

An Assessment on the Implementation and Consequences of the Mübadele (Population Exchange) on its 100th Anniversary: Turkish & Greek Sides

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Abstract

The Exchange is contemporaneous with the Republic of Turkey today. The Exchange turned 100 years old on January 26, 2023. The Exchange is one of the greatest migrations of the 20th century. Just like all migrations, it has caused significant trauma in the memories and identity construction of societies. The Exchange was not an exile but rather a migration that occurred entirely within a legal framework of an agreement and contract. This migration took place between the newly established Republic of Turkey and Greece, which separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1822. In Turkey, except for specific exceptions, the Greek Orthodox population was sent to Greece, while in return, the Turkish Muslim population in Greece, again with some exceptions, was brought to Turkey. In other words, a population exchange was carried out. In this study, the reasons and processes of the exchange, as well as the effects it has had on the Turkish and Greek sides, are examined. Qualitative research method and literature review are employed in the study. The literature review is conducted by referring to the works of Turkish and Greek researchers. The political, social, and economic reasons resulting from the exchange are presented by addressing both the Turkish and Greek perspectives. This forms the research question of the study. The study is concluded by evaluating the emerged results.

Keywords: Mübadele, The Population Exchange, Türkiye, Greece, Lausanne Peace Treaty, Trauma

1. Introduction

The Exchange represents a historical event with significant implications for both the Turkish and Greek sides. The Exchange Agreement, known as the Treaty of Exchange, was signed by the Turkish and Greek representatives, İsmet İnönü and Eleftherios Venizelos, within the context of the Treaty of Lausanne addressing minority issues on January 30, 1923.

The practical implementation of the agreement swiftly followed, initiating a rapid population exchange between the two parties according to established commissions and frameworks. This population exchange specifically involved the Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turkish populations. The exchange began immediately after the agreement, with the majority of migration occurring between 1923 and 1924.

Throughout the process of the Exchange, both the Turkish and Greek populations endured significant hardships. Even today, the trauma of the Exchange remains an integral part of identity formation for both nations. While the Exchange has reached its centenary, it carries a legacy spanning a century. This legacy undeniably encompasses substantial political, economic, and social impacts and consequences for both the Turkish and Greek sides.

This study aims to address these impacts and consequences, examining the concept of the Exchange, the process itself, exceptions, and statistical data. Its objective is to analyze the effects of the Exchange during the period it occurred and in the present-day context for both the Turkish and Greek sides, marking its 100th anniversary. The study sheds light on the lasting repercussions of the Exchange on the current lives of the affected societies and individuals involved.

2. Mübadele (The Population Exchange) Term

The 'Exchange' essentially means 'exchange' in the most concise definition. In this context, we refer to the population exchange. After the War of Independence, the Turkish and Greek sides attended the Lausanne Conference and signed the Exchange Agreement on January 30, 1923, within the framework of the Treaty of Lausanne. İsmet İnönü represented Turkey, while Eleftherios Venizelos represented Greece. (Pekin, 2005)

The Exchange stands as one of the most significant migrations that marked the 20th century. Like all migrations, it is filled with sorrow and pains. The Exchange, however, wasn't an exile or forced deportation but a kind of compulsory migration. It stands out in world history as the largest population exchange to occur legally, hence it's unique in this aspect. (Yıldırım, 2016)

The Exchange took place as a consequence of Turkey's victory in the War of Independence to end enemy occupation. Centuries ago, a large Turkish Muslim population had settled in the lands of Rumelia within the Ottoman Empire. This population, under the 'Resettlement Policy,' was sent from Anatolia to Greece. This population sent from Anatolia to the lands of Rumelia was particularly emphasized by the empire to be closely tied to the religious and national identity of being Turkish and Muslim. In summary, the Exchange occurred as a result of a victory for the Turks. However, Greece, having declared independence in 1822 and being an independent state, was defeated in the War of Independence in 1922 and had to retreat. Therefore, for the Greek side, the Exchange occurred as a result of a defeat. This profound difference between the sides significantly impacted the Exchange process, the integration of the exchangers, and the outcomes of the Exchange. (Tosun, 2002)

Records within the scope of the Exchange indicate that 1,200,000 Greek Orthodox individuals living in Turkey migrated and were resettled in Greece, while 500,000 Turkish Muslim population living in Greece migrated and were resettled in Turkey. These figures have led to vastly different processes and outcomes for both sides as a result of the Exchange. For instance, the settlement of 500,000 individuals in places vacated by 1,200,000 as a result of a victory is different from the settlement of 1,200,000 individuals in a new country with insufficient settlement areas and employment opportunities as a result of a defeat. (Arı, 2023)

There have been significant exceptions within the scope of the Exchange, which will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

3. Content & Exceptions of the Mübadele (The Population Exchange)

The Exchange refers to the population exchange between the Turkish Muslim population residing in Greece and the Rum Orthodox population living in Anatolia within a legal framework between 1923-1924. This scope does not include Catholics or Orthodox Arabs. Therefore, for instance, the Syrians in Antakya or the Catholic population in Karaman are excluded from the Exchange scope. The Exchange is an ethnic-based population change. (Arı, 2023)

There are significant exceptions within the Exchange. The Turkish minorities in Western Thrace residing in Greece are beyond the scope of the Exchange. Hence, today, significant Turkish and Muslim populations reside in cities like İskeçe and Gümülcine. Similarly, the Greeks in Istanbul, Gökçeada, and Bozcaada were also excluded from the Exchange. However, due to identity issues over the years, the Greeks in Istanbul, Gökçeada, and Bozcaada largely migrated to Greece by their own consent. (Simsek, 2016)

Except for the mentioned exceptions, all Orthodox Greeks and Turkish Muslims within the Exchange migrated to their homelands and were resettled in new locations without the right to return. The exchangers had no right to acquire any property during migration. Thus, they departed with only a few possessions to a place unknown to them, leaving behind the lands they had lived in for centuries, calling them home and country.

After the Exchange, it was prohibited for the exchangers to return to their places of origin. This forced migration happened only once. Presently, the 3rd and 4th generations of Turkish and Greek exchangers are searching for their roots. The Exchange has left a profound mark in the memories of both communities and holds a significant place in identity construction, signifying a considerable trauma. (Simsek, 2016)

4. Roots & Causes of the Mübadele (The Population Exchange)

The occurrence of the Exchange is attributed to several different reasons. The primary reason is nationalism movements. Nationalism movements that emerged in the 18th century brought forth the concept of the nation-state and played a crucial role, particularly in the dissolution of empires. The Ottoman Empire, which had long held sway in the Rumelia territories, was also influenced by nationalism movements. (Yıldırım, 2016)

Greece had lived under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for many years. However, by the 1800s, Greece also desired to establish its nation-state. Thus, it declared independence in 1822, resulting in the Turkish population in that region, who had lived for centuries, becoming a minority and foreigners under Greek governance. This situation led to oppressive actions and policies by the Greek government towards the Turkish people. Consequently, the Turkish and Greek communities, who had lived together for centuries, became unable to coexist.

One of the most significant reasons for the Exchange is nationalism and nation-state construction. As mentioned within this context, these two communities couldn't live together. During the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire lost territories like Selanik (Thessaloniki), and the Turks living there migrated to Anatolia. Although these migrants were not exchangers, they later obtained exchanger status within the Exchange agreement. Therefore, they are considered exchangers. The 500,000 Turkish exchanger population mentioned here, essentially, is much larger due to the post-Balkan Wars migrations. (Hirschon, 2005)

World War I is also one of the significant causes of the Exchange. Another is the War of Independence. Through a great victory, the Turks separated successfully and established the new Republic of Turkey on the world stage. The new Republic of Turkey aimed to resolve problems fundamentally by sending away the Rum Orthodox living in Anatolia within the Treaty of Lausanne and to Turkify the new republic. Simultaneously, rescuing the remaining

Turkish and Muslim population from oppression in Greece was one of the crucial reasons. Thus, the Population Exchange (Mübadele) offered and achieved the most peaceful resolution to issues arising from the concept of nation-building and Nation-States. The Exchange was based on quite rational and genuine reasons. (Yıldırım, 2016)

5. Facts & Figures of Mübadele (The Population Exchange)

The population exchanged was mentioned at the beginning of the study; however, the map below provides much clearer information. Edirne, İzmir, Bursa, Balıkesir, İstanbul, Tekirdağ, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, and Samsun were the cities where the most exchangers were resettled.

Figure 1: Exchange Population by Cities in Turkey between 1923-1927

Source: Tepealtı, 2019



Şekil 1: İskân Edilen Türk Mübadillerin Dağılışı (1923-1927).⁸
Figure 1: The Distribution of Settled Exchanged Turkish Immigrants (1923-1927).

Settled cities and number should also be analyzed to understand the topic. There is a table at the bottom about resettled Mübadils by Province in Turkey between 1923 and 1927.

Table 1: The Number of Resettled Mübadils by Province Between 1923 and 1927

Cities	Population of the Mübadils	Population of the Cities (1927)	%
Adana	8.440	227.718	3,71
Çanakkale	11.638	181.753	6,4
Isparta	1.175	144.437	0,81
Mersin	3.330	119.107	2,8
Afyon	1.045	259.377	0,4
Cebelibereket	2.944	107.694	2,73
İstanbul	36.487	794.444	4,59
Muğla	4.968	175.390	2,83
Aksaray	3.286	127.031	2,59
Çorum	1.570	247.926	0,63
İzmir	31.502	526.065	5,99
Niğde	15.702	166.056	9,46
Amasya	3.844	114.884	3,35
Denizli	2.728	245.048	1,11
Kars	2.512	204.846	1,23
Ordu	1.248	202.354	0,62
Ankara	1.651	404.720	0,41
Diyarbakır	484	194.316	0,25
Kastamonu	842	336.501	0,25
Samsun	22.668	274.065	8,27
Antalya	4.920	204.372	2,41
Edirne	49.441	150.840	32,78
Kayseri	7.280	251.370	2,9
Şanlıurfa	290	203.595	0,14
Artvin	46	90.066	0,05
Elazığ	2.124	213.777	0,99
Kırklareli	33.119	108.989	30,39
Şebinkarahisar	5.879	108.735	5,41
Aydın	6.630	212.541	3,12
Erzincan	116	132.325	0,09
Kırşehir	193	126.901	0,15
Sinop	1.189	169.965	0,7

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Balkesir	37.174	421.066	8,83
Erzurum	1.095	270.426	0,4
Kocaeli	27.687	286.600	9,66
Sivas	7.539	329.551	2,29
Bayazit	2.856	104.586	2,73
Eskişehir	2.567	154.332	1,66
Konya	5.549	504.384	1,1
Tekirdağ	33.728	131.446	25,66
Bilecik	4.461	113.660	3,92
Gaziantep	1.330	215.765	0,62
Kütahya	1.881	302.436	0,62
Tokat	8.218	263.063	3,12
Bitlis	3.360	90.631	3,71
Giresun	623	165.033	0,38
Malatya	76	306.882	0,02
Trabzon	404	290.303	0,14
Bolu	194	218.246	0,09
Gümüşhane	811	122.231	0,66
Manisa	13.829	374.013	3,7
Van	275	75.329	0,37
Burdur	448	83.614	0,54
Hakkâri	310	24.980	1,24
Maraş	1.143	186.855	0,61
Yozgat	1.635	209.474	0,78
Bursa	34.543	401.595	8,6
Hatay	1.037		-
Mardin	200	183.471	0,11
Zonguldak	1.285	268.909	0,48
Türkiye	463.549	13.648.270	3,4

Source: Goularas, 2012



6. Mübadele as a Trauma

The Population Exchange, like all migrations, constitutes a significant trauma in the memory of the exchangers and subsequent generations. Today, the 3rd and 4th generations of exchangers carry this trauma as it has contributed to their identity formation.

The process stemming from the Population Exchange deeply affected the Turkish and Greek communities economically, politically, and socially. Greeks describe the exchange as 'Mikrasistiki Katastrofi,' meaning the Catastrophe of Asia Minor. On the Turkish side, they define themselves as Rumeli Turks, having crucial missions in the newly established republic. (Ari, 2023)

The events during the Exchange still hold a place in memories today. People transported under harsh conditions, diseases, hunger, deceased infants and elders, quarantine periods spent in detention camps upon arrival; these are unforgettable points. Both sides of the exchangers did not want to leave their homes, the lands they had lived in for centuries. For individuals to leave their homes and lives behind in this manner, migrating to an unknown place, and rebuilding a life is extremely difficult and a significant trauma. (Pekin, 2005)

Considerable hardships were faced during the migration and subsequent period. For instance, Turks brought to Turkey after the Greeks in Yanya (Ioannina) prohibited speaking Turkish did not know the language. This was a challenging situation for both themselves and the local population in the area they settled. Naturally, they were seen not as a part of the society but as foreigners. The integration of Turkish and Greek exchangers into the communities they arrived in was not easy. They felt foreign and were perceived as outsiders by the local population. Such situations and similar ones have caused significant traumas in the memories of these societies. (Tevfik, 2014)

7. Implications of the Mübadele's (The Population Exchange) Consequences

The Population Exchange brought significant difficulties in terms of its consequences and processes for both the Turkish and Greek sides. Primarily, the compulsory migration of people who had lived on the same land for centuries, considering it their homeland, to completely unfamiliar territories and an entirely new culture, has been a cause of a lasting trauma that persists even today. This trauma is still carried by the 3rd and 4th generations of exchangers. Consequently, both the Greek and Turkish sides, through the 3rd and 4th generations of exchangers, are conducting research today to trace their roots and comprehend the Exchange. (Hirschon, 2005)

The Population Exchange created different impacts on the Turkish and Greek sides in terms of its consequences and implementations. However, some results and effects are shared.

On the Greek side, the Exchange is perceived as 'Mikrasiatiki Katastrofi,' signifying a great disaster. In contrast, the Turkish side perceives the Exchange as a significant victory; a triumph of the newly established Republic. This is because the Exchange agreement emerged as a result of Greek defeat and Turkish victory. (Ari, 2023)

The Exchange resolved the issues and conflicts left unresolved by the Lausanne Treaty and the remaining Greek and Turkish problems, which were carried over from the Balkan Wars or Greece's Liberation. The Balkan Wars were also pivotal moments for this subject. Following the Balkan Wars, the Ottomans lost their Greek territories where they had lived for around 400 years. Soon after, Turks began migrating to Anatolia. Some of the population left Greece after the Balkan Wars, while some didn't. Those who did not leave immigrated through the Exchange around ten years later. (Pekin, 2005)

The Exchange symbolizes a new era with amicable and benevolent relations between the Turkish and Greek sides. Understanding the results and implications of the Exchange is crucial to grasp what truly transpired. It remains a significant trauma in the collective memory of both Turkish and Greek societies. It also marked the end of the immigration process; there is no entitlement to rights, goods, or properties left behind. This issue resulted from the agreement and the immigration. (Erdal, 2018)

Moreover, it negatively impacted the economy for both sides, creating substantial economic burdens. This was a double burden for both the exchangers and the local populations where the exchangers were resettled. They were unfamiliar with each other's habits and lifestyles. (Tevfik, 2014)

Migration always brings hardship for people; it's challenging. It took a long time for both the Greek and Turkish sides to adjust to their new environments. Psychosocial and economic challenges and adjustment for both sides were part of the process. Exchangers left behind their jobs and found it challenging to secure employment matching their abilities and experiences in their newly settled homes. (Ari, 2023)

Additionally, both sides did not cause any significant political issues, which was a significant advantage at that time. However, the convergence of entirely different populations led to some difficulties in recognition and adjustment; it wasn't easy for either side. Some discrimination occurred between locals and immigrants, which resolved over time without legal proceedings due to their relatively minor nature.

Following the Exchange, Turkish and Greek exchangers began learning their mother tongues when they settled in their new homes. Overall, adapting to a new life and environment took a considerable amount of time. The Greek exchanger population was much larger than the Turkish exchangers, causing a greater impact on the Greek side. It's important to note that this was a result of Turkish victory and Greece's defeat, representing a catastrophe for the Greek side but a victory for the Turkish side. (Erdal, 2018)

Presently, both sides are still seeking their roots and 'Lost Land.' Exchangers are searching for their identities with the 3rd and 4th generations.

8. Conclusion

The most ideal solution to the dispute that has persisted between the Turkish and Greek sides for over 200 years was realized through the Exchange agreement signed in the Lausanne Treaty. The Exchange provided the most lasting and peaceful resolution to the disagreement between the parties. Examining the Exchange reveals significant economic, social, cultural, and political consequences for both the Turkish and Greek sides. These results encompass both positive and negative dynamics. Both sides experienced pain and significant difficulties during the Exchange process and in the new places they were settled. Particularly, the process caused substantial changes in social and economic dynamics in both countries. The Exchange, as the most comprehensive legal population exchange in history, also led to significant effects in parallel.

The shared problems experienced by both the Turkish and Greek sides and the unique issues faced by each side have been addressed in the study. A series of problems arising from the Exchange were resolved in the following years through various agreements.

The problems arising from the Turkey-Greece disputes have been attempted to be resolved through agreements and negotiations. The initial step taken in this regard was the 1926 Athens Treaty, which evolved from the Lausanne Treaty. While the Athens Treaty did not reach a consensus on the settlers, it significantly resolved disputes over their settlement and property. The remaining issues were resolved with the Ankara Agreement of 1930 and the exchange of goods within the Exchange scope was conducted through the 'barter' system. The Ankara Agreement was pivotal in resolving problems stemming from Lausanne and settling disputes. With the obstacles to the Exchange removed, both countries had to address sociological problems resulting from the Exchange. These problems remained on the agenda at various levels until the complete integration of the exchanged individuals into mainstream society was achieved.

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The Exchange is now 100 years old. When looking at the 3rd and 4th generation of exchangers and their ancestors from both societies, it's evident that the economic and social problems arising from the Exchange have been resolved over the years. Within a period of just over a decade, the exchangers were largely integrated into society. However, identity and belonging are crucial concepts that define a person. The grandchildren of the exchangers are currently attempting to trace their roots and understand their history to better comprehend their identity and belonging. This situation leads to the establishment of significant connections between the grandchildren of the exchangers from both societies and thus between the two societies.

The Exchange is a migration story and like all migration stories, it carries a sense of sadness. It is evident today that the Exchange, now over 100 years old, has deeply affected the cultural, economic, and social structures of both societies. The collective memory of societies is significantly influenced by the phenomenon of migration. The Turkish-Greek population exchange is one such example. It is evident that the Exchange played a significant role in the identity and nation-building of both the Turkish and Greek sides. This study has revealed how the Turkish-Greek population exchange, in its 100th year, impacted societies economically, socially, culturally, and politically.

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