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TURKISH MINORITY EDUCATION IN THE BALKANS (1945–1989): A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LEGAL STATUS AND CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This study offers a comparative analysis of the legal status, implementation practices, and ideological frameworks of Turkish minority education in Bulgaria, Greece (Western Thrace), and Yugoslavia (Macedonia and Kosovo) between 1945 and 1989. It examines the interaction between international legal instruments—such as the Treaty of Lausanne, UN and UNESCO conventions, and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act—and national legislation, revealing significant discrepancies between discourse and practice. The findings indicate that legal guarantees alone were insufficient to ensure the sustainability of minority education. In Bulgaria, constitutional rights were restricted through administrative interpretation, and Turkish-language education was completely abolished during the assimilation campaign of 1984–1989. In Greece, bilingual education grounded in the Lausanne framework was legally preserved but administratively constrained during political crises. In Yugoslavia, by contrast, local autonomy and federal constitutional protection enabled the maintenance of a “dual identity” model. Turkey’s educational diplomacy operated through Lausanne-based initiatives, bilateral cultural agreements, and interventions in international forums, yet its effectiveness depended on the political regimes and the nature of bilateral relations with the host states. Overall, the study highlights that minority education is not merely a pedagogical domain but also an arena of ideological and political negotiation.

Keywords: Turkish minority education, Balkans, Treaty of Lausanne, educational diplomacy, discourse analysis.