**"The Religious Factor in the Construction of Europe:
Greece, Orthodoxy and the European Union"**

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Abstract

(Research in Progress)

After Greek independence and the birth of the modern Greek State, in an effort to combine both the ancient and Byzantine heritage of Greece, the term "Helleno-(Orthodox) Christianity" was used in order to represent the historical and cultural continuity of ancient Greece, through Byzantium, to modern Greece. This constitutes part of the richness of Greece's dual heritage but is also a source of ambiguity in positioning contemporary Greece between East and West. Today, Greece remains the only Christian Orthodox member-state of the European Union and acts as a bridge between the European Union and Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe.

The focus of this ongoing 2 year research project (Leverhulme Research Grant awarded in March 2003) is the recent controversy in Greece on whether religion should continue to appear on national identity cards, within the larger context of Greek Orthodoxy as a possible factor of integration or resistance towards the European Union. The recent identity cards conflict illustrates how today Orthodoxy remains an inherent part of the historical, cultural and national identity of contemporary Greece. Furthermore, the conflict reveals how the Greek Church can act as an alternative institutional pressure group in expressing growing social insecurities, as a result of the disparity between rapid economic progress and a somewhat sluggish social development, and popular ambivalence with regard to increasing European Union integration and ongoing trends of globalisation.

A preliminary analysis of the identity cards conflict reveals three key research questions to be further investigated. First, although, the identity cards conflict confirms the historic link between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State, it also reveals the tensions within this partnership. Second, as a result of immigration, there are increasing pressures for Greece to evolve from a 'monocultural' nation to a multicultural society. Therefore, the assumed link between citizenship and religion and the assumption that being Greek means being an Orthodox Christian has come under question. Finally, the 'Helleno-Christian' link in contemporary Greek identity encompasses inherent tensions between, Orthodox traditionalism and growing trends of secularization between tradition and modernity, between Greece's eastern and western heritage, and between its national and European identity. Therefore, the role of Orthodoxy in Greece's relations with the European Union and the

increasingly important role of Orthodoxy in view of European Union enlargement (which may include additional Orthodox countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania), remain important and timely but as yet understudied topics.

The identity cards controversy will be analysed primarily through a content analysis of the press. The proposed research will compare the key issues, prevalent opinions and arguments for or against the mention of religion on identity cards drawn from an extensive body of press articles from mainstream Greek and foreign (French and English) newspapers.   Public documents issued by the Greek State and the Church, existing surveys and interviews with selected individuals will provide additional data with which to complement the material emerging from the analysis of newspaper comment.

This paper[1] presents the key results of a pilot study conducted as part of a two-year research project (funded by The Leverhulme Trust) that is currently in progress. The focus of the research is the highly mediatised conflict in Greece on whether religion should continue to appear on national identity cards. The Greek case provides an instructive example of the significance of the religious factor and the role of Orthodoxy and national identity, themselves interrelated, in Greece's international relations and position in the world. The identity cards conflict is analysed within the larger context of Greek Orthodoxy as a possible factor of integration or resistance towards the European Union.

I.   The resonance of the Helleno-Christianity in modern Greek identity

What are the historical, cultural, political and other features that differentiate Greeks and Greece from the rest of Europe ? The image of Greek collective identity and the question of what it means to be Greek today is not a recent, nor a new one. These questions relate to a variety of political and cultural aspects of modern Greek history. The political and spiritual role of Orthodoxy during the last few centuries, more particularly during and after the movement of Greek independence from Ottoman domination is of particular interest. The multiethnic citizens of the Byzantine Empire and the diverse Orthodox populations which lived under the Ottoman empire were defined primarily through their faith (Mackridge 2002 ; Yiannaras 1992). The Orthodox Church was recognized as the secular and religious representative of the Orthodox *millet*. Quite apart from its civil authority over the administration of the *millet*, the Orthodox Church was the spiritual authority responsible for

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[1] The writing of this paper is still in progress; bibliographic references and citations are not fully completed.

the preservation of the collective identity (language, faith, etc.) of the Orthodox and Greek communities (Mackridge 2002 ; Yiannaras 1992). After Greek independence and the creation of the modern Greek state, towards which the Greek Church was initially hostile[2], the Greek Church became autocephalus and independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople in 1833. Therefore, the creation of the Church of Greece coincided historically with the birth of the modern Greek state (1827).

In the late 18th century and after the Greek War of independence a central question that emerged was how to define the Greek nation in a post-classical, post-Byzantine and post-Ottoman period. The debate turned into a socio-political and ideological clash, which opposed the liberal ideas of Enlightenment of the West to those of the Church and the Orthodox tradition in the East[3]. The effort to create a synergy between the ancient and Byzantine heritage of Greece produced an amalgam of classical Hellenism and Byzantine Christianity giving birth to the notion of "Helleno-Christianity"[4]. In Greek historiography "Helleno-Christianity" became a term used by intellectuals to represent the historical and cultural continuity of ancient Greece, through Byzantium, into modern Greece (Makrides 1991 ; Tsoukalas 1993, 1999).

The term "Helleno-Christianity", which coined the bonds between Hellenism and Orthodoxy, is an all-encompassing concept embracing not only culture, but also a larger historical, intellectual and spiritual heritage that has contributed to shape modern Greek identity up to this day. Although Helleno-Christianity has become synonymous with Helleno-Orthodoxy, it is Helleno-Orthodoxy more specifically that has played a significant role in modern Greek identity. It is on this particular point that the Church of Greece continues to justify its legitimacy in Greek society, insisting on its active participation in the construction

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[2] Being fearful of the consequences for the Church itself and for Orthodox Christians, the Church originally attempted to discourage or at least delay the Greek uprising in 1821 (Runciman 1968). Although, the Greek revolution was first proclaimed in 1821 by a bishop, the Metropolitan of Patras, the Church overall and with few exceptions, remained initially hostile to the uprising, as independence would mean a loss of its privileged authority (Woodhouse 1986).
[3] For a brief historical overview of the clash between the intellectuals of Greek Enlightenment and the Church (Orthodox Patriarchate) see T. Anasstassiadis, 1996: *Religion et Identite Nationale en Grece. Nation Orthodoxe ou Orthodoxie Nationaliste: A Propos du Debat au sujet de la mention de l'appartenance confessionnelle sur la carte d'identite grecque*, Memoire de DEA., Paris: IEP.

[4] For the historical context and development of the "Helleno-Christian" adjective, see Peter Mackridge "Cultural Difference as National Identity in Modern Greece", 2002, unpublished paper (the same author refers to K. Th. Dimara's introductions to K. Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous* (1st version 1853), Athens: 1970 and *Prolegomena*, Athens: 1970) and T. Anasstassiadis, 1996.
[5] The partnership between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State and, thus, the identification of Greek identity with Orthodoxy, continued throughout the 20th century, even in more unfortunate periods in Greek history, such as the dictatorship from 1967 to 1973. During that time the Church was drawn into the so-called "moral regeneration" of the Greek nation. The military regime promoted a "Greece of Christian Greeks" consisting of a union between Church, Nation and anti-communist ideology (Venizelos 2000 ; Mackridge 2002) ; this was essentially an undemocratic and distorted interpretation of Helleno-Christianity and Helleno-Orthodoxy.

of the modern Greek nation and on Helleno-Orthodoxy acting as an adhesive body holding together the national unity of Greece.

The Helleno-Orthodox bond was at work as early as the late 19th century with the identitification of the Greek Nation with Christian Orthodoxy. The political aspirations of the Greek nationalist movements of Greek irredentism were encapsulated in the *Megali Idea*, which attempted to bring together the Church, the Greek Nation and their Byzantine past, for the political revival of the Byzantine Empire and Greece's expansion to its pre-Ottoman territories (Manitakis 2000). As a result, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek State were drawn together in the political upheavals of the Greek nation throughout the 20th century, which cemented the politicisation of the Church of Greece[5].

Today the linkage between national identity and religious tradition in Greece, namely the Helleno-Christian legacy, is still echoed in the current social, political and cultural life of Greece. The bonds of Greek society and Orthodoxy are maintained through a variety of institutions (Church, State, Education) and cultural and religious activities. Helleno-Orthodoxy resonates in various aspects of contemporary Greek public life, including Church-State relations, state celebrations, popular religiosity, rites of passage and the education system.

After the Greek War of Independence, attempts to modernise the newly created Greek State turned the autocephalus Church of Greece into a department of State, which did not allow the creation or the development of a free and truly independent Greek Church (Agouridis 2002). The Church of Greece[6] is governed by its own Holy Synod but remains under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs[7], which pays the salaries of priests and approves the enthronement of bishops and the licensing of church buildings for all religious denominations (Veremis 1995, Makrides 1994, Stavrou, 1995, Papastathis 1996). According to Article 3 of the Greek Constitution of 1975, which is declared in the name of the Holy Trinity, the prevailing religion representing the majority of

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[6] In addition to the Church of Greece, there are 3 other ecclesiastical jurisdictions, which remain under the supervision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, Turkey: the Church of Crete and of the Dodecanese islands and the monasteries of Mt. Athos.

[7] After the creation of the modern Greek State the autocephalus Church of Greece was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the Holy Synod (a non elected body of government appointees to the Greek Church) with King Otto as the head of the Church who had authority to intervene in religious affairs and approve the election of bishops (Papastathis 1999, Kitsikis 1995, Jelavich 1985). Placing the Church under the Ministry of Education originated in the idea that the transmission of spiritual faith along with education was an essential foundation for the construction of the modern Greek State (Petrou 1992). In 1975, with the revision of the Constitution, the Church became more independent under a revised administration system that limited the restrictive fashion with which the State could regulate Church affairs (Papastathis 1999).

Greek population is Eastern Orthodoxy under the authority of the autocephalous Church of Greece, united in doctrine to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Although freedom of religion (freedom of religious conscience and worship) is protected by Article 13 of the Constitution for known religions (legal entities of public law), proselytism is prohibited (Pollis 1992, Alivizatos 1999, Konidaris 1999). Overall, Orthodox Church is granted significant legal and financial privileges compared to other Churches in Greece[8]. Furthermore, the Orthodox clergy is frequently invited to give their blessings in the military, in prisons, national civil celebrations and military parades (which coincide with religious feasts and ceremonies), and during presidential and government inaugurations (Pollis 1999). Therefore, the Church expects State protection through the Constitution and other legal and financial means, just as the State depends on the Church as a homogenizing and unifying force (Kokosalakis 1996).

Throughout modern Greek history there have been no real and major confrontations between the political authority of the State and the spiritual leadership of the Church but this partnership has had moments of conflict. The socialist government in 1981 had initially promised the constitutional separation of Church and State and the expropriation of Church properties[9]. However, these reforms posed tremendous political and social risks and the government had to compromise at times when it underestimated the influence of the Church over the Greek electorate and society. The process of separating Church and State was never started and the expropriation of Church property was partially materialized at a considerable political cost. The socialist government was successful in establishing civil marriage by law in 1982, but after the strong reaction of the Church, which was opposed to civil and religious marriage being equally valid[10].

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[8] For example, licensing for the building or operation of non-Orthodox places of worship requires permission from the Ministry and the local Orthodox bishop (Alivizatos 1999). The mandatory religious instruction (focused primarily on Orthodox theology) provided by the Greek education system can be seen as an indirect form of proselytism or religious indoctrination on behalf of the Church of Greece.

[9] The expropriation of Church property (land) has been a controversial issue since the reforms implemented by Mauer, under the reign of King Otto, resulted in the closure of hundreds of monasteries and the seizure of ecclesiastical property and land, which many Christians had entrusted to the Church during the Ottoman Empire. The State expropriation of ecclesiastical property has been typically justified by the argument that the poor financial situation of the Greek State required the sale of Church land with the proceeds to be allocated to various social causes, including education. In the 1950s under the threat of stopping all payments to ecclesiastical personnel, the Church agreed to give away a substantial amount of land. In 1987, under the argument that the renumeration of the clergy was a great burden to the national budget, the Socialist government proposed a controversial legislation for the expropriation of most Church property. The bill was amended a year later and the State was able to obtain some Church land but the case was brought to the European Court of Justice. The issue is currently unresolved and inactive but remains a sore point that is often used by political parties and governments as an argument for postponing any further regulation in Greek Church and State relations (Dimitropoulos 2001).

[10] Also, legislation relative to divorce, which is granted by a civil court, was eventually adopted as early as 1920 and later, in 1983, but not without the reaction of the Church, which eventually withdrew its negative position (Dimitropoulos 2001).

Although belief in God remains relatively high[11], Greek society retains a fairly passive attachment to the church, with church attendance limited mostly to special occasions (Davie 2002, Lavdas 1997, Kokosalakis 1996, Frazee 1980). Popular religious and national festivals[12] and major feasts of the Christian year highlight the importance of popular religion in Greece (Kokosalakis 1995, 1996, Veremis 1995, Alivizatos 1999, Stavrou 1995, Makrides 1994, Dubisch 1990). Religious practice is higher than most other EU countries[13] and, according to a recent Greek study, church attendance between 1985 and 2000 has showed signs of growth rather than decline (Georgiadou and Nikolakopoulos 2001)[14]. There is a clear popular attachment to the Orthodox Church as far as rites of passage are concerned, such as baptisms, marriages[15], and burials[16]. At the same time, there is a significant degree of syncretism and some growth of new religious movements (Kokosalakis 1996). Small but visible conservative groups ('Neo-Orthodox' groups, Old-Calendarists[17]) also exist, using religion as synonymous with Greek identity (Kokosalakis 1996, Stavrou 1995). Forms of 'Neo-Orthodoxy' emerged in the 90s, supported by some intellectuals, artists and theologians, aiming to rediscover a forgotten and, in their terms, more authentic Orthodox tradition (Fokas 2000, Makrides 1998).

Despite recent attempts towards the liberalisation of Greek religious education, the Greek school system continues to transmit Helleno-Orthodoxy into the new generations (Pollis 1999). Based on the prevailing religion model (Article 3), weekly religious instruction is mandatory in Greece's public school system ; it consists essentially of an Orthodox interpretation of Christian faith and social issues (Argyriou 1992, Sotirelis 1998, Molokotos-

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[11] According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 93.8% of respondents in Greece believe in God, a higher percentage than the European average (77.4%) (Halman 2002, Lambert 2002).

[12] For example, the date of the annual pilgrimage to the Annunciation Church in Tinos and to the Icon of the Madonna (*Panagia*) coincides with state celebrations of Greek national independence.

[13] According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 53.9% of respondents in Greece go to Church on special occasions (European average: 38.8%), 20.9% of respondents go to Church once a month (European average: 10.8%) and 22.3% of respondents go to Church once a week (European average: 20.5%) (Halman 2002, Lambert 2002). Greece was not included in the previous European Values Surveys (conducted in 1991), so the 1999 figures do not allow any comparisons with previous years.

[14] Also, the monastic life in Mt. Athos is undergoing something of a revival and some monasteries are now being restored with new recruits coming from Australia and America and traditionally orthodox countries.

[15] Although civil marriage was established by law in 1982, statistics indicate that only approximately 8.5% of marriages in Greece are civil, as Greeks prefer to have marriages solemnised in the Orthodox Church (Kokosalakis 1995, Makrides 1994). According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 89.6% of respondents in Greece (European average: 73.6%) want a religious service for marriage (Halman 2001, Lambert 2002).

[16] According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 92.5% of respondents in Greece (European average: 82.3%) want a religious service at the time of death, while only 69.1% (European average: 74.9%) want a religious service at the time of birth (Halman 2001, Lambert 2002). Demands for civil burials and cremations are increasing. Civil burials are permitted by law and citizens are free to choose between a civil or religious burial, but the underlying assumption of the Church is that those who select a civil burial are atheist (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000). Cremations remain against the law in Greece (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000) ; the Church has voiced its opposition towards cremation but an association and a cross-party alliance of Greek MPs has proposed a bill to legalize cremation (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia* 15 March 2002).

[17] See Kitsikis, Dimitris 1995: *The Old Calendarists and the Rise of Religious Conservative in Greece*, Monographic Supplement.XVIII, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

Liederman 2003). Furthermore, Greek text-books tend to stress the uniformity and continuity of Hellenism across centuries[18] (Frangoudaki-Dragona 1997).

II. Religion and the identity cards: the conflict

The reading of approximately 800 newspaper articles on the conflict over religion on identity cards, drawn from the Greek national daily presss[19], allows a synthetic presentation of the conflict and a chronological deconstruction of the main events that took place.

The recording religion on official identity cards originates in the early 1940s[20], when identity cards became mandatory by law (law 87/1945) for all citizens[21] and, among other personal details, they had to include religion. The policy of including religion on identity cards and other public documents (birth, marriage and death certificates) remained into effect until 1986, when under new legislation passed by the socialist government, the declaration of religion on new identity cards became optional[22].

In a reversal of the 1986 legislation, the centre-right wing New Democracy party, in power by 1991, introduced a law according to which the declaration of religion on a new type of identity cards became mandatory. By 1993, the New Democracy government announced plans to change the law and make the declaration of religion on identity cards optional. The

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[18] In Greek history textbooks, Helleno-Christianity is first introduced in the chapters devoted to the Roman Empire, particularly the period of Emperor Justinian. According to the textbooks, Justinian's internal policy was founded on Greek culture and Christian faith, which created the so-called "Helleno-Christian world" (textbook of 4th grade, p. 256). Another example is religion textbooks, where Helleno-Christianity and the link between Orthodoxy and Greek identity is not only established, but also explicitly affirmed. Here are two representative excerpts from the religion textbooks: « Our people linked their life with Orthodox faith and life. This can be confirmed by the study of the history of our nation, our traditions and our hopes » (textbook of 3rd grade, p. 216). « The reception of Hellenism by Christianity was so successful that today it is very difficult to distinguish between these two elements … [The synthesis between Christianity and Hellenism] can inspire and provide new directions to contemporary Greek society and offer solutions to the problems of humanity in Europe and in the entire international community » (textbook of 5th grade, p. 209). For a more detailed analysis of Greek religious education see Lina Molokotos-Liederman, "L'orthodoxie à l'école grecque", unpublished paper and public lecture at the Ecole Partique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France, as part of a European conference on "Sciences des religions et systèmes de pensées", 20 March 2003.

[19] The following daily papers, representing different political views, were selected: *Kathimerini, Vima, Nea, Eleftherotypia, Rizospastis* and *Estia*. The articles were collected primarily via the internet through the research engines provided by each selected newspaper; they were also collected via subscription to press clipping services in Athens (*Idryma Votsi* and *Argo-Etairia Apokommaton Ellinikou & Xenou Typou*, Athens, Greece).

[20] According to some preliminary research and from the historical circumstances of the period shortly before the end of the Second World War, the measure of recording religion on identity cards was possibly a means of distinguishing citizens according to their religious affiliation (*Vima*, 14 May 2000, *Nea* 20 May 2000; *The Independent*, 22 May 1994).

[21] Mandatory identity cards are issued in other European countries (Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain) ; other countries where religion is recorded on identity cards are outside Europe, i.e., Israel, Indonesia and Turkey. According to some unconfirmed sources, new identity cards issued in Turkey may not include religious affiliation.

[22] The Church and religious organizations expressed their opposition partly because the new identity cards would include a personalized identification bar code containing the number 666, which is associated with the coming of the Antichrist.

Church demanded the continuation of the declaration of religion on identity cards. The European Parliament and many international religious organizations condemned the Greek decision and strongly encouraged Greece to reverse the legislation.

Between 1994 and 1996, the new socialist government adopted a 'wait and see' attitude on whether the government would finally change the legislation. By 1997 Greece became a signatory to the Schengen Treaty[23]. At that time, a privacy protection law was passed with the assistance of the Greek Data Protection Authority, according to which Greek citizens were no longer required to declare their occupation, nationality, religion, fingerprints and marital status on identity cards.

After the death of Archbishop Seraphim in 1998, Christodoulos became the new Archbishop of Greece, instituting a tense period in Greek Church-State relations. In 2000, the Minister of Justice announced plans to proceed with the issue of new identity cards, dropping the inclusion of religion. Archbishop Christodoulos organised a national mobilization campaign calling for an informal referendum to collect signatures requesting the voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards and hoping to force the government to hold a national referendum[24].

Finally, in 2001, the Council of State declared that the inclusion of religion on identity cards is unconstitutional, while Archbishop Christodoulos suggested that the Greek Prime Minister was subject to strong international pressure[25]. The Church conducted a six-month referendum collecting approximately 3 million signatures and requesting the voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards. In response, the Greek President reiterated that according to the Greek law and Constitution there was no question of holding a referendum or changing the existing legislation, which put some closure on the conflict.

Since the first outbreak of the problem, each government coming into power has had an impact on the question of whether religion should be included on identity cards. The debate, with a few exceptions, has been largely partisan and polarised. The socialist party initially advocated a voluntary declaration, but later insisted on the elimination of religion on identity cards altogether. The centre-right wing party has been consistently aligned with the

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[23] According to the intergovernmental Schengen Agreement for the free movement of persons within the EU, passports were to be replaced by identity cards as an efficient way to maintain internal controls.
[24] Apart from the political undertones of the conflict, as far as Greek mainstream public opinion is concerned, according to various polls conducted in 2000, a little over half of those surveyed were favorable to the inclusion of religion on identity cards[24] (*Eleftherotypia* 28 May 2000, 29 June 2000, *Vima* 2 July 2000).
[25] Namely, pressure from the World Jewish Council, the European Union and American Jewish lobbying organizations (*Vima*, 15 March 2001, 20 March 2001; *Herald Tribune*, 16 March 2001; *Athens News*, 16 March 2001).

Church and has insisted on the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion since 1993, thus creating a unified opposition front against the socialist government (Stavrakakis 2002 ; Anastassiadis 1996). However, in some cases, around election time, traditional party lines were crossed as some socialist and centre-right wing politicians were sceptical on the political costs of the elimination of religion from identity cards (Stavrakakis 2002). Throughout the debate, the Greek left wing and communist parties have both remained against the inclusion of religion (Anastassiadis 1996); the Greek Communist Party has also advocated the separation of Church and State and voiced some criticism on the Schengen treaty because of its potential infringement of civil rights[26].

Although the position of the Church of Greece had been originally to put strong pressure on the government to keep the declaration of religion mandatory, faced with a more determined socialist government to drop the mention of religion in 2000, it opted for the optional inclusion of religion. Even within the Church itself, there were few bishops who in 2000 deviated from the position of the Church ; they insisted on the obligation of the Church to follow the laws of the State, thus implicitly supporting the elimination of religion from identity cards, or explicitly promoted a more liberal view of Church-State relations (*Nea*, 12 May 2000).

III. Methods

Religion in Greece has been and still is a public matter, thus present in the public sphere (Demertzis 2002). Since Archbishop Christodoulos's savvy usage of Greek media, the Orthodox Church has become a focus of Greek media attention, as illustrated by the intense media coverage of the conflict over religion on identity cards. In fact, if the question of the identity cards had not been so heavily covered by the Greek and international press, the conflict would not have escalated into such a divisive national controversy. After the (temporary?) closure of the conflict over the identity cards it is time to look at the debate and exchange of positions, ideas and arguments on the issue. Given the intensity of its media coverage, the identity cards controversy will be analysed from a particular angle, that of the mass media. Hence, a fundamental pillar of the research is a systematic and qualitative content analysis of articles from the Greek and international daily press. The project will compare the key issues, prevalent opinions and arguments for or against the mention of religion on identity cards drawn from an extensive body of newspaper articles from

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[26] Skepticism on the implications of the Schengen Treaty for civil rights is not a phenomenon specific to Greece; for example, there was some debate in Britain on the potential abuses of civil liberties of electronic identity cards linked to a pan-European data base (*The Guardian*, 30 May 1995).

mainstream Greek and foreign daily newspapers. Books, journal articles, Church and State public documents, existing surveys and some interviews with selected individuals will provide additional data with which to complement the material emerging from the analysis of newspaper comment.

Since the mass media are a vast source of public information available to large audiences, they represent and reflect society in their own way. News media in particular have the capacity to represent certain aspects or segments of a society, to raise public awareness of particular issues and events and to set agendas for public discussion; in this capacity, they can contribute towards the construction of our social reality and collective identities and play a role in the formation of public opinion (McQuail 1994, Lazar 1991, Gerbner 1969). An analysis of their content can therefore reveal a great deal about common beliefs and underlying value systems, thus providing a means to study society itself (Lazar 1991). Despite the increased importance of television and radio as sources of information, the daily press is the oldest of the mass media and remains an institution of contemporary political and social life (McQuail 1994). Daily newspapers remain reference points with an implicit ethical responsibility to report events accurately and objectively (McQuail 1994).

The principal method[27] chosen for the project is qualitative content analysis, namely the systematic description of the manifest content of a communication (Berelson 1952). The objective of this qualitative content analysis is not an exhaustive classification and reorganisation of the content of the newspaper articles into categories, but rather extracting, analysing and comparing key issues, prevalent opinions and supporting lines of arguments on the inclusion of religion on identity cards. In order to gather more arguments and opinions, rather than analyse factual newsreports, the sample of articles for the content analysis includes opinion articles (editorials, comments and interviews), presenting the opinions of journalists, specialists, academics, and politicians, who expressed their views in the national daily press. A thematic typology of the key lines of arguments justifying each position is constructed in order to demonstrate schematically the structure of the debate, the tension between those in favour and those against the inclusion of religion on identity cards and their respective lines of reasoning. The analysis attempts first to identify the main positions and opinion groups towards the issue in question. As a rule, every opinion is usually justified by arguments, which are placed into a theme category in an attempt to construct a wider thematic typology of supporting arguments and lines of reasoning used by each opinion group.

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[27] The choice of method reflects a previous study involving a similar analysis of press coverage, this time regarding the place of Muslims in the school systems of France and Britain (Molokotos-Liederman 2000). The prior study focused on the press coverage relating to two symptomatic case studies: the Muslim headscarf controversy in France and the state funding of Muslim schools in Britain.

Careful attention has been used in the selection of newspapers, taking into account: circulation, audience, journalistic authority (reputation) and editorial position (ideological or political orientation)[28]. With this in mind, six dailies have been selected from the mainstream press in Greece, representing different political views[29] on the identity card question. As a means of comparison, however, the study will also look at echoes of the issue abroad by analysing non-Greek perspectives on the identity card issue as these appear in the international press -- primarily representative French and British dailies[30].

The content analysis conducted in this pilot study concerns the first period of the conflict, namely from 1986 to 1999 (25 articles), and the beginning of the second period, from January to May 2000 (25 articles). The material analysed comprises a non-exhaustive sample of 50 articles on the identity cards issue drawn from the selected Greek newspapers. The objectives of the pilot study were to identify the key themes and issues of the conflict to be further analysed in the larger project.

IV. The media debate: building a typology of themes and arguments

The content analysis of the pilot study indicated that the debate over the identity cards conflict, as it took place in the Greek daily press, was focused more on historical, political and cultural issues, particularly the link between national identity and Orthodoxy, Church-State relations and Greece's relations with Europe, and less on questions of human rights. What differentiates those advocating for and against the inclusion of religion on identity cards is their line of reasoning, namely that their supporting arguments revolve around these common themes, which are referred to in a greater or lesser extent and interpreted in different ways in each case.

i.   The opinion groups

There are two opinion groups that are clearly and diametrically opposed, one is in favour, the other is against the inclusion of religion on identity cards. Those who expressed a

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[28] Except during the period of dictatorship (between 1967 and 1974), freedom of the press in Greece is guaranteed by the Constitution (Veremis 1995).

[29] The following daily papers were selected: *Kathimerini, Vima, Nea, Eleftherotypia, Rizospastis* and *Estia*. The articles were collected primarily via the internet through the research engines provided by each selected newspaper; they were also collected via subscription to press clipping services in Athens (*Idryma Votsi* and *Argo-Etairia Apokommaton Ellinikou & Xenou Typou*, Athens, Greece).

[30] For example, *Figaro, Le Monde, Libération, La Croix, The Times, The Guardian, The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph.*

favourable opinion to the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards in the press were primarily members of the clergy, theologians and mostly centre-right wing and some socialist politicians. Among the religious minorities represented in Greece, the Muslim community did not seem to protest the inclusion of religion possibly because identity cards would act as an official document acknowledging the Muslim presence in northern Greece (*Libération*, 19 Dec. 1992).

Those who expressed their disagreement to the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards in the press were primarily legal experts, journalists, intellectuals and academics, representatives of the Catholic and Jewish communities in Greece, politicians representing mostly socialist and left wing parties, and some members of the clergy. Some intellectuals, academics and left wing politicians used the controversy of the identity cards as an opportunity to advocate a more radical change in Church-State relations.

ii. **Nation and Religion: the bonds between national identity and religious tradition**

To justify their positions both opinion groups refer to historical arguments that concern the question of national identity and the link between nation and religion, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. Both parties acknowledge Orthodoxy as an integral part of Greece's heritage but differ in terms of the extent to which it should play a role in the definition of Greek identity.

Those in favour of religion on identity cards envision an all-embracing and holistic view of Helleno-Orthodoxy. They conceive faith as a determining factor of individual and collective identity (*Vima*, 27 Apr. 1997; *Nea*, 19 Oct. 1991). In their view, Orthodoxy is not only a religious tradition, but also a whole culture and way of life; Orthodoxy becomes synonymous not only with Hellenism and the cultural and historical identity of Greece, but also with Greek nationality (*Nea*, 8 Apr. 1993, 11 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 10 Apr. 1993). This opinion group accuses the government of underestimating the significance of the Hellenic-Orthodox tradition and the historic role of the Church throughout Greek history (*Eleftherotypia*, 15 May 2000). In their view, the elimination of religion from identity cards constitutes an attempt to discredit the religious identity of the country and disconnect Greek people from Orthodoxy in an overall effort to transform Greece into a non-religious or secular country, like other western European countries, or to have the Orthodox population in Greece gradually become a religious minority (*Kathimerini*, 2 March 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 12 March 1993, 15 May 2000). Moreover, the proliferation of non-Orthodox and non-Christian groups is of particular concern because by eliminating the

inclusion of religion from identity cards there is no way of estimating the number of non-Orthodox and non-Christians, which presents a national security risk, particularly when it involves keeping track of Muslim populations (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 15 May 2000).

Referring to Church and State relations, those in favour of religion on identity cards see the conflict as part of a larger strategy to change the existing situation. They accuse the government of specifically attempting to undermine the Church and detach it from State support. In their view, because existing Church and State relations in Greece reflect the strong link between nation and religion, a separation of Church and State would actually mean the separation of Hellenism from Orthodoxy, which they see as detrimental to Greek society and culture (*Nea*, 8 Apr. 1993; *Vima*, 10 May 1998).

This opinion group sees Helleno-Orthodoxy as an essential component of Greece's heritage and an all-embracing notion that holds together and cements Greek society. There is a concern that the Greek Church and Greece is in a minority position within EU borders and is, thus, threatened by external forces, such as secularisation, by what is perceived as a primarily Catholic Europe and by a possible separation of Church and State. In fact, the underlying assumption is that, faced with further European integration, Greeks may not simply lose their faith, but most importantly, their Helleno-Orthodox identity. Therefore, existing Church and State relations in Greece are considered essential for preserving Helleno-Orthodoxy, which acts as a defence mechanism in the belief that upholding a homogeneous faith is crucial for the survival of Hellenism (*Nea*, 30 Dec. 1992). Thus, religion and national identity become a means of defending against the forces of globalisation and European integration ; this is also linked to the endorsement of a specific version of national identity, which identifies nationality with religion and assumes that being Greek means being Orthodox.

Those against the inclusion of religion on identity cards limit the scope of Helleno-Orthodoxy to Greece's historic heritage and to the cultural and spiritual sphere. Just like those in favour of including religion on identity cards, they acknowledge that the majority of Greek population are Orthodox but they argue that, precisely because Orthodoxy is a majority religion, there is no need to indicate religion on state documents (*Rizospastis*, 18 May 2000). They acknowledge the link between Hellenism and Orthodoxy at a cultural, rather than a political or state level (*Vima*, 10 May 1998). This opinion group also argues that the collective Orthodox identity of the majority of Greek citizens should not be confused with their individual identities established in a state document (*Nea*, 17 May 2000). Moreover, they conceive Orthodoxy as a faith to live by, and not as a belief to declare to government

authorities (*Nea*, 8 April 1993; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). This opinion group further argues that Orthodoxy, having survived through its own strength throughout centuries, does not need a "crutch" from a state document and that including religion on identity cards does not strengthen nor weaken the position of the Church in Greek society (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 19 May 2000; *Nea*, 15 May 2000, 25 May 2000).

Referring to arguments which are specific to Church and State relations, those against religion on identity cards insist that freeing the Greek Church from government control will be beneficial to both parties because the intermingling between Church and State undermines democracy and the original Christian mission of the Church (*Rizospastis*, 16 May 2000; *Kathimerini* 14 May 2000; *Nea*, 1 April 1993; *Vima*, 10 May 1998; *Eleftherotypia*, 13 May 2000, 16 May 2000). They perceive the Church's insistence on including religion on identity cards as tainting its ecumenical and spiritual mission, bordering on nationalism, fundamentalism and political favouritism (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998; *Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Rizospastis*, 16 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 May 2000). In a further critique of the Church, they argue that it is going through a moral and ethical crisis, that it does not seem to be concerned by the real problems of Greek society, and that it is attempting to discriminate against non-Orthodox and maintain spheres of influence on various facets of public and political life (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998). They allude to the Church's self-serving mission fuelling a dangerous form of nationalism, rather than a true serving of the Christian mission. Although few explicitly advocated the constitutional separation of Church and State[31], most of those against religion on identity cards preferred a loser affiliation between the Greek State and the Church and favoured some form of liberalisation in their relationship.

iii. Greece's relations with Europe

Both those for and against the inclusion of religion on identity cards also refer to arguments that pertain to European integration and Greece's relations with the European Union.

Those advocating the mention of religion on identity cards argue that if Greek identity cards comply with the requirements of identifying a citizen and declaring his/her nationality accurately, the European Union has no jurisdiction over the inclusion of religion on identity cards in Greece (*Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 13 May 2000). Referring to the period

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[31] In 1993 and 1998 intellectuals, as well as, political, scientific and artistic personalities in Greece published open letters advocating the separation of Church and State (*Eleftherotypia*, 1 April 1993, 5 May 1998).

when religion was recorded on identity cards with no problems or legal infractions, they suggest that the conflict is the result of external pressure. They refer particularly to the European Union and religious minorities inside and outside Greece, particularly Jewish lobbies, as the main sources exerting influence on the government to eliminate religion from identity cards (*Vima*, 27 Apr. 1997; *Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993, 25 May 2000).

The underlying line of reasoning here is that, at least in this case, national interests take precedence over European directives. There is clearly a tension between national and European scale sovereignty, particularly the concern of resigning to European control at the expense of national self-rule. Advocates of religion on identity cards see the question of the identity cards as a strictly domestic issue and accuse the government of compromising and undermining its authority while yielding to European influence; hence, they attribute the conflict to external factors, up to the point of subscribing to some "conspiracy theories" and international manipulation.

Those against religion on identity cards argue that no other European country records religion on public documents. As a member-state of the European Union and a signatory of the Schengen Agreement, it is Greece's obligation to respect both national and international law provisions and to conform to the European norm (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia,* 18 Jan. 1993; *Kathimerini,* 3 March 2000). They refer particularly to the European Convention of Human Rights (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993). This opinion group also insists that the recording religion on identity cards is contrary to the Greek privacy law of 1997, which eliminated religion from identity cards (*Eleftherotypia*, 7 Jan. 1992, 18 Jan. 1993, 13 May 2000, 9 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 Nov. 1991). They also point out that it is unconstitutional and contrary to Articles 5 and 13 of the Greek Constitution, pertaining to the protection of citizens by the state and to the inviolability of personal liberty, the freedom of religious conscience and the enjoyment of civil rights and liberties regardless of religious beliefs (*Eleftherotypia,* 18 Jan. 1993, 9 May 2000, 25 May 2000; *Vima,* 17 Jan. 1993, 27 April 1997; *Nea,* 12 May 2000, 15 May 2000). Their underlying legal argument is that the inclusion of religion on identity cards is unconstitutional and violates both national and international legislation. Differentiating citizens according to religious criteria puts some at greater risk of being discriminated because of their faith.

iv.   Human rights: majority or minority rights ?

Finally, both opinion groups use national and international legislation and human rights provisions to justify their position[32]. Those advocating the upholding of religion on identity cards give priority to majority rights, the right to choose and the freedom of religious expression. They view the government's decision as anti-democratic since, in the name of European integration, the Greek State dismisses the religious conscience of the Greek population and denies the right of those who wish to declare their religion on identity cards (*Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 6 Feb. 1998, 9 May 2000, 15 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 May 2000). This opinion groups argues that to be consistent with respect of human rights in Greece, the State has the obligation to take into account the rights of the majority of Greeks who are Orthodox and wish to express their religion on public documents (*Kathimerini*, 9 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 9 May 2000). They insist that since religious tolerance is guaranteed by both national and international legislation in Greece, fears of religious or ethnic discrimination of citizens are unfounded (*Eleftherotypia*, 10 April 1993; *Vima*, 27 April 1997).

This opinion group also evokes the fundamental right to chose by comparing the identity cards issue with legislation on marriage, according to which citizens can chose between a religious or a civil marriage. Thus, by suggesting that the government adopt a similar approach by giving citizens the freedom to choose whether or not to declare their religion on identity cards, they advocate at least a voluntary inclusion of religion (*Kathimerini*, 9 May 2000, 21 May 2000). Their underlying line of reasoning is based on human rights and the right of citizens to be able to express freely their religious belief. Thus, the previous assertion of an all-encompassing Helleno-Orthodoxy is taken a step further with a generalised assumption that the majority of Greeks truly and voluntarily wish to declare their faith on identity cards. Thus, the rights of the majority, the right to choose and the national collective identity seem to take precedence over minority rights, non-discrimination and the right to privacy.

Those opposed to the inclusion of religion on identity cards seem to give precedence to the right to privacy, minority rights and non-discrimination. They refer to the right of citizens to keep personal beliefs private (*Eleftherotypia,* 18 Jan. 1993). They argue that any coercive declaration of religion constitutes a violation of human rights, namely an infringement of freedom of religion and conscience and of the right to choose whether to disclose religious belief (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 9 May 2000, 25 May 2000;

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[32] A brief comparison of the arguments and themes that emerged in the Greek and international press (primarily French and British newspaper articles) it seems that in the international coverage of the identity cards conflict there is more emphasis on issues of human rights and religious discrimination with less reference to issues of Greek national identity.

Kathimerini, 14 May 2000). Some even point out that forcing citizens to declare their religious beliefs is incompatible with Christian freedom (*Nea*, 15 May 2000). According to this opinion group, the inclusion of religion on identity cards transforms religious belief from a private matter to a public declaration of faith, when, in a democratic society, the State has to remain neutral by not interfering with the personal beliefs of citizens (*Nea*, 25 Nov. 1991, 25 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 25 May 2000). This means that the religious, political and ideological beliefs of citizens are not essential elements with which to establish an individual identity in a public document (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 19 May 2000, 25 May 2000; *Vima*, 27 April 1997; *Kathimerini*, 3 March 2000, 14 May 2000; *Nea,* 25 Nov. 1991, 25 May 2000). Furthermore, they argue that the determination of what information is necessary for the proper identification of citizens on a government document is the sole responsibility of the State (*Eleftherotypia*, 16 May 2000, 19 May 2000; *Nea,* 25 May 2000; *Rizospastis,* 18 May 2000; *Kathimerini,* 14 May 2000).

This opinion group also refers to the historical origins of the law that established the inclusion of religion on identity cards, which they see as a remnant of an anti-democratic regime (*Vima*, 14 May 2000). The policy of recording religion on identity cards differentiates citizens according to religious and/or ethnic terms, who can become victims of direct or indirect discrimination (*Nea*, 19 Oct. 1991, 25 Nov. 1991, 6 April 1993; *Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000). This is particularly problematic for those who do not wish to declare their faith and for non-Orthodox or atheist citizens, who can be treated as different or "less Greek" (*Vima*, 27 April 1997; *Rizospastis* 18 May 2000). Moreover, even if the mention of religion were to become voluntary, there is still the risk that citizens would be differentiated, thus discriminated, according to their choice on whether or not to declare their faith (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 16 May 2000, 18 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). This risk is even more pronounced if a citizen does not indicate a religious affiliation, which in Greece can be interpreted as suspicious or as a sign of being an outsider. This means that the mere presence or absence of religion on identity cards can be used as a criterion in itself with which to discriminate citizens (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 16 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). Therefore, dropping religion from identity cards rightfully fulfils the State's obligation to protect citizens from any potential discrimination (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998).

Opponents of including religion on identity cards also point out that it is the Parliament and the elected government, which represent the Greek nation (*Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000). In their view, the Church's proposal for a national referendum exceeds the limits of representational democracy and gives power to the majority while ignoring the rights of the minority by imposing the will of those who wish to declare their

religion on those who do not (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 May 2000, 20 May 2000; *Kathimerini* 14 May 2000). Their underlying line of reasoning is the concern that, given the strong identification of national identity and citizenship with religious affiliation, non-Orthodox citizens are at greater risk of being discriminated, or at best differentiated from the Orthodox norm. Thus, the right to privacy, non-discrimination and the protection of religious minorities take precedence over the right to choose or the rights of the majority.

Finally, unlike those in favour of including religion on identity cards, who use arguments based on social, cultural and historical factors to support their case, those against use a more practical line of arguments. For example, they point out that address, occupation, marital status and religious affiliation (through conversion) can change at any time; because identity cards have to include information that establishes the permanent identity of an individual religion, religion does not belong on such documents (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993; *Nea*, 22 May 2000). In some cases, this opinion group even suggested that citizens wishing to record their religion on identity cards could request a special identity card issued specifically by the Church (*Eleftherotypia*, 16 May 2000, 18 May 2000). Finally, they point out that the practice of recording religion on identity cards does not accurately reflect the religious beliefs of the Greek population: authorities fill out the space provided on the identity card with an Orthodox affiliation automatically because many citizens declare an Orthodox affiliation to avoid administrative hassles or to ensure that they are not seen as outsiders (*Nea*, 8 April 1993). Their underlying reasoning is that the mere declaration of religious affiliation to state authorities does not necessarily constitute an accurate reflection of the religious beliefs of the population. This may also suggest that the claim of an Orthodox majority among the Greek population professed by many advocating the inclusion of religion on identity cards may not necessarily a true reflection of Greek society.

V. Concluding remarks and directions for future research

Going beyond the specific arguments used by each opinion group, the highly mediatised character of the identity cards conflict points to the link between media and religion, particularly the role of mass media in the process of national self-definition. The analysis of this important theme merits further research but it goes beyond the scope of this short paper.

The pilot study and preliminary analysis of the identity cards conflict provides some key research questions to be further investigated in the larger project and in future research avenues.

i. Although the identity cards conflict confirms the historic link between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State, it also reveals the frictions within this partnership. The significant stakes behind any sort of constitutional separation between Church and State underscore a tension between, on the one hand, Greek Orthodoxy, as popular religious belonging and part of national identity coexisting with the Western life styles and the new realities of Greek society, and, on the other hand, the institution of the Church of Greece, which has showed some signs of conservatism and resistant ambivalence to pluralism[33] in its politicised discourse and positions on a variety of issues[34]. Through the media coverage of the identity cards conflict, the Church of Greece, acting as the official representative of Greek Orthodoxy, seems to have taken on the role of an institutional pressure group expressing growing social and economic insecurities and popular ambivalence with regard to increasing European Union integration and ongoing globalisation.

ii. Both those in favour and those against religion on identity cards clearly acknowledge the bond between nation and religion, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. However, the former see Helleno-Orthodoxy in holistic and oppositional terms, as the essence of Greek identity and an all-embracing defence mechanism against the West. The latter see the Helleno-Orthodox heritage of Greece as a component and a resource of Greece's spiritual and cultural identity.

The "Helleno-Christian" link in contemporary Greek identity with its inherent dualism between a Hellenic (ancient Greek) and Byzantine (Orthodox) past is part of the richness of Greece's heritage and history but it is also a source of ambiguity, carrying a conflict of ideas. "Helleno-Christianity" carries tensions between Orthodox traditionalism and growing trends of secularization, between tradition and modernity, between Greece's eastern and western[35] heritage, and between its national and European identity. These antagonistic and polarised elements create an ambiguous outlook, positioning contemporary Greece between East and West (Tsoukalas 1999). This cultural dualism between modernizers and traditionalists,

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[33] We use the term pluralism in a philosophical sense as "a system that recognizes more than one ultimate principle" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary).
[34] For a more detailed analysis on the politicised and populist discourse of the Church of Greece, see Stavrakakis 2002.
[35] The British author Patrick Leigh Fermor in a travelogue on Roumeli in Central Greece refers to the "Helleno-Romaic Dilemma", which helps illustrate the dual heritage still at work in contemporary Greece. The author provides a long list of characteristics of the Hellene and the *Romios*[35], some of which are relevant to the scope of this study: the *Romios* looks on Greece as outside Europe, while the Hellene looks on Greece as part of Europe and a region of fellow Europeans; the *Romios* sees the Orthodox Church as a unifying guardian in times of troubles, while the Hellene sees the Orthodox Church as a symbol of Hellenism; the *Romios* looks back to the glory of Byzantium, symbolized by St. Sophia / Constantinople, while the Hellene looks back to the golden age of Pericles, symbolized by the Parthenon (Leigh-Fermor 1966). Greeks referred to *Romios* (the Greek word for Roman) to indicate the multiethnic citizens of the Byzantine Empire (New Rome) who spoke Greek and were primarily defined through their Christian faith and their allegiance to the Byzantine emperor (Clark 2000, Hart 1992).

between westerners and easterners, is still a central theme in the political, social and cultural life in contemporary Greece (Allison and Nicolaidis 1997) with some significant consequences:

- The linkage between national identity and religious tradition, and more particularly the bond between Hellenism and Orthodoxy has contributed to the identification of Greek identity with Orthodoxy. However, this assumption is being put to the test by the challenge of pluralism, as Greek society is becoming increasingly diverse through the growing presence of religious minorities. As a result of immigration, there are increasing pressures on Greece to evolve from a 'monocultural' nation to a multicultural society (Alivizatos 1999). The ongoing influx of immigrants will highlight the challenges of integrating minorities in Greek society, which is already starting to confront religious and ethnic diversity; it will also question the link between citizenship and religion and raise questions of self-definition, thus challenging the assumption that being Greek is synonymous with being Orthodox and questioning "Greek Orthodoxy as a marker of Greekness" (Pollis 1999, p. 187).

- The historical and cultural dualism associated with the concept of "Helleno-Orthodoxy" and the dichotomy between Helenism (associated with modernity) and Orthodoxy (linked with tradition) seems to cultivate a simultaneously exclusive (Greece's specificity as the only Orthodox country in the EU and among Western European countries) and inclusive (classical Hellenism linked with the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and with the idea of Europe) image of Greece vis-à-vis Europe. Various academic and political circles both inside and outside Greece have debated the possible incompatibility between the Orthodox tradition and modernity with no clear consensus (Fokas 2000). According to some views, the linkage between Helenism and Orthodoxy and the opposition between tradition and modernity promote an exceptionalist[36] view of Greece according to which the Greek case is not only unique, but that it cannot be fully understood by Europe and is, thus, considered as incompatible with western modernity (Allison and Nicolaidis 1997). From a psycho-analytic perspective, the historical and cultural dichotomy between Hellenism and Orthodoxy, between tradition and modernity, can also be seen more as the "split Greek identity" (Lipowatz 1991). However, within the wide range of intellectual debates on the Greek case (see Fokas 2000) it is important to look at the complexities beyond the simple opposition between modernity and tradition (Orthodoxy). As Stavrakakis points out, "in Greece it is not

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[36] Elisabeth Prodromou argues against "the fallacy of the charge of Greek exceptionalism, in terms of the country's church-state arrangement, and the consequences for the quality of Greek democracy" (Prodromou 2002). However, the prohibition of proselytism and the strong continued linkage of national identity and religious tradition seem to be more specific to Greece relative to other EU member states (with the possible exception of Ireland).

unusual for social objects and institutions to behave in a 'modernising' way on one occasion and in a 'traditionalist' way in the next" (Stavrakakis 2002, p. 41). In terms of the specific constitutional arrangements between Church and State, Prodromou proposes the concept of "multiple modernities" in Greece, in the sense that "the diversity in state-relation arrangements may suggest the possibility of different representations of modernity" (Prodromou 2002). This concept is of particular interest and remains to be further analysed in the larger project by exploring the complexities and contradictions in the arguments behind the positions of those for or against religion on identity cards.

    - The combined dual heritage between East and West also coincides with some ambivalent or even anti-western tendencies. These have been expressed in religious terms through some of the discourse of the Orthodox Church, which, particularly during the identity cards conflict, tends to identify modernisation and European culture with a Catholic and Protestant core[37]. Anti European or anti-western tendencies[38] in Greece can be partially explained by the view that since Greece's EU membership, economic progress has outpaced social development[39], which has resulted in a growing sense of insecurity with regards to the global economy. Furthermore, the construction of a common European culture, is often perceived often as synonymous with the undermining of Greek culture and Helleno-Orthodoxy (Makrides 1993). This growing insecurity is reinforced by the fact that, although

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[37] This tendency is historically rooted in the first centuries of the Byzantine Empire and the old conflict between the Western Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church, which goes back to the great schism between the two churches (Woodhouse 1986). Indicative of the animosity of the Eastern Orthodox Church towards the Catholic Church is the popular dictum that the Papal tiara (i.e., the Fourth Crusade of 1204 being the primary factor for the decline of the Byzantine Empire) is worse than the Turkish turban (under which the Orthodox Church was in a privileged position) (Dimitras 1984, Tsoukalas 1999). Venetian occupation and extensive missionary activities converting Orthodox populations to Catholicism have also contributed to an overall hostile attitude towards the Catholic Church (Dimitras 1984, Champion 1993). Today it seems that many Orthodox Churches, including the Greek one, consider most positions and actions of the Catholic Church as a new form of crusades towards the East (Anastassiadis 1996). The recent conflict in Yugoslavia illustrates how these historically negative attitudes towards the Catholic Church still resonate today. For example, even before the NATO bombing of Serbia, most Greeks supported the Serbs and mainstream public opinion in Greece, including the Orthodox Church, was opposed to the bombing of Serbia by the Western allies, because of a sense of solidarity for the Orthodox Serbs. In purely religious terms, the conflict was seen as the opposition between an Orthodox Serbia and a Catholic Croatia. Another example is the protest campaign organized by some Orthodox communities against the Pope's recent visit in Greece, which was perceived as part of a larger strategy to "latinize" the Balkans and eastern Europe to the detriment of the Orthodox faith (*The Guardian,* 4 May 2001*, The Guardian,* 20 March 2001, *International Herald Tribune,* 5-6 May 2001, *Wall Street Journal,* 10 May 2001).

[38] Ambivalent or anti-EU feelings towards what is perceived as a primarily Catholic Europe are not specific to Greece, particularly if we look at the British and Danish examples, which also demonstrate some strong anti European attitudes. What is more specific to Greece is that Greek anti-European attitudes and an ambivalent outlook towards the West seem to be rooted in cultural assumptions and political reasons tying national definition to a specific religious tradition (Orthodoxy) stemming from a tumultuous political history, Greece's Helleno-Orthodox heritage and century-old religious conflicts with the West.

[39] In his article "Dress Code for Greek Dinner: Golden Straitjacket" (*International Herald Tribune*, 13 June 2001), the journalist Thomas Friedman writes on the economic benefits to Greece through membership in European Union. He uses Greece as a laboratory for an interesting clash between two theories: the triumph of liberal democracy and free market capitalism and Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. "Greece is the last EU country to leave the Old World behind, and proud of it. And it is determined to prove that while you may have to give up your politics when you put on the golden straitjacket, you don't have to give up your culture" (Friedman 2001).

the European Union has no official denomination, its religious core in 1995 was estimated as approximately 53% Catholic and 20% Protestant (9% Anglican, 3% Orthodox, 2% Muslim, 0.5% Jewish) (Willaime 1996). This underpins Greek ambivalence towards the European Union, as it is and will remain the only Orthodox member state of the EU, even after Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary join the EU (Davie 1996, 2000).

Finally, some additional points of interest for future research seem to emerge, particularly if they are viewed within plans for European Union enlargement towards other Orthodox countries. The role of Orthodoxy in Greece's relations with the European Union and the increasingly important role of Orthodoxy in view of European Union enlargement (which may include additional Orthodox countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania with historic national Orthodox Churches), remain important and timely topics and areas of study[40]. In this light, historic divisions between Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic and Protestant) Christianity could re-emerge in new ways. Orthodoxy can become a common reference point and a unifying force in Eastern Europe and, in that capacity, it may also be able to act as a bridge for the European Union in its relations with the Orthodox Christian world. As the only Christian Orthodox member-state of the EU, Greece has a key role acting as a bridge between the European Union and its relations with the Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Russia, where there are signs of a religious resurgence.

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[40] See Fokas 2000 and her ongoing doctoral dissertation at LSE on the role of religion in Greek-EU relations.

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ABSTRACT

**"The religious factor in the construction of Europe:
Greece, Orthodoxy and the European Union"**
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