. *Département de Géographie*. Paris, Université de Paris X. Nanterre. pp.247-248 quoted in Aarbakke, p.57. Despite the arguments of Dalegre on the Greek sensitivity towards the Minority of Western Thrace, there were severe criticisms against the violation of property rights of the Minority as a result of the resettlement of the Orthodox Greeks of the Asia Minor. Ümit Kurtuluş, *Batı Trakyanın Dünü Bugünü* (Ankara: Sincan Matbaası, 1979) pp.152-153. Also, See A.Aydınlı, *op. cit.*, p.363-364

from the population exchange had come to an end. Regardless of their birthplaces and the date of their settlements, all the Orthodox Christians of Istanbul and Muslims of Western Thrace would be accepted as *etablis* (settled).¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, on 30 October 1930, the Agreement for Friendship, Neutrality and Arbitration, the Protocol for the Restrictions for Naval Forces and Settlement, and the Agreement for Commerce and Navigation were signed in Ankara between Turkey and Greece reflecting the increasing cooperation between these two countries. By these treaties, Turkey and Greece accepted not to participate in any economic or political alliance that would be against the interests of the other.

However, as it is noted, the newspapers in Western Thrace published at those years interpreted the political and economic treaties signed between Greece and Turkey in the beginning of 1930s as not contributing for the lessening of problems of the Turks in Western Thrace. For example, the *Inkilap* newspaper of 14 November 1930 commented this issue as follows: “They may open the way to a happy future for Turkish and Greek nations, but will this flamboyant agreement add a drop of happiness to our lives?”¹⁶⁹

On 9 February 1934, Turkey and Greece became the founding members of the Balkan Pact that was composed of four Balkan States. It was signed in Athens by Greece, Turkey, Romania and Yugoslavia. Their mutual aim was to protect their existing boundaries against the expansionist countries like Bulgaria, Italy and Germany. From the beginning of 1930s until the beginning of 1950, significant violations regarding the rights of the Muslim Turks from the Greek state that would result in a crisis situation between Turkey and Greece were not observed. However, dealing with her own internal problems, the ten year period from 1936 to 1946 marked the ‘stormiest years of the turbulent history of Greece’.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Alexandris notes that according to the datas of the Mixed Commission, the number of *etablis* given to the Muslims of Western Thrace until 1934 was 106.000. Alexandris, *op. cit.*, 1988, p.64

¹⁶⁹ The *Inkilap* newspaper cited in H.Öksüz, “The Reasons for Immigration from Western Thrace to Turkey”, *op. cit.*, p.266

¹⁷⁰ Clogg, *op. cit.*, 1986, p.132

2.2.11 The Political Participation of the Muslim Turkish Minority in the Interwar Era

It was the big landowners and the religious leaders that represented the Western Thracian Minority in the Greek Parliament during the interwar period. Also, separate electoral colleges for the Muslims of Thrace were formed in October 1923. They played a significant role in defining the political participation of the Muslim Turks in Greek politics during the interwar era in the parliamentary elections of 1923, 1928, 1932, 1933 and 1929 and 1934 for the Senate. Only in three parliamentary elections of 1926, 1935 and 1936, both the Muslim Turks and Orthodox Christians constituted a united elections district.¹⁷¹

While the political figures of the Conservative group were generally associated with the Venizelists and those of the Reformist group with Anti-Venizelists, one could see that this was not always true. As in the case of 1936 elections, Hamdi Bey, from the Reformists and Niyazi Mumcu from the Traditionalist group cooperated and made the anti-Venizelists to win the elections in Xanthi prefecture by taking the %86.3 of the votes of the Pomaks in the mountainous area of Xanthi.¹⁷² Here, I want to note that starting from 1930s the increase in the power of the Reformist was associated with the decline of the power of the Conservative group that resulted from the acceptance of Venizelos to remove the Conservatives from Western Thrace. In 1933 there were three political groupings within the Muslim Turkish Minority. These were the Reformists under the leadership of Hatip Yusuf Salihoğlu, the Moderate Traditionalist Muslims under the leadership of Hafız Ali Galip and Hasan Aga and the Anti-Kemalist Traditionalist Muslims under the leadership of Ali Rıza Ahmetoğlu.¹⁷³

2.2.12 The Metaxas Regime (1936-1941)

On 4 August 1936, the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas started in Greece. In a period of the Italian claims for dominating the Mediterranean and Bulgarian claims

¹⁷¹ Nikolakopoulos, *op. cit.*, p.177

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.180-181

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.184

for the Western Thrace Greek foreign policy makers opted for “defensive nationalism” rather than applying for expansionist notions in the formation of the Greek foreign policy.¹⁷⁴ It implied that Greeks would work all together, including minorities, for preserving the national territories of Greece rather than trying to expand them. However, within the concept of defensive nationalism, the *Megali Idea* seemed to continue to serve for the national integration of Greece as could be seen during the Metaxas regime.

By his advent to power until his death in January 1941, the human rights violations increased not only for the minority but also for the whole Greeks. The Bulgarian threat from the north enabled the Metaxas dictatorship to take more severe measures and regulations especially in the mountainous region of Western Thrace and other bordering regions in the Southern Greece. He increased the military buildup in Western Thrace. The more Greek authority implied the more restrictions for the Muslim Turks of the region. Therefore, I think that the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace suffered a lot from the applications of Metaxas regime.

Metaxas tried to make all Greek citizens to unite against the threat from the North. For the first time, he made the teaching of Greek language compulsory in minority schools. The textbooks of the minority schools were coming from Turkey. However, in 1938, new textbooks started to be printed in Greek.

The whole zones in the north of Greece with Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania were declared as ‘supervised zones’. The road between Xanthi and Ehinós which is, today, the main road that combines the city of Xanthi prefecture with the biggest village of the mountainous segment of this prefecture, Ehinós, was established not to help for the villager’s circulation but in order to help the Greek soldiers to move easier from the city to the mountainous area.¹⁷⁵

The border with Turkey was not within the supervised zones implying Greece was having good relations with Turkey at those years. Greeks had not got a fear from the East but rather a fear from the North. Under the Metaxas dictatorship, Turkey and Greece signed a treaty that enabled the cooperation between two countries in case of

¹⁷⁴ Aristotle A. Kallis, “To Expand or Not to Expand? Territory, Generic Fascism and the Quest for an ‘Ideal Fatherland’ ”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2003, Vol.38 (2) p.256

¹⁷⁵ Papadimitriou, *op. cit.*, p.144

an attack by a third party. Also, Metaxas visited Turkey and in 1937 he made the gesture of giving the house of Atatürk in Salonika, where he was born, to the Turkish state in order to be used as the Turkish Consulate.

2.2.13 *The Second World War and the Bulgarian Control of Western Thrace (1941-1944)*

By Mussolini's ultimatum to cross the Albanian border on 28 October 1939 Greece was included in the Second World War. By the end of this year, the Greek forces won victory against Italian forces. In this war, 16.600 Muslim Turks of Western Thrace fought against the Italian army. After the war, 2.600 of them were killed and 1.850 of them were wounded.¹⁷⁶

In 1941, Nazi Germany decided to invade Greece. Hitler negotiated with the Bulgarian government for assistance in the attack on Greece. Bulgarian government under Filov accepted the proposal of Hitler. In return, Filov wanted to regain the control of the Western Thrace, a region which had always been the dream of Bulgarians for their access to the Aegean Sea. On 6 April 1941, the whole of Western Thrace was occupied by German forces and after 17 days, the Bulgarian Army got the control of Western Thrace.

Bulgaria got the control of each administrative, educational and religious activity in the region. Bulgarian forces cooperated with the German forces by which the Bulgarian control of the region became more effective. Muslim Turks were forced to learn and use the Bulgarian language. At schools, the old Turkish language with Arabic letters started to be used against the usage of new Turkish language. Muslim Turks of Western Thrace were permitted to work only in farms not anywhere else. They were living in very harsh conditions under the Bulgarian control.

Regarding the hate and negative attitude of the Bulgarians towards the Western Thracian Minority two main reasons is noted: The first one is the 1913 Provisionary Government of Western Thrace (*Garbi Trakya Hükümet-i Muvakkatesi*) that was established against the Bulgarian control of Western Thrace. The second one is the refusal of Bulgarian control by the Western Thracian Minority in the

¹⁷⁶ Aydınlı, *op. cit.*, pp.393-395

plebiscite conducted in 1919. For him, Bulgarians got the chance to take the revenge of the disloyalties of Western Thracians.¹⁷⁷

Bulgarian forces forcibly got foods, clothes and any kinds of equipment from the Minority houses. Despite the Muslim Turks had very few foods and clothes they had not got other alternative than obeying to the orders of the Bulgarian forces. A refusal against the Bulgarian orders was likely to result in death.

Batıbey notes that on 23 April 1941, only three days after the Bulgarian occupation, the Bulgarian military forces made raids against the houses of the Muslim Turks in Komotini. In case of such raids, the minority were presupposed to hit tinplates. By this way, the minority members in Komotini would be alarmed and they would take necessary measures against possible raids by Bulgarian forces. That night the tinplates hits had not stopped until the morning meaning that almost all houses of the Minority were attacked by the Bulgarian forces. The Bulgarians took whatever equipment found in those houses, from food and drinks to clothes. The Turks of Western Thrace were somewhat stolen by the Bulgarians.¹⁷⁸

Such attacks against the houses of the Minority were repeated in the coming weeks. The Germans had not conflicted with the Bulgarians on these attacks. They rather ignored the Bulgarian attitudes towards the Minority. As a result of the Bulgarian pressures and harsh conditions in Western Thrace, some families of Muslim Turks started to migrate to Turkey which was seen a 'safe haven' for themselves.¹⁷⁹ When the number of the immigrants to Turkey started to increase, the Turkish government declared that there would not be accepted any other families from Western Thrace.

Besides the Muslim Turks, there were also Armenians and Greeks in Western Thrace. The Armenians generally cooperated with the Bulgarians so they were enjoying the advantages of the Bulgarian control. As a result of the Bulgarian pressures, some of the Greeks left Western Thrace and went to Greece while some

¹⁷⁷ Şevket Kemal Batıbey, *Ve Bulgarlar Geldi. Batı Trakya'da Teneke İle Alarm* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1976) p.7

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.19

¹⁷⁹ In his book, Aydınlı gives the number of legal immigrants from 1939 until 1945 to Turkey as 18 and the number of illegal ones as 18.500. Aydınlı, *op. cit.*, p.407

others who accepted the Bulgarian control of the region started to enjoy the advantages of the Bulgarian regime.

The Bulgarians of Western Thrace, who left the region and went to Bulgaria in the 1929 population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria, returned back to their homes. Thus, those Greeks who were living on their former houses were forced to leave by the Bulgarian regime. Actually, the ethnic composition of the region was tried to be changed by forcing the Muslim Turks and Orthodox Greeks to leave their own lands or become assimilated. Most of the Muslim Turks, whose migration to Turkey was a more difficult issue than that of the Orthodox Greeks' migration to Greece, had to live under the Bulgarian domination.

These developments depict us that rather than the Armenians or the majority Greeks the ones who had suffered more from the Bulgarian domination of Western Thrace from 1941 to 1944 were the Muslim Turks. Turkey insisted not to accept refugees from the Western Thrace. However, as the daily newspaper *Trakya*¹⁸⁰ notes during the Bulgarian domination, the number of those who achieved to immigrate to Turkey increased to 10.000 people, adding that the Greek state had a quite indifferent attitude towards migration to Turkey.¹⁸¹

2.2.14 The End of the Bulgarian Regime in Western Thrace and the Civil War Period (1944-1949)

In 1943, Greek gangs mainly composed of the Greek communists under EAM (*Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο*) (National Liberation Front) became organized against the Bulgarian and German forces in big cities. They were living in the mountains and applying for guerilla tactics in their operations. At first, the gangs were not so successful against their enemies. However, the defeat of the German forces in Stalingrad encouraged the Greek gangs against the German and Bulgarian forces.

One of the most significant reasons for the success of the EAM was the support from the Greek citizens. Actually, EAM promised to provide welfare and a

¹⁸⁰ It was a newspaper published by Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu, an MP represented the Turkish Minority from 1946 until 1964 for 16 years. Fettahoğlu was also the co-owner of the *Inkilap* newspaper.

¹⁸¹ *Trakya*, 3 August 1959

better future for the poor Greek citizens. Also, EAM achieved to use the nationalistic feelings of the Greeks against the invasions of Germany and Bulgaria. This can be seen in the foundation statute of EAM. Article 1 of the EAM statute referred to the liberation of Greece from foreign occupation and the achievement of national independence.¹⁸² Here, the British help in the struggle of Greeks against the occupiers should not be forgotten. In the end, the Bulgarian forces left the control of Western Thrace to EAM forces on 14 September 1944. Until 12 February 1945, EAM controlled the region.

It is noted that during the EAM regime, 25.000 Turks had migrated to Turkey.¹⁸³ Actually, both during the Bulgarian domination and Civil War period, the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace remained in between the two forces, or as Aarbakke states, between ‘the devil’ and ‘the deep blue sea’.¹⁸⁴ On the one hand they were oppressed by the Greek gangs in order to provide more food and equipments while on the other hand they were suppressed for the same needs by the Bulgarian forces. Both sides suppressed the Muslim Turks for their possible aids for the other side. The situation had not changed in the Civil War period of 1946-1949. This time the other side was the Greek government that had suppressed the Minority for possible aids to the EAM gangs who were helped by communist countries like USSR, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria.

In the Minority newspapers of those years, the main tendency was to stress that the clash between the National Greek Army and EAM forces should not force the Turkish minority to leave Western Thrace. For example, in the newspaper *Trakya*, it was stated¹⁸⁵:

Today’s conditions of Greece should not provide the necessary basis for the elimination of the Western Thracian Turks. We have neither fascists nor communists. We don’t have a problem with the government and we don’t wait for a benefit from a regime change.

¹⁸² Tsoukalas, *op. cit.*, p.60 Footnote 3

¹⁸³ Demirbaş, *op. cit.*, p.127

¹⁸⁴ Aarbakke, *op. cit.*, p.91

¹⁸⁵ Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu, “Alev Bacayı Sardı”, *Trakya*, 4 August 1947

However, according to the claims of the Turkish Consul of Komotini, 3000 people from the Minority migrated to Turkey between 1944 and 1946.¹⁸⁶ In 1947, which was generally interpreted as the catastrophic year of the Western Thracian Minority due to the fact that conditions reached to unbearable points in Western Thrace,¹⁸⁷ Britain declared that she was not able to bear the burden of supporting the Greek army against the EAM forces alone. As a result, the Truman Doctrine was accepted by the US Congress providing for 400 million dollars for both Greece and Turkey. Couloumbis notes that it was the highest per capita aid received by any recipient of the US aids in the post-Second World War period.¹⁸⁸ Truman Doctrine also represents the end of the British intervention in the policies of Greece and the beginning of the American intervention in Greek affairs.¹⁸⁹

During the civil war period, while some of the Greeks became members of the EAM and clashed against the Greek forces, most of the Muslim Turks cooperated with the Greek forces despite a number of attempts of the EAM gangs to make the Muslim Turks not to migrate and to take side with the EAM forces. For example, in the propaganda leaflet, *Savaş*, published by the Greek Communist Party, and it was stated as follows¹⁹⁰:

Those Turks who sold all their properties, left Greece and went to Turkey returned back. Their statements about Turkey were not quite well. Therefore, those who favor for immigrating to Turkey try to deceive the Turkish minority and want to direct the Turkish minority towards a disaster.

In another *Savaş* leaflet, it was stated to ‘get armed and go for victory’.¹⁹¹ However, the Muslim Turkish Minority continued to depict its loyalty to the Greek government.

¹⁸⁶ Alexandris, *op. cit.*, 1988, p.142

¹⁸⁷ *Trakya*, 5 January 1948

¹⁸⁸ Theodore Couloumbis, *Greek Political Reaction to American and NATO influences* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1966) p.28 quoted in M.Fatih Tayfur, *Semiperipheral Development and Foreign Policy. The Cases of Greece and Spain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) p.48

¹⁸⁹ Such an American intervention is generally agreed as a policy by which the Greek interests were subordinated by the local and global interests of the US. C.Tsoukalas, *op. cit.*, pp.105-106 and F.Tayfur, *op. cit.*, p.51

¹⁹⁰ Aydınlı, *op. cit.*, p.311

One of the reasons for loyalty can be that during the years of Civil War all the region was full of Greek gangs. Leaving the region and going to Turkey was very dangerous and most of those who attempted to do so were killed by the gangs.¹⁹² In case of such a situation, the Muslim Turks had to stay in the region and assist either to the gangs or to the Greek forces. Most of the Minority members preferred the second option.

The second reason for the loyalty of Muslim Turks can be the stance of Turkey against the communists. Turkey was not in favor of the communist control of Greece. Therefore, Turkey either directly or indirectly assisted the Greek national forces in their fight against the communist gangs. The third and, for me, the most important reason was the effect of religion. The religion of the Minority was Islam. In Western Thrace, the Communist ideology has been interpreted as an ideology without a religion. On this issue, Ibrahim Serif stated that there has been a rejection towards the Communist ideology based on Islam. “Communism is an ideology that rejects the notion of religion. It is mainly for this reason that we sided with Athens against the Communist EAM during the Civil War Period”¹⁹³

Civil War came to an end with more than 100.000 deaths and more than 500.000 refugees who were forced to abandon their homes. The political and economic situation in Greece was severely damaged during this period. However, it seems that the most dramatic hit was within the Greek society. The Civil War was not between the Greeks and other states but it was within the Greek community. Greek nationals fought within themselves. The ‘National Schism’ of the Interwar period between the Modernists and Traditionalists was transformed into a strife between the communists and anti-communists. As Clogg notes, such a division in the

¹⁹¹ Hikmet Öksüz, “Western Thracian Turks in Greek Civil War, (1946-1949),” in *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, no. 5 (2000/01). p.60

¹⁹² Batıbey, *op. cit.*, 1976, p.140-141. However, Kayıhan notes that in the Civil War period between 1946 and 1949, 17,793 immigrants entered Turkey either legally or illegally. Ahmed Kayıhan, *Lozan ve Batı Trakya. 1913'te İlk Türk Cumhuriyeti* (İstanbul, 1967) p.32 quoted in Hikmet Öksüz, “Western Thracian Turks in Greek Civil War, (1946-1949)”, *op. cit.*, p.62

¹⁹³ Interview that I made on 9 February 2005 at Komotini with Ibrahim Serif, the President of the Consultation Council and the elected Mufti of Komotini

Greek society was likely to cast a long shadow on the developments in the Cold War era.¹⁹⁴

2.2.15 From the End of the Civil War until 1955

From the beginning of 1950s until mid 1955, there were significant developments that strengthened the relations between Turkey and Greece. One of them was the signing of Cultural Agreement on 20 April 1951. According to this agreement, there would be exchange of academicians and students. The misinformation in the school textbooks regarding the history of the other state would be corrected. Also, the establishment of cultural institutes in the other state and the free circulation of books and magazines in the other state were provided. However, the Cultural Agreement of 1951 had not specially focused on the minority education. The provisions of this agreement were quite general and vague and they were not legally binding the two parties of this agreement.¹⁹⁵ Rather, it seems that it aimed to develop the cooperation between Greece and Turkey by means of culture. Likely, Panagiotidis states that the 1951 Cultural Agreement between Greece and Turkey was not signed to arrange the issues of the Minority education but to increase their educational/cultural relations between themselves, being both the members of the Council of Europe.¹⁹⁶

Another development was the official visits between Turkey and Greece. The Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Köprülü made an official visit to Athens in June 1952, and as a response, Sophocles Venizelos visited Ankara in February 1953. Furthermore, the President of Turkey, Celal Bayar, visited Athens in August 1952 and in this year, on 3 December 1952, the only Minority High School in the Rhodopi prefecture was founded and took his

¹⁹⁴ Clogg, *op. cit.*, 1986, p.165

¹⁹⁵ Lamros Baltiotis, “Ελληνική Διοίκηση και Μειονοτική Εκπαίδευση στη Δυτική Θράκη” (The Greek Administration and the Minority Education in Western Thrace) in K.Tsitselikis and D. Hristopoulos, ed., *Το μειονοτικό φαινόμενο στην Ελλάδα. Μία συμβολή των κοινωνικών επιστημών (The minority phenomenon in Greece. A contribution of the social sciences)* (Athens: Kritiki, 1997) p.322

¹⁹⁶ Nathanail M. Panagiotidis, *Το Μειονοτικό Εκπαιδευτικό Σύστημα της Ελλάδας (The Minority Education System of Greece)* (Aleksandroupoli: Gnomi, 1996) p.27

name, Celal Bayar High school. Here, it is crucial to note that the 1951 Cultural Agreement seems as one of the primary motives for the opening of this high school.

In addition to their cooperation in the field of education, both Turkey and Greece applied for the NATO membership and became NATO members together on 15 February 1952. By this way, they protected themselves from the threats of the USSR. One of the main reasons to be accepted by NATO was their role of buffer zones against the expansion of Soviet communism, the threat from the North.

Related with the change in demographic figures in Western Thrace, I want to add that from the 1920s until the beginning of 1950s the immigration policy of Turkey regarding the Western Thracian Turks remained the same. For Turkey, despite the difficult and sometimes unbearable conditions of Western Thrace, immigrants would not be accepted from Western Thrace and thus such a strategic region would not be emptied. However, the Turkish immigration policy changed by the advent of Adnan Menderes to the power.

During the Menderes government, the policy of the Turkish government accepting immigrants from Western Thrace was resumed and a great number of Muslim Turks left Western Thrace and went to Turkey between 1950 and 1960 either legally or illegally. The number of these people is more than 20.000.¹⁹⁷ For some Turkish scholars, it was one of the biggest mistakes of the Menderes government that directly affected the demographic figure in Western Thrace. People deprived of the harsh conditions of the region started to sell their properties to the Orthodox Greeks and migrate to Turkey.¹⁹⁸

2.2.16 The Cyprus Issue and the Events of 6/7 September of 1955

An author notes that “minority people not only feel themselves bound together by race, nationality, culture but also they share a common fate, and common experiences of discrimination and social disadvantage.”¹⁹⁹ Likely, by the

¹⁹⁷ A. Aydınli figures out that 22.872 Muslim Turks of Western Thrace left Thrace and migrated to Turkey. Aydınli, *op. cit.*, p.407

¹⁹⁸ Kurtuluş, *op. cit.*, p.51-52

¹⁹⁹ Nimmi Hutnik, *Ethnic Minority Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p.21

involvement of the Cyprus issue in the Turco-Greek relations, the fate of the two minorities in Western Thrace and Istanbul started to be negatively affected. The attempts of Greece for 'Enosis', to unite the island with the mainland Greece, were clearly rejected by the Turkish side. And, I think that whether directly or indirectly the Greek claims of *Enosis* played an important role for the beginning of 6/7 September 1955 events that had occurred against the Greeks of Istanbul.²⁰⁰

On 6 September 1955, the violent activities of groups against the Orthodox Greeks of Istanbul started with the rumor that a bomb was exploded in the house of Atatürk in Salonica, where he was born. According to the news, the house of Atatürk was affected badly from this explosion. However, the reality was that only a window of the house was smashed and nothing else. Within hours, groups of people destroyed and looted the properties, shops and houses of the Orthodox Greek Minority in Istanbul. These events have been widely criticized by both Greek and Turkish scholars. For Bağcı, these events are known as the 'black days' of the Turkish history.²⁰¹ As for Heraclides, these events were the beginning of the end for the last remnants of the Constantinople Hellenism.²⁰² While referring for the attitude of the Western Thracian Minority regarding the 6/7 September events, it was expressed that the events occurred in Istanbul was a shame of Turkey and Turkishness and they shared the pains of the Istanbul Greek Minority.²⁰³

After the 6/7 September events, a great number of the Greek Orthodox population have gradually left Istanbul and migrated to Greece. By this way, the reciprocity in the protection of the demographics of the minorities in Western Thrace and Istanbul between Greece and Turkey came to an end. From 1955 until today, one can notice that Greece has usually condemned Turkey as being the first party spoiling the reciprocity character of the Lausanne system. As a response to the Greek condemnations on the reciprocity issue, Turkey argues that the rights of the Muslim

²⁰⁰ On this issue it was stated that some of the newspapers reported the Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul to collect money from the rich Greeks of Istanbul in order to send to the Greek Cypriots. Yahya Koçoğlu, *Azınlık Gençleri Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001) p.26

²⁰¹ Hüseyin Bağcı, *Türk Dış Politikasında 1950'li Yıllar* (Ankara:METU Press, 2001) p.113

²⁰² Alexis Heraclides, *Yunanistan ve "Doğu'dan Gelen Tehlike" Türkiye* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002) p.311

²⁰³ *Trakya*, 12 September 1955

Turks of Western Thrace are not protected only with the Lausanne Treaty. Both the 1913 Athens Treaty and 1920 Sevres Treaty puts Greece under the responsibility to protect minority rights on her own territories.

However, in my opinion, as a result of the 6/7 September events Turkey lost an important leverage in pressuring Greece on the rights of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace. Today, the number of Orthodox Greeks of Istanbul has significantly decreased from 110.000 to 3.000. As a response to what happened to the Orthodox Greeks of Istanbul, Greece had not immediately increased its pressures in Western Thrace. However, I want to note that the 6/7 September events and the inclusion of the Cyprus issue in the debates between Turkey and Greece marks the beginning of a very difficult and harsh period for both the Orthodox Greeks of Istanbul and the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace.

2.2.17 The Period from 1960 until the 1967 Military Regime

The beginning of the 1960s marks the beginning of migration from Western Thrace to the big cities of Greece or Europe, especially to Germany. A number of the Muslim Turks went to Germany as *Gastarbeiter*/Guestworkers some of whom returned and some of whom still live in different parts of Europe. The main reason to migrate was the bad economic conditions in Western Thrace at those years. In 1960s and 1970s, the tobacco industry in Greece was in a crisis situation. Most of the Muslim Turks working as farmers were tobacco producers²⁰⁴. Also, other than the existence of small-scale Minority enterprises there was a low number of medium and large scale enterprises of the Muslim Turks, whose numbers had gradually decreased compared to the period of the Lausanne Treaty. This decline can be seen from the table below.

²⁰⁴ By 1983, the %95 of the tobacco production and %80 of stockbreeding was controlled by the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. This information is taken from Neofitos Gonatas and Paraskevas Kidoniatis, *Η Μουσουλμανική Μειωότητα της Θράκης (The Muslim Minority of Thrace)* (Komotini: Eklogi, 1985) p.40

Table 2: The Enterprises of the Western Thracian Minority

The Enterprises of the Western Thracian Minority	In 1923	in 1971
Large-scale enterprises	14.500	-----
Medium-scale enterprises	8600	1460
Small-scale enterprises	6500	9600
	Total: 29.000	11.060

Source: Ahmet Aydınli, *Batı Trakya Faciasının İcyüzü* (İstanbul: Akın Yayınları, 1971) p.383

An alternative to the farming and enterprises was to move to the big cities of Greece or to Europe. Those who moved to the big cities, like those of Lavrion or Gazi districts ²⁰⁵ of Athens, generally worked in the unpreferable and dangerous industries like the Metal Industry in companies like GEORGIADIS (*ΓΕΩΡΓΙΑΔΗΣ*), PIRKAL (*ΠΥΡΚΑΛ*) and VELPEX (*ΒΕΛΠΕΞ*).²⁰⁶ Those who went to Germany helped both economically and politically to Western Thrace.²⁰⁷ In economic terms, they sent remittances for their families. In political terms, they established foundations in Germany. In time, they started to struggle against the human rights violations in Western Thrace. It is not a coincidence that later in 1980s and 1990s these associations founded by the Western Thracian Minority were effective in the

²⁰⁵ According to a Survey, in 1982-1983, the number of the Minority members migrated to Gazi was approximately 400. İrini Avramopoulou and Leonidas Karakatsanis, *Η Διαδρομή Της Ταυτότητας: Απο τη Δυτική Θράκη στο Γκάζι* (The travel of identity: From Western Thrace to Gazi). Available at www.kemo.gr

²⁰⁶ Georgia Petraki, “Στην Ξάνθη και στο Λαύριο: Ταξικές Διαστάσεις του Μειονοτικού στην Ελλάδα” (In Xanthi and Lavrion: Class Dimension of Minority in Greece”, *Συγχρονά Θέματα*, Vol.63, April-May 1997, pp.84-85

²⁰⁷ In 1987, 7236 Muslim Turks of Western Thrace were reported to live in Germany. Sevasti Troubeta, *Κατασκευάζοντας ταυτότητες για τους μουσουλμάνους της Θράκης. Το παράδειγμα των Πομάκων και των Τσιγγάνων* (*Creating identities for the Muslim of Thrace. The example of the Pomaks and the Gypsies*) (Athens: Kritiki and KEMO, 2001) p.148 footnote 83

manifesting the Greek human rights abusements in Western Thrace to the international community.²⁰⁸

In 1964, Turkish Parliament passed a law stipulating that the residence and working permits of 10.000 to 11.000 Greek citizens living in Turkey would not be renewed.²⁰⁹ In addition to the deteriorating situation in Cyprus, this law once more caused the Muslim Turks to think that Greece would continue to increase the pressures in Western Thrace as retaliation to the latest applications of Turkey.

In the period from 1950s until the advent of the Colonels regime, the Muslim Turks of Komotini were mainly represented by Molla Yusuf, Hasan Hatipoğlu and Osman Üstüner in the Greek Parliament. Molla Yusuf was the leader of the Conservative Group²¹⁰ while the other two MPs were supported by the Reformists. Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu, starting from 1946 up until 1963, was the representative of the Minority from the Xanthi prefecture for 16 years. In 1950, Molla Yusuf and Hafız Yaşar formed the 'Islamic Revival' (*İntibah-i İslam*) and the conservatives gathered around this group. However, this resulted in an internal division within this group. 'Islamic Union' (*İttihat-i İslam*) was formed by Hafız Ali Reşat and Hüsni Yusuf who adopted a more conservative attitude against the ideologies of the Reformist group while Molla Yusuf adopted a more moderate stance towards the Reformists and the Greek state.

Regarding the representation of the Muslim Turkish Minority in the Greek Parliament, I want to add that the number of the big landowners and conservative religious leaders gradually decreased, while in the beginning of 1970s a new group of political figures emerged which was composed of mainly university graduates, especially from Turkey, most of whom were dealing with free economic activities in

²⁰⁸ For the struggle of these associations, see Aydın Ömeroğlu, *Belgeler ve Olaylar Işığında, Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Batı Trakya Türkleri ve Gerçek -I-* (İstanbul: Avcı Ofset, 1994) pp.130-139

²⁰⁹ Lois Whitman, *Denying Human Rights and Ethnic Identity: The Greeks of Turkey* (NY: Helsinki Watch, 1992) p.9

²¹⁰ For Nikolakopoulos, two external reasons facilitated the organization and political participation of the Conservatives: The encouragement of the General Administration of Thrace and the Democratic Party's ascendance to the power in 1950 in Turkey by which the monopoly of the hard core Kemalists came to an end. Nikolakopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp.196-197

Western Thrace.²¹¹ Sadık Ahmet, Ibrahim Serif and Ismail Rodoplu are some examples of this group who represented the Muslim Turks in 1980s in the Greek Parliament and have been the leading figures in the struggle of the Muslim Turks against the discriminatory minority policies of the Greek administration.

2.2.18 *The Colonels Regime (1967-1974)*

From the beginning of 1960s, the relations between the Greek monarchy, parliament and army started to deteriorate. In February 1964, George Papandreou came to the power and stayed there until July 1965. During this term, the Center Union (CU) government of Papandreou followed an anti-royalist, anti-military and anti-American attitude.²¹² It is mainly for this attitude that Papandreou's government did not last long. After the end of the CU government, the domestic politics of Greece was in a turmoil that resulted in the beginning of a seven-year Junta regime.²¹³

The restrictive measures increased for all Greek citizens. However, the Western Thracian Minority was again the one who suffered a lot from the Colonels regime. In 1972, for the first time, Greece officially started to identify the Minority as 'Muslims' instead of 'Turks'. From that time on, Greece officially refers to the Minority as 'Muslims' of Western Thrace.

Besides, the Minority started to be identified as composed of three groups: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies. Also, the supervised zone continued during the Colonels regime but with an addition, the Evros prefecture. By this way, the relation between the Muslim Turks living within the supervised zone and those living without this zone started to be under the control of the military. Damages to mosques,

²¹¹ K. Zolotas, A. Angelopoulos and I. Pasmazoglou, (eds.) *Η Ανάπτυξη της Θράκης: Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές (The development of Thrace: Challenges and Prospect)* (Athens: Akadimia Athinon, 1995) p.42

²¹² Tayfur, *op. cit.*, p.60

²¹³ For some scholars like Clogg the main aim of the 1967 military intervention was to prevent an almost certain Center Union victory in the polls that was supposed to be made one month later in May 1967. Clogg, *op. cit.*, 1992, p.162. For Brown, there were five discernible reasons that appeared to predispose the officer corps towards the intervention: The political incompetence of parliamentarians, the decline in the growth rate of the economy, Greece's geostrategical role in NATO, the perceived communist threat and the professional grievances of the officer corps. James Brown, *Delicately Poised Allies: Greece and Turkey* (London: Brassey's, 1990) p.22

cemeteries and historical places belonging to the Minority and some reallocations of the lands from the Muslim Turks to the Orthodox Greeks were some of the abusements during the Colonels regime.²¹⁴

In the field of education, the Greek-Turkish Educational Protocol was signed between Greece and Turkey on 23 December 1968. One of the most important sides of this Protocol was that it specifically dealt with the educational problems of the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. According to this protocol, Turkish continued to be recognized as the unique official language of the Minority. It also specified which lessons would be taught in Greek (geography, Greek language and history) and in Turkish (the rest). Arabic would no longer be taught in the schools while the learning of the Latin script was obliged by this protocol.²¹⁵ Compared to the 1951 Cultural Agreement, the 1968 Protocol exclusively dealt with the educational problems of the minorities. However, it was never effectively implemented.

Looking to the problems of the Muslim Turks in 1970s and 1980s, it seems that most of them that made life more difficult and harder for the Muslim Turks living in Western Thrace were rooted in the Colonels regime. Denial of ethnic identity, the lessening of the Minority's control on pious endowments, problems in the education of Minority children are some of these problems. I will deal analytically with such problems, which are the products of the Colonels period, in the next chapter of my thesis.

2.2.19 The Return of Democracy Back to Greece (1974-1980)

By the advent of democracy in Greece in 1974, there were not so many changes in the minority policy of Greece. Despite the return of democracy, most of the restrictions of the junta regime continued to affect negatively the situation for Muslim Turks in Western Thrace. While Turkey's intervention in Cyprus in 1974 had negatively affected the Turco-Greek relations, this intervention, also, played the key role for the return of democracy after seven years back to Greece.

²¹⁴ Kurtuluş, *op. cit.*, pp.54-57

²¹⁵ 1968 Greek Turkish Educational Protocol cited in Eren, *op. cit.*, pp.135-141

Starting from the 1974 intervention, the fears and anxieties of Greeks for a possible Turkish intervention of Greece via the Western Thracian Minority increased. Thus, the restrictive measures against the Muslim Turks were increased. However, on this issue, I agree with the argument of Larrabee and Lesser²¹⁶:

With the precedent of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus in mind, some Greeks worried that Turkey might seek to exploit discontent among Greece's Turkish minority and use it as a pretext to launch an attack against Greece and retake Western Thrace. However, Turkey's policy in the Balkans has actually been quite cautious. Turkey has not sought to play the 'Muslim card', either in Greece or elsewhere in the Balkans.

The 1974 Turkey's intervention increased the fear of a possible retaliation from the Greece to the Western Thracian Minority which resulted in a wave of migration of Muslim Turks to Turkey. It was noted that the number of the Muslim Turks migrated from Western Thrace to Turkey after the 1974 Turkish intervention of Cyprus was more than 20.000.²¹⁷

To keep alive the Cyprus issue, in Western Thrace, huge billboards featuring a bleeding partitioned Cyprus started to be displayed in 1987.²¹⁸ These huge billboards some of which is still present in the entrance of Komotini had a psychological effect on both the Greek majority and on the Muslim Turks. For the majority Greeks, it enabled an increase in the Greek national consciousness. However, for the Muslim Turks, it increased their own ethnic and religious identity feelings and remind their sufferings. So it made them think the negative attitude of the Greek state towards the Minority, which would not likely to change much in practice.

Another development that threatened the Muslim Turks emerged in 1976, when the Turkish government sent the Sismik I, a survey ship, for oil soundings in the disputed waters. Greece clearly rejected such a carry out and wanted to solve this problem in the International Court of Justice in The Hague. This crisis and other crisis situations in the Cold War era like this one had not turned into a hot war

²¹⁶ F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the Age of Uncertainty* (US:RAND, 2003) pp. 95-96

²¹⁷ Eren, *op. cit.*, 1993, p.298

²¹⁸ Poulton, *op. cit.*, 1994, p.183

between Greece and Turkey, but it had directly or indirectly played a significant role in the formation of Greek minority policy towards the Western Thracian Minority. Generally, it was the minorities that had to play the bill when the relations between Greece and Turkey deteriorated.

2.2.20 The Decade that Paved the Way for Changes in Western Thrace (1980-1990)

Towards the end of 1970s, Greece started to spend its effort for her plausible EU membership while Turkey was struggling with her internal conflicts that lasted in the military coup on 12 September 1980. Greece, in the end, achieved to become a new member of the EC. The EC membership of Greece has been very important with its reflections on both Turkey and the Western Thracian Minority. Since the beginning of 1980s by the advent of Papandreou to the Greek leadership, Greece has usually used her EC membership in order to prevent closer relations between Turkey and EC. However, it was the EC and later EU that forced Greece to change its minority policy of Western Thrace which was finally adopted in 1991 under the Mitsotakis leadership. However, from 1981 until 1991, for almost ten years, Greece continuously violated the minority rights in Western Thrace.

Here, while concerning the Greek minority policies in the 1980s we should not forget the negative attitude of Papandreou both towards Turkey and Western Thracian Minority. One of the main differences between Karamanlis and Papandreou regimes is that while Karamanlis spent most of its energy to the EC membership of Greece, Papandreou adopted for more nationalist policies. The main slogan of Karamanlis was ‘Greece belongs to the West while the main slogan of Papandreou was ‘Greece belongs to the Greeks’.²¹⁹

Towards the end of 1980s, the most significant development and possibly a turning point in the history of Western Thracian Minority was the protest of 10.000 Muslim Turks on 29 January 1988. As a result of the Greek High Court’s decision, the Union of Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace and the Union of Turkish Youth of Komotini were dissolved because of the term ‘Turk’ in their titles that endangered the public order in Western Thrace. This decision was started to be highly criticized by the Minority of Western Thrace which resulted in the protest on 29 January 1988.

²¹⁹ The slogans are cited from R. Clogg, *op. cit.*, 1992, p.179

Before the 29 January protest, in the local minority newspapers it was manifested as follows: “*Bugün Milletimizi Yarın Dinimizi İnkâr Eden Zihniyete Hayır.*”(No to those who Reject Our Ethnicity Today and Our Religion in the Future) and “*İrkımız Türk Dinimiz İslam, Şehirli Köylü Artık Uyan*”,(Our Ethnicity is Turk and Our Religion is Islam, Both Those who Live in the Villages and Cities Do Wake Up)²²⁰, “*Bu Vatanda Türk ve Müslüman Olarak Yaşamak Ne Suç Ne de Günah,*” (It is Neither a Sin Nor a Crime to Live in this Fatherland)²²¹ I will deal with the dissolution of the two unions, 1988 protest, the trials of Sadık Ahmet and Ibrahim Serif, and the violence in Komotini on 29 January 1990 in the next chapter analytically while dealing with the denial of ethnic identity because they are interrelated events, the core of which was denial of ethnic identity.

The main reason of the rally of 29 January was to protest the decision of the High Court and to make a national and international argument that a community was living in Western Thrace who were of Turkish origin, Muslim religion and Greek citizens.

2.2.21 *The Davos Summit of 1988*

On 30 January 1988, the Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou and Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal met in Davos. They aimed to increase the cooperation between Turkey and Greece. However, despite the recent protest of the Muslim Turkish minority, Turkey had not put to the forefront the issue of the Western Thracian Minority. It is argued that even the name of Western Thrace was not pronounced during the negotiation between Özal and Papandreou.²²² Also, both Prime Ministers were reported to agree that the events in Komotini were provocations aiming to spoil their meeting and the ‘spirit of Davos’.²²³

²²⁰ *Akın*, 27 January 1988.

²²¹ *Gerçek*, 28 Ocak 1988

²²² Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.188

²²³ Simeon Soltaridis, *Απο την Κρίση του Μαρτίου 1987.....στο Δαβός (From the Crisis of March 1987...to Davos 1988)* (Komotini: Vivliopolio tis Estias, 1988) p.110

The attitude of the Turkish side once more shows us that Turkish foreign policy makers had found themselves far more preoccupied with the Cyprus and Aegean problems than the Western Thracian Minority. On this issue, Oran notes that another significant implication of the 1998 Protest was that the Turkish Minority was not only protesting the decision of Athens against themselves but also protested Ankara for not being necessarily interested in what was happening in the Western Thrace.²²⁴ After the Summit, in the local newspapers of the Muslim Turks it was stressed that although the Davos Summit could be considered as the most significant historical event between Turkey and Greece after the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the positive atmosphere created in Davos between Turkey and Greece was not likely to affect the conditions in Western Thrace.²²⁵

2.2.22 After the 29 January 1988 Protest

After the 1988 protest, the minority policy of Greece started to be criticized both at the European and international level. The most prominent NGOs like Human Rights Watch (HRW), Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Amnesty International (AI) started to put a special focus and importance on what was happening in Western Thrace. At the beginning of 1990s, it was likely that the aim of the 1988 protest achieved one of its fundamental goals, which was to be heard by the EU and international community. Also, the first international report that severely criticizing the minority policy of Greece regarding the situation in Western Thrace came from the HRW in 1990 and more pressures were exerted on Greece to change its minority policy of Western Thrace. For example, the violence erupted in Komotini on 29 January 1990 that I will focus in the coming chapter, was condemned by the international media organs. Human rights groups visited the region and were reported about the damages to the shops of the Muslim Turks.

²²⁴ Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası Cilt.2* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001) p.117.

²²⁵ “Batı Trakya’ya Uğramayan ‘Davos Ruhü’ İnfalak Etti, *Akın*, 25 February 1989. “İstanbul Elen Azınlığı DAVOS Ruhunun Mutluluğu İçinde Bayram Yaparken, Bu Ortam Maalesef Henüz Daha Batı Trakya Türklüğünde Hissedilmedi” *Akın*, 31 March 1988. The second title of the *Akın* newspaper seems to exaggerate the situation in Istanbul by stating that the Greeks of Istanbul celebrate due to the positive atmosphere of the Davos Spirit because the number of Greeks in Istanbul had declined from 110.000 to approximately 3.000 in sixty-years time. This has nothing to do with a celebration from the Orthodox Greek Minority of Istanbul.

Taking into consideration all of these developments throughout 1980s and by the advent of the Mitsotakis government, we can observe that something has started to change in the minority policy of Greece towards Western Thrace at the beginning of 1990s. In the fourth chapter of my thesis, I will analytically deal with the continuities and changes in the minority policy of Greece focusing on the situation of Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. But now, in the coming chapter, I will deal with the problems of the Western Thracian Minority up until the beginning of 1990s via dwelling on each case of problems separately.

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEMS OF THE MUSLIM TURKISH MINORITY IN THE PRE-1990 PERIOD

3.1 Denial of Ethnic Identity

Referring to the Western Thracian Minority the Greek state, starting from the beginning of 1970s, has continuously stipulated that it does not have a Turkish minority within the national borders of Greece. It would rather use the term ‘Muslim’ for the Minority of Western Thrace. She based this identification on religious criterion to the Lausanne Treaty, which mentioned a ‘Muslim Minority’ and not a ‘Turkish Minority’ of Western Thrace. Looking to the attitude of the Greek state while identifying the Minority, one can see that although the Lausanne Treaty refers to them as “Muslim Minority”, the official minority policy of the Greek state on this issue has changed from time to time.

Until the deterioration of the relations between Greece and Turkey in mid 1950s the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace had not come across with problems from the Greek state regarding the refusal of their ethnic identities. There are different examples for the ethnic identification of the Minority by the Greek state. Firstly, the two communities exempted from the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations were given *etablis* (settled) in which the terms Turk and Greek *etablis* were used rather than ‘Muslim’ or ‘non-Muslim’.

In 1930s, Venizelos tried to remove the conservative circles from Western Thrace while enabling a freedom of maneuver to the secular/reformist circles which were one of the most significant groups of people in the diffusion of the ethnic Turkish consciousness of the Minority. Until 1960s, rather than the term ‘Muslim’ the Greek State used the term “Turkish” while attributing for the minority. In the HRW report of 1999, it was noted that photographs of some Turkish elementary schools in the village of Kalhandos in Komotini and the village of Makri in Alexandroupolis in 1960s showed that these schools were called as ‘Turkish Schools’. Moreover, protocols for the curriculum in elementary schools for the

school year 1957-1958 referred to the schools as ‘Turkish schools’. Besides, an elementary school diploma dated 10 June 1957, written in both Greek and Turkish, in which the 13-year-old Hatice İman was identified as a ‘Turk’.²²⁶

One of the most prominent examples for such an application was an order sent by the Chief Administrator of Thrace to majors and other government bodies in the region on December 1954 ordering the change of all signs using the term “Muslim-of Muslim” to “Turk-Turkish”²²⁷

KINGDOM OF GREECE

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF THRACE

INTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY

Komotini, 28/1/1954

URGENT

TO: The Mayors and Presidents of the Communes of the Prefecture of Rodope

Following the order of the President of the Government we ask you that from now on and all occasions the terms “Turk-Turkish” are used instead of the terms “Muslim-of Muslim”

The General Administrator of Thrace

G. Fessopoulos

Such an order, known as the ‘Order of Fessopoulos’, marks a very significant point in the issue of denial of ethnic identity by the Greek administration. Most of the Western Thracian Turks take this official order as a reference for those who deny their ethnic identities as ‘Turks’ and who reject the existence of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Soltaridis notes two reasons related with the plausible reasons of this order: As an ‘indication of Turco-Greek friendship’ and the ‘threat coming from the South’.²²⁸ Also, another cause of this ethnic identification by the Greek administration can be that by doing so Greece intended to depict to the international

²²⁶ *The Turks of Western Thrace*, January 1999, A Report of the Human Rights Watch, pp.11-12

²²⁷ Lois Whitman, *Destroying Ethnic Identity-The Turks of Greece*, (New York: Helsinki Watch, 1990) p.51

²²⁸ Simeon Soltaridis, *Η Δυτική Θράκη και οι Μουσουλμάνοι. Τι ακριβώς συμβαίνει; (The Western Thrace and the Muslims. What exactly is going on?)* (Athens, Nea Synora- A.A. Livani,1990) p.21

community that the Turkish population living in Cyprus had no reason to fear from the Greek rule over the island considering that Muslims of Western Thrace were not threatened by discriminatory or assimilative measures of the Greek state.²²⁹

The official rejection of the use of the word ‘Turkish’ dates back to the Colonel’s period. After years of identifying the minority as Turks the terms ‘Muslim’ started to be officially used attributing to the Western Thracian Minority. The signs in the primary schools were changed from “Turkish” to “Muslim”. By the Turkey’s intervention of Cyprus in 1974 the official Greek stance towards the ethnic identification of the Minority members deteriorated.²³⁰ Despite the return of democracy to Greece in 1974, Greece under the leadership of Karamanlis banned the usage of Turkish names for official purposes. Even, to give the Turkish name in parentheses following the Greek name was not allowed.

3.1.1 29 January 1988: The First and the Foremost Cry of the Western Thracian Minority

It is mentioned that “minority nations should persist in their fight for the realization of their rights as the members of a distinct cultural group because this will improve the lives of their members”²³¹ which seems quite parallel to what had happened on the protest of the Muslim Turks against the discriminatory policies of the Greek state in 1988.

The banning of civic organizations bearing the adjective ‘Turkish’ was one of the principal cases in the issue of denial of the ethnic identification of the Western Thracian minority. The “Xanthi Turkish Union” was established in 1927 as the “Home of Xanthi Turkish Youth” being the first association of the Western Thracian Minority. Then, in 1936, it was renamed as Xanthi Turkish Union. The second

²²⁹ Ronald Meinardus, “Die griechisch-türkische Minderheitenfrage” (The Greek–Turkish Minority Problem), *Orient*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1985, pp. 48–61 quoted in Ulf Brunbauer, “The Perception of Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece: Between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ ”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.21, No.1, 2001, pp.44-46. Also, I noted the same information from İbrahim Şerif in my interview with him.

²³⁰ On this issue, Hatipoğlu states that after 1974, the Turkey’s intervention in Cyprus, the pressures on the minority increased the policy of ‘ethnic cleansing of Western Thrace from Turks’ was put into practice by the Karamanlis government. Hatipoğlu, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.29

²³¹ Howard Williams, “Rights and Minority Nationalism” in Michael Watson, ed., *Contemporary Minority Nationalism* (New York: Routledge,1990) p.172

association of the Minority was “Komotini Turkish Youth Union” founded in 1928. And, the third one the “Union of Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace” founded in 1936. I want to note that neither of these organizations had problems with the Greek state up until the beginning of 1980s.²³²

In November 1987, the Greek High Court affirmed a 1986 decision by the Court of Appeals of Thrace in which the Union of Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace and the Union of Turkish Youth of Komotini were dissolved while the trial Xanthi Turkish Union continued which lasted in 2005. The Court stated that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece, and the use of the word ‘Turkish’ also endangered the public order. In order to protest this court decision and continuous denial of their ethnic identities by the Greek state institutions, the Muslim Turks collectively marched to the streets of Komotini on 29 January 1988. 29 January protest is widely accepted to be a turning point in the history of the Western Thracian Minority.²³³ The reason for the choice of this day as the day for protest was to attract the attention of the Prime Ministers of Greece and Turkey, who would meet in Davos on 29 January 1988, for the first time after 40 years.²³⁴

For the first time in the history, the Turkish Muslim Minority composed of 10.000 people rallied altogether against the decision of the Greek High Court that declared previously the non-existence of a Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, but instead, the existence of a Muslim Minority in Western Thrace. To add, the participation of the Muslim Turkish women in this protest was put to the forefront by the both national and international media organs because until this protest they had never participated to such social activities and they were believed to have a life clinged to their houses.²³⁵ Therefore, I think that this rally can be accepted as a cry of

²³² I will deal in details with the issues of these organizations and their functions in the fourth chapter while mentioning the trial of Xanthi Turkish Union that ended with the verdict of the Greek Supreme Court to be dissolved in February 2005.

²³³ For the details about this protest, see Eren, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.107-113. Moreover, related with the climate in the region before and during the protest as well as the attitude of the local newspapers both of the Minority and especially of the Greek ones see Soltaridis, *op.cit.*, 1988, pp. 73-96

²³⁴ Fehim Kelahmet, “İsmail Rodoplu ile 29 Ocak’lar Üzerine”, *MihenK*, January-February 2001, vol.3

the overall Minority - both men, women, Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies- who wanted to be heard from all over the world that they were ethnically Turkish, religiously Muslim and citizens of Greece living in Western Thrace. The main reason of this protest, the refusal of ethnic identity of the Minority by the Greek administration, can also be seen in the local newspapers belonging to the members of the Minority.²³⁶

Here, it seems that the past experiences regarding the assimilation policies of the Bulgarian state towards the Turkish minority of Bulgaria was taken into consideration by the Muslim Turkish leaders. For example, Hasan Hatipoğlu, the owner of *Akın* newspaper and one of the ex-MPs, stated: “We believe that if our today’s government tries to apply the Bulgarian type of assimilation for Western Thracian Turks she is in a wrong way”²³⁷

An anxiety could be observed within the Minority that what the Bulgarians did to the Turkish minority the Greek state would do the same in the following years. However, this type of assimilation policy has never occurred in Western Thrace. One of the possible reasons can be the EU membership of Greece unlike Bulgaria. Also, the events occurred in Bulgaria can be interpreted as an experience for the international community to which the necessary reaction had not come from the international organizations. Also, the globalization phenomenon in the beginning of 1990s enabled an intervention to the domestic affairs of the nation states which was not possible in the Bulgarian events of 1980s. It could be a result of these developments that the necessary international focus was automatically and instantly diverted on the 29 January 1988 protest in Western Thrace.

I think that the court decision of 1987 refusing the ethnic identity of the Minority was the final phase of the 1988 protest. The sufferings of the Turks from the discriminative policies of the Greek state for years in both political, economic and social issues can be counted as the side effects of this protest. They all

²³⁵ Damaskinos, Mitropolitias Maronias ke Komotinis, *H συμβολή της τοπικής εκκλησίας εις την αντιμετώπισιν των εθνικών προβλημάτων της Θράκης* (The Contribution of the Local Church in dealing with of the national problems of Thrace) (Komotini: Iera Mitropolis Maronias ke Komotinis, 1989) p.34

²³⁶ In the local Minority newspapers published before this rally, it was stated as follows: “En Nihayet Beklenen Gün Geldi. ‘Batı Trakya’da Türk Yoktur’ Diyenlere Karasudan Meriçe kadar Kadın-Erkek 120 bin Soydaşımız 29 Ocak Cuma Günü ‘Türküz Müslümanız’ Diye Cevap Verecek”, *Akın*, 27 January 1988

²³⁷ Hasan Hatipoğlu, *Akın*, 15 Ocak 1988

accumulated for years and found the chance to blow up in this turbulent period. As it is stressed, when methods of oppression and hegemonic control applied to inter-ethnic relations, tension would merely be swept under the carpet to revive with much greater force at a later date.²³⁸ For me, the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace felt that they had nothing to loose from protesting the decision of the Greek High Court because, for years, even their basic human rights were not given by the Greek state. I think that this was the unseen part of the iceberg.

3.1.2 *The Trials of Sadık Ahmet and Ibrahim Serif*

Another principal case for the denial of ethnic identity is the cases were those of Dr. Sadık Ahmet, a former parliamentarian and Ibrahim Serif in January 1990. Dr. Ahmet, as an independent candidate, was elected as a Member of Parliament in the election of June 1989.²³⁹ After a short time period, a second election was called, to be held on 5 November 1989. Before the elections, in October 1989, Dr. Ahmet and I. Serif, as independent candidates for Parliament, distributed campaign leaflets in which the minority voters were referred as ‘Turks’. After the elections both Ahmet and Serif received subpoenas for a trial to be held on 25 January 1990. They were accused of violating Article 192 of the Penal Code and disrupting public peace. On the day of trial, more than 5.000 Turks gathered in front of the Court. They wanted to show that the two MPs were not alone in their struggle of “Turkishness”.

Leaving the courtroom, Sadık Ahmet shouted: “I am being taken into prison just because I am a Turk. If being a Turk is a crime, I repeat here that I am a Turk and I will remain so. My message to minority in Western Thrace is that they should not forget they are Turks”.²⁴⁰

As a result of the trial, both Ahmet and Serif were sentenced to eighteen months of imprisonments. They spent sixty-four days in prison in Thessalonica. An appeals court then affirmed their convictions, but released them from prison and

²³⁸ George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power* (NY: New York University Press, 2000) p.259

²³⁹ Besides the votes of the Muslim Turks, it argued that Sadık Ahmet took a number of votes from the Orthodox Greeks that was happing for the first time. Soltaridis, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.79

²⁴⁰ Whitman, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.18

ordered them to pay fines (about \$2800 for Ahmet, about \$1875 for Serif) in place of the remainder of their prison terms.²⁴¹

On 15 February 1991 the Court of Cassation rejected Dr. Ahmet's appeal of this conviction. Therefore, he applied to the European Commission of Human Rights on 27 September 1991. In April 1995, the Commission in its Article 31 Report declared that Greece had violated Dr. Ahmet's right of free expression under Article 10 of the ECHR and forwarded the case to the European Court of Human Rights. On 15 November 1996, however, the Court dismissed the case because Dr. Ahmet had not exhausted domestic legal remedies.²⁴²

3.1.3 29 January 1990: Violence against the Minority

Two days after the trial of Ahmet and Serif, a religious ceremony (*mevlit*) was organized in the Old Mosque (*Eski Camii*) in Komotini for the anniversary of 29 January 1988 protest. However, a number of Greek groups decided to protest this ceremony. On 29 January 1990, violence erupted in Komotini before the religious ceremony. Mobs of Greeks ran through the streets, beating Muslim Turks and smashing windows of the shops and offices of the Muslim Turks. More than thirty people were injured and most of the shops belonging to the Minority were damaged. However, at this point, it was not a coincidence that Greek shops remained untouched without damage. "The Greek shops were labeled as the Nazis labeled the shops belonging to the Jews. The difference was that in Western Thrace the labeled shops represented the ones that should not be damaged."²⁴³ After these events in Komotini, which was interpreted by Oran as a 'mini Greek 6-7 September'²⁴⁴, the

²⁴¹ On this issue, Ortakovski notes that it was the pressures coming from the international organizations dealing with human rights issues that enabled the enforcement of their punishments to be postponed indefinitely. Ortakovski, *op. cit.*, p.189

²⁴² Yanna Kurtovik, "Δικαιοσύνη και Μειονότητες"(Justice and Minorities) in K. Tsitselikis and D. Hristopoulos ed., Το μειονοτικό φαινόμενο στην Ελλάδα. Μία συμβολή των κοινωνικών επιστημών (The minority phenomenon in Greece. A contribution of the social sciences) (Athens: Kritiki, 1997) p.261

²⁴³ The article "Helenizm" in the Sholiastis Magazine, March 1990, quoted in *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Türkleri Sorunu* by INAF: International Affairs Agency (İstanbul: Promat Basım, 1992) p.96

²⁴⁴ Baskın Oran, *Yunanistan'ın Lozan İhlalleri* (Ankara:SAEMK, 1999) p.27

governmental officials declared that the loss of the shopkeepers would be compensated by the state shopkeepers. But, only five people from the Minority have applied for the compensation. However, by the year 2005, none of them were given compensation by the Greek state.²⁴⁵

There may be different reasons for the Greek administration to deny the ethnic identity of the Western Thracian Minority. However, the first and the foremost reason can be related with the security of Greece. As Meinardus recalls²⁴⁶:

The great majority of Greeks see the minority issue mainly as an issue of national security...they fear this area might one day become a second Cyprus, subject to invasion, and possible annexation, by Turkey.

Regardingly, I. Laganis, a member of the Law Department of the Dimokritos University, argued that the ethnic Greeks of Western Thrace have had very strong feelings of insecurity due to the Turkish threat. And, each time they heard the word 'Turk' they remembered what they had suffered by the exchange and what they had left behind. Therefore, the rejection about the usage of the word 'Turk' while referring to minority was a measure not to provoke the feelings of the other and to preserve the status quo in Western Thrace.²⁴⁷

Most of the Greeks have seen Turkey as a possible threat to the Greek security. As it is stated, the Greek security doctrine includes an intensive and extensive view of the Turkish threat in spite of their common NATO memberships. Both the Greek strategic analysts, political elites and public believe that the ultimate Turkish objective is westward expansion.²⁴⁸

Besides the possible reasons regarding the security of Greece, the Greek aim for the assimilation of the Minority was another reason for the refusal of the ethnic identity. One can see that the refusal of the ethnic identity and the increase in the

²⁴⁵ I took this information from the speech of Ismail Rodoplu made during the anniversary of 29 January events in Komotini Youth Union on 29 January 2005

²⁴⁶ Ronald Meinardus, "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies" in Richard Clogg, ed, *Minorities in Greece* (London: Hurst and Company, 2002) p.81

²⁴⁷ Irene Laganis quoted in *Turkish Minority in Western Thrace*, A Briefing Paper of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), 26 April 1996, p.18 available at www.csce.gov/briefings

²⁴⁸ Athanasios Platias, "Greece's Strategic Doctrine: In Search of Autonomy and Deterrence," in Dimitri Costas ed., *The Greek Turkish Conflict* (London, Macmillian, 1991) pp. 92-93

statements of the Greek administration that the Muslims of Western Thrace were composed of three different groups, Turks-Pomaks-Gypsies, were raised in the same period, during the Junta regime.

It was argued that the term Muslim would suit better to identify the Minority because the Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies were from different origins. To divide the Minority into three different groups was accepted by the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace as a Greek policy to assimilate the Minority. In the end, what was witnessed in the 1988 protest was that both Pomaks, Turks and Gypsies united and protested together the refusal of their ethnic identities by the Greek administration showing us that the division of the Minority into three different groups had not proved to be effective until the beginning of 1990s.

3.2 Religious Freedom

Religion has always played a central role in the lives of the Western Thracian Minority. It was a tool to distinguish people during the Ottoman domination of Balkans. It was the essence of religion that enabled a safe haven for the Conservative group in Western Thrace as the Ottoman Empire dissolved. Those Muslim Turks have strongly supported the ideas of the conservative group up until 1960s. Compared to the problems regarding the denial of ethnic identity, there were fewer problems in the field of religion Greece respected more to the religious identity of the Minority than its ethnic identity. However, the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace had faced with significant problems in the religious issues.

3.2.1 Selection of Muftis

Muftis are the religious leaders of the Muslim Turks. As well as their dealings with the religious issues, the Muftis became one of the pioneering actors in the struggle of the Muslim Turks against the restrictive minority measures of the Greek state. The Muslim Turkish Minority accepted them as their both religious and political leaders. Analyzing the religious and political events in the light of the Muftis' pioneering role within the Minority will make the picture of Western Thrace to be better understood.

The right for the selection of muftis is dated back in the 1913 Athens Treaty. The rights and duties of Muftis were clearly stated in this treaty. These provisions were put into practice by the Greek state in 1920 by the Law 2345/1920. According to this law, the muftis and Head Mufti (*Başmüftü*) were given the same rights and duties as the Greek civil servants. They had the right to be elected by their communities.²⁴⁹ However, except the Article 12, none of the provisions of this law has been fully implemented.²⁵⁰

Thus, the election of muftis by their communities and the election of the *Başmüftü* by other muftis have never been realized. Until mid 1980s, the muftis were appointed by the Greek administrations from a list of three candidates who were enlisted according to the views of the leaders of the Muslim Turkish minority. Unlike the Athens Treaty, the Lausanne Treaty specifically does not put focus on the issue of *mufti* selection. However, it grants to the Muslim Turks the right to organize and conduct religious affairs free from government interference.²⁵¹

Any significant problem regarding the selection of *Mufti* had not witnessed until mid 1980s when the *Mufti* of Komotini, Mustafa Hüseyin, died of a heart attack. In his place, Rüştü Ethem was appointed by the Greek government as ‘temporary *mufti*’ without a consultation with the leaders of the Minority. Such a unilateral decision was severely rejected by the Minority. As a result of the reactions coming from the Minority, Mr. Rüştü had to resign on 5 June 1985.

Rather than a Greek appointment, the leading figures of the Minority proposed the Prefect of Rhodopi to organize elections. In spite of this proposal, the Greek administration appointed Mr. Cemali Meco as the official mufti of Komotini. Besides the ambiguities for the Mufti of Rhodopi, the death of Mustafa Hilmi on 12 February 1990 fueled the struggle of the Muslim Turks for their right to elect their own muftis in both Rhodopi and Xanthi prefectures.

On 16 February 1990, Mehmet Emin Aga, the son of Mustafa Hilmi, was appointed by the Greek state as the *mufti* of Xanthi Prefecture. But, when the Greek administration appointed Cemali Meco as the principal *mufti* of Komotini, he

²⁴⁹ For the rights and duties of Muftis see Soltaridis, *op.cit.*,1997, pp.175-192

²⁵⁰ Eren, *op. cit.*, p.85

²⁵¹ See Article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty in Appendix C

resigned as to protest the decision of the Greek state. Mehmet Şinikoğlu was appointed as the new *mufti* of Xanthi. The Greek state supported the appointment of *muftis* in Komotini, Xanthi and an assistant mufti, Mehmet Şerif Damatoğlu, in Didimotihon but not their election by the Muslim Turks on the basis that *muftis* had judicial functions in certain civil matters (e.g. marriage and divorce, alimony, etc.) besides their functions in religious matters.²⁵²

Despite the request of the two independent Turkish Members of the Parliament for the Greek state to organize official elections for the election of new *muftis* of Xanthi and Komotini, an election has never been made. As a response to the appointment of Muftis for Komotini and Xanthi prefectures, elections of muftis were organized in the mosques of the two cities. By the method show of hands, Mehmet Emin Aga was elected in Xanthi while Ibrahim Serif was elected as *mufti* in Komotini on 28 December 1990.

On 24 January 1991, four days before the mufti elections, Law No. 1920 granted the Greek State the right to appoint *muftis* for ten-year terms. According to this law, a committee, chaired by the prefect and composed of eminent Muslims, will be formed being responsible to propose to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs a list of qualified persons who must have a university degree from a school of advanced Islamic studies or persons who have been *imams* for at least 10 years with their distinguishable morality and theological competence.²⁵³ By this law, the right stemming from the Law 2345/1920 to select the muftis was eliminated and granted this right to the Greek state.

3.2.2 Control of Pious Endowments (*Wakfs*)

Pious endowments/*wakfs* (*wakıfs*) are private charitable foundations of the Muslim Turks. Any kind of control of these foundations was granted to the Western Thracian Minority firstly by the 1913 Athens Treaty. It enabled the governing of

²⁵² Kalliopi Lykovardi, *General Overview of Discrimination in Greece*, International Organization for Migration (IOM)-Legal Training Project, December 2002, p.6 available at www.iom.fi/anti-discrimination/pdf

²⁵³ Sotiris Rizas, pp.141-142 See also, *Elimination of all Forms of Religious Intolerance in Greece*. A Report prepared by Abdelfettah Amor, the UN's Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, 7 November 1996, p.10 available at www.unhchr.ch

these foundations by the Muslim population living in Greece which would be overseen by the Muftis.²⁵⁴ Later, the wakf issue was protected with the Lausanne Treaty: “In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions.”²⁵⁵

From 1920s until the 1967 Colonels regime, the directors of these endowments in Komotini, Xanthi and Didimotiho were elected by the Minority. The elections for the first directors of the wakfs were accomplished on 22 January 1950, only after 27 years of the signing of the Lausanne Treaty. Besides, it was noted that for the first time the elections for the wakf directorship was conducted only in the Xanthi prefecture during the EAM control of the region in 1944.²⁵⁶ Starting from 1950s until the Colonels regime, the election for the directors of these charitable organizations was continuously conducted according to the law 2345/1920 until the arrival of the Junta regime.

The Colonels regime represents the beginning of problems regarding the control of these organizations. The leaders of the 1967 coup dismissed the directors of the Community Boards and replaced them and appointed new directors. These new directors were suspected to work for the benefit of the Colonels regime but not for the benefit of the Western Thracian Minority. It was noted that, in 1973, even a non-Muslim was appointed as the director for one of these boards²⁵⁷ and despite the return of democracy to Greece in 1974, the appointed directors of these endowments remained there. This can depict us the rightness of the suspects from within the Minority towards the directors of these pious endowments.

The return of democracy to Greece with the Karamanlis leadership had not affected the democratization of these pious endowments. In 1979, the Karamanlis government proposed a bill for the Greek Parliament that restricted the activities of the wakfs and the control of the Muslims on these charitable organizations. This bill,

²⁵⁴ *Muslim Charitable Foundations in Greece: “Disregarding Turkish Heritage”*. A Draft Paper of the BTYTD, (University Graduates’ Association of Western Thrace), January 2004, p.1

²⁵⁵ For the Article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty See Appendix C

²⁵⁶ Rıza Kırıldökme, “Tarihi Olaylar: Her Üç Vilayette Yapılan Cemaat Seçimleri, *Ortam*, 25 Mayıs 1993

²⁵⁷ Tözun Bahçeli, *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990) p.181 and Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp.270-276

in 1980, was enacted as the Law No.1091 which was accepted and ratified by the Greek parliament.²⁵⁸ It was widely criticized by the Muslim Turks because this law increased the control of the prefect on these charitable organizations. Thus, the Muslim Turks were deprived of their ‘only remaining institutional backbone’.²⁵⁹ However, mainly due to the protests, this law was never implemented. But, the Presidential Decree no.1 adopted on 3 January 1991 had a worse effect on the control of the charitable organizations by the Minority members. This decree contained most of the provisions of the Law 1091/1980, even increasing the control of the prefect on the wakfs.

Such a tendency to increase the state control on these charitable foundations which were used for supporting education and social activities of the Minority, like paying the salaries of hodjas and teachers, and which were of fundamental importance for the survival of the Minority, created a negative view among the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace against the policies of the Greek state. Such a control on these endowments was generally interpreted by the Muslim Turks as another way of controlling the activities of this community.

Besides the problems regarding the pious endowments, building permits for new mosques were not easily given. And, the some old mosques were in need of repair. However, the necessary permits to repair these mosques were not easily given. For example, in 1990, HRW report noted that the necessary permits to complete the half-built minaret of Iasmos (*Yassıköy*) mosque had not been granted for 25 years.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the religious officials from Turkey, sometimes, were faced with difficulties for taking the necessary one-month visa from the Greek authorities to stay in Western Thrace even just for the duration of the Ramadan which is a special month for the Muslim communities.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.18

²⁵⁹ “Hellenizing the Awqaf in Western Thrace”, *Impact International: Muslim Viewpoints on Current Affairs*, Vol.11:2 23, January-12 February 1981, p.5

²⁶⁰ Whitman, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.27. The necessary permit for the completion of the minaret was given in mid 1990s by which its half-built status has come to an end.

²⁶¹ Hakkı Akalm, *Turkey and Greece: On the Way to Another War?* (Ankara: Font Matbaacılık, 1999) p.166

3.3 Education of the Muslim Turkish Minority

Articles 40 and 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne grant the Western Thracian Minority the right to education in its native language as well as autonomy in managing educational institutions.²⁶² I think that the problems in the education system of the minority were the most significant ones mainly because it was the violations in the education field that affected the largest number of individuals and more importantly it was these violations that resulted in the underdevelopment of the Muslim Turkish Minority.

Education has always been one of the highly-criticized fields within the problems of the Minority. As it was the case in most of the problems of the Minority, the advent of the Junta regime had negatively affected the education of the Muslim Turkish students. One of them was the opening of EPATH (Special Academy for Teachers' Training of Thessalonica) in 1968 that I will focus on in the coming paragraphs. The other significant effect was that according to the legislative decree of 28 January 1972 all of 'Turkish Primary Schools' started to be renamed with 'Muslim Primary Schools'.

While the children of Muslim Turkish minority were educated in the Minority Primary Schools the majority Orthodox Greek students were educated in separated primary schools. Compared to the schools of the majority, the primary schools of the Minority students were quite overcrowded and poorly funded. Most of the Minority schools consisted of dilapidated, one-room buildings, without adequate facilities or equipment.²⁶³ Besides, the quality of the education received by the students was quite poor.

3.3.1 Mixed Administration

In Greece, all primary schools of the Muslim Turks are private and managed by the school boards who are elected by the parents of the students. However, all schools in the region are under the control of the Ministry of Education and Religion. Christian teachers and teachers from EPATH are paid by the Greek state. The rest of

²⁶² See Appendix C

²⁶³ Ibid. pp. 39-41

the teachers, with the exception of the ones coming from Turkey who are paid by the Turkish State, get their salaries from the school boards. Teachers of the Minority are organized under two unions. Those graduates from Turkey are united under *Bati Trakya Türk Öğretmenler Birliği* (Turkish Teachers Union of Western Thrace) while the graduates of EPATH are united under the *Müslüman Muallimler Birliği* (Muslim Teachers Union).²⁶⁴ To add, the Minority interpreted this mixed administration as being detrimental for the Muslim Turks because it allowed the State to manipulate affairs to its liking without providing necessary means of support.²⁶⁵

3.3.2 The EPATH Dispute

In the Minority education system, there are several kinds of teachers: Graduates from education schools in Turkey, graduates from EPATH, graduates from religious schools, and the teachers coming from Turkey (Quota Teachers). Among the groups of teachers, graduates of the EPATH are the ones who have been highly criticized by the Minority members. EPATH is an academy founded in 1968 in order to train members of the Minority as teachers for Minority schools. It was supposed that in time the EPATH graduates would replace those who were graduated from the Turkish schools or those graduates of the religious schools. EPATH started its academic year 1968-1969 with thirty students, who were all graduates of *medreses* (religious schools).

The language of instruction at the EPATH is Greek. In the preparatory year, the EPATH students are taught Greek, Basic Mathematics, History, Psychology, Geometry, Music, Turkish, Sports, Geography of Greece and Technics²⁶⁶. Despite the fact that those teachers will educate the Minority children in Turkish all of the courses except Turkish are thought in Greek. Therefore, the EPATH teachers have been criticized for not knowing the Turkish language well enough to teach. This increases the suspect among the Muslim Turks that EPATH teachers have been used

²⁶⁴ Eren notes that despite the former debates and controversies between these two unions today both of them deal with the educational problems of the Minority. Eren, *op.cit.*, 1997, p.134

²⁶⁵ HRW Report, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.20

²⁶⁶ Panagiotidis, *op. cit.*, 1996, p.96

as tools for the assimilation and Hellenization of the Minority education in the primary schools of the Minority.²⁶⁷

Starting from 1980s, the parents of the Minority students protested the low education level at these schools and the decision of the Greek administration regarding the allocation of the EPATH graduates to the Minority Primary Schools by retiring those teachers graduated from Turkish Teacher Schools. And, even in some villages the parents protested the problems in the field of education and had not allowed their children to go to the school in 1981 as in Simandra (*Karaçanlar*), a village of the Xanthi prefecture.²⁶⁸

3.3.3 Primary Education

The Coordinating Bureau for Minority Schools based in the city of Kavala is the main authority responsible for the administration of minority schools in Thrace. The main problems regarding the primary schools of the Western Thracian Minority have started in 1960s. As well as the problems in the minority schools, The Muslim Turks were not allowed to elect members to the schools' boards. The Law No. 694 on the "Teaching and Supervision in Minority Schools in Western Thrace" and the Law No. 695 on "Teaching and Supervision in Minority Schools and Special Academy for Teachers' Training of Thessalonica (EPATH)" are related with the status of the Minority primary schools. The Law No. 694 resulted in the gradual elimination of the teachers who had finished education schools in Turkey from the primary schools in Western Thrace by replacements with those of the EPATH.

The curriculum in the Minority primary schools has been bilingual. Greek, history, geography, civics, and environmental education were taught in Greek while mathematics, physics, chemistry, religion, Turkish, art, and physical education were taught in Turkish.²⁶⁹ However, the Greek language taught at these primary schools

²⁶⁷ Oran mentions the reaction of the Minority members towards the Greek administration for using the EPATH teachers as "Trojan Horse". Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.134

²⁶⁸ The villagers of Simandra decided altogether not to send their children to the primary school because the teacher Raşit Hüseyin was proven to be incapable of teaching. And, he was replaced with Ahmet Ali, a graduate of the EPATH. The parents of the children severely rejected such an appointment by the Greek administration because Ahmet Ali had graduated from EPATH. Neofitos Gonatas and Paraskevas Kidoniatis, *op. cit.*, p.111. See also Impram Onsunoglou, "Κριτική στη μειονοτική εκπαίδευση" (A Critique in the education of the Minority), *Συγχρονά Θέματα*, Vol.63, April-May 1997, p.62

²⁶⁹ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.19

was inadequate. As a result, most of the students finishing their primary educations and attending for the secondary education in Greek secondary schools faced with a problem in Greek language and most of them failed in the first or second years of their secondary education.

The number of those finishing the Greek secondary and high schools and entering to a Greek university was too small. Also, there was inadequacy in the number of classrooms at the schools. Sometimes, the children of two different classes were taught their courses in a single classroom that had directly and negatively affected the quality of the education in minority schools. Also, the libraries within the Minority primary schools started to be abolished by the Military regime of 1967.²⁷⁰

3.3.4 Textbooks

The Ankara and Athens Meetings of the Turkish-Greek Cultural Commission resulted in the signing of the 1968 Cultural Protocol. The education of the two minorities in Istanbul and Western Thrace were at the core of this Protocol. Regarding the textbooks, each country was given the right to publish textbooks for its respective minority living in the other country. However, for the distribution of these textbooks the review and final approval of the other country²⁷¹ was needed. The main problem about textbooks arose at this point.

Despite the 1968 Protocol, the textbooks published by the Turkish state were rejected by the Greek state. On this issue, the argument of the Greek state was that there were references to Turkish lira in math problems or the calculation of the distance between Ankara and Istanbul.²⁷² Therefore, these textbooks were not found appropriate to be taught in the Minority primary schools. As a response to the Greek attitude, the Turkish side started to reject some textbooks published and sent by the Greek state for the Orthodox Greek Minority of Istanbul.

²⁷⁰ Kurtuluş, *op. cit.*, p.133

²⁷¹ According to the 1968 Protocol, the books have to be either approved or refused by the other country in 30 days. In case of an approval, the books are sent to the consulate of the relevant country from where they are given to the local authorities of the country for distribution. This information is quoted from Nathanail M. Panagiotidis, *op. cit.*, 1995, p.165

²⁷² Whitman, *op. cit.*,1991, p.41

However, compared the location of Western Thrace and Istanbul one can easily recognize the ineffectiveness of the reciprocity principle regarding the rejection of the textbooks. Western Thrace was the least developed region of Greece while Istanbul was the most developed and cosmopolitan city of Turkey. In case of the lack of the Greek textbooks, the Greek minority of Istanbul had the chance to learn their mother language much easier than the Turks of Western Thrace thanks to the advantages of living in such a developed city.

However, the same was not applicable for the Western Thracian Turks. They had not got other alternative than being educated with torn out and outdated textbooks. They even had not got the same advantages to develop their cultural and educational levels like that of the Greek Minority of Istanbul.

Such restrictions on the school textbooks resulted in the education of the minority children with old and torn out Turkish schoolbooks while their Greek schoolbooks were quite new and contemporary. Sadık Ahmet informed the HRW that his son was using the same schoolbooks that he used in 1960. However, he also added that this problem with the textbooks was the fault of the Turkish state mainly because schoolbooks were supposed to be specially adapted for use by Greek nationals who are members of Turkish minority. But, Turkey resisted against making the requested changes regarding the Turkish textbooks.²⁷³

3.3.5 Secondary and Higher Education

In spite of the great number of Minority primary schools, there are only two secondary and high schools for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace, Celal Bayar founded in Komotini in 1954 and Muzaffer Salihoğlu founded in Xanthi in 1964. Besides, there are two religious schools (*medreses*), one is in Komotini (1949) and the other in Ehinós (1956), in the mountainous region of Xanthi, and five public secondary schools in the mountainous region of Western Thrace. It was quite obvious that the two minority high schools were not sufficient for the great number of minority children graduating from primary schools.

²⁷³ Ibid. pp. 41-42

For example, in the beginning of 1980s, there were approximately 12.000 students in the minority schools. Only 34 of the 12.000²⁷⁴ students were able to graduate from the high schools showing us the amount of the educated minority students in Western Thrace at those years. Also, in *Ta Nea* newspaper, it was noted that by the year 1982 the illiteracy level among the Minority was 60%.²⁷⁵

The situation deteriorated in these two schools in 1984. With the governmental directorate in March 1984, graduate examinations from Minority high schools were obliged to be in Greek but not in Turkish. The implementation of this directorate was a blow to the secondary education of the Muslim Turkish students. As a result of this implementation, there was a drastic decline in secondary school students in Turkish schools from 227 in Xanthi and 305 in Komotini in 1983-1984 to 85 and 42, respectively in 1986-1987.²⁷⁶ At the same year, from the 46 third year students from the two minority high schools, only 4 of them succeeded to graduate.²⁷⁷ On the issue of the two Koranic schools, I think it is important to note that *medreses* have usually been a source of grievance within the minority members mainly because those accepted for the EPATH were mainly the graduate of *medreses*.²⁷⁸

Regarding the higher education of the Muslim Turkish students, the number of them graduating from Greek universities was quite small. By 1971, there were 5 students in the Thessalonica University in the Medicine Department and 13 students in the Law Department from the Turkish Minority while at the same year the total number of Greek minority in the Istanbul University was 200.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp.145-146

²⁷⁵ *Ta Nea* newspaper quoted in Baskın Oran, 1991, p. 151

²⁷⁶ Poulton, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.186

²⁷⁷ *Akın*, 12 Eylül 1985

²⁷⁸ *Minority Education in Thrace, A New Perspective in the Search for Solutions in 2002*, A Booklet Prepared by Western Thrace Turkish Teachers Union and Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association, Komotini, December 2002, p.37

²⁷⁹ Aydınlı, *op. cit.*, p.400. Also, Halit Eren comparing the higher education of the two minorities notes that in the fifty years time the number of the university graduates from the Turkish community of Western Thrace is around ten while this number from the Greek minority of Istanbul graduating Turkish universities is hundreds even some of whom achieved to take the stance of professorship from these universities. Eren, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.148

There were severe criticisms against the office of DIKATSA²⁸⁰ because of its policy of not to recognize the necessary university diplomas of the Muslim Turks within the normal time period. A Minority graduate from a Turkish university that applied to DIKATSA for recognition had had to wait for almost 2-3 years which indirectly prevented him/her to start working in Greece as a university graduate. As a result of such difficulties, on 3 February 1982 more than twenty graduates from Turkish universities protested the attitude of DIKATSA in Komotini which was preventing for three years to give recognition to their university diplomas.²⁸¹ The low-level of Greek language by the Turkish-university graduates and the problems about the recognition of the university diplomas were the two most significant reasons for the brain drain of the Muslim Turkish university graduates most of whom preferred to continue their lives in different countries, especially in Turkey.

Regarding the higher education of the Muslim Turks, when we take all the drawbacks in the education system, the argument of Bahçeli seems quite right²⁸²:

In theory, there is nothing preventing Turkish students from entering Greek universities; in practice, however, the quality of education received by the Turkish students in Greece is below the level considered acceptable for university admission.

3.4 Article 19: Deprivation of Citizenship

The Article 19 of the 1955 Citizenship Law No.3370 stipulates that²⁸³:

A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality. This also applies to a person of non-Greek ethnic origin born and domiciled abroad. His minor children living abroad may be declared as having lost Greek nationality if both their parents or the

²⁸⁰ DIKATSA (*ΔΗΚΑΤΣΑ*) is an office of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs which is responsible for the recognition of University diplomas acquired outside of Greece. By the year 2005, *DIKATSA* was renamed as DOATAP (*ΔΟΑΤΑΠ*), Hellenic National Academic Recognition and Information Center/Hellenic NARIC

²⁸¹ *Gerçek*, 9 February 1987)

²⁸² Bahçeli, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.180

²⁸³ Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law quoted in *Western Thrace Issue* available at <http://www.atmg.org/GreekProblem.html#WesternThrace>

surviving parent have lost the same. The Minister of Interior decides in these matters with the concurring opinion of the National Council.

According to the Article 4.1 of the Greek Constitution, all Greeks are equal before the law. Also, Article 4.2 stipulates that the withdrawal of Greek citizenship shall be permitted only in case of voluntary acquisition of another citizenship or of undertaking service contrary to national interests in a foreign country. Furthermore, the Article 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne provides the Muslim minority for enjoying the same civil and political rights like the non-Muslims as well as being equal before the law.²⁸⁴ After taking into the consideration these premises the application of the Article 19 was a clear violation of the Greek constitution and Lausanne Treaty.

Depriving an individual from the Greek citizenship under Article 19 was made according to a specific procedure. In case of a Greek individual purportedly moved away from Western Thrace for a time period, the police informed the Directorate of Citizenship. In a time period, the Directorate was obliged to inform those who would be stripped of the Greek citizenship. However, in practice, the Directorate refrained from informing those people who were likely to be deprived of their Greek citizenships. As a result, people who had been deprived of the Greek citizenship were informed in the borders or while they had contacts with state organs especially while applying for birth certificates in their municipalities. Those who were abroad had no opportunity to explain their reasons to leave Greece. Most of them were making temporary visits to Turkey either for travel or visit their sons being educating in Turkish universities or their relatives living in Turkey.

Also, related with the procedure of the Article 19 I want to add that in some of the passports of the Minority the statement of *Dönüş Dahil* (with return) was overruled or erased.²⁸⁵ A great number of the Muslim Turks who did not know to read or write in Greek were not aware of such a statement and as a result, they were not taken in Greece from the Greek border because of the lack of the statement 'with return' in their passports. And, most of those who remained in Turkey for this reasons, they were deprived of Greek citizenship under the application of Article 19.

²⁸⁴ For the Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty, See Appendix C

²⁸⁵ Eren, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.100

Those who lost their Greek nationalities either within or outside Greece became stateless people (*Aimatlos*). Those stateless people who remained in Turkey applied for Turkish citizenship. From time to time, there were some governmental decisions to accept those people to the Turkish citizenship but not all together.²⁸⁶ Those who remained stateless people within the Greek national borders had the chance to regain their Greek nationalities. However, it was a long and costly procedure. Shortly, the stateless people both in Greece and Turkey suffered a lot from the application of Article 19.

The importance of this article increases when one takes into consideration that according to official statement of the Greek Ministry of Interior, between 1955 and 1998, exactly 46.638 Muslim Turks from Western Thrace and Dodecanese Islands were deprived of their citizenship under Article 19.²⁸⁷

3.5 Violation of Property Rights

In spite of the existence of this Article 17 of the Greek Constitution which stipulates that “the right to own property is under state protection and that no one shall be deprived of this right” the former practices of the Greek state depicts us the clear violation of this article. In case of the land ownership of the Muslim Turks, in time we observe that the ratio that was 80% in 1920s declined even until 20% in the beginning of 1990s.²⁸⁸

The Muslim Turks of Western Thrace lost some parts of their properties during the reallocation of the Greeks that came from the Asia Minor as a result of the population exchange. The situation worsened by the application of the 1366/1938 Law that restricted the Muslim Turks for repairing old houses and acquiring new real estates. Those of the Minority who wanted to buy or sell lands living within the

²⁸⁶ The military regime of 12 September 1980 decided to grant Turkish citizenship for 8000 stateless people from the Western Thracian Minority. Eren, *op. cit.*, 1993, p.297

²⁸⁷ *Xronos*, 18 May 2005. The deprivations reached the peak during 1976-1979 when the Muslim Turks fled to Turkey as a result of the Cyprus crisis between Greece and Turkey. Ibid. HRW, 1999, Footnote 58, p.28. Also, only in 1991, 544 people were deprived of the Greek citizenship. This number is cited in an article of the *Guardian* newspaper quoted in *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Türkleri Sorunu*, INAF: International Affairs Agency (İstanbul: Promat Basım, 1992) p.93

²⁸⁸ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.236

border zone had to get permission from the special commission established in the border provinces.

3.5.1 *The Land Expropriations*

Regarding the sufferings of the Muslim Turks about their private properties, long-term credits were provided for the Orthodox Greeks in Western Thrace for buying lands and immovable properties from the Muslim Turks. According to an agreement in 1966 between the Greek Central Bank and the Greek Agricultural Bank, the majority Greeks of Western Thrace were given the possibility to receive the total amount they are required to pay for the purchase of the lands belonging to Muslim Turks, especially those lands that were agriculturally useful. The credit was given to be paid back in twenty years, starting two years after purchase and withdrawn only if used for purposes other than provided for.²⁸⁹

However, Soltaridis stresses that those who benefited from these credits and bought the lands, houses and immovable properties of the Muslims were living in Athens and Thessalonica but in Thrace. And, those Muslims who sold their immovable properties for different reasons were renting those immovable properties that they sold before. Thus, the aim of the given credits was not actually accomplished because those who got the credits were inclined to live in big cities of Greece but not in Greek Thrace.²⁹⁰

The expropriation of lands was another significant reason for the violation of the property rights of the Western Thracian Minority. In the Komotini prefecture, from the villages of Thrilorion (*Kafkasköy*), Amaranda (*Yahyabeyli*), Pamforon (*Ambarköy*) and Vakos (*Vakıf*), 4000 acres of lands were expropriated in 1978 in order to make an Industrial Area. It should be noted that only one fourth of this land had been converted into an industrial area while the rest of it was rented to the villagers living in the near villages. Another 4,300 acres were expropriated in northwest Komotini at the same year.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Bahçeli, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.179 and Oran, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.46

²⁹⁰ Soltaridis, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.23

²⁹¹ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.241

Besides, in 1980, 3200 acres of land was expropriated for the establishment of Democritus University from the Giaka (*Yaka*) region of Komotini. Oran notes that compared with the University of Thessalonica, which was built on 640 acres land and owned the largest land among the Greek universities, the land expropriated for the establishment of Democritus University, 3200 acres, four times bigger than the land of University of Thessalonica, seemed quite big.²⁹²

Moreover, the lands expropriated for the establishment of Dimokritos University were highly criticized by the Muslim Turks mainly because the lands that would be expropriated were composed of high-fertile irrigated farmlands. The criticism against this expropriation continued by stating that although in the near regions there were less fertile farmlands, the most fertile ones were expropriated and the size of the expropriated land far exceeded the need for the stated purpose that was and could be interpreted by the Minority as another policy of the Greek state to force the Muslim Turks leave Western Thrace.²⁹³

3.5.2 *The Evlalon Dispute*

As well as the expropriations by the Greek state, the Muslim Turks suffered from the attitude of the Greek state to reject the Ottoman land titles. The Evlalon (*İnhanlı*) dispute is a good example to depict the rejection of land titles by the Greek state. In 1975, the Greek state decided that the lands of the villagers of Evlalon, composed of 2300 acres, belonged to the Greek state not to the villagers, despite the fact that the villagers had the titles of these areas given by the Ottoman Administration and they were cultivating continuously these lands without a dispute with the Greek state.

The trial of the villagers, represented by Orhan Hacıbram, held at Xanthi Court of First Instance on 15-16 March 1982 resulting with a negative verdict of the

²⁹² Oran, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.49

²⁹³ It was noted that by 1990, the expropriated land for the University of Dimocritus remained empty for 10 years and still was surrounded by barbed wires. Soltaridis, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.22. Also, it was signified by a Minority newspaper that by December 1992, in its 13th year, the expropriated lands for the University still remained empty. *Ortam*, 22 December, 1992

Court.²⁹⁴ Then, a group of gendarmerie went to Evlalon and tried to make the villagers sign the protocol prohibiting them to go to those disputed fields.²⁹⁵ During the days of their trial and after the court verdict, the Evlalo villagers protested the decision taken at the First Instance Court by sitting besides the clock tower in the center of Xanthi. The political and religious figures of the Muslim Turkish minority actively supported the villagers' protest. In the coming months, there were some other trials regarding the disputed lands of these villagers. However, in the end, the Evlalon villagers accomplished to keep their lands.

Besides its relevance to the land disputes, I think that for the first time in the history a group of people, in spite of their small size, came together and protested a decision of a Greek state institution. Such a protest of Muslim Turks can be interpreted as one of the fundamental steps in the later struggle of the Muslim Turks to gain their positive and negative rights stemming from the bilateral and multilateral agreements signed and ratified by the Greek government. Regarding this dispute, Salih Halil calls the year 1982 as 'Evlalon Year' because they achieved to divert the focus of both Greece, Turkey and international community towards the Minority in Western Thrace via using modern methods of protest.²⁹⁶

Besides the rejection of Ottoman titles, the land redistribution (Anadazmos) policy of the Greek state affected directly the property rights of the Muslim Turks. Land redistribution was applied under Law 821/1948. A Commission was formed for the redistribution but generally it was criticized that this Commission for land redistribution was composed of the majority Greeks and the redistributed lands were generally not equivalent to the former lands of the minority members.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ For more information about the details of this two-day trial see Trakya'nın Sesi Newspaper, 22 March 1982 cited in Abdurrahim Dede, *Hak Verilmez Alınır* (İstanbul: 1988)

²⁹⁵ *Gerçek*, 13 April 1982. Also, A. Dede notes that besides prohibiting to going to the disputed lands it was written in this protocol that they would abandon their houses as well in a month.(Abdurrahim Dede, *İnhanlı Destanlı* (Komotini: Trakya'nın Sesi Yayınları, 2003) p.20

²⁹⁶ "1982 ve Azınlığımız", Salih Halil (Haki), *İleri*, 23 December 1982

²⁹⁷ Eren, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.104 and Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp.244-245

3.6 Difficulties in Obtaining Licenses and Permits

A Greek author stresses that²⁹⁸

...the existence of the Muslim drivers having licenses of car but not licenses of tractors is considered as comic. The existence of the asphalted roads in the one side of the village where Christians live and non-asphalted roads in the other side of the village where Muslims live is a case that cannot be accepted.

The Muslim Turks of Western Thrace were rarely permitted to obtain licenses in order to use tractors for agricultural purposes. For the Nomark of Xanthi, the reason for not obtaining drivers licences was related with their lack of the Greek language.²⁹⁹ While the car, motorcycle and truck licences could be obtained, there were problems in obtaining the tractor licenses that were essential for most of the Minority members who were working on farms. And, those who used their tractors without the license were punished like the case in the village of Asomatos (*Bulatköy*) in which 35 Minority villagers were sentenced by the police to pay 10.000 *drachmis* per person.³⁰⁰

Besides the difficulties in obtaining driver licenses, the Muslim Turks came across with major difficulties in being granted permits to repair their houses or to build new ones. This was automatically reflected while making comparisons between the living places of Muslim Turks with the majority Greek population of Western Thrace. While the houses of the majority Greeks were quite modern and new, those belonging to the Muslim Turks were quite old. Such differences were recognized and noted by different scholars³⁰¹ and international organizations that had visited the region in 1980s.³⁰²

As a response to the distinction between the houses of Muslims and Christians, the Nomark of Xanthi, Constantine Thanopolous, stated as follows: “In

²⁹⁸ Soltaridis, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.22

²⁹⁹ Whitman, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.37

³⁰⁰ Eren, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.93

³⁰¹ Tözün Bahçeli who made a visit to Western Thrace in June 1993 says: “I was shown Turkish houses and those that belong to ethnic Greeks in these towns. The contrast was striking. Virtually every decrepit, sagging, and poor-looking house belonged to Turks”. Tözün Bahçeli quoted in the *Turkish Minority in Western Thrace*, A Briefing Paper of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), 26 April 1996, p.4

³⁰² Whitman, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.33

the flat areas, the Moslems have poorer homes than the Christians because the Moslems prefer to invest their money in Turkey. The usual practice of Moslems is to take their money to Turkey and invest in blocks and flats there.”³⁰³ At first, the answer of Thanopolous seems quite reasonable. However, I think that the actual reason to invest in Turkey would have not been the choice of the Muslim Turks if they were given the necessary permits to repair or build new houses in Western Thrace.³⁰⁴

Besides the problems in taking the necessary permits, the anxiety of the Minority about their future and about a possible wipe-them-away policy of the Greek state directed the Minority to invest in Turkey. It is for these two reasons that most of the Muslim Turks have either empty lands, buildings or flats in Turkey, especially in the big cities like Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir.

The problems of the Muslim Turks related with the land had always been of vital importance because a significant number of those people, approximately 80%, were involved in agriculture. The land has always been the most important asset of Minority farmers living in Western Thrace. Thus, the property rights abusements in Western Thrace affected badly living conditions of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace.

3.7 Discrimination in the Public Employment

According to the Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty,³⁰⁵

...differences of religion, creed or confession shall not prejudice any Greek national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employment, functions and honors, or to exercise of professions and industries.

Such a statement seems to protect the rights of the Western Thracian Minority against plausible discrimination by the Greek state in cases of economic

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ The rightness of my argument that I will depict in the fourth chapter while dealing with the investment of the Muslim Turks in Greece is that after the elimination of restrictions for repairing or building new houses in the post-1990 period most of the Muslim Turks started mostly to invest in Greece not in Turkey.

³⁰⁵ For the Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty, See Appendix C

matters like public employment. However, in spite of this article, job discriminations were observed in Western Thrace. For example, in its 1990 report, Human Rights Watch states that of the 300 employees in the Komotini Nomark's Office and of the 1000 employees in the Xanthi Nomark's office there were not any Turks working as a civil servant.³⁰⁶

For the Greek state, there were two main reasons for not taking the Muslim Turks as civil servants: One of them was the low education level of the Minority. And, the other one was the poor Greek language of the minority members. Also, the graduates from the Turkish universities were prevented to start to work in Greece as university graduates by DIKATSA where their graduate diplomas were given recognition in two or three years. When I consider the two reasons of the Greek state, they seem quite reasonable. However, I think that the education system that was applied by the Greek state itself deserves the blame of the non-existence of the Muslim Turks in the public sector. Both the level of the education and the Greek language stem from the low-leveled education system. If the Muslim Turks were educated better in the past then it was likely that some from the Minority would be working as public employee in the beginning of 1990s. This relation between the education system and the public employment of the Muslim Turks will be clearer in the next chapter while focusing on the increase of the Muslim Turks in the public sector.

3.8 Demographical Change

According to the 1928 Greek census, the number of Muslim Turkish speakers was 126,017, a figure that grew to 140,090 in the 1940 census. And, in the 1951 census, this number was 112,665 Turks.³⁰⁷ Since then, the access to the official number of the Muslim Turks has been quite problematic because the last official data on the number of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace was given in 1951 census. After that date, any official document by the Greek governments has not been published mentioning the exact number of the minority members living in Western Thrace. However, the following table of Aarbakke shows the demographical change.

³⁰⁶ Whitman, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.38

³⁰⁷ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.7

Table 3: Demographical Change in Western Thrace

Census	Ksanthi		Rhodopi		Evros		Total	
	Mixed	Muslim	Mixed	Muslim	Mixed	Muslim	Mixed	Muslim
1920							201.404	(93.273)
1928	89 974	(39.229)	89.488	(50.432)	124.417	(12510)	303.879	(102.171)
1940	98 575		106.575		150.790		355 940	(112 535)
1951	89 891	(42 245)	105 723	(49 660)	137 654	(6934)	333 268	(98 839)
1961	89 591		109 201		153 930		352 722	(105 000)
1971	82 917		107 677		135 968		326 562	
1981	88 777	(42 000)	107 957	(62 000)	145 531	(10000)	342 265	(114 000)
1991	90 965	(39 115)	103 391	(56 865)	140 312	(7900)	334 668	(103 880)

Source: Vemund Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 2000 p.31

As can be seen from this table, starting from 1940s, the number of the Muslim Turks started to decrease. One of the reasons for this decrease could be that starting from mid 1930s until the beginning of 1950s the situation in Greece was quite harsh. The Second World War, the Bulgarian Control of Western Thrace and after that the Civil War had negatively affected the situation in Greece. Under such difficult conditions, some of the Muslim Turks left Greece and went to Turkey. Also, by the advent of the Menderes government in the beginning of 1950s, Turkey started to accept more immigrants from Western Thrace that caused an increase in the number of immigrants from Western Thrace to Turkey.

One can come across with different policies of the Greek governments aiming to change the demographic figure of Western Thrace. One of them was witnessed during the Colonel's period of 1967-1974. Many Sarakatsani, a Greek speaking transhumant people, were given financial opportunities in order to settle in Western Thrace. One of these opportunities was that an agreement on 21 June 1968 was reached between the Central Bank and Agricultural Bank of Greece for allocating 120.000 *drachmis*.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Eren, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.102

Another policy was the settlement of Pontic Greeks in Western Thrace. After the deteriorating situation within the Soviet Union, Xenophon Zolotas, the Prime Minister of Greece, stated that most of the Pontic Greeks coming from the Soviet Union would be settled in Western Thrace. In 1989, 150 families arrived to Western Thrace while this number of families increased to 270-280 by the end of 1990. In December 1990, the National Institute for the Reception and Rehabilitation of Emigrant and Repatriate Co-Ethnic Greeks (*EIYAPOEE*) was established on the basis of article 8 of the Law 1893/1990 in order to manage the problems of the Pontic Greeks immigrants and to integrate these people within the Greek society in a short time period.³⁰⁹

Oran notes that 220 such families were settled on the land, a great percentage (80%) of which was expropriated in 1978 from the Muslim Turks.³¹⁰ The newcomers of Western Thrace started to be recognized by the Minority as a threat to their own interests. This was generally interpreted by the Muslim Turks as the Greek state was trying both to ‘feed’ the newcomer Pontic Greeks and to ‘free’ Western Thrace from the native Muslim Turkish minority. As such, Greece could have changed the ethnic and demographic composition in Western Thrace in favor of the majority Greeks.

In the end, after evaluating the demographic figures from 1923 until 1990 it seems that the number of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace has almost remained the same, around 120.000, while the number of the Orthodox Christians of Istanbul decreased from 110.000 to 3000. However, as some of the Turkish scholars argue, given a two percent growth rate -and some estimates have put the growth rate as high as 2.8 per cent- the Turkish population today would be expected to number around 500.000 even if it had grown at a rate of 2 percent.³¹¹

Besides the immigration of Muslim Turks to Turkey, there was a significant immigration of the Orthodox Greeks from Western Thrace to the big cities of Greece like Athens and Thessalonica. The main reason was the underdevelopment of this

³⁰⁹ Triandafyllidou and Veikou, *op. cit.*, p.199

³¹⁰ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.47

³¹¹ Bahçeli, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.177

region.³¹² Considering the stable number of the Muslim Turkish population in Greece³¹³, big waves of immigration towards the big cities of Greece were generally interpreted as a future change in the demographic figures of Western Thrace.³¹⁴

3.9 The Surveillance Zone

In order to protect itself from the spread of Communism all northern regions of Greece, except the region in Evros prefecture which is bordering with Turkey, were declared as the supervised/restricted zone, *Epitiroumeni Zoni*, under the Metaxas regime. He invested more money in these regions in order to counter more effectively against possible attacks coming from the North. Later, in 1967, the Evros prefecture was added within this zone by which the whole Northern border of the Greek state was protected against possible communist threats coming from the North.

Although the Civil War ended in 1949 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 the restricted zone in Western Thrace was not abolished. Actually, it was the largest enclave group in the world including all the inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Rhodopi and Xanthi composed of approximately 40.000 Muslim Turks³¹⁵ that corresponded to the 1/3 of the total population of the Western Thracian Minority. In one of the Minority newspapers, it was referred to be the biggest open-air prison of the world.³¹⁶

All the roads leading to the restricted military zone were blocked by military checkpoints. In order to go in and out of this area, everyone living within the zone had to show a special identity card at the checkpoints. Even the people living within the boundaries of this region could only travel within an area that has a diameter of

³¹² It was stated that although the underdevelopment of Western Thrace should have been coped with as a national issue the existence of the Minority in this region had helped for the Greek administration to remain quiet for this underdevelopment. Zolotas, Angelopoulos and Pesmazoglou, *op. cit.*, p.52

³¹³ The birth rate of the Muslims was 3–4 times higher than that of the Christians, while more Christians than Muslims were dieing. V. Aarbakke, 2000, p.39

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*,

³¹⁵ *Gündem*, 21 April 1998

³¹⁶ *Ortam*, 22 December 1992

thirty kilometers when their homes are taken as the center. Others living outside from this zone had to get special permission in order to enter in this zone. Nobody was allowed to enter or leave this area from 00:00 a.m. until 5 a.m. Also, for any kind of professions a special work permit had to be taken from the Committee for Military Security (CMS).

In the Xanthi Prefecture there were 69 villages with almost 5000 Muslim Turkish families, in the Komotini Prefecture there were 49 villages composed of 1900 families and in the Evros Prefecture there were seven villages within the surveillance zone.³¹⁷ People living within the zone were isolated from the outside world. They were living under very difficult living conditions. The economic and social conditions were worse than that of the Minority living outside the zone. Telephones and other means of communication, roads, health services, education services, running water in houses and other basic facilities were quite rudimentary. There was a lack of necessary investment in this region. The economy within this zone was not modernized. People were using traditional methods for farming. The employment opportunities were almost non-existent within this zone that enabled the Minority members to leave and work outside of this zone.

The inequalities among those within and without the bordered zone can be seen in the table of Labrainidis. He compares the situation in the surveillance zone, stated as Area A within the Xanthi Prefecture and another region westwards of the Xanthi, stated as Area B, and which is outside of the surveillance zone. I want to note that while trying to signify the big diversities among the Area A and Area B, Labrianidis states that a visitor to this area would feel as if he/she entered into an another era or into a Third World country.

Table 4: Selected Social Indices Concerning the Mountainous Area of the Prefecture of Xanthi, 1991

INDEX	Selected Social Indices Concerning the Mountainous Area of the Prefecture of Xanthi, 1991	
	AREA A	AREA B
Inhabitants per telephone	14.1	7.7

³¹⁷ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.220

Asphalted roads as % of total area	0.27	0.73
Electric consumption per person	0.4	0.9
Persons per dwelling	4.3	2.9
Irrigated land % of total cultivated land	22.9	44.0
Public spending on public works per person	6,500	122,200

Source: Lois Labrianidis, “ ‘Internal Frontiers’ As a Hindrance to Development”, *European Planning Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, 2001, p.95

Another phase of the criticism against the role of the surveillance zone was that its role was composed of two different stages. In the first stage that was until mid 1970s, its role was primarily a military one, the surveillance zone being as a military buffer zone. However, in the second stage after mid 1970s, by the elimination of the ‘threat coming from the North’ in the foreign policy of Greece the territories under this zone were gradually eliminated except that within the Thrace region of Greece.

Thus, Labrianidis argues that the surveillance zone stopped to exist as a military buffer zone after mid 1970s. But, it was rather started to be used an instrument by the civil servants of this region aiming the political manipulation of minorities.³¹⁸ Moreover, it was argued that the aim of the surveillance zone was to divide the Pomaks living within this zone from the Turks living outside of this zone by which the assimilation of Pomaks would be possible.³¹⁹

3.10 Restrictions on Freedom of Expression and Press

Regarding the freedom of expression and media, there have been a number of newspapers, articles and booklets published by the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. There were not any restrictions on the issue of printing in Turkish. The printing press of the Muslim Turks started with *Yeni Ziya* published by the Mehmet Hilmi. Later, he continued with *Yeni Yol* and *Yeni Adım*. After the adoption of new Turkish letters in Turkey in 1928, Mehmet Hilmi started to print with new Turkish letters. It is

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.91

³¹⁹ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.218 and *Gündem*, 21 April 1998

significant that he was one of the pioneers of the Kemalist/Reformist group in Western Thrace.

The newspapers of *Balkan*, *İtila*, *Yeni Yol*, *Yeni Adım*, *Yarın*, *Adalet*, *Zaman*, *Inkilab*, *Peyam-i İslam*, *Milliyet*, *Ülkü*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Muallim Mecmuası*, *Müdafaa-yı İslam*, *Ulus* were from the oldest newspapers of the Muslim Turks published until the 1940s.³²⁰ The newspaper *Trakya*, started to be published in 1932 until 1965 (except the years of Second World War) continued to be one of the most important sources to depict the years of Bulgarian domination, Second World War and Civil War in Greece.

The two groups, Conservatives and Reformists, had their own newspapers and tried to impose their own ideologies on Muslim Turks. While the Conservative group continued to print their newspapers in Arabic letters up until the beginning of 1970s³²¹ the Reformist group continued to print their newspapers with Turkish letters. From 1970s onwards, all of the Minority press was printed with Turkish letters. The newspapers of *Akın*, *Azınlık Postası*, *Gerçek*, *İleri* were among the most significant newspapers that put light on the developments in Western Thrace from 1960s up until the beginning of 1990s.

For me, what is more important with the significance of the Minority newspapers as well as their role to inform the Minority is that most of the owners of the aforementioned newspapers were or later became the leading figures of the Muslim Turks. The owner of *Akın* after Asım Haliçoğlu, Hasan Hatipoğlu was elected to the Greek Parliament in 1961. Also, the owner of *Trakya*, Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu, represented the Western Thracian Minority as an MP at the Greek Parliament from 1946 until 1964. The owner of *Gerçek*, İsmail Rodoplu, was one of the leading political figures of the Muslim Turks in the late 1980s. The owner of the *Sebat* newspaper, a conservative newspaper with Arabic letters, Hafız Yaşar Mehmetoğlu

³²⁰ Aleksandre Popovic, *Balkanlarda İslam* (İstanbul:İnsan Yayınları, 1995) pp.336-338. For a comprehensive study about the Minority press from the beginning of 1920s until today see Feyyaz Sağlam, *Batı Trakya Türkleri Basın Tarihi Üzerine Bir Araştırma (1924-2000)* (Münih: Bavyera Eyaleti Batı Trakya Türkleri Aile Birliği Batı Trakya Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2000)

³²¹ The last newspaper printed in Arabic was in 1973. Paraskevas Konortas, “La presse d’expression turque des musulmans de Grèce pendant la période post-ottomane”, *Turcica*, XVII, 1985, pp.245-278 quoted in F. Asimakopoulou, “*Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Θράκης*” in Asimakopoulou and Christidou-Lionaraki, *op. cit.*, p.254

was elected to the Parliament with the Center Union Party in the first elections of Greece after the return of democracy in Greece in 1974.

One of the significant restrictions on the freedom to get information was that those newspapers, either daily or weekly, printed in Turkey were not allowed to be sold in Western Thrace. Besides, Turkish televisions and Turkish radios were also jammed.³²²

There are some Greek scholars who argue that the Muslim press of Western Thrace, who usually criticize the Greek governments and its applications, had a 'complete freedom of expression.'³²³ However, regarding the restrictions against the freedom of expression, some of the newspaper owners were punished by the Greek authorities despite the abolition of censorship in Greek media. To criticize the policies of the Greek state related with the Western Thracian Minority implied a possible punishment by the Greek courts.

For example, the owner of *Gerçek*, İsmail Rodoplu, was trialed and punished because he criticized the pressures exerted on the Minority and the expropriations of lands for the establishment of the Dimocritus University in the Komotini prefecture.³²⁴ Also, Salih Halil, the owner of *İleri*, was trialed on 13 June 1975 because of using the former name of Komotini, Gümülcine, in his article. Also, in 1977, he was put to trial for criticizing the lawless acts against the Minority and spent 72 days in prison.³²⁵

In this chapter, I focused on the problems of the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace in the pre-1990 period. Taking these problems into consideration, in the coming chapter I will dwell on the period from 1990 until today in which I will evaluate to what extent the problems of the Muslim Turks have been resolved by the Greek administrations. By doing so, I aim to make the reader see more clearly the

³²² During the Colonels period, it was reported that even the Turkish song records were not allowed to be played in the cafes where the Muslim Turks were gathering. Selahattin Galip's column in his newspaper, *Azınlık Postası*, 10 February, 1973 quoted in S. Cebecioğlu, *Batı Trakya Türkleri'nin Yaşam Savaşı* (İstanbul: Erol Matbaacılık, 1975) p.281

³²³ Ibid. Alexandris, 1988, p.533

³²⁴ Ibid. Oran, 1991, p.211

³²⁵ Ibid. Yanna Kurtovik in K. Tsitselikis and D. Hristopoulos, eds., 1997, p.257

change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace and its reflections on the problems of the Muslim Turkish Minority.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTINUITIES OF PROBLEMS IN WESTERN THRACE IN THE POST-1990 PERIOD

The violence erupted on 29 January 1990 in Komotini, as a result of which some Muslim Turks were beaten by the Greek mobs and some shops of the minority members were damaged, alarmed the Greek state about the increasing tension in Western Thrace. Two days later, on 31 January 1990, the Prime Minister X. Zolotas, the Foreign Minister A. Samaras, the Minister of Defense Tz. Tzannatakis and the three leaders of the Greek political parties Andreas Papandreou, PASOK, Kostas Mitsotakis, New Democracy and Charilaos Florakis, Synaspismos met together in order to discuss the latest developments in Thrace and they tried to provide plausible solutions for the prevention of such events to occur again in Western Thrace in the near future.

One of the most significant points put forward during this meeting was the increasing number of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace in parallel with a decrease in the Orthodox Greek population in the region that was interpreted as a possible change in the demographic figures of Western Thrace in favor of the Muslim Turks in the near future. The second point was the undeveloped character of Western Thrace, being the least developed region of Greece, and its consequences for the inhabitants of Western Thrace. And, the third point was the increase in state authority in the region. As a result of this meeting, a new policy towards the Muslim Turks started to be adopted. It was the first signal of an official change in the policy of the Greek state towards the Muslim Turkish Minority of Thrace.

At this meeting, some provisions were adopted about the Muslim Turkish minority and the Western Thrace region. First of all, it was agreed to increase the population of Western Thrace via two ways: The first way was the economic development of the region that would provide employment facilities for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace as well as it would attract other Greek citizens outside of

this region. And, the second way was the settlement of the Pontic-Greek³²⁶ refugees especially in the Rhodopi and Evros prefectures. As a second provision, it was also agreed that the Minority would be encouraged for urbanization through different measures like improvement in the education level of the minority, employment in certain governmental services and employment in industries outside the Western Thrace region. Thirdly, a democratic administration by elected committees was proposed aiming to block the control of the Turkish consulate on the wakf properties. Fourthly, it was accepted to decrease the judicial powers of the Mufti and transfer most of these powers to the Greek courts. And lastly, it was declared that the administrative harassments against the Minority should be abolished and the presence of the Greek authority in the region should be reinforced.³²⁷

Evaluating this meeting and its final decisions it seems that there were three main points that were likely not to work in favor of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The first point is about the settlement of the Pontic Greeks in the region. It is significant to keep in the mind that the Komotini prefecture demographically is dominated by the Turkish Muslim minority while most of the Muslim Turkish Roma within the region lives in the Evros Prefecture. Thus, the settlement of the Pontic Greeks especially in these two prefectures can be interpreted as an official policy of Greece that aims to balance the demographic figures in these two regions. Thus, the arguments stipulating that the settlement of the Pontic Greeks in Western Thrace aim to serve the national interest of Greece seem to proven true.³²⁸

The second point is to encourage the urbanization of the Minority members especially outside of Western Thrace by providing them job facilities in other more developed regions of Greece. The urbanization of the Muslim Turks outside of

³²⁶ Pontic Greeks are composed of people either who emigrated from the Southern Black Sea region to the former Soviet Union in the beginning of the 20th century or who migrated from Greece to Soviet Union in the interwar era. When the situation started to deteriorate in the USSR in 1980s, the Greek state adopted a policy of accepting Pontic Greeks in Greece and helping their integration with the Greek society. N. Glytsos, "Problems and Policies Regarding the Socio-economic Integration of Returnees and Foreign Workers in Greece", *International Migration*, 33(2), pp. 155–76 quoted in Triandafyllidou and Veikou, *op. cit.*, p.202

³²⁷ "New Policy Towards the Muslims", *Eleftherotipia*, 02.03.1990. This article is translated and cited in Vemund Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bergen, 2000, pp.765-766

³²⁸ Triandafyllidou and Veikou, *op. cit.*, p.200

Western Thrace can be interpreted as a possible way of assimilation of the Muslim Turks mainly because, whoever from the Minority starts to work and live outside Western Thrace by transferring officially his place of living and being rewritten in a municipality outside Thrace, automatically loses his rights that stem from the 1923 Lausanne Treaty that are applicable only for the Muslim Turkish minority living within Western Thrace. Therefore, assimilation outside of Western Thrace seems as an easier process compared to that within Western Thrace.

As the third point, by increasing the state control on the properties of wakfs I think that rather than obstructing the control of the Turkish Consulate the Greek state aimed to loosen the control of the Muslim Turks on these pious endowments. To keep in mind, starting from 1970s, the wakfs are governed by people who were nominated by the Junta regime, not by democratically elected people from the minority. Still today, these pious endowments are under the absolute control of the Greek administrations. Regardingly, there are also some Greek arguments stipulating that such an increase in the state control overall Western Thrace was accepted to be imperative for the defense of the region and the country against the ‘Turkish’ threat.³²⁹

Beside these negative connotations, it seems that the most significant point that was put forward at this meeting was the development of Western Thrace that would work not only for the benefit of Orthodox Christians of the region, but also for the benefit of the Muslim Turks of the region. Before 1990s, the Muslim Turkish minority was deprived of the rights and economic resources while the Orthodox Greeks of the region enjoyed their privileged positions vis-à-vis the minority members.

Starting from this meeting of the political leaders, one can recognize that the undeveloped character of Western Thrace started to change. Greece started to spend more money for the development of the region. Developments in Western Thrace implied more job opportunities and a better social and economic life for the members of the Muslim Turkish minority. This was a significant step from the Greek state towards the Thrace region and towards the Minority. It is mainly for these reasons that I take the meeting of 31 January 1990 as the beginning of change in the minority

³²⁹ Dia Anagnostou, “Breaking the Cycle of Nationalism: The EU, Regional Policy and the Minority of Western Thrace, Greece”, *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.6, No.1, Summer 2001, p.105

policy of Greece regarding Western Thrace although some of the decisions taken at this meeting were likely to serve against the benefits of the Muslim Turks. What is important here is that at this meeting, the first seeds of the change in the minority policy of Greece towards the Muslim Turkish minority were laid in the soil that would start to appear on the ground and give birth to the introduction of new policies towards the Western Thracian Minority during the visit of Mitsotakis in May 1991.

In April 1990, the New Democracy Party won the elections and Mitsotakis came to the power. He governed Greece for three years. What is widely accepted as a turning point in the minority policy of the Greek state was the introduction of new policies during the visit of Mitsotakis in Western Thrace as the Prime Minister of Greece on 13-14 May 1991. On 13th of May 1991, he visited Xanthi and one day later he visited Komotini. In the first day of his visit, he admitted that the Greek state had followed a discriminatory policy towards the Minority of Western Thrace in the past.³³⁰

During his visit, he mentioned the undeveloped character of the region and promised for more investments for the region that would work for the benefit of all Thracian Greek citizens, both the majority and the minority populations. Regarding the Western Thracian Minority, he introduced two new policies that were *Isonomia* (equality before the law) and *Isopolitia* (equality in civic rights) and he reminded the Minority about their responsibilities towards the Greek administrations.³³¹ These two policies aimed to protect the rights of the Muslim Turkish Minority and to increase their living standards in political, economic and social terms. Consequently, the introduction of *Isonomia* and *Isopolitia* under the Mitsotakis government is generally referred as a breakthrough in the history of the Western Thracian minority depicting the official change in the attitude of the Greek state towards the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace.

From now on, I will evaluate the economic, social and political issues concerning the Muslim Turkish minority in the post-1990 period. Although some of these issues are interrelated with each other, I think that studying each case separately will make the reader to have a more clear picture about what has changed

³³⁰ “Batı Trakya’da Türk Azınlığa Haksızlık Yaptık”, *Batı Trakya’nın Sesi*, June 1991, Vol.31, pp.3-5

³³¹ *Paratiritis tis Thrakis*, 15 May 1991

in Western Thrace and what still remains as a problem affecting the lives of the Western Thracian minority in the period after 1990.

4.1 Economic Developments in Western Thrace and its Reflections

One of the basic promises of the visit of Mitsotakis in May 1991 was the economic development of Western Thrace, being the least developed region of Greece. In time, this promise had proven to be true. Starting from 1992, Greece started to spend more money for the development of Western Thrace. Moreover, as it was reported, most of the basic individual human rights violations of the pre-1990 period that were criticized severely especially by the EU organs and international human rights organizations, have been abolished. Violation of property rights, being one of the most fundamental sufferings of the Muslim Turks especially throughout 1970s and 1980s came to an end. Since 1992, expropriation of lands that was one of the biggest problems of the Muslim Turks almost stopped. The Muslim Turks of Western Thrace can buy and sell land and houses, repair houses, obtain car, and mosques, obtain car, truck and tractor licenses, and open coffee houses and machine and electrical shops.³³²

Such developments played a major role for the improvement of the economic conditions in Western Thrace. As a result of the abolishment of such restrictive economic measures, Muslim Turks started to build new houses or repair their old houses. Even, bank loans started to be given for those Muslim Turks who want to build new houses. Compared to the pre-1990 period in which even to repair their houses was prohibited for the Muslim Turkish minority, then it seems that the developments in economic domain can be accepted as a significant reflection of change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace in the post-1990 period. However, in spite economic developments, Western Thrace is still the least developed region of Greece and the living standards of the Muslim Turks are still lower than the rest of the Greek population. As it was reported, towards the end of the millennium the developments in the basic public services (electricity, water, and telephones) in some villages of Muslim Turks were slower than that of non-Muslim

³³² *The Turks of Western Thrace, op.cit.*, 1999, p.3

areas³³³ implying us that Greece still has to devote more money and energy for the economic development of Western Thrace.

The developments in the economic sector have had reflections the demography of the Western Thracian minority. In the pre-1990 period, it was the restrictive policies of the Greek state like the application of the Article 19 and the harsh economic conditions of Western Thrace that prevented the participation of the Muslim Turks in the Greek economic life resulting in a migration to other countries like Turkey, Germany and France. On 7th of June 1990 in an interview published in a Turkish daily newspaper, Greek Minister of Justice Athanassios Kanellopoulos declared that there were 150,000 Greek citizens of Muslim faith in Western Thrace.³³⁴ Given a two percent growth rate, the Turkish population in the beginning of 1990s was expected to number around 500.000 if it had grown at a rate of 2 percent.³³⁵ However, in the beginning of 1990, the number of the minority members was around 150.000 showing us that some 350.000 people, most of whom not voluntarily, have had to leave Western Thrace.

With the change in the official policy of Greece towards the Western Thracian minority and the developments in the economic field, Muslim Turks started to prefer more to stay in the region and invest their money in Western Thrace than investing in other countries. Also, the feeling of insecurity which dominated the psychology of Muslim Turks for years and which was one of the most significant reasons for investing in Turkey has started to diminish in time. Today, although the immigration of the Muslim Turks to the urban centers of Greece or to the EU countries still continues, compared to the pre-1990 period the number of those migrating from Western Thrace seems to decline. Rather than immigration, Muslim Turks prefer to stay, work, spend and invest in Western Thrace. The increasing number of the newly-built houses in both Komotini and Xanthi prefectures can be accepted as an indication for this phenomenon.

Evaluating the developments in the economic life of the Muslim Turks, it should be kept in mind that the increasing number of legal and illegal immigrants

³³³ *US Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Greece, 1999, p.13

³³⁴ Athanassios Kanellopoulos quoted in Whitman, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.2

³³⁵ Bahçeli, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.177

from other countries can, also be accepted as another significant reason for the decrease in the number of Muslim Turks leaving Western Thrace and migrating to the urban centers of Greece. When one looks to the structure of the Greek economy in the post-1990 period, it becomes obvious that starting from the beginning of 1990s, especially with the immigration of Pontic Greeks from the ex-Communist regimes of the Soviet bloc and the Albanians living in the southern region of Albania, the number of legal and illegal immigrants has dramatically increased. Greece, which was a labour exporter country in the pre-1990 period, became an importer of labour in the post-Cold War era implying an extra burden on the Greek economy. In order to cope with the illegal migration two presidential decrees No.358/1997 and No.359/1997 were issued in 1997 that formed the basis of the first regularization program for illegal migration that started to function in 1998.³³⁶ Today, the number of the legal migrants is around 80.000 while the number of the illegal immigrants is more than 600.000.³³⁷

Considering the number of both legal and illegal immigrants that is around %6 of the total Greek population, then it seems that it became less attractive for the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace to immigrate to the urban centers of Greece to work. Before, there was a lack of a labour force in these urban centers and Muslim Turks pretended to migrate to these urban areas in order to earn money. However, by the advent of the immigrants the necessary labour force was exceedingly provided. Taking into account that an immigrant generally works with a lower wage than the Greek citizens, then it becomes obvious that most of the Muslim Turks started to prefer working and living in Western Thrace. Moreover, such increasing number of illegal immigrants resulted also in a decrease in the tolerance of the Greek citizens against the foreign immigrants.³³⁸ By 2000, this number decreased to 38 percent but

³³⁶ For more details about these two presidential decrees and the regularization program see Triandafyllidou and Veikou, *op. cit.*, pp.189-208

³³⁷ Ibid. p.190. See also Lois Labrianidis, “ ‘Internal Frontiers’ As a Hindrance to Development”, *European Planning Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, 2001, p.102 Footnote 22

³³⁸ According to the EU Commission’s Barometer Survey conducted in 1997 in Greece, Greeks were in the first rank among the EU countries with %71 intolerance against the foreigners. The survey quoted in Ash Amin, “Multi-Ethnicity and the Idea of Europe”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2004, Vol.21(2), p.7

it was still the highest percent among the EU members.³³⁹ It is for the increasing anxiety of Greeks about the immigrants the Greek administrations should develop new strategies in order to prevent migration to Greece.

4.2 The Abolition of the Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law

In the pre-1990 period the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace has suffered a lot from the application of the Article 19 that I explained in the previous chapter. From the beginning of 1992, the number of those deprived from Greek citizenship under article 19 started to decrease. According to a US State Department Report, in 1993, 123 individuals were deprived of their citizenship while this number decreased to 72 in 1995.³⁴⁰

In spite of the introduction of the new minority policy of Western Thrace in 1991, the phenomenon about the people suffering from the application of Article 19 became popular in the Greek media organs only six years later, in 1997, when Aysel Zeybek, a girl from Ehinós, a village of the Xanthi Prefecture, wanted to marry but she could not because her citizenship had been revoked when she was seven years old although she had never left Greece.

The Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (3370/1955), which was adopted in 1955, was abolished on 11 June 1998. It was abolished on the grounds that it violated the constitutional equality of the Greek citizens before the law as it is stated in the Article 4 Paragraph 1 of the Greek Constitution. As well as the criticisms coming from the international organizations and Turkey, it was mainly the pressures coming from the European Union that played a major role in the abolishment of Article 19.³⁴¹ Almost for forty-three years, this article was used to deprive non-ethnic Greek citizens from the Greek citizenship.

³³⁹ Kerin Hope, “Swelling Numbers Change Attitudes: Immigration”, *Financial Times*, 13 December 2000, p.7

³⁴⁰ *US Country Reports*, 1993, Greece, p.12, at www.state.gov

³⁴¹ Tözün Bahçeli, “Türkiye’nin Yunanistan Politikası” in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayarı, eds., *Türkiye’nin Yeni Dünyası* (İstanbul: ALFA, 2002) p.195. See also, Baskın Oran, “The Story of Those who Stayed-Lessons from Articles 1 and 2 of the 1923 Convention” in Renee Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean-An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (2003) p.106

Until 2005, the official number of those who were deprived of Greek citizenship under Article 19 was not known. However, in May 2005, responding to the written question of İlhan Ahmet at the Greek Parliament, the Greek Ministry of Interior officially stated that the number of the Muslim Turks from Western Thrace and Dodecanese Islands deprived of their citizenship under Article 19 was 46.638.³⁴² This great number can be interpreted as another indication for the policy of the Greek state in balancing the demographic figures in Western Thrace.

Although Article 19 has been abolished in 1998 one recent example regarding the deprivation from the Greek citizenship was witnessed six years later from its abolition, on 25 September 2004 when a woman from Xanthi was turned back by the Greek border police on the grounds that she was deprived of Greek citizenship in 1979. It seems interesting that she had continuously renewed her passport in 25 years time.³⁴³

4.2.1 The Problem with the Stateless People

Among those deprived from the Greek citizenship, a number of people started to live as ‘stateless’ within the boundaries of Greece and Turkey who have been the ‘alive proofs of an obvious unlawful practice which had been applied for decades’.³⁴⁴ The official number of the stateless people living within the boundaries of Greece is not officially published or declared resulting in a dispute over the exact number of the stateless people living in Greece.³⁴⁵ Besides, regarding the number of the stateless people from the Muslim Turkish minority that remained in Turkey, Rüştü Kazım Yücelen, the Turkish Minister of Interior declared that by the year 2000 there were 2.874 Western Thracian Turks living as stateless in Turkey.³⁴⁶

³⁴² *Hronos*, 18 May 2005

³⁴³ Abdülhalim Dede, “Kepçenine”, *Azınlıkça*, November 2004

³⁴⁴ “Υποσχέσεις Χωρίς Ιθαγένεια” (Promises Without Belonging to the State), *Eleftherotipia*, 06 March 2004

³⁴⁵ Some sources state the number as between 1000 and 4000 (HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999 p.14 and Ortakovski, *op. cit.*, p.190) while for some others this number is between 300 and 1000 (*Minority Rights in Greece*, A Report Prepared by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Greek Helsinki Monitor(GHM), 18 September 1999, p.11 available at www.greekhelsinki.gr).

³⁴⁶ R.Kazım Yücelen quoted in Metin Ayışığı, “Batı Trakya Türklerine Yönelik İnsan Hakları İhlalleri ve Kimlik Sorunu”, *Ari Dergisi*, 08-09-2004, p.3

Rather than those who got the Turkish citizenship, the stateless people in both Greece and Turkey continue to suffer today from the non-retrospectivity of the Article 19. In case of the non-retrospectivity principle it is not legally possible for those stripped from Greek citizenship under Article 19 to get back their Greek citizenship. It is for this reason that Greece is argued to be the only European state where a section of its population could not enjoy any legal and social protection by the Greek state.³⁴⁷ Since 1998, the application for the retrospectivity principle has been continuously ignored by the Greek state. One of the plausible reasons for such an attitude might be the possible return of 46.638 Muslim Turks back to Western Thrace that will imply a change in the demographic balance of the region in favor of the Muslim Turkish minority in the near future.

As a result of increasing national and international criticisms, in 1998, around 100 people who had become 'stateless' under Article 19 were given their Greek citizenships back. In the same year, the Foreign Minister of Greece, Theodoros Pangalos, stated that within one year most of the stateless people would be offered Greek citizenship³⁴⁸. However, this has not become a reality because according to the official statement of the Greek Ministry of Public Affairs, the total number of the stateless people, who regained their Greek citizenships, by the year 2005, is 118.³⁴⁹ The stateless people living in Greece who want to get back their Greek citizenships had to make a request for the regular naturalization procedure, (*συνήθη διαδικασία πολιτογράφησης*), which is a long and expensive process³⁵⁰ and its outcome is also uncertain.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Panayote Dimitras and Nafsika Papanikolatos, *Two Years of Traditionalist Modernism in Greece's Human Rights Policy*, AIM Athens, 28 January 1998, available at www.aimpress.ch

³⁴⁸ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.15

³⁴⁹ *Hronos*, 18 May 2005

³⁵⁰ A Payment of 1500 Euros is needed to be made during the application process which seems quite a big number for a person who has been suffering both economically, politically and socially from living in Greece but officially not recognized as a Greek citizen by the Greek state. *Ibid.* "The Written Question of Ilhan Ahmet about the Loss of the Greek Citizenship under Article 19", *Hronos*, 20 April 2005

³⁵¹ *Third Report on Greece*, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), adopted on 5 December 2003 and published on 8 June 2004, p.9 available at www.coe.int/ecri

Since 1998, some positive steps have been taken by the Greek state for the protection of the rights of the stateless people living in Greece. Some of the provisions of the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (ratified in 1975) are implemented. However, most of the stateless people are still deprived from basic individual human rights and they still suffer from not being recognized officially by the Greek state as a 'citizen of Greece'. Shortly, the stateless people in Greece continue to live in limbo.

4.3 Employment of the Muslim Turks in Greek Private and Public Sectors

Regarding the active participation of the Muslim Turks in the Greek economic life, most of the hindrances before the minority members to practice their own professions were abolished. Most of the problems with DIKATSA for recognizing their university diplomas were solved enabling the minority members to work as university graduates in the Greek private sector.

As an indication, starting from 1992, the number of the lawyers, dentists, doctors and pharmacists in Western Thrace has gradually increased. Also, a number of the Turkish-university graduates started to win seats in the town councils and prefectures. Moreover, the job opportunities for the women of Thrace have gradually increased. New centers for education were established like the *IEKs* (Centers for Professional Training) and new EU-supported programs have been introduced aiming to incorporate the both the Muslim Turkish minority and Orthodox Greek majority into the Greek economic life. As it is argued, the emergence of a new class of professionally successful minority members is likely to help for changing the intercommunal stalemate that will result in the development of Western Thrace as a whole from which both the minority and the majority societies of Thrace will benefit altogether.³⁵² Regardingly, I want to recall a part of the speech of Kostas Simitis in his three-day visit of Western Thrace in May 1996. "We must realize that the region's future will be determined by its economic, social and cultural development and that Thrace's growth is a national need."³⁵³

³⁵² Bruce Clark, "Young Muslims in Greece Get Mobile", *Financial Times*, 11 November 2003

³⁵³ Kostas Simitis speech cited in "PM promises Thrace front seat in Balkan development", *Athens News*, 03 May 1996

However, the positive atmosphere in the Greek private sector can not be observed in the public sector. The number of the Muslim Turks working in the public sector is quite low compared to those in the private sector. The main reasons for such a small number generally put forward by the Greek state are the poor Greek language of the minority and the need for the university degrees for high-level positions.³⁵⁴ All Greek citizens who want to work in the public sector have to participate in an examination that is held by the Supreme Council for the Selection of Personnel (ASEP/ΑΣΕΠ). There are some Muslim Turks who won a seat in the public sector via ASEP. However, their numbers are too low.

Besides, in 2002 and 2003, almost one hundred of the Minority graduates have been employed temporarily at the EU supported Citizen Advisory Bureaus (KEIT) attached to administration units. Also, a small number of civil servants have been offered positions in the Rhodopi and Xanthi Prefectures and the office of Regional Secretary General.³⁵⁵ In the pre-1990 period, it was not possible for a Muslim Turk to win a place from the public sector. But, today there are at least some Muslim Turks working as public employees that implies us that there has been a change in the Greek policy towards the minority in the field of minority employments in the public sector.

For the future, it seems that the small number of the Muslim Turks in the public sector is likely to increase mainly because the number of the minority students entering into and graduating from the Greek universities is gradually increasing.³⁵⁶ Considering that these graduates will speak and write Greek fluently and having a university diploma in their hands, the two fundamental necessities continuously stipulated by the Greek governments for the lack of minority members in the public sector are likely to wither away. Therefore, I think that in the future more Muslim Turks will work in the Greek public sector, of course if the Greek state will not put

³⁵⁴ US State Department Reports, 1999, Greece, p.19 at www.state.gov

³⁵⁵ *Outstanding Issues Affecting the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace*. A Revised presentation by the Human Rights Branch of the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association- Komotini-GREECE, May 2005, p.9

³⁵⁶ The unique reason for such an increase is the introduction of the minority quotas in the Greek universities. I will focus on this quota system in the coming sections of this chapter.

other hindrances in front of the Muslim Turks who will try to get in the Greek public sector.

4.4 The Abolishment of the Surveillance Zone

One of the mostly criticized issues in human rights records of Greece in 1980s and 1990s was the application of the surveillance zone. Being a region under absolute control of the Greek state all people living within this region have suffered from a number of human rights violations for more than thirty years that I analytically explained in the previous chapter. In 1995, the surveillance zone of Thrace was abolished. The first signs of such an abolishment became obvious during the visit of Yerasimos Arsenis of Thrace on 17-18 May 1995.

During his visit of Thrace surveillance zone, Arsenis stated that the last part of the Greek surveillance zones, that of the Thrace zone, would be abolished soon only for Greek citizens. It is due to this application that after five years of its abolishment the first non-Greek citizen was a journalist from a Turkish newspaper, Nur Batur, to visit the region on 6-7 November 2000 together with the Greek Defense Minister Akis Tzohatzopoulos.³⁵⁷ One of the significant reasons for the abolishment of the surveillance zone was the pressures coming from the EU. Recognizing that the biggest divergences in employment opportunities, income levels and living standards among regions within a member state existed in the border areas, EU promoted new plans to abolish the internal frontiers within the member state countries. Considering the attitude of the EU towards the restrictive zone, the existence of the surveillance zone seemed not to be compatible with the EU norms and principles.

To note, in spite of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the functioning of the Thrace zone continued until 1995 for Greek citizens and until 2000 for the foreigners while all other surveillance zones of Northern Greece had been abolished by 1991. After its abolition, it became quite obvious that the effective functioning of the Thrace surveillance zone had resulted in underdevelopment and poverty for those living within this zone. People living within this region have recently started more to integrate with the rest of the minority in both political, economic and social terms.

³⁵⁷ Nur Batur, "Yasak Bölge 64 Yıl Sonra Tarihe Karşıyor", *Hürriyet*, 08 November 2000

However, it seems that it will not be an easy process for these people to free themselves from the remnants of the surveillance zone.

4.5 Freedom of Expression and Press

In the pre-1990 period, satellites were not widely used in Western Thrace because they were very expensive. Besides, the Turkish television channels and radios were jammed by the Greek state. However, starting from the beginning of 1990s, one can see that Muslim Turks started to buy satellite receivers in order to have access to Turkish channels. Today, almost all minority members have such receivers at their homes and have full and free access to the Turkish televisions. The existence of the satellite receivers on the roof of the houses can easily be recognized by those visiting Western Thrace.

The circulation of the Turkish newspapers in Western Thrace was impossible in the pre-1990 period. However, starting from 2000 a number of daily newspapers started to be sold in both Komotini and Xanthi and in their municipalities. Besides the Turkish newspapers and TV channels, there are weekly, not daily, newspapers of the Muslim Turks printed in Turkish and there are radio stations owned either by the Orthodox Greeks or by the Muslim Turks that broadcast in Turkish. In Thrace, the state radio station of Greece (*ERA*) started to make special programs broadcasted in Turkish by a minority journalist in 1997. However, there is not a TV channel owned by a minority member.

Furthermore, there is only one local daily Greek newspaper, *Paratiritis*, which started to print weekly supplements in 1999 written one in Turkish for the Muslim Turks and the other in Russian for the Pontic Greeks. Later, these supplements were turned into daily supplements. Actually, there are two kinds of local Greek press in Western Thrace. The one is like the *Paratiritis* that supports multiculturalism and having tolerance towards the Western Thracian minority and the others, like *Hronos*, adopt a nationalist and conservative attitude towards the Western Thracian minority. Considering both the local and the national Greek media organs, the number of the ones having a conservative attitude towards the Western Thracian minority is much higher than the ones having a multicultural attitude towards the minority.

As for the freedom of expression, Abdülhalim Dede became one of the most prominent figures of 1980s and 1990s because of his trails between 1985 and 1998 for dissemination of false information, using satirical sketches in his newspaper, *Trakya'nın Sesi*, and trying to install a radio antenna in his back yard. Also, in 1997, he was put to trial because of the operation of his Turkish-language speaking radio station in Komotini without license. However, in the end he was acquitted because almost all private radio stations were operating without a license since 1989 due to the failure of the authorities to issue proper licenses.³⁵⁸

The significance of the media organs is that they can play a significant role in affecting the public opinion in Greece. As in the case of depicting the Muslim Turkish MPs and prominent political figures as the 'agents' of Turkey and declaring their anxieties about the possibility that Western Thrace will one day become a second Kosovo and in the end integrating with Turkey a great number of the Greek media organs still adopt a conservative attitude and interpret the recent developments in Western Thrace with an anxiety.³⁵⁹ Likely, rather than trying to see the general picture of Western Thrace from a multicultural or democratic point of view most of published books in Greece about the Western Thracian Minority seem to evaluate and interpret the issues about the Muslim Turkish minority from a conservative perspective.

4.6 Political Participation of the Muslim Turkish Minority

In the elections of 8 April 1990, Muslim Turks elected Sadık Ahmet from Rhodopi and Ahmet Faikoğlu from Xanthi prefectures as two independent MPs. However, on 24 October 1990, the Greek electorate law was changed with the introduction of 3% threshold of votes for any political party that wanted to enter into the Greek parliament. Such a change was interpreted by the Muslim Turks as a hindrance to send their independent MPs to Athens because taking into account the %3 threshold, at least 200.000 votes is required for a minority politician to become

³⁵⁸ *Minorities and Media in Greece*, A Report prepared by Minority Rights Group- Greece (MRG – G), May 2000, p.8 available at www.greekhelsinki.gr

³⁵⁹ The attitude of the conservative Greek newspapers and their headlines are quoted and interpreted in O Ios Tis Kyriakis, “Η στρατηγική της έντασης”, (The Strategy of Tension), *Eleftherotipia*, 6 June 1998

an independent representative of the Minority in the Greek parliament. And, the total population of the Minority does not exceed 130.000. Therefore, since the application of the 3% threshold in 1990, it is not possible for the Muslim Turks to be represented by their independent representatives in the Greek parliament and therefore the Muslim Turks started to elect their minority representatives through the Greek political parties.

In order to prevent the diffusion of the minority votes to the major Greek parties, a new political party, Party of Friendship, Equality and Peace (*Dostluk-Eşitlik-Barış Partisi, DEB*) was formed on 13 September 1991 under the leadership of Sadık Ahmet. In the constitution of *DEB*, the main purpose is stated as the political representation of all Greek citizens. Also, it is stipulated that *DEB* party represents those who accept that the society should be constructed on the basis of equal citizenship before the law with respect for human rights.³⁶⁰ However, due to the application of the 3% threshold it was impossible for the *DEB* to take more than the 3% of the total Greek votes only with the votes of the Muslim Turks. Therefore, the votes of the Orthodox Greeks were required for an MP candidate from the *DEB* to win the elections. Such a necessity became obvious in the elections of 10 October 1993. Although *DEB* won the %32.75 of the total votes in the Rhodopi Prefecture, Sadık Ahmet was not able to be an MP in the Greek Parliament due to the 3% threshold.

From 1991 until the death of Sadık Ahmet on 24 July 1995 in a car accident near the Sostis (*Susurköy*) village, *DEB* functioned quite properly and it was widely supported by the Muslim Turkish minority. It started to print a new newspaper, *Balkan*, reflecting the ideas of the party. After the death of Sadık Ahmet, her wife, Işık Ahmet, succeeded the leadership of *DEB*. But, in time, the existence of *DEB* has weakened and it started to lose its prior significance and power with the death of Sadık Ahmet. Today, it has a very limited function over the minority voters.

In the elections of 22 September 1996, Galip Galip (Rhodopi) from PASOK, Birol Akifoğlu (Xanthi) from ND and Mustafa Mustafa (Komotini) from Sinaspismos were elected to the Greek parliament. After five years, the Muslim Turks started to be represented in Athens with three MPs. In the next elections held

³⁶⁰ Talip Küçükcan, "Re-claiming Identity: Ethnicity, Religion and Politics among Turkish-Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 19, April 1999, p.59

on 9 April 2000, Galip Galip and Ahmet Mehmet were elected under PASOK. And in the latest elections on 7 March 2004, İlhan Ahmet from Komotini under ND was elected by the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. He won the elections with 13.784 votes while Galip Galip, from PASOK, failed with 10.135 votes.³⁶¹ After his victory, he expressed that despite the developments in human rights record of Greece, some basic problems of Muslim Turks still remained. He also added that the friendly atmosphere between Greece and Turkey should be reflected in Western Thrace which would help for the solution of the remaining problems of the Muslim Turkish minority.³⁶²

As for the local elections, the Greek government ceased to appoint the prefects and the municipal councils in 1994. Since then, they are elected by the voters of the Greek regions. Thus, the votes of the Muslim Turks become very significant in the elections for the prefects and members of the municipal councils which make the local governors and politicians to be more responsive towards the needs of the Muslim Turks and more willing to use funds in order to improve the long-neglected infrastructure projects of Western Thrace.³⁶³ However, related with the minority effect on the prefect elections, the law on the local government of prefecture was modified in 1994 and put the prefectures of Xanthi and Komotini into the category of ‘enlarged prefectures’.

According to the Article 40 of the Law 2218/1994 the Rhodopi prefecture was merged with the adjacent Evros prefecture (little minority population) and the Xanthi prefecture with the adjacent Kavala prefecture (minority population almost non-existent). By this way, the election of a Muslim Turkish prefect from the two highly-minority populated prefectures was blocked by the Greek state.³⁶⁴

However, in spite of the impossibility to be elected as a prefect, the Muslim Turks have the right to be elected to the prefecture councils and municipalities. For

³⁶¹ “Μουσουλμάνος Εξελέγη Βουλευτής στη Ροδόπη” (Muslim Elected Parliamentarian in Rodopi), 9 March 2004, *Macedonian Press Agency*, www.mpa.gr

³⁶² Adem Yavuz Arslan, “Ahmet to Represent Turkish Minority in Greek Parliament”, *Zaman*, 09 March 2004

³⁶³ Ali Eminov, “Turks and Tatars in Bulgaria and the Balkans”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.1, 2000, p.151

³⁶⁴ Ibid. Anagnostou, “Breaking the Cycle of Nationalism: The EU, Regional Policy and the Minority of Western Thrace, Greece”, *South European Society and Politics*, p.110

example, in the local elections in 1998, 14 Turkish Muslims in the prefecture councilors and 11 Muslim mayors of cities and municipalities were elected.³⁶⁵ Today, 4 municipalities and 7 sub-districts that are highly concentrated with the Muslim Turkish minority are governed by the Muslim Turks.³⁶⁶

4.7 Denial of Ethnic Identity

Denial of ethnic identity of the Western Thracian minority by the Greek state has been one of the most contentious issues regarding the Western Thracian policy of Greece. Until the advent of the 1967 Junta regime, the ethnic identification of the minority as ‘Turkish minority’ was not a problematic issue. However, after 1967, the ethnic identification of the minority was officially started to be prevented. In spite of return of democracy in 1974, the minority continued to be officially identified as ‘Muslim minority’ by the Greek state and the ethnic identification of the Western Thracian minority continued to be banned. During his visit in 1991, Mitsotakis referred to a ‘Muslim’ minority composed of three different ethnic groups; the Turkish-borns (*Τουρκογενής*), the Pomaks and the Romas.

As a response to the division of the Muslim Turkish minority into three different groups, severe reactions came from the prominent figures of the Minority. Only after ten minutes from the official announcement of the ethnic division of the minority by Mitsotakis, Ahmet Faikoglu, the independent MP from the Xanthi prefecture, replied that rather than solving the problems of the Minority, Mitsotakis visited Western Thrace in order to create new problems by dividing the minority into three segments by which the uniform character of the Muslim Turkish Minority would be affected. For him, the Minority was Turk in the past and will remain Turk in the future.³⁶⁷ Also, there were reactions from the prominent figures of the Muslim

³⁶⁵ *A Report submitted by Greece under Article 9 of the International Convention on Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination*, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 30 May 2000, p.6 available at www.unhchr.ch

³⁶⁶ *Outstanding Issues Affecting the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace*, *op. cit.*, p.9. For more information about these municipalities and subdistricts see Necmettin Hüseyin, *Batı Trakya Türkleri Derneği'nden Tarihe Bir Not* (İstanbul: Batı Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Derneği, 2004) pp.227-233

³⁶⁷ The press conference of Ahmet Faikoğlu cited in *Batı Trakya'nın Sesi*, June 1991, Vol.31, pp.4-5

Turks who regarded such an identification ‘divide and assimilate’ policy of the Greek state.

The general interpretation of Greek politicians and scholars about the ethnic division of the Muslim Turks has been similar to each other. Most of them agree that it has been only the Islam religion common to both Turkish-borns, Pomaks and Romas which has actually reflected the respect of the Greek state towards the different elements within the Minority. For example, in the interview with the Deputy Greek Foreign Minister, Yannis Kranidiotis stated that³⁶⁸

...in Greece, we do not speak of a Turkish minority; we call it Muslim minority. We feel this term, Turkish, gives them an ethnic character of Turkish while downgrading other elements that are not Turkish (such as Pomaks and Gypsies)...We have been tolerant and are becoming more tolerant. *Stricto sensu* if one wants to interpret Lausanne treaty they must be called Muslims...We are respecting the different elements of the Muslim minority.

The ban on the usage of the term ‘Turk’ in the titles of the associations still continues since 1987 when the Greek High Court accepted the dissolution of the Union of Turkish Youth and the Union of Turkish Teachers of Komotini on the bases that the word ‘Turkish’ endangered the public order and it referred to the citizens of Turkey not to those of Greece. One example for such a ban against the ethnic identification is about a speech of a minority teacher, Rasim Hint, in a minority primary school of Xanthi in 1996.

Hint used the term ‘Turkish primary school’ for the school where he was teaching during the visit of the chief of the Coordinator Bureau for Minority Schools. Then, he was put to trial for his statement of ‘Turkish school’ and in 1998 he was sent from the city of Xanthi to Hloi (*Hebilköy*), a village within the Rhodopi prefecture which is very close to the Greek-Bulgarian border. In the directive prepared by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, it was stated that he was sent to Hloi for the benefit of the state. After completing his duty, he was sent to Kimi (*Kuzueren*), another border village of the Rhodopi prefecture. In the end, in

³⁶⁸ An interview made with Yannis Kranidiotis at Athens on September 1997 by the Human Rights Watch that is cited in 1999 HRW Report: *Turks of Western Thrace*, p.10

2001, he was forced to retire at his 60 because he completed 35 years of teaching students.³⁶⁹

These directives of the Greek administration about the change in the Rasim Hint's teaching in different schools based on the 'state benefit' principle can be interpreted as a kind of indirect punishment towards a member of the Minority who used a banned term, 'Turkish'. Moreover, it was reported that in June 1997, there were twelve Minority teachers who were sentenced for eight months and pending appeal because they had signed a union document which comprised the term 'Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace'.³⁷⁰

Another significant event against the official ban for the denial of ethnic identity of the minority occurred in 1999. On 23 July 1999, the day of the 25th anniversary of restoration of democracy in Greece, the three minority representatives, Galip Galip (PASOK), Birol Akifoğlu (ND) and Mustafa Mustafa (SINASPISMOS) together with thirteen NGOs that were mainly based in Western Thrace sent a public appeal to the Speaker of the Greek Parliament and the party leaders for the recognition of the existence of the Turkish and Macedonian minorities in Greece, the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities without any conditions and the implementation of the principles of the Convention, as well as those in the OSCE documents, so that all forms of discrimination or persecution against members of these minorities cease and their rights would be respected. However, the appeal was generally labeled as 'artificial constructs' or 'groundless and vacuous positions' in Athens and was sharply rejected by almost all Greek political figures who repeated the existence of only a Muslim minority in Thrace but not a Turkish one.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ The informations about Rasim Hint and his trials are taken from an interview made with him. "...Ben Daha bu Topluma çok Hizmet Verebilirim Kanısındayım. Mesleğime Doymadan İhraç Edildim...", *Öğretmenin Sesi*, Vol.43, January 2002

³⁷⁰ Ibid. *Minority Rights in Greece*, A Report Prepared by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Greek Helsinki Monitor(GHM), p.9

³⁷¹ George Gilson, "Athens Offers Sharp Response to Muslim MPs", *Athens News*, 25 July 1999. For more details about this public appeal and its reflections in Athens see Nafsika Papanikolatos, *Minorities: Sacrificial lamb at Greek Democracy's Silver Jubilee*, AIM Athens, 29 July 1999

The Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou is the first among the Greek political figures who clearly accepted the existence of a Turkish Minority in Western Thrace in 1999. In an interview for the Greek magazine, *Κλίκ*, he stated³⁷²:

It is probable for some to feel that they have a Turkish origin as others state that they are Pomaks or Romas. What is worth is that all of them to feel that they are Greek Citizens...No one contests that there are many Muslims of Turkish origin. Of course, treaties refer to Muslims. From time to time, the minority issues are related to territorial adjustments. If the borders are not disputed, I really don't care at all if one calls himself a Turk, Bulgarian or Pomak. The Balkans will be calm if we secure our borders parallel with protection of the rights of minorities. However, if the term 'Turkish Minority' is used by a country in order to create unrest, or change the borders, then this term definitely causes a big problem.

The initial reactions against the statement of Papandreou from the Greek political sphere were quite negative because it was a 'taboo' within the Greek political circles to mention for the existence of a Turkish minority in Western Thrace. While many leading Greek political figures called for his resignation there were also some voices calling him 'the Minister of Ecevit'. In spite of the criticisms, Papandreou had not retracted his remarks. In his response to these reactions, he stated that Greece had nothing to fear on the issue of ethnic identification of minorities living in Greece. Also, he added that he was glad that he was the pioneer for the beginning of a new fertile debate on the issue of ethnic identification of minorities living in Greece.³⁷³

For years, the Greek administrations have continuously rejected the existence of a Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. Therefore, such a bold statement from the Greek Foreign Minister could be interpreted as a signal for a plausible change in denying the ethnic identity of the Western Thracian Minority by the Greek administrations in the near future. Also, such a beginning for the plurality of ideas regarding the ethnic identity of the Muslim Turkish minority could be interpreted as

³⁷² George Papandreou, "Αν Δεν Είμουν Παπανδρέου Θα Δούλεβα σε Γκέτο Μάυρων" (If I was not Papandreou I Would Work in the Ghetto of Blacks), *Klik*, vol.148

³⁷³ Derek Gatopoulos, "Papandreou: Greece Has Nothing to Fear From Ethnic Minorities", *Athens News*, 01-08-1999. For more information about the statements of Papandreou and reactions against them from Greek politicians see *Minorities and Media in Greece*, A Report prepared by Minority Rights Group- Greece (MRG – G), May 2000, pp.3-4.

an important test of democracy in Greece and how far the Greek pluralism has evolved in recent years.³⁷⁴

It may be argued that since the statement of Papandreou, the number of those Greeks who accept the idea that a Turkish minority lives in Western Thrace has gradually been increasing.³⁷⁵ However, regarding the official stance of the Greek state against the ethnic identification of the minority the recent developments that I will refer now depict us that almost no development is observed in the acceptance of the ethnic identity of the Western Thracian minority by the Greek state. Before explaining the cases of denial of ethnic identity, I want to add that the usage of the term ‘Western Thrace’, indicating a geographical location, in the titles of the minority associations was also not favored by the Greek administrations. The most prominent case related with this issue is that in October 1998 the First Instance Court in Komotini refused the registration of the Association of Religious Clergymen of Western Thrace Holy Mosques on the basis that such a usage ‘could be interpreted as a malign and intentional challenge of the Greekness of the Thrace’.³⁷⁶ Here, it is useful to note that the associations bear the title ‘Western Thrace’, like the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association, have been officially recognized by the Greek state. Also, Western Thrace is used by some Greek scholars and journalists while referring to the minority as the ‘Muslim Minority of Western Thrace’. As a result of the trials since 1995, at last the necessary permission was given in 2005 by the Court of Appeals of Thrace for the registration of this association.³⁷⁷

4.7.1 The Cases of Xanthi Turkish Union and Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rhodopi

Contrary to the statements of George Papandreou, the recent dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union by the Greek Supreme Court (*Arios Pagos*) put the debates about the ethnic identification of the Western Thracian Minority once more to the

³⁷⁴ Kemal Kirisci, “The Enduring Rivalry between Greece and Turkey: Can ‘Democratic Peace’ Break it?” *Alternatives (Turkish Journal of International Relations)*, Vol.1, no.1, Spring 2002, p.4

³⁷⁵ F.Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (US: RAND, 2003) p.83

³⁷⁶ The court decision cited in Ortakovski, *op. cit.*, p.190

³⁷⁷ “Sonunda Adalet Tecelli Etti”, *Gündem*, 25 March 2005

forefront in the minority-state relations. While the Komotini Turkish Youth Union and the Union of Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace were banned as a result of the Greek High Court in 1987 the trial of the Xanthi Turkish Union continued until 2005. Before dealing with the final decision of the Greek High Court I want to give a brief history of the Union.

The Xanthi Turkish Union was established in 1927 as the “Home of Xanthi Turkish Youth” in the town of Xanthi. It was the first association of the Western Thracian minority. In 1936, it was renamed as Xanthi Turkish Union. There were even some Orthodox Greeks being members of this Union who participated in the activities of this union in the past.³⁷⁸ Starting from 1927 until 1983 Xanthi Turkish Union had operated without problems with the Greek administrations. But starting from 1983, the trials for the dissolution of the union had started and lasted until 2005. The trial of the Xanthi Turkish Union was reviewed by the Greek Supreme Court on 19 September 2003. When one looks to the press releases it was widely argued that the Court would decide in favor of the Minority members allowing to reoperate with its full name as Xanthi Turkish Union.³⁷⁹ About the possible verdict of the Greek Supreme Court, the Vice President of the ECHR, Christos Rozakis, had boldly argued that in case the Greek Supreme Court adopts a decision against the Turkish minority then the Lausanne Treaty is automatically considered under question and its terms should be reviewed.³⁸⁰

Considering the developments especially in economic and social fields in Western Thrace, it was largely felt by the Muslim Turks that the Supreme Court would not dissolve the Xanthi Turkish Union bearing the term ‘Turkish’ in its title in an age of democracy and human rights. However, their feelings had proven to

³⁷⁸ Yeorgi Konstantin, 196th member, Spiros Yanakopoulos, 32nd member and ve Mihal Penoglu, 328th member. Also, during the 1970-71 season, Hristos Tsagkalidis was playing football in the football team of this Union. These informations are available in the booklet about the history of this union. *History of Western Thrace Turkish Civil Societies-I: Xanthi Turkish Union, 1927-2003*, A booklet about the Xanthi Turkish Union prepared by Rıza Kırıldökme, Çetin Mandacı and Gökmen Sabrioglu, July 2003) pp.41,69

³⁷⁹ Catherine Boitard, “Greek Muslims Seek Turkish Identity”, *Agence France-Presse*, 2003 cited at www.greekhelsinki.gr. For Nikolaos Kasavetis, a member of the Greek High Court, the usage of the terms “Turkish Union” and “Western Thracian Turks” on the basis of self-determination is not against the Greek Law. *Ethnos*, 05 October 2003

³⁸⁰ “Το παζάρι της Θράκης” (The bazaar of Thrace), 17 November 2003, An article available at www.e-grammes.gr

become false. On 7 February 2005, the Greek High Court rejected the appeal of the members of the Union and decided its dissolution. The reason for the dissolution was based on the conclusion of the Public Prosecutor, Dimitrios Linos³⁸¹:

The union seeks quite openly to demonstrate the existence in Greece of a national Turkish minority, while the relevant agreements and treaties acknowledge only the existence on Greek soil of a Muslim religious minority... The use of the term Turkish in Greece means the recognition of minorities which are not defined by the Lausanne Treaty...According to article 8 of the union's founding legislation it is intended the promotion on Greek soil of the objectives of a foreign state, namely Turkey.

The decision of the High Court was like a psychological blow for the Muslim Turks most of whom were awaiting for a decision in favour of the Xanthi Turkish Union. Regarding the court decision, İlhan Ahmet, the only minority MP in today's Greek Parliament, mentioned that while the associations with the title 'Turk/Turkish' have been banned there are some other associations having ethnic identifications in their titles, such as the "Cultural and Educational Association of Armenians in Komotini" and "Association of Orthodox Armenians, Saint Grigorios", who have been functioning freely for years.³⁸²

Provided that all the local remedies are exhausted with the latest decision of the Greek High Court, as the next step, the necessary application was recently made for the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on 15 July 2005.³⁸³ Greece, in 1998, was sentenced at ECHR for not allowing the establishment of the 'Home of Macedonian Civilization' in the city of Florina. In its decision, the court stated that those Greek citizens who feel that they are a member of an ethnic minority they have every right to establish associations in order to protect the cultural and spiritual heritage based on the Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights that Greece signed in 1990.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ Dimitrios Linos quoted in *The Written Statement of İlhan Ahmet about the Dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union*, 21-02-2005 available at www.ilhanahmet.com

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ "İ.T.B Davası A.İ.H.Mahkemesi'nde", *Gündem*, 22-07-2005

³⁸⁴ "Κλείνει η Τουρκική Ένωση Ξάνθης" (The Xanthi Turkish Union is Closing), *Apogevmatini*, 14.1.2005, reprinted in *Eleftherotipia*, 22-01-2005.

Like the Union of Turkish Youth and the Union of Turkish Teachers of Komotini, it seems that in its 78 years of functioning Xanthi Turkish Union had never opted for policies and actions that would fragment the Greek public order and the unity of Greece. Considering the necessary reasons for the dissolution of Xanthi Turkish Union and the existence of other associations with ethnic identifications in their titles, it seems that almost all Muslim Turks think about the latest decision of the Greek High Court to be political.³⁸⁵ I want to finish the issue by the interpretation of İlhan Ahmet about the dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union:³⁸⁶

In Thrace the so widely used multiculturalism would never be applied in practice, in case associations of Armenians, of Greeks etc. function free but the members of the minority do not have the right to express and develop cultural activity through similar institutions, like the associations.

Besides the dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union, the case related with the establishment of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rhodopi is another recent example for the denial of ethnic identity by the Greek state. As a result of bearing the term ‘Turkish’ in its title it was not given necessary permission for the establishment of this union and the case of this association was trialed at the First Instance Court of Thrace resulting in the refusal of this appeal on 17 January 2003. On 28 January 2005, the decision for the establishment of this Association was discussed at the Greek Supreme Court but the final decision was reached on 1 April 2005 by which the necessary permission was not given for the establishment of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rhodopi. By this way, the Greek Supreme Court had given two verdicts against the association rights of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace. Provided that the members of this association had consumed all local remedies it is declared that that they will bring the case to the European Court of Human Rights.³⁸⁷

Evaluating the recent dissolutions of the two minority associations from a legal framework, it seems that the Paragraph 32.2 and 32.6 of the 1990 CSCE Copenhagen Document and the Article 11 of the European Convention on Human

³⁸⁵ Ibid. *Gündem*, 25-02-2005

³⁸⁶ Ibid. *The written statement of İlhan Ahmet about the dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union*, 21-02-2005, p.4

³⁸⁷ “Örgütlenme Özgürlüğüne bir Darbe daha..."TÜRK" İsmine Geçit Yok!”, *Gündem*, 15 April 2005

Rights which protect the association rights of the minorities in the participating countries is violated by the Greek state.³⁸⁸ Moreover, the Greek state had violated the Article 3.2 of the Framework Convention for Protection of Minorities of the Council of Europe and which protects the collective usage of the individual rights.³⁸⁹

The dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union and the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rhodopi became the most recent examples for the denial of ethnic identity of the Muslim Turkish minority. I think that the Lausanne Treaty may not refer to the ethnicity of the Western Thracian minority but this should not be interpreted as the Lausanne Treaty prevents the ethnic identification of the Minority. As it was stated in one of the Greek newspapers, the insistence that the Lausanne Treaty forbids the mentioning on the Turkish minority is out of reality. This treaty does not actually forbid the ethnic identification of the minority members and it lets open the door for self-identification on ethnic terms either individually or collectively.³⁹⁰

Moreover, I want to recall the statements of Christos Rozakis, one of the most prominent figures of the Greek Law and the current Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights³⁹¹:

Although the Lausanne Treaty refers generally to non-Muslims and Muslims as its protected subjects, it seems that the legislators aimed at the protection of, respectively, the Greeks living at the time in Turkey (mainly

³⁸⁸ The article 11 of the European Convention for Human Rights is as follows: Paragraph 1: Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. Paragraph 2: No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State. *The European Convention of Human Rights and its Five Protocols* available at www.hri.org

³⁸⁹ According to this article “Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention individually as well as in community with others”. Greece signed the Framework Convention on 22 September 1997, the ratification was announced for 1999 but until today it has not been ratified yet.

³⁹⁰ Ibid. “Κλείνει η Τουρκική Ένωση Ξάνθης”, (The Xanthi Turkish Union is Closing), *Eleftherotipia*, 22-01-2005.

³⁹¹ Christos L. Rozakis, “The international protection of minorities in Greece” in K. Featherstone and Kostas Ifantis, eds., *Greece in a Changing Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) p.100 and 103

Constantinople) and the Turks living in Western Thrace...Reference to the religious elements of these minorities did not automatically reduce them to religious minorities which deserved protection of their religion and only that...The complex elements of origin, religion and linguistic opinions, as well as of cultural and political ties make this minority an ethnic minority, and not solely a religious or linguistic one.

Once more, it can be argued that the Western Thracian minority is both an ethnic, religious and linguistic minority and the Lausanne Treaty does not prohibits the ethnic identification of the minorities living in Western Thrace and Istanbul.

4.7.2 The Dispute between the Right of Self and Collective Identification

Greece always calls for a Muslim Minority in Western Thrace because of the term used in the Lausanne Treaty and not officially recognizes the existence of a Turkish minority identity in Western Thrace. For Greece, a minority member has the right to individually identify himself as a Turk and this right for self-identification is protected under a number of international treaties that Greece signed.³⁹² But, in case of a group of minority members come together and collectively identify themselves as ‘Turks’ then this poses a challenge both to the unity of Greece and to the Greek nationhood.³⁹³

Such a prevention for collective identification by the Greek state seems to work against the Article 3 Paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Paragraph 32 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the CSCE and the Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities which stipulate that persons belonging to the minorities can exercise their rights both individually and collectively. It is also stressed that, when evaluated deeper, the right for self-determination is not an individual right but a collective right. It is the corporate unit or the collectivity that enjoys this right. The individual

³⁹² For example, Paragraph 32 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of OSCE and the General Recommendation 38 and 55 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ratified by Greece in 1970, signify the right of each person for self identification. UN-CERD Report on Greece, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination : Greece- 27/04/2001* available at www.unhchr.ch

³⁹³ Anna Triandafyllidou and Anna Paraskevalou, “When is the Greek Nation? The Role of Enemies and Minorities”, *Geopolitics*, Vol.7, No.2, Autumn 2002, p.93

has only the right to participate or not in the choice of the corporate unit but nothing more than that.³⁹⁴

In the era of globalization, the documents of the EU, UN and OSCE shows us that these organizations started to put more emphasis on the collective character of the individual minority rights that will work against the assimilation of minority groups preserving their own distinctive cultural, ethnic and religious characteristics. However, as it is stated, the dispute for collective identification in Western Thrace has not yet still overcome by the Greek administrations reminding us the practice of the 1967 junta years. In case more than three Greek citizens came together they were forcefully dissolved by the military forces on the basis that they could be organized against the Colonels regime.³⁹⁵

4.7.3 *The Issue of Pomaks*

I do not want to dwell analytically on the issue of the Pomaks living in Western Thrace. However, I think that a brief mention on the arguments about the ethnic identification of Pomaks will be more suitable while explaining the denial of ethnic identity in Western Thrace. Pomaks are a community who speak a language with a Bulgarian dialect composed of Greek, Turkish and Slavic words. At home, Turkish is their second language. The number of Pomaks has not officially been published since the 1951 census but it is estimated around 30.000, that is, one-fourth of the total population of the Western Thracian Minority. As one of the reasons for not including questions about the religious and linguistic preferences in the censuses since 1951 it might be asserted that Greece has tried to avoid discussions on issues concerning ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences in Greek society.³⁹⁶ Most of the Pomaks live in the mountainous regions of the Rhodopi and Xanthi prefectures close to the Greek-Bulgarian border line. Regarding the ethnic identification of Pomaks, there are three different arguments from three different countries, Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. It seems that the ethnic identification of Pomaks is such an issue that it

³⁹⁴ Vernon Van Dyke, "The Individual, The State and Ethnic Communities in Political Theory" in Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights Minority Cultures* (1995b), p.44

³⁹⁵ O Ios Tis Kyriakis, "Βόμβες στη Λογική" (Bombs in Logic), *Eleftherotipia*, 14 June 2001)

³⁹⁶ Ibid Rozakis "The international protection of minorities in Greece", in Kevin Featherstone and Kostas Ifantis, eds., *Greece in a Changing Europe* (1996) p.98

depends from which perspective you look.

For Bulgaria, Pomaks are ethnically Bulgarians. One of their points of relevance is the similarity between Bulgarian and Pomak language. According to the Bulgarian arguments of the Bulgarian historians and academics, ethnically Bulgarian Pomaks were formerly Christians but later they were forcefully Islamized. Sometimes, Pomaks in Bulgaria were even called as ‘Bulgaro-Muhammedans’.³⁹⁷

For Turkey, Pomaks are ethnically Turks. The settlement of the Turkish communities was before the domination of the Ottoman Empire. The Hun Turks in 4th century, the Avar Turks in the 5th century and the Kuman Turks in the 11th century settled in this region. They helped for the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan territories. Therefore, the term ‘Pomaga’ which means ‘a person who helps’ was used for the Kuman Turks by the Ottoman rulers.³⁹⁸

Greece argues that Pomaks are different from the Turks in ethnic terms and it is only the Islam religion that is the common denominator between the Turks and Pomaks. Considering the arguments of the Greek scholars, Pomaks are the descendents of the indigenous Thracian or Agrian community who were later Hellenized, Christianized and finally forcefully Islamized under the Ottoman Empire.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Ulf Brunbauer, “The Perception of Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece: Between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ ”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.21, No.1, 2001, pp.44-46) For more information about the Bulgarian arguments of Pomaks see Tsvetana Georgieva, “Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol.12, No.3, July 2001, pp.303-316. and Mary Neuburger, “Pomak Borderlands: Muslims on the Edge of Nations”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.1, 2000, pp.181-198.

³⁹⁸ Ahmet Aydın, *Batı Trakya Faciasının İcyüzü* (İstanbul: Akın Yayınları, 1971) p.37. See also Baskın Oran, *Türk- Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1991) pp.134-142 and Cengiz Ömer, “Pomaklar Öz be Öz Türktür”, *Mihenk*, Vol.26, December 2004

³⁹⁹ Troumbeta, *op. cit.*, pp.83-87. Also, see F. Asimakopoulou, “*Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Θράκης*” in Asimakopoulou and Christidou-Lionaraki, *op. cit.*, pp.280-295. Moreover, in his Ph. D. Thesis submitted in 1971, Xiriotti tries to show that the Pomaks also have kinship relations with the Greeks by focusing on the similarities of the Greek blood and the Pomak blood. N.I. Xiriotti, Findings on the Classification of the Frequency of Blood Groups Among Pomaks, Aristotle University-Thessalonica, 1971 quoted in Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Gray Wolf and Crescent* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997) p.296 Footnote 28. About this study of Xiriotti, Demetriou argues that it seemed to mark a turn in the Greek policy of Pomaks in the way that the Greek state changed its policy from denial of the Pomak identity to acceptance of a Pomak identity as a sub-category of Greekness. Olga Demetriou, “Prioritizing ‘Ethnicities’: The Uncertainty of Pomak-ness in the Urban Greek Rhodoppe”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.27, No.1, January 2004, p.106. Other than kinship relations, Hidroglou focuses on some similarities in the words that is used in the Pomak and the old-

Furthermore, one of the widely-accepted arguments among the Greek academic circles is the issue of the ‘Turkification’ of Pomaks. For them, in 1940s, the main threat for Greece was accepted to be the Soviet Communism, the threat from the North. And, the Pomaks were accepted by Athens as the potential allies of Bulgaria due to their linguistic resemblance and due to plausible threats of the Bulgarians on these people who were geographically too close to the Greco-Bulgarian border. Thus, the Greek state started to put more significance on the Turkish character of the Pomaks. It is for this reason that a number of scholars agree on the issue that Greece itself made the Pomaks feel themselves more Turk.⁴⁰⁰

However, starting from 1970s and especially in 1980s Greece has put a great significance on the cultural and linguistic differences of the Pomak community. And, in the 1991, Greece officially declared the existence of a Pomak community within the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace. Since then, one can see the efforts of the Greek scholars and politicians putting a great significance on the Pomaks accepting them ethnically different from that of Turks and Romas. Then, it is not a coincidence to see that from 1990s onwards a number of books and articles have been published about the Pomaks, their culture and traditions that have been reflected to be different from that of Turkish.

In addition to the books and articles about the Pomaks, the different linguistic character started to be signified by the Greek authorities in mid 1990s. The first attempt about the written character of Pomak language was headed by the 4th Army Corps, based in Xanthi. In 1996, a group composed of the soldiers of the 4th Army, three Pomak soldiers, some Greek philologists and graduates of the EPATH prepared two dictionaries, Greek-Pomak and Pomak-Greek. Besides, in 1997, a grammar book related with the Pomak language was edited by Rıdvan Karahoca, a member of the group that prepared the two dictionaries in the previous year.⁴⁰¹

Greek languages. Paul Hidroglou, *The Greek Pomaks and Their Relations with Turkey* (Athens: Proskinio Editions, 1991) pp.24-27

⁴⁰⁰ Ronald Meinardus, “Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies” in Richard Clogg, *op. cit.*, p.88. See also, Poulton and Taji-Farouki, *op. cit.*, p.85

⁴⁰¹ *Migration, Tradition and Transition Among the Pomaks in Xanthi (Western Thrace)*. A Symposium Paper of Michail Domna prepared for the LSE PhD Symposium on Social Science Research on Greece, 21 June 2003, p.4

Regarding the overall ethnic identification of the Western Thracian Minority I think that rather than debating on their ethnic identity it is more important how the Pomaks feel and identify themselves. Maaloof tells that “my identity is what makes me not to be identical with anybody else.”⁴⁰² Today, with some exceptions who identify themselves as Greek Muslims, it seems that almost all of Pomaks continue to identify themselves as Turks and Muslims. Also, one can see intermarriages between the Pomaks and Turks.⁴⁰³ If Pomaks had been culturally and ethnically different from Turks, then intermarriages would have been very difficult between Pomaks and Turks.

The ethnic identity of Pomaks with that of Turkish became quite blatant during the 29 January 1988 protest. A significant number of the Pomaks living especially in the mountainous region of the Xanthi Prefecture joined together with the Turks and Romas and protested the famous decision of the Greek Supreme Court which refused the existence of a ‘Turkish’ minority of Western Thrace. Such a single and united voice of the Minority in 1988 can be interpreted as a manifestation of the cohesion and unity within the Minority rather than a division in three different ethnic communities as Mitsotakis officially declared in May 1991. Time shows us that since the beginning of 1970s the policies of Greece to differentiate Pomaks and Romas from Turks by signifying their ethnic differences have proven to be a failure.⁴⁰⁴ Such a division of the minority has been widely rejected by the majority of the Western Thracian Muslim Turks. As different reports about the Western Thracian minority point out, the Pomaks and Romas continue to identify themselves as Turk.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Amin Maaloof, *Φονικές Ταυτότητες* (Lethal Identities) quoted in Mina Maheropoulou, *Μπροστά στον Καθρέφτη* (*In front of the Mirror*) (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2004) p.29. To add, this recently published book of Maheropoulou is the first book composed of a series of conversations between six members of the Muslim Turkish minority discussing the issues in Western Thrace.

⁴⁰³ Hugh Poulton, “Ethnic Turks and Muslims in the Balkans and Cyprus: Turkey as a ‘kin-state’ in the Eastern Mediterranean” in Richard Gillespie, ed., *Mediterranean Politics-Vol.2* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1996) p.112

⁴⁰⁴ Poulton, “Turkey as a Kin-State” in Poulton and Taji-Farouki, *op. cit.*, p.205

⁴⁰⁵ US Country Reports, Greece, 2002, p.12 See also HRW Report, 1999, pp. 9-10. On this issue, Poulton adds that the younger Pomaks, today, identify themselves more with the Turkish identity than their parents did in the past. Hugh Poulton, “Changing Notions of National Identity among Muslims” in Poulton and Taji-Farouki, *op. cit.*, p.90

4.8 The Religious Problems

Other than the problems about the denial of ethnic identity, the problems related with the Islam religion and its practices have been one of the main controversial issues regarding the relations of the Muslim Turkish minority with the Greek state. Despite the minority members have been practicing their religious duties freely at their mosques, some religious problems like the election of muftis and the administration of the pious endowments have not been solved yet.

4.8.1 The Dispute over the 'Elected' and 'Appointed' Muftis

The dispute over the appointed muftis have continued since the appointment of the muftis in Komotini, Xanthi and Didimotihon based on the Law No.1920 adopted on 24 December 1990 which removes the right of the Muslim Turkish Minority to elect its own muftis and grants this right to the Greek state. For judicial cases, Muslim Turks can apply either to the Greek Courts or to the appointed Muftis. The Greek courts decide according to the Greek laws while the mufti applies for the Islam (*Sheria*) Law.

Today, there are two *muftis* in each city, one appointed and one elected. Such a dual existence has not been accepted by the Greek state which resulted in prosecuting the elected *muftis* for usurping authority by using the title of the appointed muftis while presenting themselves as mufti by writing “Mufti’s office of Xanthi or Komotini” at the beginning of their messages. From 1994 until 1997 both Ibrahim Serif and Mehmet Emin Aga were sentenced with a number of imprisonments by different courts but most of their cases were appealed.⁴⁰⁶

As a result of these appeals, in 1997, Serif applied for the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) while Aga applied to the ECHR in 1999. On 14 December 1999, in the case of Serif versus Greece⁴⁰⁷ and on 17 October 2002 in the case of

⁴⁰⁶ For more information about their trials see HRW Report, 1999, p.17. Besides, for a detailed information about the nine cases of Aga and the court verdicts see *The Dossier of the Prosecution of the Mehmet Emin Aga* prepared by Amnesty International and cited in *Minority Rights in Greece, A Report Prepared by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Greek Helsinki Monitor(GHM)*, 18 September 1999, pp.31-33 available at www.greekhelsinki.gr

⁴⁰⁷ The decision of the ECHR available at www.echr.coe.int/eng/press/1999/dec/serif_jud_epresse.htm

Aga versus Greece⁴⁰⁸ the Court concluded that Greece had violated the Article 9 of ECHR, which enshrines the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Also, dealing with the case of Aga, Amnesty International asserts that sending leaflets with religious messages to the Muslim Turks of Xanthi, Mehmet Emin Aga is exercising his right to freedom of expression guaranteed by international instruments which Greece has ratified and is therefore bound to observe.⁴⁰⁹ By sentencing Mehmet Emin Aga and Ibrahim Serif with the terms of imprisonment solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of religion and expression ECHR found Greece acting in violation of its obligations under international treaties.

Recently, during the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Western Thrace on 8 May 2004, the dispute between the elected and appointed muftis once more came to the forefront. During his visit, Erdoğan refused to meet with the muftis appointed by the Greek state. He rather met with the elected muftis, İbrahim Serif and Mehmet Emin Aga. However, in order not to create a friction with the Greek government, Erdoğan sent the Minister responsible from Religious Affairs, Mehmet Aydın, to meet with the appointed muftis in the dinner organized for the honour of the Turkish president. Thus, the debate over the elected and appointed muftis had not resulted in a troublesome situation that was likely to overshadow the visit of Erdoğan.

4.8.2 The Control of the Pious Endowments (Wakfs)

Since 1970s, the pious endowments of the Muslim Turkish Minority have been governed with the officials and board members appointed by the Junta regime or by the ones appointed by the Greek administration. Today, most of the Muslim Turks do not recognize these appointed officials of the pious endowments and they want to elect their officials, which is one of their rights protected under Article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty. As a result of refusing the appointed officials of the wakfs, many of the foundations' revenues have not been collected. Also, it is argued that the

⁴⁰⁸ The decision of the ECHR available at www.echr.coe.int/eng/press/2002/oct/aggano.2judepress.htm.

⁴⁰⁹ *Greece: Possible Adoption of Mehmet Emin Aga as Prisoner of Conscience*, Public Statement, 24 February 1998, Amnesty International, available at <http://web.amnesty.org>

executive board officials have used these endowments for their own personal benefits and intentionally neglected the restoration and renovation of the endowments' historical properties as a result of which they have been either worn off physically and devalued or even collapsed.⁴¹⁰

In addition to the problems with the wakf officials, according to the law that started to be implemented in 1999, all the property holders have to register all of their properties. In case of a non-documented property the Greek state has the right to seize that property. But, the properties of wakfs date back in the 16th century and the files of these endowments were destructed during the two World Wars. Thus, today, a wakf cannot officially document its ownership on all of its properties. However, in spite of the existence of such a law, the Greek state has not officially enforced the registration requirement for the pious endowments of the Muslim Turks until today.⁴¹¹

As a result of strict and direct control of the Greek administrations on the wakfs, it seems that the issue of these endowments is a 'closed box'. Other than some officials, almost nobody in Western Thrace knows about the recent situation of the wakf properties and there is an unwillingness in the Greek administrative mechanisms to open debates on the issue of the pious endowments in Western Thrace. In spite of the change in the minority policy of Greece in the beginning of 1990s, the Greek state has not yet depicted the necessary concern to solve the problems regarding the administration of the pious endowments. Quite the contrary, it has continuously extended the duties of the officials in the executive boards of these endowments or nominated others in case of a death of a board member.⁴¹²

4.8.3 *The Repair of Mosques*

Today, there are about 300 mosques functioning in Western Thrace. In each mosque, one *imam* and one *müezzin* is employed whose wages are paid by the people

⁴¹⁰ *Muslim Charitable Foundations in Greece: "Disregarding Turkish Heritage"*. A Draft Paper of the BTYTD (University Graduates' Association of Western Thrace), January 2004, p.1

⁴¹¹ *US Country Reports on Human Rights Practises*, Greece, 2000, p.6

⁴¹² For example, when Şevket Hamdi, the chairman of the Xanthi Wakf Committee for 28 unabated years, died the Secretary General of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Mihalis Aggelopoulos appointed a new chairman based on Law 1091/1980 on 10 January 2005. *Outstanding Issues Affecting the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace*, *op. cit.*, p.6

of the village. Besides, some of the mosques have their own properties like lands or shops with which the some economic needs of the mosques are met. The Article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty grants the Muslims of Western Thrace to have an equal right to establish, manage, and control at their own expense, any religious institution. However, since the Metaxas Regime, in order to establish or repair a mosque it is needed to take the necessary permission from the local Orthodox Greek bishops who have the right to object to the opening of non-Orthodox places of worship within their regions.⁴¹³

In the pre-1990 period, it was very hard for the minority members to get necessary permissions to build or repair their mosques. However, since 1992, there has been an improvement in this realm. Today, it is an easier task to apply for and get permits from the Greek administrative units including the Church. In spite of these developments, sometimes different kinds of bureaucratic obstacles have been put forward that prolonged the procedure for the attainment of the building or repairing permits of mosques. A recent example that depicts one of the bureaucratic obstacles by the Greek administrations is the repairing process of the Kimmeria (*Koyunköy*) Mosque.

On 19 April 1995, the Kimmeria Wakf Commission had submitted for an annex to Kimmeria mosque for extension of its ground floor and minaret and in September 1996, the Xanthi Urban Planning Directorate (UPD) issued the building license for the mosque extension. But, immediately after the granting of license, some ultra-nationalists and local media organs started to criticize the height of the minaret. Shortly thereafter, the UPD ordered a work stoppage because it decided that a “technical soil study” had been necessary. Meanwhile, twenty-three individuals were arrested by police for ‘arbitrary construction’ in December 1996 and the *imam* of this mosque was sentenced to eight months, whereas seventeen workers were each given 35-day prison sentences. However, both the *imam* and the workers were released on appeal. Eventually in mid-1997, the state allowed the completion of the works upon an oral directive but did not allow the building of the minaret to the desired height. The act underscores the political nature of the stop order, as no

⁴¹³ John Anderson, “The Treatment of Religious Minorities in South-Eastern Europe: Greece and Bulgaria Compared”, *Religion, State and Society*, Vol.30, No.1, 2002, p.12

mention was made in the oral directive about ‘technical soil study.’⁴¹⁴ In 2002, the minaret of the Kimmeria Mosque was completed and the mosque was opened for religious practices. Besides, in the post-1990 period, newly-built mosques as well as the repaired ones are opened for the religious practices of the Muslim Turkish minority.

As in the case of the Kimmeria mosque, the height of the minaret has always been a concern for the Greek authorities while giving the necessary permission for the establishment of the mosques. Being one of the state institutions that grants the necessary permission for establishing or repairing mosques, the local church considers that the height of the minaret, which symbolizes the existence of a mosque and a Muslim minority living in the region, should not be above than the height of the bell tower of the church in the same region. One of the recent examples regarding the debate over the height of the minaret was an organization of the Komotini bishop on 8 January 1997 aiming to protest the height of the Peleketi (*Bekirli*) mosque (16 meters) being 4 meters taller than the bell tower in the neighboring village, Amaxades.⁴¹⁵ Although the Metropolitan Bishop of the local Greek Church initially gave the building license for a 16-meter minaret and the minaret started to be built, he demanded for a decrease in the height of the minaret to 12 meters.⁴¹⁶

Here, we can see two realities of Western Thrace. Firstly, the local Greek Church continues to play decisive roles in the issues of the Muslim Turkish minority. And, from time to time, it continues to give political decisions as that of regarding the minaret of the Peleketi mosque. Secondly, once more we can see that although the Muslim Turks can freely make their religious practices in their mosques, they can sometimes come across with bureaucratic obstacles while trying to build new mosques or repair the existing ones.

⁴¹⁴ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, pp.26-27. For more information about the process of the repairing the Kimmeria mosque see *Religious Freedom in Greece: A Report Prepared by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Greek Helsinki Monitor(GHM)*, September 2002, pp.48-51 available at www.greekhelsinki.gr

⁴¹⁵ *Religious Freedom in Greece*, September 2002, *op. cit.*, p.51

⁴¹⁶ Manolis Kottakis, *Θράκη: Η Μειονότητα Σήμερα (Thrace: The Minority Today)* (Athens: Livani-Nea Synora, 2000) p.186

4.9 Problems in the Field of Education

Education is the key for the economic, political and social development of a community. It is possibly for this reason that the problems in the Minority education have always been one of the highly criticized issues in the minority policy of Greece. In each phase of education, the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace have come across with different problems in different time periods. Greece has always been highly criticized internationally for giving a low standard of education for the minority pupils in Western Thrace. Even today, in spite of developments in other socio-economic fields, the educational problems in Western Thrace still continue.

I think that among the problems of the minority in both pre and post-1990 period, the educational problems are in the first rank mainly because education determines the future of the minority. The more the minority is developed in educational terms the more it can struggle for regaining its rights stemming from the treaties that Greece signed and in the end the better the living conditions for the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace. I think that this argument will become clearer after taking into the consideration the problems in the field of minority education on which I will dwell now.

4.9.1 The Pre-School and Primary Education

Before dwelling on the primary education, I want to mention briefly the situation in pre-schools/kindergartens. The pre-school education of the minority pupils was not available before 1990s. However, by the year 2000, almost 300 minority children attended to these schools where the education is in Greek.⁴¹⁷ The number of attendants might be limited. One of the reasons for not letting their children to these kindergartens is the suspicion of some parents about the contact of their children with those of Orthodox Greeks in a Greek-speaking and Christian environment might threaten the identity formations of their children.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, some of the pupils with a slight Greek knowledge cannot continue to their education at these schools because they are born in families where Turkish is spoken. As for

⁴¹⁷ G. Mavrommatis and K. Tsitselikis, *The Turkish language in Education in Greece*, Mercator-Education (Leeuwarden- The Netherlands, 2003) available at www.mercator-education.org

⁴¹⁸Ibid.

another reason, the relation between language and culture should be taken into account.

Language is one of the basic means for a pupil to learn his/her culture. Therefore, a minority pupil with the Turkish mother tongue cannot start to learn the Turkish culture in the existing pre-schools where education is in Greek. The education of minority pupils in their mother tongue during the pre-school and primary school provides them to learn their own culture. Therefore, it is emphasized that education in pre-schools to ought to be given in the mother tongue of the Minority, Turkish.⁴¹⁹ However, today, there are not kindergartens, either private or public, that will give the basic education to the minority pupils in Turkish.

Besides the public pre-schools, there are almost 223 minority primary schools in Western Thrace. According to the datas of the Greek Foreign Ministry, the number of the Muslim teachers employed in the minority schools is 440. More than half of them, 260 teachers are graduates of EPATH, 82 teachers are graduates of the secondary education schools i.e. Gymnasiums and Koranic Schools and 90 teachers are graduates of Turkish schools and nine teachers are Turkish nationals coming from Turkey for a temporary period in order to teach in the two minority secondary and high schools.⁴²⁰ In every minority primary school, the Principal is a Muslim Turk and the Vice-Principal is an Orthodox Greek. There are at least one Muslim Turkish and one Orthodox Greek teacher in each of these schools where half of the lessons are thought in Turkish by the former and half of them in Greek by the latter. Before 1990s, the minority students were not enrolled in the Greek minority schools. However, today, the students can go either to the bilingual minority primary schools or to the monolingual Greek primary schools.

Starting from 1970s, the number of the minority students in the primary schools has been gradually decreased. This can be seen from the statistical datas of the Ministry of Education in the figures below.

⁴¹⁹ “Azınlık Eğitimi’nin Sorunları”, An Interview with Cahit Aliosman, the President of the Union of Turkish Teachers of Komotini, *Mihenik*, October-November- December 2000, Vol.2

⁴²⁰ *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace*, A Report prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hellenic Republic. Available at www.mfa.gr/foreign/musminen.htm. To note, this web address is not accessible today.

Table 5: Number of Students in Minority Primary and Secondary Schools

Pupils in minority primary schools in Thrace 1960-2003							
School year	No. of pupils	School year	No. of pupils	School Year	No. of pupils	School year	No. of pupils
1960-61	11,268	1971-72	15,237	1982-83	11,633	1993-94	8,665
1961-62	11,399	1972-73	14,966	1983-84	11,495	1994-95	8,627
1962-63	11,880	1973-74	14,754	1984-85	11,295	1995-96	8,359
1963-64	12,165	1974-75	13,978	1985-86	10,965	1996-97	8,062
1964-65	13,040	1975-76	13,461	1986-87	10,474	1997-98	7,561
1965-66	13,646	1976-77	13,191	1987-88	10,328	1998-99	7,200
1966-67	14,276	1977-78	13,101	1988-89	9,931	1999-2000	7,046
1967-68	14,922	1978-79	12,885	1989-90	9,468	2000-01	7,107
1968-69	16,078	1979-80	12,500	1990-91	9,829	2001-02	6,842
1969-70	15,945	1980-81	12,307	1991-92	9,344	2002-03	6,694
1970-71	15,637	1981-82	12,085	1992-93	9,090		

Source: Ministry of Education

Pupils in minority secondary education in Thrace (1990-2003)

Ierospoudastiria		Minority secondary schools	
School year	Number of pupils	School year	Number of pupils
1990-91	165	1990-91	318
1991-92	175	1991-92	336
1992-93	183	1992-93	333
1993-94	176	1993-94	367
1994-95	193	1994-95	364
1995-96	207	1995-96	417
1996-97	298	1996-97	562
1997-98	95	1997-98	646
1998-99	230	1998-99	740
1999-2000	241	1999-2000	812
2000-01	260	2000-01	905
2001-02	250	2001-02	909
2002-03	240	2002-03	925

Source: G. Mavrommatis and K. Tsitselikis, *The Turkish Language in Education in Greece*, Mercator-Education, Leeuwarden- The Netherlands, 2003 available at www.mercator-education.org p.26

Regarding this continuous decline, it was argued that one of the reasons for such a decrease is the issues of modernization and urbanization of the Muslim Turks. As the members of the Minority became modernized and preferred to live in cities or

in urban centers they started to have fewer children.⁴²¹ In the past, the Muslim Turks preferred to make more children mainly because as they were an agrarian community the great number of children implied potential farmers to work on agricultural farms.⁴²² However, today, the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace do not prefer to make so many children.

Here, I think that rather than urbanization the issue of modernization plays a greater role mainly because still a great number of the Muslim Turkish minority live in villages, cultivating lands and working as farmers. These farmers who continue to live in their villages seem quite modernized. They live a modern life. They have easy access to technology and they follow the patterns of modernization. As a reflection of modernization, today's agrarian majority of the Muslim Turks prefer to make one or two children unlike the prior agrarian communities of Western Thrace. Here, we should not ignore the effect of the increasing costs for raising children. In the past, it was not such a costly procedure to raise a child. But, today, it is much harder and costly for parents to raise three or four children and to prepare them a good future. Furthermore, I think that another reason for the decline especially until mid 1990 is the increase in the number of immigrants and those people whose Greek citizenships were deprived under the application of Article 19.

Besides the continuous decline in the number of the pupils attending the minority primary schools, in a ten-year period between 1985 and 1995 the number of those who could not finish the minority primary schools was %23.5. That seems quite high compared with the ratio of the Greek primary school dropout rate being %1.2.⁴²³ The dropout rate in the minority primary schools today seems to decrease but it is still higher than that of in the Greek minority schools.

⁴²¹ Ibid. p.36 Footnote 2

⁴²² Here, when I refer to the past I mean the period before the 1967 military regime. The attitude of the Muslim Turks to have fewer children was not so different in 1970s. As Özgüç notes, because of the restrictive policies of the Greek state the Muslim Turks were hopeless in providing a good future for their children. Therefore, the Muslim Turks had not preferred to make more than three children and the birth rates were continuously decreasing in 1970s. Adil Özgüç, *Batı Trakya Türkleri* (İstanbul: Kutluğ Yayınları, 1974) p.64

⁴²³ Ibid. pp.13-14

4.9.2 The EPATH Teachers

In addition to the gradual decrease in the number of pupils attending for the minority primary schools the problem regarding with the EPATH teachers continue to be one of the most significant reasons for the low education standards in the minority primary schools. As a result of the continuous appointment of the Greek state since mid-1970s, the number of the EPATH teachers in the minority primary schools has gradually increased while the number of the teachers graduated from the education schools of Turkey has continuously decreased. By the year 2000, the number of the EPATH graduates in the minority primary schools was 260 and there were only 90 teachers being graduates from the Turkish education schools.⁴²⁴ Furthermore, ECRI notes that in addition to the low education standards in the minority primary schools, the EPATH teachers are, also, not adequately trained to teach either in Turkish and Greek.⁴²⁵

In spite of their limited Turkish knowledge, the EPATH teachers continue to teach courses in Turkish. Their problem in the Turkish language once more came to the forefront with the introduction of the newly-accepted Turkish textbooks in 2000. Before, one of the most significant problems of the minority education was torn-out and outdated books. However, starting from 2000, there has been a great lack of teachers that will teach these new textbooks because it is very hard for a teacher graduated from Koranic Schools/*Medreses* and later from EPATH with insufficient Turkish language⁴²⁶ to teach these books to the students in the minority primary schools.⁴²⁷ Considering that more than half of the teachers in the minority schools are EPATH graduates, whose numbers have been gradually increasing and most of whom are highly criticized by the Muslim Turks, it seems that the significant drawbacks in the field of the primary minority education is likely to continue in the near future.

⁴²⁴ *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace*, The Report of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic.

⁴²⁵ *Τρίτη Εκθεση για την Ελλάδα* (Third Report on Greece), *op. cit.*, 2004, p.27

⁴²⁶ In both *medreses* and EPATH almost all courses are taught in Greek. Therefore, the EPATH graduates have difficulties in teaching courses in Turkish.

⁴²⁷ Ali Hüseyin and Nurgül Bostan, “Batı Trakya’nın Değişen Yüzü, *Stratejik Analiz*, Vo.51, July 2004, p.68

4.9.3 Textbooks

The debate between Greece and Turkey on textbooks had continued for years. During the Mitsotakis visit of Western Thrace, in 1991, it was promised that in case Turkey did not send the books acceptable by the Greek state, Greece would print the necessary Turkish textbooks for the education of the minority children. Turkey submitted the Turkish textbooks in 1992 but they were not claimed to be good enough to cover the educational needs of the Muslim Turkish minority. Consequently, as the debate over the textbooks continued between Greece and Turkey, a group of Greek academicians and teachers headed by Zenginidis was formed in order to write new textbooks that would replace the old and torn-out textbooks which dated back to 1950s. In the end, the first textbook was published and distributed in minority primary schools in 1992.

However, reactions came from the minority most of whom were against such an attempt that was contrary to the 1968 Educational Protocol signed between Greece and Turkey. One of the most prominent protests of this decision was that a committee of 51 people, largely made up of the prominent figures of the Muslim Turkish Minority, went to the Athens in order to return these newly-published books back to the Ministry of Education. At this visit, the independent MPs of the minority asked the ministry to withdraw the books prepared by the team of Zenginidis because they had not been approved by the Turkish Foreign Ministry. However, the vice minister of Education V. Polidoras stated that books had very good educational quality and their aim of being distributed was the improvement of the minority education.⁴²⁸ Besides the visit to Athens, abstentions from the minority primary schools were organized as a sign of protesting the distribution of these textbooks. The debate over textbooks was resolved in 1999 when the Greek state, after the evaluation of the Greek Pedagogical Institute, accepted the nineteen new textbooks published in Turkey to be distributed to the students in the minority primary schools.⁴²⁹ The new textbooks arrived in Western Thrace in December 1999 and were distributed in February 2000.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Aarbakke, *op. cit.*, p.541

⁴²⁹ “19 Türkçe Ders Kitabına Atina’dan ‘Evet’ ”, *Gündem*, 2 November 1999. See also, N. Marakis, “Τι πραγματικά έχει αλλάξει στην πολιτική για τη μειονότητα” (What has really changed in the politics for the minority), *To Vima*, 08 August 1999.

Besides new Turkish textbooks, by the year 2000, new Greek textbooks for the minority students started to be published by the *O.E.D.B* (Organization for the Publishing of Textbooks). Before, the textbooks of the minority pupils were the same with those of the majority Orthodox Greek students.⁴³¹ It was not easy for the minority students to use these books whose mother tongue was Turkish and tried to learn Greek as a second language. Starting from the new millennium, specially-prepared new textbooks started to be printed and distributed in the minority primary schools. In both cases of distribution of Greek and Turkish textbooks, it can be argued that the Greek state made a significant step for the enhancement in the education of the minority pupils. However, when one considers the overall picture of the minority education, it seems that this step has not proven to be sufficient for the development of the minority education in Western Thrace.

4.9.4 Secondary Education

After their primary education, the minority pupils can choose to go either to the minority secondary and high schools, Celal Bayar in Komotini and Muzaffer Salihoğlu in Xanthi, or to the Greek secondary and high schools or to the two Koranic schools. According to the 2001 US Report on Greece, the number of the Minority children attending to the minority primary schools was over 8.000. In the secondary education, there were 150 minority students in the two Koranic schools, approximately 700 in the two minority secondary schools and approximately 1300 in the Greek secondary schools.⁴³²

Regarding the two minority secondary and high schools, their capacity is not enough to accept all the minority pupils' applications. Consequently, even today, students for these two schools are chosen with a lottery system. However, figures depict us that compared to the past, more pupil have been recently enrolling in these

⁴³⁰ "Türkçe Ders Kitapları Dağıtıldı", *Öğretmenin Sesi*, February 2000, Vol.19

⁴³¹ These textbooks were highly criticized to include negative explanations towards the 'other' in Greek-Turkish relations. For more information about the significance of 'other' in relations between Greece and Turkey and its reflections in the Greek and Turkish schoolbooks see Iraklis Millas, *Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων (Pictures of Greeks and Turks)* (Athens: Aleksandria, 2001)

⁴³² *US Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, 2001, Greece, p.6

schools as a result of the increase in the capacity.⁴³³ Before, most of the students suffered from the lottery system but today a great number of the students applied for these two schools are accepted mainly due. But, the lottery system, which seems quite primitive for a community living in the age of modernity, still continues. Furthermore, compulsory education in Greek schools is nine years. However, this is not applied in the minority schools that results in a high dropout rate of the Minority pupils.

Also, as another reflection about the change in the minority policy of Greece, for the first time in 2001, the teachers coming from Turkey were given the necessary permission by the Nomarchs of the two prefectures in time by which those teachers started to teach their courses at the same time with all other teachers of these two schools.⁴³⁴ This development may not seem so significant. However, when one compares the period in which the Turkish teachers were given the permissions only two or three months before the end of the second semester then it seems that something has started to change in the attitude of the Greek state towards the education of the minority pupils.

Related with the two Koranic schools one in Komotini and one in Ehinis, the Law 2621/1998 enabled the recognition of these schools as equivalent to the high schools of Greece. In 1999, the curriculum of these religious schools was set by the decision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (G2/5560) in 1999.⁴³⁵ Since then, all the courses except Turkish, Arabic and the Religion are taught in Greek. Moreover, starting from 2000 girls are also accepted to these Koranic Schools. Today, most of the minority children applied for the EPATH are the graduates from these schools. In the post-1990 period, the criticisms against these

⁴³³ Galip Galip told that he played a significant role for the establishment of new classrooms for the Celal Bayar School by which more students started to be enrolled in the education at this school. My Interview with Galip Galip, on 9 February 2005 in Komotini. Also, with the establishment of these new classrooms, it was noted that in 2002, Celal Bayar School was functioning with 10 classrooms and 300 pupils. *Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı Eğitiminin Dünü ve Bugünü Paneli Bildirisi, 30 May 1998, Komotini*, Batı Trakya Yüksek Tahsilililer Derneği, p.35 As for the Iskece Muzaffer Salihoglu High School, new buildings has not been built but the capacity of the classrooms have been increased too.

⁴³⁴ Cihat Özönder, “Batı Trakya’daki Yunan Politikası” in *Balkanlardaki Türk Kültürünün Dünü-Bugünü-Yarını, Uluslararası Sempozyum* (26-28 Ekim 2001) (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2002) p.235

⁴³⁵ Mavrommatis and Tsitselikis, *op. cit.*, p.12

schools by the members of the minority have not stopped. It is widely agreed among the Muslim Turkish minority that these Koranic schools that were set up aiming to supply clergymen for the Muslim Turkish community turned into institutions providing the necessary applicants for the EPATH.⁴³⁶

4.9.5 The Higher Education and the Minority Quota System

One of the revolutionary developments within the realm of minority education is the introduction of the quota system. In 1996, for the first time a special minority quota of %0.5 was introduced which facilitated the entrance of the minority students into the Greek universities. All Greek universities started to set aside places for the minority students. By the introduction of the quota system, the entrance to the Greek universities became much easier than before for the minority students as the minority students started to compete only among themselves but not with all the other Orthodox Greek university candidates. In the first year of the quota system, only 74 minority students entered to the Greek universities while this number increased to 114 out of 334 available places in 1998.⁴³⁷ Also, during the 2000-2001 term there were 400 available spaces but only 35 Muslim students entered universities and technical institutes.⁴³⁸

Here, I want to note that some of the Muslim Turkish students, especially in their first university years, come across with great difficulties in catching up their Orthodox Greek counterparts who have taken a better-quality education and whose level of knowledge is higher than those of the minority students. It seems that it is easier for the minority students to enter into the Greek universities than graduating from these universities. But, in spite of these difficulties and some reactions from the

⁴³⁶ “Azınlık Eğitimi ve Medreseler”, An Interview with Asım Çavuşoğlu, The President of the Muslim Teachers Association of Medrese Graduates.(MMMMC), *Mihenk*, October-November-December 2000, Vol.2. See also, Hasan Paçaman, *Batı Trakya Bu!* (Komotini: Hakka Davet Yayınları, 1999) p.108

⁴³⁷ HRW Report, *op. cit.*, 1999, p.9

⁴³⁸ 2001 *US Country Reports on Human Rights Practises*, *op. cit.*, p.7

Greeks regarding the application of the quota system as ‘unjust’⁴³⁹ today there are more than 1000 minority students at the Greek universities.

4.9.6 The Introduction of Special Programs for the Muslim Turkish Students

In the post-1990 period, the Greek state started to put more attention on the special needs of the minority and started to introduce new special programs, co-sponsored by the EU, in order to develop the existing low standards of education of the Muslim Turkish students in their primary and secondary education. Although such a need for special programs had continuously been repeated both by the prominent figures of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace and by the MPs of the minority the Greek state introduced new educational programs for the minority in the post-1990 period especially as a result of the pressures coming from the EU.

The first program was the “Program of the Education of Muslim Children” designed by the Special Secretariat for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Multicultural Education of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in collaboration with the with the faculty staff of the University of Athens, headed by Anna Frangoudaki and Thalia Dragona, known also as ‘Frangoudaki Program’. The aim was to increase the level of their education in Greek and their Greek language via publication of new textbooks for the teaching of the Greek language to students of the Western Thracian minority whose mother tongue was different from Greek. It was financed by the EU with 1.2 billion *Drachmis* that corresponds to approximately 3.5 million euros. The second program was the “Multicultural Educational Support for Student Groups in Thrace” designed by the National Youth Foundation that aimed to facilitate the easier adaptation of students to the Greek educational system by providing them courses free of charge that will develop their writing and reading skills of the Greek language. This program was also financed by the EU with 585.000.000 *Drachmis* corresponding to 1.715.000 Euros. The third program that was put into practice in 1998 aimed to support the Muslim Turkish students in

⁴³⁹ For example see Damaskinos, Mitropolititis Maronias ke Komotinis, *Ο Ελληνισμός της Ροδόπης και η Τοπική Εκκλησία (The Hellenism of the Rhodopi and the Local Church)* (Komotini, 1999) p.99

secondary education particularly for first year students in the secondary schools and for those having failed in their exams.⁴⁴⁰

The Frangoudaki Program was extended for the 2002-2004 education term. During her visit in Western Thrace in September 2002, Frangoudaki declared that one of the aims of this program was to increase the percentage of minority children graduating from the 3rd class of secondary schools reaching the country average.⁴⁴¹ Within this program, 41 new textbooks were published and introduced in the minority schools and teachers working at these schools were educated with the philosophy of cross-cultural education. Also, figures show us that the number of the minority pupils graduating from the secondary schools today is four times than the number in 1989.⁴⁴² It is obvious that such special programs have been playing a noteworthy role in enabling an increase in the number of the minority pupils in the secondary education and solving some of the educational problems of the minority pupils, especially their difficulties with the Greek knowledge.⁴⁴³

Despite such special programs that aim to develop the educational standards in the minority schools and prepare the minority students for the secondary education in Greek secondary and high schools, the minority students still have problems with the teaching of the Turkish language in the minority primary schools. Until now, the Greek state has not introduced a special program for the development of the Turkish education in the minority primary schools except the adoption and distribution of the new textbooks prepared by Turkey.

For the participation in the socio-political and economic life of Greece, education has always been one of the fundamental instruments of the Muslim Turkish minority. Evaluating the developments and the drawbacks in the minority education, I think that in spite of the recently-introduced special programs by the Greek state and EU and some developments in the standards of education, the

⁴⁴⁰ *Minority Rights in Greece*, A Report Prepared by Minority Rights Group (MRG) and Greek Helsinki Monitor(GHM), *op. cit.*, 1999, p.39

⁴⁴¹ *Paratiritis tis Thrakis*, 20 September 2002.

⁴⁴² “Εκπαίδευση Παιδιών της Μειονότητας: Ανεβάζουν τις επιδόσεις (The Education of the Minority Pupils: Increasing Their Performances)”, *Ta Nea*, 17 June 2004

⁴⁴³ Maria Telalian quoted in *Human Rights in Greece: A Snapshot of the Cradle of Democracy*, *op. cit.*, 2002, p.10

significant deep-rooted drawbacks in the minority education system continue to a large extent preventing the full participation of the minority students in the Greek socio-political and economic life.

It should be kept in mind that such a participation will favor not only the Muslim Turks but also the whole Greek society. On the one hand it will enrich the multicultural character of Western Thrace, on the other hand it will provide an improvement in the human rights records of Greece increasing the prestige of the country in both the European and international level.⁴⁴⁴ For years, the members of the Muslim Turkish minority have suffered a lot from the policies of the Greek state that were aiming to make the minority uneducated and, thus, second-class Greek citizens. They are very aware of this reality. For this reason, they struggle for making the next generation minority pupils take the necessary education and for this sake they await from the Greek state to introduce new and more comprehensive policies that will enhance the minority education in Western Thrace.

4.10 The Actors that Played Role in the Change of the Western Thracian Minority Policy of Greece

The changes in the minority policy of Greece came in such an era that the Soviet Union was recently dissolved, the European Union started to increase its influence in the regional level and the Balkan powder keg exploded resulting in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In 1990s, the Balkan Peninsula, Greece being one of its members, became one of the regions towards which a significant attention was diverted by the international community. The possibilities regarding the dissolution like Yugoslavia enabled the Balkan countries to focus more on their ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities.

When we focus on the Greek domestic situation in the beginning of 1990s, we can see that considering the continuous loyalty of the Muslim Turks towards the Greek state there has never been a possibility for the secession of Western Thrace from Greek territories. Besides, under the Mitsotakis government the Greek state started to change its traditional minority policy of Western Thrace. There were different actors that played quite significant roles in such a policy change. In this

⁴⁴⁴ Greece has continuously been criticized both nationally and internationally for the low standards of education in the minority schools of Western Thrace.

section, I will dwell on the effectiveness of these national, international and supranational actors in making Greece change its static minority policy of Western Thrace.

4.10.1 The Role of the European Union

Although Greece became an EU member in 1981, the minority policy of Greece had remained the same until the beginning of 1990s. Greece was far behind the other EU members regarding the protection of the rights of its minorities. Therefore, Greece came across with severe criticisms from within the EU institutions. Besides its criticisms, provided that being one of the least developed regions in Europe, the European Union played a very significant role in the development of Western Thrace by providing funds and co-sponsoring special programs for the economic and social development of the region. As a result of the increasing EU concerns, the Muslim Turkish minority started to identify itself also 'European' implying that in case their rights are violated by Greece, they had the possibility to apply for the European institutions. Moreover, their sense of Europeaness enabled them to become more emboldened in struggling for their rights emerging from bilateral and multilateral agreements that Greece signed. Then, it is not a coincidence that most of the minority members started to apply for the European Court of Human Rights in the post-1990 period.

The European Convention of Human Rights is one of the most significant EU instrument for the protection of the minority rights. The political and civil rights of the Muslim Turkish minority are protected under this convention. In case of a violation of these rights, the minority members have the right to apply for the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) after exhausting all local remedies. Rather than the application process, some cases like that of Xanthi Turkish Union depicts us that it takes time for the Muslim Turks to exhaust the local remedies because some trials in Greek courts take quite a long time to be concluded. As a result of the long-lasting trials and the court verdicts most of whom result against the Muslim Turkish applicants, we can see that the Muslim Turks see the European Court of Human Rights as the final destination for protection of their civil and political rights. For example, the president of the recently-dissolved Xanthi Turkish Union stated that

from now on they would apply for the ECHR in order to solve their problems with the Greek state.⁴⁴⁵

4.10.2 The Role of Western Thracian Associations in Europe

The immigrant workers that came to Germany as ‘guestworkers’ in 1960s started to establish new associations organized around these associations. After a time, the number of the associations of the Western Thracian Muslim Turks started to increase and they started to assist to the internationalization of the human rights violations in Western Thrace. Especially, those who were established in Germany functioned quite effectively to divert the attention of the EU countries on Greece and Western Thrace. At the beginning of 1980s, there were only five or six associations established in Germany. In time, this number increased parallel to the increasing number of immigrants from Western Thrace. Today, this number of the Muslim Turks living in Germany is estimated to be around 12.000 being the highest among the number of the Western Thracian minority immigrants.⁴⁴⁶

These associations regularly informed the European partners of Greece about the continuous human rights violations in Western Thrace and they wanted from these countries to make pressure on Greece for its repressive policies in Western Thrace. The first attempt of these associations was made in 1983. A delegation composed of the members of these associations from Germany went to the Council of Europe on 4 October 1983 where they met with the German parliamentarian Wilfried Böhm and got his support for sounding the problems of the Western Thracian minority in the Council of Europe.

At the same day, a member of this delegation, Aydın Ömeroğlu, made a speech in open conference in which he questioned the existence of democracy in Greece. With the support of Böhm, a proposal regarding the human rights violations by the Greek state was submitted to the Parliamentarian Assembly of the Council of

⁴⁴⁵ “Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk Azınlığı: Milli Kimlik Konusunda Taviz Vermeyiz”, *Gündem*, 25-02-2005

⁴⁴⁶ Meinardus, “Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies” in Richard Clogg, *op. cit.*, 2002, p.84

Europe on 10 May 1984. Since then, the Council of Europe started to put more focus on the human rights violations in Western Thrace.⁴⁴⁷

The European Parliament started to deal with the Western Thracian minority issues in 1982 when two British MPs J.Taylor and I. Paisley submitted a proposal about the human rights violations in Greece. On 10-11 October 1983, a delegation from the Western Thracian Turks associations visited the European Parliament where they talked with the MPs and they informed them about the situation regarding the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace.⁴⁴⁸ Since 1983, the European Parliament started to put more focus on the situation in Western Thrace.

Compared to the human rights activists and prominent figures of the Muslim Turks, Sadık Ahmet being the leading figure, who tried to internationalize the continuous human rights abuselements of the Greek state in Western Thrace the associations of the Muslim Turkish immigrants in Europe had more chance and capability to divert the international attention on what was happening in Western Thrace because compared to those living in Western Thrace, the members of these associations in Europe had more chance to visit and inform both the NGOs and the EU organs dealing with the human rights issues.

Today, all of the Western Thracian associations in Europe are united under the Federation of the Western Thracian Turks in Europe and they continue to have close relations with the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. One of their latest attempts was a visit to the Parliamentarian Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2005 where they informed the MPs about the recent dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union, the problems of the stateless people resulting from the application of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code and the problems of in the field of the education in Western Thrace.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ For the details about the delegation's visit of Council of Europe and the speech of Ömeroğlu see Aydın Ömeroğlu, *op. cit.*, pp.132-133

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.137

⁴⁴⁹ *ABTTF Press Bulletin, 2005*. For more information about the Federation of the Western Thracian Turks in Europe and its activities visit www.abttf.org. And, for an analytical study about the past activities of this federation and its role in informing the international community about the human rights violations in Western Thrace see Cafer Alioğlu, *Batı Trakya Davası'nın Avrupa Cephesi* (Witten-Deutschland, 1998)

4.10.3 *The International Treaties and Conventions*

Greece, being a member of EU, UN, Council of Europe and OSCE, signed a number of international and regional treaties and conventions most of which protect the rights and freedoms of the minority communities as well as protecting individual rights and freedoms.⁴⁵⁰ Among these treaties and conventions, the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities is the only convention that solely and specifically deals with the protection of national minorities and it is legally binding those states which signed and ratified it. Also, it is widely accepted to be the first comprehensive convention for the protection of the rights of national minorities. Considering the essence of this convention, the MPs and the Turkish Muslim minority activist have continuously stipulated that Greece should ratify the Framework Convention. Also, international organizations have suggested Greece to ratify this convention. In spite of the criticisms from the Muslim Turkish minority and from the international organizations, Greece continues not to ratify the Framework Convention that she signed in 1997.

Besides, the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (1992) is also a significant document for the protection of the minority languages spoken in throughout Europe. It encourages the participating states for the development of the languages of their minority communities. Therefore, it seems that it can be effective for the development of the Turkish language in Western Thrace. However, by 2005, Greece has neither signed nor ratified this charter.

⁴⁵⁰ Some of these important treaties are the OSCE Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension (ratified in 1990), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified in 1997), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified in 1985), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Race Discrimination (ratified in 1970), Convention on the Prevention and Repression of the Crime of Genocide (ratified in 1954), Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1992), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women (ratified in 1983), Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (No. 111, ILO) (ratified in 1984), European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified in 1974), European Convention on Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (ratified in 1993), European Social Charter (ratified in 1984), Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (signed in 1997, not ratified yet) and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (neither signed nor ratified). These treaties and conventions are cited in *Compliance with the Principles of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, A report prepared by the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) and Minority Rights Group (MRG), 18 September 1999, p.8

4.10.4 The Role of the Non-Governmental Organizations

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is the most prominent organization about the internationalization of the human rights violations in Western Thrace. HRW published its first report about Western Thrace in 1990, *Destroying Ethnic Identity*, in which Greece was severely criticized because of violating human rights of the Turkish Muslim minority. It is known as the first NGO report on the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. Later, in 1992, HRW published its second report in which it was stated that in spite of some improvements in the economic and social fields like getting necessary building licenses most of the problems remained unresolved in Western Thrace. In its third and last report, it was noted that although some of the problems of the minority were resolved most of the problems continued to affect negatively the lives of the Muslim Turkish minority.

One of the most significant effects of the HRW reports was that they became quite effective in diverting the attention of the international community on the human rights violations of Greece in Western Thrace. Especially after the 1990 Report of the HRW, other governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations like Minority Rights Group and Amnesty International started closely to deal with the issues concerning the Muslim Turkish minority. For this reason, especially the 1990 report of HRW is of utmost importance in making the international community of what was happening in Western Thrace. Besides its reports, the Greek Helsinki Monitor was established in 1992 and started to prepare reports and to make declarations about the human rights violations in Greece and about the positive steps taken by the Greek state for enhancement of human rights conditions in Greece. Western Thracian minority has been one of the main concerns of the GHM.

Besides the NGOs, one can come across with the reports of the US State Department criticizing the human rights violations in Greece. The first State Department Report, known also as ‘Carter Report’ was released in 1978 focusing on the problems of the Western Thracian minority. Especially, the Country Reports released by the US State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor after 1990 started to criticize the human rights violations in Western Thrace and in other regions of Greece. Considering its latest reports, it is stipulated that although there has

enhancements in the conditions of the Turkish Muslim minority in the latest years, there are still problems to be resolved by the Greek state.

4.10.5 *The Role of Turkey*

From its incorporation until today, Turkey has always been interested about the situation in Western Thrace. Among the Muslim Turks, Turkey is generally seen as the mother nation, the kin-state and the guarantor of the existence of the Muslim Turkish minority and the protector of their rights. Especially until mid-1990s, Turkey was seen as an ‘escape rope’ by the minority. In case of a Greek expulsion, the minority would migrate to Turkey and continue to live there. Such a feeling of insecurity was one of the most significant reasons for most of the Muslim Turks to make investments in Turkey.⁴⁵¹ Turkey has continuously blamed Greece for being an EU country and still not protecting fully the rights of the Muslim Turkish minority while Greece has always put forward the Turkish disobedience to the principle of reciprocity which resulted in the significant decrease in the number of the Orthodox Greeks in Istanbul from 110.000 to around 3000 and has always warned Turkey for not to interfere in the domestic issues of Greece.

The immigrants from Western Thrace formed some associations in Turkey. The most prominent one is the Western Thrace Turkish Solidarity Associations (*Bati Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Dernekleri, BTTDD*) based in Istanbul in 1946 under the name of ‘Western Thracian Immigrants Association.’ Later it was renamed and it formed new offices in different cities of Turkey like Bursa and Izmir. They have been functioning not only for the improvement of conditions for the immigrants and stateless people from Western Thrace living in Turkey but also against the human rights violations in Western Thrace. They publish a magazine, *Bati Trakya'nın Sesi*, where they try to inform people about the situation in Western Thrace.

Regarding the role of Turkey, I want to add that although Turkey has always been interested about the Turkish Muslim minority, the public opinion in Turkey has not been so aware of what has been happening in Western Thrace. Most of the Turks

⁴⁵¹ In the post-1990 period, besides Turkey, the EU organs also became one of the primary institutions working for the protection of minority rights in Western Thrace. Considering the recent positive developments in Western Thrace that I explained at the beginning sections of this chapter such a feeling of insecurity seems to remain quiet among the minority members implying us that Turkey is not seen as an escape rope by the Muslim Turkish minority anymore.

know much more about the Turkish communities in Central Asia or the Turks in Bulgaria than the Turkish Muslims in Western Thrace. Also, one can easily recognize that from the attention and significance put on the Turkish communities throughout the globe in the Turkish academic sphere, the Western Thracian Turkish minority have been devoted one of the least. Most of the books and articles recently published in Turkey deal either with the pre-1990 period or problems of the Muslim Turkish minority. Only a few ones focus on the continuities and changes in the post-1990 period. Such a less attention from the academic circles is one of the fundamental reasons for a lesser knowledge in the Turkish public opinion about the situation in Western Thrace.

4.10.6 The Role of the Leaders of the Muslim Turkish Minority

Besides the national, international and supranational actors there were also domestic actors who played a significant role in the Greek minority policy change. The most prominent figure from the Muslim Turkish Minority was Sadık Ahmet. He is accepted to be the leading figure of the minority, playing the most significant role among other minority activists for the internationalization of the human rights violations in Western Thrace. Besides Sadık Ahmet, the Minority Consultation Council (*Azınlık Danışma Kurulu*), established in 1980 is composed of the prominent political, religious and economic and academic figures of the minority and it has been working quite effectively for the protection of the rights of the Muslim Turkish minority for years. Also, it tries to make the minority members be more aware of their rights and freedoms.

Having an overall look to the roles of the institutions and personalities, it seems that it is mostly the European institutions, treaties and conventions that have been functioning more effectively in the minority policy change of the Greek state. Especially in the post-1990 period one can witness that the issues regarding the rights of the Western Thracian minority started to increase in the EU level and in time more significance and attention started to be put on the situation in Western Thrace by the EU. From the practices of the EU organs like economic aids and special development programs one can see that the social and economic development of Western Thrace became one of the significant tasks of the EU.

I think that although the rights of the Muslim Turks are protected by the Lausanne Treaty, which is the basic treaty signed between Greece and Turkey aiming to protect the two minorities of Western Thrace and Istanbul, the developments since 1980s show us that in addition to the EU organs the European conventions and treaties that Greece ratified have been functioning much more effectively than the Lausanne Treaty. In theory, the Lausanne Treaty may seem to protect the rights of the Muslim Turkish minority. However, in practice, this cannot be observed since the advent of the military regime in 1967. For decades, the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty have not been fully put into practice by Greece. If it was so, then it is clear that it might not have required for the Western Thracian minority to apply for different international organs in order to struggle regaining its rights stemming from the bilateral and multilateral treaties that Greece had signed.

In this chapter, after focusing analytically on the reflections of the Greek minority policy change and the effects of national, international and supranational actors on developments of the post-1990 period it becomes obvious that while most of the social and economic problems of the Muslim Turks have been solved, political and educational problems of the Minority still remain. Taking these continuities and changes into account, in the coming section, which is the final part of my thesis, I will apply the Primordialism-Circumstantialism debate, which I analytically focused on in the first chapter, for the explanation of the continuities and changes in Western Thrace. Moreover, I will focus on the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister of Western Thrace in 2004 and its reflections on the assimilation-integration debate. Finally, I will finish my thesis with my future prospects and with an overall evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the differences and similarities between Primordialism and Circumstantialism/Instrumentalism and Constructionism that I analytically explained in the first chapter of my thesis, I want to discuss here to what extent the Primordialist and Circumstantialist arguments are applicable for the explanation of the events and developments occurred in the pre-1990 and post-1990 period by taking into account the character of the primordial attachments of the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. My argument here is that it is the Primordialist arguments that better explain the significance and the fixed character of the primordial attachments of the Muslim Turkish minority in the pre-1990 period while it is the Circumstantialist arguments that explain better to what extent the minority of Western Thrace adapted itself to the changing conditions in Western Thrace as a result of a change in the minority politics of the Greek government and to what extent the changing context affected the primordial attachments of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace.

As I stated in the first chapter, Constructionism cannot be applied while interpreting the events that have been occurring in the post-1990 period because according to the Constructionist arguments contextual changes result in a redefinition of identities or a social construction of a new identity by the community members and such a redefinition of identity has not been observed in Western Thrace since the incorporation of Western Thrace in Greek territories in 1920 until today. The minority of Western Thrace has always identified itself as Turks in ethnic terms, as Muslim in religious terms and as citizens of Greece in legal terms. The contextual changes have affected the degree of their boundedness to the building blocks of their identities but such changes have never resulted in a construction of a new identity for the Western Thracian minority.

In the pre-1990 period, it seems that the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace were more bounded to their primordial attachments. One of the basic reasons of such a boundedness was their unabated sufferings altogether from the application of the

discriminatory policies of the Greek state in both political, economic and social fields. The strength of their primordial bonds reached at its peak in the 29 January 1988 protest in Komotini. For the first time in history, the Turkish minority composed of 10.000 people rallied against the Greek state due to the denial of their ethnic identities by the Greek administrations. History shows us that besides religious identity, ethnic identity has always been one of the fundamental primordial attachments of the Western Thracian Minority. The arguments of the Primordialist school explain us the essence of the primordial attachments in the attitudes of a community. However, in case of a contextual change as it happened in Western Thrace in the beginning of 1990s, the static Primordialist understanding fails to explain the reason why people generally adapt themselves to the changing conditions around themselves.

In my thesis, I take the beginning of 1990s as the breakthrough in the minority policy of Greece because as can be observed in the previous sections of this chapter, with the introduction of a new minority policy by the Greek state under the leadership of the Greek Prime Minister Kostas Mitsotakis, that are *Ísonomia* (equality before the law) and *Ísopolitia* (equality in civic rights), something has started to change for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace in Greece. The Greek state started to devote more money for the development of Western Thrace, being the least-developed region of Greece. Moreover, in social terms, the attitude of Greek state towards the Minority started to become more positive. As a reflection, some of the basic individual and minority rights started to be given back. As a result of these changes in economic and social fields, Muslim Turks started slowly to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of Western Thrace. Their suspicions about the discriminative policies of the Greek state started to lessen but not ended at all. Their relations with the Orthodox Greeks of the region also started to increase. Such changes directly or indirectly affected the strength of their primordial attachments.

Circumstantialist arguments come to the forefront in case of contextual changes. Therefore, because we cannot observe a contextual change in Western Thrace until the beginning of 1990s, the Circumstantialist arguments are not applicable to the pre-1990 period. Compared with Circumstantialism, the static understanding of Primordialists fails to explain the reflections of these changes on

the primordial attachments of Muslim Turks. As for Circumstantialism, social and historical situations may heighten or reduce the importance and the utility of ethnic or racial identities in the lives of individuals and groups.⁴⁵² Such a change in meaning and importance of identities can be observed in the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace after 1990s.

In order to have a clearer picture, I want to compare the investment attitudes of the minority members. In the pre-1990, the Greek state had not provided a suitable environment for the Muslim Turks to invest in Western Thrace. Even, the necessary permits for building new houses or repairing the existing ones were rarely given. Also, the discriminative policies of the Greek state had usually made the Muslim Turks to feel threatened living in Western Thrace. Mainly due to these reasons, the minority members inclined to invest outside Greece especially in Turkey. Such discriminatory policies in the economic field directly strengthened their primordial ethnic and religious feelings against the Greek state. In case of a contextual change, if we apply for the Primordialist arguments, then the Muslim Turks would not change their stance in their relations with the Greek state and it would not be observed a change in their primordial bonds. However, when we evaluate the minority-state relations in the post-1990 era, we can notice that there has been a change in the attitude of the Muslim Turks towards the Greek state. At this point, the Primordialist arguments fail to explain this change in the attitude of the minority members and its reflections on the strength of their primordial attachments.

Individuals are rational actors who generally opt for cost-benefit policies. As Circumstantialists state, perceived costs and advantages to themselves underlie much of the behaviour of individuals.⁴⁵³ When the Greek state started to invest more for the development of Western Thrace as well as other policies in the social and educational fields, the Muslim Turks replied positively to the changing context in Western Thrace. They started to feel themselves less threatened to live in Western Thrace and they started to invest more in Western Thrace. Such a change in their attitudes seems to reflect a plausible change, whether low or high, in their primordial bonds. If the degree of their primordial attachments remained fixed and unchanged,

⁴⁵² Cornell and Hartmann, *op. cit.*, p.212

⁴⁵³ Gil-White, *op. cit.*, p.13

then no change in the attitudes of the Muslim Turks towards the Greek state would have to be observed.

Moreover, a change in their primordial attachments and its reflections in their attitudes can also be observed in the field of education. In the post-1990 period, most of the parents of Muslim Turkish students preferred their children to continue their secondary or higher educations either at the two minority schools or at those in Turkey but not in the Greek secondary schools and universities.⁴⁵⁴ It was a very hard process for a minority student to continue his/her secondary and higher education in the Greek schools mainly because the standards of education were too low in the minority primary schools and the minority students had to compete with their Orthodox Greek counterparts in the university entrance exam. Therefore, the number of those from the minority pupils continuing their secondary and higher educations in Greece in the pre-1990 was very small.

However, starting from mid-1990s, the Greek state started to enhance the conditions for the education of minority via special programmes and the minority quota system for the university entrance. Starting from 1996, the minority students started to participate in the Greek higher education via the quota system. The context has changed for the minority pupils and it is the same minority members that reacted positively towards these changes. Even, some of the Muslim Turkish parents recently started to send their children to the nursery schools where the education is in Greek.

Compared with the pre-1990 period, one can observe that today there are more than 1000 minority students at different Greek universities and the number of those minority pupils attending to the Greek secondary and high schools has started to increase by the introduction of the quota system resulting in a decrease in the number of those applying for the Turkish universities. As I mentioned in the section about the minority education of the third chapter, in the pre-1990 period a great number of the Muslim Turks were not willing to send their children to the Greek secondary and high schools. Rather, they preferred to send their children either to the minority secondary schools, one in Komotini and one in Xanthi, or to send them to Turkey.

⁴⁵⁴ Oran, *op. cit.*, 1991, p.138

Here, once more we can see a change in the attitude of the parents of the minority pupils. If we apply for the Primordialist arguments then we should state that whatever the conditions the Muslim Turks should continue strongly to cling to their fixed primordial attachments and continue to send their children either to the minority secondary schools or to those in Turkey. If the primordial attachments remained fixed, independent of the contextual changes, then the minority pupils would continue for their secondary and higher educations as they had done in the pre-1990 period. However, the increasing number of the minority students in the Greek secondary and higher education proves that the arguments of the Primordialist theories do not seem to fit for the explanation of the changes in Western Thrace in the post-1990 period.

When we analyze the attitude of the Muslim Turks towards the contextual changes in the field of education we can see that there has been a gradual change in their primordial attachments of these people that enables their necessary adaptation to the changing educational environment. It cannot be the same primordial attachments that on the one hand enable the minority students to continue their secondary and higher educations in Turkey or in minority secondary schools in the pre-1990 period and on the other hand let these students give a positive reply to the changing educational environment around themselves. As a result, I think that primordial attachments of an individual or a community are not fixed. In case of a contextual change, the primordial attachments can also change resulting in a change in the attitude of the individual who is usually prone to adapt itself to the changing conditions in his/her environment. Thus, my main argument is that while the Primordialist arguments fit better in explaining the significance of the primordial attachments and its reflections on the attitudes of the Muslim Turks towards the Greek state in the pre-1990 period it is Circumstantialism that depicts us to what extent the primordial attachments change in case of contextual changes resulting in a change in the attitudes of the Muslim Turkish minority towards the Greek state in the post-1990 period.

Until here, I focused on the applicability of the theories of ethnicity for explaining continuities and changes in the Greek minority policy of Greece and its reflections in the region. In the next section, I will mention the recent visit of the

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, its reflections and the applicability of integration-assimilation debate while explaining the reply of the Muslim Turks in the circumstantial changes in Western Thrace.

After meeting with the Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis in Athens, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Western Thrace on 8 May 2004. In 52 years time he became the first Turkish Prime Minister to visit the region since the visit of Adnan Menderes in 1952. In spite of being the kin-state of the minority and always dealing with the issues of the Muslim Turkish minority, history shows us that from time to time the minority members felt that they stand in the third rank in the Turco-Greek relations after the Cyprus and Aegean Sea issues and sometimes they were the ones bearing the burden in case of a deterioration in relations between Turkey and Greece. Therefore, the visit of Erdoğan can be accepted as a show of concern of Turkey towards the Turkish Muslim minority. Considering the continuity of problems as well as the changing conditions for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace in the post-1990 period, Erdoğan gave quite clear messages during his speeches towards the minority members: “No one told you to abandon your Turkish identity, but do not forget that you are Greek citizens and citizens of the European Union. A strong Greece will provide you with greater benefits”⁴⁵⁵

As for its relevance to my thesis, I can conclude from his speech that first of all Turkey supports the integration of the minority within the political, economic and social domain of Greece from which not only the Turkish Muslims but also Greece will benefit. Secondly, such an integration should not result in the assimilation of the Muslim Turks within the larger Greek society. And, thirdly, by stressing the EU citizenship of the Turkish Muslims, Turkey wants more enhancement in the existing conditions of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace and in case of a violation of human rights in Western Thrace by the Greek state, the minority members are automatically under the protection of the EU organs like that of the European Court of Human Rights. I think that ‘integration without assimilation’ seems to be the main

⁴⁵⁵ *Θετική η επίσκεψη του Ερντογάν* (Fruitful is the visit of Erdoğan), *Kathimerini*, 11 May 2004, Aleksis Kalokerinos, *Κάτω Απτο Χαλί* (Under the Rug), *Ta Nea*, 10 May 2004. For more information about the interpretations of this visit in the local minority and Greek newspapers and magazines see *Öğretmenin Sesi*, May 2004.

point in the message of Tayyip Erdoğan.

At this point, I want also briefly to focus on the integration-assimilation debate. While integration means two different groups living side by side, each keeping its own ethnic, religious or linguistic identities but sharing a set of political foci and state-generated symbols, assimilation implies that one group abandons, either forcefully or voluntarily, its building blocks of its identity (ethnicity, religion, language, culture, etc.) entirely and accepts the identity of the other group.⁴⁵⁶ The process of integration with the Greek social, political and economic domains has already started with the change in the minority policy of Greece towards the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. However, by the year 2005, it seems that most of the members of the Minority still are not fully integrated within these domains.

Besides this partial integration, starting from the beginning of 1990s until today an assimilation of the Muslim Turkish minority has not been observed and from today nobody can foresee that in the future the partial integration will either lead to the full integration or the assimilation of minority members. Actually, it seems that differences in religion, ethnicity and culture stand both as the main stumbling blocks in front of the assimilation of the Muslim Turks within the different circles of the Greek society and as the preventive mechanisms for the integration of the Muslim Turkish minority fully within the Greek society. In other words, if you are a member of the Muslim Turkish minority living in today's Western Thrace it is not an easy task for you to integrate yourself fully with a group of people composed of the Orthodox Christian majority because of your ethnic, religious and cultural differences. Also, in case of a full integration one should consider the risk of being assimilated within the Greek society. Therefore, I think that, in Western Thrace, the process of integration without assimilation seems quite difficult and long-lasting.

If one calls for the multicultural character of Western Thrace implying us that each community, being an indispensable and irreplaceable player in the orchestra of humanity and having a unique tone to sound in the symphony of human

⁴⁵⁶ Schöpflin, *op. cit.*, p.272

culture⁴⁵⁷ then integration without assimilation seems to become a *sine qua non* principle for a multicultural Western Thrace. As it is asserted,⁴⁵⁸

Integrating diversity and managing minority problems in a way that is compatible to a modern interpretation on the rule of law and human rights is a complicated strategy costing both in economic and political terms. However, to take on this cost seems to be the only viable and just perspective for the Greek State.

The history of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace is full of sufferings. For a minority living as a Turk and Muslim in a country whose citizens are predominantly Greek and Orthodox-Christians has not been an easy process. Being treated as a minority has always had a price that the Muslim Turkish minority has been obliged to pay. The Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace has always been accepted by Greeks as a possible threat for the unity and integrity of Greece. A possible encouragement of Turkey's separatism has been one of the most significant concerns of the Greek citizens.⁴⁵⁹ Here, rather than an all-out war Greeks have been afraid of 'a well-concerted strategy of intimidation manifested through a series of low level threats in Western Thrace.'⁴⁶⁰ Most of the Greek scholars, security planners and analysts agree that as the Aegean and Cyprus issues, the issue of the Western Thracian Minority is related with the national security of Greece. They fear of a possibility for the region to become the second Cyprus by Turkey via using the Muslim Turkish minority for its own "expansionist policies". Thus, they generally assert that the effect of Turkey in Western Thrace should be minimized.⁴⁶¹

However, when one dwells on the history of the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace it can easily be recognized that such Greek anxieties about the threat notion

⁴⁵⁷ Claude, *op. cit.*, p.85

⁴⁵⁸ Dimitris Christopoulos and Konstantinos Tsitselikis, *Treatment of Minorities and Homogeneis in Greece: Relics and Challenges*, available at www.kemo.gr

⁴⁵⁹ Van Coufoudakis quoted in *Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, op. cit.*, 1996, p.7

⁴⁶⁰ Constantine Arvanitopoulos, "Greek Defense Policy and the Doctrine of Extended Deterrence", in Andreas Theofanous & Van Coufoudakis, eds, *Security and Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Nicosia: InterCollege Press, 1997) p.154 quoted in Panayotis Tsakonas and Antonis Tournikiotis, "Greece's Elusive Quest for Security Providers: The Expectations-Reality Gap", *Security Dialogue*, Vol.34, September 2003, p.304

⁴⁶¹ For the threat perception of Turkey in Greece see Thanos Dokos, "Η Τουρκική Πολιτική στο Ζήτημα της Ελληνικής Θράκης" (The policy of Turkey in the issue of the Greek Thrace), *Νέα Κοινωνιολογία*, Vol.29, Winter 1999-2000, pp.35-39

of the Muslim Turkish minority has never existed in practice. Since the incorporation of Western Thrace to Greece in 1920 the Muslim Turks have never acted, either in the pre-1990 or in the post-1990 period, against the unity and integrity of Greece. In spite of their sufferings from the human rights abuses of the Greek governments, the Muslim Turks have never resorted to violence and the use of force against the Greek authorities in their fight for their fundamental and minority rights. They have always acted as 'loyal' Greek citizens.

Even during the Civil War of 1946-1949 the Muslim Turks did not cooperate with the communist guerilla forces and remained loyal to the Greek central authority and Greek monarchy. 27.400 of Muslim Turks were actively involved in the fight against the Communist threat all of whom were rewarded with medals by Papagos and King Pavlos after the end of the Civil War. Also, I want to add that, since 1920s, any military and paramilitary organization has not been established by the Muslim Turks in order to fight for the independence of the Western Thrace from Greece.

Considering the attitude of the Muslim Turks towards the Greek state it seems that the Muslim Turks have always felt themselves as loyal Greek citizens. Rather than acting as 'agents' or the 'Trojan Horse' of Turkey, the aim of the Muslim Turks has always been to regain their positive and negative minority rights stemming from bilateral and multilateral agreements that Greece signed and nothing more than that. Thus, the arguments of some Greeks for the separatist feelings of the Minority cannot go beyond theoretical statements that keep the ethnic and religious sentiments of the Orthodox Greek citizens alive and always fresh.

I think that the Greek minority policy towards the members of the Muslim Turkish minority and the Orthodox Greek majority in Western Thrace in the pre-1990 period is like a two-storey building. In case one floor takes fire it is unavoidable that the other floor will take fire and the building will altogether burn into ashes if the necessary intervention is not made by the fire-brigade. One of the floors belongs to the Muslim Turkish minority while the other floor belongs to the majority Orthodox Greeks of Western Thrace and it is the Greek state that will make the necessary intervention as the fire-brigade in case of a fire in one of the floors of the building. It is not significant which floor belongs to the members of minority and

which floor belongs to members of majority mainly because the floors are interrelated with each other. If the fire starts in the one floor and if Greece does not intervene in and puts out the fire then the fire will also burn the other floor and the building will altogether collapse.

The example that I gave can be applied to the attitude of the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace in the pre-1990 period. There was a fire in the floor of the minority and the Greek state rather than trying to put out the fire she had been throwing more fuel towards the fire. However, in the beginning of 1990s, Greece realized that it was not only the floor of the minority but also the floor of the majority that had been severely affected from the fire. As in the example, the existence of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace was the main reason of the Greek state not to invest both economically, socially and politically in Western Thrace until the beginning of 1990s. As a result of this policy of the Greek state, it was not only the Muslim Turkish minority but also the Orthodox Greek majority of the region suffering from the lack of the necessary investments in Western Thrace. In the end, Greece started to be nationally and internationally criticized for making Western Thrace not only the least developed region of Greece but also one of the least developed regions of the European Union in both economic, political and social terms.

As for the post-1990 period, one can see that the human rights violations in Western Thrace started to decrease and things have started to change. The introduction of *Isonomia* and *Isopolitia* under the Mitsotakis government in 1991 marks the beginning of change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace. With the application of these policies there has been a gradual change in the lives of the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. As I tried to depict in my thesis, compared to the pre-1990 period, most of the economic and social problems of the minority members have been solved. Also, compared to the period before 1990s the living standards of the Muslim Turks have been gradually increasing. Muslim Turks started to live economically and socially a better life. Today, it is more tolerable for the Muslim Turks to live in Western Thrace compared to the pre-1990 period.

I, also, want to mention that issues of the Muslim Turks were and will be treated within the framework of Turco-Greek relation provided that these two nations

continue to exist. It is quite rational for the Greek state to consider the relation between the issue of the Muslim Turkish minority and Turkey. However, I think that the Greek state should not deal with the issues regarding the Muslim Turks solely within the framework of Greek-Turkish relations. Because, it seems that the minority has suffered too much from being appointed as the ‘scapegoat’ in the relations between Greece and Turkey as well as being called to stand on its shoulders the heavy load of the Greek-Turkish relations.⁴⁶²

One of the reflections for their sufferings was that although the Muslim Turks have always favored to play a bridge role between Greece and Turkey, the Greek state had continuously treated the Muslim Turkish minority as the ‘voice’ or the ‘agent’ of Turkey. Thus, all issues regarding the Muslim Turks were falling under the jurisdiction of the Greek Foreign Ministry. However, starting from 1999, according to the records of the Greek Foreign Ministry, considering on the one hand the demography and on the other hand its incorporation in the Greek social and economic life, Greece ceased to accept the Western Thracian minority as a threat to the integrity of Greece adding that the issues of the minority fall within the domestic policy of Greece thus the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be only consultative.⁴⁶³ Today, it is the Greek Ministry of Interior responsible for the issues of the Muslim Turks. In spite of the responsibility change between the two ministries of Greece it is difficult to argue that today the Greek state treats the issues of the Western Thracian Minority separately from the framework of Greek-Turkish relations.

In my thesis, what comes out from the evaluation of the pre-1990 and post-1990 periods is that the Muslim Turkish minority seems to have fed up with being squeezed in the middle of the relations between Greece and Turkey. Therefore, I think that the issues related with the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace not only fall within the domain of foreign policy but also within the domain of domestic policy of Greece. It is for this reason that Greece should cease to accept and interpret all issues

⁴⁶² *The Written Statement of Ilhan Ahmet about the Dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union, op. cit., 2005, p.1*

⁴⁶³ Records of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted in N. Marakis, “Τι Πραγματικά Έχει Αλλάξει Στην Πολιτική για την Μειονότητα” (What Has Really Changed in the Politics of the Minority), *To Vima*, 8 August 1999

regarding the Muslim Turkish minority only within the framework of Greek-Turkish relations and it should treat the minority as a bridge between Greece and Turkey.

Throughout 1990s, it was largely assumed among the members of the Muslim Turkish minority that the changes in the economic and social fields would have a spillover effect on the solution of the remaining political and educational problems of the Muslim Turks. However, until today, the attitude of the Greek state has not so much changed in the political and educational problems of the Muslim Turks. It is true that things have started to change in Western Thrace in the beginning of 1990s. However, as it is the main argument of my thesis, it is the economic and social domains in which we can see changes in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace while the attitude of the Greek state in the political and educational issues of the minority members still continues.

Such a partial change in the Greek minority policy of Western Thrace implies us that the negative minority rights have been given back by the Greek state since the beginning of 1990s while Greece has not been so willing to return the positive minority rights back to the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. In the era of globalization and in the cradle of democracy, Greece continues to deny the collective ethnic identification of the minority members, to loosen the minority control on the pious endowments of the Muslim Turks, to appoint the muftis of the minority and not to take the necessary steps for the increase in the quality of education in both primary, secondary and high schools of the Muslim Turkish minority.

Rather than turning a blind eye on the existing problems of the minority members or trying to postpone them, Greece should opt for new policies and affirmative actions in order to solve the remaining problems of the Muslim Turkish minority. Besides, if Greece wants to increase the multicultural character of Western Thrace and if she wants the Muslim Turks integrate more with the Greek society then a possible change in the attitude of the Greek state towards the remaining problems of the minority seems more likely. In case Greece solves the remaining problems of the Muslim Turks in Western Thrace in the near future then it seems that both the Muslim Turkish minority and the Orthodox Greek majority will live altogether in a more peaceful, democratic and multicultural environment in Western Thrace.

The changes in Western Thrace that started in the beginning of 1990s still have not ended. Nobody knows what will be the end results of these changes for the Muslim Turks of Western Thrace. Provided that Greece stops considering the Muslim Turks as 'agents' of Turkey, puts emphasis on the bridge role of these people in the relations between Greece and Turkey, treats them as it treats all Greek citizens by putting an end to all kinds of ill-treatment, and, works for the solution of the remaining problems of the Muslim Turks then it seems that a better future awaits both the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace and Greece.

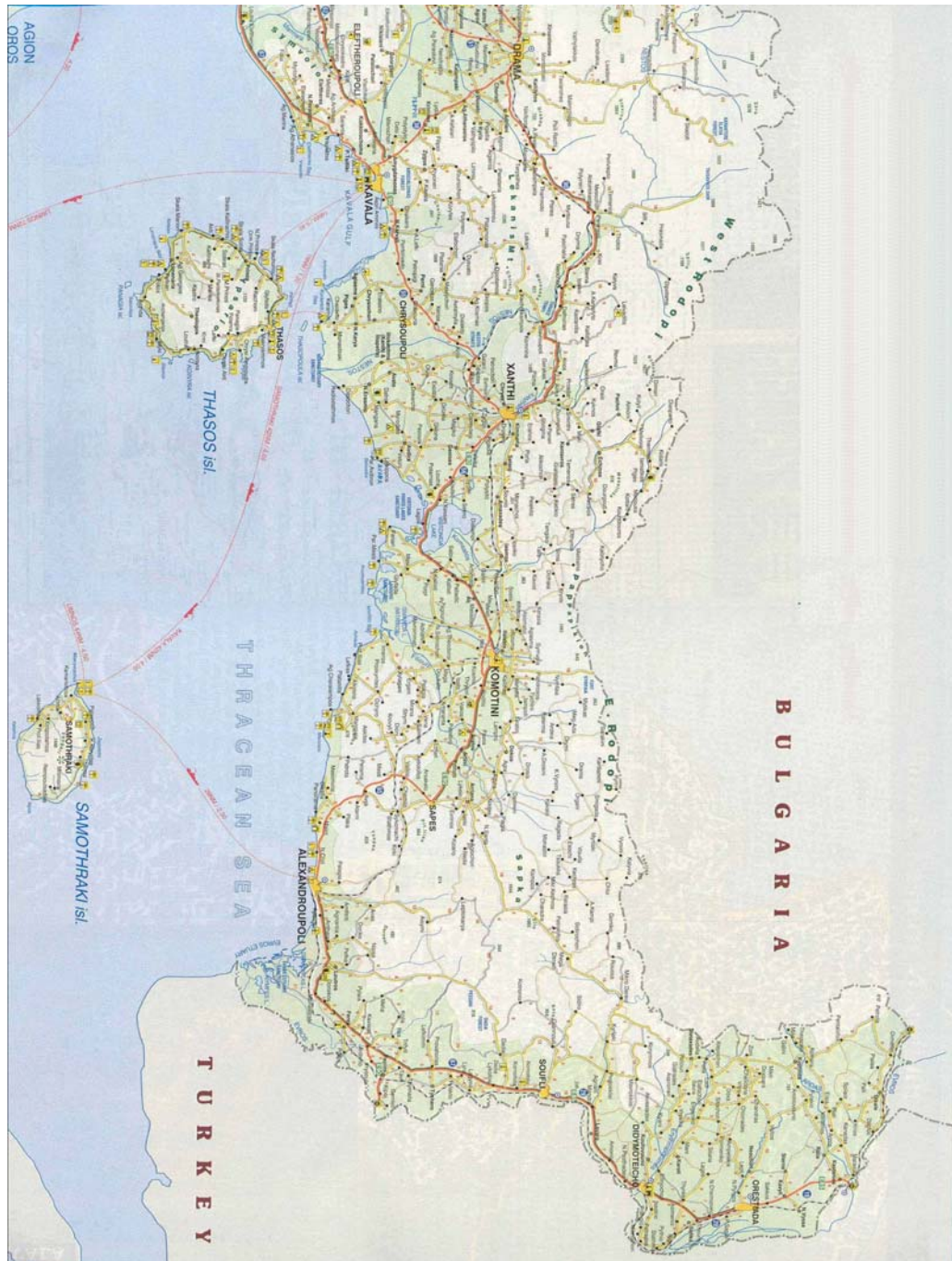
APPENDICES

Appendix - A



Source: <http://www.travel4greece.com/maps-greece.php>

Appendix - B



Source: http://www.alpha-omegaonline.com/Cartes_grece/thrace_western.jpg
http://www.alpha-omegaonline.com/Cartes_grece/thrace_eastern.jpg

Appendix - C

TREATY OF LAUSANNE

Section III. Protection of Minorities

Article 37.

Turkey undertakes that the stipulations contained in Articles 38 to 44 shall be recognized as fundamental laws, and that no law, no regulation, no official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation, no official action prevail over them.

Article 38.

The Turkish Government undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

All inhabitants of Turkey shall be entitled to free exercise, whether in public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, the observance of which shall not be incompatible with public order and good morals.

Non-Muslim minorities will enjoy full freedom of movement and emigration, subject to the measures applied, on the whole or part of the territory, to all Turkish nationals, and which may be taken by the Turkish Government for national defense, or for maintenance of public order.

Article 39.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Muslims.

All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law.

Differences of religion, creed of confession shall not prejudice any Turkish national in matters relating to enjoyment of civil and political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employments, functions and honors, or the exercise of professions and industries.

No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press or in publications of any kind or at public meetings. Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts.

Article 40.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any school and other establishments

for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion therein.

Article 41.

As regards to public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Muslim nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their language. This provision will not prevent the Turkish Government from making the teaching of the Turkish language obligatory in the said schools.

In those towns and districts where a considerable proportion of Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in employment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal, or other budgets for educational, religious, or charitable purposes.

The sums in question shall be paid to the qualified representatives of the establishments and institutions concerned.

Article 42.

The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Muslim minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities.

These measures will be elaborated by special Commissions composed representatives of the Turkish Government and of representatives of each of the minorities concerned in equal number. In case of divergence, the Turkish Government and the Council of the League of Nations will appoint in agreement an umpire chosen from amongst European lawyers.

The Turkish Government undertakes to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments of the above mentioned minorities. All facilities and authorization will be granted to the pious foundations, and to the religious and charitable institutions of the said minorities at the present existing in Turkey, and the Turkish Government will not refuse, for the formation of new religious and charitable institutions, any of the necessary facilities which are guaranteed to other private institutions of that nature.

Article 43.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities shall not be compelled to perform any act which constitutes a violation of their faith or religious observances, and shall not be placed under any disability by reason of their refusal to attend Courts of Law or to perform any legal business on their weekly day of rest.

This provision, however, shall not exempt such Turkish nationals from such obligations as shall be imposed upon all other Turkish nationals for the preservation of public order.

Article 44.

Turkey agrees that, in so far as the proceeding Articles of this section affect non-Muslim nationals of Turkey, these provisions constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of the majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The British Empire, France, Italy and Japan hereby agree not to withhold their assent to any modification in these Articles which is in due form assented to by a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Turkey agrees that any Member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction or danger of infraction of any of these obligations, and that the Council may there upon take such action and give such directions as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances.

Turkey further agrees that any difference of opinion as to questions of law or of fact arising out of these Articles between the Turkish Government and any of the other Signatory Powers or any other Power, a Member of the Council of the League of Nations, shall be held to be a dispute of an international character under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Turkish Government hereby consents that any such dispute shall, if the other party thereto demands, be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The decision of the Permanent Court shall be final and shall have the same force and effect as an award under Article of the Covenant.

Article 45.

The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Muslim minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Muslim minority in her territory.

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