

# Globalizing Greek Society: An Overview of Immigration to Greece

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## RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est d'évaluer un des effets immédiats de la globalisation sur la politique et la société grecques. Bien que la Grèce a été, le plus souvent, considérée comme un pays, qui a pendant longtemps souffert des tendances massives de l'émigration jusqu'à tout récemment, la période de l'après la guerre froide a été pour ce pays une phase de lutte contre l'immigration et les conséquences qui en résultent. Des flux migratoires vers l'Europe sont à peine nouveaux, plus particulièrement, si l'on tient compte que l'Union européenne soutient le concept du « mouvement de population », il est vrai pas à une grande échelle. Dans le cas de la Grèce, cependant, les autorités locales de même que la société ont eu du mal à s'adapter aux nouvelles réalités dictées par la globalisation. L'objet de cet article est d'illustrer le phénomène de l'immigration en Grèce immédiatement après la chute du communisme en Europe.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to assess one of globalization's immediate effects on Greek politics and society. Although Greece was, more often than not, considered as a country that had long suffered from massive trends of emigration until very recently, the post-Cold War era found her battling against immigration and the ensuing consequences of this phenomenon. Flows of immigration to Europe are hardly new, particularly, when considering that the European Union supports the concept of 'movement of population,' though not to any perverse extents. In the case of Greece, nevertheless, local authorities and the society alike have found it difficult to come to terms with the new realities dictated by globalization. It is the intention of this paper to illustrate the phenomenon of immigration in Greece immediately after the collapse of communism in Europe.

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## Greece in a Globalised Environment

It has been argued that “Alarmist predictions about large-scale migration from south to north across the Mediterranean, common in analyses of the strategic environment in the 1980s and 1990s, have proven unfounded. In the western Mediterranean, southern Europe does face a stressful social problem from migration from Africa and elsewhere, but the scale has been limited.”<sup>1</sup> There is certainly much truth in this statement; however, the overall effects of immigration should not be under-estimated either. While to exaggerate the impact of immigration would surely generate high levels of xenophobia and racial discrimination, the exact opposite is often seen as a threat to national identity and, perhaps, social integration. Even at the level of the European Union, the omnipresent amalgamation of globalization and regionalism, only a very selective trend of immigration is actually encouraged that answers to the name of ‘internal mobility.’ To this end, Greece resisting immigration is no exception to European Union ‘norms’. On the contrary, ever since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the abrupt termination of the superpower rivalry, instrumental in preserving a peculiar sense of order and stability, the occasional Greek government is often confronted with the heated debate that surrounds the phenomenon of immigration, always in line with the fundamental principles of respect for human rights and ethics.

In the case of Greece, nonetheless, a country with a small population of about 10-11 millions, controlling immigration has proved a daunting task that is rarely crowned with success. The added weight on Greece’s already strained welfare system and not that prosperous an economy should not be neglected. As it happens, “societies around the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean are experiencing rapid, sometimes violent, change, with the potential for sudden and disastrous refugee movements. The last 10 to 15 years have seen dramatic examples of this phenomenon, including the massive exodus of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria (many have since returned), sporadic large-scale movements from Albania to Italy, the flow of Kurds from South-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, and the exodus from Bosnia and, more recently, Kosovo. Turmoil in Egypt might also generate large refugee flows affecting Greece and the region, although the failure of such migration to materialize from the Algerian crisis suggests that neighboring countries in North Africa, rather than southern Europe, would face a larger refugee burden than Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

Greece herself is no stranger to civil strife, political tension and economic

crises, but to embrace those originating from countries suffering from the exact same levels of turmoil is a wholly different matter. Although Greece is, indeed, an integral part of the global village, there seems to be a rather strong urge to resist anything characteristically distant to whatever ingredients constitute the Greek identity altogether. Beyond any shadow of doubt, “Globalization also threatens the security of identity in many societies, as a consequence of migration or through wider access to information. As elsewhere in Europe, Greek society has experienced some aspects of this problem, but for other societies around the region, especially those across the Mediterranean, globalization poses a much more serious challenge to identity. At a minimum, globalization is likely to be part of the environment that Greece confronts in dealing with its eastern Mediterranean neighbors in the future.”<sup>3</sup>

### **From Emigration to Immigration**

The unique history of Greece in the twentieth century makes it a particularly interesting case in terms of its recent migration history. Amongst these particularities are the civil war (1946-1949) and the military dictatorship (1967-1974), with both of these events having their repercussions on the migratory movements to and from the country. Noteworthy is the substantial outflow of nationals, either as political refugees (1949 -1951) or as economic migrants (1950 -1973), generating a net emigration of almost one million out of a population of 7. 2 million. Castles and Miller (1998)<sup>4</sup> discussed extensively the new global trends of immigration, its acceleration and the fact that today many more countries are affected by it and its political aspects. Greece changed from a country of emigration until the 1970s to one of immigration in the 1980s and 1990s. As a matter of fact, “according to recent research findings and estimates announced by the Greek Migration Policy Institute, up to ten per cent of the population are immigrants. This translates to 1. 15 million documented and undocumented ‘foreigners’ that reside (and most of them work) in the country. The number of immigrants has quadrupled in the last fifteen years, making Greece the country with the highest proportional increase in immigration in the European Union (EU) over this time.”<sup>5</sup>

Greece was traditionally perceived as a ‘country of emigration’ throughout the better part of the twentieth century, but the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the more recent trend of globalization

have altered her status to a 'country of destination' for immigrants reaching the Greek shores from Asian and African states. Before the Second World War, between 1900 and 1924 to be more precise, Greek migrants accounted for some 420, 000. <sup>6</sup> Sadly, the economic and social issues that tormented the Greek society in the aftermath of World War Two forced an even larger number of Greeks to leave their country in search of better living standards and employment opportunities with the most likely destinations being the United States and West Germany. Disturbingly, Fakiolas (2000)<sup>7</sup> argues that almost one million Greeks left their country from 1945 to 1973. Not surprisingly, the Greek governments of the time encouraged the flow of Greek emigrants simply because of the obvious economic benefits that derived from this awkward movement of population.<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, it seems that emigrant remittances contributed much to the improvement of the Greek economy, since in 1960 alone such remittances covered 35 percent of the balance of payments' deficit and made up for 30 percent of the total 'invisible' imports.<sup>9</sup> The causes that accounted for the mass exodus of Greeks in the post-war period ranged from political reasons, such as the civil war that marked contemporary Greek history from 1946 to 1949, to the ever-increasing unemployment that resulted from the Second World War. Nevertheless, the deteriorating economies of some destination countries in the early 1970s as a result of the oil crises, coupled with Greece's return to parliamentary democracy in 1974 signalled the beginning of a new era whereby the emigrants decided to return to their homeland.<sup>10</sup> Between 1987 and 1993 nearly 50, 000 ethnic Greeks returned to their homeland.<sup>11</sup>

As in the case of Italy, Portugal and Spain, Greece, too, witnessed mass emigration prior to the 1990s and mass immigration in the post-Cold War era. The changing patterns of migration appeared during the 1980s when the return of Greek emigrants coincided with the entry to Greece of foreign immigrants. In fact, one can identify three categories of immigrants in Greece, the first consisting of Greek migrants returning from the former Soviet republics, Albania and Eastern European countries. The second category concerned foreign workers that were legally employed in Greece, with some 34, 000 immigrants recorded in 1992, though the majority consisted of European Union nationals. Finally, the majority of immigrants arriving in Greece originated from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. The vast majority of them, however, were illegally resident in Greece; therefore, exact figures for that period of time are largely unavailable.<sup>12</sup> During the 1990s, a

period marked by a significant increase in immigration to Greece, most problems related to immigration, one way or another, resulted from the lack of analysis, research and statistical data. If truth be told, a government supervised Migration Policy Institute (IMEPO) was only established as recently as 2002.<sup>13</sup> All in all, “countries of Central and Eastern Europe began to emerge as source countries. The first noteworthy flows from these areas were observed from the mid-1980’s when some of the socialist countries there embarked on a course of liberalization. Migrants began to arrive from Poland and later from Bulgaria and Romania. The flows increased sharply, however, at the end of the decade with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and its allies in the region and then with the collapse of Albania at the beginning of the 1990’s.”<sup>14</sup>

It appears that the geographic location of Greece rendered the country vulnerable to immigration flows. Moreover, the fact that until very recently Greece shared no common borders with European Union member-states, while the country happens to be located in the politically unstable region that is the Balkan Peninsula, speaks volumes for the numbers of people that treated her as a bridge to Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> To better comprehend migration in Greece, the push/pull factor theory must be stressed at this point. According to Theodoros Iosifides and Russell King (Autumn 1996) five key elements have acted as pull factors for Greece. Ease of entry was considered as the first element that encouraged immigrants to regard Greece as a likely destination. Much unlike northern and western European countries, Greek policies regarding migration seem ridiculously lax, if not inviting. What is more, Greece’s coastlines and numerous islands in the Aegean Sea provide a unique environment of multiple entry points impossible to guard with effect. Political tension and instability in the wider area of the Eastern Mediterranean is yet another factor that almost justifies immigration to Greece, while her economic recovery ever since the country’s admission to the European Communities has also attracted the attention of immigrants from nearby countries. From a demographic perspective, Greece as any other European state suffers from an aging population and low birth rates, which may prove a daunting task for any government aiming at restraining uncontrolled migration flows.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, push factors have constituted different causes depending on different countries. The various difficulties that have been faced by sending countries have included ethnic conflicts, political problems, religious tension and numerous economic challenges. Therefore, migrants seem to have decided to leave their homes in search of

higher wages, a safer and peaceful environment and have even viewed Greece as a transit country since entry to her would have meant entry to the EU or to other Western States with stricter immigration policies.<sup>17</sup> On the whole, in the 1990s Greece received its first significant numbers of migrants and refugees. The country's proximity to zones of international and civil conflict saw the influx of large numbers of people who were fleeing war and economic instability. According to the 2001 national census, the number of officially recorded non-nationals now represents 7.3% of the population. In the Athens Metropolitan area, non-nationals make up 10% of the population. On top of this, it is estimated that undocumented migrants represent a large group in Greece. In addition, Greece has a number of minorities, such as the Roma and the Muslim minority in Thrace, who have an established presence in the country. Against this background, Greece has developed a strong sense of national identity over different periods in response to what it sees as an external threat to national identity and security from 'outsiders'.<sup>18</sup>

### **Immigrants' Professional Occupation**

Most certainly, an examination of the type of profession that migrants occupy in Greece is central to our subject matter. Most foreign workers in Greece are more often than not qualified as non-skilled and have, therefore, gained employment in distinct sectors of the market. The majority of them belong to the category of 'production workers,' which is in its own turn divided into several sub-categories. Agriculture is a significantly large sector in which migrants seek employment, particularly, when taking into account the need of Greek farmers to employ numerous seasonal workers. Actually, farmers have welcomed migrants merely because this kind of work requires unskilled, seasonal, workers that usually receive low pay and seek no social security. In the case of illegal migrants, they are definitely considered 'good for business.' The same scenario, more or less, describes working conditions in the industry, fisheries and elsewhere. As one might expect, this clear preference over migrant labour has caused tension in the job sector between employers and the indigenous labour force.<sup>19</sup> Self-employment presents additional opportunities for immigrants to make a living in Greece, including street vendors, prostitutes (often involving females forced into the sex industry by gangs and members of the organised crime) and traders.<sup>20</sup> Another common activity for migrants concerns jobs in the construction business, usually occupied by eastern Europeans and Albanians. Finally, the

service sector has recently incorporated a number of migrants employed in hotels, catering services and care workers in institutions like hospitals.<sup>21</sup>

### **Consequences from Immigration**

There is no doubt that immigration in Greece has had a serious impact on the country's economy. The employment of migrants in the parallel economy has brought about its expansion and increase of its influence in the general economic situation of Greece. Many migrants make their living depending on the underground economy, thus maintaining the need for manpower in other sectors of the economy.<sup>22</sup> The black market, in particular, offers employment opportunities with companies that operate underground, as well as regular companies that employ individuals on a black market basis. It is noteworthy that a large part of illegal immigrants in Greece are often employed within these parameters.<sup>23</sup> The extensive employment of illegal migrants in the secondary sector of the economy of Greece has caused the creation of specific trends. The fact of illegality itself has defined the status of migrant workers. Employers have preferred migrants as they can extensively benefit from their exploitation. In fact, illegal migrants have no legal rights while manipulation has become a general feature of the underground economy.<sup>24</sup> According to Gabriella Lazaridis and Eugenia Wickens (1999) "Most [immigrants] are in an illegal situation as regards work in the informal sector. This places them in a weak bargaining position, forcing them to accept terms stated by the employers without attempting to negotiate."<sup>25</sup>

Research conducted to examine the consequences of migration to the host country, in terms of employment, has revealed that giving employment to migrants caused in general the increase of employment levels. Moreover, "immigration has had a notably positive impact on economic development, and it will be a permanent, and positive feature of Greek society well into the future."<sup>26</sup> This has been concluded by identifying that migrants have usually occupied positions that the native population has not been willing or adequate (in terms of numbers) to occupy. The result has been jobs that migrants occupy to be developed and maintained, while the native population has been able to engage in better-paid and more prestigious positions of work. Hence, the immigrants that have gathered in Greece have been used as a scapegoat when economic weaknesses such as unemployment occur. The native population often blames migrants for the increase of

unemployment, while continuation of the above situation has inflicted another problem of a social dimension, which is nothing short of discrimination and xenophobia. In Greece, discrimination and social exclusion is also discussed with reference to notably ethnic Greeks (*palinnostountes omogeneis*) repatriated from the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union (entitled to Greek citizenship and correspondingly privileged in access to social services, education and employment), the Muslim minority in Thrace, the Roma minority (who are all Greek citizens) and migrant ethnic Greeks from Albania.<sup>27</sup>

Immigration has caused several significant problems within the social structures of Greece. During the last few years the sex and entertainment industries have shown signs of rapid growth. However, Morokvasic (1983)<sup>28</sup>, Lazaridis (2000)<sup>29</sup> and Phizacklea (1983)<sup>30</sup> make clear that women rarely attracted the attention of either the authorities or researchers, given that they somehow seem to evade the traditional definition of what constitutes migrant labour force. In this respect, Psimmenos (1995),<sup>31</sup> Iosifides (1997),<sup>32</sup> Lazaridis (1999)<sup>33</sup> and Romaniszyn (1999)<sup>34</sup> have carried out some of the exceptionally few studies in this field of research. On the whole, prostitution and other forms of sex-related 'entertainment' have transformed into a big business, given that the trafficking of females from various parts of South-east Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has largely increased. Although the majority of women are usually employed as entertainers, when they reach their destination they realise that they are expected to provide paid sex. Others that have been indebted within their own country may have been trafficked as part of bonded labour, which actually implies that breaking free of the bond from the trafficker or patron will cause deportation from the destination country.<sup>35</sup> Migrant women have been divided into two groups according to their status at the point of entry into Greece. Those who enter the country legally under family reunion are expected to become dependent on males and, therefore, have not suffered prostitution. Women who have entered illegally have been confined to self-employment, which has included such types of work as domestic service and the sex industry. This has made the second group part of a highly racist sexual division of labour.<sup>36</sup>

Research conducted in Greece revealed very interesting results concerning the extent that prostitution has taken. Women who were engaged in this type of work were between the ages of 10 to 15, while young boys between the ages of 8 to 10 are often mistreated as well. All individuals that have been

part of the sex industry have suffered numerous inhuman conditions. Usually, traffickers and the mafia have 'convinced' individuals to work for them by locking them indoors for weeks without food or treating them in other inhuman ways. Young women have been made dependent not only during entry into the country, but also afterwards since their documents are conspicuously lost.<sup>37</sup> An even uglier face of trafficking concerns diseases, severe debilitation and even deaths caused by the inhuman transportation of migrants.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, no real protection exists on the part of the Greek State for this large number of people that have been forced into prostitution. In particular, there exist no legal or health provisions that could cater for these ill-treated individuals. The authorities, as it happens, rarely offer welfare services to any such victims, while the Greek police often deport illegal immigrants with limited success as the latter are quite likely to return to the country soon after.<sup>39</sup>

As a result, xenophobia, in particular Albanophobia, constituted a significant social force within the Greek society. Fittingly, perhaps, the 'Equality in Diversity: Migration and Integration' report stresses the very origins of the word 'xenophobia' stating that "hostility to strangers' specifically focuses on the rejection of and even hostile attitude or behaviour towards people or groups of people that are presumed or actual foreigners, the term 'xenophobia', derived from Greek, means 'fear of or timidity towards foreigners'."<sup>40</sup> Increased crime, drug trafficking and the mistaken perceptions related to unemployment have caused phobias within the native population.<sup>41</sup> The 2003 European Social Survey indicated that the majority of the Greek population "did not approve of increased immigration from other cultural spheres or poorer countries," as most agreed that "migrants take away jobs", "immigration is bad for the economy" and "migrants contribute to a rise in crime."<sup>42</sup> The media, too, have played a vital role in the increase of xenophobia. When the media are concerned with the hardship and inhuman conditions in which Albanians live, the sympathy of Greeks is usually anticipated.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, increased reporting of crimes conducted by Albanians, for example, has made Greek employers suspicious of their employees and, as a result, they are confronted with a huge dilemma when considering employing workers of Albanian origin. Interestingly, Albanian workers usually receive lower pay when compared to other migrant groups for carrying out the exact same duties.

The word 'Albanian' generally denotes to a widely held stereotype and is believed to be the main reason behind the stigmatisation and ultra-

exploitation of the Albanian migrants.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the Greek State has always been willing to exploit the issue of illegal Albanian immigrants in negotiations with the government in Tirana, intending to secure the rights of the Greek minority in Albania. The treatment that Albanians receive is explained as an effort to comply with the Schengen Treaty in order to strengthen border control and prevent the seemingly uncontrolled flow of migrants.<sup>45</sup> This is a very interesting issue that necessitates further research, since the Greek attitude towards the Greek minority in Albania has been two-fold. In particular, the Greek State has tried to support this minority in any possible way so to facilitate its existence on Albanian soil. In cases where these individuals move to Greece, however, they are then treated suspiciously and are given the same status as any other foreigner. Consequently, their identity has not been questioned on Albanian but on Greek territory.<sup>46</sup>

Evidently, “Repatriated’ ethnic Greeks from the NIS and migrant ethnic Greeks from Albania as a co-ethnic minority acquire Greek citizenship through a special process. Migrant Greeks from Albania were discouraged from acquiring Greek citizenship, while distinguishing them from other foreign nationals through a special residence and work permit of unlimited duration. In this way Greece can still claim the existence of a substantial ethnic Greek minority in Albania.”<sup>47</sup> On the whole, Greece maintains a rather intriguing relationship with her neighbours over the issue of immigration. As a matter of fact, “Negotiations between Greece and immigrants’ countries of origin are usually confined to bilateral agreements that involve foreign policy objectives. For example, discussions between Greece and Albania (Greece’s main source of immigrants) have focused on the principle of reciprocity – so that Greeks in Albania enjoy the same rights and conditions as Albanians in Greece. Greece is trying to strike similar deals with Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. Greece and Bulgaria have established a circle of contacts to work together to combat trafficking and irregular migration (Macedonian Press Agency, 28/9/2004).”<sup>48</sup> Most certainly, what is a complex subject matter may encourage neighbouring countries to improve their diplomatic relations, for immigration policy is not a topic that should be treated lightly, particularly nowadays, given the ever increasing waves of migration. In this respect, all pertinent policies should not be limited within the context of domestic affairs, merely because it has the capacity to severely affect the external affairs of a given state with its immediate environment.

## Greek Response to Immigration

The unexpected change for the status of Greece from an emigration country to one of immigration has meant a confusion of policy. The real extent of immigration has not been realised by successive Greek governments until very late.<sup>49</sup> Initially, Greece received strong external pressure from other European Union member-states so that her policy on immigration would be hardened. All member states have been concerned by the influx of migrants in Greece as this meant that a large proportion of them could then move within the European Union freely. Consequently, European Union membership, the signing of the Dublin Convention of 1990 and the application for membership with the Schengen group of countries meant that Greece would have to both harden her migration policy and adhere to communal European Union policies as well. In particular, freedom of movement within the European Union clearly illustrated that Greece had to become more careful with regard to migration policy and improve border controls. Only the constitution of Greece seemed to provide adequate protection. More precisely, Article 4. 1 of the constitution of Greece states, '*All Greeks are equal before the law*', while Article 5. 1 states, '*Every person shall have the right to develop his or her personality freely and to participate in the social, economic and political life of the country, insofar as it does not infringe upon the rights of others or violate the constitution and moral values.*' Finally, Article 5. 2 states, '*All persons living within Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and freedom, irrespective of nationality, race or language and religious or political beliefs. Exceptions shall be permitted only in cases provided for by international law.*' A constitutional reform of March 2001 extended the protection of human rights in respect to discrimination in the legal relations between private legal persons. Therefore the anti-discrimination provisions of the constitution concern also discrimination by for example individual employers or companies towards their employees.<sup>50</sup>

The immediate outcome of both external and internal pressures was changed to occur in the Greek law in 1991 replacing that of 1929. These changes made reference to 'Alien Immigrants and Refugees,' while its main goal was the strengthening of both the State's external borders and the related control procedures of entry. In addition, provisions were made for work permits to be provided before arrival since otherwise illegal entry would implicate imprisonment from three months to five years. What is important to mention is that employers of illegal migrants would have to pay

a fine of 294 euros. Complementary measures to this new law have been taken so that administrative control of immigration could be improved. These measures involved the increase of border guards, the tightening of criteria for granting residence and work permits and the use of deportation of illegal immigrants. In addition, acquisition of citizenship would be given only in the case of application by a Greek spouse after five years of residence. Finally, individuals that have been born on Greek soil, but without having inherited nationality, would obtain the Greek nationality immediately. It should be stated that the Greek State has been in need of these individuals since, as has been mentioned previously, the country has long suffered from low birth rates.<sup>51</sup>

In 1997 a legal framework was created according to which immigrants that have already moved to Greece gained the right to obtain permission of work and residence to the country. The term for getting these privileges is based on providing proof of working for Greek employers. Another important piece of legislation, law 2910/2001, concerned “entry and residence of aliens into Greek territory and naturalization of aliens”.<sup>52</sup> Although refugees have been excluded from its scope, this law has had some impact on them, since any alien entering Greece would be covered by this particular law before lodging application for asylum. The law has also provided the necessary limitations regarding the maximum period of detention, in cases of pending deportation that has been ordered by the police, to a three-month period. Law 2910 has differentiated the time needed for applying for naturalization of refugees. Accordingly, refugees that have resided in the country may be able to acquire Greek nationality after a five-year period of application while the period for immigrants has been defined to ten years. Finally, there have been no modifications regarding the treatment of the Greek State towards Afghan Asylum seekers.

However, these laws have largely been unsuccessful considering their lax application, while the Greek population has been quite indifferent too. As a result, the effect of the Greek legal framework regarding migration has been reduced by internal factors to a large degree. In particular, the Greek State aims at tackling migration, but the Greek population has welcomed it as it can be beneficial to Greek employers. This situation made entrance of migrants easier, while it obligated them to suffer lower wages, absence of social and individual rights as the Greek government was unwilling to provide this kind of welfare. Consequently, migrants got involved in the informal economy, which in itself has increased suspicion of migrants among

the native population. This has made clear that the Greek State and society are not ready yet to provide the appropriate resources including human resources and relevant knowledge that would make things smoother.

The legal status of refugees has been another interesting issue to consider. Treaties that make guaranties for the rights of legal migrants have not protected illegal ones. Consequently, as Gabriella Lazaridis and Krystyna Romaniszyn (1998) argue "Illegal migrants have no rights. They are, almost by definition, excluded, modern pariahs."<sup>53</sup> This status of deprivation of basic social rights of social security, health and education of their children has been in direct opposition with both the Greek constitution that has made provisions for equality and freedom and Community law as well since the concept of universality of human rights has been a general principle of it.<sup>54</sup> Except for the creation of new legislation, Greece, as well as other Southern European countries like Italy and Spain, has used unilateral emergency measures such as deportation with the intention to combat the number of illegal migrants on their territory. Administrative deportations have been included in all Southern European States' laws. Usually, data concerning expulsions of migrants have been confidential and not often published in official publications. In comparison to Italy, Greece has illustrated a surprisingly severe regime since the Greek figure for the year 1994 is only 158, 000 of whom 152, 000 have been of Albanian background. It may seem surprising since Greece has had a relatively high concentration of illegal immigrants, even though Greece was in favour of the June 1995 French initiative within the third pillar of the Treaty on the European Union, the Justice and Home Affairs, advocating joint action against illegal immigration and relevant employment. Yet, it is important to note that although this effort resulted in a limited resolution with no binding results, all Southern European States, including Greece, supported the proposition regarding detection and expulsion of illegal migrants.

More effective actions and policies were required on a European level in order for migration to be combated. Co-operation among European Union member states was imperative and could be achieved through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership framework. Strengthening the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership would have been in the interests of all member states, given its potential for promoting further co-operation so that migration from certain countries be reduced.<sup>55</sup> In general, co-operation with European Union States on migration matters has been regarded vital for Greece. This has been clearly illustrated by the declaration of the Greek

presidency of the European Council this year that harmonisation of Greece with EU policy has constituted a significant goal. However, forming an effective policy is a rather controversial matter. EU States would have to take a rather difficult and complex step toward achieving the formation of a policy that would be both promoting human rights and allowing room for manoeuvre.

Greek immigration policy certainly evolved during the 1990s, since the country underwent a major transformation from that of emigration to immigration, and was much influenced by external and internal factors. Although several laws were created and various initiatives taken, Greek migration policy remained inadequate, as problems caused by migration were not been surpassed. Furthermore, the prospects of co-operation between Balkan and European Union member States could have greatly contributed to the reduction of crime, trafficking and illegal migration in the region as a whole. Finally, Greek policy-makers would have to consider other options with the intention to combat illegal migration as well as the negative consequences that Greek society witnessed because of the influx of migrants. For example, such matters would have to be taken into consideration as the prospect of legalisation and regularisation of foreigners without preconditions, granting of permits to work without the condition of a link to a specific employer, strict enforcement of labour laws for the protection of all migrants' rights, provision for access to health services, rights for education and equal civil rights to all migrants regardless of their origin.

## **Conclusion**

Theories central to the phenomenon of immigration sometimes fail to produce a more comprehensive explanation of it, other than elucidating its economic impact. Marxism could have provided such a solid point of departure, in our attempt to understand immigration and the relationship between the newly formed classes; however, the so-called 'push'/'pull' factors only refer to the economic reasons that may encourage the mobility of migrants from one country to another. The need to explain immigration adequately is imperative, simply because this extraordinary phenomenon has been transformed from a low politics issue to a high politics one.

From an economic perspective, Greece, like other Southern European States, has experienced the extension of the parallel economy, while employment of illegal migrants has become widespread as well. A number of

negative consequences have become prevalent, since the exploitation of migrants through employment has become common practice. Preference of migrants over indigenous workers has caused significant tensions within the Greek society and has even allowed the native population to use migrants as scapegoats at times of high unemployment. Moreover, from a social point of view, prostitution and exploitation of juvenile females and males has increased to such a degree where the sex industry has caused the concern of the Greek population. As a consequence, the Greeks often hold negative stereotypes as regards migrants, thus producing the necessary grounds for xenophobia and racial discrimination to grow. Interestingly, the case of the Greek minority in Albania and the treatment of these people once they decide to repatriate provides ample evidence about how Greeks feel with regard foreigners. If anything, the seemingly compassionate Greeks reserve much sympathy for people who suffer, as long as they themselves are not affected.

Greek migration policy is still pretty much in its infancy, ever since it was asked to serve a particular objective during the 1990s, though vague in its nature and scope. Just as with various pieces of European Union legislation, the governments of Greece have witnessed limited success. The effectiveness of Greek migration policy notwithstanding, her role in the Balkans remains essential. Closer co-operation between Balkan states would be a great step toward eradicating, or at least reducing, crime, human trafficking and illegal migration. Given that information on the emigration background of Greece and the immigration patterns that confront her have contributed much to the better understanding of the issue, a more comprehensive and effective immigration policy to deal with the almost unexpected influx of migrants is certainly anticipated. Exactly this is what renders Greece, among most of her European Union counterparts, the ideal case study to examine relevant issues and the role of all pertinent actors.

On the whole, the issue of immigration has been controversial not so much for its negative impact, but because of the ineptitude of policy makers and government officials alike to condone the occasional loopholes in legislation and strive for its drastic revision. Immigration policies should not be reduced to mere measures of restricting the access of immigrants to a country, they should allow room to foresee relevant problems upon their arrival and settle them accordingly in a civilized fashion, as dictated by the democratic norms of the receiving countries that are genuinely concerned with this phenomenon. Greece may have had the opportunity to excuse herself due to her limited experience as regards immigration; however, it has

become obvious that she now needs to keep up the pace with the ever expanding globalised environment and make sure that the necessary policies are in place. Migration should no longer be considered as a menace, even though some extremists view it as the necessary evil of Globalization.

## NOTES

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