

FORMALIZING DISPLACEMENT

International Law and Population Transfers

Umut Özsu

OXFORD

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THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Formalizing Displacement

THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

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In the past few decades the understanding of the relationship between nations has undergone a radical transformation. The role of the traditional nation-state is diminishing, along with many of the traditional vocabularies which were once used to describe what has been called, ever since Jeremy Bentham coined the phrase in 1780, 'international law'. The older boundaries between states are growing ever more fluid, new conceptions and new languages have emerged which are slowly coming to replace the image of a world of sovereign independent nation states which has dominated the study of international relations since the early nineteenth century. This redefinition of the international arena demands a new understanding of classical and contemporary questions in international and legal theory. It is the editors' conviction that the best way to achieve this is by bridging the traditional divide between international legal theory, intellectual history, and legal and political history. The aim of the series, therefore, is to provide a forum for historical studies, from classical antiquity to the twenty-first century, that are theoretically-informed and for philosophical work that is historically conscious, in the hope that a new vision of the rapidly evolving international world, its past and its possible future, may emerge.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN THIS SERIES

The Project of Positivism in International Law Mónica García-Salmones Rovira

Series Editors' Preface

In 2014, the legacies of 1914 and the Great War are still with us. As this book goes to press, an insurgent armed group in Iraq has declared its intention to revoke the borders drawn up in light of the 1916 Sykes–Picot agreement, and there is much discussion concerning the partition of not one but two states (Iraq and Syria), the boundaries of which were drawn in the 1920s. The collapse and division of multinational empires after 1918 took a diverse population of language groups, religious communities, and ethnicities, and made them states, nations, or minorities. Europe became a continent of over 30 states, few of them ideal-typical 'nation-states'. As Michael Mann reminded us in *The Dark Side of Democracy* (echoing Hannah Arendt's summary judgment some 50 years earlier), the period from 1918 to 1939 was characterized by unprecedented ethnic cleansing and population transfer, as firm foundations for the new state were (vainly) sought in the homogenization of peoples along ethnic and linguistic lines—a commonality of blood and soil understood as the decisive guarantee of the 'state-ness' of a people, and the viability of their political order.

What was the role of international law in this epoch-making transformation? For much of the twentieth century, the history of international law in the 1920s was deeply coloured by the polemical realist critique against pacifist and legalist proponents of 'peace through law'. The 1920s were understood as a decade of optimism about the possibilities of the management of international order through law and legal institutions, an optimism which proved unfounded because it failed to grasp the nature of politics and the political. On this understanding, the place of international law in such nakedly political processes as state-formation and population transfer could at best be that of impotent moral critic, if indeed it was not altogether irrelevant. The 1920s were characterized by a strong criticism of state sovereignty and power politics, it is true, but as Mark Mazower (Governing the World) has shown, this was also a period in which there were multiple, competing visions and practices about the nature of international order and the role of law.

In this densely argued and richly empirical historical study, Dr Umut Özsu both cuts against the grain of any simplistic understanding, and recovers a complex picture of the role of law in the Greek–Turkish population exchanges of 1923, in which over 1.5 million persons were compulsorily uprooted and depatriated as a means of 'solving' the problem of Turkish minorities in Greece, and Greek minorities in Turkey. Özsu reconstructs the history of population exchange in Europe as a policy technique for addressing heterogeneity (perceived as dangerously destabilizing to political order) and building states, and shows that it was understood as an alternative means of minority protection, not incompatible with it. International law and lawyers would play a 'pragmatic and technical' role in the Greek–Turkish exchange, formalizing and legally legitimating the displacement,

and in an important sense accepting an instrumental role for law in this human catastrophe in the interest of greater political goals. These goals—international peace and national stability—were thought to be served by the transfer in no small part because of the powerful influence of what Özsu calls 'ethno-nationalism', an assemblage of ideas, theories, and practices which he identifies as central to both the nationalist political project in Atatürk's Turkey and the internationalists' diagnosis of the sources of international order (and disorder) in the East. In his careful (and to my knowledge, unprecedented) analysis of the negotiating record of the Treaty of Lausanne, Özsu demonstrates vividly how these considerations underlay the national delegations' articulation of the purposes of the exchange, and the League of Nations' representatives' endorsement of these objectives. The 'unmixing' of populations was grasped as a 'technical' and legally manageable solution to the political problem of the 'true pacification' of the East. Law was believed to be a means for the constitution of order, provided it hewed closely to political reality in order to moderate and humanize it.

This study repays careful reading, and narrates a complex story of the ways in which lineages of law, political thought, national and international political projects, and colonial and imperial histories, converged in the making of the Greek–Turkish population transfer and its legal architecture. It also opens a window on the situation of international legal thought, its diverse currents and influences, at a time when it was a key medium for contending and competing visions of the international.

Nehal Bhuta

Florence July 2014

Acknowledgments

This book is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation written and defended at the University of Toronto. I thank Jutta Brunnée and Karen Knop for supervising the original dissertation. Karen went to great lengths to finesse my argument, while Jutta pressed me to engage with the question of legal form, a question I eventually came to understand as central to the project. Nehal Bhuta, who also served on my supervisory committee, offered astute suggestions on the dissertation's orientation, and encouraged its subsequent revision for publication. Anne Orford, my external examiner, provided an exceptionally thoughtful reading of the dissertation, and has supported my work in too many ways to count.

I was fortunate to benefit from the advice of a number of outstanding scholars during the course of writing this book. Nathaniel Berman, David Kennedy, Martti Koskenniemi, Erez Manela, and Mark Mazower provided comments on an early version of Chapter 3. For conversation and correspondence at various points, I am also grateful to Antony Anghie, Helmut Aust, Tanıl Bora, B. S. Chimni, David Dyzenhaus, Anver Emon, Bardo Fassbender, Will Hanley, Fleur Johns, Alexandra Kemmerer, Hans-Lukas Kieser, Benedict Kingsbury, Nico Krisch, Dino Kritsiotis, Patrick Macklem, Susan Marks, Lauri Mälksoo, Frédéric Mégret, China Miéville, Liliana Obregón, Anne Peters, Kerry Rittich, and Teemu Ruskola. I owe a particularly strong debt to Thomas Skouteris, whose support has been both spirited and unstinting. I am also happy to thank my three anonymous reviewers, whose observations helped to sharpen the book in a number of key respects.

Book projects often require a significant degree of technical and financial assistance. The present work has been no exception in that regard. Ahmet Yüksel helped to obtain sources in Ankara. Jacques Oberson was of assistance at the League of Nations Archives in Geneva. Gail Mackisey and Elena Yakovchuk at the University of Manitoba's E. K. Williams Law Library were patient and resourceful. John Louth, Merel Alstein, Anthony Hinton, and Emma Endean, all of Oxford University Press, were efficient and encouraging while coordinating the book's production. Finally, I must thank the University of Toronto and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for facilitating work on the original dissertation, as well as the University of Manitoba for making subsequent research and revision possible.

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up with my work on this and other projects. I hope she finds the final result to be worth the wait. My parents, Nuran and Tamer Özsu, deserve a final acknowledgment for having supported this project from the beginning.

Portions of this book have previously appeared in print. Chapter 3 and parts of the Introduction refine and augment material first published in 'Fabricating Fidelity: Nation-Building, International Law, and the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange', Leiden Journal of International Law 24 (2011), 823. Chapter 4 is a revised version of 'A thoroughly bad and vicious solution": Humanitarianism, the World Court, and the Modern Origins of Population Transfer', London Review of International Law 1 (2013), 99. I thank Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press, respectively, for permission to draw upon these articles. Certain passages also owe a debt to 'Ottoman Empire', in The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law, ed. Anne Peters and Bardo Fassbender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 429, and to 'Politis and the Limits of Legal Form', European Journal of International Law 23 (2012), 243. I thank Oxford University Press for permission to rely upon them here.

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List of Abbreviations

AIDI Annuaire de l'Institut de droit international AJIL American Journal of International Law

AJIL Sup. American Journal of International Law Supplement ASIL Pd. American Society of International Law Proceedings

BFSP British Foreign and State Papers
BYIL British Year Book of International Law

CTS The Consolidated Treaty Series

EJIL European Journal of International Law
HILJ Harvard International Law Journal
LNOJ League of Nations Official Journal
LNTS League of Nations Treaty Series

PCIJ Rep. Permanent Court of International Justice Reports

RCADI Recueil des cours de l'Académie de droit international de La Haye

RDILC Revue de droit international et de législation comparée

RGDIP Revue générale de droit international public RIAA Reports of International Arbitral Awards

TGS Transactions of the Grotius Society
UNTS United Nations Treaty Series

ZaöRV Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht

Note on Translations and Terminology

Readers familiar with the history of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states will be accustomed to large doses of diacritics, as they will to inconsistencies in translation and transliteration from one text to another. In the case of Turkish terms, I have aimed for simplicity by favouring usages common to modern Turkish. Thus, I prefer 'paşa' to the more familiar 'pasha'. I have, however, made exceptions in the case of recognizable place names, where I usually follow English-language practice rather than contemporary or contemporaneous usages in other languages, Greek, Turkish, or otherwise. Hence, I write 'Izmir' rather than 'İzmir' or 'Smyrna'.

In keeping with most legal and diplomatic documents prior to and contemporaneous with the Greek-Turkish population exchange, I have not maintained a strict distinction between 'Turkey' and 'Ottoman Empire' unless discussing matters specific to the Ottoman Empire or the Republic of Turkey, or to the former's succession by the latter. It should be noted, though, that the Ottomans referred to their multilingual and multi-confessional state as 'Turkey' relatively infrequently, and even then mostly in the context of diplomatic exchanges with Western states or when writing for Western audiences during the empire's final decades.

My occasional reliance upon the dated and always problematic term 'Near East' also warrants explanation. The term is both orientalistic, having gained wide currency in late nineteenth-century European literature concerning the 'Eastern Question', and notoriously ambiguous, with a range of application that fluctuates radically from one source to another. Yet, as a key instrument of geopolitical demarcation in the early twentieth century, it captures many of the assumptions held by those involved in or commenting upon the exchange. As a result, I have chosen to retain it in certain contexts, using it in roughly the same sense in which it was generally employed at the time of the Greek–Turkish exchange, namely as a geographical term whose centre of gravity lies in Anatolia and the Balkans.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the French, German, and Turkish are mine.

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Introduction

In the autumn of 1922, more than three years after the commencement of the Paris Peace Conference, Fridtjof Nansen left for Istanbul. He went as League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, having had his mandate extended to include Greeks fleeing war in Asia Minor. Once in the city, then under Allied occupation, he wrote to Eleftherios Venizelos, until recently prime minister of Greece and still a leading figure in European diplomatic circles, to propose measures for the resettlement of Greek refugees. Among these proposals was an exchange of minority populations between Greece and Turkey, which Nansen described as being 'within the scope of the mission with which the League of Nations' had entrusted him.¹ Venizelos replied swiftly, asking the distinguished Norwegian to speak to Turkish officials with a view to laying the groundwork for a formal exchange.²

Reluctant though he initially seems to have been to accept his League appointment,³ Nansen was a natural choice for the job. A seasoned diplomat, he would receive the Nobel Peace Prize later in 1922 for his efforts to resettle, repatriate, and provide aid to refugees and prisoners of war, whose numbers had grown considerably as a result of the First World War and the ensuing Russian Civil War.⁴ As the League's first High Commissioner for Refugees, he seemed the ideal person to design and supervise a population exchange of the sort envisioned by Greek, Turkish, and west European authorities alike. But Nansen left for Istanbul not simply as a decorated representative of the 'international community'. Having achieved fame for his expeditions to the Arctic,⁵ conducted research in zoology and oceanography as a natural scientist,⁶ made a name for himself as something of

² For the correspondence see Bruce Clark, Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions That Forged Modern Greece and Turkey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), ch. 2.

³ See André Durand, From Sarajevo to Hiroshima: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984), 209.

⁴ For his acceptance speech see Fridtjof Nansen, 'The Suffering People of Europe', in *Nobel Lectures: Peace*, ed. Frederick W. Haberman, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1972), 361.

¹ Quoted in Roland Huntford, Nansen: The Explorer as Hero (London: Duckworth, 1997), 526.

⁵ See Fridtjof Nansen, Vers le Pôle, trans. Charles Rabot (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1897); J. Arthur Bain, Life and Adventures of Nansen, the Great Arctic Explorer (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1897). Nansen himself would write a history of earlier expeditions to the North: In Northern Mists: Arctic Exploration in Early Times, 2 vols., trans. Arthur G. Chater (London: William Heinemann, 1911).

⁶ See, e.g., Fridtjof Nansen, ed., *The Norwegian North Polar Expedition, 1893–1896: Scientific Results*, 6 vols. (Christiania: Jacob Dybwad, 1900–5).