

Article

A Systematic Review of the Political, Social, and Cultural Legacies of the 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange

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Abstract

The 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange (Mubadele in Turkish), formalized through the Lausanne Convention, remains one of the most consequential cases of compulsory migration in modern history. This systematic review synthesizes a century of scholarship across political, legal, social, cultural, and historiographical dimensions. Findings indicate that the exchange not only legitimized forced displacement under international law but also reinforced authoritarian state-building in Turkey and exacerbated political instability in Greece. The social consequences included trauma, marginalization, and the emergence of heterogeneous refugee identities, while cultural memory oscillated between nationalist silencing and transnational remembrance. Urban landscapes and demographic structures were profoundly reshaped, producing visible legacies in contemporary cities. Furthermore, assimilation policies formalized the integration of populations, influencing the development of national identities in both Turkey and Greece. Historiographical trajectories diverged, with Greek scholarship emphasizing refugee struggles and Turkish scholarship foregrounding nation-building. Recent studies highlight hybrid identities and transgenerational redefinitions of belonging. This review underscores the necessity of integrating political, social, and memory studies to capture the multi-layered impacts of the exchange, offering a comprehensive account of its enduring relevance for migration, nationalism, and memory studies in Southeast Europe.

Keywords: population exchange; nation-building; memory; migration

1. Introduction

The 1923 Turkey–Greece Population Exchange, implemented through the Lausanne Convention, constituted one of the 20th century’s largest forced migrations, affecting approximately 2 million people (Gursoy 2008). Around 1.2 million Orthodox Christians left Turkey while approximately 350,000 Muslims migrated from Greece (Gursoy 2008). This exchange occurred within a legal framework rather than as an exile, representing a contractual agreement between the newly established Turkish Republic and Greece (Kansu 2023). The population exchange significantly impacted both nations’ political regimes during the 1930s, contributing to authoritarian developments in both countries (Gursoy 2008). In Turkey, immigrants helped create a unified political elite that facilitated single-party rule, while in Greece, the influx exacerbated existing political instabilities (Gursoy 2008). The exchange also produced lasting architectural and cultural changes, as evidenced by the conversion of Bursa churches, which underwent physical and socio-cultural transformations that affected the spirit of place while being implemented with minimal intervention due to economic constraints (Sahin et al. 2024).



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1.1. Legal Framework and Political Consequences

The Mubadele (Population Exchange) between Turkey and Greece, signed on 30 January 1923, represents one of the 20th century's largest forced migrations, involving approximately 1.2 million Orthodox Christians leaving Turkey and 350,000 Muslims migrating from Greece (Gursoy 2008). This legally mandated exchange occurred within the framework of the Lausanne Convention following the Greek–Turkish war (Kansu 2023). The population transfer had profound political consequences for both nations during the interwar period, contributing to authoritarian developments in the 1930s by exacerbating existing political instabilities and creating unified elite groups that could more easily suppress opposition (Gursoy 2008). The exchange caused significant trauma in collective memories and identity construction of both societies, affecting their economies, cultures, and politics during early nation-state building phases (Kansu 2023). As noted by Hoebens (2018), this organized compulsory population exchange had lasting consequences for South-east Europe, representing one of the Great War's enduring legacies that continue to shape regional social realities today.

In addition, key monographs and articles have further strengthened the analytical framework. Bedlek (2015) examines the role of trauma and imagined communities in shaping national identities. Tsitselikis (2014) critically reassesses the Lausanne Convention through competing legal interpretations. Ladas (1932) remains a foundational source for understanding the legal structure of population exchanges, while Kitromilides and Alexandris (1984–1985) contextualize the exchange within broader debates on nationalism and forced migration. More recent comparative research, such as Alpan (2022), situates the exchange within global displacement studies.

While the literature on the 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange is extensive, it remains fragmented across disciplines such as history, anthropology, and political science (Hirschon 2003; Clark 2006). Existing studies tend to focus on specific dimensions—such as nation-building, memory, or identity—without systematically examining how these themes are distributed across the broader body of scholarship. This study addresses that gap by adopting a systematic review approach that does not merely summarize existing works but systematically maps thematic concentrations, historiographical asymmetries, and underrepresented areas. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, this approach enables the identification of structural imbalances in the literature, making visible patterns that remain largely implicit in qualitative syntheses.

1.2. Historiography and Dominant Narratives

The 1923 Greco-Turkish Exchange of Populations represents a pivotal moment in modern nation-building, involving the compulsory displacement of nearly two million people based on religious identity (Clark 2006). Stephen Pericles Ladas played a crucial role in shaping the dominant narrative of this event through his influential book, which appropriated contemporary Greek intellectual arguments and framed them within international law discourse, creating an account favorable to nation-states and the League of Nations while neglecting human consequences (Yildirim 2021). The exchange served as a tool for eliminating religious minorities deemed “excesses” in the nation-state framework, particularly affecting the reshaping of Turkish nationalism and creating new divisions among Muslim populations (Kolluoglu 2013). In contemporary Turkey, there has been a shift from nationalist historiography's “administered forgetting” toward personal narratives and family histories that reclaim individual connections to pre-exchange geographies, as evidenced in cultural products like documentary novels and memoirs (Igsiz 2008).

1.3. Memory, Multiculturalism, and Biopolitics

Aslı Igsiz's research examines the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange through contemporary lenses of memory, multiculturalism, and biopolitics. Her 2008 work analyzes how personal narratives and family histories have emerged in Turkish public discourse, challenging nationalist historiography's "administered forgetting" through cultural products like documentary novels (Igsiz 2008). Building on this, Igsiz (2015) critiques the 2010 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange Museum in Istanbul, arguing it represents the "museumization" of culture within EU multicultural policies and Turkish neo-Ottomanist discourse. Ozgul (2019) reviews Igsiz's book *Humanism in Ruins*, highlighting how her analysis reveals that both pro- and anti-diversity arguments are informed by biopolitics, offering critical insights into liberal cultural policies' limitations. Most recently, Igsiz (2022) contextualizes the exchange within contemporary "civilizationist" politics, connecting its biopolitical dimensions to current refugee crises, white nationalism, and Islamic counter-mobilization, questioning the scope of memory work on the exchange's centennial.

1.4. Centennial Reflections and Contemporary Scholarship

The Greek–Turkish Population Exchange of 1923, which turned 100 years old in January 2023, represents one of the greatest migrations of the 20th century (Kansu 2023). This legally mandated exchange involved approximately 1.2 million Orthodox Christians leaving Turkey and around 350,000 Muslims migrating from Greece following the Lausanne Convention (Gursoy 2008). The exchange had profound political, social, economic, and spatial consequences for both nations that persist today (Kansu 2023; Cankara 2023). Politically, the population exchange contributed to authoritarian developments in both countries during the 1930s, with immigrants from Turkey playing a role in exacerbating Greece's political instability, while Turkey's unified elite facilitated single-party rule (Gursoy 2008). The exchange caused significant trauma in the collective memories and identity construction of both societies (Kansu 2023). Spatially, the long-term impacts remain observable in contemporary cities despite the passage of a full century (Cankara 2023). Both Turkish and Greek researchers have extensively studied this transformative event's multifaceted effects on nation-state building processes (Bozdaglıoğlu 2014; Kansu 2023).

1.5. Diplomacy and International Context

The Greek–Turkish population exchange of 1922–1924 was a massive compulsory displacement involving nearly 2 million people, with over one million Christians from the Ottoman Empire settling in Greece and approximately 500,000 Muslims relocating to Turkey (Blanchard 1925; Kyramargiou 2021). The exchange was formalized through a single bilateral agreement, namely the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations signed on 30 January 1923 (Kyramargiou 2021). US diplomatic archives reveal how Greek and Turkish statesmen, along with League of Nations representatives, developed this population exchange concept during the 1922–1923 peace negotiations (Aktar 2021). The process fundamentally reshaped both societies, creating new realities requiring integration and assimilation despite language and cultural differences (Kyramargiou 2021). In Turkey, particularly in Izmir, the exchange played a crucial role in defining Turkish nationalism by creating restrictive constructions of Turkishness among the "Muslim brethren" (Kolluoglu 2013).

1.6. Nation-Building and Authoritarianism

The 1923 Turkish-Greek compulsory population exchange represents one of the 20th century's largest migrations, fundamentally shaping both nations' political and social landscapes (Kansu 2023). This legal framework migration, distinct from exile, involved

exchanging Greek Orthodox populations from Turkey with Turkish Muslim populations from Greece, with specific exceptions (Kansu 2023). Historiographical analysis reveals asymmetric scholarly attention, with extensive Greek literature contrasting limited Turkish scholarship (Lamprou 2023). Traditional narratives emphasize the exchange's political impact: refugee–local cleavages in Greek politics and the Christian bourgeoisie exodus contributing to Turkish authoritarianism (Lamprou 2023). However, recent research examining local communities and refugee agency challenges these macro perspectives (Lamprou 2023). Literary interpretations also differ significantly between Greek and Turkish authors, reflecting their distinct backgrounds and biases in depicting this forced migration (Comu 2020). An attempted voluntary population exchange agreement in 1914 failed due to the outbreak of World War I and escalating political tensions, preventing its implementation (Yellice 2024).

1.7. Migration Policies and Assimilation Strategies

The early Turkish Republic (1923–1934) implemented systematic policies aimed at creating a homogeneous nation-state through immigration, settlement, and assimilation measures. Ulker (2008) demonstrates that Turkey's post-Lausanne migration policies pursued dual objectives: assimilating non-Turkish-speaking Muslims and Turkifying Kurdish-populated eastern provinces. The 1934 Settlement Law divided the country into three zones, with security concerns driving demographic restructuring in strategic areas to favor Muslim-Turkish populations (Ulker 2008). These nationalizing measures reflected broader patterns of ethnocultural nationalism, as Eligur (2017) argues that Turkish elites applied civic-territorial nationalism to Muslim Turks while pursuing ethnocultural nationalism toward non-Muslim minorities through economic and demographic Turkification policies. The transition from the Ottoman millet system to nation-state structures affected Muslim communities beyond Turkey's borders, as Huseyinoglu (2012) shows through the case of Turkish Muslims in Western Thrace, Greece, who experienced a gradual transformation from a conservative Islamic community to an ethnic minority under the post-1923 minority regime. It is important to distinguish between the direct effects of the population exchange and subsequent minority policies. While Muslims in Western Thrace and the Rum minority in Turkey were formally exempt from the exchange, their experiences were shaped primarily by state policies implemented after Lausanne rather than the exchange itself.

1.8. Diplomatic Negotiations and Nation Formation

The Turco-Greek population exchange of 1922–1934 represents a pivotal moment in diplomatic history and forced displacement, involving nearly 2 million people (Blanchard 1925). This compulsory exchange emerged from diplomatic negotiations during the Lausanne Conference in 1923, where Greek and Turkish statesmen, alongside League of Nations representatives, developed the population exchange framework (Aktar 2021). The process fundamentally reshaped both nations through compulsory population exchanges impacting non-Muslim communities within the emerging nation-state frameworks (Kolluoglu 2013). The exchange had profound consequences beyond mere population transfer. In Turkey, the accommodation and assimilation of exchangees created new divisions among “Muslim brethren,” leading to increasingly restrictive constructions of Turkishness and reshaping Turkish nationalism's modalities (Kolluoglu 2013). This forced displacement represents not merely a bilateral Greek–Turkish episode, but a significant turning point in broader nation formation projects, demonstrating how diplomatic solutions to ethnic diversity involved massive human displacement and cultural transformation (Yildirim 2006; Kolluoglu 2013).

1.9. Identity, Home, and Belonging

The 1923 Greek–Turkish population exchange represents a complex process of forced displacement that fundamentally reshaped concepts of home and belonging. The exchange, based on religious identity rather than ethnicity, created vulnerabilities for communities like Albanian-speaking Muslims who did not fit neat national categories (Shahollari 2024). This “unmixing” process served as a tool for eliminating non-Muslims deemed “excesses” in nation-state formation, ultimately creating restrictive constructions of Turkishness and reshaping Turkish nationalism (Kolluoglu 2013). For displaced populations, home encompasses multiple dimensions beyond physical space, including relational networks, temporal memories, and material experiences that cannot be fully reassembled even if return were possible (Taylor 2009). However, descendants of exchangees have developed new understandings of homeland through visits to ancestral villages, relying on shared hospitality practices to structure cooperative interactions between Greeks and Turks, transforming the previous memory-based conceptions of homeland (Stuckey 2021).

1.10. Local Experiences and Collective Memory

The 1923–1925 population exchange between Turkey and Greece, known as the population exchange (Mubadele), was a compulsory migration that profoundly shaped Turkey’s political, social, and demographic landscape (Ari 2014; Aksakal 2022). The process involved extensive preparations, the transfer and settlement of migrants, and had lasting effects on Turkish society. Local studies, such as those in Catalca, reveal the hardships and traumas experienced by migrants and their descendants, highlighting the exchange as a tragedy for both sides (Gurcay 2019). In regions like Canakkale, archival records and Liquidation Petitions (Tasfiye Talepnameleri in Turkish) provide detailed insights into the settlement process and the challenges faced by the newcomers (Senturk 2018). The exchange led to significant losses, including the separation of families and loss of life, and its impacts are still felt and studied today (Aksakal 2022). Collectively, these works underscore the enduring significance and complexity of the population exchange.

1.11. Migration Policies in the Republican Era

Turkey’s migration policies have undergone significant transformations since the Republic’s establishment, shaped by nation-building efforts, security concerns, and international obligations. The 1934 Settlement Law (İskân Kanunu in Turkish) initially prioritized ethnic Turkish populations through population exchanges, reflecting early nation-state construction goals (Inan 2016; Manap 2025). Historical analysis reveals that “temporariness” has been the dominant concept in Turkey’s migration management, though this approach has eroded due to the volume and continuity of migrant flows (Manap 2025). Europe has been highly influential in shaping Turkey’s migration policy throughout history, from early Republican period nation-state ideology to recent EU relations (Ince 2023). The post-2000 period, particularly after the AK Party’s rise to power in 2002, marked important shifts in migration policies within foreign policy frameworks (Temir 2023). Contemporary policy formation is influenced by state security perceptions, economic developments, political populist approaches, and societal demands, necessitating more institutional and long-term policy development (Ince 2023).

1.12. The Mixed Exchange Commission and Administrative Challenges

These papers examine various aspects of the Greek–Turkish population exchange following the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and the activities of the Mixed Exchange Commission. The exchange involved the forced relocation of Orthodox Greeks from Turkey and Muslim Turks from Greece, creating significant administrative and social challenges

(Sarinay and Karacakaya 2023). The Mixed Exchange Commission played a crucial role in implementing the exchange, with Turkish representative Tevfik Rustu Bey sending detailed telegraphs from Athens to Ankara documenting the commission's struggles with neutral and Greek members regarding property settlements and procedural matters (Sarinay and Karacakaya 2023). Liquidation petitions (Tasfiye talepnameleri in Turkish) serve as primary sources for understanding the settlement process, providing statistical and concrete information about exchangees relocated to various Turkish provinces, including Seferihisar in Izmir (Kara 2024) and Canakkale (Senturk 2018). The exchange significantly impacted Western Thrace Turks, who, despite being exempt from the exchange, faced demographic and economic disruption due to excessive Greek refugee settlement in their region (Erdem 2021).

1.13. Cultural Heritage, Identity, and Museums

The 1923 Turkish-Greek population exchange represents one of the most significant forced migration events in modern history, fundamentally altering the demographic structures of both countries (Aksakal 2022; Sepetcioglu 2014). This compulsory exchange resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people who were forced to abandon their ancestral homes, leading to the loss of families, friends, and lives (Aksakal 2022). Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework of field, capital, and habitus, research reveals that exchangees' economic, social, and cultural capital became dysfunctional in their new environments, with these negative experiences persisting in collective memory (Ozturk and Ozgen 2024). The exchangees did not constitute a homogeneous group in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, and daily practices, complicating the definition of "exchangee identity" (Sepetcioglu 2014). Contemporary efforts to preserve this cultural heritage are evident through migration-themed museums, such as the Athens Asia Minor Culture Museum and İzmir Migration and Exchange Memorial House, which serve crucial roles in narrating and protecting the remaining cultural legacy (Yasdag 2023).

1.14. Spatial and Urban Consequences

The 1923 Greek–Turkish population exchange was a compulsory bilateral agreement that resulted in the displacement of over 1.5 million people, with more than one million Christians from the Ottoman Empire settling in Greece and approximately 500,000 Muslims relocating to Turkey (Kyrarmargiou 2021; Saraclar and Erat 2023). This exchange, supervised by the international community as part of the Treaty of Lausanne, aimed to resolve minority population issues and promote internal security and stability in both nations (Kyrarmargiou 2021). The population exchange had profound and lasting impacts on both countries. In Greece, new populations faced significant integration challenges, overcoming language and cultural differences while contributing to a process of "Hellenization" through refugee settlements that reshaped the country's social and demographic map (Kyrarmargiou 2021). In Turkey, the accommodation and assimilation of exchangees played a crucial role in shaping Turkish nationalism, creating new divisions among "Muslim brethren" and establishing more restrictive constructions of Turkishness (Kolluoglu 2013). The spatial consequences of this displacement remain observable in contemporary cities, demonstrating the exchange's enduring impact on urban development (Cankara 2023). The transformation of religious spaces was not limited to one country. While churches in Turkey were repurposed after the exchange, similar processes affected mosques and tekkes in Greece. These parallel developments reflect broader processes of spatial restructuring and symbolic nation-building in both countries.

1.15. Cretan Muslims and Cultural Adaptation

Cretan Muslims faced escalating nationalist conflicts and massacres, ultimately leading to two major waves of forced migration (Sahin and Duran 2019). These migrants encountered significant cultural adaptation challenges in their new settlements, particularly language barriers, as many Cretan Muslims primarily spoke Greek in daily life and had limited Turkish proficiency (Menekse 2021). This linguistic difference led to social rejection, with locals calling them derogatory names like “half infidel” and “infidel seed,” severely hampering their social integration (Menekse 2021). The traumatic experiences of territorial occupation and forced displacement became prominent themes in Turkish literature, with authors like Naki Tezel documenting these individual tragedies within the broader historical context (Oksuz Gunes 2021).

The 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange, initiated under the Lausanne Convention, displaced nearly two million individuals along religious lines, marking it as one of the largest engineered migrations of the 20th century. Unlike spontaneous exoduses, this exchange was a legally mandated, bureaucratically managed process framed within the emerging international law of minority protection. It profoundly altered the political trajectories of both Greece and Turkey, reshaping nation-state formation, urban demography, and collective identities. Existing scholarship has documented its diverse consequences, from the consolidation of single-party rule in Turkey to heightened political instability in Greece, from the trauma of dislocation to the institutionalization of memory through museums and literature. Historiographical narratives further reveal asymmetric emphases: while Greek scholarship highlights refugee struggles, Turkish studies often situate the event within the logic of nation-building. Despite extensive literature, a comprehensive synthesis bridging political, legal, social, and cultural perspectives has remained limited. This study addresses that gap through a systematic review, offering a holistic framework that traces both convergences and divergences in scholarly approaches. By systematically analyzing political regimes, assimilation policies, urban transformations, cultural memory, and historiographical debates, this work provides an integrative perspective on the exchange’s enduring significance. What sets this study apart is its scope: it brings together dispersed disciplinary insights into a single analytical framework, foregrounding how political engineering, lived experiences, and collective memory intersect across time. In doing so, it offers not merely a review but also a platform for future comparative research on forced migration and ethnonational homogenization.

The exchange involved diverse linguistic groups beyond Cretan Greek-speaking Muslims, including Greek-speaking Muslims from Epirus, Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians from Cappadocia, Slavic-speaking Muslim populations from regions such as Drama, Kavala, and Florina, as well as Albanian-speaking Orthodox communities from Eastern Thrace. This diversity complicates homogenizing national narratives.

2. Materials and Methods

The systematic review procedure involves a series of structured and interdependent phases designed to ensure rigor and reproducibility. The process begins with the precise articulation of a research question, which serves as the foundation for the analysis. In the present study, the guiding question was framed as follows: What are the social, economic, and cultural consequences of the 1923 Turkey–Greece population exchange?

Following the formulation of the research framework, a systematic literature search was performed across internationally recognized databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Scilit, and Google Scholar, using carefully selected combinations of keywords to ensure comprehensive coverage and to minimize retrieval bias.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure methodological rigor. Criteria included thematic relevance, temporal scope, language, and methodological quality. Eligible studies were then subjected to a structured data extraction process, in which variables such as sample size, methodological design, geographical scope, and outcome indicators were coded using standardized forms to enable comparability.

The selected studies were systematically coded into thematic categories, including political, social, cultural, spatial, and historiographical dimensions. This coding enabled cross-study comparison and facilitated the identification of dominant trends as well as underrepresented topics. The aim of this approach is analytical rather than descriptive, focusing on revealing structural patterns within the literature.

This study has several limitations. First, the reliance on selected academic databases and language constraints—primarily English and Turkish—may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant studies published in other languages, particularly Greek. Second, historiographical asymmetries between Greek and Turkish scholarship may influence the representation of certain themes. Third, although a systematic approach was adopted, the study does not claim exhaustive coverage of all available literature. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of broader patterns rather than definitive conclusions about the entire field.

To ensure a systematic and comprehensive literature review, the search strategy was expanded to include multilingual sources (English, Turkish, and Greek) and cross-national academic databases. This approach minimizes national and linguistic bias while improving the representativeness and analytical depth of the dataset.

This study adopts a systematic review methodology rather than a quantitative meta-analysis. The aim is not to statistically aggregate findings but to identify thematic patterns, historiographical trends, and structural gaps in the literature. Therefore, no effect size calculations or statistical synthesis techniques were applied.

Relevance to the Current Study

Applying this methodological structure to the case of the 1923 Turkey–Greece population exchange offers an integrative and interdisciplinary framework bridging history, sociology, and economics. This approach consolidates both qualitative and quantitative findings, thereby providing a holistic account of large-scale forced migration. Synthesized evidence reveals recurring patterns such as identity loss, property disputes, economic restructuring, and processes of cultural assimilation, while also uncovering cross-generational dynamics that illuminate how forced migration produces enduring socio-economic and cultural transformations.

The use of quantitative systematic review in this study complements qualitative historical approaches by systematically identifying recurring patterns across a broad body of literature. This methodological combination enhances analytical rigor, comparability, and the reliability of conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

The 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange (Mubadele in Turkish) has attracted extensive scholarly attention, generating a multidimensional body of literature. A synthesis of the existing research reveals several overarching themes:

1. Political and Legal Dimensions

Although the exchange was institutionalized through an international agreement, a large proportion of those affected had already experienced displacement under chaotic wartime conditions prior to its formal implementation. (Kansu 2023; Gurs0y 2008). Contemporary actors, such as Stephen Pericles Ladas, framed the event as a legitimate diplomatic

solution within international law discourse, minimizing humanitarian costs (Yildirim 2021). The process was closely tied to interwar political regimes: in Turkey, immigrants reinforced a unified elite that enabled single-party rule, while in Greece the influx deepened existing political instabilities (Gursoy 2008). The role of the Mixed Exchange Commission, documented through diplomatic archives, underlines the bureaucratic complexities of property liquidation and migrant resettlement (Sarinay and Karacakaya 2023; Aktar 2021).

2. Social, Cultural, and Identity Impacts

The exchange reshaped social fabrics in both countries. Trauma, loss, and identity crises became defining experiences, with displacement perceived as an organized compulsory population exchange (Hoebens 2018).

Migrants often encountered hostility: Cretan Muslims, for instance, were marginalized due to linguistic differences, being labeled derogatorily because they primarily spoke Greek (Menekse 2021). Similarly, exchangees' social, cultural, and economic capital often lost functionality in their new contexts, complicating identity reconstruction (Ozturk and Ozgen 2024; Sepetcioglu 2014). This created multiple, non-homogeneous "exchangee identities."

The case of Cretan Muslims is frequently discussed in the literature as an example of identity complexity during the population exchange (Hirschon 2003). However, a comparable case—Karamanli Greeks, a Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christian community in Anatolia—has received significantly less attention. Both groups challenge rigid ethno-religious classifications imposed by nation-state frameworks, as their linguistic and religious identities do not align with dominant national narratives (Balta 2010; Anagnostopoulou 1997). The inclusion of both groups enables a more balanced comparative framework and highlights historiographical asymmetries in the literature, particularly regarding linguistically hybrid communities.

3. Memory, Historiography, and Cultural Representation

Earlier nationalist historiographies largely silenced the human suffering of the exchange, creating what Igsiz (2008) calls "administered forgetting." Recent decades, however, have seen the rise in family histories, novels, and memoirs that challenge official narratives (Igsiz 2008; Comu 2020). The establishment of museums, such as the 2010 Istanbul Population Exchange Museum, further reflects the institutionalization of memory, though scholars critique their alignment with multicultural EU discourses and neo-Ottomanist politics (Igsiz 2015; Ozgul 2019). Centennial commemorations (2023) reinforced renewed debates around collective memory, national belonging, and transnational connections (Kansu 2023).

4. Spatial and Urban Consequences

The physical reorganization of space was one of the most visible legacies. Churches in Bursa, for example, were converted with minimal intervention due to economic constraints, yet this profoundly altered the "spirit of place" (Sahin et al. 2024). Cities such as İzmir, Canakkale, and Catalca witnessed demographic transformations, documented in archival petitions (Senturk 2018; Kara 2024; Gurcay 2019). Exchange-themed museums in İzmir and Athens illustrate the continued negotiation of space and memory (Yasdag 2023).

The transformation of religious spaces was not limited to one country. While churches in Turkey were repurposed after the exchange, similar processes affected mosques and tekkes in Greece. These parallel developments reflect broader processes of spatial restructuring and symbolic nation-building in both countries.

5. Migration Policies, Assimilation, and Nationalism

The exchange served as a tool of ethnonational homogenization. In Turkey, it reinforced restrictive definitions of "Turkishness," shaping Turkish nationalism and deepening divides among "Muslim brethren" (Kolluoglu 2013). Assimilation policies, such as the 1934

Settlement Law, institutionalized demographic engineering (Ulker 2008; Eligur 2017). Similar processes occurred in Greece, where refugees became instruments of “Hellenization” (Kyramargiou 2021). The categorization of certain populations during the exchange reflects the administrative and policy considerations of the period (Yildirim 2006; Igsiz 2022). It is important to distinguish between the direct effects of the population exchange and subsequent minority policies. While Muslims in Western Thrace and the Rum minority in Turkey were formally exempt from the exchange, their historical experiences were shaped primarily by state policies implemented after Lausanne rather than the exchange itself.

6. Historiographical Divergence and Contemporary Shifts

The literature reveals asymmetric scholarly attention: Greek academics have produced a larger body of work compared to their Turkish counterparts (Lamprou 2023). Narratives differ not only in scope but also in interpretation—Greek historiography emphasizes refugee struggles and integration, while Turkish scholarship has often prioritized nation-building perspectives. Literary works also mirror this divergence, with different portrayals of loss and belonging (Comu 2020). Recent scholarship (Shahollari 2024; Stuckey 2021) highlights hybrid identities and redefined notions of homeland among descendants, reflecting a transnational rethinking of belonging (Table 1). Recent scholarship has increasingly moved beyond nationally bounded narratives and emphasized transnational and collaborative approaches to the study of the 1923 population exchange. Edited volumes such as Hirschon (2003), Kirtunc (2005), and Tsitselikis (2006) bring together Turkish and Greek scholars, marking a shift from parallel national historiographies toward dialogical frameworks. These works highlight shared experiences, contested memories, and mutual influences, thereby challenging earlier mono-national interpretations and revealing emerging Turkish–Greek scholarly synergies.

Table 1. Comprehensive systematic review of the 1923 Population Exchange Literature.

Theme	Key Authors	Main Findings
Political & Legal Dimensions	Gursoy (2008); Kansu (2023); Yildirim (2021); Aktar (2021); Sarinay and Karacakaya (2023)	The Lausanne Treaty legalized compulsory migration; authoritarian state-building was reinforced; the Mixed Exchange Commission administered property transfers and liquidation processes under international supervision.
Social & Cultural Impacts	Hoebens (2018); Menekse (2021); Sahin and Duran (2019); Ozturk and Ozgen (2024); Sepetcioglu (2014)	Exchangees experienced trauma, identity crises, and linguistic marginalization (e.g., Cretan Muslims). Refugee identities were heterogeneous, leading to cultural adaptation challenges.
Memory & Historiography	Igsiz (2008, 2015, 2022); Ozgul (2019); Comu (2020); Kansu (2023); Bozdaghoglu (2014)	Transition from nationalist “forgetting” to active memory work; museums became contested sites of remembrance; centennial commemorations sparked new debates.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Theme	Key Authors	Main Findings
Spatial & Urban Consequences	Sahin et al. (2024); Cankara (2023); Senturk (2018); Kara (2024); Gurcay (2019); Yasdag (2023)	Churches were converted, cities underwent demographic reshaping, archival petitions documented settlement difficulties, and migration museums preserved exchangee heritage.
Migration Policy & Nationalism	Kolluoglu (2013); Ulker (2008); Eligur (2017); Huseyinoglu (2012); Kyramargiou (2021); Inan (2016); Manap (2025); Ince (2023); Temir (2023)	The exchange functioned as a nation-building tool; restrictive definitions of Turkishness emerged; Greece pursued Hellenization; the 1934 Settlement Law institutionalized migration policy; EU frameworks later influenced both states' policies.
Historiographical Divergence & Literary Narratives	Lamprou (2023); Comu (2020); Shahollari (2024); Stuckey (2021); Taylor (2009)	Greek and Turkish scholarship diverged in emphasis; literary works depicted displacement differently; hybrid identities and redefined notions of homeland emerged.
Individual & Local Studies	Aksakal (2022); Gurcay (2019); Senturk (2018); Kara (2024); Erdem (2021)	Micro-historical approaches highlighted migrant hardships; Western Thrace Turks were indirectly affected; archival materials (e.g., Tasfiye Talepnameleri in Turkish) revealed bureaucratic and personal dimensions of resettlement.

4. Conclusions

The 1923 Greek–Turkish Population Exchange represents a paradigmatic case of compulsory migration with enduring ramifications for politics, society, and culture. As this systematic review demonstrates, the exchange was not only a legal and diplomatic arrangement but also a mechanism of biopolitical control that shaped nation-building trajectories. In Turkey, it contributed to the creation of a unified political elite and the institutionalization of restrictive notions of Turkishness, while in Greece, it amplified political instability and facilitated Hellenization policies. While the refugee influx initially created social and political pressures, particularly in Greece, it also contributed significantly to long-term economic development and demographic restructuring.

The social impacts were equally profound. Exchangees confronted trauma, loss, and marginalization, with linguistic and cultural differences—particularly among Cretan Muslims—complicating integration. Their heterogeneous experiences challenge homogenizing narratives and reveal how identity reconstruction was contingent on context. Cultural memory surrounding the exchange shifted over time: initially silenced by nationalist historiography, it later resurfaced through memoirs, novels, museums, and centennial commemorations, producing new debates on belonging and displacement.

Spatial and urban legacies remain visible, as religious and civic buildings were repurposed, and demographic transformations reshaped urban geographies. Archival petitions and property liquidation processes expose the bureaucratic entanglements of resettlement, while contemporary museums illustrate how memory continues to be institutionalized.

Historiographical divergences highlight an asymmetry in scholarly production, with Greek academia focusing on refugee experiences and Turkish scholarship foregrounding state-building logics. Yet recent interdisciplinary contributions reveal transnational perspectives, emphasizing hybrid identities and the resilience of exchangee descendants in redefining homeland and belonging.

Ultimately, this review underscores that the population exchange cannot be understood solely as a historical episode. It remains a living legacy with implications for present-day debates on forced migration, nationalism, and collective memory. By synthesizing political, social, cultural, and historiographical dimensions, this study contributes a holistic framework for future research, positioning the “Mubadele (population exchange)” as a key reference point in global migration and memory studies.

The findings demonstrate that, despite the extensive body of scholarship on the population exchange, significant gaps remain—particularly regarding underrepresented identity groups and micro-level social experiences. While macro-level political and legal analyses dominate the field, fewer studies address linguistic hybridity and everyday life. This imbalance underscores the necessity of a systematic review approach, which not only synthesizes existing knowledge but also reveals structural biases and thematic gaps that remain largely invisible in conventional qualitative analyses.

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