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Secularism in Context: The Relations between the Greek State and the Church of Greece in Crisis

Abstract

The present article addresses the question of secularism in Greece. It discusses the prevalent modernist and civilisationist explanations of the recent crisis in state-church relations in Greece. Based on the idea that there is neither a single route to, nor a single pattern of, modernity and secularism, the article argues that the entanglement between state and church in modern Greece does not necessarily indicate either incomplete modernity or incomplete secularism. The paper emphasises both the structural weakness of the Orthodox Church in the modern Greek state and the secularisation of the church's ideology as core dimensions of the particular pattern of secularism in this country. The recent crisis is interpreted as a result of the twofold challenge of democratisation and globalisation that this historically grown pattern of secularism is facing over the last decades. Further, the article seeks to demonstrate that the nationalist stance of the Church of Greece should not be seen as persistent blind traditionalism and anti-modernism.

Keywords: Secularism; State-church-relations; Modernity; Nationalism; Eastern Orthodoxy; Greece.

Advocates of European modernity and cosmopolitanism in Greece are deeply worried about the actual state as well as the future perspectives of the Church of Greece (CoG). What gives them cause for concern is that the Orthodox Church of the country does not keep pace with the changing world within which it operates. In their eyes, the church is neither able nor willing to adapt to the emerging cultural and political environment. It prefers to hide its head in sand. According to the constitutional law expert Antonis Manitakis, the CoG seems

> to have not realized that we do not live in a closed monolithic society, that the cultural boundaries are abolished and that there are no longer impervious territories controlled by a single church. (Manitakis 2000, p. 14)

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The church is reproached for clinging to nationalism and desperately trying to barricade itself inside the nation-state instead of acknowledging the new role of religion resulting from the growing erosion of the nation-state order and the corresponding emergence of a new global political and cultural reality. Its critics claim,

> in the era of globalisation, state protectionism, complacent isolationism, tenacious ostrich-like behaviour and flight backward are formulas of failure. (Sotirelis 1999, pp. 78-79)

Against the background of the increasing de-nationalisation of the world, its ethnocentric message appears to be

> historically obsolete, at least for the level of cultural development in Greece, socially, as always, indifferent, and morally ignorable. (Manitakis 2000, p. 130)

These concerns about the ideological backwardness of the CoG escalated as a result of its growing presence and increased activities in the Greek public sphere over the last decade. Greek modernists mostly object to the CoG's claim that it can legitimately intervene in political matters. The framing of this ''religious expansionism'' (Mouzelis) as a serious dysfunction of a modern, secular, and functionally differentiated society has led to the repetition of the mantra of state-church separation in the Greek press. According to certain modernist accounts, state-church separation would benefit both state and church. While the political system would become more democratic, the church would have the opportunity to develop into a more spiritual and philanthropic institution (Mouzelis 2008). Sometimes it is even argued that the side to benefit most from state-church separation would be doubtless Orthodoxy (Sotirelis 1999, p. 73). In other words, Greek modernists profess to know better than the church what is good for the church.

The aim of the present article is twofold. On the one hand, I want to take up the question of secularism in modernity, and suggest conceiving of the variations in state-church relations less in terms of different degree and more in terms of different patterns of secularism. On the other hand, the present article seeks to demonstrate that the CoG is not banging its head against a wall, but is reflecting on its position in the national and global arena. My aim is to show that the public performance of the CoG over the last few years is not based on miscalculation; it rests on a well-founded assessment of a suitable way to meet the challenges of contemporary reality. I do not claim that the

nationalist path which the CoG has decided to take is the only way or even the most appropriate way to respond to the challenges it faces, I am rather concerned with the question of whether the church is capable of making a reasonable appraisal of its own position and future in a globalised world. To disapprove the politically reactionary and nationalist ideology of the Orthodox clergy in Greece is one thing; but to claim that, ''they know not what they do'' is quite another.

Two points are central to my argument. First, I suggest that the focus of the analysis be shifted from the church as *religious entity* with a set of appropriate tasks ascribed to it, to the church as an *organisation*. This shift in focus can help both avoid normativity and gain context-sensitivity in the analysis. Accordingly, I do not accept *a priori* that spirituality, non-interference in politics, philanthropic engagement, and a cosmopolitan discourse of hope and fraternisation, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, love and reconciliation, etc. are constituent priorities of a church. Despite their genuinely religious nature, churches have to respond to fundamental problems – their survival and consolidation *as organisations* in a changing world – as do other organisations. Churches that fail to respond to these problems are doomed to disintegrate as organisations sooner or later. By the same token, the capacity of churches to attend to these issues successfully attests to their adaptability and context-bound thinking. Indeed, if churches want to continue to function as social actors, they must *think in context*. They must be fully aware of their own capabilities in the particular historical (local as well global) context in which they are active.

Secondly, I suggest shifting the focus from the strength of the CoG in the narrow religious sphere of Greece to its *structural weakness* within the Greek state. By strongly emphasising the quasi-monopolistic privileges of the CoG in Greece, scholars have rarely turned their attention to the structural weakness of the church, which, however, *lies at the core of the particular pattern of secularism* of the country. Shedding light on the extremely weak position of the CoG vis-à-vis the state would be helpful in two respects. First, it would help recognise the state-church configuration in Greece as a pattern of secularism. Second, it would help avoid a serious shortcoming of modernist and civilisational accounts: the tendency to attribute responsibility to the wrong social actor when something goes wrong in Greece. By overlooking the structural weakness of the CoG some of these accounts boil down to blaming the church – directly or indirectly – for those matters for which the state historically carries the primary responsibility.

Greek state-church relations in crisis

Over the last decade, state-church relations have generated a highly contentious public debate in Greece. The debate involves a broad range of actors such as political parties and individual politicians, members of the Greek Orthodox clergy and its associated organisations, constitutional law experts, sociologists, historians, theologians, journalists, and civil society associations (in particular human rights and religious minority organisations). It has been carried out in numerous academic publications: reports, statements and comments have appeared in Greek mass media. The political background of this controversy is the growing tension in the relations between the Greek government and the CoG since the late 1990s, particularly since the election of the then Metropolitan of Dimitrias (Volos) Christodoulos as Archbishop of Athens and All Greece in 1998. The crisis reached its culmination in an acrimonious dispute about identity cards in the years 2000 and 2001. At that time, the social democratic government under the premiership of Kostas Simitis decided to implement the decision of the newly created Supreme Data Protection Authority to remove the indication of religious affiliation from the identity cards carried by Greek citizens. Pointing out the central importance of the Orthodox faith to Greek national identity, Archbishop Christodoulos called upon the government to reconsider the issue and withdraw the bill. The government, however, refused to negotiate with the church on this matter. It argued that the spheres of authority of the two institutions were clearly distinct and that matters pertaining to the identity cards lay in the domain of state control and regulation. ''We do not rule together,'' was the government's message to the church.[1] Subsequently, the CoG organised popular protest through mass demonstrations and a mass signature campaign. Although the government considered it a closed matter from the very beginning and tried to direct the citizens' attention to issues that enjoyed high priority on its agenda, the dispute about the identity cards dominated Greek public life for about a year overshadowing other issues of great importance to the country, e.g., Greece's entry into the eurozone and Cyprus's entry into the European Union (EU). Finally, the CoG succeeded in collecting over 3 million signatures in support of holding a referendum on the issue of allowing optional entry of religious

[1] For a systematic account of the arguments brought forward by both sides *cf.* Molokotos-Liederman 2003.

affiliation on the identity cards. But despite its impressive capacity to mobilise people, the CoG was unable to assert its will against the state. Finally, both the Council of State (Supreme Administrative Court of Greece) and the European Court of Human Rights dismissed the case of the CoG against the Greek state.

In a way, this dispute between the political leadership of the country and the CoG was anything but exceptional. It simply epitomised the deep crisis that has been developing in their relations over the last decades. Still, the level of discord between state and church never rose as high as it did with regard to the issue of identity cards. One reason for this escalation is the fact that on the issue of identity cards, in contrast to previous disputes, the heads of church and state took a well-defined stand from the outset: the state held that there should be no indication of religious affiliation on the identity card and the church wanted to allow its optional entry. These set positions did not leave much room for mutual concessions, and therefore, neither could compromise without losing face. Moreover, the crisis could not be managed by the familiar principle of treating the controversial regulation as ''valid but inactive,'' because once the prime minister took a clear position in parliament, public opinion would have interpreted any change as an ''unordered withdrawal.'' The major distinction between this conflict and earlier ones, however, is the fact that each side challenged the other's authority to decide the issue. Thus the conflict clearly indicated the entanglement of church and state in Greece.

Despite the significant improvement in the relations between government and church after the victory of the conservative party *Nea Dimokratia* in the 2004 parliamentary elections,[2] the public debate on the relationship between state and church did not end. The Archbishop's provocative comments only a few days after the elections (''Finally, the Almighty Right of the Lord shows what God and the people want'' or ''The situation changes, thank God!''), evoked critical reactions. He continued to voice in public his position on all issues of ''national'' importance (from the Annan plan for reunification of Cyprus and the admission of Turkey in the EU, all the way to the contents of history school books), which invariably raised

[2] Prominent members of the *Nea Dimokratia* party, first and foremost party leader and later Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, had supported the signature campaign of the church during the identity card crisis and even presented their support as a matter of belief. But after their election victory, to which the church also contributed, they had no qualms about considering the question of the identity cards as a closed matter (Ta Nea, 2007, November 16).

the question of state-church relations. In spring 2004, the CoG once more was in the forefront of public debate as a result of a dispute with the Patriarchate of Constantinople about the jurisdiction to appoint bishops in the so-called ''New Lands'' of Greece, i.e. the territories incorporated into the Greek state after the Balkan Wars and World War I. And, last but not the least, the disclosure of an unprecedented corruption scandal, which exposed a criminal network of members of the judiciary and the clergy in 2005 once more brought the CoG into the limelight. Expectedly, the public controversy on state-church relations in Greece did not come to an end with the passing away of Archbishop Christodoulos in January 2008. In the run-up to the election of his successor and long-time adversary, Archbishop Ieronymos, the issue was widely commented upon in the press. Since then, every reference to controversial statements or dubious dealings of clergymen triggers the demand for a clear separation of church and state. The debate has developed its own dynamics and is no longer limited to the persons originally involved. It reflects a structural problem that cannot be solved through change of persons.

Explanations and objections

At the core of the debate lies the question of secularism in Greece. Both modernists and church frame the crisis as a dispute over the secular or non-secular nature and future of the Greek state. Since secularisation theory has always been a particular strand of modernisation theory, it is hardly surprising that the issue is framed using the dichotomy of modernity vs. tradition. According to the modernist narrative, politics, and especially the social democratic government, represents modernity while the church embodies tradition. Modernity stands, among other things, for rationality and individuality, liberal democracy, cosmopolitanism and openness towards the world, future-orientedness (progress) and, last but not the least, for secularisation: a process in which religious thought, practices and institutions lose their social significance as a consequence of a clear-cut distinction between public and private spheres. Since religion, due to its non-rational foundations, has to be relegated to the private sphere of modern life and the government of a modern state may not interfere in the private matters of citizens, the removal of the entry of religious affiliation from Greek identity cards was considered a step towards

modernity. Correspondingly, the reaction of the church is framed in terms of traditionalism and anti-modernism, i.e. commitment to irrationality and communitarianism, ethnonationalism, closedness towards the outside world, past-orientedness (conservativism) and anti-secularism. The church's refusal to withdraw from the political arena is viewed as a serious obstacle to modernisation.

Problems related to modernity and secularism in Greece are often formulated with arguments borrowed from civilisation theory, even though authors may not always refer to it explicitly. This is not surprising either, taking into consideration that, since Max Webers' seminal work on the Protestant Ethic, the exploration of the (in-)compatibility of religions/denominations with modernity has developed into a very popular exercise among social scientists. In the comparison of major Christian denominations, Eastern Orthodoxy comes off particularly badly (*cf.* Mihelj 2007; Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005, p. 19; Makrides 2005, p. 185). So, if Protestantism has contributed decisively to the emergence of modernity, Eastern Orthodoxy has proved to be an impediment to it (*cf.* Pollis 1992, 1993; Mappa 1997). The civilisation theory arguments primarily refer to the intellectual and political tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy: mysticism in the religious experience; the fact that this part of the world has never experienced the major intellectual developments of Western civilisation such as the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment; the concept of the person in Eastern Orthodoxy which does not allow the development of the concepts of the individual and of human rights; the centuries-old caesaropapist configuration of power in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe etc. Following Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) and extensively quoting Adamantia Pollis (1987, 1993), Payne (2003) frames the disputes between church and state over the identity cards, religious freedom and homosexuality in contemporary Greece as a clash of civilisations, caused by the fact that Greece is part of the Orthodox civilization as well as member of the European Union. Since the philosophical traditions and values of Western liberal civilisation represented by the European Union seem to be incompatible with those of Eastern Orthodox civilisation, the European integration process inevitably leads to a clash of civilisations.

My objections against these narratives, which are widely used to explain the recent crisis between state and church in Greece, are methodological, conceptual and empirical. The *methodological* objections relate to the access to, and thereby the spectrum of, data used to analyse the conflict. As Anastassiadis has established, a basic problem

with the analysis of the crisis using civilisation and modernisation theory lies in the emphasis on the level of public discourse (public addresses, statements, sermons, interviews, texts, etc.) (Anastassiadis 2004) and consequently in the disproportionate attention given to the self-representation of the actors involved. One could argue that the actors deliver the categories and concepts for the analyses. While Greek governments and especially the last social democratic government (1996-2004) made extensive use of the semantics of modernity in their self-representation, the church took up the role of the keeper of tradition.[3] Deducing the grounds for actors' performance exclusively from their self-representation is, however, more than questionable. In fact, we must ask ourselves why actors represent themselves the way they do. Categories used by social actors, even if they have a long tradition as analytical categories in the history of social science, should be treated primarily as categories of practice (*cf.* Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Brubaker 2005). After all, keywords like ''modernity'' and ''tradition'' are very popular in Greece and can be, therefore, used to mobilise people.

My *conceptual* objections are based on the extensive criticism of the classical sociological concept of modernity and modernisation and the related macro-sociological theories. In the present context, I would like to confine myself to three points: first, the sharply dichotomous terms in which these theories structure human development (tradition-modernity, community-society, religion-science, irrationality-rationality, ascription-achievement, etc.) lead to a considerably distorted perception of both ''life in tradition'' and ''life in modernity.'' The widely accepted but hardly sustainable proposition of secularisation theory, according to

[3] The following statements by Archbishop Christodoulos and Prime Minister Simitis during the identity card crisis are typical of these positions. Archbishop Christodoulos: ''Some intellectuals, advocates of *the Enlightenment* and the *allegedly religiously neutral society,* are trying to impose a brutal and inhuman regime over the conscience of believers, all in the name of freedom and *human rights*. Behind this obstinacy lies the secret wish to transform Greece into a *secular* state. We want discussion but our partners in the discussion must have felt and experienced what *Orthodox moral* and *Greek-Orthodox tradition* mean and not have any inferiority complexes towards other cultures and moral conceptions'' (Excerpt of the program ''The hour of the Archbishop'' on the broadcasting station of the CoG, 14.04.2000, cited in Eleftherotypia, 15.05.2000).
Prime Minister Simitis: ''We must finally accept that it is an achievement of our civilisation that the state is no longer interested today in our *inner world*, as was unfortunately the case in earlier times. ... The entry of our religion in our personal documents is directly or indirectly limiting and violating the citizen's *religious freedom* ... With this statement, the government wishes to close this matter. It is a matter that has taken an unexpected dimension for a mature society; ... a self-evident matter in a *modern* state under the rule of law'' (Minutes of a parliamentary meeting on 24.05.2000 from the Website of the Greek Parliament).

which people in Europe were devoted Christians in the Middle Ages and lost or would lose their belief against the background of growing rationalisation in the era of modernity, is a typical example of such a distorted perception (Stark 1999). Rather than defining a historical break caused by modernity, the above-mentioned opposition series represent complementary processes and structures of modernity. ''Tradition,'' ''customs,'' ''community,'' ''ethnicity'' and even ''religion'' do not refer to pre-modern elements to be doomed in the era of modernity, but rather to products of modernity (*cf*. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983; Asad 1993; van der Veer 2001). Secondly, as a theory that elevates a particular configuration of social processes in the West to the rank of universal norms, the classical theory of modernity/modernisation is both ethnocentric and hegemonic. By strongly emphasising ''endogenous'' factors of development, it systematically disregards the constitutive importance of Western domination over the rest of the world for modernity in the West (Randeria *et al*. 2004). Last but not least, the classical concept of modernity/modernisation, not unlike evolutionism in nineteenth century anthropology, lacks context-sensitivity and historical contingency. It is unidirectional, teleological and, therefore, has strong essentialist traits.

The multifarious critiques of the classical concept led to a paradigm shift in the sociology of modernity. The theory of multiple modernities conceives of modernity as an open project and contextualises it in space and time (Daedalus 2000; Eisenstadt 2000). The new pluralist perspective identifies several routes to (Therborn 1995), and configurations of, modernity with their inherent contradictions in different parts of the world. Development patterns or models which are different from those in the West are no longer viewed as anomalies, aberrations or obstacles, but as concrete projects generated under certain local and historical conditions. This perspective, which has also gained ground in the analysis of state-church relations in the Orthodox world (Prodromou 2002, 2004; Roudometof 2005), enables us to capture the relation of the Orthodox churches to modernity much more accurately than has been the case hitherto. It provides the opportunity to grasp the notorious anti-Western attitude of Eastern Orthodoxy not as a refusal of modernity *per se*, but as a rejection of a specific hegemonic concept of modernity (Makrides 2005).

Acknowledging the plurality of modernities enables us to admit a plurality of routes to, and configurations of, secularism in modern states. One of the most widespread misunderstandings of the strand of secularisation theory focusing on state-church relations is the equation

of certain configurations like ''state-church separation'' or ''neutrality of the state towards all religious communities'' with secularism *per se*. Both conceptions of secularism are rooted in the idea that modernity and liberalism are inherently connected; the connection, however, has been historically contingent. Secularism in modern states is not limited to the above-mentioned configurations. As in many other countries in which the state was the main moving force of modernisation, the route to secularism in modern Greece was state control over religious institutions. As Nikki Keddie put it,

> some applications of secularism in practice mean something quite antithetical to the ideal of church-state separation. They produce instead increasing control of the church by the state. ... In such countries, with strong religious institutions that formerly controlled much of law, education and social welfare, the state had to take power from those institutions to introduce modernising and centralising changes. (Keddie 1997, p. 25)

The outcome of this route to secularism varies from country to country. Not only the degree of state control differs, but patterns of secularism based on state control vary as well. Modern Turkey and Greece are cases in point. In Turkey, where the master narratives of the nation-state have been formulated in clear contradistinction to the religious foundations of the imperial past, state control involved efforts to keep religious symbolism out of public life. If the extensive *interference of the state in religious affairs* is occasionally viewed as consistent with secularism, the reason may lie in the tension between the concepts of nation and religion in the history of modern Turkey. In Greece, in contrast, where the tension between nation and religion has never assumed proportions similar to those in Turkey, state control over religious institutions has been combined with the protectionist regulation of the religious market and the prevalence of Eastern Orthodox symbols in the public. In both Turkey and Greece, however, state control has targeted at – and finally succeeded in – weakening the former powerful religious institutions and limiting their scope of action to a considerable extent. The fact that these patterns, and in particular the Greek one, normally are not qualified as secularism but often as its opposite is not a result of their failure, but because they deviate from the ''orthodox'' model. We should keep in mind that words like ''control and power ... all too rarely enter the discussion of secularism'' (Keddie 1997, p. 32).

Referring to the classical theory of secularisation David Martin remarked, ''it could be criticized as an ideological and philosophical imposition *on* history rather than an inference *from* history'' (Martin

2005, p. 19). In essence, such a statement entails the demand for sociological research to move away from *a priori* theorising and become more empirical. The same demand arises from acknowledging the relevance of local-historical contexts for the emergence of social designs in the paradigm of multiple modernities. A turn towards more empirical research could make for both a more differentiated picture of reality and a more balanced view about similarities and variations between modern societies. In the case of the classical theories of modernity and secularisation, the imposition of abstract models on empirical reality resulted in empirical deviations from the abstract model being either downplayed or not perceived in the West, while they were emphasised outside the West. In the same way, similarities between the West and other parts of the world were overlooked or downplayed. Essentialist civilisation theory, which hardly took into consideration the internal plurality, dynamics, adaptability and compatibility of Eastern Orthodoxy with democracy (Makrides 2005; Prodromou 2004, 1994) had similar consequences. It could only boil down to the orientalisation of Eastern Orthodoxy (Prodromou 1996, pp. 134-142; *cf*. Fokas 2000, pp. 291-295). My *empirical* objections to the analyses of the crisis between state and church in Greece based on modernisation and civilisation theory are raised against this background. They relate to the highly selective treatment of empirical phenomena, typical of approaches based on essentialist and ideal-typical perception of reality.

Critiques of state-church relations in Greece and the religiously partisan stance of the Greek state occasionally point out state-church separation and religious neutrality of the state in Western Europe, although this ''European Europe'' (in Maria Todorova's terms) can hardly claim state-church separation or religious neutrality of the state for itself (*cf*. Keddie 1997, pp. 24-25; Davie 2001, p. 457; Madeley and Enyedi 2003). This distorted perception of Western secularism is not unique to Greece. It appears to be typical of countries of the periphery. The idealisation of the West has always been an essential component of the construction of backwardness of the ''rest'' by modernist discourse. As Rajeev Barghava put it, however,

> Western secularism, too, is essentially contested, with no agreement on what it entails, the values it seeks to promote, or how best to pursue it. ... [E]ach country in the West has worked out a particular political compromise rather than implementing a solution uniquely required by the configuration of values embodied in secularism. The separation thesis means different things in the US, in France, Germany and Britain, and, is interpreted differently at different times in each place. (Barghava 1998, p. 3)

The repeated demand of advocates of Western modernity in Greece that the CoG should concentrate on its original tasks, i.e. the tasks attributed to it in a modern, liberal, functionally differentiated society, and leave the field of politics to the politicians, is selective in two respects. On the one hand, one has to raise the counterfactual question whether these advocates of Western European modernity in Greece would ever have made the same appeal to the church, had the latter – for whichever reason – supported the government's modernisation agenda publicly and by all possible means. As this is not very likely, there are grounds for believing that the so-called problem of secularism in Greece lies not so much in the fact that the church expresses political views but rather in what it actually says.[4] On the other hand, the request to keep out of politics should not be addressed exclusively to the CoG. The ''Note on the general elections of 2008'' published by the Spanish Bishops' Conference encouraging Spanish voters to elect parties and programmes that ''are compatible with the belief and the requirements of life as a Christian'' (such as ''the defence of human life as from conception'' and the promotion of the family ''based on marriage between man and woman''), and more particularly, the mention in the note that ''a just society may not recognise terrorist organisations as political dialogue partners,'' goes far beyond the original tasks of the church in Western Europe as well. While the speech addressed by the Valencian Cardinal Agustín García-Gasco to over 160,000 demonstrators in Madrid (expressing his criticism of the ''nefarious laws'' and the underlying ''culture of radical laicism'' which leads to the ''dissolution of democracy'') (Tagesanzeiger 03.03.2008) is evocative of the speeches of Archbishop Christodoulos made to the cheering masses in Athens and Thessaloniki in June 2001, how is one to judge the reaction of Prime Minister Zapatero, who threatened to cut the church's subsidies, if it did not stay out of politics? Could it be called modern and secular, according to the principles of a strict state-church separation or state neutrality? And would Prime Minister Zapatero have ever asked the church to stay out of politics if it had supported him and not his rival? Typical of an orientalistic discourse, similar events in Greece are framed as problems of incomplete secularism, i.e. a low degree of institutional

[4] Stavrakakis refers to the all-encompassing social significance of politics in our times and makes the following comment, ''it is not politicization *in general* which is to blame; on the contrary, it is only politicization that will make possible, in due course, the democratization of Church institutions themselves. It is the *particular* politicization many dislike'' (Stavrakakis 2003, p. 163).

differentiation between the political and the religious spheres (Mouzelis 2008), whereas this is not the case in Spain. In any case, the entanglement of state and church, in the form of either churches interfering in the relationship between state and citizens or political establishment (or institutions) lending manifold support to churches, has a long-standing tradition in Western Europe. Denying this does not help in understanding events in Greece. Similarly, civilisational analyses of the conflict clearly betray the imposition of abstract models on reality and selective use of data, when we consider that in the last decade the relationship between the CoG and the Vatican was at its best ever (Anastassiadis 2004, pp. 16, 24, 31-32) while the relationship between the CoG and the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been through one of the worst crises in its history.

The pattern of secularism in modern Greece

The pattern of secularism in modern Greece has two core dimensions: (a) transformation of the church into a state authority and the resulting limitation of both its sphere of responsibility and its organisational capabilities, and (b) secularisation of the church's ideology, i.e. appropriation of the secular state ideology by the church. In the narrow religious sphere, the church did not forfeit its dominant position. The latter was even strengthened by state protection. Critics of state-church relations in Greece tend to focus on the hegemonic position of the church, in order to establish lack of secularism. However, only by turning attention to the secular control over, and ideology of, the church, the state-church configuration in Greece can be recognised as a pattern of *secularism* in a modern nation state.

The hegemonic position of the church in Greece

The problem of secularism in Greece is often described as a problem of both *incomplete differentiation* between the political and religious spheres and *curtailment of religious freedom*. Much of the discussion involves the Greek constitution. In the eyes of some scholars it is the constitution, which allows and legitimates the strong public presence of the CoG and its officials in Greece (Lipowatz 1998). As far as religious freedom is concerned, the opinions of constitutional law experts vary. Whereas former minister Venizelos is of

the opinion that the constitution guarantees the citizen freedom of religion and, thus, there is no need for a wide-ranging constitutional revision (*cf.* Venizelos 2000), others maintain that some constitutional articles allow for interpretations which result in a violation of the very religious freedom that the constitution is said to protect (*cf.* Alivizatos 1999, 2000; Sotirelis 1999).

As in almost all previous Greek constitutions, the preamble to the current constitution (since 1975) provides: ''In the Name of the Holy, Consubstantial and Undivided Trinity.'' The President (Art. 33, § 2) as well as the members of the parliament (Art. 59, § 1) have to take oath in the Name of the Holy Trinity, while provision for an alternative oath is made for deputies of other faiths but not for the non-religious (Art. 59, § 2). The swearing-in ceremony of the President, the members of parliament, and even the government – for which there is no formal regulation – takes place in the presence of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. The constitutional article according to which the religion of the ''Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ'' is the prevailing religion in the country (Art. 3, § 1) is also a remnant of all previous constitutions. The article that grants freedom of religious belief (Art. 13) considers only ''known'' religions (§ 2 and 3) and strictly forbids proselytising (§ 2). Furthermore, the state commits itself in its educational mission to nurture the national and religious conscience of the Greek people (Art. 16, § 2). This commitment is the legal foundation for both the daily prayers in schools and the state's assumption of the costs for the Orthodox tuition in Greek schools.

According to the constitutional law expert Nicos Alivizatos, the privileges of the CoG in the Greek state order derive from two different sources in Greek law: the legal status of the CoG as a *public law entity* and *the prevailing religion clause* in the Greek constitution. Referring to privileges deriving from the legal status as a public law entity like tax-exemption, remuneration by the state and execution of administrative acts, he remarks that they ''do not in fact differ substantially from the advantages granted even to non-established churches by other European legal orders.'' The most important privilege of the CoG deriving from *the prevailing religion clause* in the Greek constitution is Orthodox tuition in the Greek schools. He concludes that

> although these privileges are generally more important and wider ranging than in other European models, they are not exceedingly so. ... [I]n some respects Greece grants fewer privileges of this sort than countries such as Ireland and, more recently, Poland and Croatia, which have given the Roman Catholic Church a more important role on societal issues like abortion and divorce. (Alivizatos 1999, pp. 27-28)

Indeed, the individual constitutional articles and legal provisions are far from unique in an international comparison. The peculiarity of Greece lies in the ''*extent* of the complex of regulations concerning the relations between church and state, and which *as a whole* is unique in Europe'' (Fountedaki 2000, p. 660, italics in text; *cf.* Fountedaki 2002, p. 192).

The CoG is not the only religious institution to enjoy this legal status in Greece. The Central Israelite Council of Greece and its various communities are also public law entities, whereas the mufti authorities are state departments, and the muftis are upper-level public servants. It is the legal status of the direct competitors of the CoG (i.e. the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches) as well as other more or less ''known'' religions, which is often unclear and entails serious negative consequences affecting their work in Greece. Granted that the status of a religious institution as a public law entity involves not only privileges but also state control, the churches that do not enjoy this status are, in effect, no more free than the churches that enjoy it. Rather, they are hindered in doing their work. This brings us to a further source of the dominant position of the CoG in the country: the restriction of the religious freedom of non-Orthodox people due to certain legal provisions (*cf.* Alivizatos 1999, pp. 28-32) as well as political practices. Giorgos Sotirelis summarises the various forms of curbs upon religious freedom in Greece as violations of the following rights: (a) the right to free religious education, (b) the right to conceal one's religious beliefs, (c) the right to disseminate religious beliefs, and (d) the right of freedom of worship. He adds that several other regulations and practices on the part of the secular and religious establishments contribute to a further aggravation of this situation (Sotirelis 1999, pp. 21-41).

Even if certain constitutional and legal provisions may seem neutral at first sight, in practice they prove to be protecting the CoG from its competitors. Although the prohibition of proselytism applies also to the CoG – in contrast to past legislation that prohibited proselytising only *against* the CoG – it is obvious that the latter is not affected by it as 97 % of the Greek population are at least nominally Orthodox. The prohibition to proselytise in conjunction with the engagement of the state in Orthodox education constitutes the main tool for regulating the Greek religious market in favour of the CoG. The way in which formally neutral regulations work as pillars of the CoG is unsheathed most obviously in the strict prohibition of conscientious objection for religious reasons in Greece up until quite

recently. With the exception of members of the Greek Orthodox clergy, this prohibition has always applied to all male citizens, independently of their belief. In practice, however, conscientious objectors in Greece have been almost exclusively Jehovah's Witnesses. Between the introduction of this regulation during the Greek civil war (1946-1949) and its relaxation in 1997 and 2001, two men were executed, five tortured to death, forty-two sentenced to death and another twenty-six condemned to serve a life sentence; a further sixty-eight were deported to camps and over three thousand were condemned to prison sentences of up to fourteen years (Beis 2001). Until 1997, ''more than 100 persons per year were being sentenced by courts-martial for insubordination because they refused to wear the uniform,'' while over the last two decades of the last century ''the average number of those permanently held in jail for this reason was approximately 300'' (Alivizatos 1999, p. 31). Moreover, until 2001, conscientious objectors were in fact excluded from public service since their convictions for insubordination were entered in their criminal records. Thus there were serious disincentives for converting from Orthodoxy to the creed of the Jehovah's Witness.

In sum, the Greek state regulates the religious market in Greece in a way which guarantees the hegemonic position to the CoG. This position is reflected in the ubiquity of Eastern Orthodoxy's symbols in Greek everyday life. The omnipresence of Orthodoxy goes hand-in-hand with the almost total absence of symbols of other denominations or religions. Even so this state protectionism *does not exclude* secularism. As already indicated earlier, equating secularism with church-state separation or state neutrality assumes that modernity is necessarily connected to liberalism: the connection between the two is arbitrary, however.

Making the church a state authority

From the very beginning, the driving power of secularisation, and modernisation in general, in Greece has been the state. The route to secularism consisted in the submission of the church to secular state power. This had a twofold structural impact on the church: first, it significantly limited the sphere of responsibility of church, i.e. the church was marginalised in numerous substantial domains of public life (e.g. education, law, and administration), in which it played a seminal role in the past (Makrides 1997); and second, it hampered growth of the church's organisational capabilities, i.e. it structurally debilitated

church as organisation. Consequently, the church never developed the capacity to evolve and follow an agenda independently of the state.

Already the establishment of the autocephalous CoG resulted in the complete subordination of the church to the Greek state. As the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the historical centre of Greek Orthodoxy, lay outside the borders of the newly founded state and the Patriarch was thus considered a ''hostage'' to Ottoman power, the demand for an independent church was raised very early in independent Greece. In particular, West-oriented liberal intellectuals (''secularists'') advocated the dissociation from the Patriarchate. In 1833, only a year after the borders of the new state were mapped, the autocephalous CoG was founded. The autocephaly had a vast impact on the Orthodox Church in Greece. The church changed from an institution that embodied the Greek nation to a state authority (Stavrakakis 2003, p. 165). In addition, independence from the Patriarchate did not entail self-administration. The Catholic king became head of the church and its administration, and a synod consisting of five members nominated by the government was to hold the spiritual leadership of the church. No decision of this synod was valid in the absence of the royal commissioner; nor could any synodal decision be published or executed without prior approval of the government. Further, the synod, or any other spiritual authority or individual clergyman was prohibited from corresponding or directly contacting an external worldly or spiritual authority without prior approval of the responsible government department (Wittig 1987, p. 82).[5] Next to the limitation of the church's sphere of responsibility, the range of ''internal church affairs'' was considerably reduced. Even excommunication was defined as a ''political act'' and could not be implemented without prior consultation of the state authorities and appearance of the affected person in front of a court (Vogli 2008, pp. 183-184). So, the entanglement of state and church in Greece is a result of the secularisation of Greek public life.

In the following decades, the law regulating state-church relations did not change much. Since 1844 the king was no longer the head of the church, but many matters pertaining to the internal

[5] In order to explain this ordinance historically, particular reference is made to the Protestant background of the then co-regent Georg Ludwig von Maurer. Further, the Bavarian consistorial constitution of the time, the national churches in the Protestant West, and the Russian Orthodox Church have been referred to as models of this state-church configuration. However, one should not disregard the fact that the ordinance was authored with significant Greek participation and met with the approval of the bishops (*cf.* Frazee 1969; Wittig 1987, pp. 80-85).

administration of the church continued to remain within his competence. It is symptomatic of the development of the state-church relations in Greece that church charters guaranteeing a certain degree of autonomy in internal administration matters were only enacted in 1923 and 1943, when the Greek state was in a very weak position. In 1923, the Greek state was considerably weakened as a result of long-lasting wars, the devastating defeat of the Greek troops in Asia Minor, and the deep division of the Greek society due to the ongoing political dispute between liberals and royalists. The church charter of 1923, which introduced for the first time a synod of all bishops (synod of hierarchy) as the supreme authority of the church, did not remain in force very long, however. Against the background of the political troubles of the 1920s and 1930s it was first changed, and then suspended. A church charter granting a certain degree of autonomy to the church was only enacted again in 1943 by a very weak Greek government under German occupation (Wittig 1987, pp. 95-100). At the end of the 1960s, the military junta abolished the existing church charter and replaced it by one that assured the state greater scope for intervention. Finally, the autonomy of the church was ensured again to some degree after the fall of the junta and the democratisation of the country, i.e. with the constitution of 1975 and the church charter of 1977. Still, there can be no question of an independent CoG. The inner administration of the church including its relationship to the Patriarchate of Constantinople remains regulated by state law and cannot be modified unilaterally by the church. Moreover, canonical edicts of the church are only valid after their publication in the government gazette. The fact that the election of the Archbishop of Athens takes place in the presence of the Minister of Education and Religion may be of only symbolic significance but is still indicative of the overall relationship.

Since the state has tight control over the church, political crises rapidly become church crises (Karagiannis 1997). Modifications of the church charter generally went hand-in-hand with political changes and power struggles. The leading organs of the church were repeatedly bypassed, regulations were introduced that benefited the election of bishop candidates favoured by the state, and non-compliant synods were suspended. Among the fourteen hierarchs who held the office of the Bishop and (since 1923) Archbishop of Athens in the twentieth century, seven were forced to resign, one of them twice, while another's election was subsequently not recognised and the elected bishop was even banned before he could accede to the seat of the Archbishop three years later.

Subordination of the church to the state is further reflected in repeated confiscations of land ''owned'' by the church. According to the former Director of Economic Affairs of the CoG, the property of the church has shrunk to a mere 4 % of its original size since the foundation of the Greek state (Pylarinos 2002). Already in the first decade after the foundation of the Greek state, numerous convents were dissolved and their land expropriated. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, properties belonging to convents were made available to landless farmers under the aegis of extensive land reforms. In 1952, the church handed over 80 % of its serviceable land (arable land and pastures) to the state.[6] From the point of view of the CoG, throughout these expropriations the state hardly fulfilled its obligations towards the church.

Although the idea that the CoG owns a ''property of mythical proportions'' is widespread in contemporary Greece, the church seems to encounter serious difficulties when it tries to exploit this property. It is noteworthy that its lands are not administered centrally but by 6,700 public entities (convents, parishes, dioceses, etc.). The exact extent of these properties has never been recorded, and when titles exist at all, they are contentious. In addition, legal restrictions set considerable limits to the exploitation of this property (Nikolopoulos 2005). The state alone is in a position to establish clarity in the confused ownership structures. Until it takes the necessary steps, the property of the church will remain a matter of negotiation between two unequal partners.

Church leaders and officials tend to link the funding of the clergy's salaries from the state treasury – first introduced in 1945 and later developed into a very controversial issue – to the confiscation of the church's land property in the past. As the recent Archbishop of Athens put it some years ago,

> the payment of the Orthodox clergy's salaries is the minimum compensation for the bulk of the property handed over by the church to the state or snatched by the latter in various ways. (Ieronymos 2005)[7]

[6] The last time the state made efforts to confiscate church property was in the late 1980s. This time the government's plans met with strong opposition from the church. In the end, both sides came to a compromise, the implementation of which, however, was held in abeyance in the following years.

[7] It is worth noting here that, in 1952, the Greek government extorted the assent of the church to its plans by threatening, among other things, to stop paying the clergy's salaries (Karagiannis 1997, p. 108). Accordingly, the church now claims that it would bear the costs for the clergy's salaries if it could get the property back, for which it did not obtain appropriate compensation (Nikolopoulos 2005).

Even if there is no formal or legal ground for connecting these two issues (clergy's salaries and compensation for confiscated land), they can hardly be dissociated from each other. If for no reason other than the fact that state-church relations in Greece are a political matter and not a matter of law in the strict sense. Some people may consider the state funding of the clergy's salaries unacceptable in a secular state, but it does not imply lack of secularism in Greece. What this funding shows is the church's economic dependence on the state and its extremely weak position vis-à-vis the state.

Furthermore, the subordination to the state had consequences, which aggravated the already weak position of the church. Television and press reports in 2005, which brought to light the involvement of the clergy in manipulated judgments, embezzlement of funds, blackmail, criminal networks, sex scandals, etc., did not really come as a surprise to either the pious or the agnostic Greeks. In fact, these lapses dramatically demonstrated what the Greeks have known for a long time: a significant part of the Orthodox clergy is highly corrupt and morally questionable. The argument that the clergy's corruption is an inevitable effect of the church's role as extension of the exceedingly corrupt Greek public administration (Mouzelis 2008, 1998a, 1998b), can hardly be dismissed. Corruption and other scandals, in turn, have contributed decisively, though not exclusively, to shaking the people's trust in the church's ethical resources. The lower the trust in the moral integrity of the clergy, the more dependent the church becomes on the state for its survival. Finally, the idea suggests itself that there is a systemic relationship between corruption, clergy selection and the ''administrative'' role of the church in Greece. As the educational requirements to become a priest in Greece are very low,[8] ordination to the priesthood becomes an easy path to ''public service,'' i.e. a job funded by the state. This is bound to affect the profile of people who choose to enter the clergy.

The CoG has never existed as an independent entity and therefore never learned to act independently. This lack of experience limits its scope of action even more. It never had to worry about gaining members or increasing its legitimacy among the population as other churches do. It could not and did not have to create its own basis of legitimacy. Bearing in mind that social welfare work today has

[8] According to official data of the CoG, in 2002, only 2614 (30 %) of the total of 8,663 priests of the CoG had a university degree; 2,354 (27 %) had attended secondary school to grade 12; 1,815 (21 %), secondary school to grade 9; and 1,880 (just under 22 %) were elementary school graduates (Antoniadou 2002).

developed into one of the core bases of legitimacy of churches all over the world, the question arises whether there is a systemic link between the limited scope and the antiquated nature of the CoG's social welfare work on the one hand, and its externally secured legitimacy (by the state) on the other. Even if the CoG enjoys (independently of its spiritual and material resources) a hegemonic position thanks to government support, which other churches can only dream of, this must not belie its evident structural weakness. The Orthodox Church in Greece has never been as weak and as lacking in resources as in the modern Greek state.

Secularisation of the church's ideology

The strong and extensive state control of the church in modern Greece and its marginalisation in social life resulted in both transformation of the church into a mechanism providing legitimacy to political power and full adoption by the church of the master ideology of the modern Greek state: *nationalism*. In a society plagued by serious contradictions,

> Orthodoxy remained pivotal in the articulation of the state's hegemonic ideology and was used as a medium of social cohesion and integration. (Makrides 1997, p. 190)

The nationalisation of the church's ideology went along with the construction of a particular version of Greek national history in the second half of nineteenth century, which provided the ideological justification for Greek irredentism (the so-called *Megali Idea*) in the following decades. This narrative postulated a cultural continuity of the Greek nation from ancient Hellenism through the imperial tradition of the Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman rule to modern Greece. By reconciling the tension between Hellenism and Christianity this ''invented national tradition'' invited the church to make its own contribution to the future of the Greek nation.[9] A serious effect of the ideological congruence between state and church in Greece was the conflation of religious and national symbols (*cf.* Gazi 2007).

[9] Former President Christos Sartzetakis (1985-1990), an outright nationalist, expressed the state's expectations from the church in his plea in favour of the independence of the CoG from the Patriarchate of Constantinople: ''... [H]ad the autocephaly [of the Church of Greece] not existed ... our church would not have been able to support us and to bless our weapons during the subsequent advance to free Greek regions'' (Sartzetakis 2003).

The adoption of the Greek nationalist ideology by the CoG was a pragmatic decision of the latter. As Makrides put it,

> its enforced marginalisation rendered the adoption of a survival policy absolutely necessary. Its worldliness was in fact a defensive mechanism, designed to prove that despite its status being challenged and its internal deficiencies, it still had a pivotal and functional social role to perform. ... In this way, the church managed to polish its public image and to compensate for its numerous deficiencies in other domains. (Makrides 1997, pp. 185-190)

From this perspective, the strong link between Orthodoxy and Greek identity appears to have even been strengthened by the process of secularisation.

Throughout the history of independent Greece, the CoG strongly supported Greek nationalism and irredentism. The nationalisation of Eastern Orthodoxy was not confined only within the borders of the Greek state, however. The situation was much the same in Bulgaria, where the nationalised Orthodox Church was involved even in forcible conversions of Muslims during the Balkan Wars (Velinov 2001, pp. 87-95; Karagiannis 2005, pp. 79-81). In the early 20th century, nationalism had penetrated even the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Kitromilides 1989, pp. 183-184).[10] Finally, nationalism managed to marginalise universalistic versions of Eastern Orthodoxy to a significant extent. On occasions, the church's nationalism in Greece was so radical and uncompromising that it became a problem for the political leadership of the country.

During and after the civil war (1946-1949), which left a deep divide in Greek society, the CoG developed into one of the main carriers of the second master ideology of the Greek state: anticommunism. The term *ethnikofrosyni* (''national-mindedness''), widely used in post-war Greece until the mid-1970s, indicates a particular combination of nationalism and anticommunism (*cf.* Alivizatos 1983). While clergymen who had sympathised or collaborated with the left-controlled resistance against the German occupation were expelled from the ranks of the church, those who took up the cause of anticommunism gained the upper hand. The church's engagement in anticommunist nationalism since the Civil War also entailed the cooperation of clergymen with the armed forces. Several powerful clergymen of this period had ''served'' in the national army during the civil war, while others offered their services even in the anticommunist concentration

[10] Against the background of their implacable confrontation with the Bulgarian Exarchate, bishops of the Greek Patriarchate increasingly identified with Greek nationalism, though the Patriarchate had officially condemned nationalism some decades ago.

camp of Makronisos, ''making their own contribution to the 're-education of the detainees''' (Karagiannis 1997, p. 92). In view of the prevalence of anticommunism in post-war Greek politics as well as the increasing political influence of paraecclesiastical organisations championing the ideological fusion of nationalism, anticommunism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the CoG moved more and more toward the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum. Next to the royal court and the armed forces, the church constituted a central pillar of the post-war ''Kingdom of the Right'' (Svoronos 2007, p. 144), which violated democratic procedures and fundamental citizen rights under the pretence of fighting against communist danger. The following regime of the military junta (1967-1974) enjoyed decisive support from the CoG. No word of protest was heard from the church when the civil rights and liberties of Greek citizens were trampled upon: many were arrested, tortured and deported to concentration camps. Quite the contrary, many years after the fall of the junta regime, right-wing populist nationalism survives in the CoG, despite its remarkably low level of appeal to the Greek population. So, Archbishop Christodoulos did not shy away from praising the patriotism of putschist officers and other Greek fascists publicly (Lipowatz 1998).

The nationalisation of the church's ideology is especially visible in the deep involvement of the CoG in issues of ''national'' importance. One recent example is its active role in organising mass demonstrations against the ''appropriation'' of the name *Macedonia* by the newly independent former Yugoslav republic. The strongest resistance against a compromise in this extremely embarrassing matter still comes from the church. Similar radical nationalist reactions come from the church with regard to the Cyprus issue or Turkey's inclusion in the European Union. In fact, the CoG does not interfere in all political matters; primarily it takes up issues, which are of ''national'' importance. By equating identity cards with national identity, the church also managed to transform the entry of religious affiliation in the Greek identity cards into a national – non-religious – issue. Nowhere is the primacy of nationalism over religion, however, exemplified more clearly than in the CoG's view concerning the conscientious objectors who invoke religious grounds. The CoG and, in particular, Archbishop Christodoulos repeatedly criticised the right of Greek citizens to conscientious objection for religious reasons pointing out the harmful consequences of this right for *national security*. Archbishop Christodoulos even went as far as suggesting lobotomy as the appropriate measure to bring those citizens to reason (Christodoulos 1995).

The nationalisation of the ideology of the CoG sheds a different light on its hegemonic position in modern Greece. As an institution that is primarily concerned with the destiny of the nation and not a religious community in a strict sense, the church appears as a predominantly secular institution. Its hegemonic position and the numerous Orthodox symbols found in everyday life in Greece attest therefore not so much to the ubiquity of religious but rather nationalist ideology in the country. This observation points to a small but significant differentiation concerning the link between nation and religion in Greece (as well as in most of the Balkan states): it is not the belief itself but the formal representations of the belief that are pivotal to the concept of the nation in this part of the world. If nationalism is considered an integral part of modernity, the link between religious and national symbolism is to be understood as a particularity of modernity in this part of the world. Moreover, it provides evidence of Eastern Orthodoxy's capacity to adapt to a changing world (Makrides 2005, p. 198). Given that Greek modernists share the view that the CoG has been secularised through its appropriation of the national ideology, one wonders why they frame the recent crisis between state and church as a problem of secularism (Manitakis 2000, p. 17).

Challenges and open future

The pattern of secularism in Greece, reflected on the one hand in the strong secular control and debilitation of the church as organisation and in the secularisation of church ideology on the other, can be termed as ''nationalisation of the church'' (*cf.* Stavrakakis 2003, p. 165). In the last few decades, this historically grown model has been challenged by two major developments: democratisation of the country and globalisation – both processes that result in stronger pluralism of Greek politics and society (Prodromou 2002, 2004). Both developments bring to the fore significant parallels to as well as variations from historical developments in Western and Central Europe. As Casanova noted, in the early phase of modern state formation the churches became subject to the principle of territorialisation, which was at the very core of this new system.

> In the early absolutist phase every state and church in Europe tried to reproduce the model of Christendom according to the principle *cuius regio eius religio*, which de facto meant that all the territorial national churches fell under the

> caesaropapist control of the absolutist state. This model of church-state fusion was already challenged by the liberal-democratic state and is now undermined further by processes of globalisation. The liberal state challenged the monopolistic claims of churches by introducing either principled constitutional separation and religious freedom or expedient religious toleration. Globalisation furthers this process by undermining the principle of territoriality at various levels. (Casanova 2001, p. 424)

Contrary to common perception, even the Catholic Church has not always been a transnational organisation. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the Catholic Church was faced with the opportunity of reclaiming its transnational profile, and started developing again into a transnational organisation, independent of the individual nation-states. Greece is different in that processes of liberalisation and democratisation did not accompany the modernisation of the country since the early nineteenth century. The long parliamentary tradition of the Greek nation-state should not gloss over the fact that until 1974, and with the exception of short periods of time, Greece was an authoritarian state. The historically contingent processes of democratisation and liberalisation gained ground much later in Greece than in Western Europe, only shortly before the latest wave of globalisation. Accordingly, the configuration sketched above is to be viewed as that of a modern but authoritarian nation-state. A further important difference is that the set of possible courses of action for the CoG to meet the challenges of democratisation and globalisation varies considerably from the options available to churches at different times in other parts of Europe. Whether democratisation and globalisation are seen as opportunities or threats depends heavily on the contextual factors and the resources available to churches, as does the decision about the appropriate way to meet challenges posed by these processes. Therefore, it would be wrong to expect the CoG to react in the same way, as did the Catholic Church, once the model of state-church fusion in Greece had been challenged.

The fact, however, that the CoG is exclusively concerned with its own fate as an organisation and much less with the fate of its believers (Pollis 1993, p. 353) is not due to an alleged Orthodox theological concept of the person, but to its weak position vis-à-vis the state. As part of the state administration, the church was never in a position to take a dissident stance. On the contrary, the lower the legitimacy of political power in Greece, the more important was the legitimising role of the church, and vice versa. This simple formula illustrates the enormous potential for conflict once democratisation processes were under way in the country since 1974.

Actually, the threat from democratisation (for the CoG) did not come from the political elites of the country favouring a state-church separation; it arose more from the fact that the church was losing its familiar functions in modern Greek society. The democratic governments of the post-dictatorship era in Greece were no longer reliant on church support for their legitimacy. Introduction of democracy, therefore, represents the first major political break in the history of Greece that was not accompanied by an intervention in church matters. Contrary to what one may have expected, introduction of democracy in the year 1974 did not result in the dismissal of the Archbishop of Athens. After he passed away in 1998, the election of his successor was the first election of an Archbishop of Athens in which the state did not interfere at all. Similarly, the church charter of 1977, which grants the CoG a certain degree of internal autonomy, is owed to democratisation in Greece. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the church has turned more against the government of the country in the post-dictatorship era. For the first time in its history, the CoG is in a position to articulate political opposition and it does so. The advocates of the ''European model of modernity'' in Greece, who had repeatedly reproached the church for its subservience to the state in the past, should particularly appreciate this turn of events. Instead, they call upon the church to continue doing what it has always been doing: following the politics of, and not creating problems to, the state. Since the Greek state is increasingly dissociating itself from exclusive nationalism, the church is expected to follow and give up its nationalist discourse (Manitakis 2000, p. 92). It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the speeches of Archbishop Christodoulos, despite their politically reactionary and sometimes obviously anti-Semitic tones, are owed to democracy in Greece. Although the church is still tightly linked to the state, its growing readiness to oppose the state illustrates its emancipation (Stavrakakis 2003, p. 167) and, therefore, its preparedness for being transformed into a civil society actor with its own agenda.

Globalisation, in turn, challenges the pattern of secularism in Greece in two respects: on the one hand, Greece's integration into transnational political and legal structures limits the state's discretionary authority in a number of issues. Despite their continuing importance in the global governance, nation-states are no longer masters in their own house the way they were some decades ago. In a sense, the European integration process deprives the CoG of the very foundation of its hegemonic position: discretionary power of its

protector, the state. New actors like the EU administration or the European Court of Human Rights increasingly penetrate and shape Greek public life. If fundamental principles of European political ideology, such as human rights and liberalism, are to be implemented, some liberalisation of the Greek religious market is inevitable. Under these circumstances, violations of human rights to protect the hegemonic position of the CoG are hardly tenable. On the other hand, the Greek population is becoming increasingly transnational. In the 1990s, Greece turned from a traditional emigration country into an immigration country. The consequent pluralisation of Greek society makes the historically grown pattern of secularism look increasingly inappropriate.

The present crisis in state-church relations in Greece has been caused by their open future, as nothing is self-evident the way it was forty years ago. This generates uncertainty within the CoG, which like most churches in Eastern Europe, is not endowed with the necessary resources to face the new challenges (*cf*. Davie 2001, p. 458). Still, this does not mean that the CoG refuses to face up to reality. Despite distinctively anti-European tones in the statements of the clergy, the attitude of the CoG towards the European Union cannot be described as that of enmity or confrontation. As already mentioned above, the concentration on the populist and nationalist language of the CoG has caused misunderstandings on many occasions. For several reasons, among which the strong pro-European attitude of the Greek population, the CoG cannot afford to head for a confrontation with the European Union. In fact, a number of indications reveal that the CoG acknowledges the new political transnational reality. For instance, by opening an office in Brussels, the CoG has recognised the significance of acting as an independent actor in the transnational European arena as well as the possibility of making a contribution to the European integration project. One of the primary objectives of the CoG is to campaign for a Europe that remains conscious of its Christian roots. Meanwhile, the CoG can expect more support for this project from an old arch-enemy, the Pope, than from an old ally, the Greek state. In their joint declaration on an historical site in Athens, Pope John-Paul II and Archbishop Christodoulos confirmed the following:

> We rejoice at the success and progress of the European Union. The union of the European world in one civil entity, without her people losing their national self-awareness, traditions and identity, has been the vision of its pioneers. However, the emerging tendency to transform certain European countries into secular states without any reference to religion constitutes a retraction and a denial of

> their spiritual legacy. We are called to intensify our efforts so that the unification of Europe may be accomplished. We shall do everything in our power, so that the Christian roots of Europe and its Christian soul may be preserved inviolate. (Common Declaration 2001)

The deeply hegemonic language of the CoG is translated into a language of multiculturalism in public texts with reference to European integration. According to the CoG, the European integration process should not boil down to cultural homogenisation, and the European Union, in designing its policies, should seriously consider distinctive characteristics of the people, their history, culture and familiar way of life.[11] This clearly shows that the CoG is fully aware of the tension between human rights liberalism and multiculturalism within European Union, a tension, which has caused serious contradictions in the European governance of religious diversity. Despite the fact that private freedom of religion is considered to be an absolute right, there is a tendency to interpret state-church relations as symbols of national identity in the European legal order (Koenig 2007).[12] This may not imply that state-church relations can be designed in a way that violates fundamental rights of religious freedom; it, nevertheless, allows regulations that go far beyond the principles of state-church separation or state neutrality towards all religious communities. Against this background, the demanding attitude of the CoG vis-à-vis the state seems to be founded not on a miscalculation of power relations within Europe, but on a very accurate calculation of these relations. The church expects to exploit fully in its favour the leeway found in the contradictions in European religious governance. The popular ''translation'' of legal reforms in religious matters in Greece as European ''requirements'' (and subsequently ''unavoidable'') is, in the eyes of the church, not credible at all. Indeed, even if occasionally correct, such ''translations'' are rather reminiscent of the selective

[11] On the subject, see also the speeches of Archbishop Christodoulos published on the homepage of the Church of Greece, under the header ''Europe'' (http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/archbishop/europe.htm).

[12] Koenig remarks that ''[u]nder Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, private freedom of thought, conscience and religion is considered to be an absolute right, whereas the freedom to publicly manifest one's religion may be restricted by law. In its jurisprudence on Article 9 ECHR ... the European Court of Human Rights has granted states considerable margins of appreciation in interfering in the freedom to manifest one's belief, on the condition that such interference be prescribed by law, have a legitimate aim and be necessary in a 'democratic society.' ... A Declaration, adopted along with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) after strong lobbying of the German churches, ... clearly articulates the nation-states' sovereignty in Church-State relations'' (Koenig 2007, pp. 917-922).

politics of ''cunning states,'' i.e. states that ''deny power only to deploy it in order to evade responsibility'' (Randeria 2007, p. 6).

Moreover, the CoG recognises not only the dangers but also the opportunities arising from the integration of the country into the European Union and other transnational structures. Whereas for a long time the Greek state has guaranteed – and continues to guarantee – its dominant position in the symbolic realm, the European Human Rights Convention has proved to be an important protection for its material resources. Significantly, after Greece recognized the individual right to file a complaint at the European Commission of Human Rights in 1986, the first suit against the Greek state was filed by eight Greek convents. The background of the complaint was a law issued by the socialist government Papandreou that provided for the expropriation of the land of the CoG. Interestingly, the eight convents founded their complaint on the violation of property rights and freedom of religion, while the Greek state pointed to the status of the convents as public entities in order to deny them the right to file a claim to the European Human Rights Court (Venizelos 2000, p. 95). The Court ruled in favour of the complainants and the Greek state was asked to pay significant compensation. Furthermore, the European Funds represent an important source of finance for numerous church projects. While a few years ago most churches and convents were in a precarious condition, the majority has now been repaired and restored. Finally, it is important to mention the reform agenda of the CoG, aiming primarily at raising the educational level of the clergy, extending its social welfare network (Anastassiadis 2004, pp. 25-30) but also achieving greater economic independence. In a long but not much noticed text presented by Archbishop Christodoulos to the Holy Synod on October 11, 2000, he stated the following:

> Our essential goal must be bringing order into our sector. The events push us in that direction and oblige us to find solutions before it is too late. The situation of the church today calls for surgical cuts and not for tranquilizers.

The text concludes with a number of spiritual and practical recommendations. It appeals for self-criticism by the bishops, quick and comprehensive redesigning of pastoral work to meet the present challenges, utilisation of all existing spiritual powers, better use of laymen, education and continuous training of the clergy and church staff, reorganisation of the youth work within the church, innovations in the services, preparation for a separation of state and church no

matter who demands it – the state or the church –, a scientific study of the potential of economic independence of the church, communicative efforts to promote the position of the church in public life, improvement of the church law, reform of the church administration, determination of the church's position on church property, extension of the church's activities in the social field (e.g. foundation of schools at all levels, professional schools, universities with postgraduate programmes, and hospitals, and active involvement in the fight against drugs) (Christodoulos 2000). Focussing on spectacular conflicts between church and state in Greece hinders one from considering the agenda for reform, an agenda, which makes it evident that the CoG is reflecting on its position in a changing world.

Concluding remarks

Orthodoxy has never been a private matter in Greece. Due to its politicisation and nationalisation, it has been part and parcel of Greek public life both before and after the introduction of democracy. Therefore, I do not consider the framework of *deprivatisation of religion* to be particularly fruitful in understanding the public performance of the CoG over the last years (Roudometof 2005, p. 100; *cf.* Casanova 1994). What we are witnessing in Greece today is the effort of the CoG not to *(re-)enter* but to *remain* a relevant actor in the public arena. A more context-sensitive approach would identify signs of the *privatisation of the church* in the sense of its gradual disentanglement and emancipation from the state. The slow process of church privatisation in Greece is not being accompanied by de-secularisation, in terms of de-nationalisation, of the church's ideology. It is not expected to happen in the future either, since the strong nationalist ideology of the CoG in the era of globalisation does not represent a weakness as is sometimes suggested (Sotirelis 1999, pp. 78-79; Manitakis 2000, p. 130; *cf.* Roudometof 2005, p. 101). Two interrelated points need to be made here. First, nationalism is not swept away but merely reconfigured by globalisation processes. Second, ''the liberation of the churches from the straight-jacket of the nation-state'' against the background of globalisation processes (Casanova 2001, p. 433) does not make transnationalisation the sole adequate future scenario for the affected churches. The Catholic Church has probably

benefited significantly from its continuous transnationalisation beginning with the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement has perhaps gained considerable ground due to its global claim and transnational network structures (Martin 2002; Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001), but other churches in different contexts, with different resources and different histories may consider other pathways more suitable and advantageous for them. *Privatisation does not make necessary an ideological shift in the CoG.* On the contrary: while it becomes more and more difficult for a state embedded in transnational structures and confronted with an increasingly culturally heterogeneous population to create national identity, the CoG could maintain and further benefit from its function as a carrier of national identity. Taking into account that, in the post-modern era of globalisation, identity issues have become issues of pivotal importance, the CoG can use its secular ideology as one of its key resources to survive in a globalised world (*cf.* Voyé 1999). From this perspective, the salient nationalism of the CoG does not indicate that it is behind time but rather that it keeps up with the time.

It is difficult to predict today the dimension that the privatisation of the CoG will finally take, and to what extent this process will correlate with the privatisation of social welfare against the background of neo-liberal globalisation (Davie 2001; Anastassiadis 2004, p. 25). Anticipating the strong reaction of the church, the democratic governments of the country repeatedly avoided setting a general plan for the church's privatisation on their agenda. Instead, they prefer to implement a politics of slow and unspectacular disentanglement. The church's fierce stance on the identity cards issue should be viewed as an effort to gain time as well as control over this tacit regulation of church-state relations (*cf.* Anastassiadis 2004, p. 31). Although there is no doubt that the CoG does not belong to the advocates of state-church separation in Greece, I think that the essential concern of the CoG is not to hinder its privatisation. Its efforts towards modernisation and an increasingly independent political position stand as proof that it is preparing for it. One would be grossly underestimating the church if one thought that it needed to be convinced of the advantages of privatisation; it is already aware of them. In contrast to many of its critics, however, the CoG always *thinks in context*. It may not be sceptical about privatisation as such, but it would have reservations about the terms under which privatisation would take place. Just as ailing state enterprises need to be prepared for the market initially with

government support before they are left to their own devices, the CoG expects, above all, government support if it were to face the challenges of privatisation successfully. In turn, this expectation is based on the conviction that the state has the primary responsibility for the present situation and limited capabilities of the church. As long as the political actors refuse to take note of this expectation – and the advocates of state-church separation are deafeningly silent on this issue – the church will bring the totality of its nationalist expertise into play in order to make it clear to the state that a unilateral termination of the long-standing relationship between state and church will be painful not only for the church but also for the state. The ''change of course'' of the CoG announced after the death of Archbishop Christodoulos will not alter this fundamental expectation; what may alter is the way in which the CoG will try to draw the state's attention to its responsibilities.

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Résumé

Il s'agit de la sécularisation en Grèce. L'article s'écarte des interprétations modernistes et civilisationnistes prévalentes de la crise des relations entre l'Église et l'État. Tenant pour acquis qu'il ne saurait y avoir un modèle unique de modernité et de sécularisme, l'article entend montrer que l'imbrication État/Église dans la Grèce moderne ne signifie ni modernité incomplète, ni sécularisation incomplète. La faiblesse structurelle de l'Église orthodoxe est au cœur du modèle très particulier de sécularisation. La crise résulte du heurt avec démocratisation et globalisation. Le nationalisme de l'Église ne doit pas être vu comme traditionalisme aveugle ou antimodernisme.

Mots clés : Sécularisme ; Relation État/Église ; Modernité ; Nationalisme ; Orthodoxie orientale ; Grèce.

Zusammenfassung

Die Säkularisation Griechenlands steht im Mittelpunkt der Betrachtung. Moderne und zivilisatorische Aspekte der kürzlichen Krise der Staat-Kirche-Beziehung werden diskutiert, wobei es kein Einheitsmodell gibt, das zu Modernität und Säkularisation führt. Die griechische Staat-Kirche-Beziehung kann deshalb weder als unvollständige Modernität noch als unvollständige Säkularisation betrachtet werden. Dieser Beitrag untersucht sowohl die strukturelle Schwäche der orthodoxen Kirche des modernen Griechenland als auch die griechische Säkularisation der Kirchenideologie. Die kürzliche Krise ist ein Ergebnis der doppelten Herausforderung von Demokratisierung und Globalisierung. Desweiteren kann der Nationalismus der Kirche weder als blind noch als antimodern betrachtet werden kann.

Schlagwörter: Säkularisation; Staat-Kirche-Beziehung; Modernität; Nationalismus; Östliche Orthodoxie; Griechenland.