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## ANALYZING THE CASE OF CYPRUS DURING THE OTTOMAN AND BRITISH POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENTS



**Abstract:** The problem of Cyprus has been analyzed deeply from variety of local, regional and international perspectives. This is because the Cyprus conflict it is an historical important issue within the international agenda, it has been and will remain as such till the counter parts will find a common interest or a common solution (a substantial way out).

As much as the reader hints within the tremendous great number of books and articles written for the Cyprus case it realizes that there are many perspectives and historical issue that have to be revealed and understood in order to analyze the today's political circumstances in Cyprus and why not in the world as well.

In this paper I will try to elaborate the historical, political and institutional conditions of Cyprus during the period of the Ottoman and British establishments. Even though Cyprus has been managed or governed from many important historical powers, I will independently say that the most important are the Ottomans and British periods. This is to be said, because for the both periods we have a great number of written historical and important local, regional and international events recorded and scientifically analyzed. The time frame of their leadership and governmental infrastructures played enormously for their importance.

Both of them consciously or un consciously left behind an important cultural and political legacy that today Cyprus differs from other regions and places in the world.

As I said before I will shortly try to elaborate as well the social and institutional background of both establishments and to see to what extent they have tried to build stability and sustainability of the island and the region as whole. This work of mine will give a small perspective for the readers about the substantial political and social conditions during this two very important periods of the Cyprus history.

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### Historical background

Located in the Eastern Mediterranean, probably in the centre of the ancient world, Cyprus is filled with waves of conquest and colonization. The island of Cyprus is 9.521 km<sup>2</sup> approximately 70 km south of Turkey, strategically based at the geographical and cultural crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. As Clerides stated “most nations from Europe who wanted to conquer Africa or Asia stepped over Cyprus, and most Asian nations who wanted to conquer European countries, again, stepped over Cyprus” (Clerides, 2000, p.188). In the past historical five thousand years the island of Cyprus was settled and mostly occupied and conquered by Phoenicians, Assyrians, Arabs, Greeks, Normans, Franks, Genovese, Venetians, Ottomans and British.

The Ottomans conquered the island from the Venetians in 1571 and Cyprus was part of the Anatolian peninsula until 1878, which lasted the longest and it can be noticed that the Ottomans had influence in architecture and culture as a logical consequence of this long period. Since 1571 the population of Cyprus has been always composed of two distinct national communities- Muslim Turks and Orthodox Greeks. As we stated that Ottomans ruled until 1878 when they signed a bilateral treaty, this was made under the terms of a Convention of defense alliance between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain signed at Istanbul on 4 June 1878, after that the British took an administrative control over the island in return of defense alliance against a possible Russian threat to Turkey (Ertekun, 1984, p.1). But we should notice that legal sovereignty over the Cyprus Island continued, however, to remain with Turkey. By an Annex to this Convention of 1 July 1878 between the same contracting parties a provision was made that if Russia restored to Turkey, Kars and other conquests made by Russians during the war, than the island of Cyprus would be evacuated by Great Britain and the Convention of 4 June 1878 would be at the end (Ertekun, 1984, p.31).

At the beginning of the First World War in 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany, immediately Cyprus was annexed by Britain. In this period the Turks living in Cyprus were trapped and by the end of the war in 1918 the Turks suffered considerably both in the economic and administrative fields. Five years after in 1923 under the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey and Greece agreed that Cyprus should be under the British rule. This is the period of population exchange among Turkey and Greece and while the Greeks emigrated from Anatolia the Turks did so from the island of Crete and parts of Greece (except Western Thrace). According to a poll conducted in 1868 which counted only the male population, Crete’s population was constituted of 15.000 Muslims and 40.000 Christians (37.5% Muslim), the proportion of Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus in the 1950s was just under 20% (*Girit oyunu ve Kibriz, 2000*).

If we say that Cyprus is an extended part of mother countries Turkey and Greece from political and cultural point of view than it’s impossible to know Cyprus without taking into a consideration Turkey and Greece. It is an important fact to be stated that both Greece and Turkey helped Cyprus for not being isolated

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in political terms unlike other Islands. Further more these two countries created their own “nation-state” identities in such a period that both were in a struggle each other (Gurel, 1993, p.11).

According to Dood, perhaps the principle reason for the Cyprus dispute is each side’s intense historical memory and conviction that history has done it an injustice: it is not the record of history that is so important as the elements of it that each side accentuates to justify its own present position (Dood, 1999, p.1). Having this in mind, we can state that history captures a crucial position among the nationalistic, religious and inter-communal conflicts around the world. Only, in the past half century we have witnessed violent and enormous conflicts between identity groups, defined in cultural, ethnic, ideological or religious terms. The Cyprus conflict and other conflicts around the world such as the ones in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland and Macedonia are just a small percentage from the huge number of conflicts around the globe. Practically as Brown states: the search for the Holy Grail-noble, but futile (Brown, 1996, p.3).

The question that affects the Cyprus issue that many scholars tried to answer in the last decades is whether the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots can coexist as an independent nation-state or not. Analyzing the social relations in Cyprus among the two identity groups, who lived in mixed villages and towns for decades, were harmonious and there was a good degree of economical interdependence, but the main problem that can be detected is the religious difference among the groups (Jurgen, 1999, p.188).

In addition to this “stronger identity was attached to their ethnic groups and to the two nations that nurtured them; this set the stage for an identity-based conflict of significant intensity” (Fischer, 2001, p.308). The lack of having a common national identity made the problem even harder in Cyprus among the groups. It seems to me that Turkey and Greece affected the Cypriot communities negatively and left no space for finding a national solution for more than five decades. Maybe, this is just because of their state long- term strategies and the Cypriot communities unfortunately were nothing but victims.

Makarios statement while speaking on the occasion of his enthronement as Archbishop in 1950 he said, “*I take the holy oath that I shall work for the birth of our national freedom and shall never waiver from our policy of uniting Cyprus with Mother Greece*”(Faulds, 1988, p.4).

In a speech on 14 March 1971, at Yialousa village, Makarios said, “*Cyprus is Greek. Cyprus was Greek since the dawn of history and will remain Greek. Greek and undivided we have taken it over. Greek and undivided we shall preserve it. Greek and undivided we shall deliver it to Greece*” (Faulds, 1988, p.5).

On the other hand, as we pointed previously the Cyprus dispute is affected from three main (f) actors. The first is the inter-communal aggression (Turks/Muslims vs. Greeks/Orthodox); in the second group we can locate the regional powers (Turkey vs. Greece) and in the third group takes place the international community (UN) depending on great powers (Great Britain and

America). This mixture of powers and their regional, ideological and global interests in a way were part of the dispute among the Cypriots near about five decades in continuity.

### **Cyprus under Ottoman rule**

The Turkish people and the Greeks in Cyprus were under Ottoman rule for about 300 years. Turkish Cypriots had connections with Ottomans in religious aspect and therefore the Turkish Cypriots social structure had similar characteristics with the Ottomans. When there were religion classes in the Turkish schools; the Greek Cypriot students studied arithmetic, geography, and Modern Greek and Ancient Greek history. Their teachers were come from Greece (**Samani, 1999, p.17**).

The Greek Cypriots' idea of capitalism and their will become a nation progressed in a short period of time. Greek Cypriots' desire of union with Greece was known well before the Turkish Cypriots were in close relationship with Turkey (**Beratli, 1997, p.227**). Enosis is an ideal of Greece which does not take the geographical characteristics and historical connections. That is to say, Enosis is rather a 'right' or a 'duty' considering there past (Greek); than a utopia that forces to support church and Greek nationalism. The existence of Turkish Cypriots, whose identities and expectations were different, was not an obstacle for Greek Cypriot Community and Greece (**Stavrinides, 1999, p.9**).

At the beginning of the French Revolution (1789) Ottoman Empire was one of the biggest empires in the world with its population of 25 million people and land over seven million kilometer square. Today's Anatolia, Thrace, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Caucasian, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Hejaz, Egypt, Tripoli, Tunisia, Algeria, Cyprus, Crete and all of the Aegean islands were in the Ottoman borders (**Ates, 1994, p.161**). Nationalism and populism spread all over the world because of the French Revolution. Despite its strength and geographical wideness, The Ottoman Empire could not catch up with the developments happening around the world. Landowning systems, production and political associations were based on feudal system. Therefore, it was rather early to take steps considering the outcomes of the French Revolution. Moreover, when we think over the social and political structure of the country, this was a serious danger.

The main aim or target of the Ottoman Empire was to conquer or to fight. The wealthiest man of the country was the political and spiritual ruler (the Sultan), and the second was the Grand Vizier (**Aksin, 1996, p.7**). The wealthiest person also had the economic power all over the country.

The Ottoman Empire did not put other people-whose religions were not Islam- under pressure to change their religion; on the contrary, it helped these people to prosper their own religion with great support and tolerance, within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Here, we are to face with an interesting dilemma. The Ottoman Empire, which its own philosophy and reason to exist was to fight

and to conquer, showed an incredibly tolerant policy towards other communities within its borders. In Cyprus, the teachers who came from Greece educated the students in Christian schools (**An, 1996, p.23**).

The education process of the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots was separated from each other with small difference. But this was not the policy of the Ottomans. The reason for this difference was the Greek Cypriots own choice about education, since it was a serious matter. Greek Cypriots then contemporarily used the technology and they caught up with the new industrial developments.

Printing was invented in 1450. Greeks established the first press in Istanbul in 1627, whereas the Ottomans achieved this after 100 years, in 1729 (**Aksin, 1996, p.15**).

The developments in technology and economy improvise the political and social developments. The communities, which have used printed press, one of the most important and useful inventions in history, quickly formed their national identities. It is definite that the role of printed press cannot be ignored in the development of nationalism and patriotism among the public. Turkish Cypriots needed to publish a newspaper since Greek Cypriots started their activities for Enosis. The first newspaper called 'SADED' was published in 1889 (**Ismail, 1998, p.45**).

Between the periods 1859-1863 Eroto Karyke, who was a Greek teacher at a girl's school in Nicosia, published brochures claiming that Istanbul should be taken from the Barbarian Turks and should be given back to Greeks. He added that, a general rebellion should be led by Cyprus to achieve success in their target. In 1862, his brochures were caught by Larnaca customs (**An, 1996, p.69**).

It cannot be claimed that the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were distinguished under the rule of Ottoman Empire; the fact that Greek Cypriots were under more pressure was due to their wealth. Although the poor were under to much pressure because of the taxes (**jizye**), they were ready to sacrifice when the church was their concern.

The Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus used its wealth and authority to its best for the sake of being loyal to the traditions and culture of Greece (**Ucarol, 2000, p.76**). In spite of being the minority on the Island, Turkish Cypriots proved that they had different social identities from Greeks and they stood against ENOSIS (**Annexation of Cyprus to Greece**), right away. The economic developments of the Turkish Cypriots were not supported by the English government. Capitalism developed for the Greek Cypriots, and the Turkish people continuously started to remain behind, because of the English Government's policy (**Gurel, 1985, p.69**).

There were neither things to provoke Greek Cypriots nor things to reinforce chauvinism among the principles of the newspaper 'ZAMAN' which was first published on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1891 by Tuccarbasi Haci Dervish. In addition, there aren't any publications regarding these. However, the Greek newspapers that were

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published in the same period of time (Evagora, Enosis, Fonitis Kipru) had an aggressive style against Turks (**Ismail, 1998, p.45**).

In this regard the Church had an important role and mission and it successfully stood as vanguard in the matter of Enosis. Makarios was a religious leader too. But, he gave new ideas to the Greek Cypriot community. If Enosis had been a struggle for the sake of liberty and freedom, it would not have been important whether Makarios was a religious leader or another professional. But Enosis was not a struggle for freedom. The Church tried to realize Enosis in a religious way. But, on the other hand we have to consider another fact: that in the Orthodox communities we have a strong connection between the state and the church (**Nation state and national identity = Orthodox religion and Church**), in other words we have a symphony between them.

### **Cyprus under the British rule**

England had the right to rule the island with a pact signed on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1878. Then England gained sovereignty on the island after the Lausanne Pact in 1923. England continued sovereignty until the year of 1960 and in this period of time, she struggled against Orthodox Christians and their head, the Church, because England did not support Enosis and did not want the union of Cyprus with Greece (**Faults, 1988, p.38**).

This idea was closely linked with Greek nationalism, which aimed to reestablish the Byzantine Empire and to realize the MEGALI IDEA. This idea spreader in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when there was Ottoman rule, and afterwards, the church under the British control supported those movements. When the island was under the British rule, this was an advantage for the Greeks so as to achieve their aims (**Gazioglu, 1996, p.39**). Enosis was seen as an opposing movement to the British rule. But there were two obstacles for Enosis. The first was the British Government and the other was the Turkish Cypriots who were the other owners of the island. The British Government did not do anything at first, despite the wishes and policy of the church. But, then, the British Government started to put them under pressure; because this union would not be profitable for Britain since they had plans in the Mediterranean Sea. From the year 1879, the church began to complain about the British government (**Gazioglu, 1996, p.44**).

The Greek Cypriots made their complaints heard in London. They complained to the government in London. They raised an outcry and claimed that their social rights were not taken into consideration. Therefore a meeting was held at the British Parliament where the complaints of Greek Cypriots were discussed. A commission which was set up to discuss the Greek complaints claimed that: "They have set up a small group of foreigners in order to make them heard and to be conspicuous. Their aim is to be famous by telling lies and therefore they could be in press" (**Gazioglu, 1999, p.39**).

As Enosis was being an important subject of common issue, Turkish people started to struggle against this danger since it threatened their existence. Then the

Turkish Cypriots started to form into an organization. The most important group of these organizations was KATAK. In 1942 two different groups came together so as to set up this group. KATAK was strongly supported by the Turkish Cypriots who needed cooperation and unity (**Ismail, 1998, p.33**). At the very beginning the object of KATAK was explained as follows:

*“The aim of KATAK is to support the rights of the Turkish minority and improve their scientific, scholarly, economic and industrial level and to ensure the benefits of the Turkish Cypriots”*

The factor, which made the Turkish Cypriots star action, was different from the Greeks. Turkish people set up an organization as a reaction of Enosis. There was a suspicion that the British Government might not protect the rights of the Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, until 1940, the Turkish workers were in the same trade union with the Greek Cypriots. When they realized that the Greek Cypriot trade unions supported Enosis, the Turkish Cypriots decided to set up their own trade union. First 12 carpenters set up “the Turkish Workers Union”.

In 1944, there were a large amount of Turkish workers in the Greek Cypriots trade union called PEO (a left wing union). When this union declared that “Cypriot workers supported Enosis”, about one thousand Turkish workers resigned. Then these people organized themselves again in 1944 and the name of this union was “Lefkosa Turk Birligi”

The aims of this organization were such as (**Bilge, 1996, p.68**);

- To unite all of the Turkish workers on the island.
- To set up a political party called “Turkish-Cypriot Labor Union”
- To unite all the Turkish organizations in Cyprus and to struggle against the idea of ENOSIS.

The desire of the Greeks and the Turkish people’s struggle lasted for many years. Since 1950, the question of Cyprus has been a great matter in foreign policy. The problem was the aims of Greek Cypriots to unite the island with Greece and the Turkish people’s struggle against this plan (**Bilge, 1996, p.70**).

Enosis was an opportunity for the Greek Cypriots to be the civilized citizens of Ancient Greece, rather than being an ordinary Cypriot.

Cyprus was such a house which had two owners with equal rights. Whereas Enosis, invited the Greek Cypriots—who were believed to continue racial and cultural characteristic of Greek nation—to be an intellectual part of Greece. The Greek Church was the institution, which made this announcement. Like the other religions, this was unconditionally accepted. Enosis was not a liberal or socialist system it was not debatable. It was the church’s decree. In fact every Greek person might not have the same ideology, but there was not a democratic platform. A Greek Cypriot was first identified with religious origin and then identified with national origin. **Stavrinos (1999, p.15)** talks about this matter as; *“During the intellectually uncomplicated days of British Rule there was no other way in which Andreas could answer the question “what are you” then by saying “I am a Greek, a Greek Orthodox”. To be a Greek orthodox means to be same as all the other Greeks*

*living inside or outside the Greek state. His motherland is Greece; the whole of Greece and (as he was taught) his patriotic duty is to serve the cause of the total liberation and glory of the Greek nation. If this means fighting and occupying force, so it will have to be. A "true" Greek of Cyprus is, by definition, a supporter of Enosis."*

The Turkish people, who made up the management bourocrat class, did not bother to work on the economic matters, about which the Greeks were influential. The Greek Cypriots made it impossible to have closer relationship with Turkish people, because of their idea, which claimed that Cyprus had been a Greek island historically. This was an unacceptable idea for the Turkish community (Dodd, 1996, p.4). Dodd based the beginning of Enosis on 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dodd, 1999, p.3); *"The desire for union with Greece, the dream of giving real expressions to the megali idea uniting the Hellenic World, was in fact developing during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century"*.

The Prime Minister of Greece, Kolettis, made a speech in 1844 **Faults (1988, p.2)**; *"The Kingdom of Greece is nor Greece; it is only a part of the smallest and poorest of Greece. A Greek is not only he who lives in the kingdom but also he who lives in Yannia, or Thessaloniki, or Serres, or Adrianople, or Constantinople, or Trebizond, or Crete, or Somos, or in whatever country is historically Greek or whenever is of the Greek race.... The heroes of the independence do not belong solely to the Kingdom, to the small kingdom of Greece. They belong to all the provinces of the Greek World from the Haimos to the Tainaron, from Hellenism, Athens and Constantinople. Athens is only the capital of the Kingdom but the Constantinople is the great capital, the city, the joy and hope of all Hellenes."*

A British journalist, Nancy Crawshaw, stated that, the Greek Cypriots Enosis claim as a desire to prove that they had the characteristics of Greece (Crawshaw, 1978, p.15).

### **Conclusion:**

*The conditions in Cyprus as Gurel says; were not such problems to be understood easily, and it was not a "complex of problems" as it seemed (Gurel, 1993, p.35).*

*The both counter parts the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots actually started to understand the world and the island from different perspectives. In both periods they have been quite different with regard to their understandings over the concepts of state building, statehood, common society and other possible political models for that time.*

*During the Ottoman period unfortunately the Greek Cypriot society has been affected negatively by the concepts of being enslaved from the Turks and that the only way out from those conditions was the concept of Enosis (union of Greeks in the region). It is true that the concept of the Ottomans was more near and common for the Muslims or Turkish Cypriots but we don't have to*

*understand that the preconditions for a sustainable and secure society have been proved and shown throughout the years. The educational and religious possibilities through their institutional perspective within the context of The Ottoman state it's a substantial argumentation for this.*

*During the period of the British establishment the counter parts saw their way out once again but with different outcomes. The Greek Cypriot realized that they can strike and become more positively effected if they create sustainable argumentation for Cyprus independence. normally the main idea was not for having a common state for both sides. The Turkish Cypriots on the contrary knowing for this activities of the counterpart they started to be more institutionally organized within their unions and publicly saying that they are as well an important and crucial part within the Cypriot society and whatever happens they have to be counted and included as factors.*

*Both the Ottomans and the British they have shown a sustainable institutional governance and created a moderate political integration of both sides. They could have had a preposterous consequences if they would have shift their moderate and common political agendas.*

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