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Foreign policy priorities and ethnic return migration policies: group-level variation in Greece and Serbia

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ABSTRACT

Why do ethnoculturally defined states pursue favourable policies to integrate some returnees from their historical diasporas while neglecting or excluding others? We study this question by looking at members of two historical diasporas that, in the 1990s, returned to their respective ethnic homelands, Greece and Serbia, but were not treated uniformly by their respective governments. Utilising a wide range of primary sources, we consider evidence for a number of plausible explanations for such policy variation, including the economic profile of an ethnic returnee group, its status in internal ethnic hierarchies, its lobbying power, and dynamics of party politics. We find, instead, that the observed variation is best explained by the role that each particular group played in the ruling elites' ex ante foreign policy objectives. Elites discouraged the repatriation of co-ethnics from parts of the world they still had claims over, by pursuing unfavourable repatriation policies. Conversely, absent a revisionist claim, states adopted favourable repatriation policies to encourage their repatriation and facilitate their integration upon return. Methodologically, the article illustrates the importance of focused comparisons across *dyads* of states and particular sub-diaspora groups.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic return migration; diaspora; territory; state-group dyads; the Balkans

Introduction

An increasing number of countries are extending preferential treatment on the basis of ethnic affinity in their migration regimes (Joppke 2005; Skrentny et al. 2007; Tsuda 2009). Yet, the literature on diasporas has largely ignored the following questions: why do ethnoculturally defined states pursue favourable policies to integrate some returnees from their historical diasporas while they neglect or exclude others? What accounts for this variation across state/sub-diaspora group dyads? Perusing the literature, we derived several plausible explanations including variation in economic profile, status in internal ethnic hierarchies, partisan competition, and lobbying power. We argue, however, that this variation is best explained by the role that each particular ethnic returnee group plays in the ruling elites' ex ante foreign policy objectives. In particular, we suggest that the governing elites of a state craft policies toward different ethnic returnee groups based on whether they maintain a revisionist stance toward the territory each group of ethnic returnees is coming from. Elites will discourage the repatriation of co-ethnics

from parts of the world they still covet by pursuing relatively unfavourable repatriation policies. Conversely, in the absence of revisionist ambitions, states will adopt favourable repatriation policies to encourage ethnic return from those territories, and facilitate their social, economic, and political integration upon return.

The politics of ethnic return migration do not only concern first- or second-generation emigrants who can easily trace their roots to the homeland, but anyone perceived to fit the criteria of membership to the respective ethnoculturally defined nation-state (Keramida 2002; Vergeti 2003; Voutira 2006). In fact, some of the best-known cases of elaborate ethnic return policies are provisions facilitating ‘repatriation’ of people who have never actually lived in the countries to which they are ‘repatriating’. For instance, these include the right of Jews everywhere to make *aliyah* to Israel (Gold 2007) as well as laws facilitating the ‘return’ of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe into Germany following WWII (Panagiotidis 2015; Zeveleva 2017). We argue that, at least in this important subset of cases of ethnoculturally defined states with historical diasporas, foreign policy interests trump economic and partisan considerations when it comes to deciding policies toward different groups of ethnic returnees.

Our empirical focus is on ethnic returnees in Greece and Serbia, two ethnoculturally defined countries that are situated in the post-Ottoman space. Specifically, we study five large historical diasporic communities uprooted in the wake of the same singular geopolitical event, the collapse of European communist regimes. But their migration contexts were also different in many respects. This mixture of background similarities and differences enables us to treat as constant important background conditions such as understandings of nationhood (Brubaker 1992), levels of national identity contestation (Shevel 2011), and historical legacies (Akturk 2012), while still being able to test our argument against prominent alternatives. Our dependent variable is group-level variation in repatriation policy.

This article is motivated by two intriguing empirical puzzles from the Balkans. The Greek government pursued an elaborate integration policy toward Greeks from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s but not toward Greeks from Albania. Serbia in the 1990s devised non-favourable policies toward all co-ethnic repatriates, but, in the 2000s, it pursued favourable integration policies toward Serbs from Croatia and Serbs from Bosnia, but not toward Serbs from Kosovo. To systematically capture this variation, we coded three dimensions of state policy toward ethnic returnees: citizenship acquisition, housing, and employment. Focusing on three policy areas across five state/sub-diaspora group dyads and over the period of more than 20 years increases the number of observations and thus enhances our ability to conduct hypotheses testing. Thus, we respond to the call for more comparative work (Délano and Gamlen 2014) in a field dominated by single-country case studies.

We relied on multiple sources for our coding and testing, including transcripts of parliamentary proceedings,¹ declassified transcripts of meetings of state officials, elite and expert interviews, international agreements, laws, bylaws, government memos, and an extensive collection of newspapers, policy reports, and other secondary literature in Greek, Serbian, and English languages. Our choice to study five groups in only two countries is informed by the difficulties in coding such phenomena. To begin with, there are political as well as legal reasons why governments tend to be evasive about their unequal treatment of groups of co-ethnics. For instance, a consequential policy

may be hidden in a little publicised by-law or ministerial directive solely for administrative purposes that is hard to pin down. This is probably why work on the topic usually adopts the case-study method (Mylonas 2013; Tsourapas 2015) where problems of descriptive inference can be overcome through deep case knowledge and reliance on primary sources.

We proceed as follows. In the first section, we detail our argument and juxtapose it to potential alternative explanations for group-level variation in ethnic return policy. We then document group-level variation in post-Cold War Greece and Serbia across five state/sub-diaspora group dyads. In the third section, we test our argument against the alternative explanations. Finally, we summarise our findings and reiterate the call for disaggregating the term ‘diaspora’ (Délano Alonso and Mylonas 2017) by focusing on comparisons across state/sub-diaspora group dyads over time.

Accounting for variation in ethnic return migration policy

Group-level variation in ethnic return migration policy unsettles the baseline expectations of the two foundational arguments in diaspora research (Délano and Gamlen 2014, 45). One of them casts diaspora policy as a novel expression of nationalism (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004; Joppke 2005), and the other one sees the rise of diaspora policy as a part and parcel of the rise of transnationalism (Bauböck 1995; Rhodes and Harutyunyan 2010). These broad arguments, however, do not make predictions about the particular circumstances of each state/sub-diaspora group dyad. Similarly, research that seeks to explain cross-national and longitudinal variation in ‘national policy regimes’ as a whole (Howard 2009; Lee 2017) cannot account for systematic variation *within* those policy regimes. This is not to say that nationalist ideologies, global norms of migration governance, or national policy regimes do not matter in this process, but these arguments are not calibrated to explain the empirical puzzle we identify at the level of state/sub-diaspora group dyads. For this, we focus on theories that have been explicitly developed to account for such variation or theories that allow us to draw relevant hypotheses.

One such theory has been suggested by Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002), for whom variation in ethnic return migration policies results from *internal ethnic hierarchies* based on such criteria as linguistic and cultural competences. According to this argument, culturally high-status co-ethnic groups should be targeted by favourable ethnic return policies while those perceived as low-status co-ethnic groups should receive less favourable treatment.

Another explanation focuses on the unequal *economic utility* states can expect to derive from reaching out to different segments of its diaspora. Several case studies have found evidence of such economically driven variation in diaspora policy (Dickinson and Bailly 2007; Larner 2007; Ho 2011; Tsourapas 2015). Tsourapas’ (2015) framework, in particular, considers how states combine emigration and return migration policies to encourage certain diaspora groups to return or stay abroad depending on their perceived economic utility at home or abroad. It could be that the same logic applies when ethnoculturally defined states manage ethnic returnees. If this is the case, we should find ethnic returnee groups receiving favourable treatment when they exhibit a collective economic profile compatible with the needs of the homeland economy.

The third argument focuses on the role of *partisan competition* in designing citizenship, immigration, or diaspora policies. These arguments build on a straightforward assumption

that political parties will craft state policies to maximise their own electoral potential. Sometimes it is argued that right-wing parties favour ethnicised policy, and left-wing parties oppose it (Joppke 2003; Waterbury 2010). This traditional left–right partisan divide cannot easily explain why parties would favour one group of ethnic returnees over another, but parties can also enhance their electoral fortune directly by mobilising emigrants perceived as likely supporters (Paarlberg 2017). Based on these theories, we should find that governing parties should treat more favorably ethnic returnee groups that are perceived as likely supporters.

Another body of work in migration studies seeks to explain broad temporal trends in state integrative policies, as well as the thickening of institutional transnational ties between diaspora and homelands, as a function of bottom up mobilisation on the part of immigrant groups (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Portes 1999). When it comes to group-level variation in ethnic return policies, such arguments would predict that better-organised communities of repatriates will receive favourable treatment due to their greater ability in *lobbying governments*.

Finally, the different foreign policy goals that states seek to achieve could impact the design of their diaspora and ethnic return migration policies. Maximising regime stability at home and enhancing the country’s reputation abroad are aspects that have been highlighted in the literature (Délano 2011; Tsourapas 2015). Our own argument builds on Mylonas’s (2012) work which emphasises the importance of *geostrategic interests* when accounting for variation nation-building policies toward various non-core groups – i.e. groups perceived as unassimilated by the ruling elites of a country. The two variables highlighted are foreign policy goals of the host state (revisionist or status quo) and interstate relations between the host state and the external patrons of the non-core groups (rival or ally).² Reversing the logic of the argument to apply it to ethnic returnees, we expect states to craft their policies based on whether the governing elites maintain a revisionist stance toward the territories these co-ethnics are coming from. In our coding, revisionist or status quo orientation is a binary variable that can be identified in official discourse. A revisionist stance toward a particular territory should correlate with policies that discourage repatriation from that part of the world. The idea is that such a policy would keep the co-ethnics abroad, and thus available as a leverage in bilateral relations. We expect states to adopt favourable ethnic repatriation policies when they have no revisionist claim toward the state from which the co-ethnic group is coming. Conversely, absent a revisionist claim favourable policies are more likely. Ethnic unmixing removes a source of potential instability in bilateral relations. At the same time, the influx of co-ethnics could bolster domestic ethnic homogeneity – particularly if these populations are settled in geopolitically vulnerable areas [Figure 1](#).

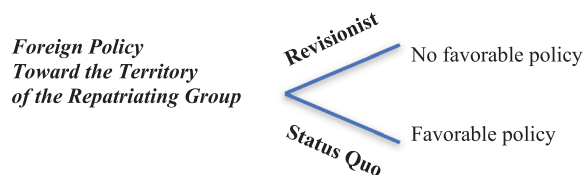


Figure 1. Foreign policy goals and ethnic return migration policy.

Identifying group-level variation

Our empirical evidence comes from Greece and Serbia, two ethnoculturally defined countries in the post-Ottoman space sharing similar histories of state- and nation-building (Todorova 2009; Mylonas 2012). Both have large historical diasporas. Greece largely operated as a classic kin-state to its diaspora in the near abroad and across the world. Serbia played a similar role as the titular federal unit of Serbs in Yugoslavia—major segments of the Serbian diaspora were incorporated in a multiethnic Yugoslav state circa 1918. Beyond the historical differences, Greece in the 1990s was a relatively prosperous member of the European Union and a stable democracy, while Serbia a war-affected competitive autocracy in sharp economic downturn. Yet, as we will document in this section, both countries devised non-uniform ethnic return policies, extending favourable treatment to some groups of ethnic returnees but not to others.

*Integrating Greeks from the former USSR and neglecting Greeks from Albania*³

During the late 1980s and into the 1990s large numbers of ethnic Greeks from the former Soviet Union and Albania moved to Greece.⁴ The repatriation of these two groups was precipitated by the collapse of the Communist regimes in both countries. The Greek state, an EU member-state since 1981, followed starkly different policies toward Greeks from Albania compared to Greeks from the former Soviet Union. This episode coincided with the first time in Greece's modern history that the country was transformed from an emigration state to a receiving country (Petrinioti 1993, 11–50, 90–95; Ventoura 1994). Some of the co-ethnics abroad were actively encouraged to 'return' by the Greek authorities while others decided to return on their own. The Greek government and relevant Ministries drafted a host of favourable laws and decrees for the 'repatriated' Greeks from the former Soviet Union but largely ignored or even discouraged the 'expatriate' Greeks from Albania (see Table 1). Let's take a closer look.

Acquiring citizenship

The effort of the Greek state to repatriate Greeks from the Soviet Union started during the 1980s when the Greek consulate in Moscow extended an invitation for repatriation to Greek communities in the former Soviet Union (Voutira 2004, 238). This invitation was aimed at Greeks who had received Greek passports following WWI (Keramida 2001, 263). In 1987, return migration from the former USSR with a repatriation visa began and continued into the late 1980s. Nevertheless, significant numbers of repatriates arrived only after 1989, when the prohibition on emigration common in most Communist states was rendered obsolete. Many repatriates fled conflict zones and could thus be called refugees (Voutira 1991; Diamanti-Karanou 2003; Marantzidis and Mavroudi 2004). By 1990, an indirect naturalisation process became institutionalised with Law 1893 (FEK, vol. A', no. 106/16.08.1990). It is important to note that this law applied to all repatriates from the former USSR regardless of whether they were designated as 'immigrants' or 'refugees' (Vergeti 2003, 122). In 1993, Law 2130, further institutionalised this procedure but more importantly decentralised the process, since the decision-making was now devolved from the Ministry of Interior to the respective Prefectures across Greece – except for the cases with incomplete proof of Greek nationality. By 1997, all of the repatriates from the

Table 1. Group-level policy variation in Greece.

Repatriates from dimensions	Former USSR	Albania
Acquiring citizenship	1987: equalisation of repatriates with Greek citizens 1990: registration of repatriates at the Municipal level (→ indirect naturalisation) 1993: naturalisation within Greece 1997: recognition of tourist visa holders as repatriates 2000: special identification card and naturalisation outside of Greece	1990: six-month residence permit 1998: special identification card (Ministry of Public Order) 2005: 10-year residence permit and addition of a Greek visa in their passport
Housing	1985: free housing, perquisite economic support, and privileged settlement policies 1990–2000: special housing plans (= subsidised housing loans, free housing in certain border areas, construction of housing complexes, special support for the renovation of houses) by General Secretariat of Repatriates, Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace and ΕΙΥΑΠΟΕ (National foundation responsible for the welcoming and settlement of repatriates and diaspora Greeks)	1992–2000: inclusion in a few support projects for expatriate Greeks, ran by ΕΙΥΑΠΟΕ
Employment	1990–2000: special measures by the General Secretariat of Repatriates, Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace and ΕΙΥΑΠΟΕ 1994: special providence for 5% of those with secondary education and 10% for all the rest in public positions in the Prefectures of Macedonia and Thrace	No special measures. 1990–2006: as ‘expatriates’ they are excluded from public sector employment. 1991: Some measures to facilitate their housing needs while looking for employment. 2005: equalisation with autochthon Greeks in the private job market

former USSR – even if they were in Greece on a tourist visa – acquired citizenship retroactively. In 1998, Law 2647 put the responsibility solely on the Regional Governments and in 2000 (Law 2790) the exclusive right to adjudicate issues of Greek citizenship fell on the shoulders of the respective Regional Governor (Vogli and Mylonas 2009, 374). With the latter law, citizenship acquisition for the co-ethnics still residing in the former USSR required an application to the respective Greek Consulate Authority in their place of residence. Alternatively, the repatriates from the former USSR and their families (regardless of their origin) could acquire a *Special Identification Card* from their respective Prefectures.

Greeks from Albania who began emigrating in 1990, and did not have a Greek passport (Vogli and Mylonas 2009, 374), had to visit reception centres where their nationality, religion, and place origin would be established through their name (given and surname). The ones who managed to establish their Greek nationality were given a six-month residence permit, which was ‘valid’ even after its expiration date. The permit read, ‘self-declared repatriate’. This modus operandi lasted until 1994. The Greeks from Albania that held an Albanian identification card which read ‘Greek nationality’ could travel between the two countries with a five-year visa; the rest of the community which claimed this linkage but could not prove it (Vlachs and other Orthodox Christians from the special minority zone in Albania) were provided with annual visas. By 1998, the Greeks from Albania could receive a *Special Identification Card* issued by the Ministry of Public Order. It was valid for three years, it could be renewed, but it did not extend to the non-Greek origin family members (Ministerial decision no. 4000/3.10.1998). The reasoning in the Ministerial decision was that this way the repatriates from Albania could

compete in the labour market on an equal footing (Pavlou 2003, 265–303). Finally, a common Ministerial decision issued in 2005 introduced a ten-year residence permit on top of the *Special Identification Card* and extended it to the family members irrespectively of their ethnic background. Moreover, a Greek visa was added to their passport, valid until their passport expired. An end to this differential treatment came after 2006 when granting the repatriates from Albania Greek citizenship became possible.

Housing

In 1990, the National Foundation for the Reception and Settlement of Expatriate and Repatriate Greeks (EIYAPOE) became responsible for the housing needs of the Greeks from the former Soviet Union across the country and built new housing projects in Thrace.⁵ This foundation (aka the National Foundation) was under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶ The Greek government received a loan of 3.17 billion drachmas from the Council of Europe in 1991 to cover the housing needs of Greeks from the former USSR (Greek Parliament 1991f). The Greeks from the former Soviet Union were eligible for special housing loans and free land among other special integration programmes. In the first half of the 1990s, the foundation raised 44,497,203,548 drachmas (a little less than \$180 million⁷; part of it funded by the Council of Europe) and more than three quarters of it had been spent within that period. In particular, 12,557,045,316 drachmas (more than \$50 million) were spent just for the housing projects of the Greeks from the former Soviet Union. The Foundation's aim was to provide funding to families who undertook agricultural settlement; the programme included subsidised settlement in the regions of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace with an immediate loan of 11 million drachmas [\$44,000] per family plus an additional 500,000 drachmas [\$2,000] per child and dependent adult. The loan was 30% interest-free and repayable over 15 years (Voutira 2004, 536). While they were often mentioned, we did not find evidence of any special provisions for the Greek repatriates from Albania.

Employment

Both the General Secretariat of Repatriates and EIYAPOE developed special policies for the repatriates from the former USSR. The General Secretariat provided stipends for professional integration, founded a special employment agency and took special care to integrate the repatriates to the labour market. A lot of these initiatives were funded with European Union funds. Moreover, the General Secretary of the Secretariat intervened personally to help repatriates from the former USSR find employment. Moreover, many repatriates were hired as teachers to teach Greek courses to other repatriates. But beyond the government structures that were founded for these repatriate group, the Manpower Agency of Greece (OAED) also developed favourable policies which culminated in 1994 to a special provision where 5–10% – depending on qualifications – of the public sector hires in the Prefectures of Macedonia (except the city of Thessaloniki) and Thrace would be filled by repatriates from the former USSR, assuming there were such applicants (Law 2190/1994; article 14, §6). In contrast, the Greeks from Albania living in Greece under an 'expatriate' status could not be hired in the public sector!⁸ Some measures were taken in 1991 by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the Manpower Agency of Greece (OAED) to address their immediate housing needs while looking for employment (Ministerial decisions: 33155/85, 30357/86, 32390/90, and

30053/91, see Greek Parliament 1991e). However, it is unclear how many members of that group benefited from these measures and what were the government's eligibility criteria. Only in 2005, with the introduction of the ten-year resident permit, their status in the labour market improved. Finally, special measures concerning social welfare and pensions were taken to ease the transition for the repatriates from the former USSR but not the ones from Albania.

Serbs from Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo: strategic neglect in the 1990s and selective incorporation in the 2000s

The early days of the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia led to large scale ethnic unmixing as the borders between these two newly independent Yugoslav republics and their Serb-dominated breakaway regions were consolidated.⁹ Many people seeking safety left the war-affected territories all together. Serbia alone received roughly 330,000 refugees from Croatia, and almost 270,000 refugees from Bosnia. During the post-war period, from 1997 to 1999, there was a small decline in the number of refugees since some of them returned to Croatia and Bosnia or left the Balkans altogether. In addition to the influx of refugees, in the summer of 1999 the Serbian army, police, and civilian administration retreated from Kosovo into central Serbia with about 230,000 civilians in tow. Thus, in the wake of the twenty-first century the total war-affected population in Serbia swelled up to 700,000, or slightly less than 10% of total population, making Serbia the country with the largest refugee population in Europe at the time.

The Serbian government¹⁰ in the 1990s extended humanitarian aid and basic social rights to these groups. Nevertheless, the official position of Serbian state elites remained that the best long-term solution was for most refugees to return to their homes in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Local integration of refugees in Serbia became state policy only after the fall of Milošević's regime in October 2000. Still, this new policy targeted only refugees from Croatia and Bosnia (see Table 2). For a long while, within Serbian policy circles dealing with internally displaced persons (IDPs) the 'bare mentioning of integration remained a forbidden word' (Grujić Zindović 2014, 24).

Acquiring citizenship

In former Yugoslavia, all citizens had both federal citizenship and citizenship of a constituent republic. Until the dissolution of the country in 1991–1992 the latter was routinely assigned to citizens based on their place of birth and had very little importance since the rights and duties of citizens were the same across the federal territory (Štikš 2015). Things changed in early 1992 when refugees arriving from war-affected Croatia and Bosnia to Serbia and Montenegro discovered they could not convert their federal citizenship into citizenship in the new rump Yugoslavia. With some delay, this practice of the Milošević government was codified into law in the summer of 1996. The law imposed strict administrative requirements on the refugees, including a security check based on vaguely defined criteria, and an obligation to prove that they had renounced the citizenship of any other former Yugoslav republic. Many refugees were unwilling to renounce their other citizenships because of the widespread fear that this would jeopardise their claims on property left behind across the Serbian border. Even those who were ready to do so faced a complicated, expensive, and sometimes dangerous quest to obtain the

Table 2. Group-level policy variation in Serbia.

Repatriates from dimensions	Refugees from Croatia	Refugees from Bosnia	IDPs from Kosovo
Citizenship	1996: conditional on security checks and renouncing other citizenships 2001: requirement to renounce other citizenships revoked; security checks significantly relaxed 2004: access to citizenship redefined as a right; administrative process streamlined		Already citizens, but troubles procuring necessary documents
Housing	1992: collective shelters for particularly vulnerable groups 1997: housing assistance in 'border areas and depopulated areas' 2002: housing assistance programme expanded; area limitations lifted 2006: Vojvodina housing initiative – covering areas of heavy refugee settlement 2008–2011: Belgrade declaration – Regional housing programme initiated, permanent housing solution for 16,780 refugees or former refugee families		1999: collective shelters for particularly vulnerable groups 2002: housing assistance programme and plans for return coordinated together 2006: included in Vojvodina housing initiative – covering area of very limited IDP settlement. 2007, 2010: housing and economic incentives for return to Kosovo
Employment	1992: right to employment in private sector, employment in public sector conditional on citizenship, limited access to work booklets 2004: improved access to work booklets in the city of temporary residence		1999: equal access to employment, access to work booklets only in the cities of permanent residence 2003: monthly payments to former public employees in Kosovo (\approx 1/3 of average salary), higher for those who return to Kosovo

necessary documents from the places they had recently fled from (Čok 1996; Rava 2010, 11). The official explanatory note, accompanying the Bill on Yugoslav Citizenship (1995) that the Yugoslav federal government was preparing since late 1994, referred to the conditions for obtaining citizenship:

Such conditions are not satisfied by the refugees who came from the territory of Republic of Srpska (RS) and Republic of Serb Krajina (RSK) or from the territory under the effective control of the institutions of these two states. On the contrary, national and state interests demand that refugees from these areas return to their earlier place of residence.

In this respect, the situation with the Kosovo Serb IDPs was more favourable since Kosovo was not a constituent republic of former Yugoslavia but only an autonomous province within Serbia. This group already possessed Serbian citizenship. However, as we will see below, the legal status of the Kosovo Serbs often obscured the special nature of their situation and left them excluded from some of the more favourable integration policies targeting refugees in the 2000s.

Only four months after the fall of Milošević in October 2000, the new government amended the citizenship law making it easier for refugees to acquire Serbian citizenship

by exempting them from the requirement to renounce their other citizenship. These changes were then further consolidated in the 2004 law on citizenship, which redefined admission into citizenship for refugees as a legal right rather than as a decision contingent on state authorities. All former Yugoslav citizens had to be granted Serbian citizenship after residing in Serbia for at least nine years. After a short parliamentary debate this unusual cut-off point of nine years was explicitly introduced into the law so that the Krajina Serbs would automatically become eligible for naturalization.¹¹ Indeed, ministers as well as MPs from across the political spectrum repeatedly stressed that the proposed law should enable all refugees to receive citizenship (Serbian Parliament 2004a), and subsequently the number of naturalised refugees rose steeply surpassing 300,000 by 2015 (National Strategy 2015).

Employment

In the 1990s, lacking access to citizenship and other official documents, such as a booklet required for employment, often prevented the refugees from exercising rights nominally extended to them. In particular, citizenship was a precondition for obtaining a job in the public sector, which constituted the bulk of the economy throughout the 1990s. In 1998, the private sector employed only 15% of the non-agricultural workforce (Uvalic 2010). Small wonder then that according to the census of refugees in early 2001 unemployment rates were 47.18% for the refugees from Croatia, and at 41.68% among the refugees from Bosnia (Census 2001, 24), although many refugees worked in the informal economy.

Bureaucratic obstacles also affected expelled Kosovo Serbs looking for employment or even access to unemployment benefits in Serbia. As Serbian citizens, they were nominally fully entitled to both. But in order to actually realise these rights every citizen needs to have a booklet in which their employment history is recorded. However, issuing work booklets is only possible in the place of registered permanent residence; a condition difficult to satisfy for those who had to flee their homes. In contrast, the 1992 refugee law made an exception for the refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, allowing them to file for new work booklets in their places of temporary residence. There was uneven implementation of this law by the various local authorities in the 1990s, but it was finally evened out in the 2000s when repeated reminders from central authorities led to the gradual removal of this obstacle for refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. Kosovo Serbs were not covered by this special clause of the 1992 law targeting refugees. Thus, their formal equality as Serbian citizens operated as an excuse for not addressing the problems emanating from their displacement.

The situation was somewhat different for the IDPs from Kosovo who were employed in the public sector before the 1999 war. Even when they were inactive, the government kept them on its payroll with reduced salaries into the 2000s. The programme effectively operated as a basic social safety net with payments never exceeding roughly one-third of the average Serbian salary (CEKOS 2016). Tellingly, the government agreed to pay full wages and additional bonuses to the public employees who stayed or agreed to return to the territory of Kosovo.

Housing

Housing was also only addressed in a piecemeal fashion during the 1990s. The government's 1997 refugees' initiative promised housing subsidies, employment, and easier

access to citizenship but it was limited to ‘border areas and depopulated areas of the country’ (KIRS 1997) in which few refugees wanted to live due to the lack of economic opportunities. The government provided shelter in the outskirts of major cities for the poorest refugees where fears of organised resettlement in Kosovo were widespread, fuelled by persistent rumours and at least one failed attempt to implement such policy by stealth (Dragojevic 2010, 70–72; Rava 2010, 11–12). Others were largely left to fend for themselves in rented apartments (about 43% in both groups) or were sharing accommodation with relatives and friends from Serbia (25% of refugees from Croatia and 38% of refugees from Bosnia) (Census 2001a, 15).

In the 2000s, the national housing initiative was expanded beyond depopulated and border areas. The government also made a diplomatic effort to resolve refugee problems at the regional level based on the principle of refugees’ free choice between return and local integration. These efforts eventually resulted in the creation of the Regional Housing Programme bankrolled by the four signatory countries (Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia) and international donors. Notably, Kosovo was not part of this regional process, and Serbia never pushed for the Kosovo Serbs to be part of the agenda; even though Montenegro, for instance, extended the programme to include 15,000 of its own displaced people from Kosovo.

The National Strategy, adopted in 2002, left room for inclusion of the IDPs in national housing and employment initiatives, but the implementation of the strategy focused on the local integration of refugees (Veritas 2002; Korać Mandić et al. 2006). The operationalisation of such programmes for Kosovo Serb IDPs was determined by a separate strategic document delegated to the Kosovo Coordination Centre (KCC) – a body tasked with managing the overall Serbian policy toward Kosovo. The KCC drafted strategies for the viable return of Kosovo Serbs to Kosovo in 2002 and again in 2010, as well as for the long-term economic sustainability for both remaining and returning Kosovo Serbs in 2007. Incentives for the return of the IDPs to Kosovo were an integral part of both of these strategies.

Explaining ethnic return migration policy in Greece and Serbia

How can we account for the observed variation in policies pursued toward different co-ethnic groups by their putative homeland? Why would successive Greek governments, ruling over an economically developed EU member-state follow different policies toward co-ethnics from former Soviet Union and those from Albania? Similarly, what was the rationale behind different approaches of the Serbian governments toward different communities of co-ethnics that were similarly affected by the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia? Our argument is that the repatriation policy of a – real or imagined – homeland toward its different co-ethnic groups is a function of its foreign policy goals toward the territory each repatriate group comes from. A government will pursue less favourable return migration policies toward co-ethnics from territories over which it has a revisionist stance, relative to groups of co-ethnics that reside in or have returned from countries over which the purported homeland has no claims (see Figure 2). In the rest of this section, we test the plausibility of our argument next to prominent alternative explanations.

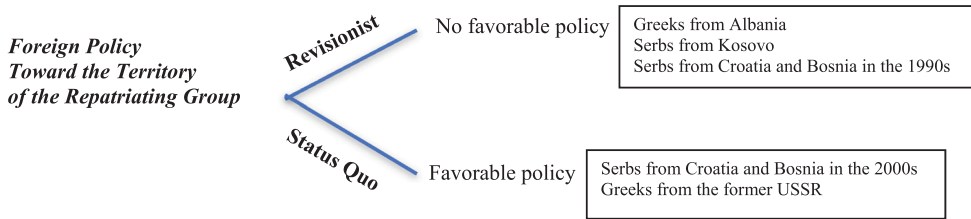


Figure 2. Foreign policy goals and ethnic return migration policy in Greece and Serbia.

Based on the minutes from the Greek parliament and the relevant legislation, the variation in treatment can be best explained if we consider the foreign policy priorities of the successive Greek governments.¹² Most Greek MPs, and important branches of the Greek administration – such as the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs – were set on preserving a Greek minority in Albania. Repeatedly, MPs, Ministers, and PMs made it abundantly clear that the preservation of the Greek minority in Albania was a non-negotiable foreign policy priority (Greek Parliament 1993, 1994, 2003, 2006). The justifications ranged from discourse reminiscent of revisionist claims from the early twentieth century to pragmatic concerns having to do with Albania’s policy (or feared practice) against dual nationality – in case Greece extended citizenship to the Greeks from Albania. This led to a much less favourable set of policies for the repatriation of Greeks from Albania as we have seen above. Thus, special measures were taken to assist the preservation of the Greek minority within Albania.¹³

In contrast, the extensive and generous measures taken in favour of the integration of the Greeks from the former Soviet Union emphasise our point. Greek elites perceived the country as experiencing a serious demographic problem (Greek Parliament 1993) with sensitive border areas, particularly in Thrace. The Greeks from the former USSR were seen as a partial solution to Greece’s demographic problem, but also as a population that could economically develop Thrace and alter its ethnic demography (Greek Parliament 1993; Keramida 2001).¹⁴ In contrast, in all discussions the repatriation of Greeks from Albania was described as undesirable. The Greek minority in Albania – a state bordering Greece, unlike any of the countries of the former USSR – operated as an important bargaining chip in the bilateral relations between Greece and Albania.¹⁵

On 19 March 1993 PASOK MP, Spyros Giannopoulos, claimed,

We cannot rely on the co-ethnics from Northern Epirus [part of Albania]. We should not de-Hellenize Northern Epirus, but we can rely on the Pontic element for which nothing has been done. In Georgia, there are 100,000 that have no reason to be there. We will never expand to Georgia. They should come and we should resettle them. (Greek Parliament 1993, 5014).

That same day, a legendary PASOK MP and Vice President of the Greek Parliament, Manolis Drettakis, echoed Mr Giannopoulos:

The settlement of Pontians in sensitive areas, requires much more generous measures than the ones we have undertaken so far. ... it is not enough if 2,000 or 3,000 resettle there, but many tens of thousands ... special and serious treatment is required with respect to the massive influx of Northern-Epirotes. ... Our efforts in this case should focus on the development of Greek-Albanian relations with the aim of the preservation and prosperity of Northern-Epirotes in their homes [in Albania]. (Greek Parliament 1993, 4998)¹⁶

The empirical record described above, in combination with a thorough study of the minutes from the Greek Parliament indicate that the Greek administration did not follow a linear logic based on the principle of ethnic affinity (Kokkinos 1991) or one implying a 'hierarchy of Greekness' (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002) to determine its policy, but mainly considered what would further its foreign policy and national security interests. Although there was a discussion about the technical problems involved in the process of separating Greek from non-Greek migrants from Albania, no state official or MP questioned the 'Greekness' of the Greeks from Albania. In fact, the perseverance and national consciousness of the Greek minority in Albania were constantly praised – especially by MPs from the Epirus region of Greece, but not exclusively (Greek Parliament 1994, 2003, 2006). Moreover, if group characteristics were to matter, then the Greeks from Albania should have been treated more favourably given that they spoke Greek at a higher percentage than the Greeks from the former USSR.

Was this policy divergence the result of partisan politics or different party ideologies? Not really. During the period under study, Greece was effectively a two-party system. Nea Demokratia, on the centre-right, and PASOK, on the centre-left, received above 80% of the total vote share. Both governing parties pursued a similar policy. But even the smaller parties that were represented in Parliament mostly concurred with the goal of keeping the Greek minority of Albania in place. As Konstantinos Rigas, MP with left-wing SYNASPISMOS, put it: 'The goal of our [national] policy should be, first: Keeping Albanians and our own co-ethnics in particular in their territories' (Greek Parliament 1991d).¹⁷ The emphasis in this foreign policy priority waned only when democratic consolidation progressed in Albania and the Albanian government guaranteed dual nationality for Greek minority members, thus diminishing the likelihood that these repatriated co-ethnics from Albania would ever return to Albania (Greek Parliament 2003, 2006).¹⁸

Naturally, the more or less automatic granting of citizenship to the Greeks from the former USSR and the difficulties experienced by the Greeks from Albania exacerbated the divergence in their treatment, since the former had voting rights while the latter did not. This meant that the Greeks from the former USSR ended up with much more leverage than that of the Greeks from Albania. Thus, what began as a strategic choice based on foreign policy priorities ended up with divergent outcomes on other aspects of integration as well.

Looking at the maps produced by the General Secretariat for Repatriated Greeks, one can see that with the exception of Thessaloniki and Athens, the two largest cities in Greece, the only other areas with such a high concentration of repatriates were the regions of East Macedonia and Thrace.¹⁹ Areas that the Greek administration wanted to change their ethnic demography. This is further evidence for the geostrategic logic behind the planning of ethnic return migration policies. Another policy indicative of the government's intentions was that when Greeks from the former USSR first arrived they could only get a rent subsidy if they decided to live within that designated area.²⁰

Turning to Serbia, we find that the non-uniform policy in the 2000s was a consequence of Serbia's efforts to mend the relations with Croatia and Bosnia based on accepting the post-war status quo while at the same time seeking to alter the post-war status quo in Kosovo. In this context, local integration of Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia became an acceptable and in some respects even desirable outcome, while the government continued

to view the displaced Serbs from Kosovo as an important potential vehicle of reasserting Belgrade's influence in its breakaway southern province.

With the fall of Milošević's regime in October 2000, Belgrade sought reconciliation and cooperation with former Yugoslav republics. The first post-Milošević minister of foreign affairs explained in his first speech in front of the parliament that these goals were being adopted both as a means of achieving the newly proclaimed goal of Euro-Atlantic integration, and as a domestically driven economic and political necessity in the aftermath of defeats that Serbia suffered in the 1990s (Svilanović 2001). In a significant shift from the policy in the 1990s, the new government put the local integration of refugees on an equal footing with their return to Bosnia and Croatia (National Strategy 2002). Regional cooperation on refugee matters proceeded more smoothly with Bosnia, while disagreements with Croatia continued in the 2000s. Faced with strong obstructionism to mass return from the Croatian side (Koska 2012; Đorđević 2015), and with an ambivalent European Union on whether to pressure Croatia on the matter, Serbian authorities gradually turned to local integration as a *de-facto* policy toward the refugee population. As the Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica said in August 2004: 'the Serbian government still intends to use every opportunity and insist that the representatives of Croatia resolve the problems of the expelled Serbs, but we will not promise more than we can achieve' (Veritas 2004a).

Thus, the focus of Serbian diplomacy shifted from demanding from Croatia to provide security and economic conditions for the actual return of the Serb refugees to a policy insisting on the restoration of the property rights of expelled Serbs. After all, both sides were aware that Serbs who managed to get their pre-war property back were mostly selling it quickly and reinvesting the money to improve their lives within Serbia. This process was simultaneously facilitated by the changes in the citizenship regime, the removal of administrative obstacles for issuing other documents, as well as by several new nationally and internationally funded housing initiatives.

Kosovo, on the other hand, became a central political issue in Serbia in the 2000s. It was difficult for the Serbian public to accept that the international community established internal administrative borders of Yugoslav republics as non-negotiable when the Serb communities in Croatia and Bosnia sought independence, but was now ready to disregard those same borders when the Albanian community in Kosovo sought independence from Serbia. Broad political consensus on contesting Kosovo's independence emerged, even though it was clear this policy would hamper Serbia's goal of joining the EU, where most member states supported Kosovo. Only two months after the remarks about the Serbs from Croatia quoted above, PM Koštunica reiterated that when it comes to Kosovo Serbs: 'The Government's approach is based on the position that return of the displaced to Kosovo is a necessity' (Veritas 2004b).

In order to encourage this return and address a broader issue of Kosovo's future, successive Serbian governments in the 2000s promoted some version of a plan for very broad autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia, combined with a similarly broad autonomy for ethnically Serbian areas within Kosovo (Ker-Lindsay 2009). In 2001–2004, a version of this autonomy within autonomy plan was promoted by Nebojsa Čović, vice president of the Serbian government and head of the Kosovo Coordination Centre (Krstić 2000, 2004; Bjekić 2001). From 2004 to 2008 prime minister Vojislav Koštunica promoted a similar plan under the label of cantonisation of Kosovo (Bataković 1999; Plan 2004). In both

plans, Serbian self-governing units were to be created by expanding, and where possible, territorially connecting the remaining Serb communities in Kosovo. These are the areas of northern Kosovo, central Lipljan-Gračanica area, southern area of Štrpce and Šar Mountains, and Kosovsko Pomoravlje in the east, ‘in which life and sustainable development, necessary for the repatriation of refugees to be a success, are possible’ (Plan 2004, article 2.2). The same areas largely overlap with ‘24 settlement areas’ highlighted in the KCC plans for return of the IDPs and for increased investment from Belgrade.

Other measures that the Serbian government took for the displaced were repeatedly justified using a similar strategic rationale. For instance, in May 2001 during one of the first of many parliamentary debates dedicated to Kosovo, one of the deputy PMs explained the policy of retaining public employees who fled Kosovo on the government’s payroll with these words:

We are trying, whenever possible, to find employment for them in our territory if their return is impossible. And we are also trying, where possible, to return them to the parts of Kosovo that are presently – at least partially – under control of the Serbs. We want to send them there in order to encourage our people there to stay. (Serbian Parliament 2001)

Similarly, while a push toward more favourable integration policies for the Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia were often justified on the basis of the expressed wish of a majority of them to stay in Serbia, no such official polling was ever conducted among the displaced from Kosovo. In fact, as late as July 2014, the Government’s KCC was issuing strongly worded statements dismissing the results of independent polls as invalid because they showed a lack of interest among the displaced for going back to Kosovo:

We do not see the solution for the IDPs solely in their local integration. Far from it, our priority is the work on their return ... this is in fact the crucial matter, because Kosovo will be ours in proportion to our numbers there. (Vreme 2014, 3)

Evidence in Serbia does not support the cultural hierarchy argument. While the plight of all three groups of co-ethnics was met with considerable solidarity and sympathy, their arrival also gave rise to resentment. In this, there were no clear hierarchies between the groups. Both journalistic and ethnographic accounts confirm that familiar tropes about inferiority of regional dialects and customs were heard about the newcomers from all three groups, with natives sometimes perceiving the newcomers as being unfairly favoured over the local population (Gojgić 1999; Dragojevic 2010, 156–163; Zlatanović 2015). Moreover, the cultural hierarchy argument cannot account for the fact that all Serbian governments in the 2000s were strongly supporting the Kosovo Serbs who stayed in Kosovo while maintaining relatively unfavourable set of policies for the displaced Kosovo Serbs. This contrast in policies only makes sense if seen from the perspective of the state’s broader goal to maintain and expand its zone of control in Kosovo.

The economic crisis of the 1990s and the relatively slow recovery in the 2000s certainly could have provided incentives for not increasing labour market competition. But Serbian governments in the 2000s still eased access to labour market and unemployment benefits for Croatian and Bosnian Serbs. At the same time, successive governments did not help Kosovo Serbs. As the statistics displayed in Table 3 below show, education levels across the three groups of co-ethnics cannot account for the variation in treatment since there were no big differences.

Table 3. Co-ethnic repatriates by group, age, and education.

Data from 2001	Refugees from Croatia	Refugees from Bosnia	IDPs from Kosovo
Average age	44.14	41.85	30
Elementary (8 years)	26.71%	19.18%	21.53%
High school (12 years)	49.96%	50.13%	43.67%
Tertiary education (15+ years)	7.59%	13%	12.92%

Party political considerations similarly fail to offer a plausible counter-narrative to the policy divergence seen in Serbia in the 2000s. In the 1990s, declassified transcripts of the meetings of the high-ranking regime officials (VSO 1995; 7–8) confirm that the refugees were from the beginning perceived as a potentially hostile electoral block that could fall prey to the regime's right-wing challengers. Indeed, in the 2000s, when many more refugees gained citizenship and became eligible to vote, municipalities with high percentages of refugees, especially high percentages of refugees from Croatia, tended to favour the extreme nationalist Serbian Radical Party (Milanovic 2004). Yet despite this support, and the tendency of the centrist post-2000 governing parties to overestimate refugees' support for the nationalists (Konitzer and Grujic 2009), these parties still implemented policies supporting the political and socio-economic integration of refugees in the 2000s. With respect to the Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo more broadly, only a small liberal party advocated a radically different approach, a position that rendered it an unacceptable coalition partner to all other parliamentary groups throughout the 2000s.

Finally, civil society groups organised by the Serbs from Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, have mostly focused on helping their constituencies navigate legal and bureaucratic rules rather than having a prominent role in shaping those rules.

Conclusion

Evidence from our study offers support for our argument that state repatriation policies are shaped by state elites' foreign policy goals. Specifically, governments pursue differentiated policies toward repatriate groups based on the foreign policy goals that they harbour toward the territory repatriates are coming from. The Greek government's policy stemmed from a desire to preserve the Greek minority in Albania as a source of leverage in its interstate relations with its neighbour. In contrast, the arrival of the Greek communities from the former Soviet Union was desirable from the government's perspective since these repatriates could serve the national interest by being settled in geostrategically sensitive border areas of Greece. Similarly, in Serbia in the 2000s a new integrationist drive targeting Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia extended only haphazardly to Kosovo Serbs who sought shelter in central Serbia after the Kosovo war in 1999. Having accepted the status quo of the Yugoslav dissolution in relations with Croatia and Bosnia, Serbia still sought to maintain its claim over the whole or a part of Kosovo. Because of this, the Serbian state tried to use Serbs from Kosovo to strengthen its territorial claims.

Our focus on ethnic return migration policies by states with an ethnocultural understanding of nationhood and history of border disputes with its neighbours covers only a subset of the broader universe of state-diaspora dyads. Yet it is a subset of cases where it is particularly striking to find non-uniform state policies toward the various sub-diaspora groups given that they are co-ethnics and have moved back to their purported

homeland. But non-uniform policies are present in a much broader set of state/sub-diaspora group dyads. A recent survey of OECD countries' diaspora policies found that two-third of member states pursue non-uniform policies toward their various sub-diaspora groups (Mylonas 2015). We hope that our article will encourage further work to systematically document, conceptualise, and explain such sub-diaspora group-level variation.

Notes

1. We scrapped the complete online transcripts of Greek and Serbian parliamentary debates in the relevant periods searching with key words that would locate the sessions in which ethnic return migration policies were discussed.
2. One way things differ in our study is that ethnic return migration policies are aimed at (real or imagined) co-ethnics, not non-core groups. The strategic calculus may be the same, however, if we expand our focus to include co-ethnic groups which are not welcome to repatriate because they are seen as enemies of the regime in power in the country of origin. This is often the case with political exiles. See for instance Mylonas (2013a) and Han (2017).
3. This section draws from Vogli and Mylonas (2009).
4. The Greeks from the former USSR were around 155,000 according to the 2000 census conducted by the General Secretariat of Repatriates (2000) while the Greeks from Albania were estimated to be around the same number. The total number of Greeks from Albania was around 200,000 in the early 2000s (see Greek Parliament 2005).
5. EIYAPOE was founded by a Presidential Decree on 13 December 1990 implementing article 8 of the Law 1893/90 but formally started functioning on 1 January 1991. It ceased its operations on March 2003 with the law 3072/2002. See: <http://users.otenet.gr/~eiyapoe/skopos.htm>.
6. In 1994, the General Secretariat for Repatriated Greeks (Geniki Grammateia Palinnostounton Omogenon) was created within the Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace and joined the integration efforts made by the National Foundation (EIYAPOE). For more on its action see: General Secretariat for Repatriated Greeks (2000, 2001).
7. The conversion rate we are using is from 1993.
8. A foundation for the Greeks from Albania was funded through a 5 million dollar donation by Ioannis Latsis with Law 1967/1991 (FEK 149 A'; also see Parliamentary records, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). The foundation primarily focused on vocational training programs (starting 1993) to facilitate the entry of Greeks from Albania to the labor market. The foundation ceased its operations in 2012. In total, a little less than 3,000 people benefited from this educational program.
9. For more on the history and politics of this period, see Caspersen (2010), Baker (2015).
10. From 1992 to 2006 Serbia was part of an increasingly loose federation with Montenegro. Throughout the period Serbia dominated federal policy-making, while policy areas such as housing, employment, and education were decided autonomously by each republic. Out of convenience we refer to the government in Belgrade as Serbian government unless otherwise noted.
11. The Deputy Chief of the largest opposition party:

I am interested to know how a serious state ministry can approach this issue so woolly when it touches upon the fate of hundreds of thousands of people. You must not allow them to feel like there are expelled here too. Croatia won't receive them back

The Minister of Interior promptly shouting a response from his seat: 'The government accepts [to lower the threshold to] 9 years' (Serbian Parliament 2004b).

12. Vogli and Mylonas (2009); King and Melvin (2000) describe similar dynamics.
13. As the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Virginia Tsouderou, put it on 6 August 1992:

Today, we are discussing some arrangements that are necessary with respect to the Repatriates' Foundation, because following the sudden influx of Northern-Epirotes and Greek-speaking Vlachs from Albania, we found ourselves in a situation where for the Foundation to be effective and for Albania not to be evacuated [by our co-ethnics] we need to operate within Albania. (Greek Parliament 1992c)

14. The vast majority of the MPs and Ministers that discussed the return of the Greeks from the former USSR were at the same wave length on this issue of resettlement in sensitive areas. There was one exception that we found, PASOK MP Alexandros Damianidis, who argued on 4 August 1992 that all of the Greek Diaspora should be assisted to thrive abroad and that the Greeks from the former USSR should be encouraged to resettle in Odessa, a city where Greeks have resided for centuries and where his father was also from (Greek Parliament 1992b).
15. Greece and Albania have had territorial disputes, a large group of Albanians (Chams) claim compensation after being expelled from Greece due to their collaboration with the Axis forces in World War II, and there is a large number of Albanian immigrants in Greece. See Vogli and Mylonas (2009, 388–389), and Manta (2009).
16. In fact, on 18 March 1994, there was a discussion in the Greek Parliament on policies of internal colonisation in Albania aiming to change the ethnic demography of the area inhabited by the Greek minority, pursued by 'Muslim Organizations funded by the Turkish state' as ND MP Antonis Fousas put it (Greek Parliament 1994).
17. Maria Damanaki, head of SYNASPISMOS at the time, and Fotis Kouvelis, another prominent MP and former Minister of Justice, also made similar points on 15 April 1992 (Greek Parliament 1992a).
18. As early as 2002, Greek MPs started to bring petitions to the Parliament demanding citizenship for the children of co-ethnics from Albania and/or for the members of the whole community that was living in Greece (Greek Parliament 2002).
19. For a map of the area, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Periferia_Anatolikis_Makedonias_ke_Thrakis.png.
20. Partially due to the problems experienced by the National Foundation (EIYAPOE) in implementing its plan and accusations about mismanagement, the housing policy changed with the law 2790/2000 and funding became available across Greece, but with a twist. Selective incentives were put in place in order to influence the settlement pattern of 'repatriates' (Voutira 2004, 536; Mylonas 2013).

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