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The aim of this paper is to describe, analyse and explain the historical emergence of nationalism in Greece. Initially, and in accordance with the modernist approach, we will be arguing that the emergence of the nationalist phenomenon in Greece is inseparably linked with the objective conditions of modernity. The emergence of an educated Greek-speaking middle class, the development of trade and industry, and the diffusion of the liberal, secular and scientific spirit of the Enlightenment in the Greek peninsula, were instrumental factors for the construction of the idea of the nation. In that sense, the Greek nation—like every nation—is an historical and social construction, which emerges as a result of the fundamental split between the pre-modern and the modern.

However, none of these two features (historicity and social construction) of Greek nationalism—or any nationalism for that matter—can explain the longevity, specificity, and power of nationalist identifications. If Greek national identity was constructed for specific socio-historical reasons, then why has it shown such a remarkable resistance to reconstruction or deconstruction over the past two centuries? If Greek national identity is a simple by-product of the adaptation process of a pre-modern society to a modern bureaucratic state, then why is the Greek nation still the primary locus of individual and collective identification in late-modernity? If Greek nationalism has been ‘produced’ by modernized elites and intellectuals, then why was it ‘consumed’ by the people? If nationalism has been inspired by the ideals of Enlightenment, then why has Orthodoxy been the cornerstone of Greek national identity?

Modernist and constructionist approaches are unable to provide answers to those questions. The value of the theoretical framework, which is proposed

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in this paper is to be found in its ability to deal with such questions which would otherwise remain unresolved by alternative approaches.

The main argument of the paper is that in order for nationalist symbols (language, institutions, architecture, paintings, music, etc.) to gain public acceptance and popularity, they have to build on and integrate pre-existing demotic cultural material, with which people are already familiarized and which they hold dear. The main source of cultural material in the Greek speaking areas of the Ottoman Empire was the Orthodox Church and its traditions. Therefore, Orthodoxy was instrumental for the consolidation of Modern Greek national identity, and an essential component of Greek Helleno-Christian nationalism.

Let us start though by providing the reader with the historical background on the politicization of the Orthodox Church, which may explain both why the Orthodox tradition exercised such influence over Greek-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire, and why its position in the Greek state which emerged after the War of Independence became an issue of heated political debate. Subsequently, we will move on to analyse the political and ideological struggles that took place during the first years after independence. During this period of nation building and identity formation, several competing nationalist imaginaries tried to win the allegiance of the people and the state and define the content of ‘Greekness’. Out of these ideological struggles the hegemonic form of Greek nationalism, Hellenic-Christianism, emerged which confirmed the position of Orthodoxy as an integral part of Greek national identity. Hellenic-Christianism remains the dominant way of imagining Greek national identity even in our epoch.

Orthodoxy before Greek Independence

The roots of the politicization of the Greek Orthodox Church can be traced back to the times of the Byzantine Empire. Since its establishment as the official religion of the Eastern Roman Empire in the fourth century, the Church became a department of the Byzantine state and played an active political role in the development of Imperial policy. The ties between the Church and the state in Byzantium were legal, political, and most importantly ‘ideological’ in nature. The emperor derived his power and legitimacy from God (ἐλέω Θεοῦ βασιλεύς), and the official Orthodox dogma was under the protection of the state that showed little, or no religious tolerance at all. It may well be argued that the Byzantine emperor was carrying out the role of the holy
inquisition in Byzantium (Adrachtas 2001:41), and that the religious policy of the Byzantine Empire was based on the doctrine, ‘one God, one empire, one religion’ (Adrachtas 2001:41).

This attitude of the Byzantine Empire was not an idiosyncratically Eastern or Orthodox phenomenon. Throughout the medieval Europe, religious homogenization was seen as a precondition for the consolidation of the state/empire (Llobera 1996:134). The particularity of Orthodoxy is to be found in the fact that it remained an imperial institution throughout the rule of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires in the Balkans (altogether more than fifteen centuries), and therefore religion in the region did not follow the path of privatization which took place in the rest of Europe, where Enlightenment and nationalism displaced the protagonistic role of the Churches in public life.

The ‘Great Schism’ between Orthodoxy and Catholicism in 1054 divided Christian Europe into two parts, the ‘Byzantine East’ and the ‘Papal West’, with profound political consequences for the historical and social development of the two parts of the Continent. If we add the regions that followed the Reformation to this map, we will see that the religious division of Europe remains unaltered until today, a fact that demonstrates the remarkable salience of religious identities even in the milieu of ‘secular’ modernity.

It is, of course, well-known that the reasons for the division of Europe between Orthodox East and Catholic West were not solely theological in nature. Suffice to say that the Orthodox defiance to negotiate a rapprochement with the Pope before the end of the Byzantine Empire resulted in a brief occupation of Constantinople by the Crusaders, and, later on, the denial of Western Christian kings to help their ‘Eastern Christian brothers’ in their fight against the Ottomans. The justification for this denial was the rejection of the prospect for reunification of the two divided Churches by the Byzantines. Indeed, the issue of reunification of Catholicism and Orthodoxy became quite pertinent in the Byzantine Empire in the years just before the fall of the city. After a long period of deliberations and discussion, the Orthodox Church eventually rejected the Catholic demands for union. In reality, it is doubtful if the fragmented and weak West would be in a position to help the Byzantine Empire anyhow, since the Ottoman army was at the zenith of its power during that period, and its forces even managed to reach the walls of Vienna later. The fall of Constantinople in May 29, 1453 marked the beginning of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans for the next four centuries.

2 Some commentators have even attributed the 2010 Greek financial crisis to the religious division between East and West. See for example Kaplan 2010.
The Byzantine legacy left its mark in the later formation of Greek nationalism in two important ways. Firstly, it isolated the territories which were to be included in the Greek state after the 1821 War of Independence from the rest of Europe. Ottoman rule in the Balkans meant that the development of nationalism in the region took place in a social environment relatively secluded from the rest of Europe and in a manner distinctively ‘South-Eastern’, given the particularities of the Ottoman system of government. To name one of these, anti-Western sentiments, which initially sprang from the ecclesiastical Schism, were further inflated by the Crusaders’ occupation of Istanbul and their denial of help to the Byzantines in the face of the Ottoman hazard. In the last days of the Byzantine Empire, a Byzantine high official said that he would rather see the turban of the Turk rule in Constantinople, than the Latin Mitre (Kitromilides 1994:191). This anti-Western attitude influenced Greek-speakers of the Byzantine Empire, who gradually started to perceive themselves as different and distinct from the rest of the European Christians, led them to appreciate their linguistic heritage, and encouraged the use of the word ‘Hellene’ as a self description:

This development had been well prepared. In the eleventh century, the scholar-bishop, John Mauroporus wrote a poem asking Christ to save Plato and Plutarch. In the twelfth, the decoration of Digenis’s Palace on the Euphrates...is described as showing Samson, David and Goliath; then Achilles, Agamemnon, Penelope, Odysseus, the Cyclops, and Bellerephon; then Alexander’s victory over Darius, and his encounter with the Indian Brahmins; finally, Moses, the exodus, and Joshua...In the same century, a writer could describe his father as a pure Hellene and a bishop specifically contrasted Hellene with barbarian in promoting someone at court (Carras 2004:313-314).

This juxtaposition of Hellenism with Christianity was of course initially an elite movement, with no evidence suggesting a wider popular appeal. However, it did exist among intellectuals and seminal personalities of the Byzantine world, like “Georgios Gemistos Plython (c. 1370-1452), Cardinal Bessarion (c. 1403-1472) and Constantine XI Palaeologus (1403-1453), the last ‘Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans’” (Xydis 1968:6). Anti-Western sentiments were further enhanced by the Ottoman Empire and the Orthodox Church, due to both religious and political differences.

The second important mark that Byzantium left in the nationalist development of the region was the influence of Orthodoxy in the political and social life of the Christian subjects, as we shall see in the following section.
Orthodoxy during the Rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans

Greek and Greek-Cypriot nationalist historiographies have created a number of myths with regard to the position of the Orthodox Church under the Ottoman rule. The most common of them suggests that the Church suffered greatly under the rule of a heterodox imperial ruler. Former Archbishop of Greece, Christodoulos, described the widely accepted view regarding the status of Orthodoxy in the Ottoman Empire as follows: “Frequent insults against the Church and its emissaries, murders of patriarchs, archbishops and other priests, abusive characterizations of the Symbol of Faith, raids on holy temples and stealing of sacred valuables, turning of churches into mosques, and violent islamizations, are just some of the torments of medieval Hellenism”.

However, contrary to this common doxa, historical evidence suggests that the Church, far from being enslaved, actually operated as an institution of the Ottoman establishment: “The Patriarch and the high-ranking clerics had assumed responsibility for all the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman conquerors. Their power, privileges, and influence were great, not only in comparison with the Orthodox people, but also in comparison with most poor Muslims. We could actually argue that the prestige of Orthodoxy had been augmented after 1453, following the decision of the Sultan to allow the Patriarch to retain all of his Byzantine powers and to exclude the clergy from the requirement to pay annual taxes” (Diamandouros 2002 [1978]:73).

In a highly decentralized system of government, in which local (often Greek-speaking) lords enjoyed great autonomy, the Church often found itself performing a number of administrative tasks, in addition to its typical religious and spiritual functions. These tasks included arbitration in local disputes, tax collection, and the supervision of the adherence of Christian subjects to traditional Orthodox family law. The words of the Sultan himself to the first appointed patriarch after the fall of Constantinople are clear: “Be Patriarch, preserve our friendship, and receive all the privileges that the Patriarchs, your predecessors, possessed”. The reasons, which led the Ottoman Empire to transform the Orthodox Church into a component of the state apparatus are beyond the scope of this essay. It suffices to say that they were related both to a set of established governance practices in the Empire, as well as to the constant

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4 Cited in Campbell and Sherrard 1969:189.
pressures created by the influence of Russia to the Orthodox populations of the Balkans (Papageorgiou 1988:31).

In short, after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, and the emergence of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Orthodox Church found itself again in an advantageous political position. Isolated from the emerging religious scepticism in Europe, local populations continued to live in accordance and harmony with Orthodox traditions, rituals, myths, and symbols. Moreover, the religious division between the subjects of the Empire (what is known as the millet system) benefited the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople who became the spiritual leader of all the enslaved Balkan Christians, responsible for the collection of some of their taxes, and the representative of the people to the Sublime Porte. "Subaltern Metropolitans, in their turn, became civil governors responsible for civil jurisdiction, enjoined, in the words of Mahomet II, to ‘watch day and night those entrusted with their guidance, to observe their conduct, and to discover and report their lawless action to my government’; and they looked upon, and addressed, the holder of the Ecumenical throne as ‘their sovereign, their emperor, and their Patriarch’" (Campbell and Sherrard 1969: 190).

Finally, since religion became the main -and perhaps only- dividing line between Muslims and enslaved subjects, Orthodoxy developed into the primary locus of cultural and political identification among Christians. This was especially true in times when linguistic and ethnic identities were quite fluid within the milieu of the multi-ethnic and multilingual Ottoman Empire. An idiosyncratic example of this flexibility of identities was the ethnic group of Karamanlis, the members of which were Christians, but spoke only Turkish which they wrote with Greek characters (Kitromilides 1994:185).

The Christian subjects who formed the millet-i-Rum (literally, the nation of Romans) and fell under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were not, of course, exclusively Greek speakers. The Orthodox millet “contained Serbs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Orthodox Albanians, and Arabs” (Kitromilides 1994:185). What is interesting for the Greek and Greek-Cypriot cases is the progressive Hellenization of Orthodoxy in the course of the years between the fall of Constantinople and the Greek War of Independence (Frazee 1969:6). The Ecumenical Patriarchs as well as the vast majority of the highest-ranking clergy were Greek speakers. This trend was the result of both the linguistically Greek Byzantine tradition and Orthodox ritual, but it also reflected the social hierarchy in the Ottoman Empire, in which the Greek element enjoyed a privileged status among the non-Muslim populations. One cannot fail to point out that this progressive conflation of the Greek language
and culture with Orthodox Christianity served later as an important nation-building factor in the nationalist era.

However, during the period under investigation, the Hellenization of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Orthodoxy in general, did not lead the Church to an unreserved acceptance of Greek nationalist claims. On the contrary, its traditional anti-Western sentiments, which dated back to the schism of 1054, meant that it considered Enlightenment as a Protestant and Catholic political project (Diamandouros 2002 [1978]:75). Moreover, dialect variations between Greek speakers in the various parts of the Ottoman Empire impeded the communication of nationalist claims, while the same can be said about the conflicting interests and political aspirations of the different social classes of Greek speakers. Besides, we should not forget that nationalism had not yet been widespread in Europe, while the Orthodox Church functioned in a multi-ethnic Empire. For hundreds of years, Orthodoxy had been an imperial institution (Byzantine, and later Ottoman). Hence, its scepticism towards demands for the creation of national states was something to be expected, since it could potentially threaten the Church’s political status.

In fact one of the main duties of the Orthodox Church was to ensure that the Christian subjects of the Empire would remain obedient to the Sublime Porte. Naturally, when the ideas of Western Enlightenment and nationalism reached the Balkans, the Church vehemently opposed them. Not only Western conceptions of progress and science undermined the authority of the Orthodox Christian dogma, but they also threatened the ecumenicity of the Constantinople Patriarchate by encouraging local populations—mainly Slavic—to emancipate their Churches from the Greek-dominated ‘Great Church’ in Istanbul. Nonetheless, by the dawn of the 19th century, the spread of Greek nationalism among the Christian subjects of the Sultan was well under way. In the preface of an 1802 Greek-Rumanian-Albanian-Bulgarian lexicon, the author suggests the following course of action to the non-Greek speaking Christians:

Albanians, Vlachs, Bulgarians, speakers of other tongues rejoice,
And prepare yourselves all to become Greeks,
Abandoning your barbaric language, speech and customs,
So that they may appear to your descendants as myths.
Do honour to your Nations, together with your motherlands,
By making your Albanian and Bulgarian Motherlands Greek.5

Nationalism and the consequent nationalizations of local churches were developments that the Church opposed for religious, cultural, and political reasons. Given the degree of control of the Church over the education of Christian pupils, it was unavoidable that the ideas of the West and the Enlightenment were filtered through the Orthodox prism before they reached the curricula of the various Church schools around the Balkans. Moreover, many of the Greek ‘Enlighteners’ were clerics themselves, and therefore, they either transmitted the teachings of Voltaire from their Orthodox point of view, or, when they did not, they were persecuted. The Patriarch himself published, in 1798, an anonymous pamphlet called Πατρική Διδασκαλία [Paternal Instruction], in which he claims that the rule of the Sultan over the Orthodox Christians is a will of God. Moreover, he suggested that Enlightenment “is a trick of the devil... while the so called political system of liberty may seem good at first glance, but it contains the spirit and the venom of Satan, which will lead peoples to loss and lawlessness” (Diamandouros 2002 [1978]:77).

This state of affairs created a tension between, what we would call, ‘soft Orthodox enlighteners’ who mainly lived in the territories of the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and their more radical Diaspora counterparts who lived in Western Europe. This tension would later be reflected in the political formations and ideological struggles, which emerged during and after the revolution. What is certain is that the Orthodox Church was an important part of the everyday life, customs, and political organization of Christian subjects in the times of the Ottoman Empire, and that, since it functioned in accordance with the Eastern Byzantine tradition and under the auspices of the Ottoman apparatus, it was reluctant to identify with western-bred nationalist movements.

The Church during the 1821-1829 War of Independence

Unlike what is still sometimes maintained in Greek political historiography (Yannaras 1992), the Orthodox Church was very reluctant to support the nationalist War of Independence. As we explained above, there were serious political, cultural, and religious reasons for that. The Orthodox establishment knew that its spiritual and political authority was put into question by local warlords, politicians, and Western-bred nationalists. Indeed, Patriarch Gregory V condemned the uprising and excommunicated the revolutionaries.

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(Kitromilides 1994:193), whiles the *Paternal Instruction* was published in Constantinople, a pamphlet which, as we have seen above, urged the Christians before the War of Independence to accept the authority of the Sultan, and denounced the ideas of liberty and civil disobedience as the works of devil and the atheist French Revolution. However, Gregory’s conservatism did not save him from decapitation by the Ottoman mob when the news about the massacre of Turks in Tripolitsa reached in Istanbul. His brutal killing turned him from a fierce critic of the revolution to one of its martyrs in the eyes of the Orthodox people, and, together with the support of low-ranking clerics, it served as a legitimizing factor for this very un-Orthodox war.

Besides, the revolutionaries could only legitimize their endeavour and thus mobilize the local population by presenting it as being in accordance with the will of God and the Orthodox dogma. This is clear in the sources of the time. For example, the revolution was often presented as the realization of a series of popular folklore myths which predicted the rebirth of the Byzantine Empire, the return of the ‘Race of Princes’ to the throne of Constantinople, and the resurrection of the last Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, Constantine Palaeologus, who had supposedly turned into stone after the fall of the ‘City’ in 1453. The most popular of these prophecies was one that claimed that a fair haired race will deliver the Christians from the evil of the Turkish yoke. *Φιλική Εταιρεία* [*Friendly Society*], the freemason-like group which played a seminal role in the organization of the revolution, purposefully built on these myths and repeatedly implied that the fair haired race (i.e. the Russians), will back the War of Independence (Kitromilides 1994:263-275). Hence, the revolution was presented as a Christian struggle against a Muslim oppressor.

An 1823 letter of the “minister of religion” of the second revolutionary government, to the bishops of the Cyclades islands is indicative of the effort to legitimize the War of Independence on Orthodox grounds:

> The Greek race, having suffered from the tyrants for almost four centuries, having been deprived from its right to self-government, having been scorned and mocked because it observed its sacred rules, has started an armed struggle against the infidel oppressors, in order to achieve political sovereignty and honour its Orthodox faith... may our Lord and Saviour be with us, and guide our decisions.

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In September 23, 1823, the head of the Greek revolutionary government, analysed the role of religion in public life, in a formal letter he also sent to the prelates of the Cyclades islands:

The role of the ministers of our national church is to enlighten our people, to spread the word of the Gospel, to set an example of virtue, to teach Greeks respect towards our sacred traditions... and to contribute to the creation of citizens who will be praiseworthy successors of their ancestors and will perform their holy duties, assigned to them by heaven.°

The "holy duties assigned by heaven", in which the author of the aforementioned letter refers, is the obligation to serve in the cause of the War of Independence, which is supposedly the will of God.

But why was this justification of revolution on religious grounds necessary? The answer to this question partially lies to what has been argued in the previous section. Throughout the years of the Byzantine, Frankish, and Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Church was the only institution that retained an extensive degree of civil and spiritual authority in the Balkan Peninsula. In the absence of a stable state and army, generation after generation of local peoples changed imperial rulers and local prelates, with the Church being the only stable point of reference as a source of authority and legitimacy. Moreover, since the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires isolated the local populations from the influence of historical, social, and intellectual developments which took place in Europe, Orthodoxy remained the only locus of cultural identification, and united the Christian subjects of the Empire under a set of common rituals, practices, customs, and rights, which formed the core of their identity. It is worth that the revolutionary government often used a sanctified language to address the people, or even threatened those who were not obeying its will, with religious retaliations. For example, the minister of religion issued a command in 1822, according to which, those who helped the bandit revolutionary

° Ibid., vol.10, p. 208.
Odysseus Androutsos will be excommunicated. Among other religious curses, he mentions the following:

In the name of our Lord, all those who cooperate with this unholy monster, this lawless enemy of our religion and our nation, will be excommunicated, and cursed, they will not be buried, and will be left rotting when they die.... They will meet the fate of Judas, and will wonder upon the earth like Cain.9

Further evidence of the Orthodox Christian solidarity during the initial stages of the struggle for independence can be found in the historical records of the time. Many of the protagonists of the revolution were not Greek speakers, while Rigas Feraios, its ideological father and a Hellenized Slav, argued for the formation of a multi-ethnic Christian Republic in which the Greek element will hold a seminal position. The political discourse of the revolutionary governments often implied that the Greek nation owes its existence to Orthodoxy:

The character, the customs, the ethos, the elegant language, the ancestral glory, and the name of our nation derive from our holy religion. We owe our very political existence and independence to our religion, since the Great Lord of Christians, who defends his Church, fights on our side against tyranny and blasphemy.10

Moreover, it is often forgotten that the War of Independence broke out simultaneously in mainland Greece, and the Danubian principalities, where Romanian-speaking populations were in majority. However, the revolution only survived in the southern parts of Greece (Peloponnese, the Cyclades islands, and Roumelis).

9 Ibid., vol. 14, p. 254 (Original text in Greek: Τον οποίον εν συνώματι Κυρίου Σαβαώθ, με ὅλους εκείνους δι' αυτού ἔχομεν ἀφωνισμένους, κατημένους, συγχώρητος καὶ ἀλάτους μετὰ θάνατον καὶ τιμωπαιόντως. Κληρονομησίαν... τὴν αγάπην τοῦ προδοτοῦ Ιουδαίας. Στενώντες εἴπονται καὶ τρέμοντες επὶ τῆς Γῆς ὡς ο Κάιν...).

10 Ibid., vol. 10, p. 207 (Original Text in Greek: Το ελληνικὸν ἑθος εἰς τὴν ιερὰν τοῦ θρησκείαν οφείλει τον χαρακτῆρα του, τα ἡθη του, τα ἔθη του, την προοιμία του εὐκλείαν καὶ το λαμπρὸν ὀνομά του. Εἰς την ιερὰν τοῦ θρησκείαν οφείλει τα σημερινὰς αριστείας του, την ανεξαρτησίαν καὶ την πολιτικὴν του ύπαρξιν, διὸ Μέγας ο θεός των χριστιανῶν, ὡς τοι διακήκατι των καὶ τὴν αγίαν τοῦ εὐκλείαν καὶ συμμάχεται μετὰ αὐτῶν κατὰ τῆς ανομίας καὶ τῆς σεβείας).
Finally, there was a further-more practical-reason which necessitated the support of the Church for the War of Independence. In poverty ridden regions, the—often fortified for fear of bandits and pirates—monasteries were important sources of funding for the war, while Sunday masses gave the opportunity for revolutionary indoctrination to illiterate local peoples. Indeed, despite the excommunication of the revolutionaries by the Patriarchate, many bishops and clergy in Peloponnesus, the southern part of the Greek mainland, joined the struggle:

There, Bishop Germanos of Old Patra distinguished himself in the capture of his city from the Turks; other bishops were imprisoned and died while in captivity in Tripoli. Many village priests (there were 2,400 in the Peloponnesus in 1821), since they were natural leaders of their communities, enthusiastically joined the armies which sought the expulsion of the Turks (Frazee 1977:130).

However, there were various problems regarding the support of the Church for the nationalist cause of the Greeks. First of all, this support could only be given at a local level, since, as we have already noted, it was not feasible for the ‘Great Church of Constantinople’, to officially support a nationalist and separatist struggle. Other autonomous Christian churches, like the church of Crete, tried to contain the spread of the War of Independence in their territories. The bishop of the province of Chania, in Crete, for instance, wrote the following letter to be read during the Sunday mass in every Church under his jurisdiction, in July 15, 1822:

Our Great master, the Sultan, has ordered me to reassure you that you should not be afraid. If you lay down your arms and swords and demonstrate your allegiance to him, he will do you harm. Even if you have participated in the revolution, and have realized your mistake, he will forgive you like a good father.11

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In other words, many officials and bishops of the Orthodox Church found it difficult to endorse the revolution, even if they wanted to. In addition to that, it gradually became evident that the struggle of independence could only be fought and won in —mainly— Greek-speaking regions. This was due to both tactical-strategic and socio-economic reasons, which lie beyond the scope of this essay. It thus became more and more a nationalist, rather than a social or religious struggle.

Therefore, even the local clergy, which also enjoyed a number of privileges under the Ottoman regime, began to doubt the cause. On the other hand, those church officials and clerics who joined the war had to come into conflict with the Patriarchate which remained faithful to the Sultan. Christos Yannaras also emphasizes the canonical problems which were caused by the revolution: The Patriarchate was unable to exercise control over the liberated regions and thus elect new bishops, arbitrate ecclesiastical disputes, or send holy Myron (holy oil), which is necessary for the baptism of Orthodox children (Yannaras 1992:262).

The 3rd National Assembly, which was convened in 1827, addressed the issue and decided that the Greek Church should not become autocephalous, but temporarily autonomous. The bishops who participated in the Assembly argued the following:

Since all of us, and above all the holy clergy of the Eastern Church, know no other mother than the Great Church, and no other head, other than the Patriarch of Constantinople, and, since his Holiness, Patriarch Gregory was sacrificed a few years ago in defence of faith and country, it is impossible for us to break apart from this Church, and so the Bishops who currently preach in Greece will govern our churches, according to our strength, without causing any schism or division in our spiritual and ecclesiastical unity [with the Church of Constantinople] (Yannaras 1992:264).

Nonetheless, this anomalous situation in which the spiritual leader of the revolutionaries was politically opposed to their struggle and subject to an enemy of the newborn state would later create problems to independent Greece and was finally resolved with the autocephaly of the Greek Church. The most important intellectual of the Greek Enlightenment, Adamantios Koraes, had pointed out the problem from as early as 1821:
The part of Greece which has been liberated thus far does not need anymore to recognize as ecclesiastical head the Patriarch of Constantinople for as long as Constantinople remains stained by the throne of the unholy tyrant, but needs to be governed by a Synod of priests, elected freely by the lay and the clergy, as it was besides happening in the ancient Church, and is still maintained in Russia which shares the same religion with Greece. For it is not fitting for the clergy of the liberated Greeks to obey in the commands of a Patriarch who is elected by a tyrant and is obliged to live under the sword of a tyrant (Yannaras 1992:265).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Orthodox tradition and way of life had to co-exist in the Greek kingdom with the modern and secular ideals of the West which were advanced by the philhellenic movement, the post-revolutionary Bavarian government and the western-bred intellectuals of the revolution: This ‘Hellenic’ “strand of modern Greek identity... posited classical Ελλάς (Hellas), in a central position in attempts to articulate a modernizing vision for the populations and territories in question. Informed by the intellectual force of the Western European Enlightenment and supported by its localized rearticulation in what has been called Neohellenic Enlightenment, this strand looked forward and backward: forward towards the establishment of a Hellenic state with clear European orientation, and backward towards the rediscovery/invention of a classical Greece that Western Europe, or more broadly Europe, claimed as one of its originary topoi, and that was, in addition, purged of the contaminating presence of the backward ‘oriental barbarism’ of the Ottoman Empire, and to a lesser extent of the memory of what was still viewed as Oriental Byzantium” (Ozkirimi & Sofos 2008:22). In that sense, the juxtaposition of Orthodoxy with modern politics turned out to be a necessary, but problematic political articulation, in the new framework, which was created as a result of the successful War of Independence.

Orthodoxy after the War of Independence, 1830-1864

As we have seen in the previous sections, there has been an ideological friction in the Greek-speaking world during the revolution. On the one hand, there was a population that defined its identity with reference to its religious persuasion, as well as with the rituals and practices which were associated
with this religious affiliation. On the other hand, nationalism and the spirit of the Enlightenment (including science and secularism) had come to Greece by Diaspora Greek-speaking intellectuals who were more detached from the Orthodox culture of the Ottoman East. And, in the middle of all this, were those in charge of drawing the ideological and political principles of the War of Independence who tried to reconcile this friction. Finally, one should always bear in mind that the War of Independence was legitimized in the eyes of romantics and neo-classicist Europeans on the basis of the ancient Hellenic heritage of Modern Greeks. Frederick Rosen summarizes the reasons for which the War of Independence drew public sympathy in England:

1. The birth of European civilization was indebted to the ancestors of Modern Greeks (who used similar alphabet and language), and therefore all European countries had to support the Greeks as a sign of recognition of this huge obligation.
2. Greeks were a Christian people who were fighting hard against the faithless Turks. Lack of support to the Greeks in their holy struggle meant that [Europe] would ignore its Christian duties.
3. Support towards Greece would lead to the creation of trade opportunities, not just with this new state, but with the wider Mediterranean region, since this would limit the influence of the Ottoman Empire (Rosen 1998:27-28).

The problems that these ideological frictions created in the nation-building process of the newborn Greek state became apparent from as early as 1827. In that year, the 3rd National Assembly attempted to delineate who is Greek and who is not. In article 6, of the constitution it produced, it concluded to the following criteria:

Greeks are:

a. All locals within the Greek territory who believe in Christ.
b. All the Christians who migrated from the Ottoman territories to our liberated land, in order to participate in the War of Independence, or to live here.
c. Everyone who has been born abroad to a Greek father...¹²

In any case, the destruction of the Ottoman navy in Navarino by the allied English, French, and Russian naval forces, that same year, opened the way for the creation of a geographically compact, but, de jure at least, independent Greece. However, it would not be an overstatement to argue that what the first Greek governor, Ioannis Kapodistrias, found when he came to Greece in 1828 was complete and utter chaos. Empty coffers, continuing battles with the Ottoman forces, a country run by local warlords and bandits, and a central government the authority of which did not extend beyond the gates of the capital, were just a few of the problems that the governor had to face when he accepted his post. Naturally, ecclesiastical issues did not feature high in his priorities. Nonetheless, the severed links between the Greek clergy and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the fact that the Patriarch did not recognize the existence of an independent Greece posed a problem for him, a problem which he unsuccessfully tried to solve. His efforts for a rapprochement with the Ecumenical Patriarchate were largely fruitless. However, despite the fact that he was a very religious man himself, he did adopt a set of secularizing measures in line with western European legal systems. For example, the creation of a proper judiciary system, which included courts of appeal, limited the authority of church tribunals. On the other hand, his policies which aimed at the improvement of the financial and educational situation of the Greek Church and clergy were fragmentary and short-lived (Frazee 1977:74).

After the assassination of the first Greek Governor, the ‘Great Powers’ of Europe decided to appoint Prince Otto of Bavaria as king of the Greeks. Clearly, king Otto and his Bavarian government took the neo-classicist side in the debate concerning Modern Greek identity. They transferred the capital from Nafplion to the historically symbolic city of Athens (which was then a mere village of not more than 4,000 people), they commissioned the construction of a series of impressive neo-classical buildings, and worked hard so as to create a legal framework for Greece similar to the one already established in Western European monarchies.

Within this general climate of modernization and westernization, the Bavarian regency tried to solve the aforementioned problem between the Greek Church and the Patriarchate along the lines and the philosophy of the Western model of church-state relations. In 1832, Otto wrote to his father: “If the heads of the Greek Church get involved into politics, by explicitly supporting a specific party, this could be dangerous for the monarch, because it would turn the whole clergy and the people against him. This problem may be circumvented if we create a governing body for the Church and place one
of the bishops of the country as its head. The head of this Synod will be like
the Speaker of our parliaments, meaning that he will not hold real executive
powers. The king will also have the authority to appoint new members on this
Synod, at regular intervals”.13

In other words, it was clear that Otto would strive to weaken the Russian
influence in Greece, which was mainly communicated by the Orthodox
Church, and consolidate royal authority within the borders of the new state
(Louvi 1977:11). In March 15, 1833, the Bavarians established a committee
that would analyse the current state of affairs in the Greek Church and suggest
ways to ameliorate its condition. The committee was led by the secretary of
state on religious and educational issues and the liberal bishop Theoclitos
Pharmakidis, both members of the English party. The commission unanimously
decided in its first meeting that “recognizes no other spiritual leader other than
its founder, Jesus Christ, and no other political leader than the king of Greece,
while it remains dogmatically united with all the Eastern Orthodox Churches”
(Karayannis 1997:13).

With a royal decree of 1833, the Eastern Orthodox Apostolic Church
of Greece was declared autocephalous and independent from the Ecumenical
Patriarchate. The attempt of the government to resolve the ecclesiastical issue
concluded to the following decisions:

1) The Church of the Kingdom of Greece does not recognize any other
spiritual leader other than the founder of the Church, Jesus Christ, while
its political head is the King of Greece, and it shall remain independent
of any other Church (Yannaras 1992:266-267).14

2) The Greek Orthodox Church is administered by a 5 members Synod,
while a royal representative participates in every meeting of this Synod.
Any decision taken in the absence of the royal representative is not valid.
The Greek Church retained only its spiritual and dogmatic bonds with
the other Orthodox Churches (Karayannis 1997).

It was clear that these views represented a westernized model of
ecclesiastical organization, and reflected the stance of the Bavarian government.
What is more important though, is that the seeds of the continuous intertwining
between the church and the state over the past two centuries rest in the

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aforementioned decisions. From the publication of this royal diktat onwards, the Greek Church was not allowed to retain any form of relationship with other Orthodox Churches (in Constantinople and/or Moscow), other than strictly dogmatic and spiritual.

The Institutional Consolidation of the Helleno-Christian Thesis

The new canonical law which established the autocephaly of the Greek Church was drafted by the Bavarian jurist and regent, Georg Ludwig von Maurer, with the valuable help and support of two like-minded Greek officials, Spyridon Trikoupis and Theocletos Pharmakidis. Especially the latter played a vital role in convincing both the bishops of the Kingdom as well as a fair number of refugee bishops from the Ottoman Empire that autocephaly was logical, necessary, and in accordance with the Orthodox tradition. John Petropoulos notes the “the arrangement concerning Church-state relations in Greece was directed by Maurer, viceroy responsible for ecclesiastical issues, education and justice. Maurer was a Protestant and the relevant decree was inspired by his own secular values and the example of Bavaria, where state authority was imposed on the functioning of both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches” (Petropoulos 1997 [1968]:217). We should also add that Maurer was himself the son of a Protestant pastor.

The precedent of the autocephaly of the Cypriot Church provided his arguments with additional support, while similar views had also been expressed by the most prominent Greek intellectual of the time, Adamantios Koraes. The first two articles of the royal decree concerning the autocephaly of the Greek Church read as follows:

**Article One**: The Orthodox Eastern Apostolic Church of the Kingdom of Greece, in spiritual matters recognizes no head other than the founder of the Christian faith, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, while in secular affairs it respects the authority of the King of Greece. It is autocephalous and independent of all other authority, but preserves perfect unity according to the doctrines professed by the Orthodox Eastern Churches.

**Article Two**: The highest ecclesiastical authority is entrusted, under the authority of the King, to a permanent Synod, entitled 'The Holy Synod of the Kingdom of Greece'. The King will determine by an organic decree of the Secretary of State who will exercise this authority, and under whom, as regards
this authority, the Synod will act. The Synod will hold its meetings at the seat of the Government and it will have its own seal, with a cross engraved on it exactly like that on the national arms and with the inscription ‘Holy Synod of Greece’ (Frazee 1977:113).

Moreover, the decree ordered the closing of all monasteries with less than six monks, the mandatory expulsion from monasteries of all trainee monks and all nuns aged under 40, and the nationalization of the estates of the closed monasteries (Yannaras 1992:272). Hence, in September 25, 1833, 412 out of the 545 monasteries were closed down and their estates and valuables were confiscated in order to fund the deprived farmers of the new state. Nonetheless, many commentators note that, given the extensive corruption of that time, it is doubtful whether the seized property and holdings were actually used for the intended purposes (Karayannis 1997).

Furthermore, the control of the state over church decisions was so firm that it is expectantly triggered fierce reaction. As we noted above, a royal delegate was to attend all meetings of the Holy Synod, while any decisions taken in his absence would be considered null and void. In fact, any Synodal decision required direct ratification by the king. Church officials, who disagreed with this unusual state of affairs, seized the opportunity given by the revolt of 1843, which forced the king to limit his powers with the establishment of a constitution. They asked the National Assembly to withdraw the autocephaly clause.

Their demands were not accepted, but some amendments were made. The first post-revolutionary Greek constitution of 1844 reaffirmed the authority of the king, but clarified that the church recognizes no one as its head other than its founder, and is spiritually united with the ‘Great Church of Constantinople’ and every other Orthodox Church (Mavromoustakou 1997:36). In addition to that, article 40 of the 1844 constitution required that the succeeding heirs to the Greek throne should be Christian Orthodox. The same provision was also established for the royal delegate to the Holy Synod.

In the following years, the Greek government attempted to normalize its tense relations with ecumenical throne. Finally, in June 29, 1850, the Patriarchate declared the autocephaly of the Greek Church (without however recognizing its previous status as autocephalous), on the condition that its administration will be carried out in accordance with the ‘Holy Canons’, without any state interference. The Patriarchate demanded that the election of bishops to the Holy Synod, as well as other, strictly internal, affairs will
not be subjected to state ratification (Mavromoustakou 1997:36). The Greek government accepted these demands and issued a new ecclesiastical charter in 1852 that limited the powers of the royal delegate - and the government - in the Holy Synod. That said, the royal delegate’s presence remained necessary for the ratification of Synodal decisions, while the king was still the one who appointed bishops, although his decision was limited by the suggestions of the Holy Synod. The charter was not revised until 1923, whilst its basic principles remain the same even today.

In 1863, King Otto was expelled from Greece, and he was replaced by Prince George of the Danish royal house of Glücksburg. The house reigned until 1973, when monarchy was abdicated in Greece. A new constitution was drawn in 1864, in which, however, the provisions regulating church-state relations remained as they were.

The ecclesiastical charter’s provisions obviously were related to the status Orthodox Church of Greece, which is also the main focus of this paper. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that not the entire geographical surface of modern Greece falls under the jurisdiction of the autocephalous Greek Church, which is limited to the territories of the first Greek state, with the additions of the Eptanese islands, Epirus and Thessaly. The island of Crete has its own semi-autonomous Orthodox Church. In the north of the country, there is the administratively autonomous monastic community of Mount Athos (Aghion Oros), while the ecclesiastical dioceses of the Dodecanese islands fall under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Finally, the territories that were annexed to the Greek state, during its century-long expansion, known as the ‘new territories’, have a different ecclesiastical status in comparison with the ‘old territories’, and their bishops are supposedly elected with the approval of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

With this ecclesiastical constitution the church continued the tradition of operating as a state department. The aforementioned royal decree brought it under the direct authority of the state and nationalized Orthodoxy in Greece, after the example of the Bavarian model. The essence and the spirit of this legal arrangement remain intact even in our epoch. In addition to that, the laws of the Greek kingdom provided for the religious indoctrination of young pupils in the Orthodox dogma. *The Holy Synod adopted the national arms as its symbol, and the state is using the sign of the cross as national arms.* However, this legal regime only explains one facet of Helleno-Christianism, i.e. the nationalisation of Orthodoxy. We now need to turn our attention, to its other facet, which is the sacralisation of nationalism.
The Ideological Consolidation of the Helleno-Christian Thesis

Unlike what is usually argued, the period of national identity formation in Greece was not characterized by the presence of only two opposing blocs: the modernizers and the traditionalists. In a sense, contemporary historians who analyze the ideological struggles of the period under investigation as a debate between “progressive modernizers” and “conservative traditionalists” seem to fall into the fallacy of anachronism. For how can the obvious differences between the vision of the Greek nation espoused by Rigas Feraios and the one espoused by Adamantios Koraes, fit into the “progress/tradition” dichotomy? Rather than that, as we shall see in the following pages, multiple- and equally nationalist- paradigms of Greek national identity were articulated by a plethora of agents: from a republican nationalism (Kairis, Koraes, and others), to an extremely theocratic conception of the nation (Oikonomos, Fanariots, and luben Orthodox). Between these two extremes, there were less radical, but equally nationalist views (Pharrnakidis, Enlighteners, Bavarians, etc). Other nationalist views also existed, which cannot easily fit to a ‘religious/ non-religious’ ideological spectrum (e.g. the Helleno-Ottoman position).

The basic difference between these competing notions of ‘Greekness’ was the weight that classical antiquity, and Orthodoxy should respectively have in the formation of national identity. As Ozkirimli and Sofos rightly argue, the ‘Hellenic’ narrative of Greek national identity was characterized by a serious inconsistency: “the linear past of the nation was invariably disrupted, as Koraes and his disciples could not account for the severing of modern Greece’s link to classical antiquity that arose from the establishment of a Christian (not Hellenic) Byzantine Empire, the ‘dark’ centuries of the Middle Ages, and the often ‘unrational’ conduct of the Church, the clergy and other elites that dominated the Rum millet of the Ottoman Empire” (Ozkirimli & Sofos 2008:82). On the other hand, “the Orthodox Church, despite its ambivalence regarding the Greek national(ist) project still had influence on local societies and Orthodoxy had permeated the realm of everyday life” (Ozkirimli & Sofos 2008:83). This tension between the main pillars of Greek national identity was reflected in the political discourses of the time.

For example, Bishop Theocletos Pharmakidis was the advisor of the Bavarians in ecclesiastical issues and a champion of Greek nationalism. His opponents accused him of surrendering the Orthodox Church to the authority of a heterodox ruler (king Otto), while his supporters communicated their views through the popular newspaper Αθήνα [Athena] (Ozkirimli & Sofos...
Undoubtedly, the royal decree of autocephaly, which, in essence, adopted every single one of his suggestions, was his greatest moment and a personal triumph. Pharmakidis’ main opponent was Father Constantine Oikonomos, who challenged autocephaly both on theological and political grounds. The former called the latter ‘Russian’, while the latter responded by calling Pharmakidis ‘crypto-protestant’, through the like-minded newspaper Αὐών [Aeon] (Matalas 2002). The Patriarchal Tome of 1850 which recognized the autocephaly of the Greek Church on the condition that it would remain dogmatically united with the Patriarchate was perhaps his only consolation for what he considered to be a new schism in Orthodoxy.

The main problem that the researcher of this period has to face is the absence of any data that would count the public’s response to these ideological antagonisms. Nonetheless, the fact that the views of the opposing ideologies were represented by newspapers, demonstrates that the issue ranked high in everyday public discourse. Besides, the ecclesiastical dispute became the excuse of a popular revolt during that era against the Bavarian government. The revolt was led by a monk known as Papoulakos, whose political position without a doubt expressed a fundamentalist Orthodox political outlook. Papoulakos political discourse disputed the rule of law, which, in his view, was much less important than the Orthodox preaching:

Our law of Christ has been written by four evangelists, seven ecumenical and eleven local synods, and eleven thousand martyrs (Yannaras 1992:291).

The fact that Papoulakos’ revolt challenged the legitimacy of the Bavarian king and took the combined forces of the Greek army and navy to put down is illustrative of the penetration of Orthodox politics in the Greek culture of that epoch. Similar extremist Orthodox viewpoints continued to co-exist in parallel with mainstream politics throughout the course of the 19th century (Matalas 2002).

All of these nationalisms shared some common nodal points in their discourse: They all believed more or less to the superiority of the Greek nation and the Greek language at least in the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor, the need to hegemonize the Balkans with an educated class of Greek speakers, and the need to expand the Greek state. The first elected Greek Prime Minister, Ioannis Kolettis, stated in a famous speech he gave in 1844: “Due to its geographical location, Greece is in the centre of Europe, having the East in its right, and the
West in its left, and its destiny has been to enlighten the West with its fall and to regenerate the East with its rebirth”. It is quite interesting that, during this period, there were three major political parties in Greece: the Russian party, the French party, and the English party, each with a different view of the ‘nation’s destiny’, and each representing the interests of a powerful European nation with different religious convictions and arrangements in its church-state relations.

Despite the existence of some common ground between the aforementioned nationalist imaginaries, there were undoubtedly important differences among them that necessitated either a synthesis or the eventual dominance of a particular national narrative. Republican nationalists like the renowned Greek enlightener Adamantios Koraes argued for the creation of a state in the model of western European standards and a national identity with particular reference to the ‘classical heritage’ of modern Greece. On the other hand, more traditionalist voices in the Greek society, mainly supporters of the Russian party, emphasized the importance of the Byzantine and Eastern tradition, and promoted a Slavic model of political organization. It is worth mentioning that very rarely have the intellectuals of that epoch questioned the place of Orthodoxy in Greek political and social culture.

The Church was also ideologically divided. While the patriarchate in Constantinople was usually in the Russian side, the Holy Synod in Greece was controlled by and expressed the views of the Bavarian government. However, even the patriarchate changed its position several times as a response to Russian policy, and appointments of new Patriarchs. The point here is that there was not at any time in Greece, during this period, a significant cosmopolitan, non-expansionist, and progressive political movement of modernizers. Such views would not even be imaginable by the majority of people, let alone legitimate, in the newly founded Greek state. Moreover, there was not a unified Church policy, or a single source of an ‘underdog’ Eastern oriented culture. Concepts, such as “the East”, “Orthodoxy”, “the West”, “Byzantium”, “nation”, etc. acquired different meanings and place within different discourses. The most peculiar example of such discursive ambiguities can be found in the word “genos”, which came to denote, under different discourses, anything from “race”, to the “Hellenic Volk”, and from Greek speaking populations, to the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire. In short, the ideological horizon of Greek political culture during this period was vague. There was not a single source or a single type of nationalism, but instead many competing nationalisms. Within this context of political, social and discursive struggles, a particular national imaginary attained a hegemonic position in Greek society.
This hegemonic form of nationalist discourse was structured around a series of nodal propositions: a) there is a unified history of one Greek nation starting from the pre-Homeric era, through to Classical Greece, the Hellenistic epoch, the Byzantium, and continuing in modern Greece. b) The nation is bound together by geography, history, language, and religion. c) Being Orthodox Christian is an almost necessary prerequisite for being Greek. d) The Greek nation is superior to almost any other nation in the world since Greeks are the heirs of almost all the great civilizations of the West (Ancient Greek, Hellenistic/Alexander the Great, Eastern Roman/Byzantium). Hence, Helleno-Christian nationalism was (and still is) a comprehensive political discourse which claims that Greek national identity is based on two pillars: the ancient Hellenic cultural heritage, and Orthodox Christianity. This unreservedly cultural form nationalism managed to transcend party and class differences, to legitimate government policies, to constitute political orthodoxy and to define publicly accepted social behaviours.

But why and how this happened? Our contention here is that the redeployment of Orthodoxy in a nationalist context was essential since religion was an indispensable part of the everyday life, traditions and customs of the Greek society. It was therefore the primary cultural material upon which national solidarity could be based. On the other hand, the Hellenic heritage of modern Greeks was both a necessary reference to a glorious past for the people of the newborn state, as well as a reason for the philhellenic sympathy towards the Greek cause in Western Europe. Hence, the fusion between religion and nationalism, classical Greece and Byzantine Empire, provided Greek irredentism with a valuable arsenal of arguments, demonized the enemy (i.e. the Ottoman Empire which conquered Constantinople and destroyed the Byzantine civilization), and offered a coherent national narrative which became the basis of national identity.

The most important intellectual resources in the effort to construct a Helleno-Christian national history were to be found in the traditional nationalist sciences, that is history and folklore studies. Zambelios, the most prominent Greek folklorist, spent his academic life at pains to prove the ancient roots of traditional songs and customs and to reveal the ‘rich cultural heritage’ of modern Greeks. In his own words, the aim of his research was to “uncover the fundamental unity of the Byzantine state, to shed light into its culture, to use the methods of historical and philosophical research in order to discover the meaning of Greekness” (Zambelios 1857). Paparrigopoulos, on the other hand, represents a classic example of Romantic historian. Educated in the
motherland of romanticism, Germany, he became a professor of history at the
University of Athens. He wrote the definite ‘History of the Greek Nation’, a work which can be characterized as the epitome of Helleno-Christianism. According to this version of history, there is an uninterrupted ‘Odyssey’ of the Greek people which starts from the mythical and pre-historic times, and it will end with the realization of their destiny, which is none other than a return to the greatness of the Ancients: “unlike all other nations, the Greek nation developed a civilization immediately after its birth in the ancient times. This does not mean that it appeared in the face of the earth in the same form that it has today, but that it had a remarkable culture long before we learn about it through the epics of Iliad and Odyssey”. Paparrigopoulos argued that the Christian Byzantine Empire was an indispensable part of the Greek identity. In 1878, he wrote: “It is an honour for Greece that produced such a remarkable civilization like Byzantium... But, without the Byzantine Empire, there would be no Greek nation, nor anyone left in the world to speak the Greek language”.

Moreover, according to Paparrigopoulos, “medieval Hellenism deserves to be called Greek. It is true that the history of our people from the 5th century A.D. to the 13th century A.D, is not full of great deeds. But that is always the case with nations”. The establishment of a system of universal education played a crucial role in disseminating these ideas, and Professor Paparrigopoulos assumed the role of the ‘national historian’, despite the fact that many other historians in his time challenged his views. In fact, Greek children are taught in schools today the historical schema of Paparrigopoulos, which divides the history of the Greek nation into an ancient, a medieval and a modern period.

In terms of state politics, Helleno-Christianism was expressed through the ‘Megali Idea’, foreign policy dogma which became hegemonic in the Greek society and pushed Greek governments until 1922 towards an expansionist foreign policy. It aimed at the liberation of the ‘unredeemed lands’ which used to belong to the Byzantine Empire and in which Greek-speaking Orthodox populations continued to live. Before coming to a catastrophic end with the Asia Minor disaster, the Megali Idea undermined any prospect for friendly relations between Greece and its neighbours. It served to solidify national

17 Constantinos Paparrigopoulos, Ibid.
18 Vangelis Panagopoulos, Ibid.

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identity against 'constitutive others', enemies against which the Helleno-Christian Greek self was defined.

The Church in the 20th Century

The course of Church-state relations throughout the twentieth century up until the fall of the military junta in 1974 is beyond the scope of this study, since the legal, social and political arrangements that had already taken place in the period under investigation in the previous sections of this paper did not go through significant changes. The nodal points of Helleno-Christian nationalism remained unaltered. Even a sketchy account of the facets of Helleno-Christian nationalism in the period following 1864 supports this conclusion:

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Queen Olga attempted to publish a translation of the New Testament in Modern Greek, since the original text, written in a Hellenistic language was almost incomprehensible to the majority of the population. Her intention provoked a chain reaction in Greek society that ended with student rallies, the interference and condemnation of the translation by the ecumenical Patriarchate, and the resignation of the Athens archbishop. As a result, the constitution of 1911 included a clause that prevented the translation of the Bible without a previous authorization of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

During the early decades of the 20th century, Greece carried a series of irredentist wars, which led to its significant territorial expansion. The basic legitimizing factor for these wars was the Orthodox religion of the populations of the “unredeemed lands”. For example, the ecclesiastical dispute between Bulgaria and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople played a significant role in the short “cold war” between Greece, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, over the control of the region of Macedonia (1904-1908). A report by Pavlos Melas, officer of the Greek Artillery Corps, who was one of the protagonists of the “Macedonian struggle” is indicative of the role of religion in the aforementioned dispute: “Having summoned the villagers, and, in particular, the village elders, I suggested to them to return to Orthodoxy [the Patriarchate]... they assured me that they never embraced the Schism [between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarches]... I then told them to that I demand, first, that they take an oath of faith to Orthodoxy... Also [I ordered them] to
petition within ten days to be sent a priest and a teacher of Greek".19

A few years later, during the First World War, the Church became actively involved in the national discord between the supporters of liberal Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and those loyal to the king. In December 1916, the Archbishop of Athens, Theocletos, excommunicated Venizelos, cursed him, and asked the people of Athens to “throw the stone of anathema” (Karayannis 1997:34). When Venizelos finally prevailed, he ordered the arrest of the Archbishop and those churchmen who supported the “anathema”.

In 1923, a new ecclesiastical charter institutionalized the right of the Orthodox Church of Greece to “approve” all school textbooks. Undoubtedly, the new assignment related to a social and political dispute that divided Greek society: a new generation of intellectuals advocated the use of demotic Greek language and the replacement of the archaic “official” dialect, known as *katharevousa*. Their demand met strong resistance by conservative politicians and academics, who sought to “protect” the linguistic heritage of ancient Greece. The dispute was only resolved several decades later, when, in 1976, demotic Greek was finally adopted as the official state language. Throughout these years, the church remained a staunch opponent of linguistic reform. At the same time, the Holy Synod was recognized as the sovereign governing body of the Church, although the presence of a royal envoy was required in all of its sessions.

After the German invasion, the archbishop of Athens, Damaskenos, kept a moderate stance towards the Nazis, while, at the same time, several bishops joined the resistance movement. Some of them, like the bishop of Kozani, attempted to mediate between nationalist and communist guerillas, in order to solidify the unity of the anti-Nazi partisan groups, which were active throughout the occupation period in the mountainous regions of Greece. Others, like the bishop of Helia, Antonius, joined the communist “National Liberation Front” (EAM). Antonius was even appointed local guerilla captain in his parish. Another prominent cleric, Seraphim, joined the nationalist guerilla group EDES. Seraphim was to become archbishop of Athens after the fall of the military junta, in 1974.

The ideological frictions which divided the resistance movement did not die out after the liberation from the Nazis. On the contrary, political conditions deteriorated even further, eventually leading to a civil war between nationalists and communists. Although some members of the clergy who had initially

joined the resistance against the Nazis kept a moderate stance towards the left, the Orthodox establishment remained loyal to the right-wing governments of the time.

The civil war ended with the defeat of communist forces and signaled the beginning of 25 years of oppression for the Greek left. The communist party was outlawed, and several thousand communists were sent to exile in small or deserted islands of the Aegean Sea. At the same time, army officers formed secret societies aiming at the establishment of a military junta. The most active of these societies, known as IDEA, was in direct contact with the archbishop of Athens, Spyridon, and in 1951, they even suggested that he should be placed at the head of a military government (Karayannis 1997:108). The plans for a military dictatorship eventually succeeded in 1967.

It is also worth pointing out that Orthodoxy has never been stripped of the privileged status of the “established” religion in Greece, in any of the constitutions of the 20th century. In essence, the institutional arrangement which was reached after the War of Independence remained unaltered until our days. Thus, all of the Greek constitutions (1822, 1823, 1827, 1844, 1864, 1911, 1927, 1952, and 1974) nominally protected freedom of religion and consciousness. Until 1974, this right was included in one of the first two articles of the Constitution, which referred to the position of Orthodoxy as the established religion. The most characteristic example of this conflation is the Constitution of 1927, the first article of which states that Orthodoxy is the established religion. Nowadays, freedom of religion is a separate clause in the second part of the constitution (the human rights part) and it is not associated with Orthodoxy. Nonetheless, the legal status of the Church of Greece throughout the 20th century not only meant that it enjoyed special privileges, but also confirmed the continuing hegemony of Helleno-Christian nationalism in Greek politics.20

Some jurists dispute this conclusion and suggest that the constitutional articles on the established religion merely ascertain a fact – the fact that the majority of Greeks are Orthodox Christians. Nonetheless, this view seems to ignore that the function of constitutions is regulatory and proscriptive. Constitutions do not normally “inform” the public on demographic tendencies.21

To conclude, throughout the 20th century, the Church remained actively

20 For a more detailed list of the legal privileges of the Church in Greece, see Georgopoulos 1998:165-202, 531-544.
21 For more details on the legal debate regarding the status of the Orthodox Church in Greece, see Chrysogonos 2002 and Mavrias 2004.
involved in Greek politics, and defended its privileged place in the public sphere. The political developments of this period are beyond the scope of the thesis at hand. However, as it became obvious, Helleno-Christian nationalist was a significant factor in the most important of them (the national discord between supporters of Venizelos and royalists, the irredentist wars of the early 20th century, the struggle for the control of Macedonia, the Civil War, and the rise of the military junta). Finally, the institutional consolidation of the Helleno-Christian thesis (reflected in the legal order of Greece), has never been seriously challenged so far.

Conclusions

Nationalism is not an ideology, which aims to mobilize certain social groups for achieving specific political goals. It is a discourse upon which depends the very existence of the groups that we came to call “nations”. To draw an analogy with another comprehensive doctrine, Marxism does not mobilize proletarians. It “creates” proletarians, in the sense that if this discourse attains a hegemonic position within a given social milieu, then a multitude of subjects will self-identify with the category of the “proletariat”, which does not otherwise “exist” as such, outside the symbolic universe of Marxism. Similarly, the fact that the Greek nation exists is an outcome of Greek nationalism, the discourse which claims that people who exhibit certain characteristics are Greeks.

Obviously, most of these characteristics are the rooted in pre-modern ethno-cultural materials. This ethnic ‘fabric’ is in turn filtered through a process of ‘streamlining’, ‘rationalization’, and politicization, by nationalists. However, one should always keep in mind that the process of producing “nations” out of “ethnie” is always political and subject to historical contingencies. In John Hutchinson’s words “the point here is that one cannot deduce from the prior existence of ethnie that they necessarily have any causal status in the formation of modern national societies. To do so without empirical examination is to make uncritical assumptions about continuities between premodern ethnic and modern national identities and to fall into the post hoc propter hoc fallacy”.

Greek nationalism emerged out of the crisis of the previous social order. It unified subjects through the demarcation of boundaries, the discursive construction of a ‘we’. Under its auspices, it accommodated a set of demands,

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not very different from the demands of other nationalist doctrines around Europe. In short, Greek nationalism argued that Greeks are different from other social groups in the Ottoman Empire, and therefore have the right to secede from the rule of the Sultan and govern themselves as they wish.

The obvious question, which emerged was why some people were ‘Greeks’, and not members of the collectivities which already existed in the institutional order of the Ottoman Empire. What made Greeks different from ‘Christians’, ‘Ottomans’, and ‘Romans’? This was a contentious issue; the process of its resolution was long and lasted long after the end of the Greek War of Independence. However, those who initially espoused the ideology of Greek nationalism and carried out the struggle for the achievement of its political and social goals defined as Greeks all ‘natives’ who ‘believed in Christ’. The term ‘natives’ would later become a source of tension, in both Greek and Cypriot politics. Nonetheless, the reference to Christ left little room for doubt that religion was a factor of seminal importance for the demarcation of the boundary between ‘Greeks’ and ‘Others’, in early Greek nationalism.

A nodal argument of this paper is that Orthodoxy was the basic cultural resource of the ethno-religious community of the millet-i-Rum in the Ottoman Empire. This cultural resource was politicized to legitimize the claim of nationalists that the millet-i-Rum was actually the Greek nation and ought to be sovereign. Consequently, Greek nationalism may be a modern discourse, but the symbolic ‘material’ for its articulation into a coherent and convincing narrative was to be found in traditional pre-modern myths, practices and rituals.

Anthony Smith has brought our attention to this interplay between the modern and the pre-modern, in a very productive way. He argued out that modernists, i.e. those who share “a belief in the contingency of nationalism and the modernity of the nation”, must be right. Nevertheless, the modernists do miss something. They cannot explain the durability and salience, the depth and longevity, of national identifications, which cannot emerge ex nihilo: “Hence the need for a type of analysis that will bring out the differences and similarities between modern national units and sentiments and the collective cultural units and sentiments of previous eras, those that I shall term ethnie” (Smith 1986:13). In Smith’s schema what is thus needed is an “intermediate position between ‘perennialism’ and ‘modernism’ [able to capture] the often subtle relationships between modern nations and older ethnie” (Smith 1986:17). Indeed, the author of this paper agreed with Smith that the modern nation is constructed out of materials that originate from pre-existing ethnic and cultural identifications and practices.
However, this essay was not a mere application of Smith’s ethnosymbolism theory to the cases of Greek and Cypriot nationalism. On the contrary, Smith’s valuable insight brings a set of new questions into play. The pre-modern ethnic and cultural elements are also the products of social, historical construction – a construction that took place in earlier centuries and went through a successful process of sedimentation and re-activation. In that sense, we seem to need something more to make sense of the attachment of people both to the nation and to its ethnic fabric.

When it comes to the first issue, we underlined that the heavy politicization of the Church is not a new phenomenon. As we have seen throughout the preceding sections, it has played an active political role in the Balkan region, for the last 1600 years. It was a point of reference for the Christian subjects of both the Byzantine Emperors and the Ottoman Sultans. Obviously, the politicization of religion is not unique in the regions under investigation in this paper. Nonetheless, Orthodoxy was unique in its ability to compare and contrast the believers and the non-believers. Greek nationalists argued, rather convincingly, that the believers formed a collective entity, which was oppressed by another collectivity, the Ottomans; hence the need to unite and revolt.

The argument was met with considerable criticism. On the one hand, the leaders of the Orthodox Church in Constantinople never succumbed to the idea that religious differences justified a revolution. Besides, the Patriarchate was actually a department of the Ottoman apparatus. At the same time, competing nationalist paradigms placed much more emphasis on language, which was seen as a proof that the Greek speakers of the Ottoman Empire were heirs of ancient Greeks. However, no intellectual or senior political figure of the time ever challenged the plain fact that all those who were called to arms and demanded independence from the Sultan were Orthodox Christians. On the other hand, not all of them were Greek-speakers, nor everyone could identify with Classical Athens.

The debate continued after the achievement of independence, via two simultaneous and intertwined processes. During the process of modernization, the newly founded Greek state attempted to limit the powers that the Church enjoyed under the Ottoman administrative system. A by-product of this policy was the fact that the Church was nationalized, despite its protests. This meant that its governing body, the Holy Synod, was placed under the authority of the state. Even canonical and religious issues are still being resolved by the ministry of Education and Creeds in Greece, which is officially, a Christian state.
Moreover, the subsequent development of Greek nationalism consolidated the place of Orthodoxy, through the Helleno-Christian argument: there is one unified and unique Greek civilization which began in the pre-Homeric years, survived the Roman occupation, and was revived during the Orthodox Byzantine era. Orthodoxy preserved and protected this civilization during the Ottoman years and led the way for the revolution. Despite the fact that the Helleno-Christian argument cannot be supported by historical or sociological evidence, it is still a hegemonic ideology in Greece. This was proven during the identity cards crisis (1999-2001), as well as repeated social surveys.

In other words, the “Orthodox Eastern Apostolic Church of Greece” enjoys the status of the established state religion in Greece, while at the time that this paper was being written, there was not any demonstration of political will to change in the constitutional place of the Church. Ecclesiastical and secular authorities were brought together, and the right of the State to intervene in the internal affairs of the ‘autocephalous’ Greek Church was institutionalized. At the same time, the Church obtained an important political and ideological role and retained some of its Ottoman legal and political privileges. At a social and cultural level, Orthodoxy was recognized as an integral part of Greek identity, and this idea was reflected in official and unofficial public discourse, historiography, education, folklore studies, literature, poetry, architecture, as well as in everyday practices, and customs.

The autocephalous Greek Church has acted in the recent Greek history not only as a state-funded institution, but also as an ideological and legitimating mechanism of the state, which has been ‘blessing’ governmental decisions, in exchange for special its privileged position in the Greek legal order. The Greek Church has come to understand itself as the guardian of tradition and national identity, and the expression of the ‘true’ Greek spirit. This myth has appealed to the Greek public.

Since the declaration of the autocephaly of the Greek Church in 1833, the relationships between the Greek state and the Church have been relatively harmonious (after a short ‘adaptation’ period), within a legal context of subordination of the ecclesiastical power of the Church to the secular power of the state. The Church played an active role in supporting, through its influence to the people, state decisions, and augmenting popular feelings of national solidarity and nationalism in the face of external ‘threats’ and internal dissents. This congruent cooperation amongst the Church and the State started disintegrating in the beginning of the 1980s when the center-left ‘Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement’ (PASOK) came to power. Since its first years in office,
PASOK attempted to introduce a series of secularizing measures (e.g. civil marriage and civil divorce), which were perceived by the Church as direct attack against its hegemonic position in the Greek national life.23

The relationships between the Church and the State further deteriorated when the dynamic and charismatic Archbishop Christodoulou succeeded archbishop Seraphim as head of the Greek Church in 1998. The decision of the socialist government to erase religion from the identity cards data set the ground for a direct confrontation which lasted for more than a year. Despite the church reactions, which included demonstrations, a ‘referendum’, and frequent media interventions, the desired results for its archbishop were not achieved. Nonetheless, the populist politicization of his discourse and actions had changed the tradition of subordination of the ecclesiastical views to the authority of the state. Even though the major opposition party - Nea Democratia - supported the Church demands, the government and the president of the republic were not willing to compromise, and new identity cards in Greece do not include sensitive private data like religion, profession, or place of residence. It was a victory for the modernizers, which, however, did not prevent the church from making further political interventions. In other words, the period starting with the enthronement of Christodoulou in 1998, has admittedly marked a radical change in church-state relations.

In other words, Helleno-Christian nationalism is the comprehensive political discourse which claims that Greek national identity is based on two pillars: the ancient Hellenic cultural heritage, and Orthodox Christianity. A third pillar was occasionally added, depending on the specific historical circumstances (e.g. “irredentism”, during the Asia Minor war, “language” during the great dispute between the advocates of the demotic idiom and the proponents of katharevousa, or “geography” during the struggle for Enosis). Nonetheless, ancient Greece and Orthodoxy always remained constant points of reference.

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23 However, the popularity of the Church did not allow to any of the post-1974 Greek Governments to proceed to radical measures such as “disestablishment”, or to permanently solve the issue of the Church property, despite the fact that there were relevant discussions among academics and politicians during the two constitutional reforms of 1986 and 2000.
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