



MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ MARMARA UNIVERSITY  
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER RESEARCH CENTER FOR  
ARAŞTIRMA ve UYGULAMA MERKEZİ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# MURCIR Analiz

## The History Education in Southern Cyprus and Regeneration of EOKA with *Revolutionary Freedom Fighters Movement*

*In the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, the hostility and hate speech towards Türkiye, Turks and Turkish Cypriots is gradually gaining momentum. The emergence of an organization like EOKA has created serious concern in the North for the Turkish Cypriots, who have suffered many hardships due to EOKA's bloody actions. Turkish Cypriots, who have already been made enemies and alienated by the history education given in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus and the excessive rhetoric of politicians, are aiming to escalate the violence and provocative actions against Turkish Cypriots with the emergence of this movement organized through social media.*

**Gülşah Savaş Çakmakçı**

### 1. The Importance of History Teaching and History Textbooks in the Construction of the Concepts of Friend/Enemy, Us/ Other

History is an important tool that allows learning about the past, making sense of the present and guiding the future. Historical knowledge passed on to future generations helps individuals develop their true selves and allows them to define their own identities and identify their friends and enemies. In history teaching, history textbooks have an indispensable place as they clearly teach all the traditions and value judgments that the society in question has had from the past to the present, who the individuals in the society really are, where they come from and where they are going. History textbooks do not always provide individuals with objective and real data. Sometimes, individuals are presented with unrealistic fictional narratives in history textbooks. Based on this, it would not be wrong to say that history textbooks are quite open to intervention and contain sections of value judgments, rules, norms and beliefs that the political power believes to be correct and wants to impose on society. Particularly through the national history narrative, individuals in society are taught who they really are, who they should be friends with, and who they should be enemies with. In other words, while individuals in society construct us through the national history narrative, they also construct us. Historical narrative often presents a selective past narrative; it is surrounded by positive narratives such as victories, heroism, and great achievements that are far from the burden of the past and that glorify national identity. In this context, it is possible to say that history education and history textbooks are used by political power to shape or transform social memory.

The most important issue to be emphasized here is that individuals who are affected by the value judgments, friend-foe definitions, and stereotyped prejudices presented during official history education at a very young age internalize these narratives and pass them on from generation to generation. These judgments become ossified and are remembered for generations, and the negative feelings and judgments that develop towards the other, even leading to hate speech, never end. Moreover, in societies divided by conflicts experienced in the context of ethnic nationalism, national history narrative emerges as an even more serious problem. In these societies, the national history narrative is often designed to reveal their own suffering and to legitimise their political existence. This official historical narrative, which is far from objectivity and is generally adorned with subjective themes, can easily embed the construction of us and the other in the memories of societies.

## **2.How Do Turkish Depictions in Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus History Books Fuel Hostility Against Turks?**

The education system in Southern Cyprus has a structure that can be considered conservative and remains at the centre of political and historical developments. The textbooks taught in schools have been used almost unchanged for many years. There are two types of sources used for history education in Southern Cyprus. The first of these is the history books prepared by the Greek Ministry of Education and sent from Greece, and the second is the history books prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. However, it should be noted that these textbooks sent from Greece are more preferred and widely used in history education given in Cyprus. Therefore, it is possible to say that the history education given in Cyprus is centred on Greece and that the textbooks mostly include Greek history rather than the history of Cyprus. It would not be wrong to say that with the teaching of Greek-centred textbooks, all the perceptions and judgments that the Greeks have about Türkiye and the Turks are directly transferred to the memory of the Greek Cypriot community through education. At this point, the judgments about Turks that were adopted from Greece are also valid for the Greek Cypriot Community. In the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, history education begins in the 3rd grade of primary school. The levels of education where history education is given the most intensively in terms of hours are the secondary and high school levels. When we look at the contents of history textbooks, we see that there are various negative depictions and narratives towards Turks. For example, the phenomenon of Hellenism is discussed extensively in history textbooks and the Turks are depicted as the arch-enemies of Hellenism. In addition, in the history textbooks in question, the words Cypriot and Greek are used synonymously, and the idea that Cypriot students are actually Hellenes is conveyed to them. It is also seen that the existence of Turkish Cypriots is not mentioned in the history textbooks and Turks are excluded from the term Cypriot. Turkish Cypriots are referred to as part of the much broader ethnic category of Turks. In the history textbooks taught in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, there are many negative definitions and adjectives for Turks.

In general, Turks are described with adjectives such as “ruthless, rude, violent, bloodthirsty, barbaric, and murderous” in the books. In addition, Turks are also described as a race that inflicts indescribable suffering on the Greek people with massacres, tortures and torment. In addition, the torment committed by the Turks against the Greeks is described and illustrated at length in the textbooks, and this narrative is sometimes reinforced with pictures. Turks are depicted as the other or the enemy in the textbooks, and this created image of the other and the enemy is introduced to young minds in schools from a very young age. In this context, it is still impossible for young minds to have positive thoughts about Turks or Turkish Cypriots, as they have internalized the negative image of Turks who have tortured and oppressed their own ethnicity through history textbooks from primary school to university education. The extremely negative narratives about Turks in history books, the image of Turks and Turkish Cypriots being marginalized and declared as enemies, are engraved in the memories of Greeks from a young age. It is worth noting that this is already the product of a specific political goal. The aim of these historical narratives is to denigrate the race in question, to ensure that it is engraved in memories with all these negativities and to reinforce the enemy image. In addition, Turkish Cypriots are again portrayed as the main actors of the conflicts and disagreements experienced on the island. In addition, the 1974 Cyprus Operation, which is considered as the occupation of Cyprus by the Turks and is shown as the sole reason for all the events that took place during that period, is again presented as an event caused by the Turks. The 1974 Cyprus Operation, which constituted the chosen trauma of the Greek Cypriots, is a historical event that is extensively covered in history textbooks. The textbooks describe in detail the ruthless and horrific cruelty that the Turks carried out against the Greeks in 1974. Impressive scenes such as children torn from their mothers, churches and houses bombed and destroyed are presented with the support of pictures. In this way, the portrayal of Turks as murderers, ruthless and bloodthirsty in previous periods is further reinforced. In these historical narratives, which are presented in a manner that is far from objectivity, it is seen that a rather subjective and biased historical narrative is presented with a relative perspective. For example, the problems faced by the Turkish side or the negativities and oppressions it was subjected to are not expressed at any level. Or, in historical narratives, while the Greeks' demands for Enosis are presented as a legitimate fact, the Turks' demands for unification with Türkiye are presented as an act of separatism. Or the Greeks are presented as those who desire a solution to the dispute on the island regarding the Cyprus Problem and are in favor of an agreement, while the Turks are presented as the actors in the lack of a solution. The most important point that draws attention here is that the periods when Turkish Cypriots lived together with Greek Cypriots without any problems have been ignored in historical narratives. These experiences of the island people who shared the same social structure and experienced many common pains and happinesses together are definitely not included in Greek history textbooks. These narratives that marginalize each other are a serious obstacle to intercommunal dialogue for these two communities, who have lived apart from each other and almost without contact for over 50 years as ethnically divided island communities. As is known, especially after the island was effectively divided into two after 1974, the new generation of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots continued their lives without contacting each other in any way and became the adults of today. The positive memories of the times when the islanders lived together remained as memories in the minds of those who lived during that period.

As a result, Greek history textbooks serve no purpose other than encouraging the members of the two communities, who have grown up unaware of each other since the 1970s, to drift further apart. Every line in these textbooks, every event illustrated, is building a barrier between the two communities and cannot go any further than alienating the Turkish Cypriots, with whom they are currently unable to establish close relations.

### **3.What Was the Purpose of Establishing EOKA And What Were Its Operations Towards Turks?**

Founded on April 1, 1955, under the leadership of Georgios Grivas, EOKA (Greek: Εθνική Οργάνωσις Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών - Ethnikí Orgánosis Kipriakou Agónos: Cypriot National Struggle Organization) aimed to end the British colonial rule on the island and to cede the administration of the island of Cyprus to Greece, meaning "enosis". Emerging as a Greek nationalist armed terrorist organization, EOKA began carrying out large-scale terrorist activities in Cyprus from the date it was founded. Although EOKA emerged as an uprising against the British administration on the island, by the 1960s it had also targeted the Turkish people on the island. EOKA, which began its armed actions on December 20, 1963, which caused the deaths of 363 Turks, carried out the largest massacre of Turks on the island within the framework of the Akritas Plan on Christmas Eve, which fell on December 24-25 and is known in literature as "Bloody Christmas". EOKA, which made a name for itself with its brutal attacks and bloody actions against Turkish Cypriots on the island, killed many Turks during this period; occupied many Turkish villages and forced the Turks to leave the mixed villages where they lived and to live in ghettos under the threat of EOKA. EOKA is seen as the main actor of the national liberation struggle for the Southern Cypriots and Greece; and EOKA members/militants are seen as freedom fighters. So much so that even though EOKA's existence cannot be actively discussed today, April 1, its date of establishment, continues to be celebrated regularly every year with various commemoration ceremonies and events in both the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus and Greece. This commemoration practice and various events organized for EOKA members clearly show that the EOKA mentality is still alive. It is possible to say that EOKA and its supporters, who want the Turkish presence on the island to end, are still considered very important for the Greek community today. In fact, for the first time this year, EOKA's 70th anniversary was celebrated as an official holiday in schools in Greece. In addition, the commemoration ceremonies and traditional celebrations organized in the name of EOKA every day are a clear example of the fact that the Greek and Greek mentality's Cyprus policy and their approach towards Turkish Cypriots have continued unchanged from the past to the present.

#### **4. Has a New Anti-Turkish Organization Been Established in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus? Is a New EOKA Emerging? Latest Developments in Cyprus**

EOKA emerged many years ago and although it is not currently an active organization in Cyprus, the legacy of enosis, that is, the idea of clearing the island of Turks, returning it to its supposed owners and connecting the island to Greece, still lives on as a strong ideal. Every year in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, the anniversary of EOKA's foundation (April 1, 1955) is celebrated with various events and commemoration ceremonies. Moreover, April 1 is one of the official holidays of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. In the last days of March 2025, many news reports were published in the entire Cypriot and Turkish public opinion about the establishment of an anti-Turkish organization in the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. This organization, which posts under the name "Agonisti Kiepalx" on the social media platform X, defined itself as the "Revolutionary Freedom Fighters Movement". In fact, it was seen that the account in question was opened in July 2024, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the TRNC, and that the so-called organization emerged on this meaningful day. They have a provocative and tension-raising purpose even with the period they chose to declare their existence. This organization, which evaluates the presence of the TRNC and British bases on the island as an occupation and openly hostile to Türkiye and the Turks via social media, reminded us of EOKA with its statements claiming that they have started a "liberation struggle". In addition, the use of fire and axe figures, which are symbols of the Mora Rebellion launched by the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire, on the organization's symbol can also be considered a conscious choice. The so-called organization declared its existence in July 2024 via X with the following statements: "You enslaved the Greek Cypriots (betrayed the Cypriots). We decided to establish this movement with the aim and goal of saving our homeland from Turkish occupation." The organization has made many anti-Turkish statements and then recently prepared a declaration and left it in cars, houses and various public areas. This manifesto, which included the statements "Our faction has started a long-term liberation struggle against the Turkish occupation as of today. We will fight with all our might to save our homeland and our lands under captivity," also revealed that a mobile phone number was written in it, and news reports that the Greek Cypriot police had launched an investigation following the distribution of the manifesto appeared in the press. . Of course, this development created serious anxiety and unrest on the Turkish side. Because the atrocities and unimaginable sufferings inflicted by EOKA in the past remain vivid memories in the minds of Turkish Cypriots. And in this context, this new formation, which adopts a discourse like EOKA, is deepening the existing distrust between the communities. Although this organization, which clearly has an extreme nationalist perspective, has not taken any actual action, it is possible to say that it has created an atmosphere of anxiety in the Turkish Cypriot community with its alienating hate speech. When examined in detail, the social media account used by the organization, called 'Agonisti Kiepalx', has a very low number of followers, at 248. It seems that this formation, which is trying to create a new EOKA, is trying to find supporters by both fanning the flames of hostility towards the Turks on the Greek side with its propaganda; and aims to create a culture of fear on the Turkish side.

Although it has been referred to as an organization in the local press, it is possible to say that this operation is not a very deep and systematic formation but is merely a product of psychological warfare. However, the organization of this formation via social media also points to a risky situation that could lead to the radicalization and violent actions of young people who are active social media users. Considering the increasing grounding of extreme nationalism on the Greek side, the occasional provocative actions against Turks, and the alienating language and hatred-inciting rhetoric of Greek politicians towards Turks, it is quite natural that this movement creates an atmosphere of concern in the Turkish side. As is known, the far-right and extreme nationalist party ELAM (National People's Front), which is gaining more and more sympathy and supporters in Greek politics, increased its number of seats from 2 in the previous elections to 4 in the 2021 elections and managed to send 1 representative to the European Parliament for the first time in its history. Considering the fragile structure and the constant escalation of tension in the region, these developments constitute serious obstacles to permanent peace. It is necessary to prevent such extreme nationalist formations to maintain peace and stability in the region and for the islanders to live in peace.

### About the Author



Savas Cakmakci, Gulsah is a Ph.D. graduate. After earning her a BA in Translation and Interpreting Program from Marmara University in 2012, she earned her master's degree program in Political Science and International Relations at Yıldız Technical University in 2015. Her master's thesis title was "The Perceptions and The Expectations of The People Who Lost Their Relative in State-PKK Conflict". With the PHD thesis titled "The Role and Importance of The Ethnic Identity Factor in Ethnic Conflicts: The Cyprus Case", she graduated from the Political and Social Sciences doctorate program at Marmara University in 2024. Savas Cakmakci's research focuses on ethnic conflicts, conflict analysis and resolution, memory, collective memory, Cyprus Problem and political discourses. She's fluent in English and French.

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