

# Refugee Trajectories

## Post-1945 Refugee Management and the Implications of Demography as a Field

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More than 90 years after the massive Greek–Turkish population exchange, Greece and Turkey are implicated in yet another mass human displacement.<sup>1</sup> The 1923 exchange severed the ties of about one and a half million Greek Orthodox and Muslims to their homes. The first internationally ratified and executed forced migration, the 1923 exchange set a precedent, providing a legal basis for ‘demographic engineering’ in nation-states and becoming an international reference point for other population transfers and partition plans (Özsu, 2015).<sup>2</sup> Today, the route once taken by Greek Orthodox and Muslims to and from Turkish and Greek Aegean shores is again an active site of relocation: refugees are trying to cross from Turkey to Greece on a daily basis and, since the signing of the controversial agreement between the European Union and the Turkish government in 2016, most of those who make it to Greece are routinely ‘returned’ to Turkey (European Council, 2016). Unlike the subjects of the exchange of 1923, these ‘returned’ are not considered ‘nationals’ who are being sent to territories where they presumably ‘belong’. Rather, EU officials appear to index refugees as surplus members of undesirable groups to be kept outside the external borders of the EU so as to uphold the fluidity of its internal borders – the Schengen Area (Timmermans, 2015; European Commission, 2016).

Within this framework, the European Union designated Turkey a country that is key to the EU’s ability to solve its ‘refugee problem’ (Hahn, 2015) and thereby ‘end the flow of irregular migration from Turkey to the EU’ via Greece (European Commission, 2017). In a speech delivered in Brussels on 13 November 2015, Frans Timmermans, the first vice-president of the European Commission, emphasized

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1 See Greek-Turkish readmission Protocol in relation to migration in European Council (2016) ‘European Council Conclusions, 17-18 March 2016’, 18 March [Press Release].

2 See also Mazower, M. (2009) *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton, Princeton UP; Nathan-Chapotot, R. (1949) *Les Nations Unies et les Réfugiés: Le Maintien de la Paix et le Conflit de Qualifications Entre l'Ouest et l'Est*, Paris, Editions A. Pedone, pp. 72-76.

the importance of Turkey in this endeavour. According to Timmermans, permitting the continued flow of refugees into the EU would strain relations among the Schengen states; 'there is', he added, 'no solidarity that does not have a core of self-interest in it' (Timmermans, 2015). Consequently, measures had to be taken, Timmermans asserted, that would ensure the effective management of the crisis to preserve this solidarity within the EU. The controversial EU–Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 was geared towards achieving this result. A year later, the European Commission announced that 'irregular arrivals' to the EU had dropped by 97 per cent thanks to Turkey's commitment (European Commission, 2017). This commitment effectively turned Turkey's borders into a barrier that sealed off Europe to refugees. Figures in the EU and national governments decided that ensuring mobility within the European Union required that the flow of refugees to the EU be stopped as a matter of political necessity.

On 15 April 2016, a month after the EU–Turkey Statement was signed, Ban Ki Moon, then secretary-general of the United Nations, announced that the world was 'facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time', adding, 'Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity' (Secretary General, 2016). Comparable in scale to the mass displacement wrought by the Second World War, contemporary refugeeism is often referred to in terms of a crisis. The notion of crisis entails a temporary condition, a disruption within a given context because of a threat to public safety and/or property (Sellnow and Seeger, 2013, p. 4). The threat posed to the refugees who flee their home countries because of conflict and violence is evident. However, it is unclear what threat the European Union faces other than demographic concerns such as the arrival of 'undesirables'. To counter that perceived threat the EU has allocated billions of euros to Turkey to keep the refugees away.<sup>3</sup>

Accounts about or from refugees in Turkey refer to housing and social opportunities funded by that allocation, but they speak to racism and discrimination too. In addition, it appears that Turkish officials instrumentalize refugees in order to portray the Turkish government as a humanitarian patron (Crisis Group, 2018; Günaydın, 2019). Turkey might have agreed to host the Syrian refugees, but the Turkish authorities do not appear to consider them to be desirable candidates for permanent settlement in Turkey.

This essay addresses the implications of the 'undesirable' in demographic terms, with a focus on displacement. Specifically, I will revisit the two decades after the Second World War, during which demographic engineering and mass deportation

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3 See the European Commission's press releases 'EU-Turkey Cooperation: A €3 billion Refugee Facility for Turkey', dated 24 November 2015, and 'EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey: The Commission Proposes to Mobilize Additional Funds for Syrian Refugees', dated 14 March 2018.

of minorities was systematized as a solution for peace, a new international human rights legal architecture was built, and the fields of eugenics and demography converged to epistemologically legitimize the configuration of the 'undesirable'.

## Refugee Trajectories and the Regulation of the Undesirable

Refugee trajectories, a term that I use in the title of this essay, does not solely denote the physical routes that the displaced follow in an attempt to escape violence and rebuild their lives elsewhere. 'Trajectory' also implies a pattern in approaching the displaced in terms of 'desirables' and 'undesirables'. This pattern is notable in demographic redistribution and deportation, and in the configuration of the unwanted.

The legal precedent set by the 1923 Greek–Turkish population exchange has arguably contributed to the systematization of so-called population transfers, in particular the 'settlement' of the desirable and the undesirable at the end of the Second World War (Özsu, 2015; Yıldırım, 2006; Aktar, 2000). Some examples include the 1945 Potsdam Agreement and the partitions of India and Palestine in 1947 and 1948, respectively (Mazower, 2009). Today, thanks to important work on international law and the protection of minorities, we have a better understanding of interwar and post-war displacement. What is missing is a more focused, critical analysis of the post-1945 demographic production of knowledge and its implications for population management generally and for the 'undesirables' in particular. I have traced the politics of expertise in population management elsewhere by focusing on the formation of a European refugee association and the studies presented to it following the Second World War (İğsız, 2018, pp. 41–72). I have discovered that some eugenicists in Italy and Germany – former supporters of fascism or those who rose to prominence under fascist rule – moved into population studies and contributed to the study of refugees in the decade after the Second World War. Their influence was widespread, reflected not least in their collaboration with Turkish scholars and eugenicists. More research on this subject is necessary to fully unravel the political implications of demographic production of knowledge at the time,<sup>4</sup> particularly with regard to refugees and displacement.

Whereas political ideology – such as nationalism – and the use of law have been widely examined in the scholarly literature on displacement,<sup>5</sup> the political impli-

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4 For more on demography and demographic production of knowledge in connection to policy, see Greenhalgh, S. (1996) 'The Social Construction of Population Science: An Intellectual, Institutional, and Political History of Twentieth-Century Demography', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 26–66.

5 See Özsu's *Formalizing Displacement* and Mazower's *No Enchanted Palace*.

cations of demographic knowledge production has received less critical attention. The rise of demography as a significant field of study coincided with post-war ‘demographic engineering’ efforts and population transfers. Demographic production of knowledge during this period offers important pointers for scholars examining policies regarding refugees. My objective here, then, is to briefly explore the work of some prominent demographers and eugenicists in post-war Western Europe and Turkey and consider the intersections of the two fields – eugenics and demography – as a productive site to question the implications of the ‘undesirable’ as a demographic category. Some of the paradigms from that time have resurfaced in contemporary xenophobic discourses, if not practices.

In the hands of some politicians in liberal democracies today, including the United States and Italy, xenophobic discourses are being translated into contentious policies such as building walls or criminalizing humanitarianism.<sup>6</sup> Reports on the violation of ‘the legal obligation to provide assistance to any person at distress at sea’<sup>7</sup> as well as the criminalization of humanitarian aid to refugees through its reclassification as ‘human trafficking’ raise questions about the implications of being human and the value of human life today.

## Demography and Eugenics: A Brief Overview

Demography and eugenics are generally addressed as two distinct fields of study. The field of demography is commonly traced to the British economist Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and his work on population growth in relation to the availability of resources, which stipulated the importance of controlling reproduction for welfare (Petersen, 1999). Eugenics, on the other hand, is traced to Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), who coined the term in 1883 (Galton, 1883, pp. 24-25; Gillham, 2001). Galton, a Victorian scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin, defined eugenics as the science to improve stock. He was concerned with heredity and intelligence as well as breeding ‘high quality’ genus (Galton, 1869). Eugenics and demography share an interest in numbers, with one focused more on the ‘quality’ and ‘improvement’ of the genus and the other on control over the numbers. Both deploy statistical data,

6 A quick search on the subject reveals a plethora of news reports on arrests related to helping migrants.

7 Heller, C., Pezzani, L. and Studio, S. (2012) *Report on the Left-To-Die Boat*, Forensic Oceanography/European Research Council Project ‘Forensic Architecture’, p. 9 [Online]. Available at <https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FO-report.pdf>. A more recent case involves the German captain Carola Rackete’s vessel Sea-Watch 3 and Italian authorities in 2019: see, for example, BBC (2019) ‘Italy Migrants: Rescue Ship Captain Arrested at Lampedusa Port’, *BBC News*, 29 June [Online]. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48809134>.

and when it comes to the regulation of numbers, it almost always matters whose numbers are to be controlled.

Eugenics and demography converged early on. In 1891, Galton addressed the demography section of the International Conference on Hygiene and Demography in London and raised questions about heredity and fertility (Hodgson, 2015). At the turn of the twentieth century, eugenicist concerns with the composition and quality of the population had gained traction and were manifested in different ways. For example, in the United States ‘an active immigration restriction movement allied itself with those expressing eugenic fears’ and who opposed ‘inferior’ Eastern and Southern European immigrants who ‘degenerated’ the high quality of the Anglo-Saxon and Northern European genus (Hodgson, 2015, p. 177). Following Galton’s logic that the increase in numbers of the lower stock endangered the high-quality stock of the upper classes, members of the immigration restriction movement argued that growth in the number of the ‘inferior’ was the cause of a decrease in fertility rates of the ‘superior’ (Hodgson, 2015, p. 177; Hodgson, 1991).

Eugenicist experiments and scientific racism in the interwar years and during the Second World War are well documented.<sup>8</sup> Often associated after the war with Nazi policies, eugenics as a field gradually fell from grace, while demography became a popular area of study. Eugenicist concerns were by no means confined to European fascism, nor did eugenics disappear with the end of the Second World War. As I briefly address below, eugenicist approaches found a niche in demographic research. Concomitantly, statistics developed as a major field to collect data on birth and death rates, ageing, and changes to populations as well as the composition of a population.

One of the leading figures in statistics is Italian statistician Corrado Gini (1884-1965), perhaps best known for developing the Gini coefficient to calculate income inequality. Widely acknowledged as a key figure in the fusion of fascism, eugenics, and demography, Gini was a supporter of Mussolini and fascism in Italy before and during the war (Gini, 1927). He developed his own theories of migration and race, was instrumental in establishing a refugee association in post-war Europe, and published widely on demography. He also collaborated with Turkish social scientists and eugenicists and was invited to Turkey in 1950 to establish the Statistics Institute at Istanbul University (İğsız, 2018, pp. 34-70, 91), where he also taught a course on demography.<sup>9</sup> Gini’s lectures covered demography and population den-

8 See, for example, Soloway, R. (1995) ‘World War II and the Population Question’, in *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 312-335; Barkan, E. (1992) *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

9 Istanbul University Press published these lectures in French: Gini, C. (1952), *Démographie et Sociologie* [Demography and Sociology], Istanbul, Istanbul University Press.

sity, the question of class and population increase, and migration and the infusion of young blood into an underpopulated country.

The topics of Gini's lectures corresponded with post-war demographic concerns. In the decade immediately following the Second World War, the reconstruction of war-torn Western Europe meant that underpopulation and the need for a labour force were dominant demographic concerns. Demographic composition was another concern: minorities were targeted as 'threats' to peace and stability; mass population transfers ensued (Mazower, 2009). Anxiety over the composition and numbers of the population informed settlement policies. Post-war national reconstruction efforts in war-torn countries necessitated statistical data collection that would then be translated into population regulation policy.

This political climate had an impact on the institutionalization of demography. Between 1945 and 1967, a number of centres and institutions of demographic research were established across Europe and the United States (Hodgson, 2015, pp. 177-178). In 1945, the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) was founded in France, and in 1946 it started publishing the journal *Population* in French and English.<sup>10</sup> Also in 1946, the United Nations established its 'Population Division' under its Department of Economic and Social Affairs, seeking to streamline demographic data collection and methods.<sup>11</sup> The journal *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography* was inaugurated in 1947 in London. In the United States, Princeton University pioneered demographic research, and between 1951 and 1967, sixteen American universities opened population research centres (Hodgson, 2015, p. 178). Istanbul University's invitation to Gini to teach a course on demography and to found its statistics institute in 1950 might be considered within this broader framework.

In addition to the institutionalization and mainstreaming of demography as a field of study, mass population transfers – which legal historian Umut Özsu calls 'demographic engineering' – marked the decade after the end of the Second World War. The founding of the United Nations in 1945 and the regulation of international law coincided with the post-war refugee crisis in Europe. In addition, several newly independent nation states emerged after the war following rapid decolonization. Of these, India is a significant case with respect to both local and international demographic engineering. Locally, the partition of India generated a mass population displacement that led to demographic redistribution, altering the composition of the population. Internationally, especially in the United States, there was also a concern that 'less developed' new countries like India would reproduce faster than

10 Institut National d'Études Démographiques. <https://www.ined.fr/en/>.

11 See 'About United Nations Population Division', *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Population Division*. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/about/index.asp>.

those in the so-called free world (Hodgson, 2015, pp. 177-178; Greenhalgh, 1996, pp. 38-46). 'Third World' became a common term to refer to these countries.

This term was coined in 1952 by one of the leading figures in French demographic research, Alfred Sauvy (1952, p. 14).<sup>12</sup> Drawing a parallel between the (mostly) non-aligned countries in the Cold War and the French 'Tiers état' – the third estate that denominates the common people as distinct from the nobility and the clergy – Sauvy identified the 'less developed' as the 'Third World'. It was used to refer to the 'non-industrialized' countries, most of which were recently decolonized and aligned with neither the Soviet Union nor the so-called free world.

In the 1950s and 1960s, demographers in the United States utilized funding from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations to convince politicians in the 'Third World' to develop birth control policies (Hodgson, 2015, pp. 177-178; Greenhalgh, 1996, pp. 38-46). The Ford Foundation was particularly interested in population control and funded most of this work. Concerns with the increase in numbers of the 'wrong kind' was not unique to the United States. In an international refugee conference organized in Istanbul in 1954, Gini called attention to the demographic pressure 'coloured' peoples put on 'European overseas possessions' – meaning colonies (İğsiz, 2018, p. 46). He warned his audience that the numbers of 'coloured peoples' increase more rapidly than the populations associated with 'Western Civilisation'. He added that the 'white peoples' behind the Iron Curtain also reproduced at a higher rate than those in the West, and that these two non-Western groups might join forces in future given their shared antagonism to the so-called 'free world' in the Cold War.

Gini is one of the most well-known of the number of individuals who combined eugenics and demography in his work. It is hard to know to what extent he and other scholars who had previously supported fascism, or figures such as Karl Valentin Müller (1896-1963), who believed in breeding quality workers belonging to a Nordic superior race and controlling the numbers of inferior groups, revised their previously held beliefs after the war (İğsiz, 2018, p. 52). This question is pertinent, as both Gini and Müller were part of a European refugee association and conducted research on post-war refugees. It is certain, however, that eugenics – promoting biologized solutions to social matters while considering the population to be a site of improvement (such as proposing birth control, as opposed to economic, political, or social policies, as a remedy for unemployment) – did not disappear after the Second World War. Many scholars working in the field of eugenics directed their expertise towards demography and population research, with a focus on refugees.

12 For more, see Shohat, E. and Stam, R. (2012) *Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Post-colonial Atlantic*, New York, NYU Press.

One was Sir Julian Huxley (1887-1975), a British evolutionary biologist, who was named the first director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).<sup>13</sup>

In *Unesco: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, Huxley pushed for UNESCO to pursue eugenicist work, even if it had fallen out of favour by that time:

Whereas variety is in itself desirable, the existence of weaklings, fools, and moral deficient[sic!] cannot but be bad. It is also much harder to reconcile politically with the current democratic doctrine of equality. In face [sic!] of it, indeed, the principle of equality of opportunity must be amended to read: 'equality of opportunity within the limits of aptitude.' [...]

To adjust the principle of democratic equality to the fact of biological inequality is a major task for the world, and one which will grow increasingly more urgent as we make progress towards realising equality of opportunity. To promote this adjustment, a great deal of education of the general public will be needed as well as much new research; and in both these tasks Unesco can and should co-operate. This does not mean, of course, that Unesco should aim at labelling, docketing, or dragooning humanity. It means that it should encourage all studies and all methods which can be used to ensure that men find the right jobs and are kept away from the wrong jobs – to ensure that individuals find outlets satisfying to their temperament, and work appropriate to their talents, while at the same time ensuring that society is not overburdened with people in positions for which they are inadequate or, still worse, which they are likely to abuse.

Biological inequality is, of course, the bedrock fact on which all of eugenics is predicated. But it is not usually realised that the two types of inequality have quite different and indeed contrary eugenic implications. The inequality of mere difference is desirable, and the preservation of human variety should be one of the two primary aims of eugenics. But the inequality of level or standard is undesirable, and the other primary aim of eugenics should be the raising of the mean level of all desirable qualities. While there may be dispute over certain qualities, there can be none over a number of the most important, such as a healthy constitution, a high innate general intelligence, or a special aptitude such as that for mathematics or music.

At the moment, it is probable that the indirect effect of civilisation is dysgenic instead of eugenic; and in any case it seems likely that the dead weight of genetic stupidity, physical weakness, mental instability, and disease-proneness, which already exist in the human species, will prove too great a burden for real progress to be achieved. Thus, even though it is quite true that any radical eugenic policy will

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13 For more on Huxley's eugenicist thought, see Weindling, P. (2012) 'Julian Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics in Twentieth-century Britain', *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 480-499.

be for many years politically and psychologically impossible, it will be important for Unesco to see that the eugenic problem is examined with the greatest care, and that the public mind is informed of the issues at stake so that much that now is unthinkable may at least become thinkable (1946, pp. 20-21).

Here Huxley stresses that biological differences encompass differences of aptitude. The avowed eugenicist further insists that the more UNESCO succeeds in redistributing educational opportunities, the more such biological differences will inhibit human progress. His main concern is human advancement, and he considers successful matching of aptitude with the right job as key for 'progress'. Huxley's approach clearly aligns eugenicist thinking with UNESCO's agenda.

At the same time, Huxley was instrumental in formulating and revising the earlier drafts of UNESCO's *The Race Question*.<sup>14</sup> UNESCO spearheaded efforts to end scientific racism and sponsored the 1950 Statement on Race to debunk 'scientific research' on racial hierarchies (İğsiz, 2018, pp. 73-74). Collaborating with anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ashley Montagu – the student of influential anthropologist Franz Boas, who promoted the study of culture instead of race – UNESCO offered institutional support to refuting theories of racial hierarchies. In line with these efforts, Huxley advocated the use of the term 'ethnicity' instead of the biologically charged notion of race. However, this did not stop Huxley from outlining a eugenicist agenda to discuss biological differences when he was the director-general of UNESCO.

Ambivalence towards biologized approaches to humankind was common in the decade after the end of war. The institutionalized mobilization against scientific racialism was advocated concurrently with aspirations to continue to improve the human genus. Under the auspices of UNESCO, ethnicity and culture were promoted as alternative notions to race. Yet it remains an open question as to whether this shift in terminology was really divorced from assumptions about bloodlines and biologized essences (including moral character and criminal 'disposition') that were presumably transmissible from one generation to the next. Huxley's endorsement of eugenics and assumptions about biologized hierarchies, while pushing for a reconsideration of 'race', is a case in point.

This ambivalence should be taken into account when viewing the rise of demography as a field of study after the Second World War. Eugenics, like race, might have been tarnished by the Nazi's scientific racism and atrocities, and scholars might have gradually dropped the notion of eugenics in favour of demography and population studies, but the extent to which eugenicist paradigms were discarded remains questionable. Eugenics and demography are clearly intertwined in post-war

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14 *The Race Question*, Unesco Programme, vol III, 1950.

scholarship.<sup>15</sup> This is not to suggest that all demographers were fascists; rather, the field's main tenets were, to some extent, coterminous with the interests of fascism and eugenics.

## Human Capital and the Undesirable

In 1966, French demographer Sauvy acknowledged that 'acceptable or not', eugenicist 'plans to improve the human race opened the way to qualitative demography' (Sauvy, 1969, pp. 509-510). This meant that the quantitative character of demography, the use of statistical data such as birth and death rates, was expanded to include the composition of the population as well as concerns to improve its quality. Migration, displacement, and the adaptation and assimilation of migrants were some of the important demographic research categories that emerged. Other important categories included family, women raising children, and the cost of 'producing men', which involved the cost of training, the expected subsequent (labour) output, and the cost of prolonging his life (Sauvy, 1969, pp. 233-247).

Within the epistemological matrix of demography, the value of human life is contingent upon productivity and ability to contribute to the economy. Those unable to contribute in this way and who therefore do not constitute 'human capital' are considered undesirable. Sauvy is not alone nor the first to articulate this approach. Others, including Gini, raised questions about 'human capital' in relation to the labour force of migrants and refugees. Gini identified the migrants and refugees in terms of human 'capital', a term that construes the displaced as labour-ready bodies whose training has already been funded by the country of origin and who thus constitute a potential gain for the host country (İğsiz, 2018, pp. 41-72). Though he may not have used the same words, Gini did in fact also address that which Sauvy called the 'cost of producing men'.

Precarious and vulnerable migrants, who for the most part did not have comparable exchange value, were likely to be denoted 'undesirable' refugees by a recipient country. At the 1954 international convention in Istanbul of the European Association for the Study of the Refugee Problems, Walter Schätzel, a scholar of international law, explained that most states did not want the group of refugees who were often referred to as a 'social burden' (*bagage social*) (İğsiz, 2018, pp. 51, 53). Schätzel's use of 'social burden' resonates with Huxley's earlier designation of specific groups as a 'deadweight for the society'. In his work on refugees, Karl Valentin

15 For an earlier example of how these fields have been entwined in the case of Turkey, see Gökay, F. K. (1934) 'Milli Nüfus Siyasetinde (Eugenique) Meselesinin Mahiyeti' [The Nature of the Issue of Eugenics in National Population Policy], *Ülkü: Halkevleri ve Halkodalari Dergisi*, vol. 3, pp. 206-213.

Müller also underlined the importance of categorizing refugees according to their vocation and ability to work, so that they would not feel like a 'deadweight for the society' (İğsiz, 2018, p. 51).

In the context of refugees, the so-called social burden thus included those who could not be easily employed – orphans, criminals, the anti-social, sickly, and elderly – who would today, for the most part, be referred to as the precarious (İğsiz, 2018, pp. 51, 266). The configuration of the precarious as 'undesirables' and potential criminals, who are deemed difficult to employ, creates a stark contrast with the notion of refugeehood. A refugee by definition is precarious and precisely because of this precarity, humanitarian assistance is necessary. The importance of expressing solidarity with the displaced was underlined in such forums, but it is clear that refugees were assigned a place in hierarchies according to their labour capacity and vocation, and not just according to their racial, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

In the post-war environment, when deportation of minorities and partition were promoted as peace-making measures and when international human rights were considered to be more a matter of protecting individuals than minority groups as a whole, it was no longer enough to be 'a designated group of displaced and stateless persons to have access to asylum protection' (Cohen, 2011, p. 54). Displaced persons were individually screened for eligibility, except for Holocaust survivors, who bypassed individual screenings (Cohen, 2011, pp. 54-55). According to the new international human rights law, everybody had the right to seek asylum, but not the right to automatically be granted asylum (Cohen, 2011, p. 57). Concomitantly, French international jurists argued that the 'West' was picking and choosing individuals from masses of refugees and displaced persons (Nathan-Chapotot, 1949, pp. 72-76).

In 1949, Sauvy wrote that after the war both the Soviet Union and the United States 'opposed any initiative that would give substance to international solidarity' and that the international atmosphere favoured this outcome:

In nations that are in the process of being formed, nationalism calls for a period of self-absorbed isolation; in advanced nations, anxiety to protect the labor market and sometimes also preoccupations with race induce great caution about immigration or even lead to a closed-door policy. In contrast to the flow of goods and of capital, where at least intentions toward greater international rapprochement do manifest themselves, national sovereignty in the matter of immigration, more than ever, rules supreme. (Sauvy, 1949)

Sauvy gestures to differences between the flow of goods, capital, and people. Concerns with race and labour clearly have an impact on the configuration of the 'undesirable'.

Following its founding in 1949, the Council of Europe decided to approach refugee problems as overpopulation because of their presumable similarities (İğsiz, 2018, p. 49). Gini, for one, agreed with this approach, stating that in post-war Italy there were mostly ‘national refugees’ – descendants of Italians arriving from the former colonies or others whom he considers to be affiliated with Italy, while the others were international refugees, whom he deems guests (Gini, 1954, pp. 21-23). Gini argued that refugees contributed, together with high birth rates in Italy, to the problem of overpopulation. Coupled with post-war unemployment, this situation created tension in economic life and politics, he claimed. Be that as it may, it is clear that the national refugees, whom Gini likens to the Greek–Turkish population exchangees who were relocated in their ‘own country’, were in Italy to stay, while the international refugees were temporarily hosted there.

Labour and race, then, have long been entwined in the configurations of social and physical mobility and used to demarcate the limits of solidarity. These limits demonstrate how racialized paradigms and labour concerns were embedded in political anxieties articulated in the terms and categories of demography. Demographic knowledge production appears to be deployed to legitimize demographic policy. The category of the ‘undesirable’ is a resilient one, and the same list of the ‘useless’ and the ‘criminal’ reappears in Sauvy’s influential book on population studies published in French in 1966:

Physical organisms eliminate unwanted toxins and dangerous or useless bodies in order to preserve their life and their good working order. Human society too tends to eliminate unwanted members, either useless or dangerous, more or less discreetly, more or less unintentionally. The useless ones are those who cannot contribute to the economic or social life: the old, the ill, the invalids, the unwanted new born etc.; the dangerous ones are the criminals, the degenerate, the antisocial, the madmen, or even sometimes the political enemies, the members of other races or other religions. They can be eliminated directly, by murder, expulsion, exclusion; or with hypocrisy, through bad treatment, refusal of care, even abandonment. (Sauvy, 1969, pp. 341-347)<sup>16</sup>

The ‘useless’ are those deemed unemployable, with no exchange value as ‘human capital’. Sauvy’s example serves as a reminder that economic productivity plays a key role in administering a given social order. Under ‘dangerous’, Sauvy categorizes political dissidence alongside racial, religious, and other differences. Sauvy’s categorization of the undesirable as a group that can be excluded or expelled recalls demographic engineering projects such as the Greek-Turkish population exchange, post-war mass population transfers, and the partition of India, whereby the states

16 The book was originally published in French in 1966 under the title *Théorie Générale de la Population*.

in question removed undesirables through expulsion or limiting the admission of refugees.

## Conclusion

In January 2016, the Turkish government made a move to 'benefit' from the qualified labour force of Syrian refugees by granting them limited employment authorization (Çetingüleç, 2016). Later newspaper headlines claimed that the most qualified and educated refugees were already 'taken' by Europe (*Milliyet*, 2016). In May 2016, the International Monetary Fund praised Germany for opening its doors to a limited number of Syrian refugees on the grounds that Germany needs new members of its labour force to compensate for its ageing population (IMF, 2016). Concerns with 'human capital' in relation to the displaced are clearly intact, as is the practice of choosing refugees for resettlement individually, at least in the EU context.

Instead of automatically qualifying for asylum because of persecution and hardship, Syrian refugees' right to asylum is secured with billions of euros paid to Turkey by the EU, which, in the form of a number of member state governments, declared the refugees to be 'undesirable'. Given the contemporary dynamics, there is reasonable ground to ask whether those same governments would take the same stance had these refugees been 'white'. In the United States, the Trump administration's migration policy not only places children in cages, but it also racially targets migrants. Trump's description of the convoy of refugees as 'very bad people' reproduces racist eugenicist paradigms that deploy a biologized essence to explain moral character. Race and labour are resilient categories that have long informed demographic policies of inclusion and exclusion, and they resurface today in political discourses and policies that raise yet again questions about what it means to be human.

Post-war international conceptions of human rights, with all of their limitations and problems in practice, conceptualized the human being as a subject worthy of dignity and endowed with rights. The fact that those who today seek to help refugees – whose lives are at risk – are criminalized and charged with human trafficking crystallizes a disturbing reconfiguration of who belongs to the category of human: the refugees are not counted among the human beings who are worthy of dignity and whose basic human right is the right to life. The criminalization of humanitarianism demonstrates that refugees are objectified, considered subhuman, reduced in their worth to their bodies along – as trafficking is usually a crime that entails smuggling human beings for exploitation or slave labour.

Xenophobic discourses routinely conceive of refugees and migrants as undesirable, large numbers of whom will dilute the stock of the white residents of the coun-

tries to which they are moving. Alt-right groups like Identity Evropa in the United States, which recently renamed itself the American Identity Movement, lament the dilution of white American ties to Europe.<sup>17</sup> Similarly to the active migration restriction movement of the 1930s, the current political administration's policies in the United States appear to empower these groups that are hostile to migration.

Demographic concerns over numbers, fears of the hyper-reproductivity of those from the 'Third World', and racialized reconfigurations of hierarchies of being human all continue to echo post-war demographic production of knowledge. In a rare instance of subjecting demographic production of knowledge in Germany to criticism, Susanne Schultz argues that demography has been presented as *the science*, leaving no room for the consideration of other perspectives on social issues in the country (2015). This approach to demography may not be as new as she seems to believe, as this essay argues. In fact, demographic anxieties and categories resurface unapologetically in 'Western' liberal democracies today both in xenophobic political discourses and state policies regarding displacement.

Anthropologist Susan Greenhalgh has discussed how demography is often perceived to be a highly methodical but non-theoretical field that is closely related to politics and policy-making organizations (1996, pp. 26-33). This may be why demographic production of knowledge is not questioned in the same way as demographic engineering projects themselves, as these critiques focus on actions taken as opposed to their epistemic foundations. There is a need for more critical research on demographic policies and epistemologies. This work might incorporate theoretical insights from a number of different fields, but scholars need to consider biopolitics in relation to demography – not only as population policy and regulation but also as a field of population study. The role played by the positivistic language of post-war demographic research needs to be interrogated in relation to demography's presentation as *the science*.

French philosopher Michel Foucault insisted that 'truth' was not an abstract term to be found 'out there', but something embedded in institutional and social frameworks of power (1980, pp. 109-133). Following this, it could be argued that every social context has its own 'régime of truth' – its 'general politics' of truth – that is, the types of discourse configured as true, the tools one deploys to identify statements as truth, and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth. Universities and armies are just two of the multiple institutions that contribute to the production of truth. The field of demography, which as detailed above plays a key role in the configuration of the undesirable, is another example of these institutional processes. Demographic production of knowledge finds its echo both in policy and in public discourse, which, instead of questioning

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17 <https://www.americanidentitymovement.com/about/>

the logics of exclusion, focuses on demographic concerns with the numbers of the ‘wrong kind’.

As mentioned above, demography is both population regulation and a field of population study. Today, contemporary population management, especially in regard to displacement and biometrics, is the subject of numerous works on biopolitics – the regulation of populations in terms of bodies and numbers. Bringing post-war concerns with demography in conversation with contemporary scholarship on refugees, displacement, and humanitarianism organized around the concept of biopolitics is an important step towards interrogating the implications of post-war demographic epistemes.<sup>18</sup> Most scholars working on displacement and borders today engage biopolitical paradigms, but only rarely does such work draw links between contemporary biopolitics and post-war demographic production of knowledge on refugees.

Rethinking régimes of truth pertaining to demography and mobility with a critical eye on the past might help us to see the inconsistencies, anxieties, and contradictions embedded in the configuration of the ‘undesirable’. This configuration has long informed humanitarian engagements with the displaced. Tracing these epistemic and political trajectories with respect to refugees and patterns of demographic concerns might help us to question structural discrepancies in the management of crises, past and present, and unravel the implications of being human.

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