

MigPol-Project

"Overview about Immigration-, Integration-, and Refugee- Protection- Politics in all Member States of the European Union"

Greece

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GREECE

PART 1: NATION-STATE BUILDING PROCESS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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1. Nation-state building process

1.1. The Greek National Myth and the formation of the Greek nation-state: The formation of a cultural majority

The Greek nation-state as it is known nowadays, is the result of a century-long process of military and political struggle. At first, the Greek state was very small, covering the Peloponnese, the southern mainland, and a few islands. Step by step, it expanded both in area and population. Since the middle of the 20th century, the Greek state has reached the borders it has today, boasting over the extreme homogeneity of its population and its history and tradition.

This paper aims to point out the nation-state building-process of Greece. On the one hand, the focus will be on the creation of the Greek National Myth; the formulation of a concept that managed to link and unite the modern Greek state with the “glorious“ past of ancient Greece.¹ On the other hand, the emphasis will be on the assimilation and integration processes of the Greek state towards the ethnic and cultural minorities that resided mainly in the areas of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace, until the consolidation of the Greek state after World War II.

We aim to point out that the one and only goal of the various Greek governments was to ensure the security of the northern borderline from irredentist and secessionist activities. Taking into account how Greeks perceived themselves and their neighbours, we show that they chose to promote the homogenisation process of the population through assimilation and exchanges of populations, without, however, having a firm position towards the ethnic and/or cultural minorities that resided in the state. Hence, why they chose to form a cultural/ethnic majority.

1.2. The Greek national myth

When the modern Greek state was founded in 1832, and during the first years of independence, the image of the national self that was projected both outside and inside the country, was rather different from the one that has been consolidated since the end of the 19th century. For the period, roughly between 1770 and 1850, the concept was that the Greeks were direct descendants of the ancient Greeks of the classical period. This had to do with the admiration of the classical civilization by the Europeans, and it was rather convenient for the creation of a proud nation with a sublime past and tradition. A common image of the period was that of the mythical phoenix², representing Greece, that after being dominated by Macedonians, Romans and Ottomans, was

¹ In modern nation-states, schools secure the composition, consolidation and reproduction of the national identity through the courses that promote the national sentiment: history, geography and the native language, but also through other activities such as visits to historical places, anniversaries etc. (Avdela 1998, 41; Katsoulakos & Tsadines 1994, 14). Consequently, the best way to approach a nation’s myth is by the history and geography course books of primary and secondary education.

² It was even depicted in coins as a symbol of Greece.

reborn again from its ashes. The direct origin from ancient Greece was extremely popular during the reign of Otto I³. The admiration of antiquity by the Bavarians was manifested by the choice of Athens as the capital city. The link between the Greece of the past and the new one was easily proven by the use of the greek language that was very similar to the one spoken in the same area during the classical years.

However, a resurgence of this kind implied a leap of two thousand years, and could not motivate those Greeks that did not speak Greek (Heraclides 2001, 56), even though many of them had played a major role in the War of Independence.⁴ There had to be a continuum, a national timeline. So, the missing links had to be found.

Hence, the image of the Macedonian kingdom was changed. During the 1870s the Greek character of Macedonia was stressed.⁵ Ancient Macedonians were perceived Greeks, since they participated in the Olympic games, spoke a language very similar to ancient Greek, believed in the same gods and were educated in the Greek way. Alexander the Great was no longer considered the conqueror and ruler of Greece, but the disciple of Greek civilization and a symbol of unity (Koulouri 1988, 73).⁶ Moreover, Greek history expanded towards the past. The Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations were considered part of the Greek national heritage, and somehow mythology, and the Homeric epics were also integrated in the national history⁷.

However, there was also missing the other characteristic of modern Greek culture, namely orthodoxy. The millets of the Ottoman Empire were based on religion, so within the Rum millet all the orthodox peoples were included, regardless of the language they spoke, even though Greek was the *lingua franca* of the area. Many of them considered themselves as descendants of the Eastern Roman Empire taking pride in orthodoxy and the victory over the “infidel” Ottomans (Hobsbawm 1992, 77). The historians of the Enlightenment period contradicted hellenism with the christian Byzantium. The latter was often considered a period of decadence and cultural darkness (Koulouri 1988, 36).

So, no later than 1880, these notions changed and Byzantium formed an organic part in the Greek tradition and history books. Along with its new image, Byzantium was newly evaluated. By 1894, in the history course books, it was possible to recite the positive aspects of the Byzantine Empire and its contribution to history (Koulouri 1988, 44).

At the same time, the projection of the Greek nation in history course books underlined mainly the positive aspects and the virtues of Greek nationality but, sometimes, negative aspects were also included. The virtues were mentioned in order to offer role models for the youth to imitate. These “national” virtues were wit, originality, inventiveness, studiousness, devoutness, and

³ Otto I of Wittelsbach was King of Greece from 1832 to 1862.

⁴ Within the new state, there were Albanian-speakers with Greek national conscience, called *Arvanites*. Besides, the ministry of education claimed that Arvanites were considered part of the Greek nation, due to their Illyrian origin (akin to the Greeks). This argument automatically incorporated Albanian-speakers to the Greek nation and solved the problem of Albanian settlements in the Greek state (Koulouri 1988, 76). While for others, although the existence of an Albanian minority in Greece could not be doubted, Albanians (Arvanites) in Greece did not have a national conscience and were assimilated by the indigenous population (Veloudis 1982, 67).

⁵ Until then, in the geography books, Macedonia and Thrace were not mentioned as parts of ancient Greece, although without ruling out their greek character (Koulouri 1988, 70-1).

⁶ The rise of other national movements in the Balkans, especially bulgarian nationalism, led to reactions from the greek side. The marking of the greek character of Macedonia, had also to do with the changing status in the area (Koulouri 1988, 73).

⁷ See the greek history books of primary education (Fragoudaki 1997(2), 344).

patriotism⁸ among others. In times when negative aspects were aloud (this was only done for educational reasons) in the course books,⁹ one was the vice of the Greeks: quarrelling. Nevertheless, while it was acceptable to learn from the dispute between Sparta and Athens and the Peloponnesian War, nothing was mentioned for the civil war during the War of Independence.¹⁰

s a result, at the end of the 19th century, the Greek national myth freezes in a concept that follows a line linking the verge of the prehistoric period to the heroes of the Greek mythology, the classical antiquity, then the Hellenistic period, and, through the transformation of the Eastern Roman Empire to the (greek) Byzantine Empire, reaches the resurged Greek Nation-state that was aiming to keep up with the reputation and glory of its past, and the ‘virtues of the marvellous personalities’ of the nation’s history. However, this image of a glorious past and virtuous ancestors, affected the way modern Greeks perceived themselves and their neighbours.

1.3. The national self and the Other

The idealization of the nation’s past and the concealment of the flaws and dark spots created a false perception that contradicted with the pettiness and the problems of everyday life. Thus, it was not difficult for modern Greeks to feel imperfectness and insecurity.¹¹ As much as they admired their ancestors, they felt bad for themselves. This feeling was getting worse when they compared themselves with their contemporaries, especially the great powers of Europe. This complex of inferiority and insecurity probably leads to “defensive nationalism” (Heraklides 2001, 65).¹² That is, on one hand, to the underestimation of all the neighbouring countries, and the ethnic groups that happened to live in the Greek territory, and on the other, to the attempts to keep away the peoples who were not, or would not become, Greek.

We are dealing with an approach that eliminated anything foreign, anything that did not fit in the national image. Besides, the neighbours (the Other) were defined in comparison and contradistinction to the Greeks (the national self), and whether they were considered friends or enemies. The image of the others was defined by superficial characteristics and the people’s temperament. For example, Serbs were considered familiar, while Turks and Bulgarians were enemies (Koulouri 1988, 75).

The latter is due not only to the ideological approach of the Other, but also to a territorial one that should be taken into account. The Hellenistic period related with Macedonia and the Byzantine period with Constantinople (Istanbul). A few years after the foundation of the Greek state, and the formulation of the national myth, the territories with Greek nationals (in the Balkans and the Near East) were described as “free” or “enslaved” (Koulouri 1988, 74).

Hence, the Greek government engaged in irredentist activities, in order to liberate the “enslaved brothers” and claim the grounds where peoples with Greek conscience lived. Little by little, Thessaly and southern Epirus were incorporated in the Greek state (1881) and the new goal

⁸ It is quite obvious that these are the virtues that many countries would put forward for their youth.

At the end of the 19th century, there was a tendency to hush any negative aspect of the greek history and character (Koulouri 1988, 76).

¹⁰ The same would apply later for the civil war that followed World War II.

¹¹ Notwithstanding the fact that there are things they should be proud of, such as the expansion of the country, or important contributions in arts and sciences (Heraklides 2001, 65).

¹² Katsoulis had already written on the defensive culture of Greek society (borrowing Deutsch’s term of defense society) in 1988 (Katsoulis 1988, 37-42).

was the claim of Macedonia and Thrace, mainly after Bulgaria had put forth the same claim.¹³ The interests of the Greek population in the area had to be safeguarded.

But this stands for every country in the Balkans. There is not one country that has not been territorially threatened by a neighbour over irredentist and ethnic criteria (Heraklides 2001, 295-6) or that has not made claims over an area and its population. All the countries have chosen to treat minorities with disregard and discrimination, and Greece has not been an exception to this rule.¹⁴

2. Cultural diversity

2.1 Greece towards ethnic and cultural minorities

The case of Greece can be used as an example of a country that was obliged to take measures for the protection of minorities after every wave of expansion. In 1830 (3rd Protocol of London), the catholic citizens of the new state were to be treated equally in every aspect by the government. In 1864 (Treaty of London), the same would apply for the Catholics of the Ionian islands. In 1881, the Muslims in Thessaly and Epirus would have autonomy in their communities and religious freedom. And, in 1913, the same engagement was undertaken for the Muslims of Macedonia and Thrace and the Koutsovlachs (Divani 1995, 52-4).

However, the problem of minorities in Greece actually came up after the Balkan Wars. Large movements of populations took place in the region from the start of the century, until the 1920s. On the one hand, the Treaty of Neuilly (1919) led to an exchange of populations between Greece and Bulgaria. On the other, the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor, led to the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey (Treaty of Lausanne, 1923).¹⁵ A large number of Greek orthodox people had already fled from their homes in Turkey to Greece, but after the Treaty, the problem was aggravated. The expropriation of land and the scrupulous settlement of the Greek refugees was one of the means to assimilate the territories that have been incorporated after 1913. The smooth assimilation of these areas was not an easy task, due to the extended ethnological unevenness in comparison to the rest of Greece. According to statistical data¹⁶ of the period, Macedonia, Epirus and Thrace were dwelled by Greeks (indigenous and refugees), Slavs, Muslims (of Albanian or Turkish origin), Koutsovlachs, Jews, Armenians and others (Divani 1995, 74-5).

The Greek administration tried to assimilate this heterogeneous population that lived near the borders and could cause problems in case of uproar. Thus, certain measures were taken in order to alter the ethnological character of these territories. Public servants were economically motivated to work there. The ministry of education cooperated with the ministry of foreign affairs in order to increase the use of the Greek language among the minorities. The new institution of

¹³ The creation of a 'Great Bulgaria' after the Treaty of San Stefano (1878) and the annexation of Eastern Roumelia (1885) worried the greek government and released a chain of reactions (Clogg 1999, 134-5).

¹⁴ However, not all countries have treated minorities in the same way.

¹⁵ After the Greco-Turkish war between 1.3 and 1.5 of Greeks left their homes in Asia Minor and migrated to Greece. The opposite way was followed by 400000 Turks (Hobsbawm 1992, 133).

¹⁶ All the statistical data that were published at that period were many times far from reality. Numbers were inflated or deflated by officials according to their interests. Other times, the people disorientated officials giving false answers. This is why numbers should be used seldom and with caution.

“General Governance”¹⁷ was established so as to decentralize power and make territorial management more versatile (Divani 1995, 76). However, the work done in each General Governance was directly related to the personality of its officers. Some of them tried to use a “paternalistic” approach to infuse the Greek national conscience to the minorities, while others, who were narrow-minded, would see enemies in every minority. In that case, the distinctions would be more obvious and inter-ethnic relations would deteriorate.¹⁸

The same resulted from the disputes between indigenous ethnic minorities and Greek refugees, who lived together. The former would feel threatened in their home ground; while the latter would try to settle and start a new life in a place they considered their country. The most important dispute was for the expropriated lands, the exploitation of natural resources, and religious and educational rights.

Apart from that, each country tried to boycott the assimilation processes or to protect its nationals in the neighbouring states. The relations between Greece and each ethnic minority were not an exception to that.

2.2. Koutsovlachs

There are various theories over the origin of the Koutsovlachs. One is that they were related to the Rumanian Vlachs, and were assimilated through matrimony with other peoples in the Balkans. Another theory claims that they were natives of Greece speaking a Latin idiom (similar to the Rumanian language), a relic from the Roman Empire (Pettifer 1994, 183). However, the Rumanian state claimed that they were Vlachs that had gone south, so as to use them in its foreign policy as a means of pressure. During the 19th century and the fever of nationalism, ethnic identities were created, even among the Koutsovlachs. Most of them had a Greek national conscience, while others considered themselves Rumanian.

In 1905, the Sublime Porte recognised a Rumanian millet in order to deteriorate the relations between Greece and Rumania, which were very good until then. The idea was that the two countries would fight over this minority. Even though there were no serious disputes, the two nations re-approached again only due to the Balkan Wars, since Greece needed allies against Bulgaria. Thence, Greece accepted the Rumanian theory and granted religious and educational rights to the Koutsovlachs. That is, there had to be Rumanian churches and schools for those who wanted to attend them, and Rumania could afford to offer good facilities. Consequently, rumanian Koutsovlachs were better off than their Greek neighbours. This is also manifested by the fact that Rumania never made any complaint to the League of Nations against Greece (Divani 1995, 103-4).

In 1925, Rumania was facing problems in the southern border, so it asked the Greek government to consent in the migration of Koutsovlachs with Rumanian conscience. They asked for 1500 families, in order to alter the ethnological composition of their southern borderline. Greece accepted since it would be relieved from a minority, and until 1929, 2000 families had left for Rumania (Divani 1995, 109).

¹⁷ There were the G.G. of Epirus, G.G. of Macedonia, G.G. of Thrace, G.G. of the Aegean, and the G.G. of Crete.

¹⁸ It is quite interesting that the only solution was assimilation, and variance was observed on the approach whether direct (and some times violent) or diplomatic. Integration did not seem to be an alternative.

2.3 Slavophones

When the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” was established in 1918, there were problems all over its borderline (Divani 1995, 130-1). The biggest problem, though, was against Bulgaria. It was about the population of Macedonia. Bulgaria claimed that all the slavophones in Yugoslavia and Greece were Bulgarians. On the other hand, Greece and Yugoslavia had agreed that the people in Macedonia were Greeks south of the borderline and Serbs, on the northern part of it. Hence, they would not make irredentist claims against each other, and agreed that they would not ally with Bulgaria, and accept its claims of the existence of a Bulgarian minority.

But this is what happened after the Peace Treaty of Neuilly (1919). Greece agreed to an exchange of populations with Bulgaria. The Yugoslavs immediately felt that the agreement with Greece had broken, so they acted in order to claim some of these Slavs (Tsitselikis 1996, 281). The Serbian consulate in Thessaloniki tried to attract the slavophone minority, and demanded the establishment of Serbian schools and churches. The few slavophones who turned towards Serbia, came from western Macedonia and they imagined that they would be treated better than in Greece. The demand for the foundation of Serbian schools, though, did not flourish, since there was no one who spoke Serbian in the Greek part of Macedonia (Divani 1995, 145-6).

The language that was actually spoken by slavophones in the area was a mixture of Bulgarian and Serbocroat, with the addition of elements from other Balkan languages. The Greek government was willing to teach this local dialect to the minority, but neither Bulgaria nor Serbia accepted it. Truly, Yugoslavia did not want any school for the slavophone minority in the Greek part of Macedonia (Divani 1995, 148-9), so again it refused the existence of any ethnic minority in the area.¹⁹ The objections of the neighbouring countries, along with the flanderie by the Greek side, suppressed any attempt of education in the local dialect (Tsitselikis 1996, 283).

But Bulgaria did not keep the same stance as Yugoslavia towards the slavophone minority in Greece. Bulgaria would not miss a chance to claim land and people towards the Aegean. Since 1918, Venizelos²⁰ had already realized the difficulties of co-existence between Greeks and Slavs, and had proposed the voluntary migration of the minoritarians. Bulgaria did not agree, since the population would be more useful in the Greek state, to pressure and provide the pretext for territorial claims,²¹ but finally gave in (Divani 1995, 308). The main allegation by the Bulgarian government was the exile of Slavs from the frontier in Thrace to the islands, during the last phase of the greek-turkish war (1922-3).²² When the war was over and these Bulgarians returned to their homes, they found them occupied by the Greek refugees from Turkey.

¹⁹ As it can be inferred, Yugoslavia used the minority issue only circumstantially, in order to pressure Greece. The same happened again in 1926, when the (by coup) government of Greece, accepted the existence of a Serbian minority in Greece, vis-à-vis military alliance and economic cooperation of the two countries. This meant the fall of that administration, and the new government did not ratify the agreement. The issue of minorities between Greece and Serbia came up many times during the second half of the 1920s, but whenever the Greek administration was willing to grant minority rights (and even found a Serbian school in Thessaloniki) on the basis of mutuality, i.e. granting of the same rights to the greek-speaking community in Serbia, the latter withdrew any claim whatsoever.

²⁰ Prime minister of Greece at the time.

²¹ Moreover, Bulgaria could not afford to take care of the refugees from Greece.

²² An article in the newspaper *South* of Plovdiv, in 9.10.1923, accused the Turks for ingratitude, and among other things it argued that when Kemal's army was in a difficult position against the Greeks, the Bulgarians of Western Thrace bothered the greek side, so no more Greek soldiers could be sent over Anatolia; and that was the reason why there were sent to the islands (Divani 1995, 311).

Greece hoped that the exchange of populations would solve the problems with Bulgaria. Moreover, Venizelos claimed that the liberal policies that had been put forward for Muslims and Koutsovlachs would also apply for the Slavs, only after the exchange, so that the state would have more concrete data (Divani 1995, 323). At the same time though, Greece ceased to call these people bulgarian-speakers or Bulgarians, and used the terms “slavophones” or “Macedonian Slavs”, so they would not necessarily be linked to Bulgaria.

Eventually, the exchange of populations between Bulgaria and Greece was not as voluntary as it was supposed to be, neither for Bulgarians nor for Greeks. After this migration process, a large number of slavophones had remained in Greece, about 80000. While they lived in an environment as fragile as the macedonian frontier, the Greek state had to assimilate them, but this had proven to be quite difficult. For various reasons, Greece was not too attractive to persuade them identify with it (Divani 1995, 334-5). At the same time, the Greek government gave up any hope of assimilating them. Eventually, it claimed that these 80000 persons had greek national conscience, and that was the reason they had remained in Greece during and after the exchange of populations (!) (Divani 1995, 339).

2.4. 1936

The dictatorial regime of the “4th of August” (1936)²³ affected the lives of the minoritarians. The attempts to assimilate these minorities within the framework of international law had annoyed the intolerant ultra-nationalists, who were anxious to get over with these “dangerous” populations. The state’s position towards the minorities got harsher, and measures were taken in order to assimilate them as quick as possible. It was the case of defensive nationalism.²⁴ This intolerance had to do mainly with the national myth, the notion of superiority against all other nationalities, and of course with the fragile macedonian environment. All the members of the minorities, regardless of their age, were forced to attend evening courses in Greek, and it was prohibited to use their native language in public places (Divani 1995, 115). Surely, these measures would fail to assimilate the minorities. What is more, they succeeded in alienating them more, with unpleasant results during the german occupation (Divani 1995, 159).²⁵

2.5. Muslims

The greek War of Independence and the gradual expansion of the Greek borderline, has led most Muslims to move and concentrate in Epirus, Macedonia and mainly Thrace, which were still part of the Ottoman Empire. Especially in western Thrace, the Muslims lived in neighbourhoods in the big towns, or in their own villages. Most of them were speaking Turkish and had Ottoman²⁶ conscience, while others, the Pomacs, were Muslim slavophones, who trusted Greece more than Bulgaria or Turkey (Divani 1995, 171). There were also Muslim Gypsies (Roma).²⁷ These populations remained in Thrace even after the Treaty of Lausanne. They were around 160000 people,²⁸ rather conservative and attached to their lands.

²³ In August 1936, a coup took place in Greece, and General Metaxas took the power.

²⁴ There was a perception of weakness to integrate these populations. The policies that were put forward were offensive in order to prevent the results of failed integration. It was more about the manifestation of weakness than of superiority.

²⁵ There were many who had taken the german side. After the liberation, it was impossible for them to stay in Greece, so they fled (Divani 1995, 258; Tsitselikis 1996, 286 & 289).

²⁶ In distinction to a turkish national conscience, for the new Turkish state that was created.

²⁷ On the contrary, the christian (orthodox) Roma form part of the same social group as the rest greek-orthodox populations and participate in all the activities of ethnic and religious life. Most of them are “settled” and only a few

They lived under a status of relative autonomy, and used their Muslim laws. There had never been any attempt to assimilate them, contrary to the other minorities (Koutsovlachs and slavophones). What is more, the Pomacs and Roma were assimilated to the Turkish minority (Heraklides 2001, 308). The minority had its own schools, and could choose the teachers (Tsistelikis 1996, 274). All the courses were in Turkish except one hour of Greek each day. A proof of the good relations between Greece and the Turkish minority was that only two hundred people chose to take the Turkish nationality (Divani 1995, 176).

Although the kemalist movement created a few problems to the (conservative) minority and the Greek state found itself in crossfire, the relations ameliorated again. The minority was considered Turkish (not Muslim),²⁹ and Turkey was more than satisfied. So, in 1933, the Turkish ambassador expressed his government's content over the relations between Greece and the Turkish minority (Divani 1995, 191). The Turkish Muslims would use their language freely, publish newspapers, work in the public sector, elect their local councils, and be represented in the parliaments.

During the mid-1950s, the treatment of the Turkish minority altered.³⁰ The minority was called "Muslim" again. There was discrimination and violations of human and minority rights, until early 1991. The situation worsened more after the coup in 1967, and the crisis in Cyprus.³¹ Since then, the discrimination continued even after the transition to democracy, and during the first socialist administrations (Heraklides 2001, 303-9).

The measures against the minority involved the abstraction of the Greek citizenship for those "minoritarians who would leave the country without willing to return"³². Other measures prevented them from buying land, cars, agricultural machinery, or from building. Their living standard was very low, and in some cases there was no electricity or telecommunications. Moreover, they would not get a licence for certain professions (e.g. chemist), they would not get accredited for a degree from a Turkish university, and they could not work in the public sector anymore. They would also be prosecuted if they called themselves Turkish (Heraklides 2001, 310-11). All these measures aimed at intimidating the minority and leading it to Turkey. Intimidation also intended to keep down the voices of those who claimed their rights. However, these policies had the opposite effect, and this was one of the reasons why the Greek government changed its approach (in 1991).

of them live a nomadic life.

²⁸ In 1991, they were more or less 115000; 55000 were Turkish, 36000 were Pomacs, and 24000 were Roma (Zeginis 1994, 48).

²⁹ After 1953, the greek administration imposed the term "turkish", instead of muslim, as it was in the Treaty of Lausanne.

³⁰ After WWII, the Turkish/muslim minority was the only one in Greece.

³¹ In July 1974, the Greek-Cypriot National Guard of President Makarios rebelled; in consequence Turkey invaded and occupied the north of the island.

³² Article 19 of the Law of Citizenship. In the beginning, it was aimed at the Slavs of Macedonia. Eventually, it was abolished in 1998.

2.6. Jews

Thessaloniki was the home of the largest Sephardic community in Europe. These Jews came in 1492, from Spain, and they joined others who had already settled there.³³ They even constituted the majority of the population of the city.

The Jews that lived in the new Greek state (before 1912) asserted their greekness and had merged into the Athenian environment. But when Thessaloniki was annexed to Greece in 1912, the sephardic Jews felt threatened. They were afraid that they would be marginalized within the northern part of the Greek state. However, the Greek government tried to persuade them that they had no reason to feel politically or economically threatened.

They were free to have their own schools, organizations and groups. They even elected deputies in the parliament. Politically, most of them were either conservatives or on the left. Only one fifth of them were moderates, supporting Venizelos. This opposition to venizelism was the reason why dictator Metaxas took the jewish community under his wing (in 1936-1940), and did not treat them as the other minorities.

The German occupation though, was the hardest blow to the Jewish community. Arrests and deportations began in Thessaloniki in March 1943. Notwithstanding the fact that there were various efforts to save the Jewish communities in the Greek towns,³⁴ only 10000 remained of the 70000 who lived in Greece in 1940 (Constantopoulou & Veremis 1998, 36).

Immediately after liberation (1944), the Greek government passed legislation to restitute the Jewish properties to their owners. On the one hand, there would be automatic return of property to those who were back alive. On the other, all Jewish property that remained unclaimed, would be ceded to a common fund for the rehabilitation of destitute Jews. In 1947, the government granted a respectable amount of money in order to cover urgent educational and religious needs of the Jewish communities.

As it can be easily deduced, the Jewish minority did not go through the same treatment as the other minorities in Greece. The Jews did not live confined in ghettos, and they were free to follow a way of life in relation to their religion, language and customs. However, their eradication during the german occupation, contributed in the homogenisation process of the Greek population.

3. Conclusion

³³ From the 14th century, Ashkenazi refugees from Central Europe joined the greek-speaking Romaniot Jews. In 1492 Sephardi Jews expelled from Spain appeared in Thessaloniki (Constantopoulou & Veremis 1998, 29).

³⁴ In Athens, a universal refusal to hand over the Jews to the occupation forces saved most of them. The left wing resistance group, the Archbishop of Athens, and the Chief of the Athens Police, cooperated to save all those who were hiding from the Germans. On Zante, the mayor and archbishop saved the entire community (Constantopoulou & Veremis 1998, 35-6).

The Greek nation-state is a rather new entity in the world system, especially in comparison with the notion the Greek people have of their nation. It was founded in the 1830s by the orthodox peoples that lived in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula, with the support of the great powers.

Greeks however, claim to be the descendants of a great people, and the inheritors of a great civilization and a great nation, which after a troublesome period resurged to claim its heritage. So, little by little, Greece expanded and claimed lands that were not as densely populated by Greeks as the southern part of the country. There were also Koutsovlachs, Slavs and Muslims.

According to the Greeks' perception of their nation and their selves, these minority populations could not remain in Greece. They should either become Greeks, through assimilation, or they should leave the country. Apart from any ideological explanation based on the Greek national myth, the main reason for this was that they lived near the border, in a troublesome area such as Macedonia and Thrace, which was coveted by all the Balkan states for its position.

One way to be easily relieved by the minorities was the exchange of populations. Greeks from the other countries would come, and settle in the areas of the minorities. Thus, the country would be nationally homogeneous and safer. Another way was assimilation. The dictatorial regime of 1936 was rather strict on this method. It obliged the populations to be taught Greek and use it as their native language. The same process could not be used in the case of the Turkish (Muslim) minority. After a quiet and prosperous period of friendly relations between Greece and Turkey the conditions worsened. Since they could not be assimilated because of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Greek state decided that the only solution would be to make them leave.

Through these policies (and the elimination of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki) Greece has become, after World War II, one of the most homogeneous countries in Europe. The Greek citizenship has been identical (almost) to a greek-speaking, orthodox population. Thus, instead of respecting and integrating the ethnic minorities and formatting them into parts of the Greek state, only one ethnic majority has been formed.

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GREECE

PART 2: MIGRATION POLICIES

Stavros Skrinis

1. The beginning of migration policies

1.1. Introduction

Greece has been a country of emigration for a long time during the past, similar to the other countries of Southern Europe. The turbulent first half of the 20th century, including two World Wars, two Balkan Wars and a Civil War had prevented Greece to evolve technologically and keep up with the rest of Europe. Agriculture, the main sector of the greek economy during that period, was not sufficiently large to absorb the country's labour force. The only plausible solution was emigration. Consequently, the demographic problem was solved and the remittances from abroad boosted the greek economy. Greece took some big steps, became an associate member of the EEC in 1964, and a full member in 1981, closing the gap that separated it from western European countries.

Thus, Greece has come to receive immigrants, both foreigners and from the diasporas. During the 1970s and 1980s, Greece had some Polish, Egyptian, African, and South Asian immigrants, most of them with legal work permits (Siadima 2001, 5). Their number was around 50,000 until the end of the 1980s. But then, dramatic political changes transformed the migration flows within Europe in general, and Greece in particular. On the one hand, the deepening of the economic gap between North and South, and West and East, made immigrants from Third World countries to inrush to Europe. On the other, the collapse of the USSR and the other Eastern European regimes led to the displacement of millions of people, in search of better living conditions and a better future.

1.2. Immigration in Greece

Immigration influxes in Greece caught the county unprepared, thus making it an uncontrolled and multidimensional phenomenon. Usually, immigrants come either seasonally or permanently, legally or illegally, on their own will, and individually. There are also cases of family or group migration. Mass migration has been the case only for Greek-Pontics and Albanians in the early 1990s.

Immigrants in Greece are distinguished in three groups. The first is comprised by EU citizens, non-EU citizens who have migrated legally and documented, and ethnic Greeks. All these are legal immigrants. Laws of free movement in the European Union cover EU citizens. Other laws and bilateral agreements cover non-EU citizens who have come to Greece through the normal and legal procedures, like the Egyptians and Filipinos did in the 1980s. In the same group of legal migrants, ethnic Greeks are also included. They have come to Greece from Turkey, Egypt, Sudan, USSR, among other countries, as refugees or due to other political reasons (Petrinioti, 20-1). The first group is also consisted of people, non-EU citizens, who have valid permits, but these permits are for limited periods of time. Therefore, by outlasting the permit, it is quite easy to pass from this group to the next.

The second group consists of all those immigrants who have come to Greece illegally and undocumented, or of those who have entered the country legally, but have decided to stay longer than the period dictated by their permit. The latter may be students who quit or finish their studies but remain in Greece. There are also the cases of those who come to Greece as tourists, but do not return to their countries and stay in Greece as illegal immigrants. However, most of the illegal immigrants are people who cross the borders secretly and undocumented. The geography of Greece, with its numerous islands and islets, the coastal line of 15,000 km and the inaccessible mountains in the northwest make guarding all possible entries a rather difficult task. The (geographic) position of Greece, not having common borders with any other E.U. country, neighbouring with three ex-communist countries on the north and Turkey on the east, makes it an ideal entrance to the developed West. All come in search of a better future; some due to economical reasons, and others due to political ones.

The latter come as refugees and seek asylum. Greece, just like many other European countries, has been very sensitive towards refugees.³⁵ This group covers all those who leave their countries because of racial, religious, national, social or political reasons, and who, therefore, are not able or do not want to return back (Karidis, 23). The line that separates the refugees from totalitarian regimes for political reasons from those who migrate for economical ones is not clear at all. Usually, being underprivileged politically and socially equals dire economic conditions. This creates a problem to the reception countries that would like to be able to define easier who is indeed a refugee and who is an immigrant.

Demographically speaking, most of the immigrants are male, while only one out of four is a female (Kiliari, 38; Papadopoulos). They are between 20 and 50 years of age, except the cases of family immigration, where younger and older persons are included.³⁶ They come from different parts of the world, although most of them are eastern Europeans or Asians.³⁷

Albanians are the largest group of immigrants in Greece. Petrinioti estimated them around 180,000 and 200,000, in 1993 (Petrinioti, 24). However, these numbers are bound to have risen since in the 1998 regularization, 230,000 Albanians applied for a temporary permit (Siadima, 10). Political refugees from the Greek minority in southern Albania made the first wave that came to Greece in the late 1980s. Many of these ethnic Greeks settled and obtained greek nationality in the early 1990s. Later on, after the disintegration of the isolationist totalitarian regime in Albania, many ethnic Albanians migrated to Greece, most of them undocumented, crossing the borders through the mountains or by sea. Most of them get arrested and deported back to Albania only to return to Greece at the first opportunity.³⁸

The second largest group is that of immigrants from the USSR, either they are ethnic Greeks (Pontics) or foreigners. In the period 1989-99, 146,102 Greek Pontics from the former Soviet Republics entered Greece, and 103,573 of them were granted a Greek passport (Fakiolas,

³⁵ In 1993, Greece was third in asylum petitions in the E.U., after Denmark and the Netherlands (Petrinioti, 31). This sensitivity stems from humanistic reasons in general, but from particular reasons as well. In 1922, after the Greco-Turkish war, between 1.3 and 1.5 millions of Greeks left their homes in Asia Minor and migrated to Greece. (Hobsbawm, 133).

³⁶ 88% of those who applied for white and green cards in 1998 were between 15 and 44 years old (Fakiolas, 13).

³⁷ Foreigners in Greece come from more than seventy countries, of the Balkans, ex-Soviet Union and the Third World. The most numerous community is that of Albanians, almost 65%, followed by Bulgarians (7%), Romanians, Pakistani, Ukrainians, Polish, Georgians, Hindu, Egyptians and Filipinos in smaller fractions (Papadopoulos).

³⁸ In 1993, more than 220,000 deportations of Albanian citizens took place (Siadima, 11).

7). Along with them many Russians, Georgians, Ukrainians and Armenians (and others) followed. Due to the distance that separates Greece from the countries they have come from, it is not as easy for them to come and go as it is for Albanians, thus they try harder to settle in Greece.

Bulgarians form another large immigrant group. Immigration to Greece started in the 1990s and was characterized by seasonality, due to the bilateral agreements between Greece and Bulgaria for seasonal working visas (Siadima, 11). However, many overstay their permits and get in the group of illegal immigrants. The large number of Bulgarians in Greece is mainly due to women immigrants. Of the total number of immigrants 15% of women and 3.9% of the men come from Bulgaria (Papadopoulos). Polish immigrants are also numerous, especially in the Athens region. They also overstay their visas, although many have come to Greece in the 1980s as refugees. Their number is hard to estimate, but it ranges between 30,000 and 100,000 (Siadima, 12). Apart from the aforementioned groups, there are immigrants, legal and illegal, from other countries as well. They have come to Greece from Romania, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, India, the Philippines, Turkey, Iraq and many other countries all over the world, which is difficult to enumerate since the immigrants are undocumented and clandestine.

Consequently, it is equally difficult to calculate the exact number of immigrants in Greece. This is so for various reasons. First, since there are undocumented and illegal immigrants, they try not to be spotted at all, not to mention declare their presence and nationality. Many immigrants from Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria may find it rather easy to cross the borders as many times as they want, even if they get deported. Third, the fact that most of them look for any job, and they have not their families with them, makes mobility from one region of Greece to the other rather easy. Other times the mobility may be beyond the Greek state. Many immigrants come to Greece in order to collect some money and then move to another country of the West, which is their final destination (To Vima, 9/7/2000). Others come to Greece only seasonally, to work in the tourist industry or in agriculture during the summer, and then return to their countries (Papadopoulos). What is more, different services of the public sector in Greece do not use the same definitions for immigrants, emigrants or ethnic Greeks who have returned, and refugees. Departments in six ministries are engaged in issues of migration (Karidis, 19). Thus, even if it were possible to keep track of all migrants and refugees, still there would not be an exact number. However, there are various estimations ranging the number of foreigners around 800,000.³⁹

According to the 2001 national census, almost half of the foreigners (376,732 people) were counted in the metropolitan area of Athens (the Prefecture of Attica), while the rest were scattered all over Greece, although preferring cities and towns to small villages, because of the working opportunities.

1.3. Working in Greece

Immigrants who come to Greece aim to stay in the country permanently or temporarily in search of better living conditions than in their homeland. Very seldom do they come with a

³⁹ According to the 2001 national survey, carried out by the National Statistical Service of Greece, the number of foreigners in Greece was 797,091 (NSSG). The census took place on March 17th, after a long period of publicity. Messages were aimed both to Greeks and foreigners, and transmitted in many languages, especially those of the large immigrant communities, in order to persuade them not to hide themselves and that the census had nothing to do with police measures, control and deportations.

certain contract in hand, in sectors where there are no Greek or European citizens applying. In general, there are very few cases of immigrants who have taken up a skilled job.

On the contrary, the majority of the immigrants and refugees who come to Greece, legally or illegally, get temporary underpaid jobs,⁴⁰ usually half the wage a Greek would take, without insurance, and in jobs Greeks are not willing to take up. Many of them do not have the necessary qualifications; therefore they get employed as unskilled workers. In rural areas male immigrants are occupied in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and construction, and women work as housekeepers. In urban areas, men work mainly in construction or construction related jobs, and in small-scale businesses, while women work as cleaners in buildings and hotels, housekeepers, or even as dancers and “entertainers” in night clubs (Siadima, 12; Fakiolas, 14).

On the whole, the immigrants’ employment is dictated by the demand in various vacancies in the local labour market and not by their capabilities or their experience. Although many of them are undereducated, there are also those who have come to Greece, especially from eastern European countries holding university degrees. As Fakiolas argues, “Although their schooling is higher than that of the local Greeks, their professional qualifications (acquired to fit in a socialist economy with high division of labour and based on Marxist ideology) are not always suitable in the conditions of the greek market economy” (Fakiolas, 7).

A large part of the greek economy depends on small-scale businesses that require unskilled workers and their competitiveness relies on labour intensity and low wages. Illegal immigrants have been ideal for these conditions, given the fact that their position prevents them from claiming even their basic rights according to the labour legislation (Linardos-Rylmon, 5).⁴¹ Immigrants have also been ideal for taking up jobs of low prestige; jobs that Greeks would not be willing to take up. It is rather interesting that even in jobs that one would think that there is substitution of Greeks by immigrants, in construction for example, usually the Greek builder becomes a subcontractor and hires immigrants to do the work he used to do (Papadopoulos).

As mentioned above, there are many women immigrants in Greece nowadays. In the 1980s they came mainly from the Philippines to work as housekeepers. In the 1990s, many Albanians and Bulgarians have come, along with others from former Soviet republics, although most of them were from Georgia and Ukraine. They are employed as housekeepers, nurses, dancers, or in the sex industry (Siadima, 21).

The rising share of Greek women in employment, the increased housing space, the aging of the population in connection with the inadequate capacity of the old people’s homes, and the will of many people to keep their old folks at home creates a high demand for paid household work that few Greek women would like to do. Fakiolas adds, “No doubt cultural factors and prestige considerations induce many well-off households to have a live-in domestic helper, whom they cannot find among the local people (Fakiolas, 5). Furthermore, the development in the country, of labour-intensive industries, especially in the areas of tourism, agricultural activity and

⁴⁰ That is, underpaid for greek and european standards. For example, while Albanian wages are approximately \$3 per day, an undocumented Albanian would get between \$6 and \$10 in rural areas, and between \$15 and \$20 in the Athens Metropolitan area (Siadima, 6).

⁴¹ During the 1980s and early 1990s, many segments of the greek economy were unable to adapt to the globalisation conditions, thus turning to the search of cheap labour, while unemployment was rising. This increase in unemployment led to a “selective respect” for the legislation towards Greeks, and then the complete disrespect for it, in the employment of undocumented immigrants (Linardos-Rylmon, 5).

the household economy, has led to an increase in the use of female labourers. (Psimmenos and Georgoulas, 45).

Underpaid labour, however, is not a problem only for immigrants and refugees. In the public discourse on immigration, employment of foreigners has been correlated with the “black” labour market. This is a mistake that underestimates the real dimensions of the phenomenon and transforms the absence of policies towards the protection of salaried employment, to a problem of ‘tolerance’ to clandestine migration. However, the “black” labour market affects Greeks as well. According to a European Commission report in 1988, 1.3 to 1.75 million worked in the greek ‘shadow economy’, while only 150,000 to 200,000 of them were immigrants (Linardos-Rylmon, 6). Nowadays, the number of immigrants is bound to have risen, even tripled, but in no way does this imply that the Greeks are all employed legally. Moreover, there are many small businesses still operating because they count on the low wages of the ‘black’ market.⁴²

Another aspect of immigrant labour is that of children immigrants. Although family migration has to do mainly with Albanian citizens (either ethnic Albanians or ethnic Greeks), and Pontics, the number of children immigrants is not negligible. Moreover, as time goes by, there are many children of immigrants who have been born in Greece. Given the fact that immigrants are underpaid, their children often find themselves obliged to work too. Many quit school and help their parents (or go begging in the streets), not earning much and working long hours. Thus, they lose the opportunity to get educated, and hence, they reproduce a generation of immigrants who will not be fully integrated in the greek society, and will have the same fate as their parents living in Greece (Kiliari, 41).

1.4. Living in Greece

When the first waves of immigrants came to Greece in the early 1990s, they found themselves between the good will and the cautiousness of the population. Some were trying to help them make a new start living in Greece, providing financial aid and accommodation. Others were quite reserved towards immigrants. As the numbers of immigrants kept rising, especially in urban areas, the cautiousness grew and living conditions worsened. Immigrants would find accommodation in poor areas, along with their peers and compatriots. Sometimes, they would even move in with them in very small apartments until they could find an affordable place of their own.

However, during the last few years, immigrants have started to integrate in the greek society. They find accommodation in various neighbourhoods, learn to speak greek and try to settle. Their children attend public schools⁴³ just like the local kids, and actually they get along very well. A survey showed that 9 out of 10 primary school pupils had a positive view of their foreign schoolmates, and a similar rate appeared willing to share their desk with a foreigner (Fakiolas, 17). In 1997, 4.6% of primary education pupils were foreigners. Considering that these children will learn to live in the greek society and make Greek friends, entails that they will mingle and integrate rather well, offering at the same time to the cultural enrichment of the society.

⁴² According to a recent OECD report, during the 1990s, Greece held the first place among all EU state members in the ‘shadow economy’, with 29% of the GNP (Linardos-Rylmon, 7)

⁴³ There is also a tendency to establish schools for nationalities, like the Polish school among others, which in 1997 had 350 students (Kiliari, 41).

Moreover, when they first came to Greece, they had to hope and pray for good health, since they were not guaranteed free medical care in the state institutions. This has changed now. All legal immigrants get the same social security rights and privileges as any native Greek, according to the legislation that has been brought into force.

2. Current migratory policies

Before the massive immigrant influx in 1990, the Greek state would not find any reason to change the existing Alien Law that was in effect since 1929. There was no urgent reason so as to put new legislation forward. The few cases of illegal immigrants were being dealt with by the police with deportations. But things changed in the 1990s. Therefore, a new Alien Law was introduced in 1991, and immediately was accused of being permeated with policing philosophy and xenophobia (Siadima, 24). The Law 1975/1991 would control the status of foreigners from non-EU countries, while making provisos for ethnic Greeks (Papassioti-Passia, 19-20). It was an attempt to modernize, in harmonization with EC guidelines (Karidis, 68), the relevant legislation on issues of entrance, exit, stay, settlement, employment and deportation of aliens, and the recognition of political refugees. The law had some positive things like the regulations on refugees, family unification, the issuing of “white” and “green cards”, and the conditions for a valid administrative deportation. The Greek state had shown for a long period of time its sensitivity in the protection of human rights. That is why many articles in the law were followed with the reservedness to the international engagements Greece had undertaken in similar issues (Karidis, 66-7). However, on the whole the law 1975/1991 had problems, either of anti-constitutional nature or of deficient and obscure regulations. Such things as deportations, stricter border controls,⁴⁴ and absence of measures ensuring human rights were common in this law. The aim was to minimize undocumented immigration and employment, but in practice the opposite was accomplished (Papassioti-Passia, 85).

Thus, the Greek Government, realising how things had turned out and following EU directives, decided in 1997, to operate its first regularization programme. According to the Presidential Decree of 1997, the conditions for the granting of the “green card” constituted a brave innovation of the legislation for immigrant employees. It permitted them to collect the necessary paperwork that proved their employment and settlement in Greece, without the interference of the employers or the demand in the labour market (Linardos-Rylmon, 2).

Nevertheless, when it came down to it, the regularization policy did not succeed in decreasing the number of undocumented immigrants, and the labour market remained almost the same as before. The immigrants were left alone to deal with a state that was unwilling or unable to carry the burden of legalization, and when the first regularization procedure was over, many immigrants who were not able to cope with bureaucracy were in a ‘grey zone’, potential victims of deportation procedures (Ta Nea, 20/05/2002). Linardos-Rylmon believed that “the re-regulation of legislation concerning the entrance of immigrants in Greece could not have any success unless there is legislation that clears the status of all those who are already here” (Linardos-Rylmon, 14).

⁴⁴ Within the concept of the Schengen treaty and the common EU area, Greece has to bear the burden of controlling a significant part of EU’s borders. Considering the geomorphology of the greek borderline, it is indeed a difficult task.

As a result, the Greek State decided to review the Law 1975/1991, and voted the Law 2910/2001. The new law, although more liberal in its philosophy and guidelines, is also restrictive, but a few parameters have changed. To start with, a new regularization, a “second chance” as the motto was, was programmed for those who have resided in Greece for at least one year before its application. Travel documents, certificates by authorities at all levels and even electricity, or telephone bills may be used to prove residence in the country (art. 66). This was necessary, but according to what the immigrants claim, it has not been enough and a third regularization will be inevitable soon. Secondly, the new law has decreased the limit for naturalization. It used to be fifteen years in the previous law, and it has turned to ten years of legal residence during the last twelve years. Third, the various penalties for people who transport, employ, or accommodate undocumented immigrants have been increased. However, as Fakiolas claims, “the application of those rules is the real issue” (Fakiolas, 15). There is also a provision in the new law, for a new procedure attempting to recruit seasonal and long-term immigrant workers (art.19). The similarities of this provision with the bilateral agreements with the Bulgarian and Albanian governments leave little margin for optimism. The new law also establishes regional migration departments of the Interior Ministry that will help employers who look for immigrant labour, a complex network of employment offices in Greek consulates abroad, and a research institute on migration. Though, these provisions are considered to be complicated for the greek public administration.

According to some researchers the Law 2910/2001 continued to treat undocumented immigration as a crime and keeps in action the extreme administrative measures. The increase in the penalties against those who help and/or employ such immigrants was also expanded to bar illegal foreigners from public health services and security funds, and forbidding medical attendance for chronic medical problems.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, this provision was on the air as anti-constitutional (Ta Nea, 17/08/2001).

To solve that, some amendments to Law 2910/2001 have been introduced in the new Law 3013/2002:

1. The General Secretary of a Municipality is authorized to establish two additional Committees for evaluating migrant applications for residence and work permits.
2. All migrant residence permits are automatically extended to 31 December 2002.
3. Establishment of Greece’s Migration Policy institute (IMEPO) in Athens (affiliation to the ministry of interior). The official establishment was announced in the Government Gazette on 5 December 2002. The institute will advice the State on migration policy and will be involved with the operational programme for migrants in Greece (its basic purpose is to facilitate migrants’ integration into the Greek society and labor market). The four-year programme will cost 260 million euros and is expected to begin in 2003. The money will come from annual residence permits that will cost 150 euros, funds from the state budget and EU. The programme’s priorities are the creation of information and counseling networks; improved education and health services for migrants, including preventive medicine; and the creation of an infrastructure for the reception and temporary housing for migrants.

⁴⁵ Emergency incidents though, were covered.

3. Conclusion

Although Greece has had a long history of emigration, things have changed during the last twenty or so years. Greece was advancing economically. Emigration has declined to a minimum, and foreigners have started to immigrate to the country. In the beginning, very few people would come. But in 1990, when the Eastern Block finally fell down, crowds of immigrants moved to Greece.

Some have come legally and documented, while the majority crossed the border undocumented, to live in clandestine status. They all have come with the dream of a better life, but in many cases they have had to overpass two serious obstacles.

On the one hand, they had to find work. This was not that difficult if they did not have many expectations. Many immigrants have found low prestige, underpaid jobs. Some were highly educated, but they would not get employed for their educational assets and professional experience.

On the other, they had to live along Greeks, a people not familiarised with the coexistence of foreigners. During the first half of the 1990s things were quite hard for the immigrants, since they had to cope with the feelings of the greek society. A superficial view of the situation may lead to the recognition of generalized xenophobia, but a more elaborate one will project the fact that there has been xenophobia only towards Albanians, and that Greeks are much more characterized by insecurity than xenophobia.

Both obstacles had to be dealt with along the relative immigration legislation. The Greek government was obliged to review its legislation, and many changes have taken place during the last decade. These changes had also to be in accordance with the respective policies of the other EU member states, and the common European policies. Although the future of the immigrants in Greece seemed vague, the last years have shown a change. Slowly but steadily their living and employment conditions are ameliorating. It still is a rough path, but progress is being made in relation to their rights. Things are getting easier for them and integration in the greek society does not seem to be impossible anymore.

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GREECE

PART 3: POLITICS OF ASYLUM AND REFUGEE PROTECTION

Stavros Skrinis

1. Evolution of asylum and refugee policies

For a long time Greece had been rather far from other peoples. It was a rather homogeneous country and very few were willing to immigrate to it, either as economic migrants or as asylum seekers and refugees, considering its poor economic conditions and an unstable political system. The largest waves of refugees until the last quarter of the 20th century were also Greeks, from Asia Minor, the Balkans, or Northern Africa.

Since the Transition to democracy in 1974, Greece has been enjoying its longest period of peaceful and stable political condition. It was in the 1980s and mostly in the 1990s that aliens would start coming to Greece to seek asylum and refuge from the conditions in their countries. Most come to Greece for economical reasons, as immigrants, but there are also many who are trying to flee from their home for fear of persecutions on racial, religious, national, social or political grounds. This is the case of asylum seekers and refugees.

This paper aims to present the actual trends on asylum seekers and refugees in the case of Greece, during these last years. The relative legislation is very recent. Asylum and refugee issues are dealt with by the laws 1975/1991 and 2452/1996, and the presidential decrees 61/1999, 189/1998 and 266/1999, all issued in the 1990s. Since this is a rather new phenomenon, the paper could only be descriptive. First, we show how asylum seekers come to Greece, then, how their application is processed, and finally, we describe their living conditions in the country.

2. Actual trends of the asylum and refugee policies

2.1 Coming to Greece

Asylum seekers enter Greece in many ways. Few arrive to airports and seaports, but most of them, presumably 90% (ECRE, 126) cross the borders illegally along with economic immigrants. They either cross the Evros River that separates Greece from Turkey, or they use small boats to reach one of the many greek islands all over the Aegean.⁴⁶

Most of them are Iraqi, Turkish and Palestinian, but there are many others from Asian countries such as Iran, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and others from Africa (Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea) (table 1). In their majority they are male, between 20 and 50 years old, but contrary to economic immigrants, the percentage of women and children asylum seekers and refugees is higher.

⁴⁶ Or even the Ionian Sea, considering a recent incident of a boat with more than 700 people, who asked for asylum.

Upon arrival they are expected to submit their application for asylum to the border authorities. Alternatively, they may address any other public authority, which has to notify the local police department and send the petitioners there. The applications for asylum may be personal or they may cover family members who are under the protection of the applicant.⁴⁷ The police authority has to interview the asylum seekers, and provide them with a “pink card”. When it is impossible to interview all asylum seekers at once,⁴⁸ or when interpreters are needed, the police issue a special note, similar to an identity, with the name and picture of the bearer and the date when the interview is due. After the interview, all the necessary documents are forwarded to the Ministry of Public Order, where they are processed and the decision is made on accepting the application and granting refugee status or not.

According to the law 2452/1996, the Greek State is obliged to provide asylum seekers with accommodation. At the moment, there is only one reception centre in Lavrion, near Athens. Airports have established so-called “surveillance areas”, where asylum seekers are accommodated temporarily (ECRE, 126). Food and facilities are provided and NGO members are also allowed to provide their services and counselling. However, since the vast majority of asylum seekers enter the country along with undocumented immigrants, they run the risk of being arrested. In this case, they get detained, and they remain under detention for as long as their application is examined.

During the application process, asylum seekers are assisted by lawyers and interpreters. The Athens Bar Association (DSA) is offering legal assistance free of charge to asylum seekers and immigrants (To Vima). DSA’s resources are not sufficient to cover all needs. Nevertheless, there are other NGO’s, such as the Greek Refugee Council (GCR) and the Greek Red Cross. Lawyers and interpreters have access to the places where the asylum seekers are hosted or detained all over the greek territory, and offer their services and counselling at all stages of the asylum procedure (ECRE, 129).

2.2. Determination procedure

There are two determination procedures: the accelerated and the normal one. In the first case, asylum petitions should be processed as a priority when they are submitted upon arrival at a point of entry, or when they are unfounded. When the claims of the applicant are unsubstantiated and speculative, or when the applicant has arrived from a third country which is considered “safe” (Karidis.), where one would not be persecuted, the applicant is denied asylum and refugee status.

Under the normal procedure, asylum seekers are interviewed by the police. They are given enough time, in order to get prepared for the interview and pursue legal counselling if necessary. According to the presidential decree 61/1999, asylum applications must be processed within three months. As mentioned above, there are many cases that outlast this period. Usually, in large cities the procedure may last a year (ECRE, 128). When the decision has been made over an application and the result is negative, the decision may be appealed to the Ministry of Public Order. A hearing follows and then the minister must take the final decision.

⁴⁷ Family members are considered the applicant’s spouse, single children less than 18 years of age, children above 18, who have a disability of some type, and the applicant’s parents if they were living together.

⁴⁸ This happens in many cases in metropolitan areas as Athens and Thessalonica where the personnel of the police and the number of interpreters cannot match the number of asylum seekers.

The only refugee status granted in Greece is ‘convention status’. The refugees get a residence permit for five years, which is renewable on a five-year basis. If the asylum application has been rejected, the Minister of Public Order has the authority to permit, for humanistic reasons, a foreigner to stay in the country (Papassiopi-Passia,). The law does not define these humanistic reasons, thus permitting ad hoc judgement of each case. A residence permit for humanistic reasons equates protection against deportation, permission to work in the country and receiving medical care.

2.3. Residence in Greece

Asylum seekers and refugees staying in Greece are granted work permits (presidential decree 189/1998). In the case of asylum seekers the permit is temporary for the period their application is processed, but it is extended if they are recognized as refugees. Recognized refugees are issued five-year residence permits along with the work authorization, and travel documents. They are also entitled to apply for separated spouses, minor children, and other dependent members to join them in Greece (presidential decree 61/1999). Moreover, refugees may apply for the greek citizenship after five years of permanent stay in the country (law 2910/2001).⁴⁹

Some refugees may find accommodation in the Lavrion reception centre. However, most of them find accommodation of their own in the cities, with the assistance of social workers or their compatriots who have come earlier to Greece. They may let with other families so that they can save resources for their expenses. Refugees do not get any financial assistance from the state, although there is a subsistence allowance for vulnerable people (such as single parents, elderly people, people with chronic medical problems) provided by the Greek Refugee Council and the Social Work Foundation (ECRE, 132-3).⁵⁰

Refugees and asylum seekers are granted a work permit, which is valid for all types of employment. Nevertheless, finding employment with legal status is extremely difficult. The majority of the immigrants and refugees who come to Greece, legally or illegally, get temporary underpaid jobs,⁵¹ usually half the wage a Greek would take, without social security insurance. Many of them do not have the necessary qualifications; therefore they get employed as unskilled workers. In rural areas male immigrants are occupied in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and construction, and women work as housekeepers. In urban areas, men work mainly in construction or construction related jobs, and in small-scale businesses, while women work as cleaners in buildings and hotels or housekeepers, (Siadima, 12; Fakiolas, 14). Refugees and immigrants have been ideal for taking up jobs of low prestige; jobs that Greeks would not be willing to take up. It is rather interesting that even in jobs that one would think that there is substitution of Greeks by immigrants, in construction for example, usually the Greek builder becomes a subcontractor and hires immigrants to do the work he used to do (Papadopoulos).

⁴⁹ The period is ten years for immigrants.

⁵⁰ The monthly subsistence allowance is €154.6 for a single person, with the addition of €31 for every subsequent family member. The GCR and SWF also provide a food allowance of €59.4 per month, in co-operation with local supermarkets (ECRE, 132-3). There is also a provision for additional assistance in special cases, such as illness or buying medication.

⁵¹ That is, underpaid for greek and european standards. For example, while Albanian wages are approximately \$3 per day, an undocumented Albanian would get between \$6 and \$10 in rural areas, and between \$15 and \$20 in the Athens Metropolitan area (Siadima, 6).

Refugees may attend Greek or English language courses, which are provided by the GCR, the University of Athens, the Red Cross, and other NGOs. These courses are provided for free to refugees and asylum seekers, even though there may be a charge for special courses. They can also attend courses on Turkish, Farsi, Assyrian and Arabic in GCR's centres (ECRE, 136).

The refugee children are expected to enrol to greek public schools and they may attend all levels of the local educational system. They may also apply to greek universities, after they pass certain examinations of language aptitude. Given the fact that most refugees are underpaid in their jobs, their children often find themselves obliged to work too. Many quit school and help their parents (or go begging in the streets), not earning much and working long hours. Thus, they lose the opportunity to get educated, and hence, they reproduce a generation of aliens who will not be fully integrated in the greek society.

3. Conclusions

Seeking asylum in Greece is a recent phenomenon. The first big wave of alien refugees started coming to the country during the 1990s. Greece is still among the first destinations for asylum seekers. People come from various parts of Asia and Africa.

The inrush of asylum seekers and refugees (along with economical immigrants) caught Greece unprepared, and with inadequate legislation. Hence, the state engaged itself to come up with modern legislation adapted to the EU guidelines.

The procedure of granting asylum is aiming at parting genuine refugees from immigrants. As a result, the granting of asylum is rather low.

Although refugees are granted many rights, as residence and work permits, freedom of movement and social security, their living conditions are still poor and their integration to the greek society rather slow.

Table 1:***Breakdown according to the country of origin/nationality:***

Country	2000	2001	Variation +/- (%)
Iraq	1 334	1 972	+47.8
Turkey	591	800	+35.4
Afghanistan	446	1 459	+227.1
Pakistan	141	252	+78.7
Iran	135	217	+60.7
Bangladesh	49	33	-32.7
Sierra Leone	52	163	+213.5
Sudan	41	45	+9.8
Palestine	36	38	+5.6
Sri Lanka	19	28	+47.4
India	27	41	+51.9
Morocco	-	148	-
Ethiopia	-	34	-
Eritrea	-	26	-
DRC	-	32	-
Russian Federation	-	21	-

Source: Ministry of Public Order

Table 2:***Total number of applications decided and the statuses accorded:***

Statuses	2000		2001		
	Number	%	Number	%	
No status awarded		1 748		1 165	
Convention status		222		147	9.5
Humanitarian status granted or renewed	175		233		
Total decisions	2 145	100%	1 545	100%	

Source: MPO Statistics

Statistics (source MPO statistics)

Number of applications submitted in Greece	
1996	1,640
1997	4,380
1998	2,953
1999	1,528

Number of Convention statuses granted

Number of Convention statuses	
1996	160
1997	130
1998	156
1999	146

Number of residence permits for humanitarian reasons

Number of residence permits for humanitarian reasons	
1996	not available
1997	not available
1998	386
1999	407

Main national groups

Main national groups seeking asylum in Greece in 1999	
Iraq	906
Turkey	195
Afghanistan	116
Iran	74

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GREECE

PART 4: INTEGRATION POLICIES

Stavros Skrinis

1. Reception of the integration policies

1.1. Introduction

The Greek nation-state as it is known nowadays, is the result of a century-long process of military and political struggle. It was founded in the 1830s by the orthodox peoples that lived in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula. At first, the Greek state was very small, covering the Peloponnese, the southern mainland, and a few islands. Step by step, it expanded both in area and population and claimed lands that were not as densely populated by Greeks as the southern part of the country. There were also Koutsovlachs, Slavs, Muslims and Jews.

Greeks however, claim to be the descendants of a great people, and the inheritors of a great civilization and a great nation, which after a troublesome period resurged to claim its heritage. According to the Greeks' perception of their nation and their selves, these minority populations could not remain in Greece. They should either become Greeks, through assimilation, or they should leave the country.⁵² Through such policies⁵³ (and the elimination of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki) Greece has become, after World War II, one of the most homogeneous countries in Europe. The Greek citizenship has been identical (almost) to a greek-speaking, orthodox population.

Greece has been a country of emigration for a long time during the past, similar to the other countries of Southern Europe. The turbulent first half of the 20th century, including two World Wars, two Balkan Wars and a Civil War had prevented Greece to evolve technologically and keep up with the rest of Europe. Agriculture, the main sector of the greek economy during that period, was not sufficiently large to absorb the country's labour force. The only plausible solution was emigration. Consequently, the demographic problem was solved and the remittances from abroad boosted the greek economy. Greece took some big steps, became an associate member of the EEC in 1964, and a full member in 1981, closing the gap that separated it from western European countries.

Thus, Greece has come to receive immigrants, both foreigners and from the diasporas. During the 1970s and 1980s, Greece had some Polish, Egyptian, African, and South Asian immigrants, most of them with legal work permits (Siadima 2001, 5). Their number was around 50,000 until the end of the 1980s. But then, dramatic political changes transformed the migration flows within Europe in general, and Greece in particular. On the one hand, the deepening of the economic gap between North and South, and West and East, made immigrants from Third World countries to inrush to Europe. On the other, the collapse of the USSR and the other Eastern European regimes led to the displacement of millions of people, in search of better living conditions and a better future.

⁵² Apart from any ideological explanation based on the Greek national myth, the main reason for this was that they lived near the border, in a troublesome area such as Macedonia and Thrace, which was coveted by all the Balkan states for its position.

⁵³ It was mainly the case of assimilation policies and exchange of populations (Skrinis).

1.2. Immigration in Greece

The geographical position and the morphology of the country make immigrant mobility quite easy and uncontrolled. At the same time, the socio-political conditions in the Balkans in comparison with the development of Greece and its integration in the European communities has made the country a desired destination or a way to other EU countries.

Immigration influxes in Greece caught the county unprepared, thus making it an uncontrolled and multidimensional phenomenon. Usually, immigrants come either seasonally or permanently, legally or illegally, on their own will, and individually. There are also cases of family or group migration. Mass migration has been the case only for Greek-Pontics and Albanians in the early 1990s.

Thus, it became imperative to review the current legislation and modernize it, especially if one takes into consideration that the law in power had been passed in 1929. The law 1975/1991 was aiming at dealing with illegal migration and supporting the legal stay of foreigners in the country. It would control the status of foreigners from non-EU countries, while making provisos for ethnic Greeks (Papassioti-Passia, 19-20). It was an attempt to modernize, in harmonization with EC guidelines (Karidis, 68), the relevant legislation on issues of entrance, exit, stay, settlement, employment and deportation of aliens, and the recognition of political refugees.

The law had some positive things like the regulations on refugees, family unification, the issuing of “white” and “green cards”, and the conditions for a valid administrative deportation. The Greek state had shown for a long period of time its sensitivity in the protection of human rights. That is why many articles in the law were followed with the reservedness to the international engagements Greece had undertaken in similar issues (Karidis, 66-7). However, on the whole the law 1975/1991 had problems, either of anti-constitutional nature or of deficient and obscure regulations. Such things as deportations, stricter border controls,⁵⁴ and absence of measures ensuring human rights were common in this law. The aim was to minimize undocumented immigration and employment, but in practice the opposite was accomplished (Papassioti-Passia, 85).

As a result, the Greek state decided to review the Law 1975/1991, and voted the Law 2910/2001. The new law, although more liberal in its philosophy and guidelines, was also restrictive, but a few parameters have changed. To start with, a new regularization, a “second chance” as the motto was, was programmed for those who have resided in Greece for at least one year before its application. This was necessary, but according to what the immigrants claimed, it has not been enough and a third regularization will be inevitable soon. Secondly, the new law decreased the limit for naturalization. It used to be fifteen years in the previous law, and it has turned to ten years of legal residence during the last twelve years for immigrants and five years for refugees. Third, the various penalties for people who transport, employ, or accommodate undocumented immigrants have been increased.

⁵⁴ Within the concept of the Schengen treaty and the common EU area, Greece has to bear the burden of controlling a significant part of EU's borders. Considering the geomorphology of the greek borderline, it is indeed a difficult task.

However, as Fakiolas claims, “the application of those rules is the real issue” (Fakiolas, 15). There is also a provision in the new law, for a new procedure attempting to recruit seasonal and long-term immigrant workers (art.19). The similarities of this provision with the bilateral agreements with the Bulgarian and Albanian governments leave little margin for optimism. The new law also establishes regional migration departments of the Interior Ministry that will help employers who look for immigrant labour, a complex network of employment offices in Greek consulates abroad, and a research institute on migration. Though, these provisions are considered to be complicated for the greek public administration.

All legal immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to free medical care and hospital treatment in accordance with the Presidential Decree No. 266/1999. This catters for access to state hospitals for free hospitalisation, medical examinations and provision of medication. Moreover, all foreigners are entitled to Greek or English language courses provided by the University of Athens, the Greek Council for Refugees, and other organizations. These courses are offered free of charge, although some fees may be required for special courses. All children have access to all levels of education irrespective of their status in Greece. Most children of foreigners of primary education age do attend school. Due to the language barrier and the lack of financial support, those of secondary education age often prefer to seek work (ECRE, 133-4). Many quit school and help their parents (or go begging in the streets), not earning much and working long hours. Thus, they lose the opportunity to get educated, and hence, they reproduce a generation of immigrants who will not be fully integrated in the greek society, and will have the same fate as their parents living in Greece (Kiliari, 41).

2. Integration policies: debates on xenophobia

For a very long period of time the Greek society has been at a distance from other peoples. The Greek state and the greek identity were built upon the pillars of the greek language and greek-orthodox religion, which stressed the links with ancient Greece and the Byzantine Empire (Skrinis, 2-3). Greece was a poor country with a glorious past. The contradiction between the past and the present situation made modern Greeks to feel insecurity. They would feel inferior when compared with their ancestors or with their contemporaries from Western Europe. They would also feel threatened by their neighbours. Hence, a ‘defensive culture’ had been created and the Greek nation had been consolidated in a way that emphasized on the homogenisation of the population and the assimilation of the minorities that dwelled in it, since it was impossible to integrate other peoples in the Greek state. Anything foreign was considered suspicious and threatening. The existence in Greece of large numbers of foreigners is alien to the ideology and the practice of the Greek state.⁵⁵ Even the existence of the Muslim minority in Thrace, given greek citizenship, was treated as a deviant case, a product of compromise with Turkey and international law, towards the building of a homogeneous nation-state. For the populations with different national identity, assimilation policies had been applied (Linardos-Rylmon, 12). This is how xenophobia was introduced to the greek society.

However, xenophobia was not easily discerned for as long as Greece was not receiving migrants and other foreigners pursuing a permanent stay. After all, Greeks have always been rather hospitable to tourists and travellers, and very helpful to anyone in need. Besides, the antidote to insecurity is reassurance and appraisal. Greeks love to be flattered and praised for

⁵⁵ For a significant proportion of the Greek population, the transitions due to globalisation and the integration of Greece in the international society are treated as threats. One of these threats is immigration (Linardos-Rylmon, 10).

anything good they do. Moreover, there were very few occasions, if none at all, for Greeks to feel xenophobia, since Greece was a poor country with a large proportion of the population emigrating to America, Australia or Western European countries, and there were very few foreigners who would migrate to Greece before the massive influx of immigrants in the 1990s.

Earlier before, Greece had not been through many similar experiences. The exchange of populations in 1922 was one. More than a million people (with greek national conscience) were forced to leave their homes and come from Turkey to settle in Greece. In addition, since the mid-1950s, around half a million ethnic Greeks have settled from Turkey, Egypt, Congo (or Zaire) and Cyprus among others, following political turmoil. Both cases share the same characteristic; it was Greeks who came to Greece. "Speaking good greek, being well versed in western European languages and having professional qualifications with high market demand, the majority of the settlers [...] attained fairly quickly economic and social integration" (Fakiolas, 7) especially those who came between the 1950s and 1970s, a period of rapid economic growth.

Apparently, this is not the case for those ethnic Greeks who have come from Albania or Eastern Europe. They cannot speak fluent greek, thus falling before the eyes of the locals. Apart from some privileges they have been granted,⁵⁶ they find themselves competing with the numerous foreign economic immigrants in the labour market and face difficulties in their integration. However, this underestimation is rather 'selective'. Through the homogenisation culture of the Greek population, these ethnic Greeks are 'potentially' good people. On the one hand, they are greek-orthodox and this is an asset for them. On the other, the good ones 'are' Greeks, while the bad ones 'are' Albanians or Romanians and so forth. Those who are hard working and successful in their field are easily distinguished for their 'greekness', i.e. athletes in the Olympic Games.⁵⁷ Oppositely, when ethnic Greeks would get arrested, their citizenship would be stressed instead of their nationality.⁵⁸

Xenophobia in Greece is rather selective. There are no cases of such feelings towards west Europeans, who most of the time are considered heralds of modernisation, culture and the integration of Greece in the European family. This is due to their educational level and *genre de vie* in general. On the other hand, Africans and Asians with lower education have not been treated or confronted with xenophobia. The community of African immigrants has always kept a low profile, closing itself socially and keeping interrelations with Greeks to a minimum. The same applies for Egyptian workers and fishermen. Another national group, which has been coming to Greece since mid-1980s from the Philippines, leads a quiet life as well (Karidis, 118-9).

At the same time, Kurds and Serbs residing in Greece either as refugees or as immigrants have also been relieved from such treatment. In their case it is compassion and sympathy that Greeks feel towards them. The Kurds either from Turkey or from Iraq, are both considered with sympathy, because they come from countries where they are oppressed. Serbs are looked upon as "brothers" to many Greeks. The link in this case, is orthodox religion. It has been noted that the hostility against immigrants is much higher for the non-Christian orthodox, and generally non-Christians (Siadima, 20). Hence, it is better to be Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian and so forth, than to be Albanian, or Pakistani.

⁵⁶ Since April 1998, they have been eligible for a special identity card, valid for three years and renewable, which grants them the right of residence (with incentives to settle in northern Greece) and guarantees them the same treatment in the labour market as the locals (Fakiolas, 7).

⁵⁷ More than half of the national weight-lifting squad is comprised of ethnic Greeks from Albania.

⁵⁸ There was a period during the 1990s, when any criminal activity would be attributed to foreigners. Fortunately, this has stopped now.

There are also different degrees of xenophobic feelings. One criterion is the level of education of the Greek population. In various empirical researches it has been shown that the more educated are also more tolerant towards immigrants, while those with lower education tend to be more narrow-minded, insecure and, as a result, more xenophobic.⁵⁹ Another criterion has to do with the amount of interrelations and interactions between the indigenous population and the immigrants. It is quite interesting that in 1989, in a EUROSTAT opinion poll, Greeks showed impressive tolerance towards the presence and the rights of foreigners in the country. Only three years later, after the massive influx of immigrants, the Greeks were holding one of the first positions in xenophobic perceptions and behaviour among EU member states. Many claim that they do not feel threatened by the presence of foreigners, but they would not be willing to live next to them. Others would not rent their property to immigrants.⁶⁰ This is one reason why immigrants tended to find homes near their compatriots. Another is of course that they would feel more at home if they kept close relations with their peers.

Albanians had kept the same stance when they started crossing the borders with Greece. But contrary to the other nationalities, Albanians came in large numbers and almost simultaneously, thus making quite an impression and alarming the, until then, sleeping xenophobic feeling of the Greeks. Due to their large numbers they have been identified with the notion of the “immigrant” in Greece.⁶¹ It is Albanians who are in the back of the mind of anyone who talks about immigration in general, or xenophobia in particular.

Albanian immigrants have been treated with xenophobia by a lot of Greeks, due to various reasons. Not because they are worse than other immigrants but mainly because they are more. It is their number that has alarmed the Greeks. There were also various incidents that have contributed to the creation of this xenophobic feeling.

James Pettifer describes rather eloquently how things started: “In December 1990, the police-state apparatus on the border between Albania and Greece was abolished, and most of the Albanian armed guards were withdrawn from the border area around Kakavia, high in the Epirus mountains. Until then, any Albanian trying to leave the country since 1945 had been shot on sight and the border was protected by a high electric fence. The immediate result was an influx of penniless, destitute Albanian refugees into Greece. Thousands struggled through deep snow and icy rivers to reach freedom and a better economic life. At first they were welcomed by the local Greeks who provided food for hungry mouths and shoes for the unshod. But as the influx continued intermittently over the next few months, tolerance and generosity began to run out, particularly in the regional capital of Yannina, where Albanians stealing garden vegetables or simply taking food from shops became a problem. This state of affairs worsened, with armed

⁵⁹ From the answers given in a survey published in the daily *Eleftherotypia* (1/8/2001), followed that people with higher education level than the average who lived in the same neighbourhood and thus had the chance to socialize with or meet immigrants, tended to think more positively about them (Siadima, 19).

⁶⁰ This however has not only to do with xenophobia. That may be one explanation. Another is that underpaid immigrants cannot guarantee that they will be able to afford paying the rent for a long time.

⁶¹ Karydis refers to a research where “according to the answers, “Albanians” are substantially identified in the common social conscience with the notion of the “foreigner” (Karydis, 121). However, we think that this is an exaggeration. We also think that the social context and the context of a questionnaire may lead to certain answers and results. For example, the notion of “foreigner” may be more easily identified with the notion of “tourist” during the summer period, than with that of “immigrant”. Then again, if the context is immigration, it is highly possible that the mind focuses on that field.

gangs of Albanians robbing isolated houses, terrifying villagers and contributing to a general Wild West atmosphere around the border” (Pettifer, 177-8).⁶²

Later, in 1997, the collapse of pyramid investment schemes in Albania caused social unrest. Then about 700,000 modern guns were stolen, and many have found their way to Greece (Fakiolas, 18). Along came a new wave of immigrants, who had lost the savings they had made strenuously the previous seven years. Many prisoners were released and a lot of them had allegedly moved to Greece (Siadima, 19). The media had emphasized on certain incidents as the aforementioned, and created the stereotype of the ‘dangerous’ and ‘ungrateful’ illegal immigrant.

The image of the immigrant through the greek mass media has not been positive at all for a long time. According to many journalists, crowds of ill-fated people had come to Greece to exploit the ‘numerous’ opportunities of employment and enrichment (Kiliari, 42-3). Albanian immigrants were considered ‘bad people’, and that extrapolated so that all immigrants were to be considered ‘bad’, ‘dangerous’ and so forth, even ‘less-civilized’.⁶³ All these stereotypes lead to xenophobia.

The result of these xenophobic feelings was an atypical stance towards immigration. This stance combined the acceptance of the presence of immigrants, but with the precondition that they should not be integrated as equals to the greek society, hence they would not have equal rights. This dual attitude was based on xenophobia, and aimed at keeping immigrants in the country, employed in jobs very few Greeks would do, with wages very few Greeks would accept, so that they would have offered to the country before they would decide (by themselves) to leave for a better place (Linardos-Rylmon, 4). This duality was based on the positive aspects of immigration to the greek economy.

Many argue that the presence of immigrants had beneficial results. They have freed many skilled Greek women with families to pursue a career. The majority of them consume mainly domestic goods and products (since they are cheaper than imported ones). Being young and without their families, they burden minimally the social infrastructure (hospitals, clinics etc). They pay all the indirect taxes, which in the case of Greece are a lot. If they are legally employed they also contribute to the social security funds, while unregistered employment reduces labour costs and helps many small-scale businesses (Fakiolas, 19; Siadima, 13-4).

Keeping these in mind, and since the media have changed their stance against immigrants, a change in society is also being witnessed. Theatre and TV productions project the ill-mannered way immigrants in general and Albanians in particular were treated in the 1990s. Moreover, immigrants ran in the recent municipal elections of October 2002, in many parties. It may stem from political correctness, maturity, or habit but at the turn of the century, many Greeks have pondered on the Greek emigrants in the 1950s and 1960s, they have been persuaded that the high rates of criminality in the early 1990s were not due to immigrants, except from a small fraction, and they acknowledge the benefits of immigration.⁶⁴ Xenophobic feelings and

⁶² Pettifer adds that “Greek police action was firm, not to say brutal in some occasions, with deaths of Albanian refugees and there have been numerous accusations of human rights violations” (Pettifer, 178).

⁶³ The images of other ethnicities as ‘less-civilised’ and as threatening the survival of ‘Greeknness’ point towards a socio-economic development that was rooted both in traditionalism and the spirit of Nationalist strife. (Psimmenos and Georgoulas, 39)

⁶⁴ Kiliari mentions some surveys showing that when immigrants formed 5% of the population in Greece, they were responsible only for 1.4% of misdemeanours and felonies. Their crimes however had different media projection than

stereotypes have started to fade out. In recent surveys, Greeks seem to be more moderate towards the presence of immigrants than before (Siadima, 19). Many immigrants have keys to greek houses, which they visit regularly to housekeep or do maintenance and repair work, and no complaint of theft has been heard over the years.⁶⁵ In addition, many Greeks offer their help and services to the immigrants in their dealings with the authorities (Fakiolas, 18).

During the last few years, immigrants have started to integrate in the greek society. They find accommodation in various neighbourhoods, learn to speak greek and try to settle. Their children attend public schools⁶⁶ just like the local kids, and actually they get along very well. A survey showed that 9 out of 10 primary school pupils had a positive view of their foreign schoolmates, and a similar rate appeared willing to share their desk with a foreigner (Fakiolas, 17). In 1997, 4.6% of primary education pupils were foreigners. Considering that these children will learn to live in the greek society and make Greek friends, entails that they will mingle and integrate rather well, offering at the same time to the cultural enrichment of the society.

3. Conclusion

Although Greece has had a long history of emigration, things have changed during the last twenty or so years. Greece was advancing economically. Emigration has declined to a minimum, and foreigners have started to immigrate to the country. In the beginning, very few people would come. But in 1990, when the Eastern Block fell down, crowds of immigrants moved to Greece.

On the other, they had to live along Greeks, a people not familiarised with the coexistence of foreigners. During the first half of the 1990s things were quite hard for the immigrants, since they had to cope with the feelings of the greek society. A superficial view of the situation may lead to the recognition of generalized xenophobia, but a more elaborate one will project the fact that there has been xenophobia only towards Albanians, and that Greeks are much more characterized by insecurity and reservedness than xenophobia.

Both obstacles had to be dealt with along the relative immigration legislation. The Greek government was obliged to review its legislation, and many changes have taken place during the last decade. These changes had also to be in accordance with the respective policies of the other EU member states, and the common European policies. Although the future of the immigrants in Greece seemed vague, the last years have shown a change. Slowly but steadily their living and employment standards are improving. It still is a long road, especially considering that there are not any specific integration policies, but progress is being made in relation to the foreigners' rights. Things are getting easier for them and integration in the greek society does not seem to be impossible anymore.

those committed by Greeks. She also mentions that foreigners have substituted Greeks in only 5.8% of working positions, in sectors Greeks were not willing to get employed such as agriculture and construction (Kiliari, 73-4).

⁶⁵ According to police reports, a combination of administrative and punitive measures has brought about a considerable decline in immigrant criminality in 1999-2000. This decline has been largely due to the close police cooperation among the Balkan countries, and especially between Albania and Greece (Fakiolas, 17).

⁶⁶ There is also a tendency to establish schools for nationalities, like the Polish school among others, which in 1997 had 350 students (Kiliari, 41).

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