# The Impact of Forced Top-Down Nation Building on Conflict Resolution: Lessons from the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey

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**Abstract**

Borders and boundaries can represent old narratives, which often, however, cannot deal with new realities. Borders are inflexible, but reality is flexible and fluid. This is augmented in crisis situations. Multi-ethnicity and history run in parallel, as shared cultures often precede and transcend Westphalia and institutionally imposed borders. For cultures with roots in antiquity, top-down established borders appear to lack legitimacy, as these cultures place more emphasis on historical similarities and traditions of peoples. Thus, what is more important: cultural and historical commonalities or institutional top-down constructions? This article examines the impact of the prioritization of top-down ethno-religious homogeneity over lasting conflict resolution. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the article draws a number of hypotheses from the fields of conflict resolution, territoriality, and nation building and tests these hypotheses on the specific case of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange (CPE) between Greece and Turkey and the dual role of the Mediterranean as a security bridge or barrier. This article highlights a "how-not-to" scenario in conflict resolution and argues that efforts to form apparent homogeneous nation-states led to short-term, incomplete conflict termination with a lasting impact, while conflict resolution remained elusive.

**Keywords:** Compulsory Population Exchange (CPE); Treaty of Lausanne; homogeneity; conflict resolution; territoriality

In transitional situations, short-termism and over-focus on the present can neglect the past and hamper the future. This research focuses on top-down decision making in transitional situations and the challenges this method poses regarding effective conflict resolution. This article adopts an interdisciplinary approach and examines conflict resolution with a focus on religion-based ethnicity, top-down nation building, and territoriality. It examines the "attempt of an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (Sack 1986, 19) and the impact this approach has had on effective conflict resolution.

This article first explores the main concepts, challenges, and shortcomings of top-down nation building, it analyzes the multifaceted role of space in the resolution of a conflict, and it examines the lasting impact of prioritizing ethno-religious homogeneity over lasting conflict resolution. The second half of this article examines the mutual impact of nation formation and geopolitics, as well as how people interact with nature and territory in pursuit of security and the relationship between politics, location, and material things (adapted from Black 2009, 1). To this end, the research highlights the distinction between conflict termination and conflict resolution and argues that efforts to form apparent homogeneous nation-states have led to short-term, incomplete conflict termination, while conflict resolution remained elusive. The article uses the case of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange (CPE) between Greece and Turkey to test these concepts.

The CPE had profound short- and long-term consequences, which radically changed life in the Aegean region. In protracted conflicts, population movement happens over time. However, the article's focus is on the specific 1923 CPE because the design, intent, content, and implementation of this exchange substantiate the thesis of this research. Consequently, the pre- and post-1923 population movements are beyond the scope of this article. Space is the medium through which, and the reason for which, violent political struggle takes place. The question of whether geography is a hard fact of life or a political state of mind that can be altered, or that it can alter perception, are key points of exploration in this article.

With reference to the case study of this article, maritime space has the dual role of a barrier or a passage depending on the intentions and capabilities of those who would cross it, the power of the opposition, and the intensity of clashing wills. Mass movement of population had already taken place before 1923, especially by land. However, the movement by land is naturally and more easily accessible, while the mass movement by sea is impossible without technology and artificial means and enablers. Therefore, the case study highlights the greater complexity of CPE in a maritime environment, which, however, was not taken into consideration by the key decision makers. In point of fact, this lack of maritime means and enablers led to the catastrophic failure of this mass movement of people.

## Case Study: The Contextual Background of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey

States in transition could restrain themselves from opportunities to make fatal mistakes before over-stretching and over-reaching. This is difficult to sustain, as Thucydides emphasizes in his depiction of Athens after Pericles's death. Greece's rulers in the early 20th century fell into the trap of ill-prepared expansionism too, and they did not avoid the transgression of boundaries. The rulers of Greece at the time clearly lacked prudence, as they failed to consider thoroughly the means and ends in a dynamic field; they did not evaluate competing interests and did not act effectively within the limits of power, while keeping an eye on the dangers of self-defeating behavior.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fragmentation of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires gave way to the formation of a number of modern nation-states. The Ottoman Empire was disappearing fast, and the bloody conflicts in the Balkans led to the mass displacement of its multi-ethnic population. Within this context, the early 1920s was marked by the emergence of a hierarchy of citizens. According to this hierarchy, non-Muslims, and in particular the Armenian and the Greek Orthodox populations, were perceived and treated as suspect populations (Bayar 2014, 3). The European rulers at the time were increasingly involved with the crisis of extensive refugee flows that were commonplace during the interwar years. The large numbers of Russian refugees fleeing from the upheavals of the revolution and civil war in the newly formed Soviet Union created one of the first groups of stateless people in modern history (Simpson 1939, 87). Long before the compulsory exchange of 1923 between Greece and emerging Turkey, forced displacement in the region had already affected millions of Muslims and Christians (Zürcher 1998, 170–172). A mutual population exchange was seen as the antidote to crises in the Balkans. As mentioned above, for the purposes of this research, the focus is on the 1923 CPE, since the design, intent, content, and implementation of this exchange highlights the arguments of this research.

As is empirically common with the dissolution of empires, during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire international power groupings were being realigned and formed rapidly, while intense negotiations over the "spoils of war" were taking place. Furthermore, a number of treaties were signed, and among these the Treaty of Sèvres, signed in 1920, was crucial to the events in the Aegean region, as it was one of the contributing factors that lead eventually to the Greco-Turkish CPE. The Treaty of Sèvres granted administrative authority to Greece over large areas of the Anatolian coastal region. However, although this Treaty was signed by the Sultan's representatives, it was not implemented, as it was not accepted by the new political forces under Mustafa Kemal.

In addition, Greece eventually entered the First World War on the side of the Allies, despite the deep political polarization of the country known as *Εθνικός Διχασμός* (the National Schism) between the Germanophile royalist supporters and those of the pro-Allied Prime Minister Venizelos. As a reward for siding with the Allies, and based on British support, Greece was promised the fulfilment of its irredentist agenda of the *Μεγάλη Ιδέα* (Great Idea) of a Greece of "two continents and five seas" (Europe and Asia, the Ionian, Aegean, Bosporus/Marmara, Black, and Libyan seas).

Within the logic of this irredentist idea, and in an effort to precipitate the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the Allies and in particular France and Britain encouraged Greece into an ill-conceived endeavor, and in 1919 Greek forces landed in Smyrna (today Izmir). Thus, having licensed, in effect, a war by proxy, the Allies then in varying degrees turned cool on it, as is often the case in a constantly shifting environment. In the end, the Great Powers looked on passively as Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his troops routed the Greeks from Anatolia and reoccupied Smyrna, bent on retaliation for prior atrocities. The international community at the time was split between an idealistic commitment to a just peace based on the Wilsonian principles of self-determination on the one hand, and harsh realpolitik behind the scenes and secret agreements in order to maximize gains on the other.

One of the most controversial paradigms of population exchange agreements came out of the Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs 1922–1923, which was the convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations (Greco-Turkish Exchange Convention 1925 [1923], 75). In particular, the Convention, through the CPE, aimed to define the national identity of over two million people (League of Nations, Treaty Series 1925, 13ff). Historically and empirically there is a humanitarian impulse to act against atrocities and exercise one's responsibility to protect. At the same time, there is a nationalist impulse to create policies and actions that work in the interest of self-preservation. This element is examined in more detail in the section "Conflict Termination vs. Conflict Resolution." The Treaty of Lausanne, which was negotiated at the invitation of the Great Powers and was sanctioned by the already weakened League of Nations, constituted an addition to the postponed World War I peacemaking (Greco-Turkish Exchange Convention supra 1924).

### Design, Intent, and Content of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange

Although a CPE of this scale had never been attempted in modern history, similar precedents, such as the Greco-Bulgarian voluntary population exchange of 1919, were available. Interestingly, the Greco-Bulgarian exchange first appeared as an option in a communication from the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos to the Bulgarian King in 1915 (Ladas 1932, 29). Hence, the idea of a population exchange between Greece and Turkey did not appear ex nihilo. However, the main difference between previous population exchanges and the 1923 exchange was the compulsory nature of the latter. The issue of minorities and their exchange was initially raised by the Turkish Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal Tengirşek at his visit of European capitals in 1922, during which he made clear to the French Prime Minister Poincaré and the British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon Turkey's vision for a lasting peace secured through the exchange of population (Aktar 2006b, 114–115). In point of fact, even before the start of the Convention of Lausanne, the Turkish side appeared to have reassurances from Poincaré that the exchange of minorities would take place according to Turkey's wishes (Aktar 2006b, 121).

The Lausanne Convention was the apogee of and the legal framework for "unmixing peoples." The first official high commissioner for refugees, Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, who was commissioned by the League of Nations, proposed and supervised the population exchange. Nansen argued that "the Near East had, by reason of its mixed populations, been a centre of discord and disorder" (League of Nations Official Journal 1922, 44). The population exchange was seen as the best form of minority protection and nation building. Nansen believed that what was on the negotiating table at Lausanne was not just generic ethnonationalism, but rather a question that demanded pragmatism and a

"quick and efficient" resolution (Özsu 2015, 79). According to Nansen's statement (1922, §2), "… the Governments of the Great Powers are in favour of this proposal because they believe that to 'unmix' the populations of the Near East will tend to secure the true pacification of the Near East…." After all, the politicians in newly formed Turkey were enacting predominantly exclusionary policies in relation to non-Muslim minorities while aiming at the homogenization and Turkification of the nation (Bayar 2014, 5). However, the decision to use the CPE as a conflict resolution approach had a very short-term focus and only managed to partially contain and terminate the violent conflict; it did not really resolve the root causes of the conflict. This argument is examined in the second half of this article.

As mentioned above, population exchange in the region was an ongoing process, which had begun a decade earlier and had affected the littoral of the Balkans and Asia Minor. The Lausanne Convention legitimized past expulsions, and it also sanctioned the urgent future transfer of the remaining minorities. The Greco-Turkish Exchange Convention applied in retrospect to the refugees who had already left the Ottoman Empire and Greece since the start of the Balkan wars of 1912 and who were now immediately prohibited from returning. The Convention, subject to those exempted under Article 2 (the Greek population in İstanbul and the Muslims in Western Thrace), also applied to the remaining minorities in the two countries.

With the Great Powers constantly changing positions in order to safeguard their interests and following the imprudent offensive in the interior of Anatolia, the Greek army was defeated in 1922 and retreated in total chaos. This left the Christian population of Anatolia unprotected, and the Great Fire of Smyrna, known also as the Catastrophe of Smyrna, took place with very high civilian casualties. The port was raided and looted for days. Women were raped and mutilated, children were beheaded, and more than 100,000 people were killed. Meanwhile, 21 allied warships sat in the harbor. Under the "disorienting flashes of light and dark," as Hemingway (1994) describes Smyrna, hundreds of thousands of people were trapped on the city's quayside, while officers on the ships still dressed for dinner ordered louder music to drown out the screams.

Asa Jennings, who was temporarily in charge of the YMCA in Smyrna while the director was on vacation in August 1922, tried to help several thousand refugees. First he bribed an Italian ship captain to secretly transport the people from the safe houses on the quay. The initial rescue would not have been possible without the very significant help from Captain Theofanidis of the Greek battleship "Kilkis." Captain Theofanidis was instrumental in initiating the first evacuation by a Greek ship, and his personal intervention was vital in persuading the Greek government to take action. Jennings then managed to secure a flotilla of empty Greek merchant ships to save thousands more. In effect Jennings managed to save thousands of people trapped on the quay in Smyrna by using lies to the Turks about his resources, bribes to the Italian captain, and an empty threat to the Greek authorities.

A number of sailors from the USA, as they were witnessing the slaughter on the quay, tried to help, but beyond protecting its own citizens, the US government, with growing commercial ties to Turkey, was not willing to get involved, especially so soon after a costly war. In point of fact, the top US officer in the region, Admiral Mark Bristol, was playing tennis outside Istanbul as Smyrna burned, and despite the fact that US destroyers were in the Smyrna harbor at the time of the crisis, they were under strict instructions from Bristol not to intervene. However, Lt. Commander Halsey Powell tried to help Jennings execute the evacuation, even though it contravened his orders. Much of this took place behind the scenes, but at one crucial moment, Powell, in an act of deterrence, aimed his ship's big guns at the Turkish Army. According to Ureneck (2015), the gesture alone was enough to "transform the situation."

The end of the Ottoman Empire was underway, and under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the armed forces began regrouping in order to fight the Greek army. During this period in Greece and Turkey, there were efforts to establish modern nation-states based on apparent ethnoreligious homogeneity. As expected, rivalries between the Great Powers were intense, and alliances were constantly shifting. The newly formed state of Greece allowed itself to be used as a

pawn on the regional political chess board. Anatolia had been a location of Hellenic settlement and culture since antiquity. When Smyrna/Izmir fell to the Turkish army in 1922, much of it was destroyed by fire, and the city's role as a citadel of Western and Greek culture, dating back nearly 2,000 years, came to an end. Up until then, the port had been very cosmopolitan, and by the standards of the region, it was an example of tolerance and prosperity where Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and other Europeans did business in relative peace. By the end of 1922 and before the Treaty of Lausanne was agreed, it is estimated that well over 1 million of refugees had arrived in Greece from the region (Hirschon 1998, 36–39). In effect this major displacement of people under emergency conditions was the culmination of what was already occurring in the previous years in the Ottoman Empire.

Toward the end of the Greek Army's calamitous three-year campaign in Asia Minor, and when the Turkish forces entered Smyrna in September 1922, the region's Christian population fled to various ports around the city of Smyrna. Hundreds of thousands of refugees arrived at Greek ports, destitute, starving, and desperate for assistance (Pentzopoulos 1962, 46). A large number of the fleeing population died of epidemic illnesses during the voyage and the brutal wait for boats for transportation. The death rate during the immigration was four times higher than the birth rate (Erden 2004, 261–282).

As discussed above, decision makers at the time justified the CPE as the only way to create homogeneity following the endorsement of the nation-state as the most viable polity for the emerging states of Greece and Turkey. The exchange was justified as efforts were focused to construct a bonded sense of national community, creating a new national identity that was inclusive enough to have popular support but exclusive enough to keep out minority communities deemed "dangerous" to national culture and homogeneity (Goalwin 2017, 4). Although accurate numbers are difficult to come by in such situations, the 1923 compulsory exchange between Greece and Turkey involved the movement of about 1.6 million people, of which 1.2 million were those entering Greece. The exchange had profound long-term consequences, and it radically altered all aspects of everyday life in the Aegean region. The population exchange was to take place on May 1, 1923; however, by that time, and following the events in Smyrna, most of the Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire had already fled. The exchange therefore only involved the Greeks of central Anatolia (Greek and Turkish speaking) and the Greeks of Pontus, who had not yet had the chance to flee (Gibney and Hansen 2005, 377). Of the latter community, it was primarily the inhabitants of the towns on the Black Sea littoral who were moved, as the Greeks of the mountainous inland areas, some 80,000 in total, had largely moved east into Georgia and Russia instead of west, when they had lost the struggle against the Turkish forces. Interestingly, more often than not, the relevant literature uses the total number of Greeks involved in the exchange of populations, but fails to stress that the majority actually had already fled, and as such they were not really exchanged.

The above discussion highlights that the 1923 CPE had a multipurpose design. First, the dominant contemporary belief from the decision-making powers was that the "unmixing of peoples" and consequently ethnic homogeneity were necessary for nation-building. In turn, these new homogeneous nation-states would be able to co-exist peacefully. In sum, the idea was that top-down–imposed, homogenous nation-building would lead to peaceful co-existence between Turkey and Greece. However, realistically this lengthy and traumatic population exchange could only lead to an apparent homogeneity and to the termination of the violent conflict, but not the political resolution of the conflict. Another purpose for the specific design of the CPE, discussed above in this section, was realpolitik and the self-interests of the decision-making powers, which detracted from a selfless effort to truly resolve the conflict. The geographical reshaping of Europe at the time and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire allowed for a plethora of opportunities materially and politically for the Great Powers. Furthermore, Greece at the time was facing deep internal discord and did not present a unified front to the international community. This poorly considered decision to deracinate populations on either side of the Aegean in favor of an apparent ethnic homogeneity

combined with self-interests and internal discord sowed the seeds for an incomplete resolution of the conflict.

## Space: Facilitator or Barrier in Conflict Resolution?

The second half of this article merges theoretical approaches with empirical case study evidence. To analyze the balance between relationship and division is to analyze the deeper issue between structure and human agency. The constantly evolving link between technology, territory, and human agency means that spatial barriers do not always match exactly their physical size. Distance is linked to the interaction between land, human agency, and capacity. Geography unleashes possibilities of development, but development then changes what geography means (Morris 2010, 35). The sea is an element of political time, space, and energy, and it is a facilitator and catalyst for the dynamic shrinking of distance on a large scale. The sea is linked to four elements: the range of activities, speed of interactions, intensity of activities, and impact of events. By circulating people, goods, information, and capital, the sea creates infinite transnational streams and webs of action and endeavor. In addition, these webs enable the creation of virtual and imagined identities that transcend borders. In this context, the sea can render obsolete the distinction between home and abroad. On one hand, the sea has been used as a bridge to obliterate physical boundaries and can give a global dimension to national security. On the other, it has been used as a barrier between countries. As mentioned above, the movement of population had already started prior to 1923, especially by land. However, movement by land is naturally accessible, while movement by sea needs artificial means and enablers that operate in a multifaceted foreign domain. Therefore, this case study highlights the greater complexity of CPE in a maritime environment, which was, however, ignored by the key decision makers. In actuality, this lack of maritime means and enablers led to the catastrophic failure of this particular mass movement of people. In general, whatever happens on land leaves a physical mark on space and time, while whatever happens in the sea does not really leave a trace. Distance can act as a barrier, especially to the side that needs to cross it successfully. However, even such a barrier is not permanently fixed, as human agency intervenes to alter the spaces that divide or unite polities. As Niall Ferguson (2011) argues, human agency is over structure, meaning that political choices matter more than geography, and that polities can succeed through good political choices (and vice versa) wherever they are. As a result, barriers can be expanded or contracted depending on the role of human agency and its impact on the physical and psychological spaces. Within the CPE of 1923, space became an identifier, an opportunity, and a medium. All three however, are contextual and as such can be used in an either positive or negative way. A key purpose of a boundary is the facilitation or prohibition of communication and contact. The sea can be used as a barrier or a bridge between peoples, and it affects the mentality, modus operandi, and therefore the culture of the different people living on its coast. Greek communities and others on the coast of Asia Minor had thrived through trade and had maintained links with the Metropolis. However, during the 1923 CPE, the lack of access to technology and of necessary means to cross the sea precipitated the catastrophic exchange of the population. With reference to this case study, for instance, both communities on either side of the Aegean would use space to build either a shared or an opposing identity. The shared identity was predominantly between the minority community and the Metropolis, while the divergent identity was primarily between the minority community and the host country. This makes a cultural identity contextual, which means that in times of peace, the divergent identities can co-exist, while in times of crises, the cultural differences are highlighted, leading to conflict.

The relationship between humans and their environment has always been strong and dynamic. It is as much a social construct as a geographical imposition, and it is constantly evolving. As politics and economics changes, so does the benefits and costs of location. For centuries, the sea has been the subject of disputes and armed conflicts among different nations. Mearsheimer argues that the "stopping power" of water is a permanent obstructive force in international relations (2001, 40–42).

He states that the oceans are buffers that act as a built-in check on the expansionism of would-be hegemons. Although his argument implies that physical distance naturally generates the payoff of a protective ditch, he also accepts that it takes more than just water to do the stopping (Mearsheimer 2001, 265). As such the role and the use of the sea vis-à-vis security is not just complicated but complex. With the same ease that a sea could be an obstacle, it could also be a source of security. Geographical space, Robert Keohane (2002, 29–43) argues, which has been seen as a natural barrier and a locus for human barriers, now must be seen as a carrier as well. This is evident in the case study discussed in this article, when the people fleeing and being transferred had to rely on the sea for their survival. At times people sought safety in the buffer zone a sea could create, and at times people tried to escape their land via sea routes. In deteriorating political circumstances where hostilities and fear are high, the likelihood of a worst-case interpretation would logically increase.

The 1923 compulsory Greek-Turkish population exchange is acknowledged by scholars in the field as the conceptual outcome of Professor Georges Alexis Montandon's proposal in 1916 to carry out mass population transfers as a solution to minorities' problems. Following the national struggles of the Balkan wars and World War I, academics and politicians who looked at the problems of minority populations sometimes came to the same conclusion as Montandon, according to which population transfer was the only way to defuse antagonistic minority issues (Naimark 2001, 18). Within this context, the politicians and decision makers at the Lausanne Conference considered population transfer and minority rights as complementary solutions to the minority problem. First there had to be an agreement for population exchange, in order to safeguard the homogeneity of the two states, and then there would be minority rights for those who remained.

There are several noteworthy characteristics from the 1923 CPE, which acted as a barrier in the resolution of the conflict. First is the asymmetry of the experience, owing to the difference in scale and the character of the populations involved. For Turkey, 1923 was hailed as the War of Independence, which saw the establishment of a new nation-state out of the Ottoman Empire. On the opposite spectrum, for Greece, 1923 became known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe, which ended conclusively the millennia-long Hellenic presence in Asia Minor. For both countries, the exchange of population resulted in a long process of cultural and social assimilation to varied degrees.

The Treaty of Lausanne entailed an exchange of population of great disparity in numbers between Greece and Turkey, in both absolute and relative terms. As mentioned above, because of the many phases of population movement there are no exact figures, but the total number of people who entered Greece at the time was in the region of 1.2 million (Statistical Annual of Greece 1930; Hirschon 1998, 36–39). Greece at the time was a very small, impoverished state totaling about 5 million people (Kitromilides and Alexandris 1984–1985). Consequently, with this influx, within two years Greece's population increased by one-quarter of its population, leading to immense problems of settlement and absorption.

The situation was the opposite in Turkey. Because of the ill-conceived Greek military campaign and the earlier population exodus, significant parts of Anatolia were abandoned, leaving behind big numbers of empty settlements. The number of people received by Turkey was comparatively low—about 400,000 in an estimated total of 13.5 million. Turkey lost an estimated 2 million people from its non-Muslim minorities through mortality and through the forced displacement. According to Aktar (2006a, 81–85), before 1923 20 percent of the population—one in five people—was non-Muslim; after the war and the Treaty this proportion went down to 2.5 percent—one in forty. In this sense, the mirror image is that for Turkey the forced departures were more impactful, while for Greece it was the influx of the displaced people that was more significant.

Based on the above-mentioned asymmetry, the people settling in Turkey were allocated abundant and abandoned Greek properties, but more often than not homeless locals had already taken over or looted these properties (Aktar 2006a, 79–95). In Greece, owing to the stark numerical differences, the newly vacated houses of the Muslims in Greece were insufficient to house the new arrivals, and an emergency settlement program was set up. The program of land reform was

accelerated, and over 1,000 new villages were created in northern Greece alone (Kontogiorgi 2006, 65–67).

The economic consequences of the conflict were profound for both Greece and Turkey, albeit in a different way. At the time of the crisis, the commerce, finance, and industry in Turkey had been concentrated predominantly in the Greek and Armenian communities. The forced displacement of these businessmen and traders from trading towns and ports, with the exception of Istanbul, radically altered Turkey's economic life (Aktar 2006a, 79–95). Furthermore, by that time the major commercial port of Smyrna/Izmir was almost totally destroyed by fire. In Greece existing industries benefited from the influx of people, and in addition to the new entrants' expertise and skills, especially in textile and carpet manufacturing, ceramics, metal work, and silk production, the refugee population provided an increased market and labor force. However, Greece was in political and economic disarray at the time, and the country was backed by the League of Nations to help raise international loans to deal with the settlement program (Pentzopoulos 1962, 89–91). This recourse to outside assistance also resulted in ongoing outside interference in Greece's internal affairs, while this kind of interference was minimized in the internal affairs of the newly formed Turkish state. Despite the gain in expertise and skill, the number and scale of refugees into an already impoverished Greece and the burden of their settlement contributed to the bankruptcy of the country (Veremis 2006, 56–61).

The majority of the population entering Turkey from Greece were small scale farmers and rural residents. Although they did not pose a major problem to the state, in many cases they were settled in areas with unfamiliar crops and climatic regimes (Köker 2006, 201–206). Furthermore, even though Atatürk's reforms were progressive, as is common with radical changes in transitional states, these are not easily applicable. Pre-existing patterns of the patrimonial state reappeared, and it seemed that the new state had managed to replicate to an extent the structures and modus operandi of the Ottoman Empire.

## Homogeneity and Seeds of Social Discontent

The need for the formation of a distinct identity was not limited to that between Greece and Turkey but also within Greece and within Turkey. In Greece initially the enormous influx of the exchanged population from Turkey evoked international and domestic concern, while the local Greeks expressed widespread sympathy. However, within the context of Greece's political and economic disarray, this soon changed into hostility and rejection, which is not an uncommon reaction in similar situations and environments. This was followed by an increase in identity issues, which is also common in cases where the emphasis is on conflict termination instead of conflict resolution and reconciliation, as discussed in more detail in the section "Conflict Termination vs Conflict Resolution." An additional challenge was the fact that, understandably, the exchanged population from Asia Minor was not homogeneous but was highly diversified based on education, wealth, and traditions. However, adjustment to the new conditions and realities also involved maintaining continuity with the past. Consequently, existing sociocultural divisions persisted and were even reinforced in times of crises. Similar experiences of rejection were experienced by the incomers into Turkey, who were stigmatized as "half infidels" by local Turks (Keyder 2006, 46–50).

Maps are designed to simplify and to become points of reference, but they can also provide a distorted reflection of an environment. Human minds carry psychological maps, as they are inclined to reimagine their territory in ways that suit assumptions about their identity and their security interests. It follows that maps and borders can cause both excessive fear and confidence, and as such they can trigger both threat and hope. Geopolitics is interactive, and, as Hans Weigert (1942, 23) suggests, "where the forces of the earth, where the spaces of state systems have become part of an ideology for which men are dying, we are no longer confronted with 'facts' alone: geopolitics does argue. It argues against us." In this sense, territory provides opportunities and constraints. It is a way of fixing a point of limitation, even if it is never final or definitive, around

which to define and prioritize interests and to separate the vital from the desirable and the core from the periphery.

The proximity or distance between a populace and a threat is not only measured by geography, but also by all of the intervening factors and forces that expand or contract. In effect, distance entails a clear physical and deep psychological element, and these are interconnected. The physical space can impose its constraints on power projection, but at the same time it is not always possible to separate people from their land psychologically, as this case study demonstrates.

Populations on both sides of the Aegean experienced the sense of "lost homelands." As Greeks from Asia Minor would say, "Abroad I am a Greek, and in my country I am a foreigner." In the sense of human suffering, there is symmetry among the forcibly displaced populations. Humans have deeply rooted and enduring attachments to territory and places of origin; beyond romanticism and the sense of loss, not only is it not forgotten but it is also passed down to successive generations (Colson 2003). However, as this case study demonstrates, even when common links exist between the host country and the settlers with an expectation of accommodation, such as in the cases of Greece and Turkey and their respective exchanged populations, this expectation is not substantiated by relevant and viable resolution efforts and development projects.

## Scale, Impact, Process

Geopolitics is where politics, geography, and history come together. At the crux of the argument is the distinction between physical space and psychological space. The former is measured in kilometers, while the latter refers to space as it is experienced by people. This introduces elements of symbolism and subjectivity, which in its turn add to the complexity of conflict resolution discussed in the section "Conflict Termination vs Conflict Resolution." Psychological space is not readily measurable by any sense data or yardstick, but nevertheless it is clearly experienced (Welwood 1977, 97). Therefore, geopolitics is as much a cultural construct as it is a physical environment. The 1923 CPE between Greece and Turkey prioritized the physical element, with more short-term focus, while the cultural, psychological, and symbolic elements that have a deeper and longer-term focus were not considered when designing the exchange.

There are three basic elements in dealing effectively with territorial conflicts, as this case study has shown: scale, impact, and process. Understandably the first two are more subjective and more difficult to resolve between conflicting parties. Impact for instance—perceived or real—is linked to symbolism. Territory, identity, culture, and narratives are intrinsically linked, and empirically it is very difficult, if not impossible, to effectively deal with the symbolic dimensions of territory. The symbolic dimensions of territorial attachment reflect the intensity with which many territorial conflicts are contested, beyond the tangible dimensions of territory as a resource that can be negotiated as part of a conflict resolution process. Also, territorial conflict is linked to demographic balances and the balancing of power relations. Territorial changes affect the equilibrium between minority and majority populations, and the balance between territory and demography is often achieved, as the case study also indicates, through population transfers between the conflicting countries. In Asia Minor, for instance, the CPE was agreed in order to create territorial and ethnic homogeneity in the recently formed Greece and emerging modern Turkey. The complexity of the Greek-Turkish conflict was increased as borders, demographic ratios, population, and power relations changed and had to adapt to the new reality.

Consequently, drastic territorial and ethnic changes may lead to immediate and short-term results, but empirically they do not contribute to longer term normalization and reconciliation, an argument that is analyzed in the following section. Ethnoreligious homogeneity through the violent and compulsory transfer of population augments polarization and alienation between states, in this case between Greece and Turkey (Waterman 2002). If the goal of the exchange was to achieve ethnonational homogeneity based on religion, it can be argued that this was achieved by both Turkey and Greece. In 1906, for instance, one out of every five persons (nearly 20 percent of the

population) of present-day Turkey was non-Muslim, but by 1927 only one out of 40 persons (about 2.5 percent) was non-Muslim (Keyder 1987).

## Conflict Termination vs. Conflict Resolution

The CPE was experienced by both sides as a harsh exile, and this was expressed through decades of yearning for "lost homelands." At the very least, the decision to enact the CPE was seen as very controversial—not only in hindsight, but also in its day. This is also evident in the fact that none of the chief negotiators wanted to assume responsibility for coming up with the idea of the CPE (Eddy 1931, 26). As mentioned above, Nansen had been entrusted by the League of Nations to develop a plan to relieve the Asia Minor refugees, and participants at Lausanne held Nansen responsible for having personally recommended the compulsory system (League of Nations Official Journal 1922, 1140; PRO FO 371/9058). Nansen's reply to this was that he had made no such "proposal but had only explained to the sub-commission that an essential preliminary question to be settled was whether the exchange should be voluntary or compulsory" (League of Nations Official Journal 1923, 383–384). The Lausanne Conference delegates were inundated with protests and petitions from affected and disaffected people (Venizelos 1922, 223–224). Curzon (1923), after an early endorsement, overtly denounced the exchange as "a thoroughly bad and vicious solution, for which the world would pay a heavy penalty for a hundred years to come"; however, he added that "these hardships, great though they may be, will be less than the hardships which will result for these same populations if nothing is done."

In international relations, more often than not, criticisms regarding decisions take place retrospectively. However, this was not the case with the 1923 Treaty. There was significant objection to the decision for the CPE, even before the ink on the agreement had dried. The main criticisms focused on the fact that, once more, state interests were prioritized over human rights and needs, and that the Treaty violated the principle of free consent, as the deracination of the population set a dangerous precedent in providing international recognition for a solution to problems regarding minorities. The ethnically homogenous nation-state, even if apparent, was the preferred polity for the emerging states out of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This however implies homogeneity, and it involves the systematic construction of a distinct identity—us vs. them—that emphasizes more subjective elements such as sociocultural and psychological barriers.

Unsurprisingly, the CPE polarized the political and societal environments in Greece, Turkey, and the international community. On the one hand of the polarization, as discussed above, were those who asserted that the exchange ensured peace in the Aegean area and ended the conflict between Greece and Turkey. Within this context, the CPE was unavoidable and it stabilized the relations between the two countries. According to the advocates of the Treaty, "the exchange should be compulsory because all those who had studied the matter most closely seemed to agree that the suffering entailed, great as it must be, would be repaid by the advantages which would ultimately accrue to both countries from a greater homogeneity of population and from the removal of old and deep-rooted cause of quarrel" (Curzon 1923, 412).

The controversy of the decision is also highlighted in the fact that nobody really wanted to take ownership of the decision. In an effort to answer the difficult question as to who was responsible for the idea of the CPE, the US diplomat Raymond Hare stated that Venizelos could be considered the father to the Exchange, while Nansen was in charge of implementing it, and Ankara suggested the compulsory element of the exchange (Hare 1930). However, such a decision could only be justified and taken by those not directly affected by it. The CPE was another political decision that prioritized peace over justice and failed to get the balance right. The CPE focused on the short term—it emphasized conflict termination instead of conflict resolution. Within the context of urgency and high volatility, focusing on conflict termination might have been more realistic, but it did not provide a viable and lasting resolution. The outcome of the CPE lends itself to what Galtung calls "negative peace." Pragmatic short-termism in combination with realpolitik and self-interests led to

the termination of the conflict, but the CPE fell well short of a lasting resolution and effectively tackling the root causes of the conflict. To this day, there are perceived or real territorial disputes between the two countries.

On the other side of the polarization were those who opposed the Treaty and emphasized ethical concerns toward the forced "unmixing" of populations who have had interwoven relations and contact over thousands of years. This criticism predominantly focuses on the compulsory element of the exchange. To deracinate entire populations on the basis of coercion and irreversibility appeared to be at odds with the contemporary Wilsonian self-determination statements that "no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property" (Wilson 1917). However, in power politics minority rights were deemed as irrelevant where the people's will was certain to run counter to the victors' geopolitical, economic, and strategic interests. In point of fact, one of the most unique elements of the Treaty of Lausanne was its irreversible character, especially the provision banning the return of the exchanged population. As mentioned already, the compulsory exchange could be seen as an immediate and short-term solution in order to avoid further escalation of the conflict. However, this short-term solution proved to be very counterproductive in the long-term, and did not plan for its progression from conflict termination to conflict resolution and even reconciliation.

Consequently, for those who advocate conflict termination, their argument is rooted in utilitarianism; while those in opposition come from the more deontological and humanitarian approach. These two diametrically opposed philosophies have long battled for pre-eminence among policy makers. Each school of thought views the other as the antagonist. As Krauss and Lacey (2002, 73) posit, "the utilitarian views the humanitarian as intent upon shattering the national defence, while the humanitarian sees the utilitarian as unconcerned with the killing of innocent civilians." Within this context, for utilitarians the compulsory population exchange is a necessary evil; whereas for the humanitarians the forced population exchange is creating the evil. The utilitarian approach would distinguish the nature and purpose of CPE from its methods. In this way the ultimate value and strength of the forced population exchange would be dependent upon its rigorous testing in reality.

Admittedly in the short term, conflict termination produces more immediate gains, but it also produces bigger and deeper uncertainties in the long term. For instance, the broken relationship between the two countries prohibited the move from polarization to reconciliation after the formation of the new nation-states. The deracination of peoples produced serious problems in the longer term. For instance the separation of peoples and the limited contact led to further polarization between Greece and Turkey, which in turn led to the lack of effective channels of communication between the two countries. As life abhors a vacuum, the lost understanding and respect for the other were replaced by suspicion and hostility. Turkish and Greek relations were stigmatized by the victim complex—that is, the deep and difficult-to-alter belief that each side suffered far more than the other side. In transitional situations, new narratives may replace old established narratives, but not always with a positive intent or outcome. The shared past can be reinterpreted, and a previous coexistence may be replaced by a rhetoric of conflict, shifting the focus on what differentiates two peoples instead of what unites them.

Polarization between and within peoples can lead to the formation of what Anderson has called imagined political community. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation do not know most of their fellow members, and will never meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their community (Anderson 1991, 6). Before Lausanne, the ethnic boundaries between Greeks and Turks were overlapping, while after the treaty ethnic boundaries aligned with new territorial boundaries. In order to form states based on ethnic homogeneity, emphasis must be placed on differences between people instead of similarities. As Barth (1969, 15) affirms, the formation of ethnic boundaries leads to a dichotomization of others as strangers, and implies a limitation on shared understandings and restriction of interaction in sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest. Within this context, the Mediterranean has always

been a transitory space connecting conflicts, people, parts of empires, and trade (Spencer 2017, 950). On this occasion however, the Mediterranean was transformed from a bridge to a barrier separating people and keeping them apart.

An additional risk in conflicts examined in this article is their escalatory nature, as intercommunal conflict may escalate to interstate hostility, and from there it may pose a threat to international stability. Ultimately short-termism might help win the conflict, but as this case study indicates, it will not lead to winning lasting peace. Conflict resolution is a long-term process that requires broad and in-depth changes, while conflict termination is more event based, as demonstrated also in this article. The latter focuses more on the microlevel of dealing with a conflict instead of focusing on the macrolevel as a whole (Paris and Sisk 2015, 301–306). In protracted conflicts, such as the one discussed in this article, for conflict termination to be effective and constructive, it would have to act as a stepping stone toward the lasting resolution of the conflict. Instead, as the case study demonstrates and despite the strong opposition to the CPE at the time of the Treaty, conflict termination became an end in itself, sowing the seeds for future tension and conflict. The focus on the microlevel prohibited any social transition, which is necessary for a lasting conflict resolution.

However, when the discussion is about lasting conflict resolution, challenges can be seen as opportunities, borders can be seen as bridges, and the sea can be a great facilitator toward this end. Borders are set up as a means of ethnoterritorial separation aiming, at least in the past, to build homogeneous states. They constitute manmade constructions highlighting the "us vs. them" and make the "other side" obscure, which, in its turn, may lead to misunderstanding and fear, as discussed above. Isolation, like globalism, Hans Morgenthau (1965, 81) argues, is an absolute stance that denies that "middle ground of subtle distinctions, complex choices, and precarious manipulations, which is the proper sphere of foreign policy." However, the sea constitutes a very porous border, and the more porous the borders the more they could be seen as a pragmatic point of contact between two neighboring polities. Borders may remain territorial demarcations of a state and identity, but they can also transform to become increasingly porous in terms of facilitating cooperation for the daily practices of the residents on either side of the borders.

## Conclusion

People make their own history, but not necessarily in conditions of their choosing. The process of "unmixing peoples" still takes place as a de facto, as well as an intended and planed, solution following violent interethnic and religious conflict, such as that witnessed in the Balkans, Africa, and South East Asia. This article examines the dreadful cost of expansionist political ambitions and the lasting and dire effects of short-term decisions to address protracted and deeply rooted conflicts. About a century ago, a nationalist ideology was needed for the formation of new nation-states, but now it seems out of place and out of date. Today there is a reassertion of the state through the revival of walls—ancient mechanisms of territorial control, sovereignty, and security.

Through the case study examined in this article, it is evident that the sea has had the role of a bridge, even if forced, for exchanged populations to cross. However, the sea has also had the role of a barrier; once crossed the exchanged populations were not allowed to cross again and return, and did not maintain links between the two countries through reconciliation or normalization. Effective handling of humanitarian crises and conflict resolution, such as the one discussed in this article, requires the cultivation of both phronesis and praxis, which are two of the most important qualities of statecraft, but were clearly missing from those who created the Greek-Turkish CPE in the early 20th century.

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