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Contesting national belonging: An established-outsider figuration on the margins of Thessaloniki, Greece

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Ideologies of Greekness

As already mentioned, the ideological perception and regulation of the two population movements that comprised the 1990s immigration flow to Greece has been markedly asymmetric. On the one hand, the inflow and settlement of a significant non-Greek immigrant population has been treated as an undesired development. On the other hand, the settlement of immigrants of Greek descent, especially FSU Greeks, was encouraged and facilitated by state policies. The difference in the Greek state's policies was closely linked to the nation's self-perception as a community defined by descent. According to this perception, only immigrants of Greek descent are an important permanent resource for the country, in contrast to non-Greek immigrants whose entry and prolonged stay is viewed as a threat to both the social cohesion and the cultural homogeneity of the nation. Nationality law has served as the main tool to secure this ideal (Pratsinakis, 2008).

Citizenship (υπηκοότητα, ιθαγένεια) is distinguished from nationality (εθνικότητα); citizenship grants formal membership in the state with the set of legal rights and duties that are attached to it, while nationality denotes inclusion in the community of Greek descent, *the Hellenic world* (Ελληνισμός). The term *génos* (γένος),¹⁶ lineage, is a key element of Greekness. It is used to legally differentiate between those who are of Greek descent, the *homogenís* (ομογενείς), and those who are not, the *allogenís* (αλλογενείς) (Tsitselikis, 2006). Opposed to the normative category of Greek citizens of Greek decent, the category of *allogenís*

¹⁶ In modern Greek the word for nation is *éthnos* (έθνος). It may be argued that there is a subtle difference between *génos* and *ethnos* congruent with Herodotus' usage of the words; the former denotes genealogical ties while the latter refers to the cultural or political bonds of a people (Jones, 1996). Yet the term *ellinikó génos* is used interchangeably with *ellinikó éthnos* to describe the Greek nation, or people, in terms of common descent. Similarly, *homoethnis* and *alloethnis* are synonyms for the terms *homogenís* and *allogenís*.

citizens, which refers to naturalized Greeks or Greek citizens belonging to ethnic or religious minorities in Greece, appears anomalous.

However, the term *homogenís* does not in practice cover all people of Greek descent; it is reserved for the Greeks outside the state who retain their ties with the ‘fatherland’ through a preferential status as people with Greek descent even where they do not possess Greek citizenship (Christopoulos, 2006; Triandafyllidou & Veikou, 2002). It is through this preferential status that FSU Greeks were given access to citizenship rights for their ‘repatriation’ to the fatherland while strict requirements were aimed at limiting the naturalization of non-Greek immigrants.

	Of Greek descent	Of non-Greek descent
Residing in Greece		
Greek born citizens	Autochthonous ¹⁷ Greeks	Allogenis Greek citizens
Foreign born citizens	Heterochthonous Greeks	Allogenis Greek citizens
Residing outside Greece		
Greek citizens	Homogenis	Allogenis
Non-Greek citizens		

Table 2.1 Statuses related to Greekness and Greek citizenship

Globally, diverse historical paths of nation-building have shaped different citizenship traditions and particular conceptions of nationhood which channel immigration in distinct ways (Brubaker, 1990; Joppke, 1999). To understand how in the Greek case the notion of *génos* and its derivatives *allogenis* and *homogenís* have crystallized, one must look into the history of Greek nation-building starting from the origins of the Greek national movement.¹⁸ Looking back in history permits us to view the construction of the Greek state as the focal point of a perceived wider trans-territorial Greek World. The identification of this wider Greek world, however, appears to be a complex matter. It forces us to explore what is implied by the term ‘Greekness’. How has Greekness been defined historically? Who was to be included in the national community? In posing these questions, my aim is to illustrate how ideologies of Greekness determine the

¹⁷ The autochthonous/heterochthonous distinction (*αυτόχθων-ετερόχθων*) is employed to indicate the place of birth.

¹⁸ The term ‘national movement’ here is used in line with Hroch (1993 p. 15) referring to the organized endeavours to achieve all the attributes of a fully-fledged nation.

belonging of this group of people, in their own eyes as well as in those of others, to a country neither they themselves nor their ancestors have ever lived in.

2.1 Greeks by descent

Conceiving the nation, making the state: religion and the classical past

The collective identities in the predominantly Greek-speaking eastern Roman Empire were shaped by the prevalence of Orthodox Christianity (Livanios, 2006). The vast majority of (Greek-speaking) Byzantines called themselves 'Romans' or 'Christians', on the rare occasion they had to identify themselves.¹⁹ This changed very little during the period of Ottoman domination due to the administrative practices of the Ottomans (ibid. 37-40). The population in the Ottoman Empire was politically organized around self-governed religious communities, the *millets* (literally, nations). All the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire formed the *Rum* (i.e. Roman) *millet*. This structure facilitated the political survival of the Byzantine identities.

The *Rum millet* was a multilingual community but Greek language enjoyed a hegemonic position; it was the language of the liturgy and the Orthodox patriarchate as well as the principal language of trade and of cultural distinction in the Balkan zones (Mazower, 2000). This hegemonic position of the Greek language among the Balkan Christians made Greekness a form of cultural capital offering access to circles of wealth and prestige (Roudometof, 1998; Stoianovich, 1960; Vermeulen, 1984). The Phanariotes, the influential Greek-speaking political elite in Constantinople, held high positions in various capacities in the service of the Ottoman Porte. At the same time, a dynamic Greek²⁰ merchant diaspora came to stretch from the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea to Western Europe (Lekas, 2005). From those two groups a Greek Orthodox intelligentsia emerged which gradually adopted the values and ideas of the

¹⁹ In the late Eastern Roman Empire, the literary environment played a role in the adoption by a small number of Greek-speaking intellectuals of the label 'Hellene' (Ελληνος). With this identification they expressed an admiration of the language and the cultural output of the ancient Greeks, and sometimes their perceived ancestral connection with them (Livanios, 2006). Until that time, the term 'Hellene' meant 'pagan'.

²⁰ Hellenization, i.e. the adoption of the Greek language and classical culture, was very widespread among the upper social strata of the non-Greek Balkan Orthodox peoples, with the exception of the Serbs. Being regarded as Greek implied a higher social status. As a result, a relatively united inter-Balkan merchant class emerged, which called itself and was known to others as Greek. (Stoianovich, 1960).

European enlightenment. The discourses which developed in the course of that process introduced for the first time the concepts of ethno-national identities in Balkan society (Kitromilides, 1990, p. 25).

The Greek intellectuals re-conceptualized the Orthodox *Rum millet* in national terms. To that aim they 'invented' their national past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) by appropriating the learned and written tradition of the Enlightenment as regards classical Greece (Liakos, 2008). In so doing they attached political significance to Greek culture. In 1805, Adamantios Korais (as cited in Augoustinos, 2008), the leading figure of the Neo-Hellenic, i.e. Modern Greek, enlightenment, declared to the Societe des observateurs de l'homme in Paris, that

The nation, 'awakening from its lethargy', contemplates for the first time the hideous spectacle of its ignorance, and shudders when it sets its eyes on the immense space that separates it from its ancestors' glories. Painful though this discovery was for the Greeks, it was a call to action, not a cry of despair. 'We descend from the ancients', they said to themselves, 'and we must try to regain the dignity of this name or no longer bear it'.

By presenting the Greek-speaking Rum as the lawful heirs of a culture highly respected outside the Greek-speaking world, the national project of the revival of the ancient in the modern nation became favourably received in Europe. At the same time, it effectively created a Greek imagined community (Anderson, 1983 #86) which was mobilized in revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Following the Greek war of Independence against the Ottoman Empire, and with the political and military help of the West, the Greek nation state was officially established in 1830.

Initially, for Greeks to feel as national subjects meant internalizing their relationship with ancient Greece (Liakos, 2008). The relation of religion to the nation was contested in the writings of the Greek intellectuals. Korais was a fierce enemy of the clergy and excluded the Orthodox Church from his view of the nation state (Veremis, 1990). Rigas Fereos, the second emblematic personality of the Greek Enlightenment, embraced the idea of a radical liberal Hellenic State as the secular version of the *Rum millet* (Kitromilides, 2003). Yet in practice the ideas of a secular republic never met with widespread support. It was a deeply religious Christian Orthodox population that revolted against the Muslim Ottoman Empire, and religion was the major element that bound the peasantry together against the 'Muslim oppressors'.²¹ Already during the war of

²¹ The Patriarchate, an official political structure of the Ottoman Empire, was expected to guarantee the loyalty of the Orthodox community towards the Ottoman state. The Patriarchate has

independence, all three constitutional texts that were adopted by the National Assemblies set religion as the major criterion for the attribution of Greek citizenship. Although the criteria changed in time, membership in the Greek nation has always been confined to the people who traced their origins to the 'Greek community of the Orthodox Millet'; being an Orthodox Christian thus became a precondition of being (seen as) Greek.²²

While religion became the defining feature of Greekness, the criterion of language was used more flexibly. The linguistic plurality of the Balkan Orthodoxy was perceived as a challenge and an opportunity by the Greek nationalists; the eventual Hellenization of non-Greek-speaking Orthodox populations could widen its demographic basis (Kitromilides, 1990, pp. 30). It is important to mention that the Greek national movement did not only inspire and mobilize Greek-speaking populations; the war of independence was led by Arvanites and Vlachs as well.²³ Those groups claimed a Greek identity and were seen by others as Greeks. Although language gradually started gaining political significance, the Greek national movement initially claimed to include a large segment of the Balkan Orthodoxy.

The conceptualization of the nation-state by the Greek intelligentsia was inclusive in other terms as well. Rigas Fereos envisioned a new federation where equality and peaceful coexistence would be provided by a common citizenship to all Balkan cultural and also religious groups under the dominance of Greek culture. Korais, following the example of the French revolution, adopted a civic conception of the nation where all residents of a free Greece would become Greeks irrespectively of language and religion (Vogli, 2007, pp. 67-69). In accordance with early-nineteenth-century nationalism, which held that humanity is naturally divided into nations (Kedourie, 1993), the Greek national idea traced its distinctiveness to its 'classical roots'. However, this in itself does not explain current perceptions of national belonging as a privilege derived by descent (Pratsinakis, 2008). Such conceptions were shaped at later phases by the irredentist Modern Greek state in the context of competing national movements in the Balkans.

continuously embraced the supranational character of its religious community and has never adopted a secessionist role. Since Orthodoxy was such a central element of the Greek national identity, the establishment of a national Church was essential for the legitimation of the new state's authority. The Greek national church was proclaimed independent of the Patriarchate in 1833. This independence was only accepted by the Patriarchate in 1850 (Mavrogordatos, 2003).

²² During the nineteenth century, non-Orthodox populations had to convert if they wished to be naturalized. On the marginal case of the Catholic Greeks see (Vogli, 2007, pp. 71-80; 191-194).

²³ Arvanites are speakers of an Albanian dialect and Vlachs of a Romanesque language close to Romanian. Both groups adhere to the Christian Orthodox religion.

Expanding the nation-state: the Byzantine legacy

The territorial settlement of the first Greek state was seen as a temporary arrangement and successive territorial gains were expected to keep pace with Ottoman decline (Koliopoulos, 1990, p. 78). Yet claims over territories could not be historically legitimized on the basis of the presence of Greek populations in classical times. The theory of the uninterrupted unity of the Greek nation, the continuous presence of the Greek *génos* in ancient, medieval, and modern periods, came to fill the gaps in time and space (Liakos, 2008, p. 204-208).²⁴ The territories of the Ottoman Empire were claimed as integral parts of the historical patrimony of the Hellenic World, since 'they have always been habituated by Greeks'. The 'Great Idea' (Μεγάλη ιδέα) was a dominant cultural, political, and ultimately military project aiming to unite within the borders of a single state all the areas of 'Greek settlement' in Asia Minor. This nationalist doctrine implied the goal of reviving the Byzantine Empire and aimed to establish its capital in Constantinople. Although the legacy of the classical past gave birth to the Greek national idea, Orthodoxy and the Byzantine past became the guiding light of Greek national aspirations after the birth of the Greek state.

In the context of irredentism,²⁵ the state assumed the role of the 'national centre', (εθνικό κέντρο) the political and cultural focal point of an extensive national community transcending contemporary state borders (Kitromilides, 1983; Prevelakis, 2000; Skopetea, 1988). Kolletis, prime minister of Greece in 1844, addressing the constituent assembly, described the contours of the Greek nation (as cited in Clogg, 1992, p. 48).

The Greek kingdom is not the whole of Greece, but only a part, the smallest and poorest part. A native is not only someone who lives within the Kingdom, but also one who lives in Ioannina, in Thessaly, in Serres, in Adrianople, in Constantinople, in Trebizond, in Crete, in Samos and in any land associated with Greek history or the Greek race.

The Greek nation was seen as being comprised by three distinct entities: the Greeks of the kingdom, the widespread merchant diaspora, and the unredeemed brethren in the Ottoman Empire (Hasiotis, 1993; Vogli, 2007). The ambitious

²⁴ In practice that meant incorporating the Byzantine past as part of the Greek history. Filling the gap in history and officially including religion as a crucial component of Greekness was the intellectual project of Papanikolaou, the so-called Greek national historian.

²⁵ Irredentism is a political movement aiming to annex foreign-ruled territories on the grounds of historical claims, actual or alleged, and the perceived ethnic affiliation of populations living in these territories.

Greek national programme, embracing the complete population of these three entities, entailed a national policy within and outside the state.

The new-born state of Greece attracted a number of Greeks from the merchant diaspora whose political and economic involvement in the Greek war of Independence had been of critical importance. Refugee inflows from the Ottoman territory – which had started during the War of Independence and continued after the establishment of the Greek state – came to strengthen the relationship of the Greek state with Greeks abroad. People who came from different parts of the Ottoman Empire settled in the existing urban centres or created new settlements signalling a substantial demographic increase for the Greek Kingdom. Yet they represented only a small segment of the ‘brethren’ that the state aspired to ‘liberate’.

The Greek-speaking communities in the Ottoman Empire were not compactly settled but widely dispersed, primarily over large coastal areas and the Aegean islands, as well as in several big urban centres. Although this proved to be an unsurpassable obstacle for Greek irredentist aspirations, in the eyes of the proponents of the Great Idea it legitimized their claims on an extended territory: ‘Greece combined the appetite of Russia with the dimensions of Switzerland’ (Miller, 1905). Given that territorial expansion was justified on the basis of the presence of Greek populations in the *irredenta*, a constant feature of Greek policy in the nineteenth century was the pigeonholing of populations depending on the regions to which Greece laid claim. At the same time the Greek leadership continued to consider the Greek diaspora, the Greek communities in the West, as a significant source of cultural, political, and economic capital for the kingdom and tried to strengthen the ties between them and the Greek state. The newly established Greek consular network followed several practices to facilitate the prescription of citizenship to *homogénis* populations both in the West and in the Ottoman Empire. In fact the notion of *homogénis* first appeared in the political vocabulary when the consulate attempted to expand the political nation, i.e. the body of Greek citizens, abroad.

Who were considered as *homogénis* by the Greek state? A linguistic definition of what it meant to be a member of the Greek nation would have significantly reduced the potentials for national expansion. In practice, national consciousness (Εθνικό φρόνημα)²⁶ prevailed as the criterion of national inclusion of the foreign-born, while descent was the official rhetoric.²⁷ Descent could be used flexibly for

²⁶ Φρόνημα (frónima) means consciousness in the moral sense of creed, or conviction. Συνείδηση (sinídisi) more precisely carries the general, more neutral meaning of ‘consciousness’.

²⁷ In 1855, descent, as encapsulated in the *ius sanguinis* principle, became the major criterion for

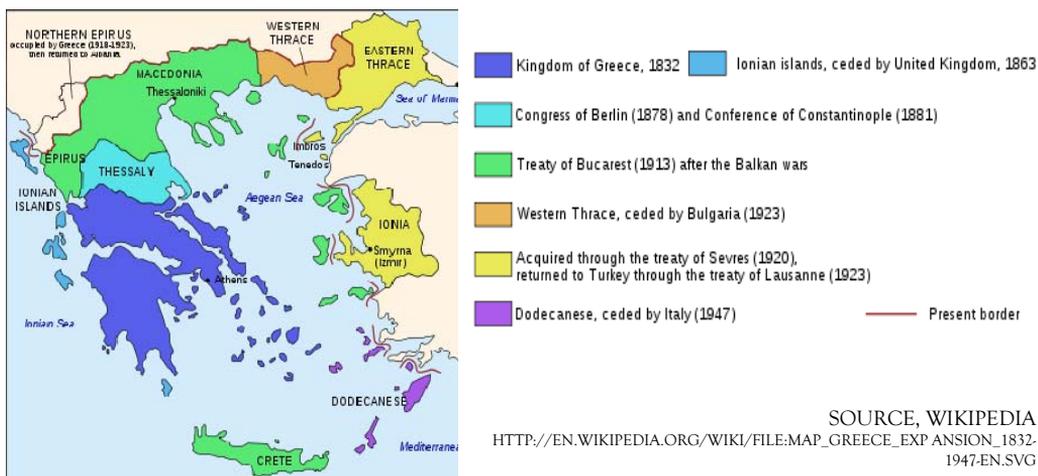
the inclusion of non-Greek-speaking Orthodox populations in the *génos*, provided that they identified with the Greek nation. Yet national consciousness could be assumed neither for Greek-speaking nor for non-Greek-speaking populations. To that end, educational projects were assiduously carried out in an attempt to cultivate the national identification of target populations, and thus to be able to incorporate as many populations as possible in the imagined Greek community.

The process of national recruitment was less complicated in Asia Minor than across the northern borders of the kingdom. That was not because Greeks in Anatolia had a more overt national consciousness. Before the penetration of nationalist ideologies the Orthodox Christian populations had identified as Romii (Romans), a name echoing the Byzantine past. The degree to which Romii identified with the Greek state varied substantially (Clark, 2006; Kitromilides, 1990). The reason for this is that in Anatolia Greece's mission of 'national awakening' was not challenged by competing nationalisms. Romii could only become Greeks or remain Ottoman Christians, and the national recruitment implemented by the Greek state proved to be impressively successful (Kitromilides, 1983; 1990).

The situation on the northern borders of the kingdom was substantially different, especially after Greece had successfully annexed Thessaly and its borders had moved upwards to Macedonia and Epirus (see map 2.1). At this frontier, four conflicting national programmes confronted each other: the Greek, the Bulgarian, the Serbian, and the Albanian. The wide definition of Greekness that served the expansion of the Greek nation across the eastern border of the kingdom was challenged in the north by rival national movements and competing Balkan 'Great Ideas'. The cultural diversity of Balkan Orthodoxy could no longer be seen exclusively as an opportunity, but now seemed a potential threat to national aspirations.²⁸

the attribution of nationality (Vogli & Mylonas, 2009). *Ius sanguinis* is the determination of a person's nationality on the basis of the nationality of his/her parents.

²⁸ The main challenge for the Greek expansion was Bulgarian irredentism. Greeks and Bulgarians tried to achieve national affiliation of populations in Macedonia by exploiting popular dissatisfaction with living conditions under their Muslim landlords. Not language but acceptance of religious authority became the identification marker. In 1870, under increasing Bulgarian pressure for the appointment of Bulgarian bishops and the use of Bulgarian language in churches, the sultan established the Bulgarian Orthodox church, the Exarchate. Those who opted for the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate became Bulgarians and those who opted for the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Constantinople became Greeks. Struggles between the two nationalisms were waged through competing educational and religious proselytization programmes. These targeted the sizeable populations that identified with their region rather a nation. In the beginning of the



Map 2.1 Territorial expansion of Greece 1832-1947

In 1912, despite conflicting interests, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece combined forces to confront the Ottoman Empire. After gaining rapid victories over the common enemy, the three states immediately confronted each other in order to annex as many territories as possible in the European space vacated by the defeated Ottoman army. Greece and Serbia, making substantial territorial gains, were the winners in this so-called Second Balkan War. With the Treaty of Bucharest, Greece's territory increased by approximately 70% and its population from 2,800,000 to 4,800,000 people (Dakin, 1972, p. 202). The new population represented the ethno-cultural complexities of the Balkan world. Besides the linguistic diversity of the Orthodox population and its divisions after years of offensive nationalist propaganda, one must take into account the presence of Muslim and Jewish minorities in the area. Thessaloniki, which is the locus of the present research, was a multiethnic city composed of three religious communities, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, the latter being the numerical majority.

The territorial gains of the Balkan Wars convinced the proponents of Greek irredentism that the 'Great Idea' was within reach. In 1917, Greece entered World War I on the side of Allies. The conclusion of the war found Greece on the side of the winners. In 1920, more than a year after the landing of the Greek army in Smyrna, the treaty of Sèvres created 'a Greece of the two continents and the five seas' (see map 2.1). Yet the treaty was never to be ratified by the Ottomans and the whole grandiose irredentist edifice in Asia Minor was soon to

twentieth century, cultural and religious rivalries were accompanied by open militant confrontations between guerrilla bands.

collapse (Clogg, 1992). An ill-conceived Greek offensive in the interior of Asia Minor resulted in August 1922 in the defeat of the Greek army by Turkish forces reorganized by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). The Greek army retreated and the Turkish army entered 'infidel Izmir', which was set on fire. The Christian inhabitants who managed to survive vacated the city en masse. In a couple of weeks, 750,000 Greeks from Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, and the Pontos regions arrived in the Greek ports, desperate and clamouring for immediate assistance in order to survive (Pentzopoulos, 2002).

The homogenization of the Greek nation-state

The defeat of the Greek Army in Asia Minor put an abrupt and tragic end to a long-standing Hellenic presence in Anatolia; Greeks lament this event as the 'Asia Minor catastrophe'. The Lausanne Convention of January 1923 specified the conditions of what it euphemistically characterized as a forced 'population exchange'.²⁹ This exchange, whose criterion was religion, concerned the permanent exodus of approximately 1.5 million people; 1.2 million Orthodox Christians were permanently expelled from Turkey and 350,000 Muslims from Greece. Exempted from the mutual expulsion were, on Turkish territory, most of the Orthodox population of Istanbul and the islands of Imvros and Tenedos; and on Greek territory, an equivalent number of Muslims in Western Thrace.

The Lausanne Convention was the legal framework for and the culmination of 'the un-mixing of peoples', a process which was already well underway in the previous decades (Hirschon, 2003, p. 4). The vast majority of the approximately 1.2 million people who were obliged to permanently settle in Greece by the Lausanne 'population exchange' had fled Turkey before the signing of the convention. In 1919, Greece and Bulgaria had agreed on the voluntary reciprocal emigration of their minorities. Many more Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians³⁰ had been forced to flee, heading to their 'alien fatherlands' in circumstances caused by the violent nationalist conflicts and war from 1906 until 1923.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the violent confrontations between existing and emerging nation states led to a complete redistribution of

²⁹ With the treaty of Lausanne the Turkish Republic was established and the boundaries were redrawn in favour of Turkey (see map 2.1)

³⁰ A detailed account of the population movements between 1912 and 1924 is provided by A. A. Palis (1925). The author estimates that population transfers in the Balkans during that period concerned 2.3 to 2.5 million people, including those of the Lausanne convention.

populations. Displacement of civilians fleeing hostilities shaped the ethnically homogenous polities that came to replace the multicultural status quo of the old world. The Greek kingdom was most affected by this reshuffling of populations. The influx of the Asia Minor refugees represented a massive increase of its population, which swelled by a quarter. The impact on the ethnic map of the country was immense. In 1913, when Greece annexed Southern Macedonia, 'Greeks' formed 42% of the population. After the population exchange, 'Greeks' constituted 88% of the inhabitants of Macedonia (Andreades, 1929). The 'Hellenization of Macedonia' permitted Greece to view itself as an ethnically homogenous country.

According to the 1928 census only 6% of the total population belonged to linguistic and religious minorities (see appendix II, table I, pp. 248).³¹ Concerning the linguistic minorities, a highly centralized administrative and educational system imposed the dominance of Greek language and promoted a uniform national culture.³² To a large extent, this policy was implemented through fear of potential territorial claims by neighbouring Balkan states, which they might seek to legitimize by reference to those minority populations. After years of irredentist politics, disputed borders, and wars culminating in mutual atrocities, linguistic difference became highly politicized. At the same time, homogeneity became a political obsession of the Greek state.

Concerning the religious minorities, during and immediately after World War II Greece experienced a further stark reduction in its religious plurality. The long history of the Jews of Thessaloniki, a city that had retained a Jewish majority for centuries, took an horrific course (Mazower, 2005). The Jewish community of the city was nearly exterminated along with the 86% of the total Jewish Greek population murdered by the Nazis when they conquered Greece. After the war, the Chams, an Albanian-speaking and primarily Muslim community living in Western Greece close to the border with Albania, was accused of collaboration with the occupation forces. In punishment, they were violently driven across the border into Albania. Moreover, in the period 1946-1949, upon official invitation,

³¹ It should be noted that the Greek state avoided the inclusion of the Arvanites and the Turkish-speaking Asia Minor refugees in the minorities category; they were subsumed in the category 'Greek Orthodox'. Yet it did count the Vlachs and the then-called Slavo-Macedonians or Bulgarian-speakers. Despite their distinction in the census, these two groups were not given minority rights but were subject to policies of assimilation. Vlachs were incorporated under this name as a group with an identity compatible with Greekness (Winniffrith, 2002). Slavo-Macedonians were re-labeled as Greeks speaking Slavic dialects and became target of an increasingly aggressive assimilation policy (Karakasidou, 1993).

³² The Muslim minority, protected by legal obligations imposed by the Lausanne treaty, was not the target of such assimilation measures. However, it faced several exclusionary and discriminatory policies enforced by the Greek State, especially after 1967 (Troupeta, 2001).

a large segment of the Armenian minority moved to the Soviet republic of Armenia (Hasiotis, 2005). Finally, 60,000 members of the Muslim minority were deprived of Greek citizenship and excluded from the Greek state.³³

These population outflows were counterbalanced by influxes of Greek populations. The 1955 pogrom and the 1964 expulsion forced the emigration of the Greek minority of Istanbul.³⁴ The Greeks of Imvros and Tenedos also deserted their homeland. The Egyptian revolution of 1952 led to the exodus of 100,000 Greeks from Egypt (Gorman, 2009). Those forced inflows fostered the idea among Greek people of the Greek state as a refuge for the Hellenic world.

At the same time, the drastic minimization of religious plurality and the linguistic assimilation of non-Greek speaking groups in Greece were leading to more rigid and normative understandings of Greekness. By a policy of re-labelling, all traces of the ethnic diversity that had characterized the country's past were erased from public memory. Until 1961 most of the places that had borne non-Greek names were Hellenized (Kyramariou, 2010); the physical and build environment was then re-named in ways that formed a reminder of the official Greek history (Mackridge, 2008). In addition, from 1951 the state stopped recording data on religion and language. The presence of the remaining non-Greek minorities within the Greek nation-state was ignored and the view of the unbroken history of the Greek nation was imposed by a rigidly centralized education system.³⁵

Local cultural practices of Greek populations – whose immense diversity reflected the coexistence of Greek communities with populations with diverse backgrounds as regards origin, language, and religion – were re-interpreted by national folklorists as quintessential Greek. They became symbols of nationhood, reflecting 'a rich Greek heritage', while their roots were traced to ancient Greece (Danforth, 1984; Herzfeld, 1986; Kyriakidou-Nestoros, 1983). Through a process of 'institutional forgetting' (see Douglas, 1986), the commonalities between those traditions and the traditions of *allogenis* communities with which Greek populations had coexisted for centuries were erased.

Today, the Greek nation state declares itself – and is also perceived by the vast majority of its citizens – as the homeland of all citizens of Greek descent who

³³ That happened by an arbitrary implementation of a discriminatory article of the Greek nationality code which prescribed the loss of Greek nationality by *allogenis* 'who had fled Greece without the intention to return' (Christopoulos, 2009).

³⁴ By the end of the 1970s the Greek minority of Istanbul, which before the pogrom numbered approximately 135,000 people, stood at under 10,000 (Alexandris, 1983 #149).

³⁵ In the primary and secondary education curricula there is hardly any reference to linguistic and religious groups diverging from the Greek national prototype.

adhere to the Christian Orthodox faith, speak the Greek language, and share in Greek culture (Mackridge, 2008). Such a rigid understanding of Greekness poses severe obstacles for the inclusion of *allogenis* immigrants, and even appears to be problematic for the acceptance of immigrants of Greek descent, such as the FSU Greeks.

2.2 The Greek State and the 'Greek World'

The concept of diaspora

In reference to the relocation of populations, the Greek word 'diaspora' (διασπορά; literally, dispersion) was first used to characterize the exile of the Athenian population after the Peloponnesian War. It also was used in the Greek translation of the bible (Septuagint) to indicate the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel. As such it was an equivalent to the Hebrew term *galut*, referring to the exile of the Jews in Babylonian times. In the course of time the word became closely linked to Jewish history in a more general sense; it epitomized the fate of Jews living in exile, outside the 'homeland' (Ohliger & Münz, 2003). Beyond its linkage with Jewish history, the term also came to refer to the dispersion of any people from their original homeland, or of people who have been dispersed from their homeland.

Until recently, the Greek state used the word *homogénia* to describe the Greek world outside its borders, while *diaspora* was reserved mostly for Greek emigrants and their descendants. *Homogénia* served as a broader term also including ethnically Greek minorities in foreign countries who had never lived on Greek territory. However, since at least 1989, government officials, politicians, journalists, and academics have used the two terms as synonymous (Venturas, 2009, p. 125).

In recent decades, literature on diaspora has been burgeoning in different social scientific disciplines. The scholarly interest largely reflects the concept's growing importance in policy and public debates; diaspora has become a politicized concept (Koinova, 2010; Shain, 2007; Sheffer, 2003) widely used in public discourse (Bruneau, 2010, p. 35). The popularity of the term in and outside academia has made it a particularly elastic notion (see Cohen, 2008). This has led to obscurity about its content and has weakened its analytical value.

Although diaspora studies have grown as an autonomous academic field of inquiry, it is still difficult to discern which processes and populations are covered by the term and its derivatives, and which are not. Following Brubaker (2005) and Faist (2010, p. 35) three core elements may be singled out as constitutive of diasporas: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance.³⁶ However, in reviewing the literature one realizes that there is no general consensus even on these basic criteria: each of these three elements has been challenged as regards its claimed status as a necessary condition. Over-utilization of the concept and lack of comparative research has meant that any hope now of finding a common denominator is essentially chimerical.

Despite the differences there is an element binds together all different approaches presented above: the assumption that diasporas are ‘real communities’ to which people belong, even if they are not aware they do. This assumption has led scholars to try to define the limits of those communities. In contrast to the prevailing academic orthodoxy, Brubaker proposes treating diaspora as a category of practice (a notion playing a role in the social processes under observation), and from there assessing whether and how it can be fruitfully used as an analytical category (a concept of use for the researcher) (2005). In his words:

rather than speak of ‘a diaspora’ or ‘the diaspora’ as an entity, a bounded group, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on. We can then study empirically the degree and form of support for a diasporic project among members of its putative constituency, just as we can do when studying a nationalist project. And we can explore to what extent, and in what circumstances, those claimed as members of putative diasporas actively adopt or at least passively sympathize with the diasporic stance, just as we can do with respect to those who are claimed as members of putative nations, or of any other putative collectivity. (Brubaker, 2005, p. 13).

Adopting this perspective, in what follows I will give a rough sketch of how Greek state officials have attempted to define the *homogénia* as part of their attempt to mobilize it for the benefit of the homeland. I do not place emphasis on the effectiveness of this construction nor on the internalization of diasporic identities by the populations claimed to be part of the Greek diaspora; rather, I am interested in the shifting goals set by the Greek governments.

³⁶ For an earlier alternative proposal of defining criteria see (Sheffer, 1986).

The Modern Greek diaspora as a category of practice

As described in the previous section, Modern Greece was constructed by and for a perceived trans-territorial national community defined by descent. Significant changes took place in the conceptualization of Greekness after its establishment. However, descent remained the unchallenged defining criterion of national belonging. This ensured the sustaining of the trans-territorial character of the nation. People who had never lived in Greece, nor their ancestors, may claim to be and be recognized by others as equal Greeks by virtue of descent within the imagined category of 'the Greek people'.

Such identifications have been supported and at periods induced by state policies. Successive Greek governments have treated Greeks abroad, the *homogénia*, as a resource with which to pursue the goals of the 'national centre'. Greece and the *homogénia* are bound together in a mutually recognized solidaristic relationship. The *homogenís* are expected to act for the benefit the 'national centre', while the Greek state is perceived as having a moral obligation towards them.

The history of the establishment of the contemporary Greek nation state is intertwined with that of the emergence of the Modern Greek diaspora. Actually, the formation of a national diaspora preceded the creation of the Greek state and significantly influenced its establishment. The wealthy merchant communities had provided the material underpinnings of the pre-independence intellectual revival which took place primarily in the West. At the same time, the *Phiiliki Etairia* (society of Friends), the secret revolutionary society that laid the groundwork of the Greek revolt, was founded in 1814 by three young Greeks in Odessa (Clogg, 1999, p. 11).

The situation changed drastically after the establishment of the Greek nation state. After its institution, the Greek state came to monopolize the definition of Greekness and became the main actor and regulator influencing the formulation of the Greek diasporic identities. Three phases can be identified in relation to the goals set by Greek governments towards the Greeks outside Greece. The period of irredentism marks the first phase. In that period the aim was to include what was perceived as the Ottoman periphery of the Hellenic World into an expanding Greek state. As already described, the Greek world was initially perceived to consist of three distinct entities: the residents of the Greek Kingdom, the unredeemed Greeks, and the Greek merchant communities. According to the irredentist project of the Greek state, only the Greek merchant communities were claimed to be diaspora Greeks. Greek governments attempted to influence the

ideological, political, and economic processes within those communities, mainly by way of seeking support for its irredentist policy (Konstantinova, 2007; Tsoukalas, 1979, pp. 368-370; Venturas, 2009, p. 126).

The year 1922 signifies the demise of irredentism but did not entail a shift in the function and the self-perception of the Greek state as the focal point of a wider Greek world. It simply marked a new phase in its relations with the Greeks abroad. Expansion to include Greek populations was no longer the goal. After a period during which Greek policy focused exclusively on internal affairs due to the massive 1920s Asia Minor refugees inflow, state authorities took on the role of maintaining ties with a more widespread and diversifying population claimed as belonging to the Greek diaspora. The aim was to sustain and develop the 'Greek' character of this population.

In the nineteenth century the influential – albeit numerically restricted – Greek mercantile communities in Western Europe had experienced a decline. Worsening socio-economic conditions in the regions where they lived, in contrast with the opportunities in the Ottoman lands, motivated people of these communities to move to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, assimilation further reduced the Greek presence in the old trading centres of the West and the Balkans. Odessa, and other Russian, Bulgarian, and Romanian ports, became the new hubs of the Greek merchant diaspora (Hasiotis, 1993).

Extensive emigration away from the Greek state took place at the end of the nineteenth century. Following the 1890s economic crisis, and again in the aftermath of Asia Minor catastrophe, great waves of emigration headed for transoceanic destinations, predominantly the United States. After World War II Greeks emigrated in large numbers to Western Europe, primarily Germany, but also Australia and Canada; from 1945 to 1974 almost one in six Greeks departed (Fakiolas & King, 1996, p. 172). Government rhetoric shifted from the celebration of the wealth and intellectual radiance of the merchant diaspora to pointing out the risks of the nation 'bleeding out' and of its emigrants being assimilated abroad (Venturas 2009, p.134).

In economic terms the new diaspora populations were of great interest to the Greek state; the inflow of remittances sent back to the homeland presented a valuable and stable source of capital.³⁷ Government policy strengthened the ties between the Greek 'national centre' and its diasporic communities. Various

³⁷ In contrast, the efforts of the Greek state had not been as successful in attracting capital from the old merchant diaspora, whose economic interests were closer to the international markets than to those of the weak Greek kingdom (Dakin, 1972).

initiatives were launched to prevent assimilation, including sending labour attachés to consulates abroad, setting up ‘Greek houses’, funding cultural events, and appointing teachers to teach Greek to the children of Greek emigrants living and working in cities in Western Europe (Venturas, 2009, p. 126). The establishment of the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad (GSGA) in 1982 signalled the institutionalization of a more coherent and all-embracing policy. The GSGA organized the emigrants and created representative organs for them. To this end the First World Congress for Greeks abroad was organized in 1985.

Facilitating the return of repatriates was a chief objective of this policy. At the discursive level, the use of terminology is very telling. Rather than speaking of repatriation (επαναπατρισμός), reference is made to *palinnóstisi* (παλιννόστηση), a classical Greek word echoing Ulysses’ return to Ithaca. Partly as a result of government measures, Greek immigrants express a strong orientation towards Greece and commonly embrace an ethos of return³⁸. Moreover, Greek communities abroad have been characterized by a high degree of social cohesion and strong ethno-national identity (Vermeulen, 2008).

In the late 1980s, the Greek government gradually took a different stance towards what it considers its diaspora, entering the third and present phase. The pursuit of ‘repatriation’ in order to revitalize the homeland was reconsidered; the new aim became to retain Greeks abroad so that they could serve Greek interests from afar. The prevention of assimilation of Greeks abroad was not seen as a sufficient means to achieve the new goals; the World Council for the Hellenic World Abroad was set up as an organ for promoting Greek interests, with respect to ‘national issues’ and with a concern for economic expansion (Venturas, 2009).

In the course of implementing this new policy, the government rediscovered a largely forgotten twig of the Greek family tree: the Greeks of the former Soviet Union. The case of the Greeks in the Soviet Union is an intriguing and rather exceptional case. In the turbulent 1920s, the Greek governments were diffident about those Greeks in the Soviet Union who attempted to immigrate to Greece. Greece was still struggling to accommodate the 1.2 million refugees from the forced ‘population exchange’ with Turkey, and in governmental circles there was also a fear that Greeks from the Soviet Union would spread the ‘virus of Bolshevism’. For these reasons, the Greek governments were not willing to accept a large migration inflow from the then newly formed Soviet Union. Thereafter,

³⁸ As Peek (2008, p. 68) vividly describes for the first generation Greeks in Utrecht, the Netherlands, ‘they believe that returning to the home country is the right thing to do [...] They do not want to return yet they feel they should or at least should want to’.

Soviet Greeks remained enclosed within the sealed borders of the Soviet Union,³⁹ with very limited contact with ‘the historic homeland’ and largely forgotten by it. The East–West divide thus separated Greece from this segment of the *homogénia*.

The situation changed drastically in the late 1980s when Greeks started migrating to Greece from the disintegrating Soviet Union. In that period, voices were raised concerning the moral duty of ‘the fatherland’ towards these forgotten and much-afflicted members of the Greek family. Governmental officials initially expressed worries about the scale and suddenness of the inflow. However, they soon re-conceptualized it as an asset for the state. In contrast with the then new policy of keeping diaspora Greeks abroad, but in line with the well-rooted self-image of Greece as a refuge for Greek people, the Greek government proclaimed an official invitation to Soviet Greeks to move permanently to Greece. This plan aimed to settle them in the rural areas of the north-eastern Department of Thrace, home to the Greek Muslim minority. Before going into greater detail regarding Greek state policy on FSU migration in chapter 4, I first outline the origins and the history of the Greek populations in the Soviet Union.

³⁹ With the exception of the small-scale migrations in the 1930s and 1960s; (see chapter 3.2)