

“When the immigrants faced the Statue of Liberty”: Critical Discourse Analysis of National Narratives in Greek Parliament

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Abstract

The increased arrival of immigrant/refugee populations often leads to public debates. These debates about immigrant/refugee policies are often raised in parliament. Inside parliament, speakers use specific arguments to persuade their audience, aiming to construct specific national identities, and to promote the national homogenizing discourse. To accomplish this, the politicians often exploit narratives and more specifically, national narratives, reframing aspects of history in order to shape the national conscience. The aim of this research is to analyze how two political leaders of opposite Greek parties, Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Yanis Varoufakis, use narratives on the Greek immigration/refugee movement to the USA in the 1920s to argue about the contemporary Greek policy toward immigrant/refugee issues. To analyze their narratives, we utilize the model of *positioning* suggested by Bamberg (1997), drawing a distinction between three levels: the *narrative world*, where we focus on how the characters are positioned in relation to one another within the reported events; the *narrative interaction*, where we examine how the narrator positions him/herself in relation to the audience through specific *argumentative strategies* (Reisigl and Wodak 2001); and the *broader socio-ideological framework*, which concerns the positioning of the narrator toward the Discourses, namely, toward the ideologically defined ways of representing reality. According to our findings, at the level of the narrative world the two politicians construct differently the USA immigrant/refugee policy. These constructions result to different arguments at the level of the narrative interaction, where Mitsotakis promotes as a norm the exclusion of the Others, while Varoufakis promotes their assimilation. Given that both the exclusion and the assimilation of the Others comprise homogenizing practices, we realize that, at the level of

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the broader socio-ideological framework, both political leaders, each from a different perspective, reinforce the national discourse.

Keywords

Immigrant; Refugee; Parliament; National discourse; National narrative

Introduction

The mass population movements in Europe led to the rise of different attitudes and practices toward immigrants/refugees¹, ranging from xenophobia to solidarity. In the past, Greece was among the countries that sent immigrants/refugees to developed countries (USA, Canada, Australia, Germany). However, during the last decades, Greece has also served as a host country. From the end of the 1990s, immigrant/refugee populations arrived in Greece, mainly from the Balkan countries (such as Albania, Bulgaria, Romania). More recently (from 2014 onwards), people from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq have arrived in Greece (Skourtou et al. 2004, 10-11; Stergiou and Simopoulos 2019).

This increased arrival of immigrant/refugee populations and the traditionally (allegedly) homogeneous population of Greece in the past (Christopoulos 2021) often leads to public debates. These debates about immigrant/refugee policies are often raised in parliament. The parliament, as a dominant institution with a symbolic role in representing the nation, is connected to the construction of *national identity* (Shenhav 2008) and the promotion of the official *national homogenizing discourse* (Archakis 2020). Inside parliament, speakers, using specific arguments, aim to construct various identities and persuade their audience (Chilton and Schäffner 2002; Tsakona 2014, 533). To accomplish this, politicians often exploit *narratives* and, more specifically, *national narratives*. Through national narratives, they reframe aspects of history in order to shape the national conscience (Yadgar 2002).

In this study, we examine how two political leaders of ideologically opposing parties attempt, through national narratives, to construct different aspects of national identity inside parliament and to promote national discourse. In particular, both Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Yanis Varoufakis (re)construct from

1 The term *immigrant* defines people who move, of their own will, seeking work opportunities and better living conditions, whereas the term *refugee* defines people who move under the pressure of geopolitical changes and the infringement of their rights and are under asylum status or apply for asylum (for a more detailed definition of the two terms, see indicatively Stergiou and Simopoulos 2019, 33-34). Realizing the generalized use of these terms, the often-blurred boundaries between them, as well as the political considerations, perhaps hiding behind the use of the one or the other term, in this article we choose to use the terms together, as immigrants/refugees, referring simultaneously to both groups.

their own perspectives the movement of Greek immigrants/refugees to the USA, in order to express their own views on the policy Greece must follow today to address immigrant/refugee issues.

To analyze their national narratives, we utilize the model suggested by Bamberg (1997), drawing a distinction between three levels of *positioning*: the *narrative world*, where we focus on how the characters are positioned in relation to one another within the reported events; the *narrative interaction*, where we examine how the narrator positions him/herself in relation to the audience through specific *argumentative strategies* (Reisigl and Wodak 2001); and the *broader socio-ideological framework*, which concerns the positioning of the narrator toward the Discourses, namely, toward the ideologically defined ways of representing reality (Fairclough 1992, 2003).

In what follows, we focus on the role of the narrative in the identity construction. More specifically, we examine the function of narratives as a means of constructing national identities and reinforcing national construction, as well as the exploitation of such narratives in parliamentary talks. Then, we present our data and describe the analysis tools. In the analysis section, we analyze two indicative excerpts from the two politicians' talks. The last section rounds up the discussion and the conclusions.

Narrative and Identity Construction

The narrative is the main genre through which the construction, interpretation, and sharing of human experience is attempted (Schiffrin 1996, 167; Georgakopoulou 2006, 33). Speakers organize narratively how they perceive the world around them, how they express their perception, and, finally, how they function socially (Bruner 1990, 77-80). In other words, narrative meaning consists of the speakers' readiness for “culturally relevant meaning” (Bruner 1990, 73). Narratives are organized, expressed, and interpreted by cultural choices and evaluations, namely by cultural conventions (Bruner 1990, 80, 1991, 4; cf. Archakis 2008, 136-137). So, Bruner (1991, 11-12) points out that for a narrative to be “interesting” and “tellable,” it has to be deviated from the expected cultural conventions (cf. Labov 1972, 366). Thus, “narrative necessity” is based on the deviation from the expected cultural normativeness (Bruner 1990, 49-50; 2001, 29-30). In this sense, narratives do not represent reality as logically confirmed truth, but offer a version of reality from a specific evaluative perspective (Bruner 1990, 77, 1991, 4-5; Labov 1972, 359-360; Archakis and Tsakona 2012, 40).

Due to this evaluative dimension, narratives function as a means of constructing the identities and surrounding world (Archakis and Tsakona

2012, 40-41). Following *social constructionism*, identity is not considered as a set of static, innate, and predetermined characteristics (Schiffrin 1996, 169; De Fina 2003, 16). It emerges from semiotic procedures through which we attempt to construct both Ourselves and the Others (see indicatively De Fina 2003; Archakis and Tsakona 2012; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2015). So, the form of a narrative, its content, and the way someone tells it is studied as a means of constructing personal/collective social, cultural, national, and other identities (Bruner 1990, 1991, 2001; Bamberg 1997), thus as a means of promoting cultural and other assumptions. These assumptions are shaped and (re)defined during the narratives. As Bruner (1991, 19-20) claims, the construction of a history, tradition, and legal system is based on a “local capacity for accruing stories of happenings of the past,” which are interpreted and (re)defined in the present. In the same vein, Fisher (1987, 63) points out that narratives aim to give order to human experience and motivate others to establish ways of living in common.

Nation-State, National Narratives, and National Identity Construction

People construct their identities and communities largely influenced by the foundation of the nation-states (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1992; Anderson 2006). The nation-state represents the “fundamental unit of world political organization” (Blackledge 2005, 40; see also Archakis 2020, 35). It can be described as a sovereign entrenched territory (state) inhabited by a group who feel to share common characteristics, such as language, origin, culture, historical memories, and rights (nation) (Smith 1991; Hobsbawm 1992; Anderson 2006). However, inside the states, the situation is often more complicated as different ethnic/cultural groups usually coexist. From this perspective, the nation-state has been perceived as a social construction based on the national homogenizing discourse (Archakis 2016). The term *discourse* can be defined as a “wa[y] for representing aspects of the world” (Fairclough 2003, 124). A discourse does not simply reflect reality but attempts to construct reality from a certain perspective (Fairclough 1992, 3). Thus, the national discourse projects the fragmentation of the world into distinct nations connected with specific states and homelands as a natural phenomenon (cf. Billig 1995, 61; Triandafyllidou 1998, 595) and present nations within state borders as homogeneous entities (Archakis 2020, 37).

The construction of nation-states has been accompanied by the creation and reproduction of their national narratives (Roudometof 2002, 8; see also Brand 2010). According to Yadgar (2002, 58), the national narrative can be defined as:

the story that a (national) collective tells about itself. It [the story] tells the individuals constituting the nation [...] who they are, what comprises their past (the national, the common one), the structure of their characteristics as a collective, and where they are heading - that is, how they should act in the political realm.

National narratives contribute to the construction of the people's national conscience (cf. Yadgar 2002, 58; Malone et al. 2017, 71). Nevertheless, the nations have not only one narrative. Competing national narratives are usually constructed. Different social groups talk about the nation, attempt to present their own voice as dominant, and fight to gain control of state institutions (Billig 1995, 71). This struggle for hegemony means that national narratives are constantly negotiable (Billig 1995, 71; Malone et al. 2017, 71).

In other words, national narratives contribute to the construction of national identity (see indicatively Doak 1997; Roudometof 2002; Yadgar 2002; Malone et al. 2017) and competing national narratives project the antagonistic aspects of national identities. National identities are dominant ideologically defined ways through which we perceive Us, the nation, and the Others (Billig 1995, 60-61). The Others are those we recognize as different from Us because they do not have the same nationality as Us, and they are not citizens of our state (Billig 1995, 61; Triandafyllidou 1998, 593-594). The idea of the Other is closely linked to the concept of national identity and the special characteristics that theoretically define the uniqueness of a nation (Triandafyllidou 1998, 596, 2001; Yadgar 2002). To imagine our nation in all its particularity, it must be imagined as a nation among other nations. From this aspect, the characteristic of national discourse is the connection of the particular/local with the universal/global. This connection is based on the acceptance that there exists a sociology of nationhood to which both our nation and the others' nations are subject. This is a governing principle that creates states within which We and Others are reproduced as nations connected with our places. This principle governs both Us and the Others and makes us obedient to universal rules which stipulate what a society can or cannot do in a world fragmented in nations-states (Billig 1995, 82-83).

Modern reality, however, is characterized by an increasing movement of immigrant/refugee populations. In this context, the host countries attempt, with various national homogenizing policies, to ensure national order and cultural “purity,” which is disrupted by the arrival of the Others. The policies par excellence through which national discourse “defends its national self” (Archakis 2020, 121) are expulsion and assimilation. Specifically, the *expulsion*

or *exclusion* of Others proceeds with strict controls and policing at the borders as well as with violent deportations and “pushbacks” (Archakis 2020, 121).

The assimilation/integration,² according to Christopoulos (2004, 352-353), “aims at the *similar* commitment of the subjects to the dominant codes of conduct but also to the ideals of a political community [...]. The strategy of assimilation basically signifies and dictates the abandonment of heterogeneities in the name of participation and equality.” The assimilation aims for the Others to denounce their specific characteristics, reject their identity, and become like the majority (Archakis et al. 2023). This policy discriminates the Others due to their cultural and language identities with a view to eradicating these differences and “promising” their gradual integration into the host country (Archakis 2020, 167). To sum up, the host countries, serving the national discourse, distinguish their nations from the rest and attempt either to exclude those who are not considered as part of their own nationality or to assimilate them in order to maintain homogeneity inside their territory.

National Identities and National Narratives in the Parliament

As a dominant institution with a symbolic role in the representation of the nation, parliament is traditionally connected with constructing national identity (Shenhav 2008) and promoting official national homogenizing discourse (Archakis 2020). Parliamentary texts as a genre belong to the broader category of the political texts (Chilton and Schäffner 2002). They address people who attend meetings of the Parliament, but they are also disseminated through TV and digital media to the broader public, namely, voters, Greek citizens, and generally to everyone interested (Negrine and Lilleker 2002; Archakis and Tsakona 2008; Tsakona 2014). The members of the Parliament, through their talks, take political positions, express their opinions, and contradict whoever questions them. So, as Chilton and Schäffner (2002, 229) point out “the parliamentary debates are typically persuasive discourse,” as the politicians aim to persuade the audience of their positions and suggestions.

In parliament talks, narrative is used as a means of sharing experiences, describing events, and argumentative and persuasive means. However, to connect with the audience and gain trust, a common cultural and language background is necessary (Archakis and Tsakona 2008; Archakis and Tsakona 2011; Tsakona 2014). In these political contexts, narratives “function as a means of persuasion which offers politicians the chance to construct various identities” (Tsakona 2014, 533). Narratives, and especially national narratives,

2 We approach both assimilation and integration as models of imposing (explicitly or implicitly) the dominant culture, language, and religion to minority groups (Archakis 2020; Christopoulos 2021).

contribute to the identity’s construction of the speaker, their opponents, and/or the broader audience they address. In this way, the contradictory schema of We versus the Others is often exploited and certain national identities emerge and strengthen (De Fina 2003; Archakis and Tsakona 2008; Tsakona 2009a, 2009b; Tsakona 2014).

In the framework of (national) narratives, speakers argue in order to justify their claims (Küçükali 2015). According to van Dijk (2016, 83), “[d]ebates in parliament are generally argumentative. Speakers defend their own position with arguments, and attack and delegitimize opponents with counter-arguments.” Each politician’s argumentation reveals alternative perspectives as to how things are and contributes to negotiation and decision-making (Muntigl 2002, 51).

Taking the above into consideration, our research aims to critically analyze two antagonistic national narratives conveyed in parliament and to explore how political opponents construct their social identities and their audience, how they argue about immigrant/refugee policy issues, and how they position themselves toward the national discourse.

Data

Our data consist of national narratives in excerpts from plenary talks at the Hellenic Parliament. These excerpts refer to the immigrant/refugee movement of Greek people in the past. We detected in the proceedings of plenary meetings talks between July 2015 and January 2020 about immigrant/refugee issues. We draw our data upon the official website of the Hellenic Parliament (www.hellenicparliament.gr). 132 out of the 264 talks in total contain narratives, and 24 out of those contain national narratives referring to the immigration of the Greeks in the past.

Here, we chose to analyze two out of the 24 national narratives in which two political leaders of ideologically opposite parties reframe the immigrant/refugee movement of the Greeks in the past in order to argue about the immigrant/refugee issue today. Specifically, we discuss a narrative by Kyriakos Mitsotakis, president of New Democracy (ND), and a narrative by Yanis Varoufakis, president of the European Realistic Disobedience Front (MeRA25).

ND, according to its program statements about the immigrant/refugee issue, claims on the party’s official website:

- “nonnegotiable political priority is ensuring the security of Greek citizens,”
- “guarding the borders is a condition of national sovereignty,”

- “we often talk as New Democracy about security issues. The maintenance of law and order,”
- “acceleration of the procedure for examining asylum requests,”
- “we are absolutely clear. Distinction between refugees and illegal immigrants,”
- “illegal immigrants, those who are not entitled to asylum, until they are turned back to Turkey, should be hosted in closed accommodation facilities,” and
- “of course the procedure for returning to Turkey should be accelerated as much as possible.”³

In contrast, the program statement of MeRA25, as stated on their official party website, includes the following about immigrant/refugee issues:

- “MeRA25 [...] will be against any military ‘solution,’”
- “the distinction between immigrants/refugees is outdated and unacceptable for civilized countries,”
- “a country such as Greece [...] is obliged to create opportunities for the immediate, real integration of the immigrants who live here,”
- “the government, the opposition and other institutions can no longer face immigrants as a shapeless, irresolute human mass the opinions of which are not recorded and cannot intervene at all to the decisions and policies which oppress so many lives,” and
- “MeRA25 will legislate the provision of a permanent work/residence permit to whoever has completed two years working in the country, to whoever has completed ten years staying in the country without working and to all children who have been born in the country from the above mentioned groups, as well as the within two years initiation of the procedure for the provision of citizenship to all those who have a permanent work/residence permit.”⁴

As previously mentioned, the two national narratives we chose refer to the same historical period, namely, the movement of Greeks to the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both K. Mitsotakis and Y. Varoufakis mention the reception and identification of immigrants/refugees on Ellis Island, USA. Ellis Island is outside Manhattan, and from 1892 until 1954 functioned as a

3 The program statements of ND about the refugee/immigrant issue are available in Greek at the link: https://nd.gr/nea/omilia-toy-proedroy-tis-nd-k-k-mitsotaki-gia-prosfygiko-metanasteytiko-stihio?fbclid=IwAR3Fa-27L_ELLdO05V531GUQZlhaJRKUKfeXq_7q83iAYWq_pKa-nmx6wyM

4 The program statements of MeRA25 about the immigrant/refugee issue are available in Greek at the link: <https://mera25.gr/prosfygiko-metanasteytiko/>

reception center for moving populations as well as a spot for their legal and medical examination.

The talks from which we drew the excerpts took place in October 2019, a period when ND was the governing party, and issues surrounding the management of immigrants/refugees were on the news. More specifically, K. Mitsotakis’ narrative took place on October 4, 2019, in the framework of the 26th meeting, in response to the timely question by Y. Varoufakis on the issue of the “Abolition of the camp in Moria and the internal borders” (Hellenic Parliament 2019a, 3015-3020).

[1]

KYRIAKOS MITSOTAKIS (President of the Government):

You referred to the Statue of Liberty. When the economic immigrants of the previous generations faced the Statue of Liberty through the fog that is often found in the area, they also knew that they would go to Ellis Island, where they would be registered and identified, so that the American authorities would know who enters the country and who does not!

(Applause from the side of ND)

Please do not compare, Mr. Varoufakis, a country which was built by immigrants, a country with vast lands that needed immigrants, a multicultural and multiethnic country, with Greece or other European countries (Hellenic Parliament 2019a, 3019).

On the other hand, Y. Varoufakis’ narrative took place on October 31, 2019, in the framework of the 40th meeting, in response to the discussion about the amendments to the draft law of the Ministry of Citizen Protection entitled “About International Protection and other Provisions” (Hellenic Parliament 2019b, 4003-4120).

[2]

YANIS VAROUFAKIS (Secretary-General of MeRA25):

However, let us look at the situation more generally and not specifically. The distinction between refugees and immigrants, which is indeed part of International Law, has a history that is very different from the present. Let us return to 1922, when the

Destruction of Smyrna took place. The Greeks of Smyrna left on ships. Many of these ended up on Ellis Island, New York.

Some left from the Peloponnese, others from Egypt. We discuss our Greek compatriots who ended up on Ellis Island. There, they registered, and a distinction was made depending on who was persecuted or was just an immigrant. They did not throw anybody in the sea; they did not load on ships those who were immigrants, and not officially refugees, to be sent back. They were sorted and then they were integrated into American society. The United States would not be as powerful today if this had not happened.

Foreigners created more working positions than they occupied. Indeed, the labor supply rose when we had immigration flows, regardless of whether it was in the United States, Australia, here in Greece in 1991, or anywhere else. Simultaneously, however, labor demand increases due to multiple reactions (Hellenic Parliament 2019b, 4026-4027).

Analyzing the above-mentioned national narratives, we aim to examine how the two political leaders construct the same event narratively, how they argue and interact with their audience, and how they position themselves concerning the national discourse on the immigration/refugee issue.

Analysis Tools

In our analysis, we use the three-dimensional model suggested by Bamberg (1997, 2004). Bamberg (1997, 2004) distinguishes the levels of positioning by setting three basic questions. The first question posed was: *How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?* At this level, we analyze how the narrative world and the characters are constructed and which aspects of the narrator's identity are highlighted. The speaker constructs the narrative world, filtering the past through the present. The events selection, array, assessment, and language coding are decisions of the narrator. So, each narrative world has the stamp of its narrator-constructor (Bruner 1990, 109-110). Here, our analysis aims to compare the two different narrative worlds that construct Mitsotakis and Varoufakis for the same historical event of immigrants/refugees arriving on Ellis Island.

The second question posed by Bamberg (1997, 2004) is as follows: *How does the speaker position him/herself in relation to the audience?* Here, we are interested in how a narrative is carried out in front of the audience, the degree

of the narrator’s alignment and *adjustment* to the expectations of the audience, and the way the narrator *designs their audience* (Bell 1997). So, at this level, we focus on the different ways the narrative of Mitsotakis, on the one, and the narrative of Varoufakis, on the other, reinforce their argumentation and adjust to the audience’s expectations.

We draw tools from the critical discourse analysis to detect how the two narrators construct their argumentation. Specifically, we exploit the *argumentation strategies* suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 45). To construct their arguments, text producers use various *topoi/loci*. The topoi/loci comprise “conclusion rules” that connect the argument(s) with the conclusion and the contention (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 75-80). As Boukala (2020, 295) mentions, the topoi/loci “can contribute to a deep analysis of the political [texts] since they are ‘research formulas’ which examine the common sense or the dominant knowledge.” In our data, we analyze the following topoi/loci:

- 1) The topos of history: An action, when it is comparable with a historical example, should be performed or omitted in relation to its consequences (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 80).
- 2) The topos of advantage/usefulness: An action should be performed if it is useful from a specific point of view (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 75).
- 3) The topos of disadvantage/uselessness: An action should be rejected when it is more likely to lead to undesired results (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, 75-76).

Here, we examine how the two narrators make different uses of the topos of history and the antonym pairs of the topoi of advantage/usefulness and disadvantage/uselessness, each one aiming to become likable to his audience. Political leaders addressing an existing or *imagined audience* (Litt and Hargittai 2016) attempt to construct an *in-group* (Duszak 2002), a common *collective identity* (Polletta and Jasper 2001; cf. Sifianou and Bayraktaroğlu 2012, 295) with the people who support their party or the people they want to influence. In this way, our aim at the level of the narrative interaction is to analyze how the two political leaders, by exploiting specific argumentative strategies, attempt to construct a homogeneous group with common “*imagined*” *characteristics* (Sifianou and Bayraktaroğlu 2012, 298) and common expectations.

At the third level, Bamberg (1997, 2004) poses the question of *How do the narrators position themselves to themselves?* This is a transition to the broader cultural, ideological, and social context. Based on common perceptions, speakers construct their narratives and position themselves (explicitly or implicitly) toward the expected norms, values, and dominant discourses (see

also Archakis and Tsakona 2012, 44). At this level, we examine how the two political leaders position themselves toward the national discourse and what practices they use to achieve national homogenization.

In Table 1, we summarize the analysis tools and research aims for each narrative analysis level, as suggested by Bamberg (1997, 2004).

Table 1: *Depiction of analysis tools and research aims*

<i>Narrative Analysis Levels</i>	<i>Research Aim</i>
1st: Narrative World	<i>How do Mitsotakis and Varoufakis construct the immigrants/refugees' identification on Ellis Island, their selection and admission into the USA?</i>
2nd: Narrative Interaction Argumentative strategies (Reisigl & Wodak 2001): 1) Topos of history 2) Topos of advantage/usefulness 3) Topos of disadvantage/ uselessness	<i>What kind of argumentative strategies do Mitsotakis and Varoufakis use to construct a collective identity with the ND and MeRa25 supporters, respectively?</i>
3rd: Broader Cultural, Ideological and Social Context	<i>How do Mitsotakis and Varoufakis position themselves toward the national discourse?</i>

Analysis

Narrative World: Constructing the Greek Immigrants/Refugees of the USA

At the level of the narrative world, we examine the different ways in which the two political leaders define the moving populations and construct the Greek immigrants/refugees of the USA, the conditions when they arrived there, and the policies the American authorities applied for their reception.

Mitsotakis defines the moving populations from Greece to the USA as “(economic) immigrants” and systematically ignores the reference to refugees. So, he promotes the exclusion of the non-refugee populations by the authorities of the host country. Mitsotakis also presents the conditions and policies with which the USA received Greek moving populations. He advocates the procedure of discrimination and exclusion: those who arrived in the USA were identified and categorized into those who were allowed to enter the country and those who were excluded. Moreover, Mitsotakis presents the (*economic*) immigrants of the USA as national Others who were aware of (*knew that*) the

controls set by the American authorities and obeyed them. At the same time, he claims that the Greek immigrants who arrived in the USA were useful to the specific country, as the USA was built by immigrants/refugees as *a country with vast lands [...], a multicultural and multiethnic country*.

On the other hand, Varoufakis constructs the narrative world from his own perspective. He defines the moving Greek population as “immigrants,” “persecuted” and “refugees.” Through his reference to persecuted and refugees, he recognizes that certain people from those moving are possibly entitled to asylum and becomes more inclusive. He also described their initial entry as a simple register of those who arrived at Ellis Island in order to ascertain who were persecuted (refugees) and who were immigrants. According to Varoufakis’ narrative, *the Greeks [...] on ships or our Greek compatriots*, after their registration, were all accepted, stayed, and worked in the USA, and finally were assimilated into American society. Moreover, Varoufakis claims that immigrants/refugees might be useful for any country, as they could increase employment opportunities and contribute to economic growth.

As far as the American authorities are constructed, on the one hand, Mitsotakis emphasizes their role as state control mechanisms and as national “depositories” of the USA. This element is also implicitly highlighted by referring in the begging of his narrative to the primary American national symbol of immigration, the Statue of Liberty. On the other, Varoufakis does not directly refer to American authorities, limiting and/or undermining their controlling role.

Thus, the identity that the two political leaders construct for themselves is projected. Mitsotakis constructs himself as an institutional person who reinforces the USA policy. In other words, he reinforces a policy that, according to his narrative, entails the activation of controlling mechanisms legalized to discriminate between the national Others who are allowed to enter the country and those who are excluded. In contrast, Varoufakis constructs himself as an institutional person who reinforces the inclusive policy of the USA, which, according to his narrative, entails the arrival and assimilation of all the national Others.

Summarizing the positioning of the characters in the narrative world, we note that Mitsotakis constructs the USA as a country that assimilated only the immigrants/refugees who were useful, while the rest were excluded. On the other hand, Varoufakis constructs the USA as a country that assimilated all immigrants/refugees, as all of them were useful for its economic development. However, it is interesting to note the common ground in both narrative worlds. Both Mitsotakis and Varoufakis construct the USA as a dominant

nation-state that defines what the members of their society can do or cannot. Moreover, according to the two speakers, every country takes economic advantage of the immigrants/refugees.

Narrative Interaction: Speakers’ Argumentation

At the narrative interaction level, we are interested in how each of the two speakers constructs his audience and himself in relation to them. Specifically, we examine how each speaker uses the narrative to support an argument and to promote his/her position. We also concentrate on how he/she uses this argumentation to construct a collective *in-group* identity with his/her audience (existing and/or imaginary). Here, we are discussing arguments based on the historical event of the Greek immigrant/refugee movement in the past as well as arguments that concern the usefulness of the immigrants/refugees for the economy of the host country.

Arguments Based on the Historical Event

Through the above construction of the narrative world, the two speakers attempt implicitly to reinforce their argumentation about how Greek authorities should function today concerning the immigrant/refugee issue. In other words, the two political leaders exploit the same historical event to construct their arguments and to show the analogy with Greece today. Their argumentation is based on the topos of history.

In Table 2, we see how Mitsotakis exploits the specific topos to argue in favor of the controls and the discrimination of the incoming immigrants/refugees, and ultimately, of their exclusion.

Table 2: *Topos of history in Mitsotakis’ narrative*

Topos of History	<i>An action, when it is comparable with a historical example, should be performed or omitted in relation to its consequences.</i>
Premises	Immigrants who would go to the USA knew that they would be registered and identified by the American authorities.
	American authorities knew who entered the country and who did not.
Conclusions	Therefore: • Today, in Greece, immigrants/refugees should know that they will be checked and identified by the Greek authorities. • Greek authorities should know who enters the country and who does not.

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In the above argument, Mitsotakis points out that immigrants/refugees who went to the USA were aware that their personal data would be registered and identified by the American authorities (*they also knew that*), and simultaneously, they were obedient to this procedure. Connecting the Greek immigrants/refugees of the past with the Greek reality of today, he supports that both immigrants and refugees who come to Greece should obey the corresponding controls set by the Greek authorities. He suggests that since the USA registered and identified the newcomers populations and excluded whoever did not have the right to enter the country, Greece should do the same. Mitsotakis implies that only refugees should have the right to enter a country, and immigrants should be sorted into legal and illegal. Illegal immigrants are represented as a potential threat to national security, a dominant element for the ND party (Boukala 2020: 306, see also *Data* Section).

On the other hand, Varoufakis, through his argumentation, tries to depict the identification procedure of the immigrants/refugees in Greece today differently. Making use of the topos of history (see Table 3), he attempts to persuade his audience about the settlement of all the immigrants in the country.

Table 3: *Topos of history in Varoufakis’ narrative*

Topos of History	<i>An action, when it is comparable with a historical example, should be performed or omitted in relation to its consequences.</i>
Premises	In the USA, all were registered and entered the country, both the prosecuted [meaning those requesting asylum] and the immigrants.
	They were not thrown into the sea; they did not prosecute the immigrants.
	They were integrated into American society.
Conclusions	Therefore: • In Greece, all immigrants/refugees should be registered and assimilated. • The practice of expulsion and exclusion of those who do not fulfill the “institutionally defined” characteristics of the refugee is unacceptable.

According to the Varoufakis’s topos of history, Greece should register and assimilate immigrants/refugees and not adopt practices of expulsion or exclusion. Varoufakis, aligned with the declarative statements of his party concerning the “unacceptable discrimination” of the new immigrants/refugees

in the country and the “provision of permanent work/residence permit” (see *Data Section*), argues in favor of the assimilation of all immigrants/refugees.

Arguments Based on the Usefulness of the National Others

The two politicians also argue about how useful the national Others are in Greece today. Mitsotakis argues in favor of their uselessness in Greece, exploiting the topos of disadvantage/uselessness (see Table 4).

Table 4: *Topos of disadvantage/uselessness in Mitsotakis’ narrative*

Topos of Disadvantage/ Uselessness	<i>An action should be rejected when it is more likely to lead to undesired results.</i>
Premises	The USA was a country with vast lands.
	The USA was a country which needed immigrants.
	The USA was a multicultural and multiethnic country built by immigrants.
Conclusions	Therefore, since Greece is a small and monocultural country, it does not need immigrants.

Mitsotakis, exploiting the topos of disadvantage/uselessness, argues in favor of the exclusion of the national Others since Greece today does not have any economic benefit from their arrival, unlike the USA in the past. At the same time, Greece cannot be compared to the USA as far as the area it covers and the extent of multiculturalism. Greece, being a small and homogeneous country, has no “room” for immigrants/refugees and does not wish for any cultural admixtures.

Varoufakis, through his argument, tries to reinforce the usefulness of assimilating all immigrants/refugees. Thus, Varoufakis exploits the topos of advantage/usefulness (Table 5) in order to respond to Mitsotakis’ argumentation.

Table 5: *Topos of advantage/usefulness in Varoufakis’ narrative*

<i>Topos of Advantage/ Usefulness</i>	<i>An action should be performed if it is useful from a specific point of view.</i>
Premises	Immigrants/refugees were useful in any country (USA, Australia, Greece). The labor supply rose when we had immigrant/refugee inflows.
Conclusion	Immigrants/refugees will also be useful in Greece today as work opportunities will increase.

Using the topos of advantage/usefulness, Varoufakis states that immigrants/refugees reinforce financially a country increasing, not decreasing, the work opportunities. He provides that the immigrants/refugees contribute to the “economic growth” of every host country (see also Pavlou 2004, 61). Thus, he presents as an advantage of Greece the arrival and assimilation of immigrants/refugees.

Overall, the two political leaders, during the narrative interaction, initially exploit the topos of history by using a “historical analogy” (Chilton 2004, 149). In this context, they put forth the analogy between the immigrant/refugee phenomenon in the USA and the arrival of immigrants/refugees in Greece today. The different perceptions and representations of the narrative world (see *Narrative World: Constructing the Greek Immigrants/Refugees of the USA* Section) contribute to the construction of different arguments by the speakers during the narrative interaction, as well as the construction of different aspects of national identity. Moreover, using the contrasting topoi, the topos of disadvantage/uselessness, and the topos of advantage/usefulness, the speakers present their perspectives on whether immigrants/refugees are useful/useless in a country, treating them with a utilitarian approach. With the above argumentation, each speaker constructs a collective identity with their existing and/or imaginary audience, attempts to become likable, satisfy the audience’s expectations, or persuade more citizens to support their party.

Broader Socio-Ideological Context: The National Discourse

At the third level of positioning, we are interested in exploring the narrators’ broader cultural, ideological, and social context. More specifically, Mitsotakis, through his national narrative, provides the distinction between immigrants and refugees, and the exclusion of those not entitled to asylum. By contrast,

Varoufakis promotes the assimilation of all immigrants/refugees. In both cases, however, the narrators use homogenizing practices aimed at the eradication of any (ethnic, cultural, and language) differences and construction of a common national identity (Park and Wee 2017).

We observe, therefore, that Mitsotakis excluding the national Others adopts a “fixed reflective reaction of the nations-states” and aims at national “purity” (Archakis 2020, 69). On the other hand, Varoufakis supports their assimilation, which entails the eradication of their otherness “in the name of contribution and equality” (Archakis 2020, 130). Both exclusion and assimilation promote the national homogeneity and the national discourse. So, we argue that the narratives of the two political leaders reproduce different aspects of the national discourse.

Conclusions

In this study, we focused on how two political leaders of ideologically opposing parties promote national discourse in their parliamentary talks. Specifically, we analyzed two national narratives, one by K. Mitsotakis, leader of ND, and one by Y. Varoufakis, leader of MeRA25. The main aim of our analysis is to indicate how the two political leaders narratively reframe the immigrant/refugee movement of the Greek people to the USA in the past in order to argue about the present immigrant/refugee issue. As analytical tools of the two national narratives, we use the three levels of positioning (narrative world, narrative interaction, socio-ideological context) suggested by Bamberg (1997) and certain argumentative strategies (the topos of history, the topos of advantage or usefulness, and the topos of disadvantage or uselessness) suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2001).

To sum up our findings, at the level of the narrative world, the two political leaders reveal their positioning toward the Greek immigrants/refugees of the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as toward the immigrant policy of the USA. Mitsotakis constructs the USA as a country that assimilated only whomever was useful to it and excluded the rest, while Varoufakis constructs the USA as a country that assimilated all immigrants/refugees because everybody was considered useful for its economic growth.

At the level of narrative interaction, we emphasized how Mitsotakis and Varoufakis are aligned and adjust to the expectations of their audiences and how the two narrators design their audiences (Bell 1977). Here, the narrators use specific argumentative strategies to persuade their audience (existing and/or imaginary) on the suitable policies concerning the management of the immigrant/refugee issue. Thus, they construct with their audience a

homogeneous group with common “imaginary” characteristics (Sifianou and Bayraktaroğlu 2012, 298) and expectations. On the one hand, Mitsotakis focuses on the rhetoric of discrimination and exclusion, and, on the other, Varoufakis employs the rhetoric of assimilation. The same rhetoric is also depicted in the respective program statements of the parties they represent. Mitsotakis seems to promote the opinions of his party about “ensuring the security of Greek citizens,” the “[d]istinction between refugees [namely legal] and illegal immigrants” and “procedure for returning.” On the contrary, Varoufakis promotes the opinions expressed by his party about the “unacceptable” distinction between refugees and immigrants and the “provision of permanent work/residence permit” (see *Data Section*).

The two speakers, through their argumentation, share experiences with the audience in order to construct a common identity, a similar ideological commitment to their audience (Fischer 1987, 63). As nations-states do not have only one national narrative, we can say that the two political leaders express antagonistic national narratives on the basis of which different aspects of national identity are constructed. With his national narrative, Mitsotakis fights to maintain his party’s control of state institutions and the right to talk about the nation as one that excludes Others if they are not useful for its prosperity. Varoufakis, through his national narrative, fights for his party to win control of the state and presents its voice as the voice of the whole nation, as one that assimilates the Others to its advantage (cf. Billig 1995, 71). However, both narrators reinforce the argument that a country accepts the immigrants/refugees who are useful, who can be incorporated into the productive fabric, who can contribute to the economic growth of a country, who can be assimilated. Therefore, in any case, the perception of immigrants/refugees is utilitarian (Pavlou 2004, 45).

With regard to the positioning of the narrators vis-à-vis the dominant social norms, we realized that despite the differences in the speakers’ positions at the two previous levels, the broader socio-ideological context of each narrative is common. The expected cultural normativity that is overturned, causing the need to carry out national narratives by the two political leaders, lies in their common acceptance that the fragmentation of the world in distinct nations-states is something natural (Bruner 1991, 11-12; Billig 1995, 61; Triandafyllidou 1998, 595). The two speakers, through their national narratives, attempt to project, interpret, and manage this overturn of normativity, the populations’ movement outside the “permitted” borders. According to the narratives of Mitsotakis and Varoufakis, nations are subject to the sociology of nationhood that distinguishes them and connects them with specific states. This principle

dominates both majority (e.g., Americans then in USA, Greeks today in Greece) and minority groups (e.g., immigrants/refugees), and it imposes on both of them the need to respect the universal rules that define what a society can and cannot do (see Billig 1995, 82-83). However, the two political leaders give different interpretations to the immigrant/refugee policy of the USA and, therefore, define the universal rules we, as a society, should respect and follow in a different way. Mitsotakis promotes the exclusion of the Others from the national borders, while Varoufakis promotes the assimilation of the Others. Both the exclusion and assimilation of the Others comprise homogenizing practices. Therefore, the two leaders' opinions, despite the different political directions of their parties, are based in a common national discourse. Even politicians who facilitate the procedures of hosting immigrants/refugees and (seemingly) accept and respect these groups feed and are fed by the national discourse and its homogenizing aspirations. Assimilation is one such procedure, promising to immigrants/refugees the protection and provision of the majority benefits. The national homogenizing discourse, therefore, is deeply rooted in the people's conscience and is often reproduced even when it is seemingly undermined (Archakis et al. 2023).

We hope that our critical analysis of parliamentary talks can reinforce the critical reflexes of the people to obtain awareness about the politicians' positionings and to realize the way national homogenizing discourse is reproduced in the parliamentary framework. However, we acknowledge the limitations of a local analysis which is essentially "post hoc and interpretative, open to alternative readings" (Coupland 2007: 224). The same narrative can be differently recontextualized and reinterpreted, as generally the texts are made relevant by specific discursive frames. So, such research may be enriched by a further exploration of how these narratives are perceived by the broader audience. Such research may also be enriched by other countries' national narratives (e.g., countries of southern and eastern Europe) provided in their parliaments confirming or undermining the sociology of nationhood. Thus, we could compare the narrators' positionings about immigrant/refugee issues across the local Greek borders.

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