# MILLET SYSTEM IS ALIVE: PATH-DEPENDENCY IN RULING DIVERSITY IN CYPRUS

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## Abstract

This article sees the roots of the identity politics in Cyprus in the historical legacy of the Ottoman millet system. It demonstrates that ethnic divisions in Cyprus have been (re)produced by the institutionalized political legacies going back to the Ottoman millet system. The system persists due to a number of institutionalist mechanisms from path dependency (historical institutionalism) to the elite incentives to continue the status quo (rational choice institutionalism) and the limits of cultural repertoire (sociological/cultural institutionalism). The change toward a different model of ruling diversity is not impossible, but extremely unlikely given the rational, cultural, and historical bases of the millet system-like designs in Cyprus. Hence, there still seems to be no alternative to the bi-communality of the island in negotiating for its future politics. Given the resistance of current institutional legacy in Cyprus, the change can only be possible with deeper exogenous shocks or a long chain of small steps that might take unpredictable length.

**Key words:** Cyprus, millet system, historical institutionalism, path dependency, ethnic politics.

# "MİLLET SİSTEMİ YAŞIYOR: KIBRIS'TA FARKLILIKLARIN İDARESİNDE İZLEK BAĞIMLILIĞI"

## Özet

Bu makale Kıbrıs adasında Osmanlı döneminden bugüne gözlemlenen kimlik politikalarını Osmanlı millet sisteminin bir mirası olarak görmektedir. Adadaki iki temel etnik grup olan Türk ve Rum nüfusları millet sistemi ile kurumsallaşmış ve yüzyıllar boyunca bu sistemin mirası üzerinde hayat bulmuştur. Bu mirası cari kılan temel üç mekanizmanın her üçü de kurumsalcı literatür içinde kalınarak açıklanabilir: tarihsel kurumsalcılığın izlek bağımlılığı kavramı, siyasi elitlerin statükoyu korumaya yönelik motivasyonları (rasyonel seçim kurumsalcılığı) ve kültürel repertuar (sosyolojik/kültürel kurumsalcılık). Bu şartlar altında başka bir modele geçiş imkansız olmasa da oldukça zor görünmektedir. Bu bakımdan geleceğe dair projeksiyonlar da millet sisteminin genel çerçevesi dışında düşünülemez. Herhangi bir değişiklik ise ancak iki şekilde mümkün olabilecektir: tarih boyunca yaşanmış kırılmalardan da daha derin bir harici şok yahut çok uzun bir dönem boyunca ısrarla aynı doğrultuda süregidecek olan değişim adımları.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Kıbrıs, millet sistemi, tarihsel kurumsalcılık, izlek bağımlılığı, etnik siyaset.

## يستمر النظام الملي: التزام المنهج في إدارة المجموعات المختلفة بقبرص

### الفحوى

إن هذه المقالة ترى بأن سياسات الهوية في جزيرة قبرص منذ عهد الدولة العثمانية وحتى يومنا هذا هي ميراث لنظام الملة (الشعب) العثماني. إن وجود العرقين الذان يمثلان المجموعتين العرقيتين الأساسيتين في الجزيرة ألا وهما العرقان التركي و اليوناني قد وجدا بشكل مؤسساتي عبر نظام الملة العثماني (الشعب) وقد استمر هذا النظام في الوجود لمئات السنين بفضل العثمانيين. ويمكن شرح الآليات الثلاثة التي ضمنت استمرار هذا النظام عبر البقاء ضمن الأدب المؤسساتي. مفهوم محور الارتباط المؤسساتي التاريخي (مؤسساتية الاختيار العقلاني) والتحفيزات المقدمة من النخب السياسية للمحافظة على المستوى أو المنحى و المرجع الثقافي (مؤسساتية سوسيولوجيا/ثقافية). وإنه على الرغم من أن الانتقال إلى نظام آخر تحت هذه الظروف ليس بالأمر المستحيل التحقق ولكنه سوف يكون صعبا للغاية. ولذا لا يمكن التفكير في التخطيط المستقبلي خارج النطاق العام لنظام الملة (الشعب)، وإن أي تغيير يمكن أن يتحقق فقط عبر شكلين فقط. صدمة خارجية تكون أقوى من الانكسارات التي تمت عبر التاريخ، أو خطوات تغييرية قابلة للاستمرار بشكل إصرار مستمر على مدى زمن طويل جدا.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** قبرص، نظام الملة، المؤسساتية التاريخية، الارتباط المحوري، السياسة العرقية.

## Introduction

This article discusses the relationship between the institutional patterns of minority policies and minority formation as well as minority reproduction in Cyprus. It demonstrates that ethnic divisions in Cyprus have been (re)produced by the institutionalized political legacies going back to the Ottoman millet[1] system. Yet, at times, there seems to be an increasing gap between the popular demands and institutional provision. While cultural groups have increasing internal heterogeneity and diversifying demands, political institutions are unable to match these demands. This paper argues that this mismatch is a result of the political designs in Cyprus going back to the original millet system, which more or less has survived until today as the primary boundary maker in the island.[2]

The millet system is based on recognition of the diversity based on religious lines. By enforcing such a boundary marker, it sustains the identity differences based on religion while pushing cross-cutting communal cleavages to evaporate. The following political regimes since the Ottoman millet system up to today have kept this division as the primary boundary of the majority and minority in respective states. As a result of this process, the Cypriot political systems up to day have been resistant to the social forces pushing for greater or lesser diversity. The millet system and its ongoing legacy in the island prevented the two major identity groups of the island to be multiplied. Yet it, at the same time, prevented the assimilation of these broad identity groups into one.

## Political legacies of governing diversity

Scholars of ethnic politics distinguish between different ways of governing ethno-cultural diversity. As put forward by Rogers Brubaker's seminal work,[3] citizenship is matter of closure. It determines and enforces the rules of membership in the club and hence creates a bounded society under the

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[1] Although the term 'millet' is used as the equivalent of 'nation' in contemporary Turkish, the term referred to religious divisions rather than ethno-linguistic divisions in the Ottoman era.

[2] This article is written based on the author's paper presented at APSA 2010 Conference. See, Huseyin Alptekin. "Millet System is Alive: Path-dependency in Turkish and Cypriot Minority Incorporation Patterns", APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper, (2010).

[3] Rogers Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 21-25.

title of nation. In other words, citizenship draws the lines of exclusion and inclusion to draw the boundaries of political societies. For Brubaker, this occurs in two major ways in modern times: including those who are born in the homeland of the nation (*jus soli*) and including those who carry the blood of the nation (*jus sanguinis*). In Brubaker's distinction, both kinds of citizenship distinguish the citizens from non-citizens yet in reality, many citizenship regimes also categorize their very own citizens into different ethno-cultural groups. The millet system, in this regard, is one major historical case of ruling ethno-cultural diversity within the scope of citizenship. Needless to say, this citizenship model is not same as modern notions of citizenship but rather refers to a pre-modern membership style in the political society (the state). This proto-citizenship comes without the modern connotations of the term such as the universal rights and freedoms associated with modern citizenship.

The millet system takes individuals as embedded in cultural communities, in which culture is more or less equal to religion. It grants collective rights to such cultural communities. The political society in this formulation becomes the sum of such communities clearly separated from each other and each with its own hierarchical organization. For Parekh, the central political authority not only refrains from interfering with the internal affairs of religious communities but also "recognize and institutionalize their autonomy, enforce their customs and practices, and so on. Individuals are assumed to owe their primary loyalty to their respective communities, and derivatively and secondarily to the state."[4] Amongst such cultural communities, one was the dominant community. As explained by Kurtaran,[5] in the case of the Ottomans, Sunni Muslims, regardless of their ethnic origins, were the dominant community and, hence, had the right to rule the country. Christian and Jewish communities (*millets*), on the other hand, had religious freedoms and non-territorial self-government with respect to the intra-group affairs. The millet system was put into force following the capture of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmet II in 1453. The system was abolished with a series of reforms throughout the 19th century. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, the system's legacy has lived for longer.

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[4] Bhikhu Parekh, Rethinking Multiculturalism, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 200.

[5] Uğur Kurtaran, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Millet Sistemi", Kafkas Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitü Dergisi, Vol. 1, No. 8 (2011).

The millet system incorporates minority communities as unitary and fixed blocs without paying attention to intra-group diversity or individual rights, which would be anachronistic to expect in such a pre-modern historical context. Accordingly, the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire were divided strictly. Yet, the millet system in the Ottoman Empire and, specifically, in Cyprus faced some severe problems as modern notions of citizenship flourished in the West. First, the millet system did not see an inherent value in diversity, but rather accepted it as an inevitable fact. In this sense, the reason why the state enabled different communities to survive was not their inherent value. Nevertheless, the lives and belongings of the members of different millets were sacred based on the Islamic law. Second, the millet system did not define diversity in the broader sense, but it rather defined it along a single spectrum: the religion. Third, this single spectrum did not aim to support and recognize intra-community diversity. Crosscutting cleavages and non-religious communities were mostly disregarded in the system. Finally, the millet system was not a system of equality but formed a hierarchy of communities, the Muslim millet being in control. As argued by Barkey and Gavrilis, one major function of the millet system was to ensure that the minorities could remain under the state control.[6]

From these aspects, the millet system is not a version of contemporary liberal multiculturalism or even modern consociationalism. While consociationalism follows the principles of millet system in many aspects, it often provides a more egalitarian relationship between the majority and minority groups. Hence, consociationalism resembles the millet system with all the conditions except for the last one: promoting strict authority hierarchies between communities. While consociationalism is put in force in deeply divided societies where there is some sort of balance of power, millet system is based on one superior group recognizing others' right to survival and even self-government to a certain extent. This being said, the millet system's emphasis on inter-communal hierarchies is not in full contradiction with contemporary consociationalism's assumed egalitarian design. Even in consociational forms of ruling diversity, one cannot see a fully egalitarian share of power or respect between communities. And in most egalitarian consociational systems, this can be possible only for the few major communities while the smal-

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[6] Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy." Ethnopolitics Vol. 15, No. 1 (2016).

ler or less salient ones do not benefit from the fruits of diversity.[7] Following Chandra and Wilkinson's ethnic structure and ethnic practice distinction,[8] one can claim that there will always be unrecognized minority communities in every society as their ethnic structure does not fully into visible and strong practices. In such cases, some cultural communities remain as latent communities mostly existing in the structural realm but not in ethnic practice. Such groups tend to remain unrecognized even in the consociational systems. Hence, even a textbook example of consociationalism like Lebanon will exclude some groups, which lack ethnic practice, as it becomes almost impossible to balance more than four communities, each having veto rights in certain levels.

## Path-dependency of ruling diversity in Cyprus

The legacy of the Ottoman period in Cyprus did not rest in a common life based on shared social, judicial and moral processes or value. Nevertheless, the inter-communal relations were not antagonistic either. Hence, such a salience of bipolar identity structure, in fact, was not seen having a potential for violent conflict. "Centuries of Ottoman rule show that a relatively peaceful ethnic and religious cohabitation has been, in fact, the "normal" state of affairs, a status of longue durée."[9]

The order in the island was based on the distant yet peaceful coexistence of separate and segregated faith communities, even in the same villages with very limited interaction crosscutting the communal cleavages. It should be noted that this bi-communal design was not an outcome of nationalism or some sort of nationalist policies of the Ottoman Empire. The waves of nationalism reached Cyprus centuries after the capture of the island by the Ottomans in 1571. When the wave of nationalism reached the island, it found the bi-communal structure of the island given and was embraced in a way suiting to the existing communal lines. In accordance with Gellner's analysis,

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[7] For a discussion of consociationalism see Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy", World Politics, Vol. 21 No. 2 (1969).

[8] Kanchan Chandra and Steven Wilkinson, "Measuring the Effect of "Ethnicity"." Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 41. No. 4-5 (2008). Ethnic structure-practice distinction, which distinguishes between all the ethnic categories and the categories activated in different contexts. Accordingly, ethnic structure refers to the distributions of attributes (e.g., language, skin color) in a given population whereas ethnic practice refers to activation of one or more of these attributes by agents as the defining characteristic ethnic identity.

[9] Irene Dietzel and Vasilios N. Makrides. "Ethno-Religious Coexistence and Plurality in Cyprus under British Rule (1878—1960)", Social Compass, Vol. 56, No. 1 (2009), p.70.

nationalism is a functional outcome of industrialization, which was not a visible process in Cyprus in much of the imperial age. As Cassia states,[10] "neither religion nor ethnicity were major sources of conflict in a society composed of two ethnic groups" in Cyprus during the Ottoman rule. Following Cassia's description of the Ottoman rule in Cyprus, one can reach to four legacies in the island. First, the Turks of the island were relatively small in number but they were also the ruling community in charge of the island. Second, the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church emerged as a part of the Ottoman millet system in fulfilling two primary functions: collecting taxes and representing the Greek population of the island, not in a democratic sense but rather as playing an intermediary role between the Orthodox Greek public and the state apparatus. Third, the Church, as an outcome of this intermediary role and authority driven from this role, could own large monastic estates and carried out agrarian production for the European markets. Last but not least, Greeks and Turks emerged and have remained as the two major communities of the island as the former was connected to the European markets with business ties and the latter concentrated on land ownership and remained in charge of administrative matters of the island.[11]

Thus, Muslim-Turkish and Orthodox-Greek identities in Cyprus have remained as the major communities of the island up until today. This distinction was enforced by legal regulations in the island under different rules from the Ottomans until the contemporary era. However, the durability of the identities has not stuck to single, one-dimensional patterns. While the borders have resisted change over the course of time, the nature of these two communities has passed through certain changes. Until recent periods, religious roots of the identities were more significant than ethnic-linguistic roots. Yet, the picture has started to change in the recent history with the process of secularization and increasing heterogeneity within the two communities of the island. Apart from the secular-religious divisions within each respective community, ideological cleavages have also emerged as the island has been modernizing. While some previously silent, invisible cultural groups have increasingly been mobilized, secular political movements also have

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[10] Paul Sant Cassia, "Religion, Politics and Ethnicity in Cyprus during the Turkocratia (1571–1878)", European Journal of Sociology, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1986), p. 3.
[11] Cassia, "Religion, Politics and Ethnicity in Cyprus during the Turkocratia (1571–1878)", pp. 5-6.

increasingly had differing attitudes. For instance, most recently, leftist and pro-integrationist Turkish Cypriots held different political views from what used to be the common stance of the Turkish community in the island. On the other hand, the role of the church has become a central question amongst the Orthodox Greek population of the island. Such intra-community political cleavages started to shake the traditional bi-communal stance, yet has remained far from changing the bi-communal status quo. Further, the migration patterns into the island also increased intra-communal differences especially in the Turkish Cypriot case. Yet again, the institutional designs of respective regimes have long resisted to this intra-communal diversification. In other words, the bi-communal institutional design formed a strong path dependency, which outlived even the states that kept them in force.

Such a strong path dependency cannot only be explained by the enforcing mechanisms of formal political institutions. Even exogenous shocks and critical junctures did not break this path as the island has been through multiple wars and crises over centuries. This is a phenomenon that needs explanation based on the findings of sociological and rational choice branches of institutionalism on top of historical institutionalism. Rational choice institutionalism can be fruitful in shedding light on the strategic context of the existing institutional design. This approach can shed light on how the existing elites of respective communities found the status-quo beneficial for their individual interests. From the perspective of rational choice institutionalism, the millet system-like designs sustained the equilibrium line for the communal elites.[12]

Sociological institutionalism, on the other hand, goes beyond the strategic context provision of institutional framework and sees institutions and their enforcement of the rules stemming from "a set of shared understandings that affect the way problems are perceived and solutions are sought."[13] The ongoing path dependency in bi-communal design, hence, cross-cut the major historical ruptures and could reach up to now with the support of institutions not only in the sense as formal rules but also as strategic context and quite informal ways as in providing a cultural repertoire facilitating the survival of the system over generations and across different rules.

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[12] For the role of elites in the maintenance of status quo in Cyprus, see James H. Wolfe, "Cyprus: Federation Under International Safeguards", Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1988).

[13] Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics", Annual Review of Political Science, Vol. 2, No.1 (1999), p. 371.

## Enduring Identity Distinctions in Cyprus in the post-Ottoman era
## The British rule

The way diversity is ruled in accordance with the millet system continued in Cyprus in a different form during the British rule. "Village administrative councils were segregated and handled community affairs separately, with specially formed Joint Councils for the adjudication of matters common to both groups."[14] For linguistic and religious reasons, the Greek and Turkish schools of Cyprus had been separate before the British rule and remained so during it.[15] Eighty-two years of British rule from 1878 to 1960[16] strictly followed the Ottoman way of communal segregation in managing diversity.

The Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) started the path toward "exclusive nationalism" as the Orthodox Church also embraced nationalism in the aftermath.[17]

The annexation of the island by the British in 1878 bolstered the demands of enosis (the ideal of unification with the mainland Greece) by Greek Cypriots. In the year of 1900, there were seven newspapers printed on the island and the newspapers were yearning for the motherland Greece. Even the name of the most liberal one of the seven was Enosis.[18] Although the motherland relinquished *Megali Idea*[19] for a while after the Minor Asian Catastrophe (1919-1922), Greek Cypriots lost nothing from their enthusiasm for enosis under the British administration.

The intensifying anti-colonial demands of the Greek population of the island and violent acts of EOKA (National Organization of Freedom Fighters, *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*) targeting Turkish Cypriots alongside the British pushed the Turkish population closer to the British administration. The millet system had already divided the two societies of the island, but the increasing demands for enosis created a new phenomenon, antagonism, between the two societies. Turkish Cypriots developed their natio-

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[14] Vangelis Calotychos, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives: Difference at the Heart of the Cyprus Identity and Its Study", Vangelis Calotychos. "Cyprus and Its People" (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 5-6.

[15] Rebecca Bryant, "An Education in Honor", Vangelis Calotychos. "Cyprus and Its People", (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), p.56.

[16] The British took over the administration in 1878 but eventual annexation did not happen until the breakout of the World War I in 1914.

[17] Dietzel and Makrides, "Ethno-Religious Coexistence and Plurality in Cyprus under British Rule (1878—1960)", p. 80.

[18] Necati Kızılyürek, Milliyetçilik Kıskacında Kıbrıs. (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p.79.

[19] Megali Idea means the Great Idea in Greek and refers to the aim of the uniting all Greeks.

nalism as a defensive contra-nationalism against enosis demands and soon ended up with their own violent organization. The TMT (Turkish Defense Organization, *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*) was formed to retaliate against the EOKA operations.

As the international circumstances change with the end of the World War II and start of the Cold War, the British Empire lost its grip in its overseas territories. As the British rule is losing its capacity, inter-communal violence and violent acts against British administration escalated. This process pushed Britain to accept to end its rule in the island. Nevertheless, it was too late for Greece to annex Cyprus as Turkey was now back in the game and taking part in the negotiations over the future of the island. Cyprus was recognized as a sovereign state by virtue of a constitution and three treaties, the Treaty of Guarantee, the Treaty of Alliance, and the Treaty of Establishment, all of which came into force on August 16, 1960.

"Drafted by the Greek and Turkish governments, and not by the Cypriot themselves, it [1960 constitution] contained in it provisions for segregation at all levels between the Greek and Turkish communities, thus making the constitution virtually unworkable".[20] Nevertheless, the alternative scenario of majoritarian decision making would strip the Turkish Cypriots off their agency in determining the political future of the island. Hence, once again, Cyprus continued the bi-communal design of the millet system's legacy.

## Post-Independence developments: one state, two nations

The 1960 constitution has in fact a sui generis form when compared to the constitutions of different countries over the world. Its durability was guaranteed by the guarantor countries, namely Turkey, Greece and Britain according to the Treaty of Guarantee. These countries were equipped with authority to recognize and guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Cyprus.[21] Moreover, the first subsection of the Article 182 of the Constitution did not allow any amendments of the Basic Articles, which were the products of inter-state negotiations of the guarantor

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[20] John Zarocostas, "Cyprus", Mohammed Ayoob, "Conflict and Intervention in the Third World", (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980).
[21] Treaty of Guarantee Article 2.

states.[22] For a change to be possible, the guarantor states had to agree on the change. The Basic Articles of the Constitution have both a national and international character because of the references from the constitution to Zurich, Guarantee, and Alliance Treaties and references from these treaties to the Constitution. Thus, the making, change, abolishment and implementation of Cypriot constitution were internationalized.[23]

The Constitution did not emphasize a Cypriot nation or public, instead it particularly refers to the Greek and Turkish communities. While the Greek community comprised "all citizens of the Republic who are of Greek origin and whose mother tongue is Greek or who share the Greek cultural traditions or who are members of the Greek-Orthodox Church,"[24] the Turkish community comprised "all citizens of the Republic who are of Turkish origin and whose mother tongue is Turkish or who share the Turkish cultural traditions or who are Moslems."[25] In the third subsection of the Article 2, the remaining population of the Republic had individually been allowed to choose one of these communities to participate in.

The Communal Chambers were formed regarding the divided histories of the communities. The Chambers have both executive and legislative powers which are shared with the House of Representatives and Ministries. Thus, the Republic is compared to the federal states because of the fact that the real balance was between Community Chambers and the institutions at the center in a similar situation to the balance between the executive and legislative branches in federal states.[26] This federation was basically on a communal basis, but there were also some regional regulations in the Constitution such as the creation of separate municipalities for the Turkish inhabitants in the five largest towns of the Republic (Nicosia/Lefkosha, Limassol, Famagusta/Gazimagusa, Larnaca and Paphos).[27]

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[22] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 182-1: "The Articles or parts of Articles of this Constitution set out in Annex III hereto which have been incorporated from the Zurich Agreement dated 11th February, 1959, are the basic Articles of this Constitution and cannot, in any way, be amended, whether by way of variation, addition or repeal."

[23] Kudret Özersay, Kıbrıs Sorunu, Hukuksal Bir İnceleme, (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2002), p.56.

[24] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 2-1.

[25] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 2-2.

[26] Özersay, Kıbrıs Sorunu, Hukuksal Bir İnceleme, p.56.

[27] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 173-1 (the continuation of the separate municipalities would have been decided by the President and the Vice-President of the Republic within four years according to the same Article).

The political division in Cyprus was not just insular and it linked the divided communities to the 'motherlands', namely Turkey and Greece. Hence, the independence era was even closer to the Ottoman millet system as it once again connected the local populations of the islands to their millet centers in Greece and Turkey. According to the Constitution, the official languages were, naturally, Greek and Turkish.[28] Although the Republic had its own flag of neutral design and color, "the Communal authorities and institutions shall have the right to fly on holidays together with the flag of the Republic either the Greek or the Turkish flag at the same time".[29] "The Greek and the Turkish Communities shall have the right to celebrate respectively the Greek and the Turkish national holidays".[30] Moreover, each of the Greek or Turkish Communities had the right to receive subsidies from the Greek or the Turkish Government for institutions of education, culture, athletics and charity belonging to communities respectively.[31] Also "where either the Greek or the Turkish Community considers that it has not the necessary number of schoolmasters, professors or clergymen for the functioning of its institutions, such Community shall have the right to obtain and employ such personnel to the extent strictly necessary to meet its needs as the Greek or the Turkish Government respectively may provide".[32]

The political order built by the founding treaties and the constitution did not endure very long. While the violence was continuing in Cyprus, three guarantor states and two communities declared their demands at a conference in London. President Makarios proposed minority rights for Turks and the Turkish side claimed that the intercommunal violence (mostly stemming from EOKA's targeting of island's Turkish population) proved that the two communities should be physically separated. These opposing demands naturally could not meet on a middle ground and no agreement was reached in London.

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[28] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 3-1.
[29] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 4-3.
[30] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 5.
[31] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 108-1.
[32] The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Article 108-2.

### 1974 military operation: From enosis to taksim

On April 21, 1967 a group of colonels took over power in Greece and overthrew the elected government. As the junta intervened in Cypriot politics by sending a death squad after President Makarios and attempted to replace him with Samson, Turkey stepped in. The 1974 Turkish military operation following the coup in Cyprus changed the Cypriot politics dramatically. It created two de facto political authorities in the island for the first time in its history. The extent of communal self-government increased in an unprecedented way.

The Turkish Cypriots proclaimed the Turkish Federated State of Northern Cyprus in 1975 and Rauf Denktaş was elected President. In 1983, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared to the world (yet, has still not recognized by any country except for Turkey). Its main two differences from the Republic of Cyprus formed in 1960 were its secular character and nearly mono-ethnic demographic structure. It was designed as a democratic and secular republic according to its constitution of 1985.[33]

The Citizenship Law which was accepted by the Republican Assembly of the TRNC during its session on May 21, 1993 enabled a migration flow from Turkey to island. Turkish Cypriots, thus, tried to compensate for their demographic disadvantage vis a vis the Greek Cypriot community.

"Persons who have made investment … and have performed or likely to perform, extraordinary services in science, politics and cultural sectors; … who have taken part in 1974 Peace Operation and their spouses and children; and the widows and children of those killed in the Peace Operation; … who have rendered services after August 1, 1958 in the cadres of the Turkish Resistance Organization in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus"[34] shall become citizens of the TRNC without requiring the satisfaction of conditions such as residence or good conduct under previous paragraphs.

The Turkish Cypriot economy, after the division of the island, had problems despite the economic aids of Turkey. Turkish immigrants from Anatolia to the island created an intra-communal division in the island's Turkish population: Anatolian rooted Turks and native Turkish Cypriots. Turkish

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[33] The Constitution of TRNC, Article 1.
[34] The Citizenship Law of the TRNC, Article 9/1.

Cypriots began to underline their Cypriot identity to differentiate themselves from the immigrants from Anatolia.[35] The CTP (Republican Turkish Party, *Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi*), the first opposition party of Turkish Cypriots, which has existed in the political arena since 27 December 1970, became the voice of resentments against the immigrants.

While the intra-communal dissent was increasing particularly in the northern part of the island, Kofi Annan, the General Secretary of the UN, demanded a meeting of the sides in Cyprus without any preconditions in a report presented to the UNSC on June, 22, 1999. The United Nations Security Council drew up the general solution framework consisting of unique sovereignty, unique citizenship, and unique representation in the international arena in the decision of 1250 and invited the sides of the problem to start the negotiations in the decision of 1251. Although the Turkish side voted in favor of the Annan Plan in the referendum of 24 April 2004, the Greek side rejected it with 76 percent of votes and joined the European Union one month later.

With the failure of Annan's initiative and ongoing attempts since then, the two alternatives for a solution in the Cyprus problem are partition or a novel formula for reintegration. Reintegration has been tried but has had no success up to now. A unified and unitary state is not acceptable in any form by Turkish Cypriots and does not have an institutional predecessor in the island. A reintegration with a confederal structure is not accepted by Greek Cypriot political parties. Reintegration models on the basis of federalism keep failing. No matter which option is chosen, both sides still rely on the dualistic identity structure, which can easily be traced back to the millet system. It seems like the new regime of ruling diversity in Cyprus will have to comply with the legacy of the millet system in one way or another.

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[35] Necati Kızılyürek, Doğmamış Bir Devletin Tarihi, Birleşik Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p.20.

## Theorizing continuity

Then, the question becomes how such a continuity could exist despite numerous critical junctures (e.g., devastating wars, coups, revolutions, boundary changes) experienced in Cyprus. This question requires an analysis of the institutional continuity both in terms of formal and informal institutions of bi-communal design. As outlined above in the discussion of path dependency, the rational choice institutionalism approach focuses more on the 'strategic' role of institutions than historical institutionalism's focus on path dependency and sociological institutionalism's stress on the internalization of institutions.[36] For rational choice institutionalism, institutions are accepted to be a strategic context of arrangements that allocate de jure political power,[37] games and equilibria of games,[38] and solution for collective action problems.[39] A clear demonstration of this approach could be seen in North's definition of institutions as "ex ante agreements over cooperation among politicians,"[40] which "facilitate exchange among bargaining parties" and "reduce uncertainty by creating a stable exchange structure". In other words, institutions are the "rules of the game of a society, or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction",[41] and instrumental products serving for "the interests of maximizing the wealth or utility of principals."[42]

Historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism go one step further in assigning a constitutive role to institutions. Hence, such a synthesis does not only accommodate for the individual actors' commitment to the bi-communal design, but also stresses the bounded nature of change due to the boundedness of the political repertoire. This emphasis on path dependence can explain why such deep social structural changes in Cyprus did not

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[36] According to the historical institutionalist approach, institutions shape not only strategies for given preferences, but also shape the preferences, interests, goals, and/or objectives, see Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Perspective", Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[37] Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[38] Kenneth Shepsle, "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach", Journal of Theoretical Politics Vol. 1, No. 2 (1989).

[39] James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, The Calculus of Consent. Vol. 3, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); Mancur Olson, Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[40] Douglass C. North, "Institutions and a Transaction-Cost Theory of Exchange", James E. Alt and Kenneth Shepsle, "Perspectives on Positive Political Economy" (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.182.

[41] Douglass C. North, "The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development", John Harris, Janet Hunter and Colin M. Lewis, "The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development", (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 54.

[42] Douglass C. North, Structure and Change in Economic History, (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 202.

lead to rupture in the bi-communal design of the island politics. It also tells us why institutions remain sticky for long periods of time even though they operate inefficiently, for instance, due to the increasing intra-diversity within the communities. In a nutshell, political change is often bounded, because institutions do not only shape strategies as predicted by rational choice institutionalism, but also preferences. Those in charge of institutions resist change to protect the status-quo from which they drive their privileges. Further, as seen by rational choice institutionalists, political change occurs rare for it is thought to be costly given the uncertainty of alternatives.

Nevertheless, a fruitful analysis of institutional legacy of the millet system in Cyprus needs more than rational calculations of the involved actors vis a vis the incentives and constraints they face. As often argued by the institutionalist school, change never occurs from scratch but is often bounded. Even the deep ruptures and replaced regimes can leave their legacies behind. Cyprus could keep the institutional legacy of the millet system despite devastating wars, coups, and sharp regime changes throughout its history.

## Concluding Remarks

Cyprus has long relied on the legacy of the Ottoman millet system in its dealing with diversity. Its sticky and resilient institutional design relying on and enforcing bi-communality (Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots) may not be the best possible regime. It might even be producing a number of inefficiencies in the political and economic landscape of the island. It might also be too slow to respond to a number of popular demands. Nevertheless, the institutional legacy of the Ottoman millet system could overcome all these problems and persist until today in one way or another.

This article saw the roots of the minority policies in Cyprus in the historical legacy of the millet system. The change toward a different model of ruling diversity is not impossible, but extremely unlikely given the rational, cultural, and historical bases of the millet system-like designs in Cyprus. Hence, there still seems to be no alternative to the bi-communality of the island in negotiating for its future politics. Given the resistance of current institutional legacy in Cyprus, the change can only be possible with deeper exogenous shocks or a long chain of small steps that might take unpredictable length.

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