

Published in Samim Akgönül (edit.) *Reciprocity, Greek and Turkish Minorities, Law, Religion and Politics*, Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2008.  
Presentation in Afemam, Atelier 12, Strasbourg, 7/8.7.2005.

### Reciprocity in National Paradigm

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During a reception in the Turkish Embassy in Athens in a conversation with the Ambassador Ali Tuygan (later undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), in 2000, he said to me how sorry he was for the difficulties that the Greek students of minority high schools of Istanbul were facing due to the decisions the Turkish government had taken lately. These decisions had created insuperable obstacles to the Greek students who wanted to enter the exams needed in order to continue a higher (university) education. 'I am really sorry' he said, 'because I am a father myself, too, and I know how hard these decision are for the families. But' he added, 'the Greek government is creating problems to the Turkish minority and especially in the education field. The Greek side should get a message. It has to understand that it is to the interest of all not to create similar problems'.

I took the liberty so say to him that I followed his reasoning and I would have acted probably in this spirit of 'reciprocity' if I had been in his position, but that I still had a question in my mind which I stated: 'I had been a member of the Greek minority of Istanbul. During that time I considered myself a citizen of the Turkish Republic. Legally I am still a Turk. I am a Turk according to the Turkish constitution and the Turkish law. Then how can one explain that when the Turkish government has a complaint against a foreign country, Greece in this case, it decides to punish its own citizens?' It took the Ambassador a split second to think and react in full sincerity: 'You are right!' he said, 'I know what you mean. It should have been like this. You talk of citizenship, a concept that we, in his part of the world have not developed. Unfortunately we have not reach this desired level yet'.

I believe that this anecdote summarizes almost all I want to say. We know – and by ‘we’ I mean almost every body powerful and influential in minority issues – what is the proper approach (the modern, just, civilized etc. approach). However, the reciprocity principle is still in use. In this presentation I will try to ponder on the question ‘why?’ What is this ‘level’ which we still have not reached, as the Ambassador regretfully declared?

Continuously condemning (the recurring) reciprocity

Even though it is accepted by all parties and by all individuals involved that the ‘reciprocity’ principle, as it reached us from antiquity – eye for eye and tooth for tooth – and as it is practiced in Greece and Turkey against the minorities is

1. A) Not legal and not in tune with international agreements

B) Ethically unacceptable since it ‘punishes’ the innocent

C) Illogical and contrary to common sense since it alienates the citizens *vis a vis* their governments

D) And out of date (and almost a terrorist act) since it treats human beings as hostages,

yet, it is of interest that it is still widely and continuously practiced.

The reciprocity has been practiced as a means to exert pressure and secure political advantages and/or as an act 'to come equal', A) for many decades, B) by both Greece and Turkey and C) worst of all, it is 'accepted' by many in both countries as a 'normal' approach in exercising minority policy.

Thus the reciprocity is A) in principle and de facto legitimized, B) does not create indignation and remorse anymore, C) it is put into practice publicly and officially, and sometimes, D) it is used as a deterrent, or as a threat and/or blackmail, i.e., as a 'preemptive' measure. This last use of reciprocity brings to light a new dimension: any oppressive measure against the minorities can be legitimized and 'explained' on the basis of a probable and suspected future negative act of the 'Other'.

Reciprocity is used 'anachronistically' too. Measures can be taken 'now' for acts that had taken place in the past. This 'past' can be recent or quite old. Once the use of reciprocity principle is accepted as a legitimate action, there is no reason not to extend this 'past' to any ancient period. In these cases 'history' is put into use and any action against the minorities is ad hoc legitimized, since it is easy to demonstrate that the 'Other' had been at some point guilty on similar issues in the past'.

The paradox of reciprocity and the axioms of nationalism

All these sound as a paradox which contains a considerable amount of inconsistency, double standard and insincerity. I suspect that the source of this paradox lies in the use of two paradigms at the same time.

A) The legal interpretation of international relations that is in tune with the principles of the United Nations, international law and agreed treaties, on one hand and

B) The ideology and understanding of nationalism which is equally accepted and popularized, on the other.

The first paradigm composes the basis of the official defensive discourse, the 'ideal', the approach which is politically correct, the 'desired level' as the ambassador had said. It provides also the basic material needed when the rights of 'our' side are to be reminded and defended. Reciprocity on the other hand, as a second paradigm in use in national and ethnic issues, is the 'real' situation, 'the message' that the Other side should get and start behaving as the ambassador also stated. This second use represents the balance of powers that determines the outcome in a controversy connected to a supposed 'material situation' appearing as the 'real world'. To use a simile, for the nationalists, it is as the law is on one side and the battle front where the fierce war continuous on the other.

The ideology and world view of nationalism assume some principles as valid and as their starting points. It is through these principles that many of their actions are justified and legitimized. We may call them the axioms of nationalism. Reviewing these axioms will help in tracing the roots of reciprocity.

The nationalists accept that:

A) The constituents (the unit, the element, the basis) of our human environment are the 'nations' (not the individuals or some other groups and/or categories, such as the cities, the age groups, the professions, the genders, the classes, the religious groups etc.)

B) By a 'nation' they mean a group of people that have some things in common.

a- origin

b- beliefs

c- rights and obligations

d- will and destination

e- and consequently, responsibilities

This kind of nationalism is sometimes called 'ethnic nationalism' and is not compatible with nationalism founded on 'citizenship' that is based on loyalty to a state and/or a constitution. Here with 'nationalism' it is meant the 'ethnic' one, which is the dominant one in the Balkans.

The nationalist paradigm presupposes some special relationships between the members of each nation as well as between the parties (the various nations). An extreme example of this nationalistic paradigm was manifested in Nazi Germany but the bases are encountered in almost all ethnic nationalisms. Their members perceive an environment where an ethnic

controversy dominates and prevails over various levels of the society:

- 'We' are confronting the other nations

- The individuals are considered secondary *vis a vis* the general (national) interest. Actually the highest ideal is the interest of the nation. It should be reminded that in both Greece and Turkey the 'national interest' is a concept that sounds as the ultimate priority.

- And the most important, the individuals were perceived as the constituents of the nations; they were identified as members of the same 'whole'.

.... then reciprocity follows

When nationalism and its paradigm is view under this perspective the paradoxical use of reciprocity in matters that concern the minorities becomes understandable. It is the consequence of a special reasoning; it appears as a 'logical' practice and outcome. Once the individual is perceived as part of the group (a representative of the whole), the 'punishment' of any individual of the other nation for the wrong doing of the group seems normal and understandable.

This understanding and practice are encountered in traditional and/or primitive societies where individual responsibility has not yet developed. A criminal act in a village would legitimize

a communal punishment. Actually responsibility was conceived on the communal level. The same understanding was found in the way the Jews were treated by the Nazis. A Jew was considered 'against the Germans' as a member of the group, as a unit of a whole, as a representative of all the Jewish population. The identity and the actual behavior of the individual were of a secondary importance; in practice they were overlooked.

When the nationalist understanding becomes the prevailing notion punishing the Greeks of Istanbul when the Greeks of Cyprus harm the Turks is perceived as logical. Actually what the parties see is that the Greeks harm the Turks and the Turks punish the Greeks (the 'same' Greeks).

In Nazi Germany the Jews were 'punished' because the 'Jews' supposedly harmed the Germans – irrespective of individual responsibilities. Actually the Germans simply took some 'precautions' against their enemies – identified as a nation. That this understanding is closely associated with racism is self-evident.

The difficulty with ethnic nationalism and its use of reciprocity is that this understanding operates both in public opinion but also among official dignitaries as a 'common sense'. The use of reciprocity is perceived as 'normal', 'just' and especially 'practical' even though legally it may seem to present some 'shortcomings'.

The even bigger problem is that once the parties believe in the use and legitimacy of the reciprocity principle, they behave only within its sphere. They would not correct and/or change a behavior unless they face a situation that satisfies the logic of reciprocity. They would not, for example improve the situation of 'their minorities', even if they would like to, expecting first to see the 'Other' side initiating a similar change. Reciprocity not only triggers negative escalations but also retards positive steps.

Reciprocity is also seen as a very productive and useful tool used for blackmail, and/or as a deterrent and preemptive mechanism. The parties do not want to lose a weapon that they have used in the past extensively.

Reciprocity operates as a traditional pragmatic tool in international relations, because it is in tune with the ethical principles of a great part of the Greek and Turkish communities, too. The

Greek and Turkish societies, in their greatest part, still are not in peace with the ills that they have incurred to the 'Other'- the 'Other' as minority members - and they resist the minority rights activists who want to come to terms with 'history'. Both societies at present prefer to 'forget' the historical results and the ills that the use of the principle has incurred.

### Nationalism and reciprocity

In short, the use of reciprocity principle and its numerous ills is the result of a perception that has its roots in the paradigm of nationalism. As long as ethnic nationalism is dominant and the concept of citizenship is for lip service only, it seems that the reciprocity in minority issues will continue. The force that limits the application of the so called 'reciprocity' originates from the international centers and organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and from some civil societies, limited in number.

The retreat of the use of the reciprocity principle should be envisaged to accompany the recession of ethnic nationalism on one hand, and the increase of trust in these organizations and to human rights, on the other. The understanding of 'citizenship' is understood as a decisive step in securing human and minority rights, too.

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