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# The Consequences of the Lausanne Convention

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## AN OVERVIEW

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My intention in this chapter is to present a synoptic picture of the effects of the population exchange for both Greece and Turkey, taking, as it were, an eagle's eye view over the Aegean. With limitations of space, I can only draw attention to the most outstanding features. The overall picture, based on chapters in this volume, is inevitably simplified and generalised. This summary indicates only the main outlines; each chapter with its special focus provides the detail to fill out the image.

### **Asymmetries**

Overall, in assessing the consequences for the two countries, the most significant feature is the asymmetry of the experience. This arose as the result of two critical factors: the different historical and political significance of the events of 1922–23 for the two countries, and the difference in scale and the character of the populations involved.

Firstly, the asymmetry is most evident in the immediate political significance of the war which was entirely different for each side. For the Turks, the military conflict culminated in a major triumph. The year 1923 was celebrated as a liberation, the War of Independence which established a modern nation-state out of the Ottoman Empire. The establishment of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state constituted a regaining of recognition and power which had been eroded in the last period of Ottoman decline.

For the Greeks, however, this event constituted a major defeat, known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, a greater disaster even than the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, for it ended with finality the millennia-long Hellenic presence in Anatolia. At the time it constituted a major humanitarian emergency, with intervention by international agencies, both for short-term relief and for the long-term settlement of the displaced peoples. For Greece, the exchange of populations resulted in an ongoing process of long-term economic, political, cultural, and social adjustment and assimilation; through sheer weight of numbers it profoundly altered the Greek state and indeed all aspects of the society.

But what was a victorious event for Turkey also had its costs: the exchange which actually entailed the substantive loss of a major portion of the mercantile class, the bourgeoisie, and elite of Ottoman society was also the culmination of a process that had started years before with the loss of the Balkan provinces and of the majority of the Armenians in Anatolia. The population exchange, involving huge numbers in absolute and relative terms, destroyed existing social, economic and political structures and these could not easily be reconstructed. This had formative, even determining effects, on the way civil society developed in the new Republic (see below, Political patterns).

## Demographic effects

It is important to note that the exchange comprised two phases: immediately following the Greek army's rout, the initial flight of the mass of refugees under emergency conditions in 1922, and later between 1923 and 1926 the more or less organised exodus of the Muslims from Greece, and the remaining Orthodox particularly from the Anatolian interior, excluding on both sides only those defined by the final signing of the Treaty (see Alexandris, Oran this volume). According to official records of the Mixed Commission, the 'Greeks' who were transferred after 1923 numbered 189,916 and the number of Muslims expelled to Turkey was 355,635 (Ladas 1932:438-9; using the same source, however, Eddy 1931:201 states that the exchange involved '192,356 Greeks from Turkey and 354,647 Muslims from Greece'). While accurate figures are impossible to ascertain, it is probable that the total number of Christians who entered Greece at this time was in the region of 1.2 million, the main wave being in 1922 during the period of hostilities (Bierstadt 1925: 248-250; Eddy 1931: 251; Ladas 1932: 438-442; Pentzopoulos 1962: 96-99; Kitromilides and Alexandris 1984-5; Hirschon 1998 [1989]: 36-9). Hence, the second aspect of the asymmetry was the scale and the character of the populations involved. The Lausanne Convention specified an exchange of populations which entailed a great disparity in numbers, in both absolute and relative terms.

An important differentiating factor is that the ratios in the host populations were incommensurate. For the tiny Greek state, a nation totalling around 4.5 million, the influx represented a massive increase by one-quarter of its popu-

lation in just two years (equivalent to the U.K. currently receiving about 15 million refugees in two years), and created immense problems of settlement and absorption (Kitromilides 1992). But on the other side of the Aegean, as a result of previous displacements, the military campaign and the population exodus, parts of Anatolia were left with vast tracts of abandoned countryside and empty settlements. Estimates indicate that Turkey suffered an overall loss of population (1906 census returns registered 15 million, while the first Republican census in 1927 recorded 13.5 million) (see McCarthy 1993, 1995). Contrasting with the proportionately huge influx into Greece, the number of Muslims expelled from the Greek state and received by Turkey after 1923 was relatively small (350,000 in an estimated total of 13.5 million, or under 4 percent). Their impact on society as a whole was not very great – larger influxes had occurred over previous decades, especially since the Balkan Wars. It should be noted that over the longer period this region of the Ottoman Empire suffered immense demographic change (McCarthy 1993a), a fact which has largely been neglected in Turkish historiography until recently (*ibid.*; see also Toprak n.d.).

Significantly, this population decrease accompanied a dramatic alteration in ethnic and religious composition. The radical change in composition was striking on both sides since Turkey and Greece could subsequently claim to be homogeneous states (but see below, Social problems). Turkey lost an estimated two million people from its non-Muslim minorities through mortality as well as from forced displacement. This drastic loss meant that while 20 percent of the population – or one in five persons – was non-Muslim before 1923, after the war this proportion had gone down to 2.5 percent, or one in forty (see Keyder 1987, also Aktar, Keyder this volume). On the other side of the Aegean, an equivalent result occurred in Greece. Although the total number of Muslims expelled was smaller in overall numbers, mainly from Greek Macedonia and from the island of Crete, the effect was parallel, since Greece's Muslim population decreased from about 20 percent to 6 percent of the total (1928 national census). Again, the asymmetrical impact should be noted: it was the departures that were more significant for Turkey, while for Greece it was the influx that had the greatest impact.

## Settlement Patterns

Effects on the social geography and settlement patterns were also radical. Again the asymmetry is striking for the problems were of a totally different order, almost as in a concave-convex mirror. In Anatolia, a population deficit occurred in some regions where settlements were emptied of the Christian inhabitants following the exchange, so that even today many houses, indeed whole villages, stand empty. The picture of a ravaged landscape emerges, of widespread post-war devastation in the wake of the passage of two armies. Following the exodus of the Christians from all over Anatolia (Orthodox and others, particularly the Armenians, who had previously been subjected to

forced deportation and massacres), numerous villages were depopulated. (Zürcher 1998: 170–2) The exchanged Muslims, far fewer in number, were allocated abundant Greek properties, but often homeless locals had already taken over, or plundered and looted these because they themselves were in need (see Köker, Aktar this volume).

The opposite occurred in Greece for the country suddenly experienced tremendous population pressure. The newly-vacated properties of the Muslims were insufficient to house the newcomers and an emergency settlement programme resulted (Yerolymbos this volume). The programme of land reform and redistribution was accelerated and over one thousand new villages were created in northern Greece alone (Pentzopoulos 1962; Kontogiorgi this volume). New urban quarters were established and towns expanded in all parts of the country, but even from the start these new housing schemes were overcrowded. Over the long term, the housing problem proved intractable, persisting even into the 1970s in some urban areas as a focus for grievance and of political disaffection (Pentzopoulos 1962: 114, 227; Hirschon 1998[1989]: 45–53). In fact, the chaotic experience of providing accommodation under emergency conditions formatively marked town planning practices in Greece, and effectively institutionalised ad hoc approaches which have blighted the urban landscapes to the present day (Yerolymbos this volume).

## **Economic effects**

The economic effects were profound for both countries but of a different order, again because of the character of the populations involved in the exchange. In effect, Turkey lost its entrepreneurial class since finance, industry and commerce had largely been in the hands of the Christian populations – Greeks and Armenians. The exodus of traders and businessmen from trading towns and ports, excepting only Istanbul, radically disrupted the economic life of the region (Aktar, Keyder this volume). Izmir/Smyrna, a major commercial centre of the eastern Mediterranean, was almost totally destroyed by fire. Agricultural exports, the mainstay of the Ottoman economy, were badly hit as international trading links had been disrupted and as farming expertise lost in the exchange could not easily be reacquired (Aktar this volume), nor could artisan skills (Zürcher 1998:172). On the other hand, the void provided opportunities for some Turkish entrepreneurs who took control of abandoned businesses, for instance, olive oil production along the Aegean coast (Terzibasoglu 2001).

The Muslim incomers to Turkey from Greece were overwhelmingly small-scale farmers and rural dwellers. The advantage was that they could become self-sufficient in a short time and did not pose a major problem to the state. Unfortunately, however, their expertise was not properly deployed because, in many cases, they were settled in areas with unfamiliar crops and climatic regimes (Köker, Koufopoulou, Aktar this volume). Since they were almost entirely agriculturalists – and those who were townfolk did not apparently have

a noticeable impact on economic life – they brought no new skills, and simply swelled the already predominantly rural base of the economy (Keyder 1981).

In contrast, it is well known that Greece gained new skills and industries; textile and carpet manufacturing, ceramics, metal work and silk production were among these. Established industries benefited for, in addition to the newcomers' commercial expertise and skills, the refugee population provided a hugely increased market and labour force (League of Nations 1926; Mears 1929). But on the negative side, Greece had to meet the immense cost of settlement of the refugees in both rural and urban areas. Impoverished and politically in disarray, the country was backed by the League of Nations to establish the Refugee Settlement Commission which raised international loans to deal with the settlement programme (under high rates of interest given the humanitarian crisis) (Ladas 1932; Pentzopoulos 1962: 89ff). This recourse to outside help resulted in ongoing outside interference in Greece's affairs, a factor which was purposefully minimised in the Turkish Republic. In the 1930s, the financial burden of refugee settlement contributed to the country's bankruptcy and, over the following decades, continuing economic crises (Mazower 1991) had knock-on effects for political relations (Mavrogordatos 1983; Veremis this volume).

## Political patterns

The refugee influx had a major impact on Greek politics, not surprisingly given the vast numbers of displaced people. Hailed early on as a success story, the policy of creating new settlements in northern Greece ensured the country's claims to territory, as the perceived ethnic homogeneity of the area increased (but a more complicated picture is presented in Danforth 1995; Karakasidou 1997; Cowan 2000). It was paraded as a prototype of a successful settlement programme for the displaced, and was visited by international agencies (Pentzopoulos 1962: 111; Voutira this volume). But in the longer term, the tensions between sections of the population, both urban and rural, exacerbated already existing rifts, continuing the 'national schism' of the First World War (see Veremis this volume). The polarity between liberals and right-wing royalists continued, with several military interventions in the 1920s. Following the rapprochement between Greece and Turkey in the 1930s when Prime Minister Venizelos cancelled out the issue of unsettled compensation, widespread disaffection from the Venizelist (liberal) party took place. Consequently, the Communist Party made record gains in the elections of the early 1930s with extensive refugee support. In urban refugee quarters, support for the left was high from this time onwards, and the refugees played a critical role in changing political alignments in the country (Mavrogordatos 1983). The military dictatorship of 1936 was followed by the Axis Occupation and then the bitter civil war of 1944 to 1949 – the culminating expression of cleavages which revealed how accommodation of the refugees had only been partly successful (Veremis this volume).

An uninformed view that the exchange had no definable impact on Turkish politics is countered by analyses regarding the development of state–society relations in the new republic (Aktar, Keyder this volume). The departure of most of the Christian population constituting a major part of the empire’s elite in the bureaucracy, as well as in business, had a deeply disruptive effect. Besides affecting commerce and banking, it entailed an upheaval in the functioning of state institutions and required the establishment of a new bureaucracy. Kemal Atatürk’s modernising reforms were far-reaching but not easily applicable in the new context. With the hiatus in social structures, pre-existing patterns of the patrimonial state reappeared. As some commentators have noted, the republic soon began to operate more like the Ottoman state of a past period, and it seemed that the state had replicated the empire (cf. Keyder this volume).

Consideration of the political effects of the exchange must include difficult issues related to the recognised minorities of Turkey and Greece. The fate of those who were allowed to stay under provisions of the Convention reveals how, in effect, they became hostages to the vicissitudes in Greco-Turkish state relations. For both populations – the Muslims of Greece, and the Rum Orthodox of Istanbul and the islands of Imbros and Tenedos – treatment by the host states over the decades depended on larger geopolitical issues, on international relations, as well as on internal political interests (the complexity and contentious nature of this topic is evident in contributions by Alexandris, and Oran this volume; see also Erginsoy 1998).

## **Cultural Influences**

The exchange had a major impact on Greece in all areas of cultural life. With the influx of the Asia Minor peoples, a revival of Byzantine traditions in iconography took place and Orthodox Christian theology was revitalised, both of which had become ever more influenced by western patterns in the nation-state. Regional cultures in Anatolia were distinctive and the diversity of this incoming population was marked. Different culinary traditions were introduced by the newcomers and became signifiers of identity (Stelaku, also Koufopoulou this volume). Much attention has been directed to the influence of the Asia Minor refugees on urban popular music, particularly the ‘rebetika’ (see Gauntlett this volume); while local traditions in music and dance were further enriched by the introduction of Pontic and other regional forms from Asia Minor with the establishment of rural refugee settlements all over Greece (see Lemos n.d.; also, Williams [forthcoming] for the effects of the expulsion on Cretan and Giritli music).

The effects on Greek literary pursuits were profound. A distinctive genre of literature flourished in Greece (Mackridge this volume) inspired by the vision of the ‘lost homelands’, and poetry and the theatre have also found deep veins of inspiration in this experience of displacement (see, for example, Fann 1996). Notably and in contrast, the exchange apparently had very little impact on literature in Turkey right up to the 1990s (Millas this volume). The existence of

such an enduring silence is in itself remarkable, and suggestive of the different political processes each country has been involved in over the past eighty years. Overall for Turkey, however, the cultural effects of the 1923 population exchange appear to have been insignificant, probably because the demographic scale was so small, yet another aspect of the asymmetry of the experience.

## Social Problems

The initial response to the enormous exodus of refugees from Turkey evoked international concern, and immediate widespread sympathy from the local Greek population. It was not long before this changed, however, and the acute problems, costs, and threats posed by accommodating their numbers was replaced by hostility and rejection, a common reaction noted in many such situations. In response, identity issues arose among the incoming displaced. In particular, those who had been supporters of the Greek cause in Anatolia were shocked by their exclusion and the prejudice they encountered, expressed in pejorative names: ‘Turkish seeds’ (*tourkosporoi*), ‘baptised in yogurt’ (*viaourtovaptismenoi*) or ‘orientals’ (*anatolites*).

The common view that the exchange altered Greece’s ethnic composition by producing a more homogeneous society has been powerful and persistent, and has had direct effects on current policies for refugee settlement (Voutira this volume). It is, however, oversimplified and masks a more complex reality. The incoming population, though all Orthodox Christians, was in fact highly diversified. From dispersed regions of the Ottoman heartland, these people were differentiated by language, by dialect, and by regional cultural patterns, so they did not comprise a homogeneous group (e.g., Stelaku this volume; Hirschon 1998 [1989]: 22–28). Adjustment to the new conditions involved ways of maintaining continuity with the past; thus, in the longer term, existing social and cultural divisions persisted and were even reinforced at certain times (e.g., during the civil war).

Furthermore, the settlement of large numbers of Asia Minor and Pontic refugees in the city of Salonika had profound ramifications for its substantial Jewish community, which had essentially been the predominant group until the first decades of the twentieth century. The influx of the Orthodox Christian refugees in the 1920s affected not only the city’s demographic profile but also civic policy and local attitudes. The community’s dominant position was eroded, conditions became less favourable and at times they were subjected to outbursts of hostility. Finally, the end of the Ottoman diversity of the city ended in 1943 when its Jewish population, numbering around 50,000, was deported en masse by the Nazis, with only a few thousand surviving (*Sychrona Themata* 1994; Loizos 1999).

Until now little has been known of the experience of the Muslims exchanged and settled in Turkey, but a younger generation is showing an increasing interest in origins and identity, revealed in literature, and in current research (Yorulmaz 1997; Yalçın 1998; Yildirim 2002; Köker, Koufopoulou

this volume). Interestingly, the experience of rejection was shared by the Muslim incomers who were stigmatised as ‘half infidels’ (*yarı gavur*) by local Turks, but here any assertion of a distinctive identity would not have been welcome in the prevailing Kemalist ideology of nation-state building.

On both sides of the Aegean, then, masses of people have experienced the sense of a ‘lost homeland’ through three and even four generations (Tsimouris 1997). This is the common factor then – in terms of human lives, there is no asymmetry. Forcibly displaced people everywhere share the experience of dislocation, of loss of home and place. This response can be documented from many parts of the globe: there is a continual process of definition and redefinition of identity, an emphasis on continuity with a compass point of reference to the place of origin. Lost homelands are not easily forgotten. People have enduring attachments to place, the sense of loss and disruption does not disappear easily and, interestingly, these bonds are often passed on to successive generations (Colson 1999). Elsewhere I have argued that this is explicable as a widespread response, not simply attributable to romanticism and nostalgia but something more fundamental, involved in the development of the human person in particular sociocultural contexts (Hirschon 2001a).

This explains why observable or objective similarities between incomers and hosts, the ‘proximate host’ assumption, does not always result in smooth assimilation. Even when common factors exist between the host society and the incomers which might lead to the expectation of accommodation, such as in the case of Greece and Turkey and their exchanged peoples (and indeed of Cyprus, see Loizos 1981, Zetter 1999), this expectation is not substantiated (nor is it in the case of internally displaced persons and those forcibly displaced through development projects). Empirical data show how enduring are these attachments to place of origin and how they can be revitalised after many years. The human costs of population exchanges are high indeed and constitute a factor in the equation which should be given considerable attention. Policy makers would do well to consider the longer term ramifications of population transfers whose far-reaching effects are illustrated in research conducted in this region.

The contemporary relevance of the Greek–Turkish exchange of population should be evident for situations which have arisen in India–Pakistan, in Israel–Palestine, in Cyprus, as well as for Albanians, Afghans, Eritreans, Iraqis, Kurds, Sri Lankans, Somalians, Sudanese, Tibetans, and other groups who have been forced to leave their homelands. This volume seeks to establish a deeper and more detailed understanding of the various ramifications of forced population displacement over the long time-span by focusing on the experience offered by a particular case. Overall, the asymmetries in the experience of the two countries are striking. This reveals how important it is to achieve an overview, as well as to assess these consequences from diverse points of view. By taking a stance which is inclusive and holistic, incorporating as many sides of the story as possible, we may achieve a deeper understanding of the consequences of mass population exchanges. The case of Greece and Turkey with its time depth of eighty years is a benchmark and will, it is hoped, inspire other studies of this kind.