Consequences of Population Transfers: The 1923 Case of Greece and Turkey

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As with many ethnic conflicts, the relationship between Greece and Turkey has been characterized by a series of interrelated disputes that represent an infringement on the freedom and basic rights of one group by the other. Early relations between Greek and Turkish populations in the nineteenth century quickly evolved into a zero-sum game of control and domination. Not only was the exchange of territory that demarcated the border between the young Greek state and the declining Ottoman Empire viewed in these terms, but more importantly, the control and coercion of each other's ethnic group was played out in a "tit-for-tat" manner. The violence and abuses by one side seemed to justify violence by the other, providing both sides with the rationale and opportunity to continue committing atrocities against each other. Gaining control and power over one's own fate meant unifying one's own group, which often led to taking control and power away from another.

National unity was idealized and pursued by centralizing power and demanding a common language, culture, and religion for citizens, which provided for a strong self-identification of the state. Acquiring unity through such measures, however, resulted in the state's intolerant and repressive behavior toward those perceived as "other."[1] Due to Ottoman domination of the Greeks from the fifteenth century, and with the later rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, the separate identities of Greeks and Turks would eventually develop into a game of conquest between "self" and "other." The formation and development of "self" became inextricably linked to the control or conquest of "other." Each successive conflict between the Greek and Turkish populations built upon the previous conflict, and then served as the foundation for each subsequent conflict. This set the foundation for a history of animosity between the two peoples that has continued, in a variety of settings, until the present day.

The international community had few methods with which to manage the ethnic conflicts that erupted with the rise of nationalism, and most of these methods were ineffective. At the turn of the

[1] Patrick Thornberry, *International Law and the Rights of Minorities* (Oxford, 1991), 1.

twentieth century, the international treaties that were created to protect the rights of ethnic minorities were limited and ill defined, establishing only restricted rights for minorities within a limited geographic region of mostly European states. The most common strategies for diffusing the violence between ethnic groups were to exchange populations or to attempt to redefine territorial boundaries. Both were accomplished with immeasurable human suffering, and with little success in resolving the ethnic animosities.

This following study is an examination of the consequences of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923, and how this exchange shaped the nature of relations between Turkey and Greece over the course of the twentieth century. Section I will describe the general historical events that brought about the population exchange from the time of Greek independence until 1923. Section II will then discuss the transfer of populations and the immediate impact of uprooting and relocating entire communities. Section III offers a broad account of the long-term consequences of the population transfer. The fundamental concern in this analysis is to describe the circumstance that led states to destabilize their own societies, either by disenfranchising or abusing certain minority groups or by attempting to expel or otherwise eliminate these groups entirely. The study concludes with an examination of how a commitment to the protection and advancement of minority rights can mitigate the continuing abuses against minorities in both Greece and Turkey. For the purposes of this examination, the broad definition of a minority group as a non-dominant group distinguished by a shared ethnicity, race, religion, or language will be adopted.

Greek Statehood: Defining Borders and Separating Identities

In 1821, a portion of the Greek people gained its independence after four centuries of being under Ottoman rule. The nascent Greek state, however, included less than one-third of all Greek nationals from the Ottoman Empire.[2] This reversed the irredentist policy of a minority group seeking to unite with the majority of its "motherland." In the case of the Greeks, the minority group that was independent sought to expand its territorial control to include the majority of Greeks living to their north in Thessaly, Epirus, and Macedonia, and southward to encompass the Aegean islands and Crete. For many Greeks, this was simply a policy of reclaim-

[2] Theodore George Tatsios, *The Megali Idea and the Greek-Turkish War of 1897: The Impact of the Cretan Problem on Greek Irredentism, 1866-1897* (New York, 1984), 3.

ing territory that had once been theirs during the Byzantine Empire. For the Ottoman Turks, however, this Megali Idea (the "Great Idea" that would unite all ethnic Greeks), was perceived as a threat to their territorial integrity.[3]

The Birth of the Megali Idea

The Protocol of 1832 established the territorial boundaries of Greece, and marked the beginning of a national struggle to unite all ethnic Greeks under one nation-state. The Greeks sought to create a modern state with a strong centralized government and a clearly defined nationality. Greek leaders espoused the concept of nationalism and advocated the need for promoting a homogeneous culture based on a common language and religion, as well as national customs and traditions.[4] The purpose of this unifying process was two-fold. First, it rallied all citizens around the national goal of the Megali Idea. Populist nationalism was developed and utilized, not only to unify the citizens of this newly created state, but also to divert attention away from the overwhelming domestic problems that plagued Greece at the time. This allowed for greater attention to be focused on the foreign policy goal of freeing all Greeks who remained under Ottoman rule and by building a pan-Greek state. Greek sociologist Constantine Tsoucalas describes the emergence of Greece's policy of unification and its first ill-fated results:

> The period from 1895 to 1907 saw a substantial setback in Greece's economic development. The new government could not solve the problem of the external debt, and a state of permanent depression set in. Faced with rising popular discontent, the government had recourse to the Megali Idea. Public opinion was aroused; in 1897, despite economic depression and a total lack of military preparations, the government was pushed into declaring war on Turkey.[5]

In 1897, the Megali Idea brought Greece and Ottoman Turkey to fight their first war against each other as independent states. Turkey succeeded in defeating the ill-equipped Greek army, but

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Keith R. Legg and John M. Roberts, *Modern Greece: A Civilization on the Periphery* (Boulder, 1997), 19.

[5] Constantine Tsoucalas, *The Greek Tragedy* (Middlesex, UK, 1969), 25.

did not succeed in destroying the Greek dream of a unified Greater Hellas. As a consequence of the war, Greece was required to pay a large indemnity to Turkey and to give up parts of Thessaly. Greece also failed in its attempt to unite with Crete. The only solace to Greece was that the island was given autonomy from Turkey.[6] The war also brought about grave economic problems for Greece, leading an international commission to take control of its finances. The pursuit of the Megali Idea was suspended,[7] but it would rise again, bringing tragedy to both Greeks and Turks, and establishing a pattern of mutual resentment and bitterness that would mar relations between the two countries for the remainder of the century.

The second function of the Megali Idea was to give the major revolutionary figures from the Greek War of Independence the opportunity to gain domestic political support in their competition for government positions.[8] One of these dominant figures was Eleftherios Venizelos, who became Prime Minister in 1910 and led Greece through both victory and defeat in pursuit of the Megali Idea. Greece was a victor in both of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the first against Ottoman Turkey and the second against Bulgaria. With the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest, which ended the Balkan Wars, Greece was able to expand her territory to include Crete, Epirus, most of Macedonia, as well as many of the Aegean islands.[9] The Megali Idea seemed to be gaining momentum and ostensibly becoming a reality, and it continued to focus the attention of Greeks both at home and those remaining in Ottoman Turkey who hoped to be unified with their ethnic brethren.

World War I and the Decline of the Ottoman Empire

From the onset of the First World War until 1916, the Turks deported approximately 150,00 Ottoman Greeks to Greece and moved 50,000 or more into the interior of Anatolia. In the process of the deportations many thousands of Greeks died.[10] The Armenians suffered a worse fate at the hands of the Turks, enduring

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[6] Legg, 95.

[7] Tatsios, 110.

[8] Legg, 21.

[9] Tsoucalas, 31.

[10] Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 28.

several massacres during this period, and ultimately, genocide. Ottoman Turkey was facing its own demise and its rulers felt threatened by the heterogeneity and pluralism represented by its ethnic minorities.[11] The Turkish government's preferred strategy for dealing with the rebellious factions within the minority groups was to expel from its territory or exterminate all members of the ethnic communities that Turkey believed posed a threat.

During the First World War, Prime Minister Venizelos succeeded in overriding the King's interest in maintaining a position of neutrality by bringing Greece into the war on the side of the Allies. Britain encouraged Greece to join the Allied powers in the war by promising to grant Greece control over Western Anatolia. Greece, albeit belatedly, accepted Britain's offer. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire and Allied victory provided Greece with the opportunity to reap its share of the spoils of war. With the support of Britain and France, Greece sought to unite the Greeks of Asia Minor into a single Hellenic state. Since Ottoman Turkey had allied itself with Germany, the West was interested in bringing about the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the dissemination of its territory to the victors of the war.

As part of the Paris Peace Conference, the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres gave Greece almost all of Thrace (with the exception of Constantinople), as well as the Aegean islands of Imbros and Tenedos, and the Dodecanese except for Rhodes.[12] More importantly, the treaty provided Greece with administrative control over Smyrna (Izmir) and the surrounding Anatolian provinces with large Greek populations.[13] This appeared to bring the Megali Idea into fruition. In fact, the difficulty of administering an area heavily populated by Turks would prove fatal to Greek and Western calculations. Greece's determination to unite all ethnic Greeks by expanding its territory, despite Turkish nationalist opposition, would be met with a crushing defeat of the Greek army and would mark the beginning of the end for the Megali Idea.

The Path to War

The Treaty of Sèvres remained an illusive victory for Greece as long as the Turkish nationalist forces opposed the terms of the

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[11] Ibid., 42.

[12] Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922* (Ann Arbor, 1998), 129.

[13] Tsoucalas, 34.

treaty and resisted its enforcement.[14] Although the Treaty of Sèvres offered international recognition and a tacit acceptance of the Megali Idea, this only provided the Greeks with a false sense of security by making them think that they would receive support from the West in their effort to annex territories from the collapsing Ottoman Empire. Greece's overestimated expectation of Western backing, combined with its underestimated view of Turkish nationalism, fueled a misguided Greek military strategy for uniting all ethnic Greeks under one nation-state.

In 1919, the Greek army occupied Smyrna, committing its own atrocities against the Turkish population.[15] By 1921, the Greek army had advanced eastward and northward, attempting to weaken and expel Turkish nationalist forces.[16] This was met with severe reprisals from the nationalists under the emerging leadership of Mustafa Kemal, who would later become the founding president of modern Turkey and still later be given the name of father of his country, *Atatürk*. The anti-nationalist Turks, as well as ethnic Greeks and Armenians, were targets of Turkish nationalist attacks. Nur Bilge Criss describes the conflict between the anti-nationalists, who sought to protect the minorities, and the nationalists (also known as Kemalists) who feared that the minorities would aid the secessionist movements.

> Ankara ordered the Turkish police in Istanbul to identify acts of treason, starting with the minorities. The anti-Nationalist activists who were Turks were already well known to Ankara. Those Turks who had a serious reason to fear Nationalist retribution were leaving the country. … Turkish police were trying to gather information about the sympathies and about direct help provided by these people to the Greek cause.[17]

Just as the anti-nationalists opposed the Kemalist attacks against ethnic minorities in Turkey, Greece's strategy for enforcing the Treaty of Sèvres also had its critics. Ioannis Metaxas, a Greek military officer and staunch anti-Venizelist, opposed the enforcement of the Treaty of Sèvres on the basis that it was neither possible nor appropriate to impose Greek rule on Turkish soil. Metaxas believed that even if Greece had succeeded in controlling Smyrna

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[14] Smith, 133.

[15] Clogg, Richard, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge, 1992), 94.

[16] Naimark, 45.

[17] Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul Under Allied Occupation, 1918-1923* (Boston, 1999), 145.

and enforcing the treaty, a new war would be inevitable as Turkish nationalism would rise again and new guerrilla groups would be formed to oppose Greek rule. Metaxas' views epitomized the anti-Venizelist movement. In his response to questions of why he opposed the policy of war, he argued: "Because in fact you are seeking the conquest of Asia Minor, and without preparing for it through the Hellenization of the country. It is only superficially a question of the Treaty of Sèvres. It is really a question of the dissolution of Turkey and the establishment of our state on Turkish soil."[18]

Metaxas' position, had it been accepted by the ruling powers in Greece, would have avoided the fatal policy that led to the devastating consequences of 1922. However, it represented, nonetheless, a misguided belief about minority groups. His belief in the necessity of Hellenizing those territories Greece desired to rule was indicative of the mind-set of the time, which viewed minorities as a liability to civil society rather than as an entity to be protected. As long as minority groups were not treated with equanimity, they would represent the potential for instability. However, little effort was made to provide minorities with the same rights as the majority populations. Rather, governments sought to create homogeneous populations by changing the identities of the minorities who could be converted and expelling those who refused conversion.

Both Greek and Turkish elites believed that minority groups increased the potential for conflict within a democratic society and expected that a diverse population would only lead to division and unrest. The political leadership feared that the differences among minority groups would lead to a weak government that lacked the solid support of its populace. Thus, the idea of establishing civil society by protecting the identity of minority groups often was not even a consideration. A strong central government required unity among the populace, and this unity was achieved through the homogenization of people who might otherwise represent diverse religions, languages, and customs.

Even Metaxas' desire to Hellenize non-Greeks before imposing Greek rule on them, however, was not considered seriously because the policy of the Megali Idea had become so firmly entrenched among the Greek populace that its abdication would have caused a severe political backlash. The objective to create a Greater Hellas was pursued regardless of the fact that the territories sought by Greece were inhabited mostly by Turks. The vision

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[18] Smith, 203.

of the Megali Idea had unified the Greek people since the emergence of the Greek state, and in many ways, it had taken on a life of its own. More importantly, the Kemalists' persecution of ethnic minorities, including ethnic Greeks, was difficult for Greece to ignore. So the pursuit of unification continued, and the relationship of reciprocated violence between Greeks and Turks made war a reality.

By September 1922, the Turks succeeded in launching a massive counter-offensive against the Greek occupation and destroyed the Greek army. The Turks then occupied Smyrna, killing an estimated 30,000 Greeks and Armenians living there, and then setting fire to the city.[19] As chaos set in, hundreds of thousands of the surviving ethnic Greeks of Turkey were forced to flee and sought refuge in neighboring Greek islands or the mainland.[20] The Megali Idea, which eluded Greece since its inception, was finally put to rest.

Sanctioning Ethnic Cleansing

The devastating war led to a formal exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. In 1923, Turkey's victory gave it the necessary advantage to replace the Treaty of Sèvres which had favored Greek interests, with the Treaty of Lausanne. Capitalizing on their position as victors, the Turks insisted on compulsory population exchanges as the final settlement to the war and refused to allow for provisions in the treaty that would safeguard the rights of the minorities who remained.[21] The *Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations* provided for the transfer of approximately 1.4 million Anatolian Greeks to Greece, and 356,000 Thracian Turks to Turkey.[22] The terms of the treaty essentially had been fulfilled prior to the agreement, as all but 290,000 of the Greeks to be transferred had already been forced from their homes and were living in refugee camps in Greece.[23] To argue, then, that it was the population exchange that

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[19] Clogg, 97.

[20] Tsoucalas, 35.

[21] Naimark, 54.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

brought about a cessation to the hostilities between Greece and Turkey is to misconstrue the course of events.

The exchange simply prohibited the Greeks from returning to their homes, which left Greece with the heavy burden of having to absorb over one million citizens. By the time the population transfer was formally accepted, the Greek army had been destroyed, the majority of the Greek population in Turkey had been almost entirely expelled or killed during the hostilities, and Greece was exhausted and demoralized by her overwhelming defeat. Furthermore, the population exchange only served to escalate rather than reduce the tension between Greece and Turkey. The idea that creating virtually homogeneous populations in Greece and Turkey would stabilize relations proved unfounded for two reasons. First, it was impossible to transfer all minority groups, and second, the exchange caused immense suffering and further destruction for both the Greeks and Turks who were forcibly expelled. Those who were not expelled included the Greeks of Constantinople who had lived there prior to 1918. As the historical residence of the Orthodox Patriarchate for the Greek Orthodox Church, Constantinople's value could not feasibly be replaced by another city. In return for this exception, the Turks of Western Thrace were also exempted from the exchange.

Without effective measures for the protection of the minorities who remained, these populations faced continued injustices from their governments. The most immediate suffering, however, was endured by "the tens of thousands of Greeks [who] perished in the process of being driven from their homes and resettling in Greece."[24] In the course of the Greeks' journey out of Anatolia, they faced violence from bandits, suffered from the diseases of infested camps, and risked suffocation, starvation, or drowning due to the overcrowded and underprovisioned ships that were meant to transport them to Greece. It was estimated that hundreds died every day in makeshift hospitals and camps. And a full year after the exchange took place, well over one million refugees in Greece remained destitute.[25] The conditions for the Turkish refugees were better only to the extent that they were fewer in number and could be more readily absorbed in the regions of Anatolia vacated by the Greeks. Like the Greek refugees, the Turks from Greece found it difficult to support themselves and find acceptance among the Anatolian Turks. Since many of the Turkish refu-

[24] Naimark, 55.

[25] Ibid.

gees spoke Greek and new little Turkish, they were treated as aliens from Macedonia.[26]

Patrick Thornberry describes the treaty that legitimized the population exchange as an unjust and crude expression of state power, leading to "appalling human misery."[27] At the time, and to a great extent still today, the state system has promoted international law that tends to accord primacy to states as legal actors or subjects of law. Although it is less pronounced today than during the interwar period, the consequence of limiting the conduct of international law to relations among states has been that individuals or groups within a state have found it difficult to use the international legal system to protect their rights. With the limited protection for minority rights, individuals or groups whose rights had been violated by their own governments were left to rely on another state for representation in the international legal system. Most likely, this state would be one with ethnic or religious ties to the minority group being persecuted and would be willing to make a claim against the state responsible for violating the minorities' rights. Most often, however, the minority populations were simply left to their own defenses.

Perhaps as a cruel irony of history, the idea of adopting population exchanges as a measure to mitigate the atrocities committed against minorities was popularized after the Balkan Wars in which Greece and her Balkan allies (Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro) had triumphed over Ottoman Turkey. Only now, Greece itself was suffering the hardship of such a painful settlement. It is an even greater cruelty of history that the forced expulsion of populations continues to be used as a solution to, or in conjunction with, ethnic violence in the Balkans today. The unnatural goal of creating a complete identification of state with nation (or national group) continues to lead to state sanctioned ethnic cleansing, either through the expulsion or concerted destruction of minority groups.

In 1923, the League of Nations accepted the idea of the population exchange with reservation and with a sense that no other option to end the atrocities against the minorities was viable. In some respects, the Treaty of Lausanne was an attempt to codify the need to find a solution based on the reduction of fear between Greece and Turkey. This required that both states would need to recognize the borders imposed by the proposed settlement and

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Thornberry, 51.

believe that they would not be challenged in the future. For if either state believed it could challenge the borders based on the existence of its ethnic groups living in the neighboring state, then irredentist policies would continue and war would ensue again. Under these circumstances, minorities might be perceived and treated as insurgent elements that could encourage irredentist or secessionist aspirations. Therefore, the treaty sought to make the borders permanent, to reduce the number of ethnic minorities in both states, and to provide for basic measures that would protect the minority groups that did remain.

The League's rationale underlying the support of the exchange was that it was better to provide a legal framework for transferring populations than to allow the inevitable violence against the minority groups to continue. In this vein, other states with equally intractable ethnic conflicts today occasionally invoke the Greek-Turkish population exchange as a successful approach to ending the violence and settling territorial disputes. This interpretation of the population exchange, however, is based on a misrepresentation of the history that followed the 1923 exchange.

The Post-1923 Consequences of the Population Transfer

The population exchange left behind minority groups in both states who continued to suffer at the hands of their ethnic rivals. The expulsion of populations that had lived in these areas for centuries left the emigrants with a grave sense of injustice. And this sense of injustice continues even today to be played out between Greeks and Turks. Forcing ethnic groups to leave their ancestral homes serves to inflame ethnic animosity, resulting in destructive consequences for future relations between these groups. The descendants of those forced to emigrate remember the blame and resentment that resulted from the population exchange and feel they are justified in withholding certain rights and privileges afforded to the citizens of the majority.

The lack of any substantial minority populations in Greece and Turkey left the small remaining minorities at an even greater risk of being oppressed, as their voice was significantly weakened by the exchange. The belief system that ethnic heterogeneity is harmful and that homogeneity should be achieved only perpetuates conflict and prevents these ethnic groups from prioritizing mutually beneficial goals and establishing a civil society based on equal rights for all citizens. Moreover, the active pursuit of such homogenization of populations may actually sow the seeds of future conflict.

Minority Rights Abuses in Greece

According to Helsinki Watch, human rights abuses against ethnic minorities continue in both Greece and Turkey today. In a 1990 report, Helsinki Watch describes efforts by the Greek government to assimilate the ethnic Turks of Western Thrace by discriminating against them and denying them their ethnic identity. The report indicates that the Greek government has failed to provide ethnic Turks with equal protection under the law by depriving them of certain rights of citizenship if they leave Greece; denying them the right to purchase property, establish businesses, or repair Turkish schools in Western Thrace; and restricting their freedom of expression, religion, and travel.[28]

The Turks of Greece claim that the Greek government denies them their identity by referring to them only as Moslem Greeks rather than Turkish citizens of Greece. "Greek authorities deny the existence of the Turkish minority, asserting only that there is a Moslem minority in Greece, a minority population that is homogeneous in religion, but heterogeneous in origin."[29] The Greek government's response is that the Treaty of Lausanne refers only to "the Moslems of Greece" rather than the Turks of Greece, therefore the identity of "Turk" can apply only to citizens of Turkey.[30] In this regard, the Turkish minority is denied its ethnic status and becomes a religious minority only. Greek courts have ruled that reference to Greek citizens as "Turkish" endangers public order by "openly or indirectly inciting citizens to violence or creating rifts among the population at the expense of social peace."[31]

Even though the Treaty of Lausanne refers to the Turkish minority as a religious minority, the reasoning behind the court rulings and the Greek government's policy indicates a far deeper and more fundamental problem in the relationship between Greece and Turkey. The history of violence and animosity between the two nations, and the lack of substantive measures to educate the majority population on the values of ethnic heterogeneity and minority rights serves only to propagate ethnic conflict. The nature of the relationship between Greece and Turkey inevitably affects the relationship between their own majority and minority popula-

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[28] Ibid., 1.

[29] Lois Whitman, *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Turks of Greece* (New York, 1990), 3.

[30] Ibid., 15.

[31] Ibid., ii.

tions; and in turn, the domestic conditions and continuing civil strife in both states cause increasing bitterness in their interstate politics. Only by implementing and abiding by laws that respect the human rights of all citizens regardless of ethnicity, can this vicious cycle of antagonistic internal politics and belligerent foreign affairs come to an end.

In 1955, Greece enacted the Greek Nationality Law, which discriminates against non-ethnic Greeks regarding their right to citizenship. Chapter B, Section VI, Article 19 states that:

> 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 surviving parent have lost the same.[32]

Although the extent to which this law is enforced is not clear, the fact that it has not been repealed raises questions about Greece's interest in avoiding appearances of discrimination. Ethnic Turks have also complained of restrictions on their freedom of movement, claiming that their passports have been confiscated without cause, and returned a few months later without receiving any explanation.[33] The existence of discrimination in any country weakens civil society and has the potential to cause conflict and perhaps violence on some level. The importance of reporting discriminatory policy is to rectify the problems that exist, and to prevent discrimination from escalating into more serious abuses and violent conflict.

Minority Rights Abuses in Turkey

The denial of ethnic identity is by no means limited to the Greek government. While the Turks of Greece have complained openly about their experience of discrimination, the Greeks of Turkey live in fear of speaking out against the Turkish government. Helsinki Watch reported that Turkey's restrictions of the Greek minority are in violation of the Lausanne Treaty, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the minority rights agreements issued by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, including

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[32] Ibid., 11.

[33] Ibid., 13.

the Paris Charter.[34] Since Turkey has signed all of these international documents, its violation of the terms of these agreements harms its reputation as a supporter of international law.

Greeks have lived in Constantinople, now Istanbul, since the seventh century B.C.E. Of the 100,000 to 110,000 ethnic Greeks left there after the population exchange in 1923, only approximately 2,500 remain.[35] The largest exodus of ethnic Greeks occurred in 1955 and 1964. In 1955, a bomb exploded in the Turkish consulate in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, damaging in addition the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Violent attacks against the Greek minority in Turkey ensued, and riots occurred in the Greek neighborhoods of Istanbul. After these riots left fifteen people dead and caused approximately $300 million in damages, thousands of ethnic Greeks left Turkey. Six years after the attack, a Turkish court found that the Turkish Prime Minister at the time was responsible for the bombing, and that his intentions had been to create the exactly the results that actually took place in Istanbul.[36]

In 1964, while tensions between Greece and Turkey were high due to the ethnic conflict in Cyprus, the Turkish government chose to expel all Greeks who held Greek citizenship from Turkey. The thousand Greeks who were expelled were Greeks who had been born and lived in Turkey, but who simply held Greek citizenship. Many of them were given only a few hours' notice, and were prohibited from taking anything with them except for $22 and one suitcase of clothing. The official government position was that "[a]s the result of the unfriendly policy of the Greek government towards Turkey, the Turkish government is terminating the privileged treatment accorded in the past to Greek nationals."[37]

That same year, an additional 10,000 to 11,000 Greeks were expelled from Turkey when the Turkish government refused to renew the residence permits of Greeks citizens. A Turkish newspaper reported that in addition to those who were expelled, 30,000 ethnic Greeks of Turkey had left permanently. The newspaper reported that "they were not allowed to sell their houses or property or to take money from their bank accounts."[38] Thousands of

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[34] Lois Whitman, *Denying Human Rights and Ethnic Identity: The Greeks of Turkey* (New York, 1992), 3.

[35] Ibid., 6.

[36] Ibid., 8.

[37] Ibid., 9.

[38] Ibid.

additional Greeks who feared losing their lives and property chose to leave Turkey, which, in many cases, had been their families' homeland for hundreds of years. Those who remain continue to be fearful of abuses by the government. Officials from the Turkish Human Rights Association report that "the Greek community is more fearful than the Kurds or the Armenians."[39]

Those who invoke the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey as a successful strategy for solving intransigent ethnic conflicts fail to understand fully the nature of ethnic cleansing. The policy of eliminating the existence of an ethnic group from a region has immensely devastating repercussions that extend beyond the immediate need to end the fighting. The loss and suffering endured by those affected by population transfers continue even after they have relocated and begun new lives elsewhere. The suffering becomes part of their identity, and that identity includes a polarized view of "self" and "other." The adversary that drove the refugee from her or his home becomes the "other" (often the embodiment of evil) that must be opposed or controlled, for fear that the "other" will become dominant. Transferring populations does not control or manage the ethnic conflict, but rather, sets it deeper within the consciousness of the ethnic group.

Extending the Ethnic Cleansing to Cyprus

Indeed, one can argue that the population exchange between Greeks and Turks in 1923, repeated itself in Cyprus in 1964 and (more forcefully) in 1974. The ethnic ties of the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus to their respective "motherlands" prevented them from forging a Cypriot national identity. Greek-Cypriots had even fought in the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, which initiated the same type of distrust among the two Cypriot communities as existed between Greece and Turkey.[40] The Greek-Cypriots had hoped that the creation of an independent Greek state would lead to union between Cyprus and Greece, freeing Cyprus from its Ottoman rulers. Although the Greek-Cypriots accounted for 80 percent of the population and the Turkish-Cypriots for only 18 percent, Ottoman control of the island created a situation in which the majority was treated as a minority group.

With its independence in 1960, a constitution was imposed on Cyprus that actually served to aggravate ethnic conflict by pro-

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[39] Ibid., 2.

[40] Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing* (New York, 1996), 138.

moting a situation in which the two communities would act separately in their decision-making process, with each side being able to veto the decisions made by the other.[41] Inevitably, conflict erupted and today ethnic division continues to plague the island. The relationship between Greece and Turkey during the previous century was an ominous foreshadowing of the conflict between the ethnic groups in the newly independent Cyprus. The aspiration for unity based on ethnic homogeneity impacted how the ethnic communities in Cyprus viewed themselves and each other.

The lack of willingness to accept and value the ethnic differences by both communities guaranteed the escalation and perpetuation of violence on the island. Without a mutually acceptable solution available, Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot population viewed segregation along ethnic lines as the only solution to the conflict. Turkey forced the Greek population to the south of the island and congregated the Turkish population in the north. And at the time of this writing, the Turkish military continues to enforce the division of the island and the separation of the two communities (with the ultimate goal of creating two separate states) as a final settlement. Although many scholars and policymakers alike view the present-day division of the island as a successful solution, this interpretation of events only reinforces the idea that homogeneous states are desirable and that ethnic rivals can and should be effectively displaced or otherwise "cleansed" for the purposes of establishing peace. Solutions that justify the expulsion, elimination, or other forms of cleansing of ethnic groups can only propagate ethnic hatred and foster further instability.

Conclusion: Promoting Civil Society through Ethnic Diversity

When states believe that the international community will accept the forced transfer or expulsion of minority populations, then more constructive approaches to creating civil society will not be pursued. More significantly, if ethnic groups, of either the majority or minority populations, believe that ethnic strife will always lead to self-determination, then ethnic conflict can become the means to an end rather than an unintended consequence. Violence, then, becomes an option for bringing about homogeneity. Once homogeneity is no longer viewed as the only means to a uni-

[41] David Wippman, "International Law and Ethnic Conflict on Cyprus," *Texas International Law Journal* 31 (Spring 1996).

fied or strong state, ethnic diversity can exist without posing a threat to any minority group.

Thomas Franck, a prominent legal scholar, explains that ethnically homogeneous populations are an interest of government leaders that is still pursued today. While the continuing ethnic violence in the Balkans is well known, there are other, more subtle, examples that elucidate how deep-seated the desire for ethnic purity is in the world today. In 1997, Slovakia's then Prime Minister offered the Hungarian Prime Minister 600,000 Hungarians in exchange for the ethnic Slovak population of Hungary. Franck argues that "[s]uch an approach to the survival principle tends to shade into genocide, an extreme violation of basic international treaty and customary law."[42] Contemporary ethnic conflicts that pursue the elimination of certain minority groups reveal that international treaties prohibiting such behavior are being undermined by political leaders who do not understand that ethnic diversity can promote a strong a civil society rather than detract from it.

In a cross-sectional study of 125 civil wars since 1944, Nicholas Sambanis of the World Bank found that forced partitions of ethnic populations "are less likely to occur as the degree of ethnic heterogeneity increases."[43] Therefore, the more diffuse a state's ethnic composition is, the less likely it is that any given majority can impose its will on minority ethnic groups. These results indicate that increasing ethnic diversity may, in fact, prove to be a better solution to ethnic violence than promoting homogeneity.

In 1923, international norms for the protection of minorities were greatly inadequate, and international treaties failed to safeguard the rights of these groups. Consequently, the separation of ethnic rivals may have been the only practical solution at the time. Today however, these norms, and the various international treaties that promote these norms, are beginning to have a more pronounced influence on the behavior of states. While some states still violate the rights of minority populations, most states do provide for the legal protection of minorities. The focus of ethnic conflict resolution today, therefore, should not rest on the misplaced assumptions of the past. For the failures of the 1923 population exchange have shown the long-term destruction of such policies. The irreversible damage done by ethnic cleansing (of all types)

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[42] Thomas Franck, *The Empowered Self: Law and Society in the Age of Individualism* (Oxford, 1999), 249.

[43] Nicholas Sambanis, "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War: An Empirical Critique of the Theoretical Literature," *World Politics* 52, no. 4 (2000): 459.

throughout this century indicates that policies that encourage homogeneity are more destructive than they are stabilizing. The policies of the new century should take into consideration these failures and explore the importance of ethnic diversity in advancing civil society.

Ethnicity in and of itself, however, is not defined by conflict. Some ethnic groups live quite peacefully among each other, while others, in apparently similar circumstances, do not. The fundamental factor in determining which ethnic groups will engage in conflict is the extent to which the leadership of these groups protects and values the rights of all individuals, regardless of ethnicity. International law has played a large role in defining the rights of minorities and in influencing state behavior to protect the rights of those citizens who are the most vulnerable targets of ethnic violence. However, laws alone are not sufficient to end ethnic conflict.

There must be a certain level of acceptance for the ethnic composition of a state at any given time. This acceptance requires that states recognize the legitimacy and the validity of all ethnic groups that comprise the state. For whenever a state understands and promotes the value of its composite parts, it is in effect valuing its own identity and enhancing its own development. Similarly, when a state seeks to undermine any single element of its population (a part of its own identity), it is sowing the seeds of conflict, promoting instability, and stifling progress. It is generally when those in power view the interests of minority groups as antagonistic to the interests of the state that abuses against minorities occur. Inevitably, a spiraling level of fear encompasses the majority, or ruling group, and any minority group. The majority group may fear that the existence or presence of ethnically or religiously diverse groups somehow threatens its own identity, and so it tries to isolate and weaken these minority groups. The minority groups then seek to protect themselves, if possible, by engaging in the same type of violence that is used against them by the majority group.

This powerplay between ethnic groups is based on the belief system that empowering one's "self" (one's own ethnic group) occurs only by weakening, subjugating, or otherwise eliminating others. In many ways, those who engage in violent behavior do so out of weakness rather than strength. This weakness stems from the group's fear that by accepting the legitimacy of an ethnically diverse people, the original group must recognize that it is not superior. It is this sense of superiority that leads to fear. For in reality no ethnic group can be superior to another. Therefore, to achieve this perception of superiority, ethnic groups must engage

in rhetoric and behavior that demeans or denigrates those belonging to different groups. As each group seeks to differentiate itself and empower itself by pursuing this self-imposed sense of superiority, these groups are lead inexorably to an increasing level of violence.

Few would disagree that ethnic conflict is based on ethnic hatred. Unfortunately, the customary response given regarding the origins of ethnic hatred is that such hatred is decades or centuries old. It is as though the duration of the hatred is what defines it. After all, history is replete with examples that lend credence to the idea that populations that have fought fervently against each other and have suffered at the hands of each other can never live amicably together. Yet this superficial view offers little insight and provides a limited basis for which to understand ethnic conflict. The continuation of any type of relationship, whether it is based on mutual respect or mutual animosity, requires that a population be educated to support the views that maintain that particular relationship. In this regard, the political leadership of a state or ethnic group plays a decisive role in the nature of ethnic relations.

Political leaders often derive their own power by generating fear and fostering the enmity that leads the populace to believe that without such leaders, it will be at the mercy of a vicious adversary. The political game of "self" versus "other" begins, and the general public perceives that the identity of "self" is in danger of being influenced, or dominated, or perhaps even eliminated by those viewed as "other." These leaders are then able to use fear to garner the political support they need to carry out abuses against other ethnic groups. Without such fear, the general public has little reason to react violently to those they perceive as "other." In addition, political leaders are often able to direct the kind of public information necessary to increase ethnic animosities and to secure the loyalty they need to make the abuses appear justified.

One of the most immediate challenges today is how to deal with the proliferation of violent ethnic, racial, and religious conflicts that constitute the main human rights threats at the turn of the twenty-first century. The imperative to change the conditions that lead to ethnic violence remains as true today as it was at the turn of the last century. More importantly, doing so requires that governments put forth a concerted effort to respect and encourage ethnic diversity, to promote effective democratic institutions, to foster the growth of civil society, and to create a genuine universal human rights culture.