

**Alexander E. Balistreri, Research Associate**

**de l'Université de Bâle & de Princeton**

**The Political Economy of Mass Migration  
in the Turkish-Soviet Borderlands, 1921-1945**

**Le jeudi 17 mai 2018 à 18h15**

**Université de Neuchâtel – alvéole B1.01**

**(Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines – Espace Louis-Agassiz 1)**



A column of tanks passes a family in flight. Kars, Turkey, December 1948. David Douglas Duncan, <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/ddd/gallery/life/479.html>

## **ABSTRACT**

The laying down of the Turkish–Armenian border in 1921 was a partition in all but name. Like its counterpart in 1947 India, the “Turko-Armenian Partition of 1921” was accompanied by homogenizing displacements of populations and the prospect of major property redistribution. Indeed, evacuated land and empty villages presented the Turkish state with a bountiful resource: By redistributing “empty” land and village property to new settlers, the state had an essentially bottomless source of patrimony that could potentially encourage the loyalty and permanence of the population in a politically sensitive border region. Nevertheless, Turkey’s lack of state capacity in the border region condemned its basic policy goals to decades of failure. In my lecture, I will examine the Turkish state’s approach to mass migration in the Turkish–Armenian border region after 1921. Using archival documents and contemporary newspaper reports, I look at different kinds of mass migration (whether voluntary or forced) and the attempt to enact a rational system of land apportionment as a means of dealing with migration and encouraging settlement.

## **BIOGRAPHY**



Alexander E. Balistreri is a research associate in the Program in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Basel. His teaching and research cover modern Turkish, Caucasian, and Near Eastern history. Balistreri graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Political Science) and received master’s degrees from Sabancı University (Turkish Studies) and Princeton University (Near Eastern Studies). He is currently completing his dissertation at Princeton University. Balistreri’s current research examines the history of the polyethnic city of Kars (1750–1950) and its incorporation into the Republic of Turkey after forty years of Russian imperial rule.