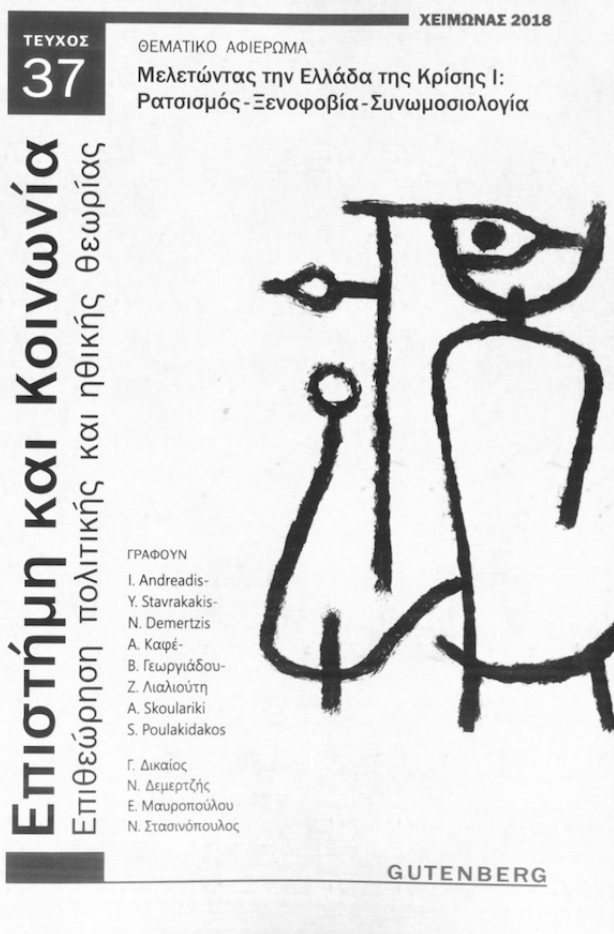


## Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία: Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας

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### The Greek public discourse on immigration: The merchants of conditional humanism

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*Stamatis Poulakidakos\**

THE DISCOURSE ON IMMIGRATION  
IN THE GREEK PUBLIC SPHERE:  
BETWEEN SECURITIZATION AND HUMANITARIANISM

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Theoretically stemming from the notions of risk society and the politics of fear, this paper seeks to address issues related to the representations of immigrants in Greece through the public discourse, as it appears in the sites of two mainstream Greek daily newspapers. In this sense, we examine specific parameters of the discourse related to refugees/immigrants (provision –or not– of asylum, provision –or not– of humanitarian aid, effects of migrant/refugees on public finance, on public health and social life of host communities, and their influence to the culture of the host societies). Quantitative content analysis of the statements regarding refugees/immigrants documented a predominant ‘managerial’ and securitization rationale over the provision of humanitarian aid or asylum to refugees/immigrants, especially on behalf of politicians.

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*Fear in contemporary 'risk societies'*

ONE OF THE GREAT PARADOXES of our time is that even though we are the healthiest, wealthiest and longest-lived people in history, we are increasingly afraid (Gardner 2008: 16). In the 'risk society' (Beck 1992, 2006) the central societal focus drifts away from the positive acquisition of 'goods', towards a negative logic bound up with the avoidance of 'bads' (Beck 1992, Mythen 2007: 798). This 'culture of fear', according to Furedi, permeates western societies in terms of health, environment, technology and personal security (Furedi 2002, Gale 2004: 323, Furedi 2006). Contemporary 'liquid society' (Bauman 2000), generates a sort of unpredictable free-floating fear not focused on any specific threat, defined as anxiety, hence an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes (Kazdin 2000: 209-212). The free-floating dynamic of fear is promoted by a culture that communicates hesitancy and anxiety towards uncertainty and continually anticipates the worse possible outcome (Furedi 2006: 5). In that way, any feature of daily life can change overnight into a 'Trojan horse' (Beck 1992: 54), which may lead us to panic and terror (Jakonen 2011: 161). This results in the emergence of the notion of 'security'.

As Bauman argued (2005: 93), 'the alarms about deteriorating security magnify the already plentiful supplies of "security fears", while simultaneously shifting public concerns and the outlets for individual anxiety away from the economic and social roots of trouble and towards concerns for personal safety'. It is not security from those who refuse us jobs or deny our humanity when we are in a job, from those who take away our self-respect, and humiliate and dishonor us, but a security against trespassers on our property and strangers at the doorway, prowlers and beggars in the streets (Bauman 2004: 82), even strangers to our societies and our core societal values (van Dijk 1987).

This rationale has contributed subsequently to the creation of a state of tension and polarization, to the rise of prejudices

(negative stereotypes), as well as to the seeking for and creation of scapegoats, to portray as threatening and eventually demonize. That is because in securitization theory, security is not an objective condition, but the outcome of a specific social process (Abrahamsen 2005: 57, Pram Gad & Lund Petersen 2011: 316, Abrahamsen 2017: 138-139).

### *The politics of fear*

The rise of catchphrases such as the ‘politics of fear’, ‘fear of crime’ and ‘fear of the future’ is testimony to the cultural significance of fear today (Furedi 2007: 1). Through that fear, power shows itself in the modern world. Powerful people assert their will by being part of the communication process that defines social issues and social problems (Altheide 2006: 207). They promote and strategically use audience beliefs and assumptions about danger, risk and fear, in order to achieve certain goals (Altheide 2006: 15) and discipline the domestic population (Chomsky 2005: 1).

It is argued that the politics of fear relies on compliant mass media that will carry news reports and other messages that promote fear, and it works best when these messages and meanings are part of the broader culture and are recognized and taken for granted by a mass audience (Altheide 2006: 47). Buck (in Young 2003: 1674) suggests that fear serves as an emotional agent that automatically cues individuals’ attention towards potentially threatening stimuli and noxious consequences. Therefore, a large part of the politics of fear involves sensational mass-media formats, which promote repetitive images and slogans about crime, fear and terrorism (Altheide 2006: 47) and cultivate expectations of a likely and beyond our control victimization (Romer, Jamieson & Aday 2003: 89).

The politics of fear manifests itself through the rationale of securitization. National borders display the symbolic and material power of nation states. In this respect, it is a common assumption that states and their respective legal systems are essentially anti-

immigration, racist, xenophobic, and exclusionary (Samers 2010: 180). The western states make it harder for asylum seekers to enter their territory (Afouxenidis et al. 2017: 10) and when aliens enter, they are being restricted in off-shore island detention centres and other similar isolated spaces (Samers 2010: 18).

### *Migrants as the dangerous and distant others*

The global spread of modern forms of life deprives an increasing proportion of people from their adequate ways and means of survival in both the biological and social/cultural sense of that notion. Hence, the issues of ‘immigrants’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are central in contemporary political agendas (Bauman 2005: 93). The boundaries between humanitarianism, ethics, politics, and the modern state are visible in debates over immigration (Barnett & Weiss 2008: 238). Established racist perceptions of migrations have influenced the overall representation of immigrants, presenting them mainly as poor, uprooted, marginal, desperate and therefore somehow inferior to the members of the host societies they interact with (van Dijk 1987: 386, King 2002: 89-90, Alexander, Thompson & Edles 2016: 428-429, 439-443).

Barker (1981) first employed the notion of ‘new racism’ to describe the emergence of ‘racial’ discourse, which placed the emphasis on cultural difference, masking explicit reference to physical characteristics and denying racism. Some writers have recognized this avoidance of direct reference to racial discourse as ‘postmodern racism’. As such, racism highlights the presence of those seen as ‘aliens’ and how this presence is assumed to be a threat to the nation and national or wider cultural identity (Taguieff 1993, Gale 2004: 323).

On one hand, within this ‘racial discourse’, immigrants, especially those categorized as ‘non-whites’, are not labelled as being racially inferior. Nonetheless, their cultures and values are commonly represented in media discourse as ‘alien’ and a threat to western core values or democracy itself (Gale 2004: 323).

In the public sphere, migrants are depicted as ‘a risk to public health’ (ter Wal 1996, Milioni & Vadratsikas 2016), ‘as competitors –against the natives– for employment’ (Grobet 2014, Poulakidakos & Kaloeida 2015) and as ‘social burden’. Hence, as persons who drain public resources that would otherwise be granted to natives, especially in times of financial hardship (Milioni et al. 2015).

On the other hand, the most frequently encountered positive depictions of migrants underline their ‘distance’ from local-indigenous communities (Bauman 2004), since they are represented as victims, under the condition of incidents with multiple people-victims. The ‘otherness’ of migrant populations regarding their public representations is further confirmed through their absence from the public sphere and the degradation of the positive aspects of migrant populations’ effects in host communities (Poulakidakos & Kaloeida 2015, Milioni & Vadratsikas 2016).

These narration patterns of migration are not at all random. They are systematic patterns of global inequality that divide the world into zones of Western comfort and safety and non-Western need and vulnerability (Chouliaraki 2010: 121). According to Hampshire (2013: 76 in Afouxenidis et al. 2017: 10) the tightening of procedures and policies in recent decades was a result of the negative image of asylum seekers due to media portrayal and highly politicized discourses.

### *Immigration: The Greek case*

Immigration trends in Greece used to be –since the beginning and until the last decade of the 20th century– limited mainly to inflows from the Balkans and to refugees of Greek origin from Asia Minor and from Egypt. Nevertheless, the economic underdevelopment of the country did not encourage immigration into Greece. On the contrary, Greeks emigrated in significant numbers mainly to northern Europe (Germany, Belgium), USA and Australia (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005: 5, Polyzos 2006,

Alipranti-Maratou 2007, Triandafyllidou 2008, Moreno et al. 2011), a trend that lasted approximately until the 1970s. This situation formed a rather homogeneous in ethnic terms country, at least up to late 1980s (Antonopoulos, Tierney & Webster 2008: 364, Tramountanis 2016).

Since the early 1990s, Greece has experienced a sharp rise in immigration as a result of social, economic and political changes in former communist countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kasimis 2012). The majority of immigrants –coming from Eastern and South-Eastern European countries and Asia (Moreno et al. 2011: 167, Kasimis 2012)– has been to a great extent undocumented and mainly looking for a job (Polyzos 2006, Papageorgiou & Tsironis 2013: 101, Angeli, Dimitriadi & Triandafyllidou 2014).

The new situation has been characterized by administrative and political confusion with regard to migration policy (Tramountanis 2016) –since the Greek state found itself to a large extent unprepared to deal with the dramatic increase in the inflow of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, both in terms of procedures and infrastructures (Afouxenidis et al. 2017: 17)– and an over-representation of immigrants working in conditions of informality across the Greek economy (Polyzos 2006, Alipranti-Maratou 2007, Triandafyllidou 2008, Dimitrakopoulou 2012: 7, Angeli, Dimitriadi & Triandafyllidou 2014). The phenomenon of migration to Greece became a topic of heated debate, and was increasingly designated as a ‘social problem’ alongside unemployment, national (in)security and crime (Antonopoulos, Tierney & Webster 2008: 353).

Since 2009, Greece has been suffering perhaps the country’s worst economic recession in recent history. Huge sovereign debt and the government’s decision to accept loans from the International Monetary Fund and the European Union have changed entirely the economic, political, and social environment of immigration in Greece (Kasimis 2012). The austerity policies implemented due to the acceptance of the bail-out packages (Featherstone 2011, Mylonas 2014) had significant repercussions on the

social dimension of the Greek economy (Papageorgiou & Tsironis 2013: 108). Employment and income have shrunk for both the native-born and immigrant populations, while competition within and between the two has increased. This has resulted in lower wages, precarious labor and fewer regularized immigrants, drawing attention to immigration as an even more growing threat to the cohesion of Greek society (Kasimis 2012, Papageorgiou & Tsironis 2013: 108-109). Poor whites tend to look down, instead of up, for the most likely causes and agents of their misery. And the dominant consensus, preformulated by the elite, distributed, further detailed, and dramatized by the media, will, of course, have little tendency to counter argue such racist dimensions of the ideology (van Dijk 1987: 387).

In tandem with these devastating financial woes, Greece has become the gateway to Europe, primarily through the porous land and sea borders with Turkey (Angeli, Dimitriadi & Triandafyllidou 2014). During the last years there has been a further increase in undocumented immigration (Moreno et al. 2011: 170) from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, due to the latest embattled contexts in countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria (European Asylum Support Office 2017).

In this context, the Ministry of Citizen Protection (the government's department responsible for Greece's public security services) drafted the 'National Action Plan for Migration Management'. Placing the responsibility of migration policy with this Ministry indicated that the Greek state viewed migration primarily as a security issue. Although the Action Plan 'foresaw that an effective migration policy should ensure access to international protection for all illegal migrants entering its territory... [i]n practice, the primary focus was on the deterrence and apprehension of irregular arrivals' (Angeli, Dimitriadi & Triandafyllidou 2014: 26). Greece, through this plan, followed the prevalent security-based EU approach on immigration management (Afouzenidis et al. 2017: 17). Already since the 1980s, the EU has developed a restrictive and control-based policy toward migration, with typical examples, the Dublin Convention and the Schengen



Agreements. However, from the moment asylum seekers and refugees were framed as a predominantly security problem, EU's priorities regarding migration started to focus more 'on sealing its borders rather than its human rights obligations' (Amnesty International 2014: 9 in Afouxenidis et al. 2017: 18). The most recent manifestation of this approach is the EU-Turkey agreement in early 2016.

Taken together, Greece's homogeneous ethnic past, diachronic xenophobia, highly porous borders and until rather recently ineffective legal and institutional framework for the regularization and integration of immigrants in the Greek society, have created a fragile environment for the management of immigration (Kasimis 2012, Tramountanis 2016). This fragile environment has been further enhanced by the emergence of the financial crisis in late 2009. The crisis context and the polarized public dialogue on issues of public interest (Dalakoglou 2013, Poulakidakos 2014, Poulakidakos & Armenakis 2014, Wodak & Angouri 2014, Poulakidakos & Veneti 2016) escalated the division between 'migrants and indigenous' and the perception of immigrants as scapegoats for the major social and financial issues of the Greek society (Pavlou 2009: 54, Dimitrakopoulou 2012: 8, Papandreou 2013:27).

### *The media and political discourse (on immigration) in Greece*

Migration has been a rather dispensable issue for politicians, as well as for the media and the public (Moreno et al. 2011: 135). The media play a decisive role in defining the dominant consensus and preferred interpretations for many public events. For most dominant group members they are virtually the only source for ethnic information (van Dijk 1987: 391).

The mainstream representations of immigration in the Greek public sphere appears to have undergone several different

stages. During the early years of ‘metapolitefsi’<sup>1</sup> (1974-1989), migration is being approached through the rationale of national identity. After that, the foreign immigrants are represented as a –limited– ‘threat’, a negative aspect of the migration phenomenon, in contrast to the positive narration on the –synchronous– repatriation of Greek emigrants.

To a significant extent, reporting on immigrants –especially during the nineties (Moschopoulou 2005, Kountouri 2009)– has been couched in conspiracy theories rhetoric and an overall perception of ‘pollution’. In these cases, the Greek or European cultural, ethnic or even religious ‘purity’ –in terms of racial and cultural whiteness– is perceived to be threatened (Dalakoglou 2013: 520) and the reporting concentrates more on the presumed threat for the country and the people than on practical issues of immigrant integration (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005: 13-14). Another major characteristic of the immigrant representation –at least until mid-nineties– is the overemphasizing on the criminality ‘generated’ by the immigrants (Moschopoulou 2005, Constantinidou 1999: 130-137) and the inherent criminal nature of the immigrants, due to their trespassing of the Greek border (the term illegal immigrants-‘lathrometanastes’ was actually first used during that period) (Kountouri 2009: 46, 55).

Since the mid-nineties, a rather significant change in the perception of the immigration issue takes place (Pavlou 2009). The social dynamics (emergence of the anti-racist movement) (Kountouri 2009: 60) and specific events, in which immigrants were the victims, turned public attention away from financial and social risks, allegedly caused by the immigrants, towards issues of racism and xenophobia, as well as the everyday problems encountered by the immigrants (Kountouri 2009: 47). This change, though, did not eliminate the negative perceptions of the immigrants, especially on behalf of the conservative media and political and social groups (Lawrence 2005). The perceptions

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1. The period following the fall of the junta regimes in Greece, from 1974 to the present.

of a host community may be implicated in the generation of particular emotional dispositions and discourses that are hostile to migrants and at the same time tolerant and understanding (Zembylas 2012: 198).

In ideological terms, on one hand, before the advent of the crisis, right-wing press and private TV channels in particular, tend to stigmatize and discriminate against immigrants and minorities. On the other hand, state TV channels, mainstream and left-wing newspapers, adopted a more careful and sensitive approach when reporting on ethnic issues and towards minority and immigration matters, and are characterized by a relative openness to cultural and ethnic diversity with only a mildly nationalist viewpoint (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005: 13-14). Under this rationale, migration in political and scientific debates in Greece, has been approached mainly as a social problem rather than a social phenomenon, and the positive contribution made by migrants to Greek society has been largely neglected (Antonopoulos, Tierney & Webster 2008:357).

As politics expresses internal restlessness and addresses external threats to the society's secure existence (Sparks 2003: 200, Wodak & Angouri 2014), several Greek political actors have exploited the undocumented immigration flows and developed a rhetoric surrounding the need for stricter border controls and a tougher policy towards undocumented immigrants (Lawrence 2005: 330), including threats of mass deportations (Kasimis 2012), whereas others approach immigrants as people in need, who deserve our help and mercy. These appear to be the two main trends in the political and journalistic public discourse on immigrants in Greece, as it has been articulated in mainstream media during the pre-electoral periods of the 2014 European elections and January 2015 Greek national elections, as well as between mid-November and mid-December 2014, when a major protest of Syrian immigrants took place in Athens' Syntagma square (Poulakidakos & Kaloeida 2015).

### *Main research question-Research hypotheses*

In this paper, we focus on the contemporary representations of refugees/immigrants in and through the public discourse in Greece, as depicted by two mainstream daily newspapers, a conservative (*Kathimerini* [The Daily newspaper]/kathimerini.gr) and a left-wing one (*EF.SYN* [The editor's newspaper]/efsyn.gr). Our main research question is how are the refugees/immigrants represented by the public discourse.

The research focuses on four different periods: The two pre-electoral periods of 2015 in Greece (January and September 2015), as well as during the days that the issue of the refugee camp of Eidomeni hit the public (February 2016) and the month following the pact of the EU-Turkey treaty for the managing of the immigrant/refugee flows heading to Europe (March 18-April 18 2016). The two pre-electoral periods were selected due to the increased 'density' of public dialogue on issues of public interest, while the 'Eidomeni period' and the days after the EU-Turkey treaty on the managing of refugee/immigrant flows, because the refugee/immigrant issue hit the headlines of the media.

More specifically, the abovementioned research question can be analyzed in several research hypotheses, stemming from our theoretical background:

H1: According to our theoretical background, we expect that the immigrants/refugees heading to Europe from the embattled contexts of the Middle East and Africa in seek for asylum will be primarily approached as 'risks' to be managed, especially on behalf of the (conservative) politicians.

H2: There will be cases of a positive –in terms of 'understanding'– presentation of the immigrants. In these cases, though, the public discourse will be creating 'boundaries' between the indigenous and the immigrants, between 'us' and 'them', underlining the negative, dramatic plight of the immigrants and their need for humanitarian aid.

H3: Immigrants will be classified along a range of ‘social problems’ and major financial issues, such as unemployment, health issues and crime.

H4: Under the ‘new racism’ rationale, the immigrants -though not directly characterized after their skin colour-will be identified as a threat even towards cultural aspects and the cohesion of the western societies and they will be presented as a threat to ‘whiteness’ and western cultural values.

### *Methodology*

For the scopes of the current research, we will use the research method of content analysis. Content analysis transforms content of quantitative and qualitative nature into a form of data with either qualitative or quantitative form. It can be briefly defined as the systematic, based on scientific criteria, quantitative or qualitative analysis of the characteristics of various messages (Berelson 1952, Kyriazi 2001, Neuendorf 2002: 1). It constitutes a systematic, reproducible technique of transforming the words of a text into fewer categories of meaning, based on specific codification rules (Stemler 2001, Miller & Brewer 2003).

The primary objective of content analysis is the systematic research of the content of a unit of analysis (text, image, news item, advertisement, web page etc.). Thus, the content is being examined in a holistic way and the categories used to encode the text are clearly defined, so that to enable the repetition and control of the entire procedure. Researches making use of content analysis focus on the main thematics of a text, their comparative meaning, the ‘space’ and time dedicated to these thematics and other content characteristics that respond to the main research question and the research hypotheses (Berelson 1971).

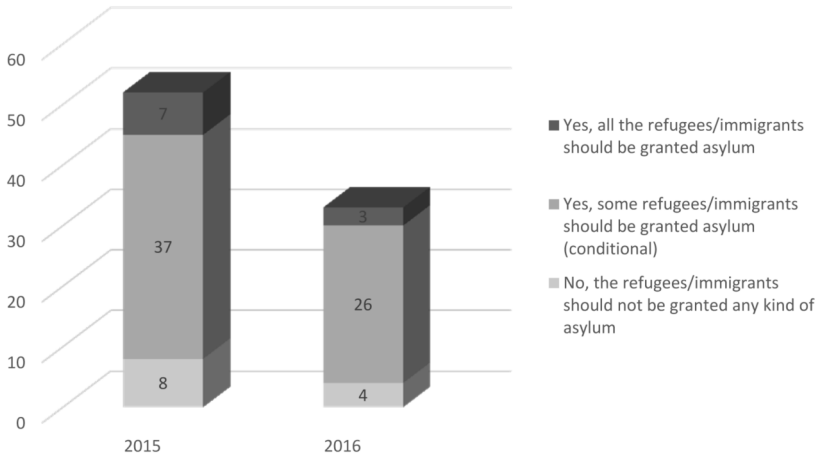
Quantitative content analysis is conducted via a coding protocol and aims at the production of quantitative data out of a specific sample. Our unit of analysis is any statement (interview bite) concerning the refugees/immigrants by anyone who ap-

pears to talk about this issue. Our sample consists of 352 statements ( $n=352$ ) of Greek and foreign actors (politicians (156), journalists (61), citizens (29), NGOs' representatives (31), public services' officials (25), refugees/immigrants (17), other-various (33)) appearing in the media of our research. The statements are included in the 30 most relevant articles regarding the immigrants /refugees' issue of each period (a total of 120 articles). Aiming to reveal more detailed statistical relationships, the dependent variables addressing our research hypotheses will be cross-tabulated to several control variables (e.g. the status of the person making each statement, ideological orientation of the person making the statement). The existence of statistically significant relationships between the different variables will be tested via the chi-square test.

## *Results*

The issue of the provision of asylum to refugees is rarely discussed. Out of a total number of 352 statements, the provision of asylum is mentioned in only 85 statements (24.1%). As shown in Graph 1, the majority of the statements regarding the asylum issue were made in 2015 (during the two pre-electoral periods in Greece) and in both years –2015 and 2016– the vast majority of statements are in favor of providing asylum only to refugees, by stressing out the need to discriminate them from the immigrants entering Europe, who are not eligible to asylum: “The illegal immigrants are not refugees. There are aliens trying to enter our country (Greece) for numerous reasons. The existence of detention centers is a necessity, to discriminate between immigrants and refugees’ (M. Chrysoveloni, Ind. Greeks MP candidate, *EF.SYN.* 16/01/2015). In addition, there are very few opinions supporting the provision of asylum to all refugees/immigrants, or –contrary– the non-provision of asylum, even to the officially recognized refugees (Graph 1.1).

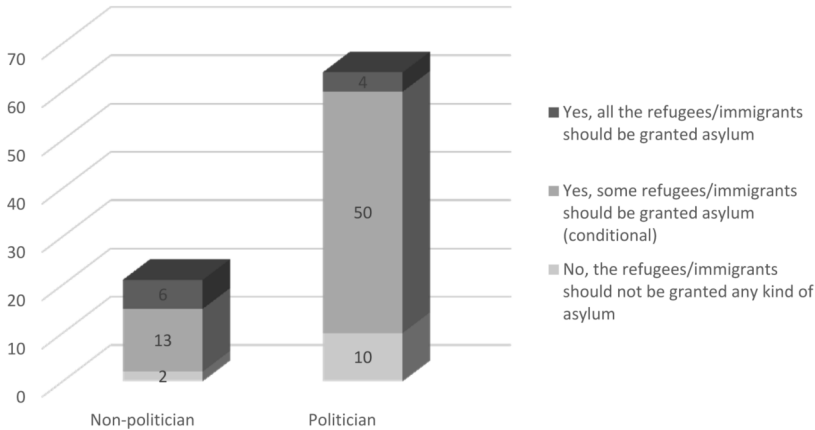
Graph 1.1: Statements on asylum for refugees/immigrants per year.<sup>2</sup>



In terms of the status of the person making the statement, politicians, who talk about the asylum issue the most, appear to mostly support the conditional asylum provision (50/64, 78.1%), whereas non-politicians talk about unconditional provision of asylum (6/21, 28.6%) (Graph 1.2). Characteristic in this sense is the movement of German citizens to welcome refugees with ‘refugees welcome’ banners.

2. Due to the limited number of statements concerning the provision of civil rights, the chi square test for Graphs 1.1- 1.4 is invalid.

Graph 1.2: Statements on asylum for refugees/immigrants per status of the person making the statement.

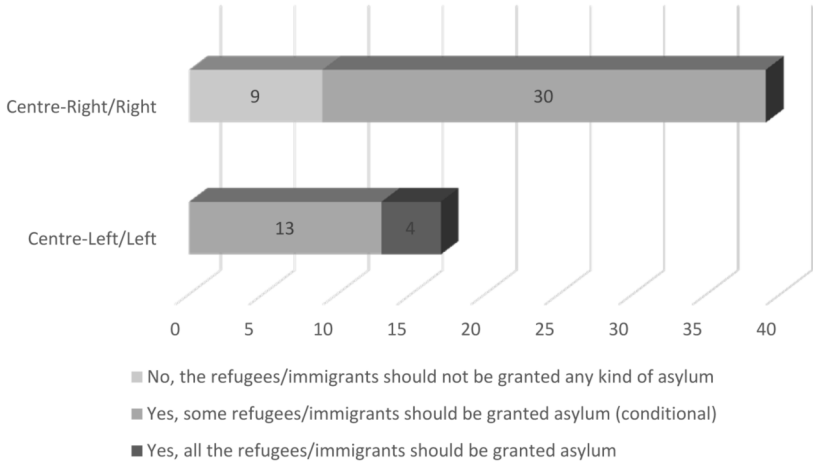


As far as the ideology of the politician is concerned, centre-right/ right politicians appear –as expected– to express their disagreement on the provision of any kind of asylum in 9 out of 39 statements they make. Still, the majority of both centre-right/ right and centre-left/left politicians appear to support the conditional provision of asylum to immigrants. After the words of J. C. Junker ‘we proposed a plan for the increase of the asylum applications from 120.000 to 160.000’ (*EF.SYN.*, 04/09/2015), the EU seems to primarily treat the refugees/immigrants as numbers in an obviously managerial rationale (Graph 1.3).

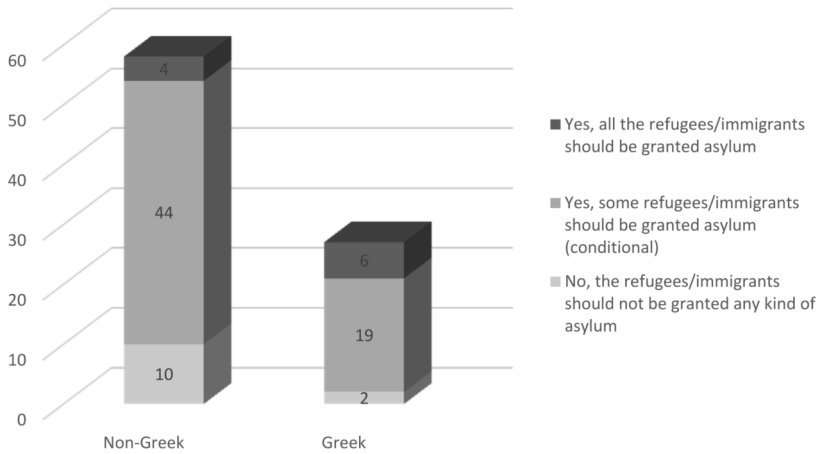
In terms of the nationality of the person making the statement, Greeks appear to be slightly less skeptical on the provision of asylum to the refugees/immigrants compared to non-Greek speakers (‘We are in danger of becoming a minority in our continent’- V. Orban, *EF.SYN.*, 04/09/2015), though they talk about this issue less frequently than non-Greeks (Graph 1.4).



Graph 1.3: Statements on asylum for refugees/immigrants per ideology of the person making the statement.



Graph 1.4: Statements on asylum for refugees/immigrants per nationality of the person making the statement.

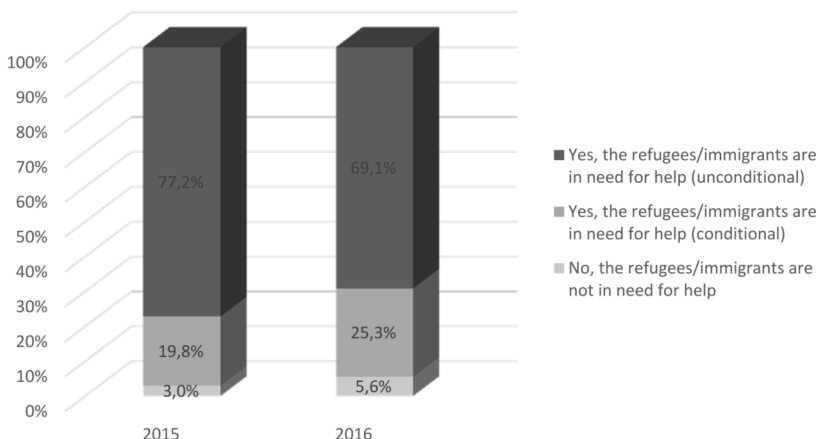


Overall, the discussion on the provision of asylum to the refugees/immigrants is a rather limited one. In the relevant references, the vast majority of the actors expressing their opinions favor the conditional (only to refugees, but not to immigrants), provision of asylum. Characteristic is the example of the former British PM David Cameron, who promised the hospitality of 20.000 refugees in the UK, coming only from Middle East settlements, but not from the ones having already reached Europe.

After these results, we accept our first hypothesis of the refugees/immigrants being approached as ‘risks’ to be managed through the conditional provision of asylum, especially on behalf of the politicians. As we shall see, the refugees/immigrants are predominantly considered people in need for humanitarian aid, due to the inhumane conditions they are forced to live in.

As shown in previous research (e.g. Poulakidakos & Kaloeida 2015) the public discussion on refugees/immigrants focuses on the difficult conditions they have to get through due to the embattled environments in their homelands and the long and dangerous journeys to the western world, for which they pay in numerous occasions with their own lives. These inhumane conditions are the main reason behind the prevalence of the willingness to provide unconditional humanitarian support towards all refugees/immigrants, both in 2015 and 2016, since the majority of the expressed opinions do not discriminate between refugees and immigrants when talking about the need to provide them with humanitarian aid. The need for aid to the refugees/immigrants stems as an absolute priority through the characteristic article of *Kathimerini* (11/01/2015), which deals with the personal dramatic stories of young immigrants being ‘trapped’ in Greece. Still, there is a rather significant percentage (25.3% in 2016) supporting that not all refugees/immigrants should be provided with humanitarian aid (Graph 2.1).

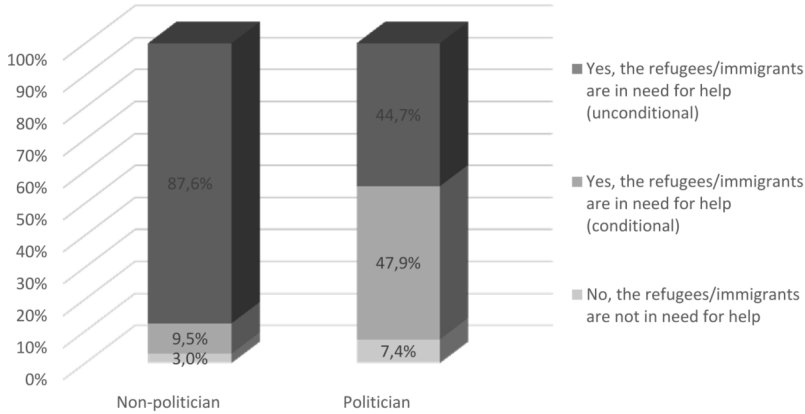
Graph 2.1: Statements on the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants per year of research (chi square p-value=.318).



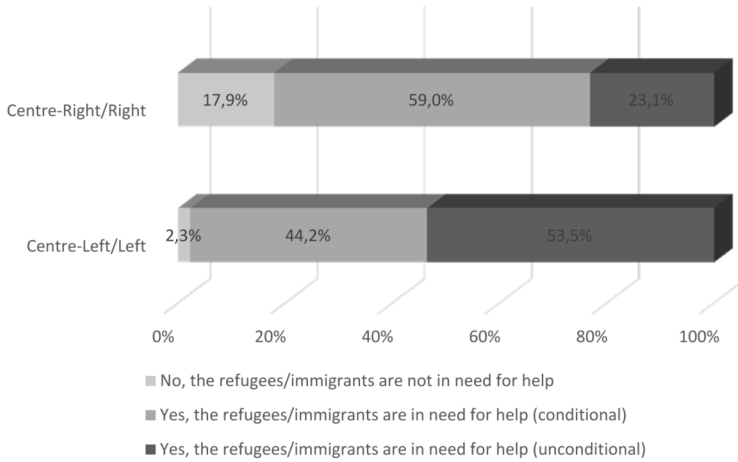
Though in temporal terms the opinions regarding the provision of help to the refugees/immigrants appear to be rather homogeneous, this is not the case if we examine the opinions in terms of the status of the person making the statement. As shown in Graph 2.2, politicians differ significantly (chi square p-value=.000) from non political personnel (citizens, members of NGO's, journalists, public services officials, refugees/immigrants) in terms of the conditional or unconditional character of the proposed help to refugees/immigrants.

In terms of the ideological differentiation of the statements, the conservative politicians seem to mostly favor the conditional provision of help only to officially recognized refugees (59%). As the French Minister of Foreign Affairs B. Cazeneuve says: 'there will be efforts for the quick deportation of the immigrants, the ones who are not "proper" refugees' (*EF.SYN.*, 14/09/2015) (Graph 2.3). Furthermore, this Graph affirms the findings of Graph 2.2 in terms of the alleged conditionality on behalf of the politicians when it comes to providing humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants. Be noted here that the conditional aid percentages appear to be rather high in center left/left politicians as well (44.2%).

Graph 2.2: Statements on the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants per status of the person making the statement (chi square p-value=.000).



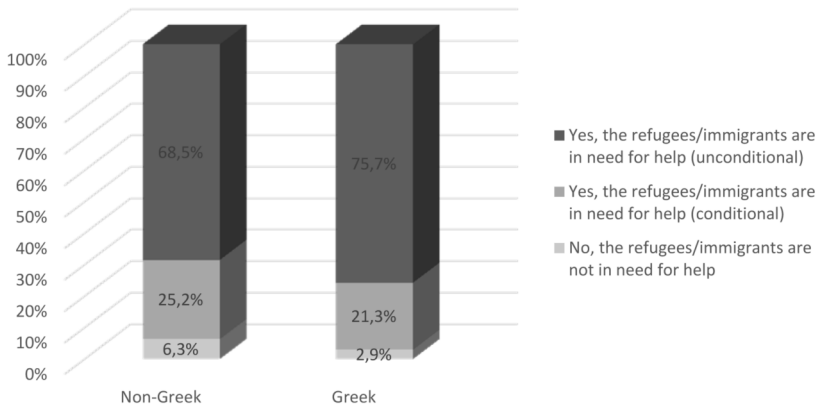
Graph 2.3: Statements on the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants per ideology of the person making the statement.<sup>3</sup>



3. Even though the difference between the centre-right/right politicians and the other categories appears to be a significant one, the chi square test is invalid, due to the existence of a high percentage of expected counts less than 5 (33.3% > 20%).

Comparing Greek to non-Greek statements regarding the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants, the Greek statements appear to be only slightly more in favor of the provision of unconditional help to all people reaching the Greek borders, compared to the statements made by non-Greeks, though Greece is a major destination for the immigrants crossing the sea borders of the Aegean between Turkey and the Greek islands on their way to Europe (Graph 2.4). As the Greek deputy Minister of Migration G. Mouzalas notes: ‘The Greek people have shown solidarity to the increasing numbers of immigrants/refugees’ (*EF.SYN.*, 15/09/2015).

Graph 2.4: Statements on the provision of humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants per nationality of the person making the statement (chi square p-value=.283).



As shown in the last four Graphs (2.1-2.4) there seems to be a statistically significant relationship between the status of the person who makes the statement and the political ideology of the politicians’ making statements with respect to the provision of either conditional or unconditional humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants. This demonstrates that the politicians -and among them especially the centre-right/right ones- approach the

immigration flows predominantly in ‘managerial’ terms, regarding it as a problem which needs to be managed or even stay as far away as possible from the European societies (this has been the stance of the four Visegrad countries), since it is discursively constructed –as shown more evidently in previous research (e.g. Milioni & Vadratsikas 2016)– as a potential danger in social and cultural terms.

This rationale was actually materialized when the EU signed the treaty for the managing of Syrian refugees with Turkey (Collett 2016, Afouxenidis et al. 2017). In addition, journalists, artists (coded as other), civilians, NGOs members, authorities’ officials predominantly opt for a humanitarian response to the huge inflows of migrant/refugee populations to the EU. As stated in the second research hypothesis, the predominant focus of the majority of the statements on the inhumane conditions of the immigrants/refugees and their need for help attaches on them a sense of inferiority and ‘alienates’ them from the indigenous populations. This alienation rationale –i.e. the immigrants/refugees differ significantly from the European populations– is further enhanced by the managerial rationale of the politicians.

Under the pressure of the humanitarian dimension of the refugees/immigrants flows to Europe and the need –according to politicians– to manage these flows, the public discussion from the beginning of 2015 to the end of April of 2016, did not focus on issues having to do with the financial, health and public security effects of the incoming refugee/migrant populations. It is notable that the possible financial impact of the refugees is mentioned in only 22 statements, their possible effect to crime rates in only 31 statements and their impact to public health in only 11 statements.

The quantitative degradation of those aspects of the public debate on migrant populations takes place because of the ongoing nature of the refugees/immigrants’ resettlement nowadays. The coverage of previous migration populations referred usually to populations already settled in various host countries (e.g. Greece) and thus already in a state of permanent interaction with

the indigenous social system. This is not the case, though, nowadays. The immigrant/refugee populations are still on the move and in constant quest for their final destination, which might even change according to the policy followed by the European states, some of which were opening and closing their borders on a frequent basis (e.g. Hungary, Austria, Serbia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, FYROM), during the reference period of our research. This situation of constant regression in the political management of the refugee/immigrant flows has turned the spotlight away from the issues related to the symbiosis of migrant and indigenous populations, though this issue is sometimes put into public attention, as through the president of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, who stressed out that in some areas the immigrants have outnumbered the indigenous populations and that might cause a dangerous context (*EF.SYN.* 19/09/2015).

Within this limited (22) references context, refugees/immigrants are considered to have a positive economic effect for the host societies, both in terms of the renewal of the work force and the enhancement of consumption (13/22). Only center-right/right-wing politicians seem to disagree (in 5 out of 9 statements) with the positive contribution of the refugees/immigrants to the economic life of transit or host countries, though A. Merkel recognizes the positive contribution of immigrants in the German economy (*EF.SYN.* 07/01/2015).

Quite the opposite is the case in the 31 references to the immigrants/refugees' connection to crime. The majority of the talking heads (20/31) connect immigrants/refugees to crime. This proportion is much more evident in the statements of politicians (16/17) and especially center-right/right politicians, since all of them (16/16) connect the refugees/immigrants to various forms of crime (illegal entry in Europe, theft, vandalisms, disturbance of public peace). For example, the Hungarian government announced the arrest of 519 immigrants who tried to cross its borders and filed charges against 46 of them (*EF.SYN.* 17/09/2015). More balanced are the references to the health effects of the incoming refugees/migrants, since five out of eleven statements

support that the immigrants constitute a danger for the public health and the other six disagree with that opinion.

After the results on economic effects, crime and health issues, we reject our third hypothesis for the correlation of refugees/immigrants to a range of social problems. The rejection stems from the very limited discussion on those issues and the positive approach of the immigrant/refugee populations in economic terms, with the exception of center-right/right politicians, who underline –in all three areas of interest (economy, crime, health)– the possible negative repercussions of the massive relocation of refugees/immigrants from the Middle East and Africa to the European states. As the Austrian Chancellor W. Feiman puts it ‘Austria cannot host all refugees’, implying that his country has already (in February 2016) exceeded its limits in terms of either temporarily or permanently hosting refugees (*Kathimerini*, 26/ 02/2016).

This cleavage between center-right/right politicians and the rest of the ‘talking heads’ is evident in the opinions focusing on the potential negative effects of the refugees/immigrant flows to the western culture, since 20 out of 21 center-right/right politicians consider the refugees/immigrants a threat to the western culture. As Adonis Georgiadis (New Democracy Vice-President and MP) mentioned through his twitter account ‘the terrorist attack in Paris, may be the end of innocence for Islam in Europe’ (*EF.SYN.* 07/01/2015). The conservative politicians monopolize the (negative) opinions on the effects of the refugees/immigrants on the western culture. After that, we accept our fourth hypothesis concerning the presentation of refugees/immigrants mostly as threat to the Western culture, even though the specific thematic is rather marginally discussed.

## *Discussion*

After the above mentioned results, a first conclusion is that the public discussion on the refugees/immigrants is –in quantitative terms– a rather unilateral one. The vast majority of the researched



interview bites refer to the need for providing –mainly conditional or (in fewer cases) unconditional– humanitarian aid to the refugees/immigrants. The main reason behind this focus is that the refugees/immigrants flows are increasing and the need to provide immediate help and a minimum of decent living conditions to the uprooted and wrecked populations coming from the embattled countries of the Middle East and Africa is (as it should be) of utmost importance.

Apart from that, though, the over-emphasizing of the public discourse on the provision of something that should go without saying, along with the managerial rationale behind –mainly– the political discourse on the attitude towards the refugees/immigrants and the majority of negative opinions in terms of the correlation of refugees/immigrants to cultural threats, though in limited number of statements, creates a ‘scheme of distantiation’ that divides the indigenous populations of the host countries from the incoming migrant flows and presents migrants as ‘risks’ (Beck 1992, Furedi 2006) that need to be managed.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon of migration (Zembylas 2012), the rationale of distantiation does not only emerge from the rationale of mercy towards the ‘poor’ refugees/immigrants, but from the cultivation –even through in a direct way only in a limited number of statements– that these populations constitute a possible threat in cultural (threat for the western civilization) terms. The predominantly negative stance of conservative politicians towards the immigrants/refugees in a variety of issues (conditional provision of asylum and humanitarian aid, connection of migrant populations to problematic social phenomena or even cultural threats) stems from the increased dissemination of an extreme-right rhetoric against the refugees/immigrants in the public sphere, both in Greece (Dalakoglou 2013, Ellinas 2013) and other European countries, especially between 2015 and 2016, when the ‘refugee crisis’ reached a pick, with hundreds of thousands of refugees/immigrants trying to enter Europe. A rhetoric that in a sense ‘fits’ the exclusionary and restrictive migration management systems of most western nation states (Samers 2010).

The current research demonstrated similarities in the contemporary public discourse on the refugees/immigrants with previous relevant occasions (Gropas & Triandafyllidou 2005, Dalakoglou 2013, Poulakidakos & Kaloeida 2015). The constant immigrant flows because of the diachronically embattled contexts in their home countries and the numerous lethal accidents of people in the Mediterranean have shifted the public focus towards the provision of emergency help for these people. Although a tragedy is taking place in the European land and sea borders, the politicians favor a managerial approach to the crisis, by supporting the division between refugees and immigrants and the subsequent conditional provision of either humanitarian aid or asylum, in terms of the people eligible for it (e.g. immigrants vs. refugees). In this vein, Thomas de Maiziere (German Minister of Interior Affairs) stated that: ‘Germany is willing to do its best to help solve the refugee issue, but this help cannot be given without limits’ (*EF.SYN.* 13/09/2015). This conditional rationale stands as the major factor enhancing the discriminating rationale between the indigenous populations and the migrants, promoting a rationale of ‘conditional humanitarianism’ towards the refugees/immigrants and a securitization rationale regarding both the external and internal borders of the EU countries.

The predominantly ‘managerial’ rationale of the political discourse concerning the immigrant flows entails an underlying rationale of fear and risk. The conditionality in the provision of humanitarian aid, the unwillingness of several western governments to provide asylum, the closing of the borders, the approach of the refugees/immigrants as numbers, the strict police and military patrols in the borders of several EU countries, imply a rationale of ‘risk management’, against an either immediate (e.g. crime, terrorism), or long-term (cultural) threat (van Dijk 1987, Taguieff 1993, Gale 2004).

In summary, the EU and Greek immigrant/refugee policies, as articulated in the (political) discourse of the current research, are characterized by the inherent contradiction between the obligations arising for protection of migrant populations coming

from endangered backgrounds and the need to control these migration flows (Afouxenidis et al. 2017), promoting a rationale of securitization over humanitarianism.

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