THE PONTUS QUESTION: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: *This article intends to analyze the problematic known by the international public opinion as "the Pontus Question," which can be summarized as the uprisings of the Greek subjects living in the Black Sea Region of the Ottoman Empire during the last years of the Empire and the Turkish National Struggle, the subsequent inter-communal clashes, and the migration of these Greek subjects to Greece with the population exchange. Within this framework, it examines the historical and socio-cultural background of this question and elaborates why and how it has nowadays been presented to the international public opinion as "the Pontic Genocide" allegations.*

Key Words: *Pontus Question, Greek, Ottoman Empire, Greece, Population Exchange*

PONTUS MESELESİ: GENEL BİR BAKIŞ

Özet: *Bu makale uluslararası kamuoyunda "Pontus Sorunu" olarak tanımlanan, Osmanlı Devleti'nin son yıllarında ve Milli Mücadele döneminde Karadeniz bölgesinde yaşayan, imparatorluğun Rum tebaasının ayaklanmaları, bölgede yaşanan topluluklar arası çatışma ve son olarak Rum tebaanın nüfus mübadelesi ile Yunanistan'a göç etmesi olarak özetlenebilecek sorunsalı tanımlamayı ve analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede sorunun tarihsel ve sosyo-kültürel arka planı incelenmekte ve günümüzde "Pontus soykırımı" iddialarının uluslararası kamuoyunun gündemine nasıl ve ne amaçla getirildiği yorumlanmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Pontus Sorunu, Rum, Osmanlı Devleti, Yunanistan, Nüfus Mübadelesi*

Introduction

Nationalist movements within multi-ethnic empires had produced multiple alternative historiographies. The historians of the constituent communities evaluated their separation from the imperial system as a struggle for independence from tyrant rule, while the historians of the ruling community perceived the process as the emergence of a separatist movement, which aimed to destroy the long-lasting order created by the empire itself. This was the case for the Ottoman Empire. When the constituent elements of the Empire, namely the Serbians, Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians and Arabs gained their independence, multiple alternative historical narratives were produced by both sides. While those who gained their independence argued that they had engaged in a glorious struggle for achieving their independence and nation-state against the despotic and oppressive rule of the Ottomans, namely against the "Turkish yoke," Turkish historians tended to label the independence movements with terms such as "rebellion, revolt, uprising, incident, etc." For example, for a Bulgarian historian, the reason for Bulgarian backwardness was likely a direct result of the Ottoman oppressive and even imperialist/exploiting rule. Hence, according to this rendition, when the Bulgarians claimed their rights to be independent, Ottoman tyrants dispatched troops and killed thousands of Bulgarians to suppress the Bulgarian revolution. On the other hand, the majority of Turkish historians argued that the Bulgarians, who had lived under Ottoman Empire for centuries enjoying political, economic and religious privileges under the imperial system, had been corrupted by the nationalist ideas as well as foreign intervention. Therefore, they revolted against the Ottoman Empire, killed and expelled the Muslim population living in the region and committed treason against their own state.

These rival historiographies have survived even until today to a great extent; however, recent studies in history conducted both in Turkey and in the countries which emerged out of the Ottoman Empire have produced more objective and stimulating results. There are two significant exceptions to this trend. The first one is the revitalization of the historical studies regarding what had happened to the Armenians in 1915. There is a significant "war of wording" regarding this issue. While the Armenian and some Western historiographies employ the word "genocide" to describe the Armenian relocation and related incidents that took place in the first decades of the twentieth century, Turkish historiography uses the word "question" to denote the same occurrences. In other words, there are two competing depictions of the same moment in history: the "Armenian genocide" as an "event" and the "Armenian question" as a "process." This futile discussion was resurrected in the 1980s and is still occupying the agendas of both Turkey and Armenia as well as the agenda of the international community.

The second significant exception is a less-discussed debate of the Pontic Greek genocide allegations, so-named after the fate of the Greek community living in the region called Pontus, located along the Black Sea littoral from the town of İnebolu in the west and the city of Batum in the east. Similar to the Armenian case, but to a lesser degree, there emerged rival historiographies regarding the fate of the Pontic Greeks in the early decades of the twentieth century. Particularly admiring the "success" of the Armenian lobbies in convincing some 18 parliaments for recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations, the Greek state and Greek diaspora began to press for the "undeniable fact" of the Pontic Greek "genocide." However, still, the literature on this subject for both sides is newly emerging and quite limited. Hence, the idea of writing this paper as an overview of the Pontic Greek "genocide" debate emerged due to this dearth of literature, which is presently incapable of fully putting forward what had really happened to the Pontic Greeks. As such, this paper's aim is not to examine all the sources regarding the subject matter or to provide the reader with an all-encompassing and comprehensive study on the Pontic Greeks. Rather, this paper is designed as a preliminary work for demonstrating the basic discussions regarding the issue through referring to a bulk of literature, not only written by Turkish historians, but also by Greek and Western historians. In other words, this paper intends to review the Pontus Question in order to establish a basis for future research.

The paper is composed of four main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the Pontic Greek genocide allegations in order to present the reader with some Greek and Western accounts of the subject matter. Among the literature making the claim of Pontic Greek genocide, two sources, a book and the written statement of a non-governmental organization, have been selected since the arguments of genocide were put forward, albeit briefly, in these works. After acquainting the reader with these allegations, the second chapter focuses on the historical background of the Pontus Question to contextualize these allegations and the response produced by Turkish historiography. This second chapter is divided into several sub-sections dealing first with the background of Greek nationalism which had been a stimulating factor for the Hellenization of the Ottoman Greeks and then with the Greek Revolution and subsequent independence of Greece together with the impact of this independence on the Greek community living in the Ottoman Empire. The third chapter tries to define the Pontus Question by focusing on the establishment of clandestine Greek societies in the Ottoman Empire, their activities and the inter-communal clashes between the Muslims and Greeks in the Black Sea region. In doing that, the chapter focuses on the cooperation between the European powers and the Ottoman Greeks, the Turkish reaction towards the incidents experienced in the Black Sea region and the exchange of population between Turkey and Greece, which had practically ended

the Pontus Question. Finally, the last chapter deals with the current ramifications of the Pontic Greek genocide allegations through examining the limited recognition of genocide allegations in Greece and in several states of the United States. The paper ends with an overall conclusion.

The authors of the paper do not claim that they have located or consulted all the literature regarding the subject matter. The literature written in Greek was unfortunately left unexamined; however still, to a great extent, Greek historians have been referred to through the English and Turkish translations. Furthermore, archival documents have not been utilized extensively, but the secondary literature citing archival documents has been examined and cited in the paper. Objectivity, an essential component of social scientific research, in this paper is adhered to as much as possible; hence both Greek and Turkish accounts are presented in a comparative sense. In other words, what has been written in this paper is clearly footnoted and nothing has been left uncited. Unfortunately, the authors of the paper have witnessed that even these basic requirements of social scientific research have been ignored in much of the literature regarding the subject matter; therefore this paper, is a modest attempt to review a significant part of the existing literature and to assist subsequent research in this much unexamined part of history.

I. Pontic Greek Genocide Allegations

As mentioned in the introduction, what had happened to the Pontic Greeks between 1914 and 1923 has been termed differently by Turkish and Greek accounts. While the Turkish side has described the events as a double-sided phenomenon which has both domestic and international dimensions, some Greek and Western sources are almost completely determinate on labeling these events as "genocide." Therefore, prior to the closer examination of the Pontus Question, it would be better to identify how the literature advocating the Pontic Greek genocide allegations perceives the issue as "genocide." Indeed, there is a plethora of publications having such a description and many of these publications are referred in the subsequent chapters of the article. However, in this part, two sources are utilized to provide the reader with a brief account of the Pontic genocide allegations. One of them is a book written by Harry Tsirkinidis entitled *At Last We Uprooted Them… The Genocide of Pontos, Thrace and Asia Minor through the French Archives*.[1] In this book, the central argument of the author is

1 Harry Tsirkinidis, *At Last We Uprooted Them… The Genocide of Pontos, Thrace and Asia Minor through the French Archives*, Athens: Kyriakidis Brothers Publishing House, 1993.

that after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Greeks had been systematically oppressed and persecuted by the Turks through the centuries and this reached to a climax in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; according to this view, the latest phase from 1914 to 1923 can be, without doubt, considered as "genocide."

Indeed, Tsirkinidis asserts that he has utilized French archival documents in order to support his claims; however, unfortunately, he has not footnoted the archival documents. Hence, it is impossible for the reader to check the accuracy of the documents and the claims in the book, since there is no indication in the book that the documents actually exist. If this academic deficiency can be ignored, the arguments in the book can be summarized as follows: The oppression and persecution of Greeks by the Turks can be neither confined to the period between 1914 and 1923 nor to the Pontus region. Rather, the persecutions had started after the Turkish conquest of the region where the Greeks had been living for centuries. When these maltreatments had reached a zenith in the early twentieth century, Pontic Greeks had established several organizations to protect their rights; however, this could not deter the Turks from increasing their pressure. Therefore, two phases of "genocide" were experienced. The first phase was perpetrated between 1914 and 1918 by the oppressive central and local authorities of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) claiming thousands of lives and uprooting much of the remaining Greeks in the Pontus region as well as in the western and central parts of Anatolia. The second phase, on the other hand, started with the arrival of Mustafa Kemal on May 19, 1919 in Samsun, one of the most important cities of the Pontus region, and ended with mass forced exodus of the Greek community of Anatolia. The symbolic event of this period was the great fire in İzmir said here to have been sparked by the invading Turkish army. The final action was the compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece clearly ending the Greek presence in their historic homelands in Anatolia.

The second source utilized in this part of the paper regarding the Pontic genocide allegations was a written statement submitted by the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, a non-governmental organization which had a special consultative status in the UN. In February 1998, the United Nations Economic and Social Council announced that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had received a written statement entitled "A People in Continued Exodus" from the League.[2] Indeed, in the document the concept of "genocide"

2 For the full text of the statement see http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G98/106/67/PDF/G9810667.pdf?OpenElement

was never utilized; however still, the claims it included could be considered as a summary of a bulk of literature on the Pontic Greek "genocide."

To start with, it was stipulated in the document that the Pontus region was inhabited by the Greeks since the eighth century B.C., even before the establishment of the first Pontic Kingdom; hence, this region was essentially a Greek homeland. Secondly, it was determined that after the Ottoman conquest in the second half of the fifteenth century, living conditions and communal life of the Pontic Greeks were affected negatively by a number of economic and social mechanisms, such as deteriorating economic conditions, increasing taxes and a continuous distrust between Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of the region. Third, during the nineteenth century, a series of mass migrations of the Pontic Greeks had been experienced as a result of the Ottoman-Russian Wars of 1828-29, 1853-56 and 1877-78. Thousands of refugees, panicked by the fear of reprisal from the Muslims, migrated to the Russian territories. The formation of the initial Greco-Pontic communities in the North Caucasus and Georgia, therefore, was an outcome of these developments. Fourth, with the formation of the Young Turk movement in the early twentieth century, a new nationalistic and ethnocentric ideology appeared in the Ottoman Empire. This movement attempted to eliminate the Christian communities of the Empire in order to establish a nation-state. The number of Pontic Greeks in the beginning of the twentieth century may be estimated at about 750,000 and as a result of Young Turk as well as subsequent Kemalist policies, all of them were said to have been uprooted from their homelands through "massacres, atrocities, massive rapes, abduction of women and children, forcible conversions to Islam, death marches into arid regions, in inhuman conditions of hunger, thirst and disease meant for full extinction."[3] It was finally stipulated in this written statement that:

> [F]rom 1916 to 1923, about 350,000 Pontians disappeared through massacres, persecution and death marches. The population which could survive was driven to exodus. Thousands went away as refugees to a number of countries, such as France and the United States of America. Some 190,000 of the survivors arrived in Greece before 1923. The agreement signed in 1923 by Greece and Turkey, along with the Lausanne Treaty, for the mass exchange of refugees between the two countries, did not include the Pontians still alive in the region, most of whom had been converted to Islam. As a whole, about 200,000 fled from 1916 to 1923 to the Caucasus, mostly to Georgia and to Russia.[4]

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

All in all, the book written by Harry Tsirkinidis and the written statement submitted to the UN by the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples summarize the Pontic Greek genocide allegations. Although the rest of this paper does not focus on responding to these allegations, these claims will be recalled when necessary. The paper does not intend to judge them as right or wrong, but rather it tries to approach these allegations through employing Turkish and Western sources in juxtaposition to the Greek ones to provide the reader with a more comprehensive and objective account of what actually happened in the early decades of the twentieth century with regard to the Pontic Greeks.

II. Contextualizing the Pontus Question: The Historical Dimension

1. Historical Background

The emergence of the Pontus Question is closely interrelated with the emergence of Greek nationalism and Greek identity formation in the early nineteenth century. Without examining the dynamics of Greek nationalist consciousness, it would be impossible to understand the emergence and evolution of the Pontus Question. Therefore, in this part of the paper three historical occurrences or processes contributing to and shaping the nature of Greek identity formation are examined. The first of these developments was the conclusion of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 between the Ottoman Empire and Russia ending six years of war which began in 1768. The second development was the French Revolution in 1789 and the subsequent spread of nationalist movements within the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the third development was the exacerbation of the internal problems, particularly the economic ones, within the Ottoman Empire, which contributed to the uneasiness of the Orthodox Greek population.

a. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca and the "Eastern Question"

On July 21, 1774, in a small town in Silistria[5] called Küçük Kaynarca, the head of the Ottoman delegation, Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed Paşa (c.1720-1774),[6] and the head of the Russian delegation, Count Peter Aleksandrovich Rumiantsov (1725-1796), signed a peace treaty after a very short negotiation process, ending six years of Ottoman-Russian war. However, neither of them was aware that this

5 This town is still situated in the Silistria Province of Bulgaria.

6 In this article, the dates in paranthesis after the names of persons indicate the dates of birth and death. The dates with an "r." indicate the dates of beginning and end of the reign of an emperor, sultan, or king.

piece of paper opened a new era not only for the Ottoman and Russian Empires but also for the whole of world history. Accordingly, many historians agree that the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca resulted in one of the most enduring international problems of European politics, known as the "Eastern Question."[7] As a matter of fact, the Eastern Question was a very complex phenomenon; however, it can be briefly defined as the international rivalry for domination over the Ottoman territories from the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. In other words, the concept of the "Eastern Question" does not refer to a particular problem, rather a variety of issues emerged out of the Ottoman decline. Indeed, the Eastern Question not only included inter-state rivalry over the Ottoman Empire, but also the nationalist movements within the Ottoman Empire and its implications on the dismemberment of its once-admired multi-ethnic composition.

What made the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca extremely important for the emergence of the Eastern Question was two significant outcomes of its provisions. The first outcome is the Russian access to the Black Sea through her territorial acquisitions from the Ottoman Empire.[8] This achievement immediately turned out to be a major British concern. A prospective Russian naval superiority in the Eastern Mediterranean meant a significant threat for the security of the British trade routes to India. Hence, a policy of checks and balances through the preservation of territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire against Russia turned out to be a priority for British foreign policy until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[9] Thus, Anglo-Russian rivalry, which would ultimately result in a war in the mid-nineteenth century (namely the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856), had always been at the core of the Eastern Question from then on.

The second outcome of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty is more important for understanding the transformation of the status of the Orthodox population in the Ottoman Empire in general and the Greeks in particular. Accordingly, Articles 7 and 14 of the treaty granted Russia the authority to protect the rights of the Orthodox Christian peoples of the Ottoman Empire.[10] Although Roderic Davison

7 There is a plethora of literature on the Eastern Question; however, two books provide the reader with a comprehensive account of the emergence and evolution of the Eastern Question: Matthew Smith Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1966; and A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, London, New York: Longman, 1994.

8 With this treaty, the Ottomans ceded the part of the Yedisan region between the Dnieper and Southern Bug Rivers to Russia. This territory included the port of Kherson and gave the Russian Empire its first significant direct access to the Black Sea. Russia also acquired the Crimean ports of Kerch and Yenikale and the Kabarday region in the Caucasus; thus, it was able to consolidate its naval position in the Black Sea.

9 A. Lobanov Rostovsky, "Anglo-Russian Relations through the Centuries," *Russian Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Spring, 1948), pp. 41-52, pp. 43-44.

10 For a detailed discussion of these articles with reference to the studies of a number of historians, see Roderic H. Davison "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility': The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (September, 1976), pp. 463-483.

interprets the text of the treaty more cautiously by stipulating that the wording of the treaty did not necessarily mention a "duty" for Russia to protect the rights of the Orthodox Christians, but rather a looser form of "representation" of the Orthodox Christians on behalf of the Ottoman Empire,[11] Russia would interpret the treaty in a way that it would easily intervene in Ottoman internal affairs with that pretext. Such an attitude contributed much to the emergence of independence movements since the Orthodox Christian elite became aware of the foreign support, which could be obtained easily when necessary.

All in all, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca can be considered as a valid starting point for contextualizing the Pontus Question since Russia became the protector of the Orthodox Greek population of the Ottoman Empire and exercised this self-assumed "duty" of the protection of Christians as a pretext for its own strategy within the framework of the Eastern Question. Only four decades after the signing of the treaty, this pretext became a significant tool for Russia to legitimize the war it waged against the Ottoman Empire (namely the Ottoman-Russian War between 1806 and 1812) and several subsequent wars (between 1828-1829, 1853-1856, 1877-1878). However, although Greeks obtained a foreign patron, Greek nationalism had not yet blossomed since it had to await a more significant breaking point in European as well as world history, namely the French Revolution.

b. The French Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 not only transformed the French political system; its implications had also reached to even the remotest parts of Europe and then to the rest of the world, particularly through the spread of nationalism as an ideology motivating people who became aware of their national identity.

It is not surprising that the initial target of the nationalist ideas was the multi-ethnic empires, including the Ottoman Empire. Despite grave territorial losses, in the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had still retained many of its territorial possessions in Southeastern Europe. Due to geographical proximity to Western Europe from where the ideas of nationalism had been spreading, the Balkans, with its extremely diverse ethnic composition immediately developed into an arena for the implementation of the teachings of the French Revolution, such as freedom, independence and equality. Therefore, the first nationalist movements within the Ottoman Empire erupted in this volatile region.

11 Ibid., p. 469.

The velocity of the spread of nationalist ideas is quite striking, if one considers that Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1808) was enthroned in the same year as the French Revolution, while the first nationalist uprising in the Ottoman Empire had erupted with the Serbs during his reign in 1804.[12] This revolt had been suppressed by the Ottomans; however, it opened a new era in the Balkans, which was mainly characterized by independence movements against the Ottoman Empire.

To sum up, if the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca provided an external fulcrum for the Christian Orthodox population, the French Revolution contributed to the consolidation of their nationalist sentiments. Before the ideas of fraternity and equality, the ideas of liberty reached the most volatile region of the Ottoman Empire and turned it into the "powder keg" of Europe in the nineteenth century. Since the capacity for the reception of the ideas of the French Revolution was quite related with the intellectual quality of the recipients, it was the Greeks, among other ethnic communities, who eagerly absorbed this new thinking. This point will be elaborated upon further in the coming pages.

c. Internal Problems of the Ottoman Empire

In understanding Greek nationalism in general and the Pontus Question in particular, an examination of external factors, such as the intervention of foreign actors and the French Revolution, would not suffice; therefore, internal factors should be analyzed in order to understand the evolution of these issues more accurately. From the seventeenth century onwards, the Ottoman Empire began to encounter not only external setbacks, but also internal difficulties, particularly in terms of economic maintenance of the Empire. The longevity of the Ottoman wars resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural production because of lack of enough manpower. Moreover, devaluation of Ottoman currency to meet the expenses of the Empire increased popular discontent since the purchasing power of the people decreased considerably.[13] From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the Ottoman

12 While several historians, including Charles and Barbara Jelavich, underestimated the significance of Serbian uprising of 1804 as a nationalist movement, Lawrence Meriage argues that it was quite important because of its being a pioneer movement for other ethnic communities living in the Balkans. The Serbian uprising, which had started as a reaction against the oppressive rule of the Ottoman governor of Belgrade, was initially launched by the Serbs of Vojvodina and later supported by Russia. See Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Balkans,* Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey, 1965, p. 48; Lawrence Meriage, "The First Serbian Uprising (1804-1813) and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Eastern Question," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (September, 1978), pp. 421-439, p. 422; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Milliyetler ve Sınırlar: Balkanlar, Kafkasya ve Ortadoğu*, translated by Şirin Tekeli, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994, p. 55.

13 These economic problems were compounded with a stormy wave of uprisings in Anatolia, known as *Celali* Revolts (named after the first serious rebellion by Sheikh Celal in 1519), particularly in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Benefitting from the weakening of central government, some local notables or governors appointed by the Sultan began to rebel. In their quest against the central government, they found a solid military base composed of former soldiers who had deserted the Ottoman army by refusing to participate

periphery witnessed the rise of urban notables (*ayan*), most of whom followed oppressive policies, particularly in terms of tax extraction from the people. As a result, both the Muslim and Christian subjects of the Empire suffered from increasing taxes.

In his significant book on the evolution of the Greek state, Richard Clogg writes "[t]here could have been no prospect of successfully sustaining a revolt if the Ottoman Empire had not been weakened militarily, territorially and economically during the course of the eighteenth century."[14] In other words, the economic and social problems experienced since the early seventeenth century established a significant pressure on the whole of Ottoman society. This distress was not only peculiar to the non-Muslim components of the Ottoman Empire. However, compounded with foreign intervention and the nationalist fervor particularly inflicted by the non-Muslim elite, the Orthodox Christian population became more reactant to the failures of the Ottoman administration. This was another factor contributing to the Greek Revolution of the nineteenth century and subsequent establishment of the Greek Kingdom.

2. Greek Nationalism, Greek Revolution and Greek Independence

Up to now, it was argued that the Russian protectorate of the Orthodox Christians living in the Ottoman Empire, the nationalist ideas emerging out of the French Revolution, and the discontent of the population regarding the deterioration of the living conditions within the Empire formed the basis of the nationalist uprisings within the Ottoman Empire. However, there are additional factors that make the emergence of Greek nationalism and subsequent developments, such as the success of Greek Revolution and acquisition of independence, more peculiar. In this section of the article these special conditions are examined in detail.

a. The Greek Community within the Ottoman Empire until the Greek Revolution

Indeed, one of the most significant assertions of those who support the claims of the Pontic Greek "genocide" is that the Greeks, as other non-Muslim communities

in long and exhausting wars. The *Celali* Revolts had prompted the desertion of almost all of the Anatolian Peninsula by exhausting its resources. Cities were sacked, agricultural lands were pillaged, and many peoples were killed. Hence, from the early seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, the confidence of the population towards the Ottoman administrators decreased. For the economic problems of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the eighteenth century, see Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

14 Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 20.

of the Empire, had always been oppressed by the Ottoman Empire since the Empire itself was founded on a religious basis resulting in a solid distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. True, there was such a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims in a legal sense; however, this does not necessarily mean that non-Muslims had always been maltreated. Of course, particularly in times when the Ottoman economic and political decline was evident, the pressure on Ottoman society had increased and non-Muslims were mal-administered; they were even subject to oppression. However, still, as a multi-ethnic empire, the Ottoman state, had laws, regulations and all other political and legal apparatuses for proper administration of its subjects either Muslim or non-Muslim.

Furthermore, it was an oft-cited view of eminent historians that among other Christian communities living in the Ottoman Empire, Greeks had always enjoyed a privileged status. Ottoman favor of Greek subjects was first reflected just after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) immediately reestablished the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, allowed for the election of a new Patriarch, Gennadius Scholarius (c. 1400-1473), and issued an imperial edict (*berat*) that granted extensive rights to the Patriarchate.[15] Besides religious rights and freedoms, with the abolishment of independent Bulgarian and Serbian Churches after the conquest of the Bulgarian and Serbian Kingdoms in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the Patriarchate was given not only spiritual, but also financial and judicial authority over the entire Orthodox Christian population of the Ottoman Empire.[16] The privileged status of the Greeks was not only limited to this imperial edict of the Sultan. Accordingly, Greeks were able to preserve not only their religion but also their language since they were allowed to be educated in their own language. There were even imperial orders

15 The rights granted to the Orthodox Patriarchate were so generous that even many Western historians appreciate the extent of these concessions. According to Anton Bertram "[t]he whole fabric of the extensive privileges enjoyed by the Greek community in Turkey (still known officially as "Romans") rests upon an historic utterance of Mohammed the Conqueror. One of his first official acts was to re-establish the shattered religious organization of his new subjects. Constantinople fell on May 29, 1453. On June 1, the Conqueror, having directed the election of a new Patriarch, proclaimed the Patriarch-elect in the most honorific terms, delivered to him with his own hands the pastoral staff, and made use of these memorable words: "Be Patriarch, live with us in peace, and enjoy all the privileges of thy predecessors." These words are the charter of the Greek privileges. Nor has the Patriarch ever failed to cite them whenever these privileges have been called in question. Upon them rests the considerable civil jurisdiction which he and his tribunals have always enjoyed." See Anton Bertram, "The Orthodox Privileges in Turkey, with Special Reference to Wills and Successions," *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1909, pp. 126-140, p. 126. Greek historian Theodore Papadopoullos depicts and appreciates these concessions in a similar fashion: "These privileges, which had historical antecedents in the treaties, entered into by Islam and the Christian Church in the times of the Arab conquest, carried with them a civil jurisdiction over the Sultan's Christian subjects irrespective of national status. They also implied a responsibility vis-à-vis the Sultan in respect of the Christian subjects, whose allegiance was deemed to be guaranteed by the covenant entered into between the Ottoman Sultan and the Patriarch. In return for that allegiance and against discharge of the fiscal obligations prescribed by Islamic law, the Christian subject was to enjoy the free exercise of worship and the protection of his own traditional life and values." Theodore Papadopoullos, "Orthodox Church and Civil Authority," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Church and Politics, (October, 1967), pp. 201-209, pp. 201-202.

16 İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003, p. 63.

written in Greek, meaning, according to İlber Ortaylı, that Greek became a semi-official language of the Empire in the years immediately after the conquest of Constantinople.[17]

In addition to religious freedoms, Greeks also assumed a privileged position within the Ottoman economic structure. Greek merchant communities expanded over the territories conquered by the Ottomans. For example, Halil İnalcık writes that when the Crimean port of Caffa was captured from the Genoese in 1475, there emerged an influx of Ottoman merchants to the region. Among the non-Muslim merchants entering Caffa in the year 1490, there were sixteen Greeks, four Italians, three Jews and two Armenians. In other words, Greek merchants outnumbered the merchants of other non-Muslim communities.[18] What is more, in the sixteenth century, in Venice, there were two hundred houses of Greek merchants, who were Ottoman subjects.[19] Greeks were not only active in the trade sector, they were also engaging in tax farming. Just two decades after the conquest of Constantinople, wealthy Greeks were able to challenge Ottomans for the tax farming of Istanbul. İnalcık writes:

> ... in 1476, when a five-man consortium of Greeks bid 11 million *akches* (about 245,000 ducats) for the farm of the Istanbul customs for three years, a four-man consortium of Muslims outbid them by 2 million and gained the contract. [The] Next year a Muslim Turk of Edirne and a Jew jointly put in a higher bid, but were outbid by a consortium of Greeks.[20]

The vibrant participation of Greeks in the Ottoman economic life was not peculiar to the earlier centuries of the Ottoman Empire. Daniel Panzac argues that as late as the eighteenth century Greeks were quite active in maritime trade, even more than in the earlier centuries. To provide an example, among the non-Muslim charterers organizing the intra-Ottoman maritime trade, Greeks formed the majority.[21] What is more, as a result of the disappearance of English and French ships from the Mediterranean due to the English-French wars between 1756 and 1763, the Greek merchant fleet was able to control the Eastern Mediterranean trade and beginning from 1783; Greek merchant ships composed the nucleus of the fleet used for European-Russian trade.[22] This fertile period for Greeks was reflected by Panzac as such:

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17 Ortaylı, op. cit., p. 63.

18 Halil Inalcik, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 29, No. 1, The Tasks of Economic History, (March 1969), pp. 97-140, p. 112.

19 Ibid., p. 113.

20 Ibid., p. 124.

21 Daniel Panzac, "International and Domestic Maritime Trade in the Ottoman Empire during the 18th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (May, 1992), pp. 189-206, p. 200.

22 Ibid., p. 203.

> … the Ottoman Greek merchant navy began to grow during the 1770s. The wars of the French Revolution, beginning in 1792, and later the suppression of the Republic of Venice in 1797 ended in the disappearance of the French and Venetian merchants' navies in the Mediterranean. This disappearance benefited especially the Greeks, navigators and merchants, who were far more oriented toward European relations than the Muslim merchants.[23]

Such control over the economic activities of the Empire resulted in the emergence of a wealthy Greek community, which was able to send its children to Europe for education. Particularly those merchants acquainted with the ideas of Enlightenment, starting from the eighteenth century onwards, wanted their children to be raised accordingly. Hence the Greek elite became more familiar with European ideas and particularly after the French Revolution; this familiarity would result in increasing nationalist fervor among the Greeks.[24] Earlier, the main country of attraction for Greek students was Italy, the cradle of humanism and the Renaissance; however, starting from late eighteenth century onwards Germany replaced Italy. Hence, besides the more secular and republican ideas of the French Revolution, Greek youngsters began to encounter German Romanticism from the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814).[25]

Economic prosperity and capital accumulation also brought political power to the Greek community of the Ottoman Empire. In the early eighteenth century, tired of handling local disputes for the administration of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which had been dependent on the Ottoman Empire from the late fifteenth century onwards, the Ottoman administration decided to send the rulers of these principalities from the center. The Ottoman choice was the Greek notables of the Phanar district of the capital, known as the Phanariots. Indeed, the Phanariots had already served the Empire as imperial dragomans, since many of them had been educated in European universities, particularly in Padua, and since they were familiar with European languages.[26] They also acted as merchants and, from the early seventeenth century onwards, numerous Phanariot businessmen began to settle in the Danubian principalities. Through intermarriages, the

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23 Ibid., p. 204.

24 For a detailed account of Greek encounters with Western philosophy see, G. P. Henderson, "Greek Philosophy From 1600 to 1850," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 19, (April, 1955), pp. 157-165.

25 Constanze Guthenke, *Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism, 1770-1840*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 97.

26 Thomas Naff, "Reform and the Conduct of Ottoman Diplomacy in the Reign of Selim III, 1789-1807," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 83, No. 3, (August - September, 1963), pp. 295-315, p. 299.

Phanariots began to be accepted by the local nobility.[27] From the early eighteenth century until the Greek Revolution in 1821, these two principalities were ruled by these Greek families. According to Wayne Vucinich, the Phanariots were so loyal to the Ottoman Empire that they "…were sometimes called the 'Christian Turks,' a term that seems to describe their 'moral and political position.'".[28]

All in all, Greeks had enjoyed significant political, economic, social and religious privileges under the Ottoman administration. It can be argued that the Ottomans initially attempted to use the former religious authority of the Greek Patriarchate to administer the Christian population of the Empire. They increased the competence of the Patriarch at the expanse of other Orthodox components of the Empire. This made the Patriarchate a target for reaction in the eyes of Slavic people even more than the Turks; that is why, for example, the Bulgarian independence movement initially began as a quest for an independent church rather than an independent state.[29] What is more, economic privileges granted to the Greeks resulted in the emergence of a Greek merchant class, whose offspring educated in Europe turned out to be the Greek revolutionaries in the early nineteenth century.

b. Who Are the Greeks?: The Problem of Definition

In order to understand Greek nationalism, emergence of Hellenism as an ideology for identity formation should be considered as a significant development and should be examined carefully. Such an examination also requires an analysis of how the Greeks have defined themselves. Indeed, the definition and self-definition of Greeks has long been a matter of controversy. There are at least four concepts utilized to define this community.[30] To start with, the Ottomans used the word *Rum* to define the Greeks up until Greek independence. The very word was derived from "Roman," denoting the descendants of the subjects of the Byzantine Empire.[31] Various ethnic communities of the Balkans and Anatolia, including Turks, Albanians, Vlachs, Greeks, Bulgarians, etc., were baptized as Orthodox

27 Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, p. 132.

28 Wayne S. Vucinich, "The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, (December, 1962), pp. 597-616, p. 602.

29 Ortaylı, op. cit., p. 64.

30 Herkül Millas, *Geçmişten Bugüne Yunanlılar: Dil, Din ve Kimlikleri*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003, p. 163.

31 The designation of the Eastern Roman Empire as "Byzantine" was first encountered in Western Europe in 1557, when German historian Hieronymus Wolf published his work *Corpus Historiæ Byzantinæ*, It would later be popularized by French historians in the seventeenth century. See Valerie A. Carras, "Some Ecumenical Principles for Teaching and Writing History," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3/4, Summer/Fall 1998, pp. 387-400.

Christians under the Byzantine Empire and all of them were referred as "Roman."[32] Similarly, the Ottomans did not have a specific definition of the Greek community; rather, they tended to define all the descendants of the Byzantine Empire as *Rum.* Such labeling of Greeks as "Roman" was not only peculiar to the Muslim world. Rigas Velestinlis (1757-1798), one of the major ideologues of the Greek Revolution, defined his own nation as *Romios*, having the same meaning with *Rum.*[33]

The second word used to denote this Orthodox community was "Greek." Indeed, this word has been and still is utilized not by the Greeks themselves but by the Europeans, although it was one of the oldest usages of the Greeks for their self-definition. Accordingly, the word is derived from ancient Greek word of *Grakoi*, which, according to Aristotle, had been originally used by the Illyrians for the Dorians in Epirus. Herkül Millas argues that Adamantios Korais (1748-1833), one of the major ideologues of the Greek Revolution, advocated for defining the nation as "Greek," since the Europeans acknowledged that nation with this name.[34]

However, particularly after the Greek independence, neither the word "*Romios*" nor the word "Greek" was used for Greek self-identification. The winner of this conceptual rivalry was the word "Hellen" (έλλην) referring to the ancient glorious past of the Greeks. Therefore, the independent Greek state was initially named as the "Hellenic" (έλλάς) Republic. That is why the process of transferring national awareness to the Ottoman *Rum* community in the late nineteenth century onwards was labeled as "Hellenization."[35] On the other hand, after the establishment of the Greek Kingdom, Ottomans tended to label the citizens of this new state not as *Rum* but as *Yunan.* This word is a derivation of the adjective "Ionian," which was utilized to distinguish between the Greeks living in the Greek Kingdom and the Greek subjects of the Ottoman Empire, which had still been labeled as *Rum.* In

32 Indeed, since the Abbasid Empire, the Muslims came to known on the Anatolian Peninsula as *Diyar-ı Rum* (Roman lands). Therefore, it is not surprising that Mehmed II named himself *Kayser-i Rum* (the Caesar of Rome) after the conquest of Constantinople, since he perceived the Ottoman Empire to be the successor of the Roman Empire.

33 Millas, op. cit., p. 163.

34 Millas, op. cit., p. 163.

35 Although Hellenization was a process experienced mainly in the nineteenth century, the idea of Hellenism as a Greek nationalist ideology can be traced back even to the early fifteenth century. George Gemistos Plethon (1355-1452), a Greek humanist, wrote that his community could be labeled as Hellenes since the community could claim the heritage of the Hellenic civilization dating back to the fourth century B.C., to the glorious days of the Alexander the Great. However, the real revival of Hellenism was compounded with the European reception of ancient Greek heritage in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. It was the European philhellenism that contributed much to the Greek awareness of their history and heritage, which resulted in what Millas has called *progonoplexia* (a strong commitment to ancestors) and *arhaiolatreia* (worshipping to the ancient world). These two attributions formed the basis of Greek identity as well as the admiring mood of philhellenes for the Greek civilization. Millas, op. cit., pp. 164-166.

other words, the Ottomans tried to prevent Hellenization of the Ottoman *Rum* community through distinguishing between the identities of the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire and the Greeks of the Greek Kingdom.

Before moving onto the Greek Revolution, the ideologues of the Greek nationalist movement, particularly Adamantios Korais and Rigas Velestinlis, should be mentioned briefly in order to better understand the nature of Greek nationalism in the early nineteenth century. Inspired by the thinking of French philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau, Rigas called for combating against "Turkish tyranny" as well as against the establishment of civilian control over the military and a government accountable to the citizens.[36] Unlike Rigas, who perceived some Turks as potential allies for the combat against Ottoman tyranny, Adamantios Korais was a radical, for whom "…all Turks were obsessively loathed."[37] The anti-Ottoman and sometimes anti-Turkish stance of these two Greek ideologues shaped the thinking of particularly the educated Greek youngsters at the turn of the nineteenth century and fueled the eight years of continuous uprisings and wars in the Ottoman history, known as the Greek Revolution.

c. Emergence, Evolution and the Consequences of the Greek Revolution (1821-1829)

Up to now, the emergence of Greek national consciousness has been discussed; however, several other external factors were influential in determining the time and location of the Greek Revolution. To start with, it was not until the early nineteenth century that Greek national consciousness had consolidated in a way that would lead the Greek people to independence. Secondly, starting from late eighteenth century onwards, Russia emerged as an external intervener, inflicting Greek reaction against the Ottoman Empire.[38]

A second significant development contributing to Greek aspirations for independence was the establishment of the Septinsular Republic on the Ionian Islands in 1800, after these islands were freed from French occupation by a joint Ottoman-Russian fleet. Although this autonomous state was a nominal part of the Ottoman Empire, it was mainly controlled by Russia. This experience of autonomy, albeit in a limited region, contributed to the Greek desire for

36 David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation*, New York: The Overlook Press, p. 19.

37 Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, p. 21.

38 For example, during the 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian War, the Russian fleet reached the Peloponnesian peninsula and attempted to initiate an uprising by the local population against the Ottoman Empire. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. 4, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1982, p. 361 ff.

independence. Later, the islands were re-occupied by the French during the Napoleonic Wars, but after the defeat of Napoleon, the islands were given to the British and another independent republic was established in 1815. This independence was more influential than the former experience of autonomy; therefore, Greek fervor for independence further consolidated.[39]

A third significant development was the establishment of Greek revolutionary organizations in the early years of the nineteenth century. Among these institutions, *Philike Hetairia* (The Friendship Society) was one of the first and most efficient organizations. Established in 1814 in Odessa by three Greeks named Emmanuel Xanthos, Nicholaos Skufas and Athanasios Tsalakov,[40] it was estimated that the number of members of the society reached a thousand on the eve of the Greek rebellion of 1821.[41] Two influential Greeks of Phanariot descent were invited to be the leaders of the Society. These two Greeks had also been serving the Russian state at that time. Count Ioannis Capodistrias (1776-1831), who had been appointed as the Joint Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801-1825) together with Count Karl Robert Nesselrode (1780-1862), rejected the offer of leadership, while Alexander Ypsilantis (1792-1828), the most effective leader of the organization, who had been appointed as the aide-de-camp of the Tsar in 1816, accepted the offer in 1820.[42] Under the administration of Ypsilatis, the Society quickly spread from Russia to the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as to the Peloponnese, Istanbul, Aegean and Ionian Islands.[43]

The final significant event that ultimately led to the Greek Revolution was the revolt of Tepedelenli Ali Paşa (1744-1822), which erupted in 1820. Tepedelenli Ali Paşa, son of an Albanian notable, had been appointed as the governor of Ioannina in 1788 and ruled the region for more than three decades. He was quite oppressive, particularly against the Greek revolutionaries, and his staunch rule had not allowed the Greeks to initiate a full-scale uprising against Ottoman rule. Indeed, Tepedelenli Ali Paşa was aware of the Greek insurgency movement and the clandestine organizations, so much that he continuously tried to inform the Porte about a prospective Greek rebellion. However, at that time, Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) was manipulated by a mighty member of the Palace, Halet

39 Duane Koenig, "A Report from the Ionian Islands, December 1810," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (September, 1943), pp. 223-226, p. 223, particularly footnote 2.

40 C. W. Crawley, "John Capodistrias and the Greeks before 1821," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1957, pp. 162-182, pp. 175-176.

41 Clogg, op. cit., p. 51.

42 Ibid., p. 48.

43 Crawley, op. cit., p. 179. For a detailed account of Philike Hetairia, see Brewer, op. cit., pp. 26-35.

Efendi (1760-1823), who was renowned to be pro-Greek. Halet Efendi was able to convince the Sultan to limit the authority of Ali Paşa, which in turn resulted in his revolt against the state, lifting his tight control over the Greeks in the Peloponnesian Peninsula.[44]

Although everyone expected a significant Greek rebellion in the Peloponnesian region, surprisingly the first Greek rebellion was initiated in a remoter part of the Empire, namely in Moldavia by Alexander Ypsilantis on March 1821. Ypsilantis was able to convene an army and passed the Prut River, expecting that he would be able to prompt the Rumanians to join his army. However, the Rumanians, already weary of the suppressive rule of the Phanariots, were not enthusiastic to fight alongside the Greeks. On June 1821, the army of Ypsilantis was defeated by Ottoman troops and Ypsilantis fled to the Habsburg Empire.[45]

Meanwhile, almost at the same time, another rebellion erupted in the Peloponnesian region. Unlike the Danubian revolt initiated by *Philike Hetairia*, this was a popular movement and it quickly spread over the Peloponnesian region. Ottoman troops sent to suppress the rebellion were defeated by the revolutionaries; during the rebellion, the Muslim population living in the region was almost totally exterminated. According to Salahi Sonyel "[i]t is estimated that more than 50,000 Muslims, including women and children, lived in the Peloponnese in March 1821. A month later, when the Greeks were celebrating Easter, there was hardly anyone left." Solely, in the town of Tripolitsa, 10,000 Muslims were massacred on October 5, 1821.[46] Hence, Greek rebellion started as a reaction against Ottoman rule, but once it was triggered, it was transformed into a total anti-Muslim uprising, claiming thousands of Muslim lives in the region.

On January 13, 1922, Greek rebellion leaders were assembled and declared the independence of Greece. Ottoman incapacity to suppress the rebellion led Sultan Mahmud II to demand the support of the governor of Egypt, Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa (1769-1849). Mehmed Ali Paşa demanded the governorships of Crete and the Peloponnesian Peninsula to support the Sultan and his demands were accepted. From 1824 to 1826, Egyptian troops had almost completely suppressed the rebellion. However, this time, European powers, which preferred a weaker and

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44 Halet Efendi had been educated by the Phanariots and served for the dragoman families of Istanbul. What is more, in order to preserve their posts, all high-ranking officials, including the governors, had to bribe Halet Efendi with valuable gifts. In 1820, he had not received the gifts he demanded from Tepedelenli Ali Paşa. Frustrated by the attitude of Ali Paşa and convinced by his Greek fellows about his oppressive rule, Halet Efendi was able to persuade the Sultan to issue an imperial edict limiting the authority of Ali Paşa within Ioannina. *Mufassal Osmanlı Tarihi,* op. cit., p. 2879.

45 Clogg, op. cit., p. 49.

46 Salahi Sonyel, *The Turco-Greek Imbroglio: Pan-Hellenism and the Destruction of Anatolia*, Ankara: SAM Papers, 1999, pp. 12-15.

independent Greece instead of stronger governance initiated by Mehmed Ali Paşa, intervened. A joint fleet from Russia, Britain and France attacked the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet at Navarino Bay and burned it completely on October 20, 1827.[47] This was followed by an Ottoman declaration of war against Russia in 1828 and its subsequent defeat one year later. Finally, with the Treaty of Adrianople, signed on September 14, 1829, the Ottoman Empire recognized the independence of Greece.

The recognition of Greek independence was not the end of Ottoman-Greek contention; rather, it completely altered the inter-communal relations. The next chapter, therefore, focuses on how Greek independence fostered further Greek irredentism and how the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, compounded with the reflection of Greek nationalism towards Ottoman Greeks, further exacerbated inter-communal clashes between the Turks and the Greeks. Although such inter-communal disputes had been experienced in all parts of the Empire, for the sake of this paper, the incidents in Pontus region are the primary focus.

III. Defining The Pontus Question: An Evaluation Of The Historical Facts

The definition of Pontus Question is a difficult task because of the complex nature of this phenomenon. As stipulated in the introduction, there are two rival historiographies regarding the issue, which are contradicting in evaluating the basic historical facts. In this chapter, therefore, it is intended to examine what actually happened in the turbulent years of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Pontus region and how these occurrences can be evaluated to put forward a more accurate account of the Pontus Question.

1. The *Megali Idea* (Great Idea) and Greek Expansion during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Established in 1832, the borders of the Greek Kingdom was only limited to the Peloponnesian Peninsula and the Attica region; in other words, the lands claimed by the Greeks as the Greek mainland such as Thessaly, Epirus and Western Thrace had remained in the Ottoman Empire. This made the new state a revisionist one as stipulated by Theodore George Tatsios: "…the underlying objective of Greece would be expansion to include, within the borders of the new state, all the lands still in Turkish hands and inhabited mostly, or to a great extent

47 For the details of the Navarino incident and Anglo-Russian relations at that time, see C. W. Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations 1815-40," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1929, pp. 47-73.

by Greeks."[48] Therefore, from the very beginning, Greece aimed at expanding its borders at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, this practical policy agenda had its ideological background in a centuries-old idea, which would be revitalized in the mid-nineteenth century. This idea, known as the "*Megali Idea*" (Great Idea), was deeply rooted in the Greeks' national and religious consciousness and designed to motivate the Greeks for the recovery of Constantinople for Christendom and the reestablishment of the universal Christian Byzantine Empire which had fallen in 1453.[49]

The irredentist ideology of *Megali Idea* would require continuous Greek expansion towards the old Byzantine territories, namely all of Southeastern Europe, the Aegean Islands, Crete, Cyprus, Asia Minor and Pontus. The *Megali Idea*, as a concept, was clearly referred to, for the first time, by an ambitious Greek politician, John Kolletis, who voiced the fundamental characteristics of this ideology in the Greek National Assembly in January 1844 as such:

> The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece; it is merely a part, the smallest, poorest part of Greece. The Greek is not only he who inhabits the Kingdom, but also he who inhabits Ioannina or Salonika or Serres or Adrianoupolis or Constantinople or Trebizond or Crete or Samos or any other region belonging to Greek history or the Greek race… There are two great centers of Hellenism. Athens is the capital of the Kingdom. Constantinople is the great capital, the City, the dream and hope of all Greeks.[50]

48 Theodore George Tatsios, *The Megali Idea and the Greek Turkish War of 1897: The Impact of the Cretan Problem on Greek Irredentism, 1866-1897*, Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984, p. 6.

49 Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998, p. 3, also see, Michael M. Finefrock, "Ataturk, Lloyd George and the Megali Idea: Cause and Consequence of the Greek Plan to Seize Constantinople from the Allies, June-August 1922," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 1, On Demand Supplement, March 1980, pp. D1047-D1066. The Megali Idea had never disappeared from the Greek minds, particularly those of the Greek political and religious elite, and indeed, it was the Ottoman tolerance towards Greeks that nourished the development of Megali Idea. According to Tatsios, "[t]he decision of the Turkish conqueror [Mehmed II] not to destroy the Christian religion was an event of the greatest importance in the development of the Megali Idea. The Orthodox Patriarchate became the new center for Hellenism and the Hellenized races of the Balkans and their only hope for future deliverance from the Turkish yoke. Consequently, although the Byzantine Empire was annihilated and the Greek race was submerged the Greek population survived and became the most important non-Turkish element of the Ottoman Empire. See Tatsios, op. cit., p. 9.

50 Richard Clogg, "The Greek *millet* in the Ottoman Empire," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society I, The Central Lands*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982, p. 193. Clogg cites another interesting excerpt from an Athenian Greek named Zeta, which is quite similar to that of Kolletis: "Do not think that we consider this corner of Greece as our country, or Athens as our capital, or the Parthenon as our national temple. The Parthenon belongs to an age and to a religion with which we have no sympathy. Our country is the vast territory of which Greek is the language, and the faith of the Orthodox Greek church is the religion. Our capital is Constantinople, our national temple is Santa Sophia, for nine hundred years the glory of Christendom. As long as that temple, that capital, and that territory are profaned and oppressed by Mussulmans, Greece would be disgraced if she were tranquil." See Richard Clogg, "The Byzantine Legacy in the Modern Greek World: The Megali Idea," in Lowell Clucas (ed.), *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe*, Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988, p. 253.

In other words, the establishment of the Greek Kingdom satisfied neither the Ottomans nor the Greeks. While the Ottomans perceived Greek independence as a fatal threat to the Ottoman territorial as well as communal integrity, which would result in further rebellions by the Ottoman Greeks, the Greeks of the Greek Kingdom were discontent with the limited borders of their new state. Hence, the establishment of Greece did not solve but rather exacerbated Ottoman-Greek relations.

The *Megali Idea* was not only promulgated by romantic propagandists but also by the very founding documents of the Greek state itself. To illustrate, King George I (r. 1863-1913) was labeled in the Greek Constitution of 1864 as the "King of Hellenes" not as the "King of Greece", meaning that he had the authority over all Greek nation, wherever they had been living.[51] What is more, the *Megali Idea* did not remain within the confines of the Kingdom of Greece; it had spread quickly to the remotest parts of the Ottoman Empire starting from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. To give an example, in 1865, just two decades after the famous aforementioned speech of Kolletis, another speech given in Trabzon to a Greek audience celebrating the accession of King George I ended with these words: "Come sovereign, the peoples of the East await you…and like…the Greek Alexander, implant civilization in barbarized Asia…Long Live George I King of the Hellenes! Long Live the Greek Nation! Long Live the Protecting Powers!"[52] Hence, Trabzon began to become the center of Hellenism in the Pontus region through infiltration of such irredentist ideas.

According to Richard Clogg, "[t]he *Megali Idea* was not merely the dominant ideology of the nascent Greek state, it was in effect the *only* ideology."[53] Despite this, however, the *Megali Idea* was not a monolithic ideology. There are at least three variants, all of which survived until the early twentieth century. The first variant was the "…romantic dream of a revival of [the] Byzantine-Greek Empire centered on Constantinople."[54] Although this option seemed charming for ordinary Greeks, more pragmatist politicians were aware that it was really a dream. The second variant was the "…aspiration for Greek cultural and economic dominance within the Ottoman Empire, leading to its gradual subversion from within the Ottoman Empire by a natural process, which need not entail a violent clash between the rival Greek and Turkish nations."[55] Particularly, Greek merchants and their extensions in the Ottoman Empire suggested such a peaceful

51 Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece,* op.cit., p. 46.

52 Clogg, "The Greek *millet* in the Ottoman Empire," op. cit., p. 198.

53 Clogg, "The Byzantine Legacy...," op. cit., p. 254.

54 Tatsios, op. cit., p. 4

55 Ibid.

option in order to protect their economic interests and profitable trade. Finally, the third variant argued for a "…progressive redemption of the Greek *irridenta* by their incorporation in the Greek [K]ingdom, which entailed a head-on clash with the Ottoman Empire."[56] It was this third variant promulgated by the Greek politicians that prevailed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, until the final resolution of the Turkish-Greek contention in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, the Kingdom of Greece continuously attempted to expand territorially and the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish nationalist movement aimed to prevent this territorial expansion.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly between 1864 and 1874, there was great political turmoil in Greece since twenty-one governments had served in just a decade, the longest of which lasted only a year and a half. However, especially during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Greece had achieved relative political stability which created a fertile environment for internal development and external territorial expansion. In 1864, Britain had ceded the Ionian Islands to Greece; hence, this can be perceived as the starting point for Greek expansion. But the real opportunity came with the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878. Although Greece aimed to side with Russia, with the pressure coming from Britain and France, it remained neutral during the war. In the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Greece demanded Crete, Epirus and Thessaly; however, the Ottoman Empire refused these demands. A final resolution was designed with the mediation of Great Britain in 1881, when the Ottoman Empire ceded all of Thessaly and a small part of Epirus to Greece.

The territorial expansion of Greece was compounded by the establishment of a new Greek irredentist organization almost after a century from the establishment of *Philike Hetairia*. This new organization, named *Ethniki Hetairia* (National Society), was established in November 1894, mostly by the junior officers of the Greek army. The aims of the Society were declared as "[t]o work unceasingly to ensure the unification, liberation, and progress of the Greeks, and when the time comes… to support a weak and tiny Greece; to work for Greater Greece, even if this means going against the wishes of the present government."[57]

The activities of *Ethniki Hetairia* together with available international circumstances resulted in further attempts for territorial expansion. The next territories on the Greek nationalist agenda were Crete and Macedonia. In late 1896, inflicted by Greek authorities, a rebellion broke out on Crete, and on

56 Ibid.

57 Salahi Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Publications, 1993, p. 266.

January 21, 1897, a Greek army landed in Crete to unite the island with Greece. The European powers, however, intervened, and proclaimed Crete as an international protectorate. This intervention had not stopped Greek aspirations. The retreating Greek army was sent to northern Thessaly and crossed the Ottoman-Greek border. This time the Ottoman response was decisive. Ottoman troops defeated the Greeks and advanced towards Athens. This alarmed the Great Powers and resulted in their intervention. After a ceasefire on May 1897, peace negotiations had started. While the Ottoman Empire demanded retrocession of Thessaly and the renewal of agreements with Greece as indispensable terms to be included in the peace treaty, the Great Powers were reluctant to include any provision that would disturb the former balance between the Ottoman Empire and Greece. Thus, the Ottoman Empire had to cede the territories that it occupied during the war and had to be content with a small amount of war indemnity paid by Greece.[58] What is more, the Ottoman Empire *de facto* lost Crete in December 1898 when the international protectorate delivered the island to the administration of Prince George of Greece (1869-1957) as the first governor-general.

The defeat of 1897 was humiliating for the Greeks despite their political gains; thus, they were waiting for an opportunity of a reprisal, which came in 1912. Through a series of negotiations, the able and ambitious Greek politician, Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) joined a Balkan alliance against the Ottoman Empire, promulgated first and foremost by the Serbian Prime Minister Milovan Milovanoviç (1863-1912) and included Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria. The general war had started with the Montenegran attack on the Ottoman Empire on October 1912. Other Balkan states joined immediately and they quickly defeated unorganized Ottoman troops, forcing them to retreat even to the environs of the capital city. However, the sharing of the spoils of war, particularly the ethnically complex region of Macedonia, resulted in another series of war fought among the former allies, in which the Ottoman troops were able to retake some territories that they had previously lost, including Edirne.

For Greece, the territorial gains of the two Balkan Wars were enormous. Greece acquired Salonika and the coastal strip of Macedonia including the fertile plains of Kavalla, Southern Epirus with Ioaninna, Crete (unification of the Island with Greece was formally recognized by the Ottoman Empire), and the islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos. The population and surface area of the country were almost doubled.[59] The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, had lost almost all of

58 For a detailed account of the reasons for the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War, see Mehmet Uğur Ekinci, "The Origins of the 1897 Ottoman-Greek War: A Diplomatic History," Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Bilkent University, Department of History, July 2006.

59 Smith, op. cit., p. 19.

its European possessions except for the small territory of Eastern Thrace. Indeed, the Balkan Wars turned the Ottoman Empire into a revisionist state since the Ottoman authorities saw revisionism as the only remedy to postpone, if not eliminate, the threat of disintegration. Therefore, just one year later, after the conclusion of Balkan Wars the Ottoman Empire entered its final war, namely World War I in 1914,, which would ultimately result in its disintegration.

To conclude, considering the Ottoman-Greek relations after Greek independence, Greek irredentism was one of the most significant reasons for further deterioration of these relations. Continuous attempts for Greek expansion together with Western, particularly British, Russian and French, support for Greek aspirations resulted in a significant Ottoman distrust of the Greeks as well as their European patrons. These problematic relations had repercussions for the ordinary Ottoman Greeks, who are the focus of the next part of this paper.

2. Anatolian Greeks in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

a. A General Overview until the Late Nineteenth Century

Scattered around every corner of the Anatolian Peninsula, Greeks living in Ottoman Asia Minor could not be considered as a monolithic and homogenous community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Smith enumerates at least three different Greek communities living in different parts of the Empire. In Western Anatolia there was "…the relatively compact population of Smyrna and the western coastal strip with its historic towns."[60] This community included almost all social strata, from the peasant farmer to a large middle class and to the educated class of the bourgeoisie. Having considerable contacts with Europe and being relatively more educated compared to other Greek communities of the Empire, the Greek community of the Aegean region was the target of the Greek nationalist movement, and it had easily been influenced by the political developments which had taken place in Greece. The second group was composed of the Orthodox community of interior Anatolia, primarily living in the Karaman province. This Orthodox community spoke Turkish; their knowledge of Greek was confined to the alphabet. Therefore, their books were produced in Turkish but written in Greek characters. Known as *Karamanlides*, these people "…were distinguishable from the Muslims neither in occupation, class, nor racial stock, but only in religion."[61] Their level of integration to the Ottoman social system was

60 Ibid., p. 27.

61 Ibid., p. 27. For a detailed account of the *Karamanlides*, see Richard Clogg, "Anadolulu Hıristiyan Karındaşlarımız: The Turkish Speaking Greeks of Asia Minor," in John Burke and Stathis Gauntlett (eds.), *Neohellenism*, Canberra: Australian National University Publications, 1992, pp. 65-91.

so high that they had been the Greek community least influenced from Greek national consciousness and irredentist aspirations. Finally, the third variant of the Greek community was the very ancient Greek-speaking Orthodox community of the Pontus region in northeastern Anatolia.[62] These people began to claim themselves as descendents of two great Pontic kingdoms. The first Pontic Kingdom was established around 280 B.C. and expanded under the powerful ruler, Mithridates Eupator (132-63 B.C.). However, it fell under Roman control in 62 A.D. The second Pontic Kingdom, on the other hand, was established by the descendants of the Byzantine Empire, namely by the Comnenos Dynasty after the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204. It was able to survive until the second half of the fifteenth century when its capital city, Trabzon, was conquered by Sultan Mehmed II in 1461. Although the male heirs of the Comnenos Dynasty of this second Pontic Kingdom were first exiled and then executed for being accused of participating in a plot against Mehmed II, after the conquest of Trabzon, local Christian landowners were very much protected. According to Dimitri Korobeinikov, "…Orthodox Christian *timars* existed in Bayburt, one of the Pontic centers, until the beginning of the sixteenth century, which suggests that Christian military landlords were incorporated in the Muslim society."[63] In other words, Ottomans did what they had done in the Balkans in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, namely they preserved the Christian populations of the region under Christian landholders. What is more, although "[t]hese Pontic Greeks were under Muslim rule from the 1220s at the latest [,]… we find several extant Pontic metropolitan sees in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries."[64] In other words, particularly after the reorganization of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate following the conquest of Constantinople, the religious centers in the Pontus region was also preserved and they were placed under the authority of the Patriarchate. In sum, until the nineteenth century, the Greek community was very much integrated into the Ottoman society without a strong assimilation.

Although the Greek Revolution was the first serious blow to the Ottoman multi-ethnic structures and although there emerged a great distrust towards the Greeks, Smith argues that between the Greek Revolution and the Greek-Turkish War of 1919-1922, "…the Greeks were able to increase and multiply, colonize, penetrate inland, found new businesses and propagate nationalist ideals with little interference from the Ottomans. There were no massacres or widespread persecutions…"[65] Similarly, according to Sonyel, particularly by the second half

62 Ibid., p. 26.

63 Dimitri Korobeinikov, "Orthodox Communities in Eastern Anatolia in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. Part 1: The Two Patriarchates: Constantinople and Antioch," *Al-Masaq*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (September 2003), pp. 197-214, p. 198.

64 Ibid.

65 Smith, op. cit., p. 29.

of the nineteenth century, Greeks "…had largely regained their economic and partly political influence in the affairs of the Ottoman state, which they had enjoyed prior to the Greek rebellion of 1821."[66] In other words, during the nineteenth century, as noted above, Greeks retained their former political and economic privileges and they continued to prosper in the Pontus region as well.[67]

b. Internal Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century

Regarding the population movements of the nineteenth century, it can be understood from the Ottoman statistical data that starting from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the proportion of the Greek population in Central Anatolia and the Black Sea region declined considerably. There are two significant reasons for this decline. First of all, there was a huge influx of a Muslim population migrating from the Caucasus and Balkans, fleeing from the Russian advances in the Ottoman-Russian Wars of 1853-1856 and 1877-1878 as well as Balkan Wars. Tens of thousands of such refugees were settled in the interior parts of Anatolia as well as the Black Sea region. For example, an English missionary visiting Samsun in 1864 "found the place overflowing with Circassian emigrants… The pasha was doing all that lay in his power to scatter the poor exiles in every direction. Shiploads of them were sent to other ports."[68] In other words, the Muslim population increased more in these years vis-à-vis the Greek population. Their settlement in the region produced tremendous problems, which sometimes disturbed the peace and tranquility of the inhabitants of the region, particularly of the non-Muslims, including the Greeks.

The second reason for the relative decline in the Greek population in Central Anatolia and the Black Sea region was the internal migration of the Greeks from these parts of the Empire to the Western coastal areas. Many Greek sources argue that these migrations were forced movements, intentionally planned by the Ottoman authorities. However, according to Greek historian Gerasimos

66 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 257.

67 To give an example of how the Greeks preserved their political and economic status the official annual registers (salname) of the Ottoman Empire dating from 1879 provide significant clues. Accordingly, there were over fifty high ranking Greek functionaries in government service, including judges, professors, diplomats, governors, etc. What is more, among the 40 private bankers listed in Istanbul, there were 12 Greeks, 12 Armenians, 8 Jews and 5 Levantines. Similarly, of the 35 stock-brokers in the capital city, 18 were Greeks, while of the 32 bankers in European Turkey, there were 22 Greeks. All these statistics demonstrate that towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Greek community had once more emerged as strong as before the Greek Revolution. See, Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, pp. 257-258.

68 Excerpted from Gerasimos Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor: Confession, Community, and Ethnicity in the Nineteenth Century*, Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1992, pp. 24-25.

Augustinos "[t]he migrations that Greeks undertook at this time were not imposed nor directed by the authorities. Economic interests were the impelling force behind the Greeks' journeyings."[69] These internal migrations reached such a level that the Greek Orthodox metropolitan of Kayseri, for example, prepared reports indicating that by the year 1834, almost 60 percent of the Greek males who were able to work left from the cities in the Kayseri province and headed mainly towards the coastal regions of the Empire.[70]

While the proportion of the Greek community in Central Anatolia and the Black Sea region declined considerably, the overall Greek population of the Ottoman Empire increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century. One of the most significant reasons for this increase in the Greek population was the Greek immigration from the Kingdom of Greece and Cyprus to the Ottoman Empire. Political instability and economic incapacity of the Greek state forced its citizens to seek lucrative jobs on the other side of the Aegean. As Augustinos writes:

> Greece was endowed with a good climate and as yet a thinly populated land, but with few trading centers of any note and a government struggling with the problems of social order and administrative efficiency; it was less than a promised land in its early years. That the risks to personal security seemed no greater in well-populated areas of the Ottoman Empire and that officials did not unduly interfere in people's private affairs was enough to convince many Greeks to remain it the lands of the sultan and encourage others to emigrate from the Hellenic Kingdom in a quest for better economic opportunities.[71]

According to Smith, "…the economic growth of the Greek communities on the west coast [namely the Aegean region of the Anatolian Peninsula] was partly dependent on, and helped to attract, Greek immigration."[72] What is more, the opening up of Anatolia to European trade and construction of railways from İzmir to its hinterland facilitated trade and attracted more of a Greek population. Sonyel also writes "[a]s Greece could not provide employment for all her subjects, many of them lived and worked in the Ottoman Empire. Even Greek Cypriots migrated periodically to the southern coast of the Empire, especially to Antalya, in search of work."[73]

69 Ibid., p. 26.

70 Ibid., p. 27.

71 Ibid., p. 29.

72 Smith, op. cit., p. 25.

73 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 261.

The destination of Greek migration from the Pontus region was not confined to Western Anatolia; from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Greeks migrated to Russian territories as well. Indeed, Greek authors tend to write that the reason for Greek migration was the Ottoman persecution of Pontic Greeks. This thesis had also largely been utilized by Venizelos and Greek religious authorities during and after World War I to convince the European public opinion that these immigrant Greeks should be returned. However, as Augustinos argues, this immigration was not mainly because of security considerations, but because of economic reasons. The long excerpt from his writings clearly shows the reasons of Greek immigration:

> The lands abandoned by the Muslim tribespeople [in the Caucasus] who departed for the Ottoman Empire lay ready to receive new settlers. Russian officials were quick to appreciate the value of encouraging the colonization of those lands. The availability of a Christian population nearby in Eastern Asia Minor seemed just the answer to their needs. In the shifting of peoples between the imperial realms, which the two governments [the Ottoman and the Russian governments] sanctioned, the Russians must have felt they were getting the better part of the bargain. Unskilled, non-sedentary Muslims, whose faith was at odds with the Russian state religion were leaving; in their place would come coreligionists possessing needed skills and ready to settle down.
>
> In the aftermath of the Crimean War, Russian consuls and agents in towns along the Pontic coast worked diligently to recruit prospective Christian emigrants. As an inducement to Greek Orthodox and Armenian subjects of the Porte, the Russians offered employment at good wages to skilled workers, such as bricklayers, carpenters, and stonemasons, as well as land for settlement and the promise of better treatment by the tsarist authorities...
>
> ...Of those who did emigrate to Russia, a number found the reality did not live up to the promise. Disillusioned with the experience, after a while they petitioned the Ottoman authorities for permission to return.[74]

These words demonstrate that Russians were not only interfering in Ottoman internal affairs with the pretext of protecting the rights of the Orthodox Christians, they also tried to attract the Greek population to prompt them to settle in the Caucasus region.

74 Augustinos, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

The number of the population of Pontic Greeks has long been a matter of controversy. Greek sources have tended to exaggerate the number of the Pontic Greek population living in the region in order to justify that the region had included a Greek majority throughout history. However, in order to provide the reader with a more realistic account, the Ottoman census results should be included. Because Ottoman authorities had never allowed the Westerners to engage in population studies within the borders of the Empire, and until the disintegration of the Empire, the Ottoman authorities had the sole responsibility for designing population censuses. This means that Western statistical data could only be counted as a secondary source. Just to give an example, a Western historian, A. Synvet, joined the endeavor of the Greek Patriarchate of Hellenizing the Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians and other Orthodox Christians and claimed the number of the Greek population in the Ottoman Empire was 4,324,369 in 1878.[75] However, according to Kemal Karpat, who had used Ottoman census results to determine the Ottoman population, reached the conclusion that the number Greek population living within the borders of Empire was 2,332,191 (13.4% of the total population), nearly half of the number stipulated by Synvet. This huge gap between statistical data shows that those who study the Ottoman population have to be very careful not to be trapped into exaggerated numbers having no solid statistical basis.[76]

According to Kemal Karpat, the number of Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire increased slightly in 1905 to 2,823,063 (13.5% of the population), and decreased in 1914 to 1,729,738 corresponding to 9.3% of the total population.[77] This means that when the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, Greek population constituted less than 10% of the total population. These numbers were also approximately in line with the numbers provided by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which stipulated that the approximate number of Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire in 1914 was 1.5 million.[78]

Coming to the population debates regarding the Pontus region, the starting point in this paper for the population statistics of the region is the first Ottoman census in 1831 ordered by Sultan Mahmud II. In this census, solely the male population had been counted and it had been determined that the number of Muslim and non-

75 Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, pp. 47-48. For a detailed analysis of Greek statistical studies on Greek population in the Ottoman Empire, see Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire*, New York: New York University Press, 1983.

76 Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 9, 1978, pp. 237-274, see charts in pp. 258-274.

77 Ibid., pp. 237-274.

78 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 261.

Muslim males in Trabzon province was 46,890 and 11,431 respectively.[79] The reason for why the statistics regarding the Trabzon province has been chosen is that the borders of this particular province roughly corresponded to the Greek definition of the Pontus region. Of course, non-Muslim components did not only include Greeks, but also Armenians and other Christian communities. This data was also supported by a German traveler, Jakob Philip Fallmerayer, who had visited the Black Sea region around 1840s. Accordingly, he stipulated that Greeks had assumed a majority nowhere in the region and to illustrate this, he gave the number of the population living in the city of Trabzon, in which there were approximately 5,000 Muslim houses (*hane*) whereas the number of Greek houses hardly exceeded 400.[80] In 1869, according to the Annals of the Trabzon Province (*Trabzon Vilayet Salnamesi*), in the city of Trabzon, there were 1,776 Greek houses while the number of Muslim houses corresponded to 5,763. What is more, among 63,365 houses counted in the entire Trabzon *Sancak*, 10,519 belonged to the Greeks. In 1871, in the Province of Trabzon, which was composed of the *Sancak*s of Trabzon, Lazistan, Canik and Gümüşhane, the number of houses were 146,972, of which 23,874 belonged to the Greeks.[81] In other words, in the years 1869-1871, the ratio of Greek population was most concentrated in Trabzon city (30,8%); it declined when the Trabzon Sancak was taken into consideration (16,6%) while the ratio declined further when the Trabzon Province was taken into consideration (16,2%). This means that the Greek tradesmen and artisans were settled in the city and town centers, while in the rural areas, the number of Muslims exceeded Greeks considerably because the Muslims were mainly engaging in agricultural activities.

According to the Annals of the Trabzon Province, in 1895, of 1,071,477 people living in the province of Trabzon, 157,212 were Greek (14,6%); the reason for this decline of the proportion from 16,2% in 1871 might be, as mentioned above, Muslim immigration from the Caucasus to the Pontus region and simultaneous Greek immigration from the Pontus region to the Caucasus.[82] In an encyclopedic book published in 1897 in Istanbul, it was stipulated that in the Trabzon Province the number of the population was 1,477,700. Among the population, there were 636,700 Muslims vis-à-vis 193,000 Greeks (13% of the total population).[83] In

79 Enver Ziya Karal, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İlk Nüfus Sayımı (1831), Ankara, 1943, pp. 214-215, excerpted in Mesut Çapa, *Pontus Meselesi*, Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2001, p. 26.

80 Jakob Philip Fallmerayer, *Doğu'dan Frangmanlar*, translated by Hüseyin Salihoğlu, Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002, pp. 54-55.

81 Çapa, op. cit., pp. 141-143.

82 Ibid., p. 144.

83 Ali Cevad, *Memalik-i Osmaniye'nin Tarih ve Coğrafya Lugatı*, İstanbul: 1897 [1313], cited in Çapa, op. cit., p. 28.

1898, the Annals of the Trabzon Province determined the number of population and the number of Greeks as 1,163,815 and 181,044 respectively (15,5%).[84] In 1901, this time, the numbers were 1,211,644 and 185,784 respectively (15,3%).[85]

All in all, the statistical data acquired from the Ottoman archives demonstrate that the Greeks had never constituted the majority in the Pontus region. Therefore, the land claims demanded by some Greek delegations from the region in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and subsequent international meetings regarding the establishment of an independent Pontus state had no significant basis. Although the Greeks tried to demonstrate that many of the Muslims living in the region were converted Greeks and some of these converted Greeks had not even known of this very "fact," even they were aware that such a claim would not suffice to convince the Western states that they constituted majority in the region.

c. Inter-Communal Relations between Muslims and Greeks in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Greek educational, literary and cultural societies began to mushroom first in the capital, then in all parts of Anatolia where Greeks had been living. These societies, known as *sillogi*, aimed to Hellenize the Orthodox population of Anatolia. While Ottoman Greeks were labeled as *Rum* and they had been integrated to the Ottoman society for centuries, starting from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Greek teachers sent to the capital and Anatolia tried to raise Greek national consciousness within the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, Sonyel writes that in Istanbul alone "…there were about 20 such *sillogi* c. 1878, the most important of which was the Greek Literary Society… which founded some 200 Greek schools throughout the Empire."[86] These schools were supported by Greek banks, by the subventions from the Greek state and by the contributions of the prosperous Greek communities of Egypt; the teachers were educated by the University of Athens by the main propagandists of the *Megali Idea.*[87] Although these schools and other efforts for Hellenization of the Ottoman Greeks through missionary activities met with little success in the interior parts of Anatolia, they were largely successful in the coastal areas of the Empire and particularly in the great urban centers, such as Istanbul, Izmir and Trabzon.

84 Çapa, op. cit., p. 144.

85 Ibid., p. 146.

86 Sonyel, op. cit., p. 264.

87 Ibid.

The Ottoman-Greek War of 1897, the Cretan decision to unite with Greece in 1908 and the Balkan Wars had exacerbated the Turkish distrust of the Greeks. Particularly, the forced immigration of Muslims from the Balkans to Istanbul and Anatolia during and after the two Balkan Wars worsened the situation. The atrocities committed by the Greeks and Bulgarians over the Muslim inhabitants of the Balkans led to a great disturbance among the Ottomans. The massacres perpetrated against the Ottoman prisoners of war also had significant repercussions in all parts of the Empire. Sonyel refers to Greek historian Grigoriadis, who admits that 65,000 Ottoman prisoners of war were taken to the desert island of Makronisi outside Lavrio and most of them were massacred there.[88] What is more, there emerged the question of settling huge numbers of immigrants. All these problems resulted in several atrocities against the Greek population living in Anatolia and the government sometimes remained insufficient to prevent such occurrences.

All these developments prompted Venizelos to devise a solution. He understood that the distrust between Turkish and Greek people made their coexistence very difficult. Hence, he decided to conclude an agreement with the Porte for a voluntary exchange of the Greek-speaking populations of Turkish Thrace and Aydin Vilayet in Asia Minor for the Muslim populations of Greek Macedonia and Epirus.[89] However, Turkey's entry to the World War I interrupted the process and the idea of exchange of populations had been frozen almost for a decade.

The Balkan Wars revealed that the Greeks might be considered by the Ottoman officials as a significant danger for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Empire. Unlike the Armenians, who solely counted on the Russian protectorate, Greeks had not only been supported by the Europeans; they had also their own state which had been turning the Ottoman Greeks against the Ottoman Empire. Even Mark Levene, who accused the Ottoman Empire of creating "a zone of genocide" between the years 1878 and 1923, admits this grave perception of threat:

> Significantly, a Greek challenge to the political integrity of a would-be Turkish state was more plausible than anything the Armenians could muster. Greece, after all, had seceded from the empire almost a century earlier, expanding at the Ottomanist expense in the western Mediterranean and Thrace, and was to attempt, in the aftermath of CUP defeat in the First World War, a full-scale -and initially successful- invasion of the Anatolian

88 Ibid., p. 277.

89 Smith, op. cit., pp. 32-33

> mainland. It could thus be argued that the CUP had real grounds for concern over the existence of a large Ottoman Greek fifth column, especially in the Turkish-held Mediterranean and Aegean islands and coastline, as well as by their supremacy in the western-orientated trade out of Smyrna.[90]

Despite this troublesome perception of the Greeks by the Ottoman administration, namely by the Committee of Union and Progress, even as late as 1913, the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire retained their privileged status. Even Henry Morgenthau (1856-1946), one of the ardent anti-Turkish and pro-Greek Western diplomats, who served as the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul between November 1913 and February 1916, wrote in his extremely philhellenic book entitled *I Was Sent to Athens* the following:

> I learned that, not only in Constantinople, but also throughout Asia Minor, the Greeks largely controlled the banking, the shipping, and the general mercantile business. Some of the Greeks in Constantinople were among the most brilliant and cultivated people I have ever met anywhere in the world. Highly educated, fluent linguists, and very prosperous, they would have adorned any society. Some of them were the only non-diplomatic residents of Constantinople who were admitted into the diplomatic social circles.
>
> I found that the Greeks, like various other non-Mohammedans, occupied a peculiar legal status in Turkey, for which there is no parallel in any European country. They constituted a separate legal community, and exercised all community rights for themselves. They organized and supported their own schools. This peculiar status arose from the theocratic nature of the Turkish Government.[91]

All in all, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while continuous Ottoman defeats in subsequent wars increased the Ottoman concerns for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Empire, non-Muslim minorities of the Empire, particularly Greeks and Armenians contributed to this feeling of insecurity through organizing direct rebellions or indirect support for the anti-Ottoman activities. Hence, a vicious circle had been created. The activities perpetrated by the minorities increased Ottoman concerns for the maintenance of

90 Mark Levene, "Creating a Modern 'Zone of Genocide': The Impact of Nation and State-Formation on Eastern Anatolia, 1878-1923," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, (Winter 1998), pp. 393-433, p. 407.

91 Henry Morgenthau, *I Was Sent to Athens*, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929, the full text of the book was available at http://www.hri.org/docs/Morgenthau/

the Empire and this sense of insecurity resulted in increasing Ottoman pressure on the minorities, further alienating the Greeks and Armenians living in the Empire. This vicious circle, which had also been exacerbated by the Westerners, would turn into a catastrophe in the early decades of the twentieth century, affecting the lives not only of non-Muslim, but also of all the citizens of the Ottoman Empire in an extremely negative way.

3. Pontus Society and its Activities

As stated above, there were various Greek societies called *sillogi* established in different parts of the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century that had served for the Hellenization of the Ottoman Greeks. Considering the Pontus region specifically, the Pontus Society was one of the most active *sillogi*. Indeed, the Pontus Society was not a monolithic entity; it was an umbrella organization uniting various smaller organizations established in different parts of northeastern Anatolia.

a. Establishment of Clandestine Greek Organizations in the Ottoman Empire

The first Greek organizations in the Pontus region were established as clandestine organizations in the Merzifon American College in 1904 and they were called *Rum İrfanperver Klübü* (Greek Club of Knowledge-Lovers) and *Pontus Klübü* (Pontus Club). In the same year, in İnebolu, another secret organization was founded by a Greek-origin American priest named Clematheos.[92] Four years later, in 1908, two additional secret organizations were established in Samsun under the auspices of the Metropolitan of Amasya, Germanos Karavangelis (1866-1935).[93] These organizations were called *Rum Teceddüd ve İhya Cemiyeti* (Greek Society for Renewal and Revitalization) and *Müdafaa-i Meşruta* (Legitimate Defense). This last organization was a military one and it aimed to arm all the Greeks living in the Pontic region extending from İnebolu in the west to Batum in the east. Greek historian Stephanos Yerasimos criticized the militarization of Greek secret organizations by a religious leader, namely Germanos as such: "Although there was no local discontent requiring the establishment of a self-defense organization, Germanos established the first armed militia organization with the youngsters of this neighborhood [Kadıköy, near Samsun] immediately after the 1908 revolution."[94]

92 Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *İki İsyan Bir Paşa*, İstanbul: Babil Yayıncılık, 2003, p. 70.

93 *Pontus Meselesi: Teşkilat – Rum Şekavet ve Fecayi-i Hükümetin İstitlaat ve Tedabiri: Avrupa Hükümetleriyle Muhabere,* Ankara: [Uncited Publisher], 1922, edited by ….. pp. 118-119.

94 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 356.

What is more, it was understood that Greek companies contributed these organizations through providing them logistical support. For example, in 1908, fifty Manlicher rifles had been transported by the Greek Destunis Company and stored in the coffee house of Mercanis in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul, which would later be utilized to arm the members of this clandestine military organization.[95]

Following this establishment period, particularly the Greek organizations in Samsun quickly established branches in various cities of the Black Sea region, including Bafra, Çarşamba, Fatsa, Havza, İnebolu, Kavak, Sinop, Tokat and Ünye; they had even extended to the interior parts of Anatolia including Kırşehir, Kayseri and Ürgüp.[96] In 1909, all these organizations were put under the control of the Asia-Minor Society (*Asya-yi Suğra Cemiyeti*) through the connection established by Chrysanthos Filippides (1881-1949), the Metropolitan of Trabzon.[97] In 1910, the Pontus Society began to publish a journal entitled *Pontus.*[98]

b. The Activities of Greek Organizations during World War I

Ottoman participation in World War I in 1914 and the subsequent defeat of Ottoman armies on the Eastern front resulted in the Russian occupation of Eastern Anatolia, including the coastal areas of the Black Sea region. On April 18, 1916, Russian troops entered Trabzon and were welcomed by Metropolitan Chrysanthos. In a letter he sent to the Russian Tsar, he declared his support for the Russian occupation of the city.[99] The governor of Trabzon, Cemal Azmi Bey (1868-1922), had to deliver the administration of the city to Chrysanthos, who dissolved the existing Municipal Council and assembled a new one composed mainly of Greeks.[100] Encouraged by the Russian occupation of the Black Sea littoral, Greek organizations intensified their activities and Greek irregular bands armed by these organizations began to attack Turkish villages. One of the strongest band leaders, Vasil Usta, was contacted by the Russian secret service and with a Russian torpedo boat he was sent to Samsun to organize the bands in the region.[101] Later on, Vasil Usta went to Sivas and collected hundreds of armed

95 Ibid., p. 57.

96 *Pontus Meselesi*, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

97 Ali Güler, *İşgal Yıllarında Yunan Gizli Teşkilatları*, Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1988, p. 49.

98 Ibid.

99 *Pontus Meselesi*, op. cit., p. 165.

100 Mahmut Goloğlu, Trabzon Tarihi: Fetihten Kurtuluşa Kadar, Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2000, p. 175.

101 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 360.

men to start a "general rebellion."[102] On September 24, 1916, he attacked Muslim villages to force Muslims to retaliate and to urge the Russians to protect the Greeks against Muslim attacks. This time, he was accompanied by the secretary of the Greek Consulate in Samsun, Lazaros Melidis. However, he was defeated by Turkish troops near Ordu and escaped to Trabzon, where he stayed until the end of the World War I.[103] As a result of this insurgency, Greeks of Tirebolu region were relocated in November 1916 to the interior regions of the Sivas Province. Towards the end of January 1917, Greeks living in Bafra were also relocated, this time to the Ankara Province. Although Greek sources argue that these relocated Greeks were persecuted by the Ottoman troops, Yerasimos wrote that there were no massacres perpetrated against relocated Greeks and they returned to their home after the end of World War I in 1918.[104]

The archives of the Greek Metropolitan See in Trabzon, which were examined by Turkish authorities after the Russian retreat, included the documents of secret correspondence sent to Chrysanthos during World War I. In these documents, Chrysanthos was informed that some Greeks were assigned to inform the Russian officers on the situation and tactics of the Turkish army located in Eastern Anatolia. In two of such letters dated in 1917 and addressing Chrysanthos, two such Greek spies, Polihronyos Partenopulos and Pavlos Patmanidis, were named.[105] What is more, it was understood from these documents that many of the Greek religious leaders, including Metropolitans serving in the region contributed to the establishment of the new Greek secret organizations. A letter sent from the Gümüşhane Metropolitan See to Chrysanthos on December 18, 1917 demonstrated that a branch of the Trabzon-based *Rum İttihad-ı Milli Cemiyeti* (Greek National Unity Society) was established in Gümüşhane.[106]

The Pontus Society not only had branches within the Ottoman Empire but also in Europe. The center of Greek propaganda in Europe was France, particularly Marseilles. In this city, an organization called the External Pontic Congress (*Harici Pontuslular Kongresi*) was established and it was headed by Konstantin Konstantinides, the son of the major of Giresun, Yorgi Paşa.[107] In 1917, in one of the meetings of the Congress, Konstantinides delivered a speech, in which he not

102 Ibid., p. 361.

103 Ibid., pp 361-362.

104 Ibid.

105 Unless it would be stipulated otherwise, all the letters referred in this section of the article had been discovered in the Trabzon Metropolitan Office and they had been translated by a committee including one Greek (Dimitraki Efendi) and one Turkish translator (Mülazım-ı evvel [First Lieutenant] Ziya). *Pontus Meselesi*, op. cit., p. 120.

106 Ibid., p. 217.

107 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 367.

only defined the region of Pontus, but also commented on the Greek activities in the region. Accordingly he defined Pontus as a region stretching from the Kastamonu province in the west and Caucasus in the east. He further argued that the number of population living in this region was 3.5 million among which there were 1.5 million Orthodox Greeks, 500,000 Greek-speaking Muslim Greeks, 250,000 Orthodox Greeks who declared themselves as Muslims to the Ottoman officials and 1,250,000 other ethnicities including Turks, Georgians, Turcomans, and Circassians.[108] In other words, he claimed that Turks constituted only a small minority in the region, while the Greeks formed the majority. Of course, these numbers were quite exaggerated and as noted above, they were inconsistent with the academic studies as well as government censuses on the population of the Black Sea region.

Konstantinides not only had made such propagandistic speeches, but also tried to attract foreign attention to the Pontic cause. In one of his letters written to Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), the then Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he demanded Russian intervention for the establishment of a republic whose borders would stretch from the Russian border in the east to the Sinop Province in the west after the Russians had retreated from the region.[109]

One of the most significant problems that those Greeks demanding an autonomous, if not independent, Pontic state in the region encountered was that the region had also been demanded by another Ottoman minority, namely the Armenians. Although, in the second half of 1918, the Greek and Armenian diaspora in Europe became more organized with the establishment of the League of the Oppressed Nationalities of Turkey (*Ligue des nationalités opprimées de Turquie*) in Geneva, whose members were predominantly Greek and Armenian, soon after the Armistice of Mudros, the spoils of war resulted in a significant contention between them, particularly on the city of Trabzon.[110] In other words, anti-Ottomanism could only unite Greeks and Armenians until the end of World War I; however, still, particularly Chrysanthos and Venizelos strived for the continuation of Greek-Armenian cooperation against the Ottoman Empire and Kemalist forces. This territorial disagreement demonstrated why the region of Pontus became a significant problem between Armenians and Greeks in the Paris Peace Conference and a number of subsequent international meetings regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire between 1919 and 1922.[111] In November 1918,

108 Konstantinides said that he had taken these numbers from a newspaper article, published in an Athens newspaper called *Neologos*. *Pontus Meselesi*, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

109 Ibid., p. 140.

110 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 346.

111 Ibid., p. 347.

Konstantinides assembled another congress in Marseilles and the resolution adopted at the end of the congress was sent to the British Foreign Minister, Lord Curzon (1859-1925). In this resolution, Konstantinides demanded the protectorate of the Allied Powers over the 1,500,000 Greeks and the establishment of a Pontus Republic in the region stretching from the Russian border to the Sinop Province.[112] However, at that time, British foreign policy regarding the region was to establish an Armenian state, which would be placed under the mandate of the Allied Powers and to integrate the Pontic Greeks into this prospective Armenian state. In other words, even the British were aware that it would be impossible to establish a Greek state in the region with such a small number of Greek populations in the region; hence, a Greco-Armenian federation seemed for them a more plausible option.

While Konstantinides tried to garner European support for the Pontic cause, Metropolitan Chrysanthos aimed to establish contacts with the Greeks living in the Caucasus region. As mentioned previously, these Greeks were attracted by the Russians in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and established a significant community in the region. In one of the letters sent by a Greek living in Tbilisi named Velisaridis to Metropolitan Chrysanthos, Velisaridis informed Chrysanthos that it was quite possible to gather volunteers for the Pontus Society from Kuban and Sochum.[113] In other words, Greeks living in the Caucasus might be utilized to establish volunteer troops against the Muslims living in the region. Meanwhile, Greek notables of Istanbul who were engaged in anti-Ottoman activities began to intensify propaganda activities, including publishing propaganda materials regarding the Pontus Question. Accordingly, one of the central branches of the Pontus Society, located within the Beyoğlu *sillogi,* prepared a booklet entitled "Horrors in Pontus" (*Pontus Fecayii*). This booklet was translated into several languages and sent to European countries as well as the United States.[114] Additional books were prepared and published in Istanbul and Athens. The *Black Book* published by the Patriarchate in Istanbul was followed by the *Red Book* or *Great Adventure of Pontus* published in Athens. All these books were translated and distributed in Europe.[115] As it can be seen, not only Greek secret organizations, but also the Greek Patriarchate in Istanbul contributed to the Pontus cause and influenced not only the public opinion of the Ottoman Greeks but also European public opinion. This strategy was quite similar to the one adopted by the Armenians. However, while Armenian propaganda materials such

112 Yusuf Sarınay, "Pontus Meselesi ve Yunanistan'ın Politikası", in Berna Türkdoğan (ed.), *Pontus Meselesi ve Yunanistan'ın Politikası: Makaleler*, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 1999, p. 14.

113 *Pontus Meselesi,* op. cit., p. 220.

114 Çapa, op. cit., p. 17.

115 Ibid., pp. 74-76.

as the *Blue Book* were published by the Allied Powers during World War I, Greek propaganda materials were mainly published in Greece or in Istanbul under the auspices of the Greek government and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul.

c. The Activities of Greek Organizations after World War I until 1920

The Paris Peace Conference which was convened in 1919 to settle the post-World War I international environment witnessed the gathering of delegations from the Ottoman minorities, particularly established by Armenians and Greeks. These delegations tried to convince the leaders of the European states to allow the Armenians and Greeks to establish their own autonomous, if not independent, states in what were in remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Besides the Greek delegation representing the Greek state, in May 1919, Chrysanthos attended the Paris Peace Conference as well. He delivered a memorandum to the delegates of the conference on May 2, in which he labeled himself as the "Metropolitan of Trabzon and the Delegate of Unsaved Greeks" (*Trabzon Metropoliti ve Gayr-ı Müstahlis Rumların Murahhası*).[116] Accordingly, in the memorandum, he first defined the Pontus region. This definition was more limited when compared to the aforementioned definition made by Konstantinides in 1917. Chrysanthos claimed that historically the Pontus region was composed of the Provinces of Trabzon and Karahisar as well as some parts of the Provinces of Kastamonu and Sivas. The region that he defined as Pontus comprised almost the entire Black Sea littoral from İnebolu to Batum. The Greek population of the region was given by Chrysanthos as 600,000; however, there were also 250,000 Greeks which had to migrate to the Caucasus before and during World War I. This would make the total Greek population 850,000.[117] Probably, Chrysanthos was likely aware that the numbers presented by Konstantinides two years before were so unrealistic that the Paris Peace Conference would not take them seriously. However, still, even these reduced numbers were not welcomed by the British authorities of the Foreign Office. Arnold Toynbee, who had been serving in the Foreign Office during the Paris Peace Conference, wrote at that time:

> The statistics and frontiers put forward in this memorandum are fantastic, and the official figures of the Greek Government only total 450,000 Greeks for the vilayets of Trebizond and Sivas. Even this is, of course, a large number… But the memorandum errs in claiming that they are a

116 The Turkish translation of this memorandum was available in Ibid., pp. 161-164.

117 Ibid., p. 163.

> *majority* of the population, and no state territory with a Greek majority could be carved out in this region.[118]

Perceiving that the territorial and demographic information provided by the delegation representing the Pontic Greeks seemed unconvincing, the head of the delegation representing the Greek state, Venizelos, adopted a more realist attitude. Citing the statistics of the Greek Patriarchate of Istanbul, he argued in the Conference that the number of the Greek population living in the region was 477,828, while the Muslim population was 2,735,815.[119]

Returning to the memorandum presented by Chrysanthos at the Paris Peace Conference, after giving these numbers and after explaining the Russian occupation of Trabzon and his subsequent administration of the city, Chrysanthos also added a significant detail. Accordingly, Colonel Chardigny, the French representative in Tbilisi, had demanded him to establish Pontus troops in order to fight against the Turks on the side of the Allied States.[120] Indeed, the Russian army had established a division of 12,000 Greeks who joined the Russian army during the Russian occupation of the region. This Pontic division was commanded by Greek soldiers serving in the Russian army, namely Colonel Ananias and Colonel Nikiforakis.[121] Although the number of troops was aimed to be increased to 50,000, after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Greek division was disbanded before it became operational.[122] However, still, the confession of Chrysanthos was significant enough to demonstrate the degree of external support to the Pontic cause.

The memorandum of Chrysanthos ended with some claims and demands. He claimed that the Muslim and Greek population of the Pontus region was almost equal and indeed majority of the Muslim population was originally Greek, who had forgotten neither their identity nor language. He added that both Turks and Russians admitted that the Greeks were competent more than any other nation to rule the Pontus region; therefore, he demanded from the conference to place the Pontus region under the control of an autonomous Greek state.[123] It should be recalled that these demands came from an Ottoman citizen and a religious figure

118 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 352.

119 Sarınay, op. cit, p. 19. In 1921, the Central Army Commandment sent a report on the Greek population in the region where the Greek insurgents aimed to establish an "independent" Pontic state. In this report, the Greek population in the region was stipulated as 273,733, while the Muslim population was 2,391,316. This means that the Greek population hardly exceeded 10% of the total population. Cited in Balcıoğlu, op. cit., p. 81.

120 Ibid., p. 163. This letter sent from Chardigny to Chrysanthos on December 24, 1917 was also available in the book, Ibid., p. 225.

121 Sarınay, op. cit., p. 10.

122 Ibid.

123 *Pontus Meselesi,* op.cit., p. 164.

serving in the Ottoman Empire. His demands were so ambitious and so unrealistic that they had even been refused by Venizelos, who was aware of the British policy of the establishment of an Armenian state and integration of Pontic Greeks to that state. Accordingly, Venizelos demonstrated himself as making a great sacrifice to leave Trabzon to the prospective Armenian state as an outlet to the Black Sea and never mentioned a Pontic state.[124] Such a policy frustrated the Pontic Greeks demanding their own state.

After disappointed by Venizelos in the Paris Peace Conference, the leaders of the Pontic Society began to pursue a more active policy. A significant aspect of this new active stance was to increase the Greek population living in the region in order to increase the Greek proportion in the total population. Indeed, the strategy of population transfers was not new; it had been implemented since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. According to the statistics, it was estimated that between 1870 and 1920, 30,000 Greeks inhabited the Samsun region with the joint effort of the Patriarchate and Greek State.[125] During the Armistice period between 1918 and 1922, Greek immigrations to the region from the Caucasus and interior parts of Anatolia intensified. A secret organization called *Kardus* was specifically established in Istanbul in 1919 to organize the Greek immigration to the Pontus region. This organization seemed to be a charity establishment operating under the overt name of "Central Commission of Greek Immigrants"; however, it aimed to increase the Greek influx to Asia Minor and to send irregular bands to the Pontus region under the guise of immigrants.[126] According to Ottoman archival documents, as a result of the activities of this organization, towards the end of July 1919, approximately 8,000 armed Greeks were transferred from the Caucasus to Trabzon.[127]

Towards the end of 1919, Chrysanthos had returned to Trabzon from Paris without a tangible result for the establishment of an independent Pontic state. However, he continued his efforts. In November 1919, he went Batum and during his presence there a Pontic government was established in the city. The government, which had not been recognized officially, started arms delivery to the shores of Trabzon immediately and issued passports to the Greeks in the name of the Pontic Republic.[128] From Batum, Chrysanthos went toTbilisi and Yerevan and initiated negotiations with Armenians for a prospective Greek-Armenian

124 Sabahattin Özel, *Milli Mücadelede Trabzon*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991, p. 38.

125 Ertuğrul Zekai Ökte, "Yunanistan'ın İstanbul'da Kurduğu Gizli İhtilal Cemiyeti (Kordus)," *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, No. 40, January 1971, ss. 22-23, cited in Sarınay, op. cit., p. 21.

126 Ibid.

127 Özel, op. cit., p. 133.

128 Ökte, op. cit., p. 28.

federation in Eastern Anatolia and the Pontus region. This was done under the directions of Venizelos and in January 1920, Greek representative Kathenioties and Armenian representative General Termissian signed a treaty which concretized the Greek-Armenian collaboration.[129]

Meanwhile in December 1919, Greek Prime Minister Venizelos suggested that the British government organize approximately 4,000 Pontic Greeks serving as volunteers in the Greek army. Accordingly, Colonel Katheniotes had been assigned by the Greek government to deal with these Greek soldiers and, if accepted by the British Foreign Ministry, these troops could be sent to Pontus to restore order there.[130] In other words, besides the Russians, the Greek state also engaged in a more active policy, even including military operation towards the Pontus region. However, British officials clearly refused this offer with an observation stipulating that this "…idea should certainly be discouraged."[131]

All in all, from the Paris Peace Conference until early 1920, Greek organizations aimed to obtain foreign support. Their demands from the British were refused and their activities within Russian territories for the establishment of a Pontic division could not be operationalized. Disappointed by these failures and forced to be contended with armaments and a limited number of officers from European states and particularly from Greece, the local leaders of these organizations decided to struggle with the Ottomans by their own means. This resulted in the intensification of the activities of Greek bands in the region, which had already been established before World War I.

4. The Activities of Greek Bands in the Black Sea Region

Indeed, the activities of Greek bands first intensified just after the beginning of World War I, when the first significant incidents of these bands were witnessed in the Bafra region. There were eleven Greek villages in the Nebyan district of Bafra whose population reached 6,219. The inhabitants of these villages came together and established armed bands with a total number of 1,500 men. When the Ottoman government declared a state of war against the Allied Powers and began to conscript male Ottoman citizens, the Nebyan Greeks refused to join the army and began to attack Muslim villages as early as October 1914. From this date until the end of 1920, there were 110 incidents committed by the Nebyan bands against Muslims living in the region. According to official documents, in these 110

129 Ibid., p. 29.

130 Sonyel, op. cit., 1993, p. 363.

131 Ibid., p. 364.

incidents, 534 Muslims were killed, thousands were wounded and their properties were pillaged.[132] Solely, in the villages of Çağşur and Koşaca 367 Muslim civilians were brutally murdered.[133] The total value of Muslim properties pillaged in Alaçam region near Nebyan exceeded 360.000 *kurush*, while among 27 villages and farms, 16 were burned to the ground and the remaining were partially damaged.[134]

Another location where Greek insurgency intensified was the city of Samsun. Between March 1915 and February 1916 Greek bands burned more than 500 houses, and until the end of 1920, 51 Muslims were killed.[135] Solely in the town of Çarşamba, 335 houses, two mosques, and two schools were burned in the same period as well.[136] Three incidents were particularly recorded in detail in the archival documents. These were the massacres perpetrated by Greek bands in the villages of Güney, Baylarca and Duayeri. Accordingly, 24 Muslims were killed in the first two villages and among them there were small children as well as elderly people. In Duayeri, 20 Muslims were killed as a result of crossfire by the Greek bands.[137] Similarly, in the city of Amasya, 48 Muslims were killed and 17 villages were pillaged.[138]

Greek atrocities were most intensified in the Köprü town and its dependent districts. There, the Greek bands, which were composed of 800 Greeks, had destroyed several villages. In these incidents more than a hundred Muslims were killed; all of their properties were pillaged.[139] Particularly, in Ortaklar and Esenbey villages, all inhabitants were brutally massacred.[140] Ortaklar had once been a prosperous village composed of 150 houses; however, after it was pillaged in October 1921, there was no single house left for inhabitance.[141] Similarly, in the Küpecik village of Ladik town on 1 August 1921, only five houses and ten granaries were left unburned among 150 houses.[142]

In all, the total recorded number of the Muslim losses who had lost their lives as a result of the atrocities perpetrated by Greek bands in the Pontus region was

132 The details of these incidents were provided in Ibid., *Pontus Meselesi,* op. cit., 243-303.
133 Ibid., p. 240.
134 Ibid., pp. 246-248, 297.
135 Ibid., pp. 310.
136 Ibid., pp. 312-314.
137 Ibid., pp. 303-304.
138 Ibid., p. 316.
139 Ibid., pp. 334-344.
140 Ibid., pp. 333-334.
141 Ibid., p. 344
142 Ibid., p. 350.

1,641.[143] However, Turkish government estimated that the number was higher. The Minister of Interior, Fethi Bey, declared in a speech he delivered in the Grand National Assembly on December 29, 1921, that the number of houses burned and pillaged from 1919 to late 1921 was 3,303.[144] These numbers demonstrate the level of Greek atrocities which claimed hundreds of lives and resulted in a serious desolation in the region.

These atrocities were not only documented in the Turkish archives but also there were French archival documents providing accounts of the Greek insurgency. Yerasimos cited two of them. In the first document, it was stipulated that the bands were mainly located around Samsun and reached 2,500 men. The document states: "For the last few years, they engaged in bloody revenge activities against Muslim people in all occasions"[145] In the second document, it was determined that since Turkish troops began to protect the cities of the Black Sea region, Greek bands directed their attacks to less protected villages.[146] In other words, Western representatives serving in the region had witnessed the atrocities committed by the Greeks and cited them in their reports.

Greek atrocities were responded to by the establishment of Turkish irregular bands and these several attacks towards Greek villages hosting the Greek insurgents. In other words, there were no one-sided persecutions solely perpetrated by the Turks against the Greeks as many Greek and European sources indicated. Rather, the distrust between the two communities reached such a level that their coexistence turned out to be in danger and mutual atrocities were perpetrated. As a result of the inter-communal clashes, local leaders of Greek organizations began to complain to the High Commissars of the Allied Powers about the atrocities committed by the Turks in the Pontus region. Even in the weekly meeting of High Commissars held on February 6, 1919, the French representative, Admiral Amet, argued that in the rural areas of the Black Sea region as well of Central Anatolia Greeks were massacred. However, Yerasimos writes how the Greek propaganda material published in these years included solely the incidents perpetrated by the Turks while ignoring the ones perpetrated by the Greeks:

> In the counter-propaganda book entitled *Pontus Question (Pontus Sorunu)* and published in 1923 in Istanbul by the Turks, 25 killings and an equal number of usurpation incidents were cited in detail; contrarily, there was

143 Ibid., p. 397.

144 Ibid.

145 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 378.

146 Ibid.

> no single concrete example in the long theses of martyrdom of the Pontic Greeks for the winter and summer of 1919.[147]

Greek atrocities against the Muslim population of the Black Sea region intensified after the Armistice of Mudros. Particularly, the landing of British troops in Samsun and Merzifon in March 1919 facilitated Greek insurgency activities. What is more, just after the signature of the Armistice another Greek organization was established in Istanbul. Known as *Mavri Mira* (the Black Destiny), this organization was established under the auspices of the Patriarchate and protected by the British state.[148] This organization was rapidly spread to Bursa, Adapazarı, Ankara, Konya, Karaman, Kayseri, Maraş, Urfa, Diyarbakır and Siirt through clandestine agents. More important, the organization hosted some Greek bands operating in the Marmara region, the most significant of which was the band of Todori at the outskirts of Istanbul.[149] In other words, Greek brigandage activity became more organized with the establishment of these new organizations supported by the British state and the Patriarchate.

While *Mavri Mira* was hosting existing Greek bands established by Ottoman Greeks, at the same time, the Greek state also increased its support of the Pontic Greeks. Accordingly, Greek officer Karaiskos arrived in Samsun and began to organize Greek bands already established in this region. Soon, the number of armed men in these bands reached 25,000.[150] The atrocities committed by these bands reached such a level that the Ottoman government decided to send a military inspector to the region in order to report on the reasons for these insurgencies.[151] He was Major-General Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), who demanded and was appointed to that post. Mustafa Kemal reached Samsun on May 19, 1919, examined the situation there and sent several reports to the Porte. In his report dated 21-22 May, he wrote that the reason for the disturbance in the region was the activities of some forty Greek bands and if these bands were to end their activities, thirteen Muslim bands, which had been established to protect the Muslim inhabitants of the region, would immediately do the same.[152]

The Greek insurgency was not only depicted in the reports of Mustafa Kemal but also in the writings of several European visitors coming to the region. For

147 Ibid., p. 371.

148 Güler, op. cit., p. 36.

149 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

150 Sarınay, op. cit., p. 34

151 Ibid.

152 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 375. For a detailed analysis of Mustafa Kemal's reports sent from Samsun, see Mithat Sertoğlu, "Mustafa Kemal'in Samsun'dan Gönderdiği İki Mühim Rapor," *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, Vol. 3, No. 14, (Yıl)

example, Admiral Bristol, who had written a significant report on the situation of Anatolia after World War I, informed the Allied Powers about his deep concern over the "anarchic environment created by Greek activities," while American Consul Ralph F. Chesbrough wrote to the US Secretary of State that some Greek bands which were operating around Samsun region were established and equipped by the British agents.[153]

Of course, the Greek insurgency movement was responded to both officially and by the inhabitants of the region. As mentioned before, the first response was the establishment of Muslim bands to protect Muslim lives and properties against the Greek bands. Among these bands, the one headed by Topal Osman Ağa (1883-1923) in the Giresun region was quite powerful. Topal Osman Ağa, the son of a local notable family, had already been accused of atrocities perpetrated against the Armenians and Greeks during World War I and was sentenced in absence by the Military Tribunals (*Divan-ı Harb)* established in Istanbul.[154] When the Mayor of Giresun resigned due to health reasons in May 1919, Osman Ağa became the mayor of that city benefiting from the weaknesses of the central government in the region.[155] After assuming such an influential post, he began to organize Muslim youngsters and lead them in their struggle against the Greek insurgency movement. Between 1919 and 1921, the irregular troops of Osman Ağa fought against Greek bands, while in 1921 they joined the Turkish army in the Sakarya Battle.[156]

It should be noted that during this period of inter-communal clash, the irregular troops of Osman Ağa sometimes engaged in criminal activities and killed innocent Greeks while suppressing Greek insurgency activities around Greek villages. Despite his cruel methods, his struggle against Greek bands created a sense of security for the Muslim inhabitants of the region who had long suffered from Greek atrocities.

Consolidation of a nationalist movement in Ankara by Mustafa Kemal and the response of Muslim bands towards the Greek insurgency movement concerned the Greek authorities, first and foremost the Greek Prime Minister Elefterios Venizelos. Therefore, towards the end of 1920, he decided to apply an active military policy by leaving Turkish troops under crossfire through the Greek army which had already been positioned in Western Anatolia and Pontic troops, which

153 Yerasimos, op. cit., pp. 379-380.

154 Süleyman Beyoğlu, "Milli Mücadele'de Giresun'un Yeri ve Önemi," in *Giresun Tarihi Sempozyumu: Bildiriler,* Giresun: Giresun Belediyesi Yayınları, 1997.

155 Çapa, op. cit., p. 109.

156 Ibid., p. 113.

would immediately be established in Northeastern Anatolia. Accordingly, in a letter dated October 5, 1920, Venizelos argued to the British authorities that in order to press the Turkish government to accept the Sevres Treaty, such a dual operation was necessary; however, since Greece was incapable of engaging in such a large scale operation, he demanded 200,000 uniforms and 3 million pounds from Britain.[157] He wrote:

> The only radical remedy would be a new campaign with the object of destroying definitely the nationalist forces around Angora and the Pontus, with the following double consequences:
>
> 1. Of driving the Turks out of Constantinople which would form, together with the zone of the Straits, a separate state the existence of which would constitute a unique efficacious guarantee of the liberty of the Straits.
>
> 2. Constitution of a separate state at the Pontus with the Greeks that have remained there, and those who having emigrated to escape from the Turkish persecution during the last fifty years are dispersed in the south of Russia, and whose total number amounts to 800,000. This state, collaborating with Armenia and Georgia, would form a solid barrier against Islamism and eventually against Russian imperialism. The forces which Greece now disposes of would be sufficient to ensure the complete success of this expedition, but for political and financial reasons the Hellenic Government would be unable to assume the exclusive initiative and responsibility thereof, as in June last.[158]

In other words, Venizelos did not only demand material support from the British, but he reversed his policy of leaving Trabzon to a prospective Armenian state which would also include Pontic Greeks. He understood that the Nationalist forces under the command of Kazım Karabekir (1882-1948) would not allow the establishment of an Armenian state; therefore he began to press for an independent Greek state in the Black Sea region. The subsequent defeat of Armenians by the Turkish troops and the conclusion of the Treaty of Gyumri in December 1920 showed that the concerns of Venizelos became a reality.

Meanwhile, because of the insufficiency of irregular bands to cope with the Greek insurgency, the Turkish government established in Ankara in April 1920 quickly planned a long-lasting solution to this problem and combined several troops to

157 Ibid., p. 413.

158 Smith, op. cit., p. 131.

establish an army called the *Merkez Ordusu* (Central Army) in December of the same year. This army was sent to the Black Sea region to investigate the activities of clandestine Greek organizations and to suppress the Greek insurgency. Nureddin Paşa (1873-1932) was appointed as the commander of the *Merkez Ordusu*.

When Nureddin Paşa arrived in the region, he immediately began to adress the issue thoroughly. His investigations conducted at the Merzifon American College revealed how these missionary schools contributed to the Greek insurgency in Anatolia. According to a letter dated on February 16, 1921, Nureddin Paşa wrote to the General Staff that in the Merzifon American College and in its hospital, some documents, including the emblem and statute of the Pontus Society, were founded. What is more, it was also understood that, a teacher teaching Turkish language at Merzifon College, Zeki Efendi, was killed by Greeks because he had been thought to inform the Turkish authorities about what had been going on in the college.[159] Among the documents found in Merzifon, it was also revealed that the director of the college and the American representative in Samsun attempted to send some Greek and Armenian students to Europe without the permission of the Ottoman Empire.[160] As a result of these allegations, the college was closed, and except for two Americans, all of its personnel were deported.[161]

In addition to the establishment of the *Merkez Ordusu*, the second significant precaution taken against the Greek insurgency was the collection of weapons and ammunition from the Greek population living in the Pontus region.[162] This decision was evaluated by Greek sources as intentionally depriving the Pontic Greeks of their basic need for security; in other words, these sources argue that this policy of disarmament facilitated Turkish atrocities perpetrated against the Greeks. However, in order to provide security for the Muslim inhabitants of the region, such a decision was perceived as essential by the Turkish National Assembly. What is more, it became evident from the investigations of Nureddin Paşa that the Greeks of the region were armed excessively through the weapons transported from Greece to the region. Hence, the issue of disarmament was designed as a precaution to sustain security in the Black Sea area.

By the spring of 1921, a significant development forced the Turkish National Assembly to adopt more radical measures to protect the Muslim inhabitants of

159 *Pontus Meselesi,* op. cit., p. 424.

160 Ibid., p. 431.

161 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 417.

162 Balcıoğlu, op. cit., p. 87.

the region, this time not only from Greek irregular bands, but from the attack of the Greek state. Accordingly, on March 16, 1921, the Turkish government signed the Treaty of Moscow with the Soviet Union. The Russians pledged to send money and ammunition to Anatolia via the Black Sea. Informed about the treaty, the Greek state sent several warships to the Black Sea in order to prevent the transportation from Soviet Union to Turkey. These warships bombed some of the Black Sea ports, most significant of which was İnebolu, which was bombed on June 9. As a result of these attacks, fearing a combined attack of Greek troops and the local Greek insurgents, the Turkish government adopted a decision ordering the relocation of Greeks aged between 15 and 50 into the interior parts of Anatolia. On June 19, the Commandment of the Central Army issued notification which ordered the relocation of the aforementioned Greeks to Malatya, Ergani, Maraş, Gürün and Darende. What is more, the notification declared that any maladministration during the relocation would be punished severely and the security of the women, elderly and children would be provided by the Turkish troops. However, this relocation was never fully applied and in November of the same year, it was totally abandoned.[163] According to the Turkish military statistics, the total number of relocated Greeks was 63,844.[164] Of course, as a result of weather conditions, hunger, diseases and more importantly as a result of the attacks perpetrated by irregular Turkish bands, some of these relocated Greeks either died or were killed. This process of relocation was a tragic incident; however, it was perceived at that time as a necessary precaution for the provision of internal security since the Greek army had already initiated its major assault against Turkish troops and advanced in Anatolia so much so that the Great National Assembly discussed the evacuation of Ankara. Fearing a Greek rear attack, the Turkish government attempted to secure its newly established control in the east through such precautions.

The final precaution to prevent Greek insurgency was the establishment of *İstiklal Mahkemeleri* (Independence Tribunals) to try those who had engaged in the activities of Greek bands. As a result of these trials on October 10, 1921, the Tribunal established in Sivas issued 177 death sentences (174 Greeks, 3 Muslims). The Metropolitan of Trabzon, Chrysanthos, the Metropolitan of Giresun, Lavrentios, and the major propagandist of the Pontus cause in Europe, Konstantin Konstantinides, were sentenced to death in absentia.[165]

163 Sarınay, op. cit., p. 49

164 Balcıoğlu, op. cit., p. 120.

165 Ibid., p. 51.

The precautions adopted by the Turkish government seemed unduly harsh and, indeed, they were so; however, even some Western historians admit that the decisions of disarmament, relocation and the trials in the Independence Tribunals had a certain level of justification because of the solemn threat perception of the time. For example, Smith writes that:

> The Turks claimed, correctly, that there were revolutionary and separatist elements in the Pontus who were a potential threat to the rear of their army in the event of a Greek offensive. It was true that certain Pontine Greeks nourished ambitious plans of raising irregular troops with the aid of regular officers from the Greek army for the liberation of the province. They wrote long and unconvincing letters to Venizelos soliciting his help in launching their projects…It was true also that the Greek forces did their best to invite Turkish reprisals by bombarding some of the Turkish Black Sea ports from the sea.[166]

What is more, archival evidence demonstrates that the security concerns of the Turkish government were not totally exaggerated. The meeting of Colonel Sariyannis, the deputy chief of General Staff of the Greek Army, with British politician and diplomat Philip Kerr (1882-1940) on March 1, 1921, reflected that Turkish suspicion about a Greek attack on Pontus region was not an unfounded fear. According to Yerasimos, in this meeting Sariyannis offered to Kerr that if the Greek offensive towards Ankara from the West would be insufficient, the "…Greek army could land [at] Pontus, establish military bases where [the] Greek population lived and then occupy Sivas and Erzurum with the help of Armenians."[167]

As a result of these military and legal precautions in the beginning of 1923, the Greek insurgency came to an end. However, Turkish-Greek relations had been so disturbed during these volatile and turbulent years that their coexistence became almost impossible. Therefore, a final resolution was designed by the Turkish and Greek states together under the mediation of the international community, which was the Turco-Greek exchange of populations. Without a brief examination of this process, the solution of the Pontus Question cannot be understood properly. As such, the last part of this chapter of the paper is devoted to this issue.

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166 Smith, op. cit., p. 211.

167 Yerasimos, op. cit., p. 418. Yerasimos acquired this excerpt from Ksenofon Stratigos, *I Ellas en Mikra Asia (Greece in Asia Minor)*, Athens: [Uncited Publisher], 1925, p. 173.

5. The Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations

The disintegration of multi-ethnic empires after the dissemination of nationalist ideas produced population transfers or exchanges since the ethnic components of these empires, which had been living in peace for centuries, became reactant to each other. The reason for this discontent is that since these communities had been scattered within the territories of these multi-ethnic empires, each of them tried to unite all its members under the same territory. This resulted in an irredentist version of nationalism producing territorial claims for the other's living space. This was the case in the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the disintegration process, former constituent communities began to pursue irredentist policies claiming the territories even if the claimant constituted only a tiny minority. Such policies made coexistence of communities almost impossible. The solution found to ameliorate further clashes was to design an exchange of population which satisfied both sides.

The idea of exchange of populations in the Ottoman Empire first emerged after the Balkan Wars. In 1913, the Ottoman government signed a convention with the Bulgarian government as a follow up to the Treaty of Constantinople, which had been signed on September 29, 1913 ending two years of continuous conflict. According to this convention, 48,570 Muslims from the Bulgarian territory were exchanged for 46,764 Bulgarians from Eastern Thrace.[168] Indeed, such a policy was so novel for the international community that according to Harry J. Psomiades, this was the first interstate treaty in modern history providing for an exchange of population.[169] The international community had been accustomed to more bloody resolutions of the population problems throughout history and such a mild and peaceful policy surprised everyone.

The Turco-Bulgarian exchange of populations had also been perceived by Elefterios Venizelos, the then Greek Prime Minister, as a good solution for resolving the contention between Turkish and Greek populations living in Greece and in the Ottoman Empire respectively. That is why he suggested the Turco-Greek exchange of populations in 1914, when the Ottoman government decided to expel some of the Greek inhabitants of the Western Anatolian littoral in order to settle Muslim emigrants from Macedonia who had been pouring into the Ottoman Empire by the thousands. Such an offer was also welcomed by the Turkish side. According to Psomiades, "[t]he success of this exchange

168 Onur Yıldırım, *Diplomacy and Displacement: Reconsidering the Turco-Greek Exchange of Populations, 1922-1934*, New York & London: Routledge, 2006, p. 40.

169 Harry J. Psomiades, *The Eastern Question: The Last Phase: A Study in Greek-Turkish Diplomacy*, New York: Pella Publishing Company, 2000, pp. 53-54.

subsequently led the Turks to attempt to solve the much more significant problem of the large Greek minority in Turkey by legal ratification of another *fait accompli.*"[170] However, the outbreak of World War I made this initiative futile.

The idea of a Turco-Greek exchange of populations was revitalized once more after the Greek defeat in Anatolia by the Turkish forces united under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. After the final and decisive defeat of Greeks in late August 1922, the Greek army began to retreat. When massive numbers of Greeks left Anatolia with the invading Greek army by September 1922, Greece was caught unprepared in resettling and accommodating these refugees. Even if they emulated Ottoman institutions of refugee administration, the Greek state failed to deal effectively with the incoming population.[171]

With the impossibility of coexistence of the Greek and Turkish communities due to the bitter experiences of World War I and the Turkish struggle for independence mainly against the Greeks, when the Turkish and Greek delegations came together to discuss the situation after the Turkish War of Independence, both sides were ready to revitalize the idea of exchange of populations. Accordingly, Onur Yıldırım summarizes the process as such:

> Almost a decade later than the abortive exchange plan and the two abortive diplomatic steps taken in Paris in 1919 and in Sevres in 1920 and initiated principally by the Greek statesmen (primarily by Venizelos himself), the ruling elite in Turkey and Greece which anonymously saw respective minorities as a major source of friction finally found a legitimate platform upon which to renegotiate and ultimately adopt, albeit on a compulsory basis, the earlier project of 1914. Thus under the patronage of the Allied states, the ruling classes of Turkey and Greece proceeded with the forceful removal of the minorities, silhouettes of the Ottoman past, in order to consolidate the formation of their respective states. Accordingly in the early stages of the peace negotiations at Lausanne, the two sides reached a quick agreement on an agenda to exchange the majority of their minorities and signed, to this effect, the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations on January 30, 1923.[172]

During the Lausanne negotiations, although it was Venizelos himself who welcomed a compulsory exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece

170 Ibid., p. 54.

171 Ibid., p. 7.

172 Ibid., p. 8.

before World War I and although he had still been aware that it would be a very plausible option to settle inter-communal clashes, he aimed "…to have it appear that such a brutal process was forced upon him by the Turks."[173] However, still, the Turco-Greek exchange of populations was concluded after a series of negotiations as a separate convention attached to the main text of the Treaty of Lausanne. The first article of the Convention stipulates:

> As from the 1 May 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory. These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorization of the Turkish government or of the Greek government respectively.[174]

However, there were exceptions to the exchange of populations. Greeks living in Istanbul and the Turks living in Western Thrace were exempted from exchange. After the conclusion and ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne, the exchange of populations had started on both sides in late December 1923 and was completed one year later in December 1924.

The process of the execution of exchange of populations is not related much to the purposes of this paper; however, reference to some details regarding the number of exchanged populations might be useful. The number of refugees who arrived in Greece from the beginning of the Balkan Wars in 1912 until the end of 1920 was 535,000 and approximately 190,000 of them were from Anatolia.[175] On the other hand, the number of Muslim refugees who arrived in Anatolia and Istanbul in the same period was 413,922 and 143,189 of them poured in from the territories lost to Greece in the Balkan Wars.[176] As a result of the exchange of populations in 1924, the number of Greek refugees coming to Greece was 1,221,849 and 1,104,216 of them had come from Anatolia and Thrace. On the other hand, the number of Muslim refugees arriving in Turkey was 388,146 and most of them came from Greek Macedonia and the Aegean islands.[177]

The legal dimension of the population exchange had not ended with the conclusion of the main convention. There were additional legal mechanisms

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173 John A. Petropulos, "The Compulsory Exchange of Populations: Greek-Turkish Peace-making, 1922-1930," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 2, pp. 135-160, p. 142, also cited in Yıldırım, op. cit., p. 45.

174 Yıldırım, op. cit., p. 109.

175 Ibid., p. 88.

176 Ibid., p. 90.

177 Ibid., p. 91.

created to solve the problems of this process. For example, on December 1, 1926, the Turkish and Greek governments signed the Athens Convention, which stipulated that the Turkish and Greek states would take the possession of the abandoned properties. This convention resulted in many problems and contentions on both sides which had finally been resolved with the Ankara Convention signed on October 30, 1930. With this convention, the exchange of populations was officially completed and the ownership of all the abandoned properties of the exchangeable and non-exchangeable was legally transferred to the respective governments.[178]

The exchange of populations was also the final resolution of the Pontus Question since the Pontic Greeks were subject to this process. Although many Greek sources claiming the occurrence of a Pontic Greek "genocide" tend to label the exchange of populations as a final phase of the extermination of this community, indeed, the exchange of populations was designed not by the Turkish government itself, but as a result of mutual understanding between Turkey and Greece. Of course, uprooting thousands of people from their homelands had been a quite traumatic experience. Both the Greeks living in Turkey and the Turks living in Greece had been residents of their respective countries for centuries. When the art of coexistence, which was a peculiar and compulsory aspect of multi-ethnic empires, had come to an end after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the exchange of populations was perceived by both Turkish and Greek authorities as the only viable option to provide peace and tranquility for the respective peoples.

IV. Reflecting Upon the Pontus Question: Current Ramifications

Although the Pontus Question had been legally finalized with the exchange of populations as an annex to the Treaty of Lausanne, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has once more revived by the Greek state on the one hand and the Greek diaspora on the other. There are several reasons for this revival after more than half a century after the closure of this case. The first reason was the deterioration of bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey, particularly after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 and the subsequent inter-state crises in the Aegean such as the territorial sea, continental shelf and remilitarization of the Greek islands.[179] The problems regarding the Aegean were resurfaced after the

178 Ibid., p. 117.

179 For a detailed account of Turkish-Greek relations in the post-Cold War era, see Dimitrios Costas (ed.), *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s: Domestic and External Influences*, London: Macmillan, 1991.

codification of the Law of the Sea in the early 1980s and exacerbated by the early 1990s.

The second reason was the successful resurrection of the Armenian genocide allegations starting from the second half of the 1980s. Indeed, the Armenian diaspora, which had understood that terrorist activities would not produce the intended result, namely recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations by Turkey, began to politicize the issue in a way to provide international support for the Armenian cause so as to place pressure upon Turkey. The success of Armenian propaganda techniques, the most significant of which was the decision adopted by the European Parliament in 1987, attracted Greek attention for utilizing similar methods with Turkey. This would not only put Turkey under pressure regarding bilateral problems with Greece, but also consolidate the coherence and unity of the Greek diaspora as it had done for the Armenian diaspora.

Hence, from the early 1990s onwards, Greek propaganda claiming that the Pontic Greeks were subject to "genocide" during and after World War I just as were the Armenians began to produce significant outcomes. The activities of the Greek diaspora was so intensified outside Greece that the first official initiative regarding the recognition of the Pontic Greek genocide allegations was surprisingly not initiated by Greece but by the United States. Accordingly, on February 23, 1994, New York Senator Alphonso Marcello d'Amato submitted a draft resolution to the U.S. Senate entitled "A Call for Humanitarian Assistance to the Pontian Greeks." In this resolution it was stipulated that the Pontic Greeks escaped from the conflictual environment that they had been living in and since then they "…have found themselves alternately both discriminated against as well as innocent victims of brutal wars."[180] Although the resolution did not clearly mention Pontic Greek "genocide" it still stipulated that particularly under the Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union, Pontian Greeks "…have been subject to severe discrimination and torture" and "…have historically been denied their right to develop their own culture and study their history." The resolution concluded that the U.S. "…should take the lead in organizing international humanitarian efforts to aid this destitute population."[181]

It was quickly understood from the resolution presented to the U.S. Senate that the effort of Senator d'Amato was an organized effort with the Greek Parliament, for just one day after the submission of the draft resolution, the Greek Parliament

180 For the full text of the resolution, see http://bulk.resource.org/gpo.gov/bills/103/sr182is.txt.pdf.

181 Ibid.

unanimously issued a law recognizing the Pontic Greek genocide allegations on February 24, 1994 and this law, No. 2193, was approved by the then President Constantine G. Karamanlis on March 7. According to Article 1 of the law, 19th of May is determined as the "Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of the Hellenes of Pontos"; whereas Article 2 states that "[t]he character, the content, the agency and the method of organization of commemorative events are defined by Presidential decree, issued on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior following the opinion of the recognized Pontian associations."[182] It was not determined in the law why 19th of May was chosen as the day of remembrance; however, the date was quite symbolic because it was the day when Mustafa Kemal landed in Samsun and, according to Turkish historiography, initiated the Turkish struggle for independence. As noted above, Mustafa Kemal was officially sent Samsun to report on the activities of the Pontic Greeks. Thus the date chosen to indicate the Pontus "genocide" was quite meaningful for the Greeks.

A second significant initiative for reflecting the Pontus Question towards the international community was concretized in 1998. As indicated in the first chapter of this paper, a written statement was submitted by the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, a non-governmental organization which had a special consultative status in the United Nations. On February 24, 1998, United Nations Economic and Social Council announced that the Secretary-General of the United Nations received that written statement entitled "A People in Continued Exodus."[183] The details regarding this written statement was discussed above; therefore, it is sufficient to recapitulate once more that although in the document the concept of "genocide" was never utilized, the claims it included could be considered as a summary of a bulk of the literature on the Pontic Greek "genocide."

Turkish-Greek relations had warmed considerably after the earthquake in Turkey on August 17, 1999. The Greek assistance to Turkey immediately after this catastrophic event and subsequent Turkish assistance to Greece in another earthquake ameliorated conflictual relations. As a result of these developments, the Greek government became more careful in utilizing the concept of "genocide" in its official documents; however, in 2001 this created as significant crisis in Greece. In 1999, a presidential decree was adopted in the Greek Parliament, which accused Turkey of massacring the Orthodox Greeks in Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence, labeled these massacres as "genocide", and offered

182 The full text of the resolution is provided by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

183 For the full text of the statement, see http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G98/106/67/PDF/G9810667.pdf?OpenElement

to make September 14th a remembrance day for the "…alleged mass murder of Greeks in 1922 during the war that led to Turkey's establishment as a modern state."[184] This decree would be different from the one adopted in 1994, which solely recognized the Pontic Greek genocide allegations. Rather, it recognized the alleged massacres perpetrated against the Greeks living particularly in Western Anatolia and referred to the fire in İzmir, while determining the date of September 14th as a remembrance day. Two years after its adoption, in February 2001, the decree was signed by the ministers of the Greek government. This was reacted to by the Turkish Foreign Ministry arguing that such a presidential decree would deteriorate newly ameliorating relations between Greece and Turkey.[185] Finally, the then Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, seeking to ease tension with Turkey asked officials to remove the word "genocide" from the decree.[186] However, he was reacted against by not only the Greek diaspora but also by some Greek non-governmental organizations, showing the degree of awareness regarding the issue in Greece.

After these developments, starting from early 2000s, particularly through the efforts of the Greek Diaspora, several U.S. states began to adopt resolutions in their local legislative bodies or the governors of these states began to make official declarations recognizing the Pontic Greek genocide allegations. Such declarations started with the proclamation made by the Governor of New York, George Pataki, on June 13, 2002, in which he stipulated that:

> …from 1915-1923, Pontian Greeks endured immeasurable cruelty during a Turkish Government-sanctioned campaign to displace them; an estimated 353,000 Pontian Greeks died while being forcibly marched without provisions across the Anatolian plains to the Syrian border and those who survived were exiled from Turkey and today they and their descendants live throughout the Greek diaspora.[187]

As it can be seen, it was first and foremost the relocation of Pontian Greeks particularly in the years after the World War I that was labeled as "genocide" in this proclamation. As mentioned above, the number of relocated Greeks according to the Turkish archives is quite clear; 63,844 Greeks were relocated to the interior parts of Anatolia and many of them survived after the relocation and they left the country after the exchange of populations.

184 "Greek PM Moves to End 'Genocide' Row with Turkey," *Reuters*, 4 March 2001.

185 "Turkey Angered by Greek Accusations of Genocide," *Reuters*, 13 February 2001.

186 "Greek PM Moves to End 'Genocide' Row with Turkey," *Reuters*, 4 March 2001.

187 For the full text of this proclamation, see http://www.ahiworld.com/061302.html

Another significant point in the declaration of the New York Governor was his citation of a book entitled *Not Even My Name*,[188] which was not an academic publication, as one of the few English-language accounts of the Pontic "genocide".[189] This book is written by Thea Halo and includes the memoirs of a Greek woman experiencing the relocation process. Treating this book as an academic publication proving the Pontic Greek "genocide" seemed controversial; however, it would later be something like a custom to refer this book while claiming that a Pontic Greek "genocide" occurred.

Following the proclamation of the Governor of New York, either through declarations from their governors or through their legislative organs, six states in the United States recognized the Pontic Greek genocide allegations. The first one of such recognitions came from South Carolina in 2002. Accordingly the Governor of South Carolina, Jim Hodges, issued a proclamation in which he proclaimed December 8, 2002 as the "80th Anniversary of the Burning of Smyrna and Commemoration of the Persecution of the Greeks of Asia Minor."[190] In text of the proclamation, it was stated that "…tragically, hundreds of thousands of Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians were killed or displaced from 1915-1923 in areas surrounding the Black Sea coast, Pontus and Smyrna" and "…in 1922, Smyrna, the largest city in Asia Minor was sacked and burned and its inhabitants murdered."[191] Similarly, the Senate of South Carolina made almost the same proclamation sponsored by Senator André Bauer.[192] Relating Pontic Greek genocide allegations with the incidents experienced in İzmir after the Greek retreat in September 1922 was not peculiar to this proclamation but an often encountered practice. While those arguing that a Pontic Greek "genocide" happened, they also assert that the burning of İzmir by Kemalist forces was the final point in the policy of extermination of the Anatolian Greeks; yet, they tend to ignore that the reason for the fire burning much of the city has not been clearly determined. What is more, the Greeks of İzmir welcomed the Greek army invading Western Anatolia and supported it until the final days of its defeat; hence, they were fearful of Turkish revenge and retreated with the Greek army to Greece. Of course, under war conditions, some civilians might have killed or injured; however, it is quite evident that either according to the principles of international law or the historical facts, these incidents could not be labeled as "genocide".

188 Thea Halo, *Not Even My Name*, New York: Picador, 2001.

189 http://www.ahiworld.com/061302.html

190 For the full text of this proclamation, see http://www.angelfire.com/folk/pontian_net/News/proclomations.htm

191 http://www.angelfire.com/folk/pontian_net/News/proclomations.htm

192 For the full text of this proclamation, see http://www.angelfire.com/folk/pontian_net/News/proclomations.htm

Turning back to the U.S. states recognizing the Pontic Greek genocide allegations, New Jersey followed South Carolina. In a joint meeting of the Senate and the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey, a more detailed resolution compared to the proclamation of the Governor of South Carolina was adopted. Even the Pontic Greek "genocide" was considered in the resolution as "the first mass genocide of the twentieth century," in which "…353,000 Greeks living in Pontus were murdered and an equal amount forced to flee their homeland in terror by the Ottoman Empire during the period of 1914 to 1922."[193] The resolution concluded with a statement "…commemorating the Pontian Greek Genocide of 1914-1922, and commends the Pontian Greek people for their significant contributions to civilization," while there is no mention of what kind of contributions Pontic Greeks made to civilization.[194]

On December 17, 2003, this time the Senate of Pennsylvania adopted a resolution commemorating the Pontic "genocide" of 1915-1923 with almost the same wording as that of the New Jersey Resolution.[195] The Florida House of Representatives did the same on April 19 2005.[196] In 2006, there were two more recognitions. The first one was made by Rod R. Blagojevich, the Governor of Illinois, on April 15. It was stated that between 1914 and 1923, "…353,000 Pontian Greeks and an estimated 150,000 people from the rest of Asia Minor died during a "forced march without provisions across the Anatolian Plains to the Syrian border."[197] What is more, like the law adopted by the Greek Parliament, the Governor proclaimed May 19, 2006 as "Greek Pontian Genocide Remembrance Day." The final recognition was made by the State of Massachusetts through a resolution filed by Theodore Speliotis "commemorating the Pontian Greek Genocide of 1919 to 1922."[198] Meanwhile in Saloniki, a Pontic Greek "genocide" monument was erected on May 7, 2006. Attending to the ceremony for the opening of the monument were not only the Mayor of Saloniki, Vassilios Papayorgopoulos, but also other political and military figures. This was reacted to by the Turkish Foreign Ministry with a declaration on May 11 which argued that the Pontic Greek genocide allegations had been a simple and

193 For the full text of the resolution, see http://www.angelfire.com/folk/pontian_net/News/NEW_JERSEY.htm

194 Ibid.

195 For the full text of the resolution, see http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=2003&sessInd=0&billBody=S&billTyp=R&billnbr=0188&pn=1327

196 For the full text of the resolution, see http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=17788&

197 For the full text of the proclamation, see http://www.library.sos.state.il.us/departments/index/register/register_volume30_issue17.pdf

198 See http://www.mass.gov/legis/journal/hj051806.pdf

intentional misreading of the historical facts and such developments disturbed Turkish-Greek bilateral relations.[199]

Similarly, in 2007 and 2008, several official and semi-official meetings were held in different cities of Greece particularly on May 19th of each year for the commemoration of the Pontic Greek "genocide." After all these meetings, the Turkish Foreign Ministry has always issued notifications stipulating that these allegations had no historical basis and served for nothing but the deterioration of bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece.[200]

In addition to these developments, on December 15, 2007, a non-governmental organization, the International Genocide Scholars Association (IAGS), issued a resolution recognizing the Pontic Greek genocide allegations. Indeed, the IAGS already recognized the Armenian "genocide" in a resolution that it had adopted in 1997. The 2007 resolution asserted that the activist and scholarly efforts have resulted in widespread recognition of the Armenian "genocide," while there has been "…little recognition of the qualitatively similar genocides against other Christian minorities of the Ottoman Empire."[201] The association further stipulated in the resolution that the "…Ottoman campaign against Christian minorities of the Empire between 1914 and 1923 constituted a genocide against Armenians, Assyrians, Pontians and Anatolian Greeks" and demanded the Turkish government to acknowledge all these "genocides" against these populations, "…to issue a formal apology, and to take prompt and meaningful steps towards restitution."[202]

All in all, the resurfacing of the Pontic Greek genocide allegations has followed a parallel course with the deterioration of the Turkish-Greek relations. Increasing reference to these allegations during the 1980s after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus resulted in the adoption of a law in the Greek Parliament in 1994 and subsequent recognition by six states of the United States due to the efforts of the Greek diaspora in this country. However, Turkish Foreign Ministry continuously responded these claims by arguing that asserting such a misreading of history would only serve for the development of a mutual enmity between the Greek and Turkish nations.

199 For the full text of this declaration see http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_72—-11-mayis-2006_-sozde-_pontus-helenizmi-soykirimi-aniti_-hk_-.tr.mfa

200 For some of these declarations see http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_88—26-mayis-2008_-_sozde-pontus-soykirimi-anma-gunu_—etkinlikleri-hk_.tr.mfa

201 For the full text of the resolution see...

202 Ibid.

Conclusion

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which had once controlled one of the most strategic regions in the world for centuries, had been a very problematic process; that's why the issues such as the Armenian or Pontic Greek questions are still discussed. These difficult and painful years of regional history from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have become the subject matter of a plethora of literature. The disturbance of the peace and tranquility of peoples living in the same territory for centuries was compounded with a series of wars, first World War I and then the Turkish War of Independence, as a result of which thousands of people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, had lost their lives and properties. While, for example, thousands of Muslims either were killed or forced to leave their properties in the Balkans in the Balkan Wars, thousands of Armenians or Greeks experienced similar catastrophes. What should be done in studying these periods, therefore, is not to exaggerate or ignore the bitter experiences of Muslims or non-Muslims, but to evaluate the history of this problematic age as a whole without establishing extremely rival historiographies to further alienate the peoples of the region.

Unfortunately, the literature regarding the Pontic Greek genocide allegations established a radical historiography which even sometimes becomes difficult to grasp. For example, most of the Greek historians have never mentioned the massacres perpetrated by Greeks against the Muslims living on the Greek Peninsula during the years of the Greek Revolution and the Balkan Wars; they tended to ignore the war crimes against the Turks living in Western Anatolia during the Greek occupation of the region between 1919 and 1922 although these war crimes were clearly referred to in Article 59 of the Treaty of Lausanne as such: "Greece recognizes her obligation to make reparation for the damage caused in Anatolia by the acts of the Greek army or administration which were contrary to the laws of war." What is more, there were even several Greek accounts depicting the retreat of invading Greek army as a massacre perpetrated by Turkish troops against the Greeks. Of course, such accounts were attempted for an intentional misreading of history to convince the international community that Turkish history is replete with many "genocides." However, there were several more objective Greek historians who try to put forward a more objective account of what had happened in those years.

Politization of history through the quasi-academic and prejudiced works has recently resulted in the reemergence of the Pontus Question. Following in the footsteps of the Armenian lobby, the Greek diaspora tries to increase the Pontic consciousness and make the international community familiar with the Pontic

Greek allegations. Up to now, it can be said that the Greek allegations have not received international recognition. Still, Greek attempts such as the commemoration of the Pontic "genocide" through ceremonies organized by central and local authorities in Greece, publication of several books and articles on the Pontus Question, and the works of the Greek diaspora in European countries and the U.S. for a wider reception of Pontic Greek claims continued. However, such policies do not result in what they have been designed for; rather they served for further distrust between the Greek and Turkish nations. Without objective research based on archival documents and initiated not for distorting historical facts but for setting forth the truth, it would be impossible to accurately understand the maladies of the past and to locate the relevant cures to prevent their future occurrence. In sum, whatever cost it has, truth should be respected; if history becomes enslaved by politics, then the tragic moments of the past will be relegated to a simple propaganda overshadowing reason and commonsense.

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