

# REFUGEES, 'ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS' AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: USE OF DISCURSIVE CATEGORIES AND LEGITIMATION OF ASYLUM POLICIES IN GREEK POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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It has been noted that the categorisation of migrants into distinct categories and the hardening of the boundaries between these categories has been a significant part of European policy and discourse in immigration and asylum (Lewis and Neal, 2005). While this can be seen as a consequence of the inadequacy of the Geneva Convention definition of refugees in the current socio-political context, it also serves the objectives of EU and state policies of controlling migration and preventing irregular immigration. An example of this trend includes the re-categorisation of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants, which, as Story (2005:17) argues, 'is a meaningful discursive act, with important repercussions for how asylum seekers and unauthorised migrants are perceived and acted upon.' Irregular migrants have been criminalised and constructed as a threat to the security of the state, a discursive move which legitimates restrictive policies (den Boer, 1996; Humphrey, 2003; Story, 2005). The aim of this paper is, firstly, to examine the employment of the categories 'asylum seeker' 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant' in Greek political discourse, taking into account domestic as well as European factors. Secondly, it considers its social effects at the discursive level, especially with regards to the legitimation of restrictive policies and the denial of protection to forced migrants.

## 1. Introduction

The categorisation of migrants into distinct categories and the hardening of the boundaries between these categories has been a significant part of European policy and discourse in immigration

and asylum<sup>1</sup>. Such categories, ranging from settlers to irregular migrants usually have specific definitions in law, even if their interpretation tends to vary in different contexts.<sup>2</sup> They are also accorded different rights depending on the legal status according to international and domestic laws and policies.<sup>3</sup>

However, this article is concerned with such categories not as legal but as discursive ones. In contrast to legal categories, discursive ones can have flexible, elusive meanings. The term refugee, for example, has a specific legal meaning derived from the Geneva Convention but can encompass a wide range of different meanings in different settings, from what Zolberg calls 'ordinary parlance' to academic definitions.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, it has been pointed out that the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' have both been used interchangeably in political and media discourse and in a manner in which the latter has been given negative meanings and replaced the former in political and media discourse.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there is an increased trend in the European Union (and beyond) to re-categorise asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants'.<sup>6</sup>

Attributing a category to a group is not only linked with categorising or identifying them but also with particular viewpoints

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<sup>1</sup> G. Lewis and S. Neal (2005) "Introduction: Contemporary political contexts, changing terrains and revisited discourses," *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.28 No. pp. 423-444.

<sup>2</sup> E. Guild (2005) "The legal frameword:Who is entitled to move?" in E. Guild and D. Bigo, eds., *Controlling Frontiers : Free Movement into and within Europe*. Aldershot:Aldgate; P. Tuitt (1999) "Rethinking the refugee concept" in F. Nicholson, and P. Twomey, *Refugee Rights and Realities: Evolving International Concepts and Realities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; R. Zetter (1991) "Labelling refugees;Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.4. No.1. pp. 612-635.

<sup>3</sup> G. Lewis and S. Neal, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> P. Tuitt, op.cit.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bloch and L. Schuster (2002) "Asylum and welfare: contemporary debates," *Critical Social Policy*, Vol.22. No.3., pp. 393-414; S. Moss (2001) "Mind your language: the semantics of asylum," *Forced Migration Review*, Vol.11., p.39; F. Prieto Ramos (2004) *Media and Migrants a Critical Analysis of Spanish and Irish Discourses of Immigration*. Bern: Peter Lang.

<sup>6</sup> B. Story (2005) "Politics as usual: The criminalisation of Asylum seekers in the United States," RSC Working Paper No. 26, <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/RSCworkingpaper26.pdf>, Accessed 12/10/06.

and argumentation.<sup>7</sup> For example, the re-categorisation of asylum seekers in European Union asylum policy as irregular migrants can be seen as a consequence of the inadequacy of the Geneva Convention definition of refugees in the current socio-political context, but also reflects the objectives of preventing and controlling entry of forced migrants.<sup>8</sup>

An example of this trend includes the re-categorisation of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants, which, as Story argues, 'is a meaningful discursive act, with important repercussions for how asylum seekers and unauthorised migrants are perceived and acted upon'.<sup>9</sup> Irregular migrants have been criminalised and constructed as a threat to the security of the state, a discursive move which legitimates restrictive policies.<sup>10</sup>

The article looks at how three of these categories, 'refugees' 'asylum seekers' and 'illegal immigrants'<sup>11</sup> are employed in Greek political discourse and how they can contribute to the legitimisation of restrictive asylum policies. It would be first helpful to examine how these categories are legally defined. Refugees, according to the Geneva Convention, are 'any person who, {...} owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.'<sup>12</sup> Asylum

<sup>7</sup> F. Prieto Ramos, op.cit.

<sup>8</sup> A.Geddes, (2003) *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*. London: Sage F.Duvell and B.Jordan (2002) "Immigration, Asylum and Welfare: the European Context," *Critical Social Policy*, Vol.22. No. 3., pp. 498-517 G.Lewis and S.Neal, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> B.Story, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> M. den Boer (1996) "Moving between Bogus and bona fide: the policing of exclusion and incursion in Europe," in R. Miles and D.Thronhardt, eds., *Migration and European Integration: The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion*. London: Pinter; M. Humphry (2003) "Refugees: an endangered species?," *The Australian Sociological Association*, Vol.39. No.1. pp.31-43; B. Story, op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> The words are placed in inverted commas to signify that they categories used in the texts, especially in the case of 'illegal immigrants', a term which is not adopted by the author as an analytical category.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR (1996) *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, p. 16 <http://www.unhcr.com> Accessed 13/11/2004.

seekers, on the other hand, are defined by the UNHCR as ‘a person who has left their country of origin, has applied for recognition as a refugee in another country, and is awaiting a decision on their application.’<sup>13</sup> Irregular immigrants on the other hand can include ‘a foreigner arriving clandestinely on the territory of a state; a foreigner staying beyond his or her permitted period of entry and residence; a foreigner working when not permitted to do so or in a manner inconsistent with his or her immigration status.’<sup>14</sup>

It is argued that the employment of categories by different political actors in the Greek context is greatly varied and tends to reflect their political viewpoints and overall argumentation – for example, left-wing political actors are more likely to employ the term ‘refugee’ to refer to forced migrant, while government and right wing political actors show a preference for the term ‘illegal immigrant’. It is also notable that the meaning given to these categories does not necessarily reflect their legal meaning or even a shared meaning among political actors. Moreover, the employment of categories by the government actors suggests that there is an effort to re-categorise asylum seekers as ‘illegal immigrants’ which, I argue, helps the legitimisation of restrictive policies regarding the prevention of entry of potential asylum seekers.

## 2. Greece: the socio-political background

Greece has been seen, until the 1990s, as a sending rather than a receiving country with considerable labour out – migration to western industrialised countries from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> This generalisation tends to obscure the variety of inwards

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR (2003) ‘Information and Briefings:Basic facts’ [http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/basic\\_facts/definitions.html](http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/basic_facts/definitions.html) Accessed 16/04/07.

<sup>14</sup> E. Guild (2003) “Who is an irregular migrant,” Paper presented at the conference ‘Irregular Migration and Human Rights’, University of Leicester, 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>15</sup> J. Cavounidis (2002) “Migration in Southern Europe and the Case of Greece,” *International Migration*, Vol.40. No.1., pp.45-70; C. Kassimis and K.Kassimi (2004) “Greece: A history of Migration,” Migration Policy Institute, <http://migrationinformation.net/Feature/print.cfm?ID=228>, Accessed 15/06/2004;P.Kiprianos, S. Balias and V. Passas (2003) “Greek Policy towards

and outwards migration until the early 1990s. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Greece has received refugees, returnees and repatriates of Greek origin, the most notable one being the settlement of approximately 1.5 million refugees from Asia Minor.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, outwards movements included political refugees to eastern European countries following the Greek Civil war (1947-1950) and a small number of Greek citizens seeking refuge abroad during the military dictatorship of 1967-1974.<sup>17</sup>

Immigration increased in the early 1990s and consisted mostly of economic migration from former communist countries, with largely an informal character linked to the opportunities for irregular and black-market employment.<sup>18</sup> An Immigration Act introduced in 2001 attempted to impose a more regulated framework for economic migration, although it focused more on preventive and repressive measures rather than on legal routes of entry or integration.<sup>19</sup> The two regularisation exercises in 1998 and 2001 are seen as more representative of the ad-hoc nature of immigration policy.<sup>20</sup>

The limited history of reception extended to refugees and asylum seekers. Until the 1990s, assistance for applications and welfare assistance was provided by non-governmental organisations, including the UNHCR, which granted refugee status along with the

Immigrants and Immigration" *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol.37. No.2., pp.148-164; A. Papadopoulou (2004) "Smuggling into Europe: Transit Migrants in Greece", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 17, No.2., pp.167-184.

<sup>16</sup> R. Black, (1994) "Asylum policy and the marginalisation of refugees in Greece," in W.T.S.Gould and A. M. Findlay, eds. *Population migration and the changing world order*. New York: J. Wiley.

E. Voutira, (2003) "Refugees: whose term is it anyway? *Emic* and *etic* constructions of 'refugees' in Modern Greece," in J.van Selm et al., eds, *The Refugee Convention at Fifty : a view from forced migration studies*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books. Tsoukala.

<sup>17</sup> R.Black, *ibid*. P. Kiprianos et al, *op. cit*.

<sup>18</sup> M. Baldwin -Edwards (1999). "Where Free Markets Reign: Aliens in the Twilight Zone," in Arango & M. J.Baldwin-Edwards, eds. *Immigrants and the informal economy in Southern Europe*. Portland, Or.: Frank Cass; C. Kassimis and K. Kassimi, *op.cit*.

<sup>19</sup> M. Baldwin-Edwards (2004) *Immigration into Greece, 1990-2003*. Athens, Mediterranean Migration Observatory.

<sup>20</sup> M. Baldwin-Edwards, *ibid*.

Greek state.<sup>21</sup> UNHCR recognised refugees from Eastern European countries were resettled in the US, Canada and Australia, all of which operated immigration offices in Athens.<sup>22</sup>

Those asylum seekers who were not resettled in western states would remain in Greece informally, with no specified legal status and largely employed in the black economy, with the exception being refugees from Turkey, mainly Kurdish who would be granted asylum officially for reasons of foreign policy. Underpinning this state of affairs was the belief among political actors that Greece was predominantly a transit country for refugees who were interested in settling in other western states – an attitude which continued into the early 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Even then, the recognition rate was about 2%, compared to the 33% recognition rate by the UNHCR. The informal approach of the Greek state – allowing refugees to remain without status – and the high recognition rates by UNHCR have led some authors to suggest that the asylum policy of the Greek state in the 1980s and early 1990s was a particularly tolerant one, even suggesting that the recognition rate during the 1980s was higher than in subsequent years.<sup>24</sup>

Numbers of asylum seekers did fall in the 1990s and 2000s although peaks in application by Kurdish, Iraqi and Afghani – the main asylum seeking groups in Greece- nationals, were associated with political upheavals and wars in the areas of origin.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, because of geo-political, policy and economic changes, more refugees were likely to settle rather than move on to European countries.<sup>26</sup> The legislative framework soon proved inadequate and the need for new legislation became obvious, but it has been widely considered

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<sup>21</sup> R. Black, op.cit., P.N.Papadimitriou and I.F.Papageorgiou (2005) “The ‘New Dubliners’: Implementation of European Council Regulation 343/2003 (Dublin-II) by the Greek Authorities,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.18 No.3., pp. 299-318; N. Sitaropoulos (2002) “Refugee Welfare in Greece: towards a remodelling of the responsibility-shifting paradigm,” *Critical Social Policy* Vol.22. No.4. pp.536-455.

<sup>22</sup> R. Black, op.cit. P.N.Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> R. Black, op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> R. Black, op.cit.; P. Kiprianos et al, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> A. Papadopoulou, op.cit.

<sup>26</sup> P.N. Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, op.cit.

more reactive than proactive. The first legislation specifically for asylum was introduced in 1996 replacing the earlier Act of 1991 and was supplemented by presidential decrees which regulated its implementation.<sup>27</sup> EU instruments on asylum and immigration, notably the Schengen Treaty and the Dublin Convention were also incorporated into Greek law and policy – often without extended discussion and debate –, which was also influenced by EU recommendations and directives, such as the ones on manifestly unfounded procedures and safe third countries.<sup>28</sup> However, both law and administrative practice, especially in the area of reception, have been criticised as inadequate.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, Greek asylum law and practice moved from 'tolerance' to ever increasing restrictions, with limited provision of protection and an emphasis on preventing irregular migration and entry of potential asylum seekers.<sup>30</sup> The former is evident in the low recognition rates, as low as 0.08% in 2002 and 0.4% in 2005<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, delays in the asylum process system, using domestic law to deny applicants access to the asylum process and downright refusal to accept applications have all been used in varying degrees to limit the granting of asylum.<sup>32</sup> Other measures were geared towards the control of Greek borders and preventing the entry of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The establishment of a body of border guards in 1997 and the signing of a readmission agreement with Turkey in 2001 – by which migrants entering illegally, an offence in the 2001 Immigration Act, could be returned immediately to Turkey – are examples of this kind of measures.<sup>33</sup> Deportations of failed asylum seekers, lately to countries considered

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<sup>27</sup> P.N. Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, *op.cit.*

<sup>28</sup> M. Baldwin-Edwards, *Immigration into Greece*, *op.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> N. Sitaropoulos (2000) "Modern Greek Asylum policy and Practice in the Context of the Relevant European Developments", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.13. No.1. pp.105-117; A. Skordas and N. Sitaropoulos (2004). 'Why Greece is not a Safe Host Country for Refugees'. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol.16. No.1 pp.25-52.

<sup>30</sup> R.Black, *op.cit.*; A.Papadopoulou, *op.cit.*

<sup>31</sup> A.Papadopoulou, *op.cit.*; A.Skordas and N.Sitaropoulos, *op.cit.*

<sup>32</sup> M. Baldwin-Edwards, *Immigration into Greece*, *op.cit.*; A.Papadopoulou, *op.cit.*; P.N. Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> A.Papadopoulou, *op.cit.*

unsafe such as Iraq, and long detention periods have also been reported.<sup>34</sup>

The reasons for this restrictive turn in Greek asylum policy can be seen as varied, but the main influence is the overall direction of EU immigration and asylum policy. The establishment of a zone of free movement in the European Union with the Schengen Treaty and the reconfiguration of asylum and immigration policies within this context with the Amsterdam Treaty meant that increasing emphasis was put on the control of the external borders of the Union.<sup>35</sup> These priorities put pressure on the Greek state, which because of its geographical position and long maritime borders has been one of the main points of entry for migrants.<sup>36</sup> This has been reflected in the priorities of Greek policy of controlling borders and preventing ‘illegal’ immigration.<sup>37</sup> The implementation of the Dublin I and II Conventions has also meant that since Greece has been in many cases the first port of entry, applications should be considered there, but the slow process and inadequate resources created considerable difficulties in processing the applications.<sup>38</sup> This contributed to an unwillingness to grant asylum or in certain cases process and accept claims, also reflecting the general trend in European Union.<sup>39</sup> In addition, due to the small number of refugees and the large number of economic migrants in Greece – often with irregular status – asylum in political discourse tend to be subjugated to issues relating more to economic migration.<sup>40</sup> Popular negative perceptions, shared by officials and the public, of labour migrants, especially those coming from Albania, and the belief that most migrants entering the country are economic migrants rather than

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<sup>34</sup> A.Papadopoulou, op.cit.; A. Skordas and N. Sitaropoulos, op.cit.; N. Sitaropoulos, *Modern Greek Asylum Policy*, op.cit.

<sup>35</sup> A. Geddes, op.cit.; S. Lavenex (2001) *The Europeanization of refugee policies: between human rights and internal security*. Aldershot: Aldgate.

<sup>36</sup> N. Sitaropoulos, *Modern Greek Asylum Policy*, op.cit.

<sup>37</sup> A.Papadopoulou, op.cit..

<sup>38</sup> A.Papadopoulou, op.cit.; P.N. Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, op.cit.

<sup>39</sup> A. Favell and R. Hansen (2002) “Markets against politics: migration, EU enlargement and the idea of Europe,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.28. No.4. pp. 581-601; P.N. Papadimitriou and I.F. Papageorgiou, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> N. Sitaropoulos, *Modern Greek Asylum Policy*, op.cit.



asylum seekers, are also seen as having contributed to restrictive immigration policies.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. Data and methodology

The paper is part of a comparative research study of the political discourse of asylum in Greece and Ireland between 1996 and 2004. It draws on the variety of political texts, such as parliamentary debates, oral questions and written answers, press releases and press conferences, policy documents, articles and interviews, selected on ground of relevance to the research topic. The overall aim of the research project was to examine how political actors legitimate the introduction and maintenance of restrictive policies in the field of asylum.

The method employed for the analysis of the data is Critical Discourse Analysis and was chosen as appropriate for the exploration of the interaction between discursive and social phenomena, which are seen as constitutive of each other.<sup>42</sup> A further goal of Critical Discourse Analysis is the exploration of power relations in their discursive form, which make it particularly relevant to issues of immigration and asylum seeking, given the unequal relations between receiving states and groups of migrants. The analysis of the data focused on both themes and discursive strategies. In order to overcome some of the methodological weaknesses of Critical Discourses Analysis – the lack of clarity and transparency in the process of analysis – it was supplemented by the use of Nvivo qualitative software, which can offer greater consistency and transparency to the analytical process.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> R.Black, op. cit.; A.Papadopoulou, op.cit.

<sup>42</sup> N. Fairclough, (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge; R. Wodak (2001) "What CDA is about - a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments," in R.Wodak and M. Meyer, eds, *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London:Sage.

<sup>43</sup> L. S.Gilbert (2002) "Going the distance: closeness in qualitative analysis software," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol.5. No. 3. pp. 215-228; Richards (2002) "Qualitative computing—a methods revolution?," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol.5. No. 3. pp. 215-228.

## 4. The employment of terms in Greek political discourse

### 4.1 *'Asylum seeker'*

A first – and rather surprising – finding is the rather limited use of the term 'asylum seeker', or as the equivalent translation in Greek is, 'asylum claimant'. It occurs only 26 times in 12 documents out of a total of 120. When it occurs it tends to be used when political actors talk about asylum procedures in a legal or administrative context, as in the following extracts:

(Extract 1)

“When an asylum claim is submitted by a non-native detained for deportation, the deportation is postponed until the final decision on the claim, according to the 4803/13/7 Joint ministerial decision of 18-6-92, and the claim is examined under the fast-track procedure. As a rule, asylum seekers are not deported, even after the dismissal of their claims, but they are given a date for voluntarily leaving the country, because they are considered refugees in the broad sense, according to the Geneva convention of 1951”. (F. Petsalnikos, Minister for Public Order)<sup>44</sup>

(Extract 2)

“In what concerns Article 3, the reference to entry points of ports or airports refers only to asylum seekers who submit a claim while they are in a transit zone”. (P. Kammenos)<sup>45</sup>

The above quotes are representative of how the category is used in the texts. Firstly, it is employed in an administrative or legal context rather than, for example, as part of an argument in the context of a debate. Secondly, they are representative of the documents where the employment of the category occurs: nine out of 26 instances occur in written answers, while a further nine in

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<sup>44</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 05/03/1999 p. 5021, <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/ES0305.pdf>, Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>45</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 12/12/1996, p.1816-7, [http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/12\\_12\\_96.pdf](http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/12_12_96.pdf), Accessed 24/09/2007

a single debate discussing the articles of the 1996 Refugee Act. Thirdly, the language of the extracts where the category occurs tend to be fairly neutral in tone, even if, as in the first extract, the objective is to defend government policy following questions posed by opposition MPs. This differs from the more emotionally charged employment of the categories 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant'.

The limited use of 'asylum seeker' as a category might be surprising in comparison to its extensive use in other European countries, where 'asylum seeker' is extensively employed not only as a legal category but as a discursive category in political and media discourse.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the neutral manner of the employment of the category contrasts with the often negative connotations it has acquired in other European contexts, having in a way replaced or been used a substitute for the category 'refugee'.<sup>47</sup>

It might be complicated to pinpoint the reasons why the category is not in extensive use in Greek political discourse, but one suggestion could be the underdeveloped nature, until the 1990s, of a legal framework specifically for asylum, which would designate asylum seekers as a specific group with a distinct set of entitlements. However, the main explanation for this particularity might lie in the preference for employing the terms 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant' for reasons that pertain to the particular meaning of the former in the Greek context and because of policy objectives which are reflected in the choice of categories. The next section attempts to clarify the reasons behind the extensive use of the category 'refugee'.

#### 4.2 'Refugee'

Unlike in other European contexts, where the meaning of the category 'refugee' can have both positive and negative connotations, in the Greek context they are overwhelmingly positive. Voutira

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<sup>46</sup> M. Gibney (2006) "A thousand Little Guantánamos: Western States and Measures to Prevent the Arrival of Refugees," in K. Tunstall, ed., *Displacement, Asylum, Migration*. Oxford:Oxford University Press; S. Moss, *op.cit.*

<sup>47</sup> M. Gibney, *op.cit.* F. Prieto Ramos, *op.cit.*

attributes this to the history of reception of 1.5 million refugees from Asia Minor following the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, in addition to smaller number of Pontic Greek refugees from the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> The settlement and integration has been widely regarded as successful and contributed to the Greek state building projects of homogenising the population of Northern Greece, rendering 'refugee' a term of honour and intricately linked to Greek national identity.<sup>49</sup> This perception is enhanced by forced migration experiences in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when around 65,000 political refugees sought refuge in Eastern European countries after the end of the civil war and small numbers of Greek leftists sought asylum to western European countries in the 1960s and 1970s, especially during the military dictatorship of 1967.<sup>50</sup>

These factors affect the use of the category 'refugee' in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It is the most frequently used category in the data, occurring 633 times in all types of documents. It is employed by opposition and government alike – supporting MPs, and more significantly for this research, it tends to replace, in both cases, the category 'asylum seeker'. I outline below the varied usages by different actors.

Firstly, 'refugee' is used as a category encompassing 'asylum seeker' in the talk of speakers who oppose government policy or ideologically support less restrictive policies. For example, in an oral question regarding conditions of detention of foreign prisoners, an opposition MP asks the Public Order Minister:

(Extract 3)

'if he is prepared to offer humanitarian solutions to the refugees who are in our country without documents and cannot obtain them because of the unusual conditions in their countries of origin.(S. Alfieri)<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> E.Voutira, op.cit.

<sup>49</sup> E.Voutira, op.cit.

<sup>50</sup> Kiprianos et al, op.cit.

<sup>51</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 24/10/1997, [http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/24\\_10\\_97.pdf](http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/24_10_97.pdf), Accessed 24/09/2007.

While the speaker, a member of the opposition leftwing Synaspismos party, uses the term 'refugee', it can be inferred from the context of her question that it is more likely to be referring to asylum seekers or undocumented migrants, who are far more likely to be detained in Greece – for instance for entering illegally and not having the required documents.<sup>52</sup> However, the manner in which it is used in this context is more as an inclusive category than as a narrowly defined one corresponding to specific legal criteria. A similar inclusiveness is also evident in the following extract, regarding the living conditions of Kurdish migrants in the Greek city of Patras:

(Extract 4)

"[...] After the problems with the political refugees in the Agios Andreas campsite [a temporary accommodation centre] we have the same problem in Patras. Around three hundred Kurds live in disused train wagons, having created a makeshift settlement next to the port of Patras, without heating electricity, toilets etc. They see Patras as an exit to Europe, so that they can live in humane conditions and find a home for their children and their families". (I. Karatasos)<sup>53</sup>

While Kurds in Greece could be considered refugees in the broad sense, and even considering that some of them might have received refugee status, relevant research suggests that Kurdish nationals in Greece are likely to have varied immigration statuses.<sup>54</sup> The attribution of the category refugee seems to be guided by conditions specific to the Greek socio-political context.

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<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International (2004) *The Greek Policy Towards Refugees, June 2002-November 2003*, [http://www.amnesty.gr/library/2003/2003-01-22%20Refugee Report.doc](http://www.amnesty.gr/library/2003/2003-01-22%20Refugee%20Report.doc), Accessed 04/02/2004; Amnesty International (2005) *Out of the spotlight: The rights of foreigners and minorities are still a grey area*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGEUR250162005>, Accessed 07/10/2005.

<sup>53</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 04/04/1997, [http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/04\\_04\\_97.pdf](http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/04_04_97.pdf), Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>54</sup> A. Papadopoulou, op.cit.; G. A. Antonopoulos and J. Winterdyk (2006) "The Smuggling of Migrants in Greece: an Examination of its Social Organisation," *European Journal of Criminology*, Vol.3. No.4. pp.439-461.

Kurdish migrants in Greece have been, until at least the end of the 1990s allowed to remain in an irregular manner if not recognised as refugees, for reasons of foreign policy towards Turkey.<sup>55</sup> Because of their significance in this respect, Kurdish refugees tend to be seen in a positive light by political actors (and publics) of all persuasions. As the speaker in the second extract himself remarks, *'they are not any refugees. They have a particular significance for our country'*<sup>56</sup>

In short, the preference of the category 'refugee' instead of any other category by opposition MPs can be seen as both representative of the domestic context as well as strategic. First, it seems to be bound by the positive connotations of the word in the Greek context and possibly the fact that left-wing opposition MPs are likely to have more positive attitudes towards these groups, given the persecution of left-wing views in Greece until the 1970s. Secondly, it can reflect positive or advantageous views about specific groups, such as Kurdish migrants from Turkey. At the same time, the employment of a category with positive, rather than neutral or negative, connotations could be seen to achieve more favourable responses from other political actors or the wider public to the issues raised.

The employment of the same category by government actors is more varied as it tends to encompass several different conditions. For example, it can refer to Greek returnees and repatriates from the former Soviet republics who came to Greece following the collapse of the communist regime in the beginning of the 1990s. In fact, a significant part of the debates on the Asylum Bill of 1996 focused on this issue. Similarly, it can signify Greek political refugees in former communist eastern European countries. In what concerns non-ethnically Greek refugees, the term refers mainly to two broad groups: political refugees, such as Turkish and Kurdish refugees from Turkey, and refugees from the conflicts in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. I would distinguish two forms of usage of interest for this paper, refugees being either differentiated from

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<sup>55</sup> R. Black, *op.cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 04/04/1997, [http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/04\\_04\\_97.pdf](http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/04_04_97.pdf), Accessed 24/09/2007.

'asylum seekers' as a category or 'refugees' being equated with 'asylum seekers'.

In a very few cases, 'refugees' appears to be used as a different category from 'asylum seekers'. For example, it is mentioned in a written answer that a Presidential Decree would

(Extract 5)

"regulate the provision of medical and socio-economic provisions to recognised refugees, asylum seekers and recipients of humanitarian status." (E.Skoulakis, Minister for Health and Welfare)<sup>57</sup>,

which suggest that the two categories in question are distinguished.

It is more likely, however, that the two categories are used interchangeably – for example, the main accommodation centre for asylum seekers in Greece – Lavrio – is sometimes referred to as an 'asylum seeker accommodation centre' and sometimes as a 'refugee accommodation centre'. This could be attributable to insufficient knowledge of the terms by the actors, but also to the privileged meaning of 'refugee' in the Greek context.

More interestingly, the term 'refugee' is preferred in relation to the category 'asylum seeker' in situations where the latter would be a more accurate one. The following extract from a press conference following the capsizing of a boat and the arrival of around 800 migrants to Zakynthos, several of whom, at the point of this statement, intended to submit an asylum claim<sup>58</sup>: When interrogated by journalists concerning the status of the migrants and the possibility that they are returned to Turkey – the point of departure of their ship – the government spokesperson stated that:

(Extract 6)

"not all 1000 of them are political refugees" and continues by stating that "it is possible, amongst them to be some who can

<sup>57</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 06/10/1998, <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/ES1006.pdf>, Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International, op. cit.; UNHCR (2001) "Greece: boat arrival," <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=3bebce7b4&page=news>, Accessed 11/09/2007

submit a claim, based on international practice and the directions of UNHCR, to be proven that they are political refugees. It is clear that for them there will be a different treatment. We are very sensitive towards political refugees.”(C. Protopapas)<sup>59</sup>

Similar issues arise from another press conference extract, this time with the Greek Foreign Affairs Minister. When a journalist argues that the readmission agreement with Turkey removes access to the asylum procedure for irregular migrants, the foreign minister claims that:

(Extract 7)

“in the preface of the protocol we insisted on including a clear reference to the respect of human rights and refugee rights and in no case do we intend to deny the rights of political refugees. Our country is a country open to political refugees and we are obliged to do so by international law.”<sup>60</sup>

These extracts highlight several issues of interest. It could be argued that what is debated is the possibility for migrants to become asylum seekers and be entitled to protection afforded to claimants under both international and domestic law. However, the category employed by the speakers in response to the journalists’ questions is ‘refugee’ rather than ‘asylum seeker’, in direct denial in the first extract, and more indirectly in the second one. While the groups in question could be considered refugees in the broad sense, they are not recognised through legal procedures based on the Geneva Convention, therefore not protected by its provisions. Secondly, the speakers refer to ‘political refugees’ specifically, which relates to experiences of displacement particular to the Greek context – of Greek citizens and of histories of reception. It also adopts a narrow interpretation of the Geneva Convention which can exclude a large number of asylum seekers

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<sup>59</sup> Ministry for the Press and Mass Media, Press Release 07/11/2001, [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage\\_lldoc.html?id=2886153](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage_lldoc.html?id=2886153), 24/09/2007.

<sup>60</sup> Press Conference of G. A. Papandreou, 28/11/2001, <http://www.pasok.gr/portalgr/41/206/7/print/135/1/showdoc.html>, Accessed 24/09/2007.



coming from war affected countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Thirdly, whether intentional or not, the choice of the words 'can submit' – authorised by reference to 'international practice' and 'the directions of UNHCR – suggests that access to the asylum determination procedure depends on fulfilling the criteria beforehand. The speaker seems to imply that being a refugee is an essential condition predating any examination of an asylum claim following set procedures.

This, in a sense renders the category 'asylum seeker' redundant by suggesting that someone either is or is not a refugee, without a need for a procedure to examine the claim. It can be argued that the employment of the two categories so far suggests a kind of 'discursive disappearance' of the 'asylum seeker' category, which becomes more pronounced when compared to the employment of the category 'illegal immigrant' below, the effects of which for the legitimisation of policies are going to be analysed in the following section.

#### 4.3 *'Illegal immigrants'*

The effectiveness of employing the term refugee is further enhanced by opposing it to the other main category in Greek political discourse, that of 'illegal immigrant, which occurs 288 times in 52 documents. This count only includes instances when there are clear indications that the speakers refer to refugees or asylum seekers, such as references to irregular entrants from Iraq or Afghanistan. In such instances, the 'illegal immigrants' category is used in opposition to the category refugee – including asylum seekers – but also as synonymous to it. Fairclough's account of the logics of difference and equivalence is useful in understanding this relationship. These logics are seen as 'social processes of classification' which can work simultaneously in the process of classifying individuals and groups into categories.<sup>61</sup>

The continuation of extract 7 in the above section illustrates how the opposition of the two categories work. After expressing commitment to international law, the Foreign Affairs Minister goes

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<sup>61</sup> Fairclough, *op. cit.* p. 100.

on to say that *'This is different from illegal immigrants.'*<sup>62</sup> Thus the category of 'refugees' is differentiated from and juxtaposed to that of the 'illegal immigrant'. A similar move is also made in the following statement by the Health and Welfare minister, who states that:

(Extract 8)

"[a]ll actions and procedures of examining asylum claims are taking place with the sole purpose of protecting the interests of real refugees and not of the total of illegal immigrants who arrive in our country and who cannot possibly be irresponsibly identified or self-identify as refugees."<sup>63</sup>

These extracts exemplify claims that illegal immigrants cannot be refugees. The two categories are presented as mutually exclusive, creating a 'logic of difference' between them. However, it is widely accepted by academic literature as well as NGO practitioners that refugees often have to enter in a clandestine manner, as most legitimate ways of entry have been closed by recent immigration policies.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, the contrast is again made between 'refugees' – who are entitled to protection – and 'illegal immigrants' – who do not. The absence of the category 'asylum seekers' from the frame of reference enhances the distinction between 'genuine' refugees – enforced by the adjective 'real' in the text – and 'non-genuine' 'illegal immigrants', a category which nearly always has negative connotations.<sup>65</sup> The juxtaposition is enhanced by the underlying positive connotations of the category 'refugees'.

Furthermore, the latter part of the extracts entails a negative moral evaluation of characterising such groups of asylum seekers

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<sup>62</sup> Press Conference of G. A. Papandreou, 28/11/2001, <http://www.pasok.gr/portalgr/41/206/7/print/135/1/showdoc.html>, Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>63</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 18/10/2002, p.3264, <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/SYN01-18-02.pdf>, Accessed 24/09/2007

<sup>64</sup> L. Fekete (2001) "The Emergence of Xeno-racism" <http://www.irr.org.uk/2001/september/ak000001.html>, Accessed 13/10/06.

<sup>65</sup> F.Prieto-Ramos, op.cit.

as refugees, triggered by the adverb 'irresponsibly'. This can be interpreted as suggesting that the interests of refugees are harmed by false claims, as well as the inappropriate use of categories. The distinction between deserving and undeserving is a theme identified in research on the political discourse of asylum and immigration of other European countries.<sup>66</sup>

The other logic that seems to operate simultaneously in Greek political discourse is that of 'equivalence'. In these moves by political actors, 'refugees' are equated to 'illegal immigrants'. An example of this occurs in a press conference where a journalist poses a question regarding "*an increase of Iraqi refugees of Kurdish origin in Greece.*"<sup>67</sup> The government spokesperson replies in the following manner:

(Extract 9)

"What I can say is that Greek borders are controlled in order to prevent illegal immigration. When there are indications that a mass movement of illegal immigrants will take place, we take more specific measures [...]" (D. Konstas)<sup>68</sup>

The speaker in effect substitutes the category 'refugees' employed by the journalist with that of 'illegal immigrants'. This re-naming of categories is a frequent occurrence in press conferences and question posed by the opposition in the parliament. If the question employs the category 'refugee', the government – supporting speaker may chose to change the terms of reference by employing the category 'illegal immigrants' instead, or by referring to 'illegal immigration' as a phenomenon to be controlled, rather than forced migration, as in the extract above.

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<sup>66</sup> M. Gale (2004) "The Refugee crisis and fear: Populist policies and media discourse," *The Australian Sociological Association*, Vol.40. No.4. pp.321-340; M. Humphrey, op. cit; R. Sales (2002). "The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain", *Critical Social Policy*, Vol.22. No.3., pp. 456-478.

<sup>67</sup> Ministry for the Press and Mass Media, Press Release 10/09/1996, [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage\\_lldoc.html?id=27412486](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage_lldoc.html?id=27412486) Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>68</sup> Ministry for the Press and Mass Media, Press Release 10/09/1996, op.cit.

A similar logic of equivalence exists in the discourse of right-wing MPs, where ‘illegal immigrants’ appears to be the dominant category when referring to refugees and asylum seekers. For example, one speaker from the opposition New Democracy party refers to the reception centre of Lavrio as (Extract 10) “*the main reception centre of illegal immigrants.*” (A. Papakosta-Sidiropoulo).<sup>69</sup> Likewise, the following extract is taken from a debate about a bill on controlling immigration supported by the opposition right wing New Democracy party illustrates this conflation in more detail:

(Extract 11)

After a bureaucratic process of submitting an asylum claim which is rejected, the illegal immigrant is let free with a note that he should leave Greece within fifteen days. You understand that nobody leaves, because not only they don't try to avoid the procedure, but in Evros, as we've been told, just after they cross the border they look for the nearest police station to turn themselves in. When they see a patrol car passing they shout “come to arrest us”.<sup>70</sup>  
(C. Markoyiannakis)

In both extracts the speakers attribute to asylum seekers the category ‘illegal immigrants, the first by renaming a reception center for asylum seekers and the second by conflating the two statuses. In addition, the second extract evaluates negatively migrants who apply for asylum for following necessary steps – for example turning themselves over to the authorities – in order to submit an asylum claim. One difference from the aforementioned usages by government actors is that the tone adopted by opposition actors can be more hostile to both refugees and irregular migrants, as the party has adopted a hard line on immigration control.

In short both by conservative opposition and government, either through a logic of equivalence or difference, the two categories are employed in such a manner that they can create specific effects in

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<sup>69</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 23/11/2001, p.1713 <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/SYN102301.pdf> Accessed 24/09/2007.

<sup>70</sup> Records of the Greek Parliament, 03/04/2003, p.3746 <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/praktika/pdf/SYN20030403.pdf> Accessed 24/09/2007.

terms of the legitimation of restrictive policies. These effects are discussed in the next section.

### 5. Use of categories and legitimation policies

As it has been observed in the previous section, 'asylum seeker' is a nearly absent discursive category from Greek discourse, while 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant' are preferred by the speakers of all political persuasions at varying degrees. The combined usage of these terms should be seen as linked to the legitimation of policies. With 'asylum seeker' being an absent category, the main contrast in terms of entitlement to refugee protection is expressed through the opposition between 'refugees' and 'illegal immigrants', where the former is constructed as 'genuine' and 'deserving' while the latter as 'non' genuine' and 'undeserving'.

In terms of Critical Discourse Analysis, the employment of the term 'illegal immigrant' can be considered in the context of using negative other-presentation strategies. Negative other-presentation can be broadly defined as depicting an out-group in a negative manner, either in a blatant or subtle way.<sup>71</sup> Employing the category 'illegal immigrant' can be regarded as such a strategy, as the term in itself, and in the way it is used in current discourses of asylum and immigration, suggests a condition outside legality and associated with criminality, especially in relation to the clandestine manner of arrival.<sup>72</sup> Contrasted to the positive connotations of the category refugee, its employment not only suggests a lack of entitlement to refugee protection in law, but negative qualities which legitimate restrictive measures.

The implications of the 'refugees'/'illegal immigrants' binary are particularly evident in documents whose main theme is the return of migrants to Turkey based on the readmission agreement signed between the two states. The classifications and distinctions made in extracts 6 and 7 in the previous section are geared towards

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<sup>71</sup> T. A. Van Dijk (1993) *Elite Discourse and Racism*. London: Sage; C. Boreus (2006) "Negative discrimination: A typology," *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol.9. No.3. pp.405-424; I. Van Der Valk (2003). 'Right-wing parliamentary discourse on immigration in France'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol.14. No.3., pp.309-348.

<sup>72</sup> M. Gale, op.cit. Humphrey, op. cit.

justifying the expulsion to Turkey of a particular group of migrants. The following extract is illustrative in terms of the government's legitimating strategy:

(Extract 12)

Journalist: The UNHCR observed in their announcement that after [in] the agreement and the protocol that were signed between Greece and Turkey there is no specific mention of the Geneva Convention. Also, refoulement is forbidden by the Geneva Convention.

Protopapas: Of refugees.

Journalist: Yes, but they should be given the possibility (to claim refugee status).

Protopapas: Yes, but to political refugees or other people given UNHCR prescribed status. Here it's not about refugees. You know very well that this story has created a phenomenon of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants in Greece. The admission of refugees – included in international conventions – is a different matter from illegal immigration. (GRPCGS 061201, C. Protopapas)<sup>73</sup>

Similarly to previous extracts, a distinction is made between 'refugees' and 'irregular migrants', but this extract also highlights how the dichotomy between 'refugees' and 'illegal immigrants' has implication in terms of policy, specifically on whether they can be readmitted to Turkey or not. The right not to be readmitted to Turkey – which has, as the journalist rightly suggests, implications in terms of the right to non-refoulement – is constructed by the government spokesperson as attributed only to refugees and specifically 'political refugees'. This representation can legitimate the exclusion of forced migrants from war affected areas, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, as they do not fulfil narrowly interpreted criteria of the Geneva Convention, an exclusion which can be significant given that large numbers of asylum seekers in Greece originate from there.

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<sup>73</sup> Ministry for the Press and Mass Media, Press Release 06/12/2001, [http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage\\_lldoc.html?id=2890050](http://www.minpress.gr/minpress/scriptpage_lldoc.html?id=2890050) Accessed 24/09/2001

Furthermore, the suggestion that access to asylum procedures is the entitlement of those who fulfil the precondition of being refugees combines with the 'discursive disappearance' of the 'asylum seeker' category to deny protection from refoulement that is afforded to the latter category as well as the former – in Greek law even with an oral statement that they wish to claim asylum.<sup>74</sup> In the light of incidents of preventing access to the asylum procedure, recorded by NGOs in Greece, we can see a correspondence between the discursive level and the social, where policies are enacted.<sup>75</sup>

The legitimization of restrictive policies through the employment of categories is not limited, of course only to texts concerning readmission. Extract 9 above suggests that the 'renaming' of refugees to 'illegal immigrants' can have a wider purpose of legitimating prevention of entry measures, specifically the stricter control of borders in order to prevent entry. The same logic applies to the employment of categories by opposition right wing MPs, illustrated by extract 11, where the characterisation of refugees and asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants' in parliamentary debates helps legitimate their position for stricter control measures. Again the representation of refugees as political refugees can legitimate exclusions of large groups.

A further legitimating strategy suggested in extracts 6,7 and 9 is that of positive self-presentation, which in discursive approaches is defined as a semantic and rhetorical strategy which permits speakers to present themselves or the group with which they identify in a positive light in terms of values, attitudes and actions and is extensively used in discourses of immigration.<sup>76</sup> In all these extracts, the speakers state that they respect the rights of refugees and fulfil their obligations under international instruments of refugee protection. Such statements are extensively used in the documents examined, and allow the political actors to showcase 'the

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<sup>74</sup> Amnesty International, op. cit.; A.Skordas and N. Sitaropoulos, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> Amnesty International, op. cit.

<sup>76</sup> A. Triandafyllidou (2000). "The political discourse on immigration in southern Europe: a critical analysis," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, Vol.10. No.5. pp.373-389; I.Van Der Valk, op. cit.; T. A.Van Dijk, op. cit.

ethical superiority and intrinsic goodness of the in-group'.<sup>77</sup> The positive qualities and attitudes of the political actors themselves and in extension the host community indicated by the use of the pronoun 'we' and the first person plural are accentuated further by their contrast to the negative presentation of refugees and asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants.

## 6. Conclusions

The employment of categories can be seen in the context of social practices constituting discourse and discourse constituting social practice. On the one hand, the use of categories related to domestic factors which affect the extent of employment of categories. On the other hand, they reflect the priorities and goals of Greek asylum and immigration policy.

The influence of domestic factors underpins strongly the use of the categories 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' in Greek political discourse. The research yielded at least one surprising result: 'asylum seeker' is a rarely used category with a predominantly neutral meaning, unlike in the discourse of other European countries and western countries, where it is extensively employed, often with negative connotations attached to it. This might be linked to the relative newness of asylum legislation in Greece and the discursive preference for the term refugee, which resonated strongly with experiences of migration in the Greek context.

Because of these reasons, the term 'refugee' tends to be used instead, both by left wing opposition political actors and government actors. Given their different goals and political orientation, its employment appears rather varied. Left wing opposition actors employ 'refugees' as an all-inclusive category, which incorporates migrants with potentially varied immigration statuses and reflects positive connotations deriving from Greek experiences of forced migration as well as from the positive images of Kurdish and Turkish refugees in Greece. On the other hand, government and right wing opposition actors tend to employ 'refugees' as a category retaining its positive meaning, but narrowly defined so as it can

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<sup>77</sup> A.Triantaphyllidou, *op. cit.* p. 382



legitimate several exclusions. Firstly, the in-built assumption of genuineness can exclude migrants who may have entered illegally and have not yet claimed and been granted asylum. Moreover, it appears that the preferred definition of refugees is that of political refugees which interprets the provision of the Geneva Convention in a limited fashion, which can result in the exclusion of a large proportion of asylum seekers in Greece.

Furthermore, the category 'refugee' – incorporating that of 'asylum seekers' is both opposed and equated to the category 'illegal immigrants'. In opposition, following a 'logic of difference', refugees are distinguished from 'illegal immigrants' and their genuine claims to asylum are opposed to the lack of claims and entitlements of illegal immigrants, a category with heavy negative connotations. At the same time, following a logic of equivalence, refugees are re-labelled 'illegal immigrants' by government and right – wing opposition actors. In both logics, however, the category is laden with negative connotations. The emphasis on the use of 'illegal immigrant' as a category can be seen as reflecting the preoccupation of Greek policy with the prevention of irregular immigration, which is linked to wider objectives of European Union policy with regards to the protection of its external borders and the prevention of asylum seeking and irregular migration.

It is the legitimization of such policy aims which seems to be served by the employment of the categories illustrated in this article. The designation of refugees as 'illegal immigrants' involves, firstly a strategy of negative other-presentation of this group, where the negative qualities attributed, legitimate in themselves restrictive policies of prevention of entry and readmission. Secondly, its juxtaposition to the category of refugees legitimates boundaries between those who are not entitled to protection and those who are, reinforced by the absence of the category 'asylum seeker' which could extend the obligations of the state to provide protection. The use of positive self-presentation strategies where political actors stress their respect of refugee rights and international laws enhances their moral position and further justifies restrictive policies on the grounds of their good attitudes towards refugees.

As a last observation, it should be noted that the employment of categories, rather than fixed boundaries and meanings, is fluid. Each category encompasses a multitude of meanings derived from different legal, social and historical contexts and dependant on the political

orientation and policy goals of political actors. These meanings and their boundaries are constantly reconfigured and negotiated in the texts, an occurrence exemplified by the co-existence of logics of difference and equivalence between the categories of 'refugee' and 'illegal immigrant'. Again, this can be seen as part of a process of redefining and justifying goals in a changing regional and domestic socio-political context of asylum policy.

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