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## **Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934**

Erol Ülker

**Abstract.** This paper discusses the relationship between the geographical dimension of the Turkish government's population homogenizing measures and security policies in the Settlement Law of 1934. Investigating the division of the country into three zones of settlement by the law in question, the paper demonstrates that security concerns became one of the key factors in the governmental policy, which aimed at changing the demographic structure of certain strategic areas in favor of the Muslim-Turkish population.

## Introduction

This paper is concerned with the Settlement Law of 2510, issued on June 14, 1934<sup>1</sup>. There is a considerably large literature focusing on this piece of official legislation, whose significance for a student of Ottoman-Turkish history is that it acknowledged the influence of nationalist ideology on the demographic policies of the state to an unprecedented degree<sup>2</sup>. However, as I have argued in an earlier article published by EJTS, most of the provisions of Law 2510 were based on the assimilative design of the previous practices of settlement employed throughout the first decade of the Republic's history (Ülker 2007). That is to say, the new law combined and developed what had been legislated earlier by various official regulations, making the assimilative mentality of the state exceptionally clear and direct.

[2] What I argue in this article is that a policy that can be called 'geographical nationalization' was associated in Settlement Law 2510 with the assimilationist settlement measures. Designed in accordance with the security interests of the state, it found clear expression in the provisions concerned with the goal of changing the demographic structure of certain areas in favor of the Muslim-Turkish population. These meticulously delimited areas included, but not were not limited to, the areas around railways, natural resources, borders and bridges. Although most of Law 2510's provisions on that strategy involved the eastern provinces, there is evidence, if not conclusive proof, indicating that the Thrace Affair (1934), which resulted in the dislocation of the Jewish population inhabiting Thrace, was closely connected with the security interests of the state as well.

[3] I should emphasize at the outset that it is not possible to determine, in most cases, how the provisions of the law in question were applied by the administrative apparatus of the state in

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<sup>1</sup> 'İskan Kanunu', no: 2510, 14/06/1934, *Düstur*, Tertip: 3, Cilt: 15, pp. 1156-1175.

<sup>2</sup> The most important piece of recent scholarly work on this subject is Kirişçi 2000. This article aptly brings up the close relationship between the immigration policies of the state and the construction of national identity by making an extensive analysis of the Law of Settlement. The other important name in the field is Soner Çağaptay. In a number of articles and his last book, Çağaptay also draws attention to this link and demonstrates significant aspects of the settlement policies of the state. See for example Çağaptay 2002, 2004, and 2006 (especially pp. 82-101).

different localities. The availability of primary sources that would help to answer this question is highly limited. For this reason, this article deals to a large extent with the intentions of the policy makers rather than the administrative practices of the state. My inquiry demonstrates that the ruling elite perceived the national character of the population as a significant aspect of state security. This introduced the ethno-cultural category of Turkishness as the national character of the reliable elements of the population in Law 2510.

### **Assimilation and the Settlement Law**

[4] In June 1932, a bill concerning the adoption of a new Settlement Law was forwarded to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. This was certainly not the first time that a law on settlement was on the agenda, for the Turkish Parliament had already issued a number of official decrees, directives and laws for regulating the immigration-settlement policies since the promulgation of the Republic in 1923 (see Ülker 2007). Moreover, there was already a specific law on settlement in effect when this bill came to the parliamentary discussions, Settlement Law 885, adopted in 1926<sup>3</sup>. Yet the drafters of the law proposal made it clear that something broader was intended. They emphasized the assimilative design of the new law by bringing up the need for measures to promote the use of Turkish by those who remained removed from 'Turkish culture'<sup>4</sup>. The provisions of the new law were expected to furnish these measures<sup>5</sup>.

[5] The deputies repeated the same assimilative concerns with the drafters of the law proposal in the parliamentary discussions preceding the adoption of the new law in 1934. Sadri Maksudi, for example, stated that:

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<sup>3</sup> 'İskan Kanunu', no: 885, 31/06/1926, *Düstur*, Tertip: 3, Cilt: 7, pp. 1441-1443.

<sup>4</sup> '1/335 Numaralı İskan Kanunu Layihası ve İskan Muvakkat Encümeni Mazbatası' in *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre: IV, Cilt: 3, Ek: 189, 02/05/1932, pp. 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

[6] Turkification of the language is among the greatest devices for assuring the future of the Turkish race and the living of Turk as Turk. This is our aim.<sup>6</sup>

[7] Şükrü Kaya, Minister of Interior of the time, expressed the intention of the government in the most lucid way possible, saying:

[8] This law will create a country speaking with one language, thinking in the same way and sharing the same sentiment.<sup>7</sup>

[9] The use of such terms as race, descent and blood in the law proposal and the deputies' speeches in the Grand National Assembly was clearly inspired by the prevailing Turkish nationalist discourse which became increasingly characterized by open ethno-cultural references in the political context of the 1930s. This tendency expressed itself in the officially supported National History Thesis and Sun-Language Theory. They were based on the understanding that all Turks constituted a 'super-family' that could be distinguished from others through its ethnic and genealogical characteristics (Yıldız 2001: 158, 161).

[10] The phrasing of Law 2510 was under the influence of this context as well. Terms like 'the Turkish race' and 'descent' appeared prominently in the final draft of the law, echoing the prevailing nationalist ideology of the period. Yet 'Turkish culture' was the most critical concept of the Settlement Law<sup>8</sup>. It was clearly associated with speaking Turkish as one's native tongue. This becomes clear in the documents that regulated the admission of immigrants and their naturalization into Turkish citizenship (see Kirişçi, 2000). A circular issued by the General Directorate of Settlement in order to govern the application of Law 2510 specified who were eligible for immigration as:

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<sup>6</sup> *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre: IV, Cilt: 23, İçtima: 3, 14/06/1934, p.71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.141.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise stated, I use the term 'Turkish culture' in this meaning that runs through the law under consideration.

[11] individuals of Turkish race or individuals connected to Turkish culture who speak Turkish and who do not know any other language.<sup>9</sup>

[12] Moreover, a person of 'Turkish culture' was officially considered to be a Muslim individual who spoke no other language but Turkish. This left all the non-Muslim communities, along with the non-Turkish-speaking Muslims, beyond the official margins of Turkish culture:

[13] Foreign Kurds, Arabs, Albanians; other Muslims who speak languages other than Turkish and all foreign Christians and Jews cannot be given nationality declaration documents. And they cannot be given immigrant paper. They all will be treated as foreigners.<sup>10</sup>

[14] The ruling elite privileged, however, certain Muslim communities that were not necessarily Turkish speakers. As far as the status of immigration rights to Turkey was concerned, Pomaks, Bosnians, Tatars and Karapapaks were supposed to be treated in the same way with the individuals of Turkish culture<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore,

[15] Muslim Georgian, Lezgi, Chechen, Circassian, Abkhazian and other Muslims who are deemed to be connected to Turkish culture will be assigned nationality declaration documents with the order of the center.<sup>12</sup>

[16] It should be emphasized at this point that these groups were not defined as peoples of Turkish culture, but they were supposed to be treated as such. This nuance made it possible for, say, a Bulgarian-speaking Pomak to immigrate to Turkey. S/he was supposed to be regarded as being of Turkish culture, i.e. a Turkish-speaking Muslim, even if s/he spoke Bulgarian as a native language. Yet this contradiction was to have been overcome with the assimilation of this hypothetical Pomak into Turkish culture by learning Turkish and forgetting Bulgarian.

[17] Law 2510 furnished the administration with a set of measures to assimilate not only the members of such immigrant communities, but also thousands of other Muslims that still did not speak

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<sup>9</sup> 'İskan ve Nüfus İşlerinin Sür'atle İkmali Hakkında Tamim', no: 15035/6599, 7/8/1934 in *Eski ve Yeni Toprak, İskan Hükümleri ve Uygulama Klavuzu*, p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Turkish as a mother tongue ten years after the establishment of the Republic<sup>13</sup>, as well as a large nomadic population throughout the country<sup>14</sup>. In this respect, the first article of Law 2510 gave the right to the Ministry of Interior to govern the distribution of the population across the country on the basis of adherence to Turkish culture<sup>15</sup>. Article 11 comprised very important measures, which were deployed, according to the drafters of the law, to assure 'unity in language, culture and blood'<sup>16</sup>. It charged the Ministry of Interior with preventing the foundation of villages and districts by non-Turkish speakers. The Ministry also employed specific measures against those who did not possess Turkish culture or did not speak Turkish though 'possessing Turkish culture.' These measures consisted of population transfers aiming to disperse such people within the country and depriving them of citizenship when necessary<sup>17</sup>.

### Zones of Settlement

[18] The most striking stipulation of Law 2510 was the second article under the rubric of 'Settlement Regions.' It divided the country into three settlement zones in which the conditions for settling were strictly tied to the individual's relationship to Turkish culture.

[19] Type One Zones: Places where the concentrating of populations of Turkish culture is desired.

[20] Type Two Zones: Places set aside for the relocation and settlement of populations whose assimilation into Turkish culture is desired.

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<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that the number of people whose native or secondary language was Albanian increased from 21.774 to 40.647 between the years of 1927 and 1935 according to the demographic censuses implemented in these years (Dündar, 1999, p. 81). The ongoing immigration from the Balkans might have played a role in this increase.

<sup>14</sup> Şükrü Kaya stated in this respect that settling approximately one million nomads wandering in the eastern provinces, and other cities such as Adana, Antalya, Muğla and Burdur, was an urgent necessity to provide them with the values of the Republic *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre: IV, Cilt: 23, İçtima: 3, 14/06/1934, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> 'İskan Kanunu', no: 2510, 14/06/1934, *Düstur*, Tertip: 3, Cilt: 15, p. 1156.

<sup>16</sup> '1/335 Numaralı İskan Kanunu Layihası ve İskan Muvakkat Encümeni Mazbatası' In *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre: IV, Cilt: 3, Ek: 189, 02/05/1932, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> 'İskan Kanunu', no: 2510, 14/06/1934, *Düstur*, Tertip: 3, Cilt: 15, p. 1159.

[21] Type Three Zones: Places that will be uninhabited, and where settlement and residence will be prohibited due to spatial, sanitary, cultural, political, military and security reasons.<sup>18</sup>

[22] A number of additional provisions regulated the conditions of inhabitation of the settlement zones in a detailed manner. These provisions seem to have been concerned with nationalizing the population inhabiting Type One Zones. Type Two Zones, on the other hand, were chosen as appropriate regions for the assimilation of the targeted groups.

[23] Paragraph Four of Article 10 gave the Ministry of Interior the authority to transfer nomads or settled tribesmen not possessing Turkish culture to Type Two Zones. According to Article 12, the non-Turkish speakers who inhabited Type One Zones and were not transferred to Type Two Zones ought to be settled in the centers of villages, districts and provinces whose populations were of Turkish culture. The same article prohibited the settlement of new tribesmen, nomads and others who did not possess Turkish culture in Type One Zones. The immigrants of Turkish culture should have been settled in Type One Zones as well according to the same article<sup>19</sup>.

### **Eastern Provinces and Security**

[24] In the text of Law 2510, there is no mention of the geographical distribution of the zones of settlement across the country. Yet we are able to locate detailed information concerning the Type One Zones in the eastern provinces, thanks to a significant official circular, 'Decree Concerning the Acceptance of an Instruction about Land Distribution in the Type One Zones'<sup>20</sup>, published in November 24, 1939.

[25] This decree, governing land distribution in the Type One Zones, comprises important provisions that privilege ethnic and linguistic affiliation with Turkishness. Its second article provides all persons of Turkish descent and language residing in Type One Zones without sufficient land, with an

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1156.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1158-1160.

<sup>20</sup> 'Birinci İskan Mıntıklarında Toprak Tevziyatına Dair Olan Talimatnamenin Kabulü Hakkında Kararname', no: 2/12374, 24/11/1939 in *Eski ve Yeni Toprak, İskan Hükümleri ve Uygulama Klavuzu*, pp. 166-171.



opportunity to acquire lands possessed by the public treasury. The third article, on the other hand, put restrictions on land distribution and settlement areas of non-Turkish-speaking tribesmen in Type One Zones <sup>21</sup>.

[26] These restrictions detail the list of places in Type One Zones where the re-settlement of non-Turkish speakers was forbidden. The majority of the enlisted items were located in the provinces overwhelmingly inhabited by the Kurdish population, centers of active Kurdish opposition to the state, which culminated in the Şeyh Said (1925), Ağrı (1927-30) and Dersim (1936-38) revolts during the interwar period (Bozarslan 2002: 848). The government undertook a variety of measures against this active opposition, among which was the policy of deporting the rebellious Kurds, especially following the outbreak of the Ağrı revolt (Ülker 2007: 48). Furthermore, Law 5098, adopted June 20, 1947, which revised Law 2510, mentions Ağrı, Sason, Tunceli and Zeylan as forbidden zones in the Article 18<sup>22</sup>. Prohibiting settlement in these regions appears to have been another strategy of the government to cope with Kurdish opposition until 1951 when the prohibition of resettlement in these regions was rescinded by the Law 5826<sup>23</sup>, except a small area limited to a part of Ağrı<sup>24</sup>.

[27] Looking at the list of the restrictions, one immediately recognizes that a significant number of areas near railways were closed to the re-settlement of the non-Turkish speakers. For example, there was one area within a twenty-kilometer-wide zone along both sides of the railway starting in the Sallar station of Diyarbakir province and passing from Diyarbakir, Beşiri, Kurtalan, Baykan, Bitlis, Tatvan, Gevaş, Van and Özalp. This area extended up to the Iraqi frontier by passing through the Tigris River Valley<sup>25</sup>. The areas surrounding the railways from the Euphrates bridge to Diyarbakir, Divriği to Sarıkamış, Malatya to Divriği, Diyarbakir to Mardin, and Diyarbakir to Akçakale were also forbidden to the re-settlement of non-Turkish speakers.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>25</sup> Birinci İskan Mıntıklarında Toprak Tevziyatına Dair Olan Talimatnamenin Kabulü Hakkında Kararname', no: 2/12374, 24/11/1939 in *Eski ve Yeni Toprak, İskan Hükümleri ve Uygulama Klavuzu*,., p. 167.

[28] Fifteen kilometer wide zones on both sides of significant roads and highways were also categorized this way. The transit ways passing through Karaköse, Hamurderesi, Patnos, Doğubeyazıt, Muradiye, Erzurum, Taşkesen, and Hınıs were a few of them. The highways passing through Elazığ, Petrek, Mameki, Seyithan, Darboğaz, Pülümer, Muti Bridge, Sanboğaz, Refahiye, Erzincan, Tercan, Elazığ, Keban, Arapkir and others were also in this category.<sup>26</sup>

[29] In addition to the railways, highways and the transit roads, the vicinities of natural resources were forbidden to the re-settlement of non-Turkish speakers as well. The mines in Divrik, Ergani, and Guleman were in this category<sup>27</sup>. Another category was the areas surrounding the frontiers. Twenty-five kilometer wide zones along the borders of Syria, Iraq, Iran and Soviet Georgia and Armenia were also forbidden to the tribesmen speaking languages other than Turkish<sup>28</sup>. Certain parts of Maraş, Göksun, Pınarbaşı, Erzincan, Erciş, Tatvan, Elazığ, Gümüşhane, and Ağrı Provinces were also cited as being Type One Zones forbidden to the re-settlement of non-Turkish speakers<sup>29</sup>. Finally, the areas assigned to the settlement of Turkish immigrants were also among the restricted regions<sup>30</sup>.

[30] It is significant that the government prohibited the vicinities of railways, highways, transit roads and natural resources to the re-settlement of non-Turkish speakers. There is no doubt that these areas were of strategic importance to the state and therefore their protection was of high priority. Alongside the military measures, the government also considered the ethno-cultural features of the population a significant factor in the protection of these areas.

[31] For this reason, it aimed at consolidating the Muslim-Turkish composition of the population in the areas that were located in the Type One Zones where 'the concentration of

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.168-169.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

population of Turkish culture is desired<sup>31</sup>. The aforementioned circular drew the outline of this policy in a very clear manner. While the settlement of the non-Turkish speakers was restricted, the population of Turkish descent and language was provided with lands from the public treasury. Having been Type One Zones, these areas were also opened to the settlement of the immigrants of Turkish culture, according to the Article 12 of the Law 2510.

[32] This policy was, of course, not unique to the period under consideration. Fuat Dündar notes that the security of railways was very important for the army during the World War I, which was why they sought to protect them against nomad attacks. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) government meticulously isolated the tribes and settled Turkish immigrants on their steads around the railways (Dündar 2001: 144-145).

[33] However, the policy was highly systematically defined with the promulgation of Law 2510. Apart from finding official expression in the provisions of this law, which divided the country into settlement zones, the details of how it would be applied were comprehensively furnished by the aforementioned decree. It was, however, concerned only with the Type One Zones located in the eastern provinces. I have not come across a similar official document or legislation for another region.

#### **Thrace Affair and Security**

[34] Even so, there are strong clues, if not official proofs, that the Thrace region was subject to comparable, if not the same, treatment as the eastern provinces. This is not to suggest that the whole Thrace region was turned into a Type One Zone. I actually could not find any specific reference to a list, similar to the above, of strategic regions that were categorized this way. Yet the unfolding of the Thrace Incident (1934) bears important signs that Thrace was also subject to a geographical homogenization motivated by security concerns.

[35] Briefly stated, the process leading to expulsions, particularly of Jews, from the Thrace region started two weeks after the acceptance of Law 2510 in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Provoked by the anti-Semitic local press, certain groups attacked the homes and stores of Jews (Bali

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<sup>31</sup> İskan Kanunu', no: 2510, 14/06/1934, *Düstur*, Tertip: 3, Cilt: 15, p. 1156.

2001: 246-47; see also Karabatak 1996 and Levi 1996). These instances took place simultaneously in different parts of Thrace including Edirne, Çanakkale, Uzunköprü, Kırklareli and Babaeski (Bali 2001: 247). As a result, the developments brought distress and subsequent displacement to the Jewish population throughout Thrace, and especially *Edirne* where there was a Jewish population of about 8,000<sup>32</sup>.

[36] Although İsmet İnönü, Prime Minister of the time, announced that persons responsible for the developments would be punished immediately (Aktar 2001, 73-74), there are important documents bringing up the role of the government in the Thrace Incident. Ayhan Aktar provides one of them (Aktar 2001: 92). This is a correspondence addressed by Percy Loraine, the British Ambassador, to the British Foreign Ministry. Loraine notes that the expulsion of Jews from Thrace was rooted in the government's decision of clearing the region of its Jewish inhabitants. According to the Ambassador, this strategy was to be realized step by step through the initiation of boycotts and small provocations against the Jews. Nevertheless, the government lost control of developments, which resulted in this unintended outburst.

[37] Another document found in the U.S. State Department archives is in accordance with Loraine's view.

[38] The interesting fact has come to light that the entire Jewish population of Thrace is in process of being expelled. Whether this affects three or five thousand persons cannot be ascertained, nor has any public announcement on the subject, whatever, been made. Apparently, the decision in high places to evacuate the Jews has not been reached in any spirit of anti-Semitism. Already the minority populations of Thrace, other than the Jews, have been moved out, and now it is the turn of the Jews, almost all of them small trade people, to submit the same thing. They will probably all, or at least the majority, come to İstanbul.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> NAUS, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944 (M 1224), 06/06/1934, 867.4016 Jews/10.

<sup>33</sup> NAUS, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944 (M 1224), from Robert P. Skinner to the Secretary of State, 29/06/1934, 861.4016-Jews/9.

[39] The important point in this correspondence addressed by Robert Skinner to the US Secretary of State is that rather than anti-Semitism, the Thrace Incident originated from the strategy of the government to expel the non-Muslim population from Thrace.

[40] In this respect, Ayhan Aktar reveals the connection of the Thrace Incident with a significant development that appeared in the foreign policy concerns of Turkey. He aptly argues that Italy's ambitious interests in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions- exemplified by the motto of 'mare nostrum' (our sea) - made Thrace a vulnerable region in the eyes of the administrator-elite (Aktar 2001: 84-88). In the face of a possible cooperation between the expansionist Italy and Bulgaria, Thrace seemed so critical that the inhabitation of non-Muslim elements in the region was perceived as a threat to Turkey's security interests.

[41] Seen from this angle, the correspondence of the Thrace Incident with a remarkable amount of military activity in the same region does not seem to have been a coincidence. There were a number of noteworthy activities in and around Edirne, such as repairing roads, construction of bridges, and a considerable movement of troops, which obviously indicate the measures undertaken to prepare this vulnerable area for defense against military threats<sup>34</sup>. In this regard, strengthening the Turkish composition of the population of Thrace appears to have been one such measure against the expansionist inclinations of Italy and Bulgaria.

[42] Information provided up to here brings forth the undeniable possibility that rather than anti-Semitism or racism, the Thrace Affair originated from the security policies of the state. That the Jewish population was not the only group affected by these developments can be seen as more evidence supporting this possibility. In July 20, 1934, the United States Embassy in Sofia informed the Secretary of State of the expulsion of four Bulgarian families from the region near Edirne. An interesting point is that the correspondence linked this development to the operation of the Law of Settlement and viewed the division of the country into different zones of settlement as the reason for the Bulgarians' expulsion. The correspondence also points out the fear that several hundred Bulgarians residing in Edirne would be obliged to leave if the implementation of the law was carried

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<sup>34</sup> NAUS, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944 (M 1224), from John McArdle to the Secretary of State, 20/07/1934, 867.20/48.

on<sup>35</sup>. Another correspondence from the US Embassy in Turkey to the Secretary of State attributes the developments in Thrace to Law 2510 and, in particular, the division of the country into the zones of settlement<sup>36</sup>.

### **Settlement of Immigrants**

[43] The distribution of the settlement regions for immigrants across the country constitutes another convincing point attesting to the government strategy to increase the density of the population of Turkish culture in Thrace, regardless of whether it was partially or entirely Zone Type One. The settlement of immigrants possessing Turkish culture in Type One Zones was an officially accepted policy of the government, proposed by the Article 12 of Law 2510. Even before the adoption of the law, this policy had been carried out in the eastern provinces. It is remarkable that the provinces in the Kurdish populated east and also Thrace seem to have gotten, at least theoretically, the highest numbers of the immigrant settlements. That is to say, the deportation of the Jewish population was associated with the plans for settling a large number of immigrants in Thrace, a policy familiar in the eastern provinces.

[44] The operation of this strategy can be observed in the press. On August 11, 1934, the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* discussed the Turkish immigrations from neighboring countries. According to the news item, twenty thousand Turkish immigrants, coming mainly from Romania, had entered Turkey through Istanbul in the past year. It was reported that those who had immigrated thus far had been settled in the Diyarbekir region, but in the future, it was argued in expectation of an increase in those coming from Bulgaria, the new immigrants were to be settled in Thrace<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> NAUS, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944 (M 1224), 06/06/1934, 867.4016 Jews/10.

<sup>37</sup> NAUS, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1930-1944 (M 1224), 19/9/1934, 867.4016 Bulgarians/2.

[45] More importantly, in early 1935, the Inspectorate General of Thrace (*Trakya Umumi Müfettişliği*) informed the Prime Minister's Office about the areas within which 100,000 immigrants would be settled. Out of the total of 100,000 immigrants, 10,000 were going to be settled in the east, 15,000 in Edirne, 30,000 in Kırklareli, 15,000 in Tekirdağ and 30,000 in Çanakkale<sup>38</sup>. The distribution of immigrants exclusively to the provinces in the east and Thrace was not a coincidence. Under the legal framework of the Law on Settlement, the government intended to Turkify the population structure in these strategic areas through the settlement of immigrants of Turkish culture.

[46] This was a part of a long-term strategy, sustained in part by the improved housing conditions provided to immigrants. According to a governmental decree issued on April 25, 1935, a five year-long program was developed by the central authority to settle a massive number of immigrants in the zone of the Inspectorate General of Thrace, comprising the provinces Edirne, Çanakkale, Kırklareli and Tekirdağ. The same decree noted that as many as 350,000 immigrants could be placed in these provinces<sup>39</sup>. Towards this aim, the government endeavored to develop the housing conditions of the region to promote the settlement of as many immigrants as possible. In addition to repairing properties abandoned by Armenians and Greeks, a large number of new houses were to be constructed for the incomers<sup>40</sup>. In 1937, for example, 10,000 new houses for the immigrants were reported to have been constructed in various parts of Thrace<sup>41</sup>. Meanwhile, the government hardly ignored the eastern provinces, for the highest proportion of immigrants was to be settled in there in 1937. While Bursa, for example, would receive only 35 immigrant dwellings, and İzmir, Aydın and Bilecik even below than that number, 300 immigrant dwellings were to be settled in Diyarbakir and 100 in Zara<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> BCA, Fon No: 30..10.0.0, Yer No: 72.474..6, 04/02/1935.

<sup>39</sup> BCA, Fon No: 30..18.1.1, Yer No: 54.31..1, 25/04/1935.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> 'Trakya'da Göçmenler İçin Ev Yapılıyor', *Tan*, 17 May 1937, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> 'Göçmenler İçin Yeni Liste', *Tan*, 07 June 1937, p. 2.

[47] At the same time the government guarded against immigrants who did not speak Turkish. The 'Circular concerning the Swift Completion of Settlement and Demographic Works'<sup>43</sup>, adopted in August 7, 1934, provided a specific stipulation on that matter. It ordered the cautious application of Article 11 of Law 2510 towards immigrants of non-Turkish descent and those who did not speak Turkish, a stipulation reflecting the ongoing assimilative attitude against non-Turkish speaking immigrants<sup>44</sup>. This provision prohibited the establishment of villages and districts by non-Turkish speakers, and charged the Ministry of Interior with spreading their settlements among the population of Turkish culture. Another instruction, published in 1936, was concerned with this matter as well<sup>45</sup>. Aside from urging the settlement of immigrants while promoting the conditions for their assimilation, it prohibited the concentration of immigrant housing separately from those of native dwellers<sup>46</sup>.

### **Concluding Remarks**

[48] Accordingly, the aim to homogenize the population as a whole was accompanied in Law 2510 and the related official regulations with a more pragmatic intention of changing the population composition of strategic regions in favor of the Muslim-Turkish population. The intention was pragmatic because it was instrumental to the security policies of the state.

[49] Indeed, there is a noteworthy difference between this security-oriented demographic strategy and the demographic measures of nation-building. The significance lies in the difference between the overall objectives. The overlap of the territories of the state with a homogenous population is a well-known objective of nationalist ideologies, applied through the policies entailing the nationalization of population. The terms nationalization or homogenization would address two

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<sup>43</sup> 'İskan ve Nüfus İşlerinin Sür'atle İkmali Hakkında', no: 15035/6599, 7/8/1934 in *Eski ve Yeni Toprak, İskan Hükümleri ve Uygulama Klavuzu*, pp. 234-239.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>45</sup> *İskan Toprak Talimatnamesi*, (Ankara: Köyöğretmeni Basımevi, 1936).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



different and often contradictory political processes (Brubaker 1996: 88). On the one hand, they can designate an attempt to assimilate the population by turning, for example, Ukrainians into Poles, which occurred in Poland during the interwar period (*ibid.*: 84-86). On the other hand, the same terms may address dissimilation rather than assimilation. Unlike the assimilation of targeted groups to the putative characteristics of the core nation, dissimilation relies on the differential treatment of the minority groups on the basis of their presumed 'difference'. Put it shortly, 'assimilationist nationalization seeks to eradicate difference, while dissimilationist nationalization takes difference as axiomatic and foundational' (*ibid.*: 88).

[50] The security-oriented demographic strategy was premised on the dissimilation of the groups that were not considered as members of the core nation in geographically demarcated areas, by singling out the Muslim-Turkish population as a reliable element for the security interests of the state. More importantly, it was more pragmatic than the nation building strategy that aims to homogenize the population as a whole by means of assimilation or dissimilation policies. Homogenization or Turkification of the population in particular regions was not a goal in its own right, instead, it was deemed instrumental to achieving security.

[51] Emphasizing security to such a degree should not be seen as a justification for the state policies of geographical homogenization. What was at issue was, perhaps, more exclusive than the demographic measures of nation-building because the government normalized the ethno-cultural category of Turkishness in the state practices by introducing cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics of the population as an officially recognized aspect of the security policies of the state. This inevitably blurs the distinction between, for example, two non-Turkish speaking persons, one of which was involved in rebellious activities against the state and the other not. Despite the difference in their 'criminal' records, both of these individuals represent a potential threat to the state for the reason of their language, when national characteristics of the population are introduced as a part of the security policies of the state.

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