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Punitive Inclusion

A Political Economy of Irregular Migration in the Margins of Europe

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Critical approaches to national and international efforts to manage the flows of poor immigrants into advanced Western economies over recent decades have tended to be premised on the notion of physical or geographical exclusion. Accordingly, nation-states, transnational regions and even whole continents have been described as striving to solidify their borders against immigration from impoverished or otherwise disadvantaged parts of the globe (see, e.g., van Houtum, 2010; Carr, 2012). This claim appears to contain a significant element of truth when one considers, for instance, that irregular migrants are often forced by border regimes to navigate risky border zones, and, indeed, that many of them die as a result (see further Weber and Pickering, 2011; Albahari, 2015; Bigo, 2015). There is increasing recognition in literature on migration, however, that borders can be far more permeable than usually assumed, and they are thus better described as points of variable intensity than as strictly linear and rigid structures (Rahola, 2011; see also Bourbeau, 2011). A considerable number of scholars working in this vein have sought to explain the permeability of borders from the perspective of political economy, extending their focus beyond practical factors that may undermine effective border control as such (e.g., extensive borderlands or limited availability of financial resources), and rather privileging the role played by governing elites inside nation-states in adopting policies and promoting practices that essentially relax border controls so as to enable mass import of exploitable migrant labour according to domestic market needs and dominant political interests (see further Wacquant, 1999; De Giorgi, 2010). This article sets out to address the ways in which migrant labour exploitation is actually achieved; a question that political economy analyses of policies and practices of immigration and border control have left understudied to date.

There is no shortage of accounts arguing that, over recent decades, deprivation, wars, human rights abuses, and other adversities in various parts of the world have combined with advancement in transport and communication technologies to give rise to a global pool of exploitable migrant labour. Yet the ways in which migrant labour exploitability is maintained and, indeed, enhanced inside the borders of so-called 'host' countries have yet to receive sufficiently comprehensive scholarly attention. Pertinent research has so far focused either on unjust welfare and employment policies that are designed to keep migrants socio-politically weak, for example through systematically restricting their access to welfare and labour rights, or on aggressive penal and cognate policies that target migrants and threaten them into acceptance of unfair conditions of work (see, e.g., Bigo, 2002; Melossi, 2003; Calavita, 2005; Lawrence, 2007; Lazaridis, 2011; Brotherton and Barrios, 2011; Sawyer and Blitz, 2011). Its indisputable importance notwithstanding, this body of work is nevertheless limited in scope. With a few partial exceptions (e.g., Andreas, 2009; Wacquant, 2009a, 2009b; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; De Giorgi, 2010), little recognition has been paid to a host of emergent themes: the functional equivalence and aggregate effect of seemingly unrelated state policies on matters of welfare, employment and punishment, insofar as they bolster, simultaneously as well as cumulatively, migrants' exploitability in the labour market; the contributions other

state policies (e.g., on immigration and asylum) and certain informal practices by non-state actors (e.g., street-level acts of violence performed by private citizens or political formations) may additionally make to the same outcome, whether by design or coincidence; the precise mechanisms through which the policies and practices in question buttress migrant labour exploitability; the ways in which different policies and practices may actually stand in a relationship of operational complementarity, their respective modes of application interacting and reinforcing one another, either materially or symbolically; and the specific institutional arrangements (e.g., legislation and bureaucratic structures and cultures) that facilitate the application of such policies and practices. In neglecting the above themes, one risks undermining not only the multiplicity of bases of migrant labour exploitability, but also the complexity and intensity of the issue, thereby ultimately overlooking the full scope and downplaying the intricate and persistent nature of the political and policy interventions required to overturn it.

With a view to helping fill these gaps in the literature and thereby promote suitable responses against migrant labour exploitation, this article focuses on the case of Greece and the treatment irregular migrants have been afforded in the country over recent decades. There are three main reasons why Greece lends herself ideally for the analytic purposes at hand. Firstly, the estimated absolute number and proportional population share of irregular migrants residing on Greek soil have persistently stood at exceptionally high levels by European standards ever since Greece first became a country of net immigration in the 1990s. Secondly, the country's extensive informal labour market has since readily absorbed large cohorts of workers without papers. And thirdly, there is by now ample scholarly and other evidence regarding the array of unjust and abusive realities irregular migrants typically experience both inside and outside the labour market in Greece. A fully comprehensive overview of such evidence has yet to be produced, which goes some way towards explaining the disproportionately limited attention paid to date to the links between migrant labour exploitation and policies and practices against migrants in domains other than employment as such; links that have become all the more prominent since Greece was plunged into recession in 2008 and full-blown financial crisis in 2009.

Bringing together material from a variety of Greek and international sources, spanning scholarly research, media reports and official documentation by government and independent actors, the article sets out to offer an unprecedentedly wide-ranging summary of policies and practices that systematically disadvantage or otherwise harm irregular migrants in the context of contemporary Greece. The article also presents an original synthesis of media reports and scholarly, polling company and NGO research on dominant political discourse and public opinion in Greece, which suggests that the political construction of a nexus between immigration and crime underpins an impressive degree of public support towards the policies and practices at issue. By reference to key tenets and insights of scholarship on political domination and surplus labour appropriation, the article meanwhile identifies the multifarious ways in which these policies and practices serve in tandem to promote migrants' exploitation in the workplace.

A few caveats regarding the article's analytic scope and method are in order at this juncture. To begin with, the article covers developments that have taken place in Greece since the early 1990s, at which time immigration policy started taking shape in the country so as to deal with what was already a rapidly growing influx of foreigners and especially undocumented migrants. The cut-off point of the analysis is the beginning of 2015, when a coalition government led by the left-wing Syriza party

assumed power against the backdrop of a refugee crisis mounting in various parts of the globe and manifesting itself particularly acutely in Greek border areas. This temporal span was necessary partly due to limitations of space, and partly because at the time of writing the Syriza-led coalition had been in office for too short a period for its policies on immigration to be conclusively assessed. With regard to the preceding two-and-a-half decades, moreover, the article does not distinguish between policies under governments of avowedly different ideological orientation, nor does it seek to differentiate between policies according to contemporaneous changes in the socio-demographic composition of irregular immigrants in Greece (e.g., the substantial decrease in the proportion of Albanians, and the increase in the proportion of Asians and Africans, by the late 2000s). Again, such analysis would have been impossible here for reasons of space but would have been redundant, too; indeed, a diversion from the main substantive aim of the article. This is because any differences between the immigration policies of the two political parties that alternately dominated government until mid-2012 (PASOK, on the centre-left, and New Democracy, on the centre-right), before joining forces in the context of a centre-right-led coalition that ruled until January 2015, have been convincingly identified in prior research as mostly superficial (see further Baldwin-Edwards, 2014). It is true that successive waves of irregular migrants have varied not only by the main country or region of origin and other socio-demographic characteristics, but also to a significant degree by the niches they have respectively occupied in Greece's informal labour market (during the 1990s, for example, Albanians were predominant in unskilled farm work and the construction industry, whilst since the 2000s Chinese have usually filled gaps in retail stores and trade, and Bangladeshis in restaurants). But this should by no means detract from the fact that Greek immigration policy has undergone little substantive change over the years.

The Porosity of Borders

In trying to enter Greece, be it by land or sea, irregular migrants often find themselves at serious risk of death. This is partly due to the country's geographical location and the natural dangers this implies for clandestine border-crossing (e.g., very low temperatures during winter at the mountainous Greek-Bulgarian border, frequent sea storms in the Aegean) and partly due to hazardous practices followed by border authorities in Greece, some of which are in blatant violation of international refugee and human rights legislation (e.g., refoulement of refugees at sea; see further Pro Asyl, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2008; UNHCR, 2009; Lauth Bacas, 2010; Amnesty International, 2012b). The Greek state has long failed to keep records on the prevalence of death in the process of clandestine border-crossing. Secondary analysis of domestic and international media reports, itself bound to provide under-estimates precisely because of the nature of its sources, has nevertheless revealed hundreds of fatalities and an even greater and growing number of 'missing persons' since the early 1990s (Baldwin-Edwards, 2009; FRA, 2011; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012).

Irregular immigration to Greece has nonetheless undergone an impressive overall rise during the same period. Whilst regular immigration to the country has increased only modestly, the estimated growth of irregular immigration to Greece has been by far the highest in Europe. By 2011, for instance, the absolute number of undocumented migrants in Greece was approximately 390,000, which nearly amounted to one-third of the estimated total of 1,239,472 immigrants in the country that year, itself comprising around one-tenth of the country's total population (Maroukis, 2012a, 2012b; see also Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012).

That Greece is such a common destination for irregular migrants is due only in part to the practical difficulties involved in controlling the country's unusually extensive borderline, which spans 1,170 kilometers of land borders and the longest coastline in Europe, at 13,676 kilometers, including far-stretching land and coastal borders with several migrant source countries (e.g., Turkey, Albania) and hundreds of remote islands scattered across the Mediterranean and the Aegean. It would be remiss not to note that large flows of irregular immigration have effectively been channelled towards Greece's perilous though still porous borders by ever-tightening restrictions imposed across Europe upon irregular immigration from other parts of the world, in the form, for example, of stricter policing of national borders and narrowed opportunities for accessing asylum and visa procedures (Xenakis, 2004).¹ At least until the financial crisis hit Greece in 2009, the country's large informal labour market (including, for example, agriculture, the construction industry, and domestic services) easily incorporated unskilled and semi-skilled workers without papers, yet it has long been common for irregular migrants to view Greece as a transit country on their way to mainland Europe, where the prospects of long-term and permanent settlement appear more appealing (see further Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, 2008).

Most crucially, however, and despite repeated official proclamations to the contrary, the Greek state itself has introduced policies and promoted practices that have helped to maintain the size of the irregular migrant population in the country at consistently high levels, not only engaging in piecemeal attempts at blocking irregular migration routes into Greece, but also failing to facilitate processes of asylum, regularisation, deportation, or even voluntary repatriation for migrants without papers. In particular, measures purportedly taken to secure national borders against irregular migration have been conspicuously delayed and insufficient; the infamous barbed-wire fence that was constructed in the region of Evros in 2012, for example, extends only across 12.5 kilometres of the country's 206-kilometre mainland borders with Turkey, at most serving to divert irregular migratory flows to the Greek-Turkish sea borders. Meanwhile, as discussed in some detail later, asylum and regularisation procedures have been notoriously arduous, protracted and, for the overwhelming majority of applicants, ineffectual. Similarly, efforts to apprehend and deport irregular migrants have long been known to be of limited efficiency and effectiveness, so much so that the annual rates of apprehensions and deportations have both followed an overall downward trend over the years. Finally, whilst voluntary repatriation schemes for undocumented migrants remain little used, the legal maximum length of administrative detention of irregular migrants underwent repeated extensions before being rendered indefinite in April 2014 (see further Triandafyllidou, 2014; Cheliotis, 2013, 2015).

In this sense, it is fair to conclude, as Carr (2012: 108) does, that Greece is for irregular migrants a 'trap' (see also Anderson, 2000: 49-56). Viewed through the analytic lens of political economy, this phenomenon is inextricably linked to the combination of three contingencies in the country's informal labour market: first, its unusually large size, estimated to account for around 25 per cent of GDP, one of the highest proportions in the EU-27 (European Commission, 2012); second, its capitalist nature, insofar as it predominantly relies on exploitative conditions of work to ensure that employers derive excessive gains (e.g., that the surplus generated by workers is appropriated by the owners of the means of production); and third, the ample

¹ At the same time, Greece has also received unaccompanied migrant children and adult asylum seekers returned from neighbouring Italy in contravention of pertinent international legislation (Human Rights Watch, 2013b).

opportunities for employment it affords outsiders. Broader developments such as the construction boom in the 1990s, the expansion of export-oriented labour-intensive farming, and the rise of dual-income nuclear families against the backdrop of persistently minimal levels of state welfare provision for the elderly and young children, have heightened demand for a wide range of low-prestige and poorly paid menial labour (e.g., building, fruit-picking, domestic care work) that unemployed Greek nationals have grown increasingly likely to shun, many even under conditions of financial crisis (see further Triandafyllidou, 2013; also Cavounidis, 2006; Lawrence, 2007; Demoussis *et al.*, 2010). In other words, that large numbers of irregular migrants find themselves ‘trapped’ in Greece is in good part because they lend themselves as a highly exploitable workforce fit for the needs of the country’s shadow economy.²

Research on wage differentials in Greece clearly points in this direction, given that the wages of migrant workers have been found to be systematically and significantly lower than those of their native counterparts, partly because migrants are usually pushed into low-paid jobs regardless of their skills and prior experience, and partly as a result of discriminatory practices against them within their occupations (see further Demoussis *et al.*, 2010; Drydakakis and Vlassis, 2010; Lianos *et al.*, 1996; Fakiolas, 1999). What has yet to be explained in sufficient scope and depth, whether in relation to the Greek case or other cases where similar arguments have been made, concerns the ways in which irregular migrants are turned into exploitable workers. It is to this issue that the article now turns.

Irregular Status and Labour Exploitation

As a general rule, the degree to which workers are amenable to having their labour exploited increases with the level of flexibilisation of working conditions and the intensity of job precariousness in particular; a phenomenon aptly captured by Pierre Bourdieu’s (1998: 85) portmanteau term ‘flexploitation’. The effectiveness of job precariousness as a mechanism of labour control is further enhanced in two complementary and mutually reinforcing ways. On one hand, the creation and maintenance of a large reserve pool of workers increases the perceived certainty of precariousness, signalling to those already in wage labour that they are, in fact, easily replaceable. On the other hand, the reduction of welfare provisions for those out of work raises the costs of prospective unemployment for current wage labourers, and of continued unemployment for their would-be reserves, thus pushing the former and preparing the latter to settle for exploitation in the workplace (see further Wright *et al.*, 1998; Harvey, 2006).

The massive swathes of irregular migrants who keep crossing the porous Greek borders in search of a better future lend themselves ideally both as exploitable workers and amenable reserves. For one, their numbers help ensure that a sufficiently large pool of ‘surplus’ labourers is always at hand, whilst their desperate predicament as a result of poverty and attendant needs (e.g., to earn a living) further inclines them to exploitability if and when a job becomes available. Indeed, although immigrants are excluded in Greece from national indices of poverty, they are over-represented amongst the poorest and most vulnerable (Tsakoglou and Mitrakos, 2006; NSSG, 2010).

Irregular migrants’ exploitability as wage labourers cannot be adequately

² Other explanations for the ‘trapping’ of irregular migrants in Greece, most notably accounts of politico-economic pressures exerted to this end on Greece from other EU member-states, are beyond the scope of this article.

explained, however, without also considering the consequences that stem from their irregular status itself. In Greece at least, irregularity precludes one from access either to legal employment and labour rights or to welfare benefits. In other words, irregularity does not just restrict migrants' prospects for paid employment to the informal labour market, where wages can freely be shrunk well below the legal minimum and layoffs go entirely unchecked. It also deprives migrants of any welfare entitlements (including even emergency social assistance) that would soften the sanction of dismissal and the strains of unemployment more generally (European Committee of Social Rights, 2010). In sum, irregularity promotes labour exploitation in that it facilitates both the depression of wages as such and the production of conditions that make depressed wages more likely to be accepted by workers.

Greek governments have been far from oblivious to the wide scope for labour exploitation that mass poverty and irregularity of status generate in the country's vast shadow economy. To take perhaps the most telling example, commenting on the growing influx of irregular migrants from Albania into Greece in the mid-1990s, the then Minister of Finance and known ardent supporter of neoliberal socio-economic policies Stefanos Manos publicly stated as much: 'I am enthusiastic about Albanians! It is, of course, illegal work [that they can only offer], but this is a precondition for their labour to be provided at a low price' (cited in Karydis, 2011: 100; see also Baldwin-Edwards, 2014: 326).

Whilst Greece has ratified a number of key international and European treaties that guarantee fundamental rights for all, it has been reluctant to grant legal status to refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants more generally. Indeed, Greek border authorities have been found to actively discourage apprehended irregular entrants from seeking international protection in the first instance (see, e.g., Human Rights Watch, 2008). Although rates of asylum applications to Greece have nevertheless grown to be amongst the highest in Europe, the country has maintained one of the lowest rates of refugee recognition in the continent and one of the highest rates of asylum cases pending in the world (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005; Eurostat, 2010; UNHCR, 2010), having long failed to establish an effective and timely system for processing applications (CPT, 2011; see also Karamanidou, 2007; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, 2008; Karamanidou and Schuster, 2011; Cabot, 2014). This failure has certainly not been for want of financial resources: as admitted in April 2012 by Michalis Chrysochoidis, Minister of Citizen Protection at the time, Greece had thus far used no more than €40 million out of €250 million of allocated EU funding for immigration and asylum management, including for facilitating procedures of asylum application (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

In a similar vein, regularisation in Greece has been substantively narrow and procedurally perverse. In the vast majority of cases, regularisation is effectively reduced to seeking a renewable residence or work permit of very short duration.³ The process of regularisation, including renewal of temporary permits, has meanwhile been fraught with a series of grave challenges over the years. Before all else, whilst the volume of regularisation applications received by Greek authorities is one of the highest in Europe (McKay *et al.*, 2011), access to the application process is anything but straightforward. Pertinent information is usually limited and unclear, formal eligibility criteria are tight, and deeply unfair financial impediments are in place, including, most notably, excessively high application fees and, for the purposes of renewing a work permit, the legal requirement that applicants themselves assume the

³ Rejected asylum seekers may also apply for regularisation.

burden of paying their social insurance contributions when their employer has refused or otherwise failed to do so. Lengthy delays are also common in the assessment and subsequent stages of applications as a consequence of complex bureaucratic procedures, inadequate training and poor staffing levels, to the effect that permits have at times been granted after their expiration date, whilst decision-making has often been found to be arbitrary and inconsistent. Practically, then, the best case scenario for most migrants seeking regularisation is to find themselves in limbo, shifting between regular and irregular status with long breaks filled with uncertainty and anxiety in between, when their chances of falling victim to unscrupulous lawyers, mafia operators and corrupt state officials are also greater (see further Baldwin-Edwards, 2014; Cabot, 2014; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, 2008; Gialis *et al.*, 2014).

Political Discourse and Public Attitudes about Immigrants

Despite –or, indeed, as we shall see, because of– the contribution immigrants make to Greek economy, they are systematically subject to stigmatisation. Mainstream political discourse in Greece has typically employed apocalyptic language to frame immigrants as an undifferentiated mass that poses a variety of serious threats to Greek society, from ethno-cultural disintegration and health deterioration to unemployment and, most notably, crime, often also associating these purported threats to one another.

Particularly as concerns the issue of crime, such discourse points, on one hand, to what is presented as an inexorable rise in police-recorded crime rates in Greece since immigration into the country started rising in the early 1990s, and, on the other hand, to the over-representation of non-Greeks both in official crime statistics and the country's prison population, especially the fact that they have come to outnumber Greeks behind bars. Nowhere is the constructed nexus between immigration and crime more acute than in the case of irregular migrants, who, before anything else, are ascribed a criminal label by mere dint of their irregular status itself (see further Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2013a, 2013b; also Tzanelli, 2006; Karamanidou, 2007; Karyotis, 2012). A series of important facts are obscured by this discourse: that crime in Greece has remained moderate by European standards; that Greeks are still responsible for the bulk of offences committed, and that their participation has in recent years grown substantially in the case of certain key property and violent offences (e.g., thefts, burglaries, robberies, homicides); and that there are strong anti-foreigner biases in police practices and judicial decision-making processes, which inflate the proportional share of immigrants in crime and prison statistics (see further Papandreu, 2009; Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2010, 2011; Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2013b).

Despite distorting lived reality, mainstream political discourse appears to have had an appreciable degree of influence on public attitudes, either inciting or sustaining and exacerbating concern about the impact of immigration on Greek society, fear of crime by immigrants, and punitiveness towards them. Comparative survey research, for example, has demonstrated that anti-foreigner sentiment is higher in Greece than anywhere else in Europe (Semyonov *et al.*, 2006; Mulcahy, 2011), and that Greeks hold the most negative views on the continent regarding the impact of foreigners on society, including their impact on crime (Semyonov *et al.*, 2012; see also Semyonov *et al.*, 2008; Semyonov and Glikman, 2009; Ceobanu, 2011; Mulcahy, 2011; Swarts and Karakatsanis, 2013; Figgou *et al.*, 2011). Domestic survey research has meanwhile found that Greeks are more likely to favour stricter police treatment for immigrants than for natives, just as they are more likely to favour imprisonment for immigrant offenders than for offenders from other socio-demographic groups (see further Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2011).

It has been shown additionally that a substantial proportion of the Greek public supports control measures specifically oriented against irregular immigration, such as simplification of extradition proceedings, denial of political asylum, and enhanced border controls (Papastamou *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, in January 2011, the then recently announced construction of the barbed-wire fence along a section of the country's mainland borders with Turkey was met with especially high levels of public approval, ranging according to different opinion polls between 59 and 80 per cent (Public Issue, 2011; *Proto Thema*, 16 January 2011; *Ethnos*, 17 January 2011). These attitudes, not unlike increased consent to situational crime control measures that compromise personal convenience and liberties since immigration into Greece began its upward climb in the early 1990s, are linked to the widespread perception of immigrants as the primary source of criminal danger and associated insecurities (see further Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2011).

Since the onset of the Greek financial crisis in 2009, the messages put forward by the neo-fascistic party Chrysi Avyi ('Golden Dawn'), and the degree to which they have found appeal amongst the Greek public, have taken hostility towards immigrants in general and irregular migrants in particular to an even higher level. Chrysi Avyi has mainly based its discourse on an anti-immigrant platform, not only castigating irregular immigrants for their purported role in rising crime rates and falling living standards for the Greek majority –indeed, immigrants are systematically referred to as 'filth', 'rubbish' and 'subhuman' in official party rhetoric–, but also calling for cracking down on irregular immigration by laying landmines along the Greek-Turkish mainland borders and placing special forces in the area with a licence to shoot at will (Human Rights Watch, 2012; see also Psarras, 2012; Xenakis, 2012; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou, 2015). The party has additionally threatened to have immigrants and their children thrown out of hospitals and kindergartens (see, e.g., *The Guardian*, 12 June 2012), has requested in parliament that ethno-racial segregation be enforced in schools (*Eleftherotypia*, 14 March 2013), and has spoken about the need to reinstate the death penalty in the country as a means of dealing with 'foreign murderers' (*Eleftherotypia*, 30 March 2013).

A significant and growing minority of the Greek population appears to agree with this discourse. Not only did Chrysi Avyi see its share of the vote increase from a slender 0.3 per cent in the national elections of 2009 to 6.9 per cent in those of June 2012. It also managed to attract similar levels of support in all three subsequent national elections, including those of September 2015, thereby consolidating its position as the third largest parliamentary party. This was despite the arrest and pre-trial detention in late 2013 of several of its MPs, including party leader Nikos Michaloliakos, on charges of involvement in a criminal organisation responsible for multiple cases of homicide and a series of other serious offences, a development triggered by the murder of a Greek left-wing anti-fascist musician in the Keratsini district of Piraeus (see further Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2015; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou, 2015). This goes a long way towards explaining why centre-left PASOK and centre-right New Democracy have both increasingly sought to intensify their anti-migrant rhetoric, and have co-opted the far-right agenda in so doing (Karamanidou, 2015).

To account for the political use of anti-migrant rhetoric solely by reference to its electoral appeal, however, stops short of explaining why such rhetoric should be appealing in the first instance. To put the point differently, why would the Greek public hold views or fall for political narratives that blatantly misrepresent a population of weaker others, let alone weaker others so useful to the country's

economy as irregular migrants? It is easy to see how anti-migrant narratives can resonate in the context of a strongly nationalistic society with deeply entrenched racist attitudes and a markedly declining birth rate, not to mention the intensification of socio-economic insecurities amongst large segments of the public since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2009. Yet at least part of the answer requires that we grasp the role of anti-migrant narratives in helping to authorise policies and practices that effectively serve the economic interests of the average Greek by heightening the exploitability of irregular migrants in the country's informal labour market.

Violence and Labour Exploitation

A continuum of physical violence, both threatened and enacted, has long unfurled against migrants in Greece under the pretext of fighting crime across the country and reducing fear of criminal victimisation amongst the Greek public. Alongside state violence, carried out routinely on large scales by a series of criminal justice and cognate institutions, repertoires of violence are performed on smaller scales, albeit not necessarily less systematically, by non-state actors such as private citizens and political groups and organisations. In important respects, state and non-state actors may be bound together by strong ties of mutual dependence and support. Just as, for example, Greek state authorities may rely on information from members of the public in order to be able to initiate and carry through proceedings of arrest, detention and deportation against individuals residing or working in the country without papers, so too they may tolerate or promote anti-migrant violence perpetrated by non-state actors, often even by colluding with them. This continuum of physical violence is actually the means by which labour exploitability is maximised amongst migrants in Greece, even if not all violent actors are consciously or otherwise invested in labour exploitation as such.

Generally speaking, the use of violence against unruly employees compensates, at least in part, for the imperfection of job precariousness and workers' socio-economic weakness as the key practical bases of labour exploitation. As well as increasing the perceived certainty of punishment, regular exhibitions of pure force against unruly workers also heighten the costs of either repeating or reproducing the behaviour in question. This, in turn, helps to quell or pre-empt instances of individual and collective worker resistance, be they oriented towards altering the conditions of extant employment or seeking to promote disengagement from the system of market exchange with employers in favour of alternative sources of paid labour (e.g., self-employment). The way in which reserve pools of workers are kept in check is not dissimilar, insofar as large-scale intimidation through widespread enactments of violence forces them into submission to the established order (see further Wright *et al.*, 1998; Wrong, 1979, 1994).

To return to the case of Greece, the combination of force against unruly workers and a broader environment of violent intimidation of immigrants as a whole is what adds impetus to control over irregular migrants and exploitation of their wage labour. To start with, irregular migrants have regularly been subject to blackmail by Greek employers who threaten either to report the undocumented status of troublesome employees to the police –in which case deportation proceedings would be triggered against the individuals concerned– or to call upon the violent 'rent-a-mob' services of Chrysi Avyi to deal with them (see further Reyneri, 2001; Papaioannou, 2013; Chrysochoou, 2014).

On occasion, custodians have been put in place to exercise surveillance over workers and mete out physical punishment as necessary. To take the most well-known

example, that of the vast strawberry plantation of Nea Manolada in the southern Peloponnese, irregular migrants from Bangladesh have been forced to live in barracks under degrading conditions and to pay more than half their meagre salary to employers in rent. Long tolerated by officials at the Greek Ministry of Labour, this situation only came to broad public attention in April 2013, when some 200 workers found themselves under gunfire by Greek foremen upon demanding six months' unpaid wages. Dozens of workers were injured at the time, four of whom so badly as to be in need of hospitalisation, at which point the police swiftly initiated proceedings to have them deported. Upon completion of the ensuing rounds of court hearings with a verdict reached after a mere fifteen minutes, all four Greek defendants walked free, two cleared of all charges and two having received suspended sentences. Denied witness protection and still awaiting their dues by the time the case was tried, migrant plaintiffs were, by contrast, ordered to pay a total of 12,000 Euros as fine for having previously exercised their right to apply for change of judge on suspicion of bias. It comes as no surprise that irregular migrants' labour exploitation in the plantation in question has reportedly continued unabated (see further *Channel 4*, 6 March 2013; *The Guardian*, 1 September 2014; also, more generally, Lawrence 2005, 2007).

Beyond the immediate environment of the workplace, immigrant communities are systematically subject to intimidatory practices of over-policing, including a greater likelihood of being stopped and searched, alongside so-called 'sweep' or 'cleaning operations' launched in the name of fighting illegal immigration and associated crimes. Similarly, immigrants are significantly more likely to be brought to a police station than Greek persons, just as they are more likely to be arrested by the police regardless of whether one accounts for the number of arrests for deportation (see further EU-MIDIS, 2010; Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2011). Police violence against immigrants is also reportedly commonplace, ranging from the unwarranted use of force and the deliberate destruction of residence permits during routine identity checks, to physical maltreatment in police stations (see, e.g., Amnesty International, 2012a; see also Samatas, 2011: 433-434).

Police authorities have meanwhile shown extraordinary tolerance to cases where members of Chrysi Avyi have systematically conducted open attacks on immigrants and their property (purporting, ironically, to be re-establishing law and order in the absence of state action), and where they have issued threats against activist organisations that provide assistance to immigrants in need, such as the medical NGO Doctors of the World (see *Eleftherotypia*, 8 February 2013).⁴ Several such activities, including attacks on the market stalls of immigrant traders by MPs and other members of Chrysi Avyi, have been captured on film and used by the party itself in propaganda and intimidation campaigns (see further Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2013b). To the extent that governments have recognised the existence of anti-migrant far-right violence at all, its effects have generally been neutralised and its control has been approached in a self-defeating fashion. In October 2012, for example, the then Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection Nikos Dendias advocated the policing of immigrants as a key means of tackling far-right violence in the country (*Financial Times*, 18 October 2012), thereby not only confusing victims with their victimisers, but also disregarding reports of police collusion with Chrysi Avyi and high levels of

⁴ Since the financial crisis hit Greece, the party has also organised soup kitchens, food distribution and blood donations only for natives, and has established a network of doctors providing free consultations again to Greeks alone, hence the network has officially been named 'Doctors with Borders' (see further *The Independent*, 30 March 2013).

infiltration of the force by members of the party (see further Psarras, 2012; Papaioannou, 2013; Christopoulos, 2014; Amnesty International, 2014).

More generally, racist violence has been a serious and rapidly growing issue in Greece. Official data are bound to downplay its prevalence, both because of practices of under-recording and insufficient investigation, prosecution and punishment of such cases by the police and judicial authorities (especially when police officers are implicated as perpetrators), and because of underreporting by victims themselves due to lack of confidence in the Greek criminal justice system, fear of reprisals, and active dissuasion by the state. In the latter respect, for example, a €100 fee was introduced in 2010 as a prerequisite to the investigation of complaints against the police, whilst undocumented migrants have additionally been effectively threatened with punishment should they report their victimisation. At the beginning of 2013, amidst fanfare accompanying the launch of a police hotline for reporting racist violence against immigrants, the Chief of Hellenic Police made clear that victims with irregular status would not be offered 'some form of asylum' but would rather be arrested and deported (*To Vima*, 21 January 2013; see further Amnesty International, 2012a; Human Rights Watch, 2012; NCHR, 2011; RED, 2012).

Data provided by Greek and international NGOs, however, suffice to indicate the graveness of the problem. During the first six months of 2011 alone, for example, the NGO Doctors of the World estimated that their Athens clinic had treated 300 victims of racist attacks, whilst the NGO Praxis claimed to have treated just over 200 victims over the same period. Furthermore, according to local anti-racist organisations, at least 300 attacks on immigrants took place between April and June 2012 in Greece (Human Rights Watch, 2012; *Associated Press*, 19 June 2012; see also Amnesty International, 2012b). Racist violence has grown to be so acute that, in late 2012, the US Embassy in Athens issued an official public warning to American citizens residing in or travelling to Greece about a heightened risk of attack for those whose complexion might lead them to be perceived as foreign migrants (US Embassy in Athens, Greece, 2012; see also *BBC*, 10 January 2013). Albeit exceptional in terms of foreign relations and diplomatic practice, the US Embassy's warning was in tune with a growing body of reports from domestic and, especially, international media and organisations that have revealed and strongly condemned Greece for the high and rising prevalence of inhumane treatment of immigrants in the country, as well as for the long-standing and continuing failure of Greek state authorities to properly acknowledge and tackle the issue (see, e.g., Amnesty International, 2012a; Cheliotis, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2013a).

The continuum of violence against migrants in Greece extends to sentencing and custodial policies and practices. As soon as immigration to Greece began to rise in the 1990s, the country's crumbling prisons started filling with immigrants typically serving long-term sentences for relatively minor infractions. Indeed, owing largely to biases in the sentencing behaviour of judges, non-Greek prisoners have come to outnumber their Greek counterparts in recent years, amounting, for example, to 7,875, or 60 per cent, out of a total of 12,912 pre-trial and convicted prisoners on 1 January 2013, with a significant and increasing proportion of non-Greeks –half of them by 2012, for instance– being imprisoned in connection with irregular migration (see further Cheliotis, 2012; Cheliotis and Xenakis, 2011, 2016, forthcoming). In line with what is known in penological literature as the 'less eligibility' principle, whereby the working and unemployed poor are controlled by being constantly threatened with a fate even worse than their poverty, the looming prospect of imprisonment combines with the overhanging threat of administrative detention under notoriously inhumane

and degrading conditions (Cheliotis, 2013) to enhance the exploitability of irregular migrants in the job market, whether as wage labourers or as reserves.⁵

Concluding Remarks: The Limits of Inclusion

On a broad, conceptual level, this article seeks to problematise the dominant critical perspective on border control policies and practices that have evolved in response to the flows of poor immigrants into advanced Western economies over recent decades. The dominant critical perspective views exclusion as the intended outcome and practical effect of border controls, and either openly or implicitly proposes inclusion as a more just and humane alternative. Focusing on the case of Greece and the treatment irregular migrants are afforded in the country, this article first draws attention to ways in which purportedly exclusionary policies and practices of border control may be imperfect by design, before proceeding to demonstrate that the partiality of efforts to exclude irregular migrants from national territories may be necessary for the promotion of particular politico-economic interests domestically. In the Greek case, the inclusion of irregular migrants has been crucial to the country's large informal labour market and to native employers operating therein, just as it has been essential, by extension, to political elites seeking to retain and broaden their electoral clienteles (Xenakis and Cheliotis, 2013b).

Moving on to address the exploitative agenda behind irregular migrants' inclusion in the Greek labour market, the article argues that migrant labour exploitation has essentially required that inclusion take a combination of specific and ascertainable forms: generous in terms of the sheer size of incomers; meagre as concerns provision of social and legal rights and entitlements to them; and dynamic in the sense of physically controlling their behaviour in the workplace and beyond. To this end, apparently unrelated policies on matters of immigration, welfare, employment and punishment, together with practices of anti-migrant brutality and intimidation by state and non-state actors, have effectively formed a continuum of violence that forces irregular migrants either to submit to any available condition of work or to await for their chance in a disciplined fashion.

Labour exploitation has not always been an intended effect on the part of the actors involved, nor the sole function served in the process. The findings of this article nevertheless suggest that the conventional distinction between exclusion and inclusion needs to be unpicked for the woes of irregular migration to be successfully grasped and tackled.

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⁵ Elsewhere I have sought to advance this argument by claiming that the deplorable conditions under which immigrants are typically kept in Greece's carceral institutions also perform important symbolic functions for the broader Greek public. That is to say, knowledge of such conditions helps unconsciously alleviate the pains of downward mobility and falling living standards that the average Greek citizen has been experiencing amidst conditions of financial crisis over recent years, providing him or her with reassurance that they continue to enjoy material advantages over those on the margins of society. The principle underlying this subtle symbolic function is what may be termed 'more eligibility' (see further Cheliotis, 2013, 2015).

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