

The Vision of the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ as Model for Religiocultural Diplomacy and the Case of the Greek Orthodox Church under Archbishop Christodoulos (1998–2008)

Abstract

Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos (1998–2008) sought to co-shape the European Union. Seeing the EU both as a project and as a cultural-civilizational family of common integral, constituent elements of identity, he wished to affect the process of Europeanisation by enhancing the influence of its Eastern Orthodox flank. The emergent pattern of his aspiration resembled that of a unitary Eastern Orthodox bloc within the EU, functioning in concert so that to be able to exert influence and co-determine the direction of the Europeanisation process along the lines of its own values. That culminated in the archbishop’s exclamation that Russia should eventually join the EU: thus, a rhetorical reminiscent of the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ would counterbalance the Westernist overarching model, to no avail though; after all, all Orthodox Churches pursue their own individual/national agendas at a European level. However, creed is a central element of identity perception and even though the Orthodox Church of Greece has significantly readjusted its policies, the deep-rooted religiocultural element of identity, evidently, was expected to have a sway during Christodoulos’ era, and that the Greek-Orthodox collective imaginary would conflate a sense of kinship to Orthodox Russia, with a vague, romanticised geocultural strategic agenda.

Keywords:

Christodoulos; ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’; Europeanisation; Greek Orthodoxy; cultural diplomacy.

Introduction

Within the framework of Europeanisation as a convergence process and in line with the post-Westphalian, postsecular arrangement thereof, the Orthodox Church of Greece (hereafter OCG) found itself in a flux political state of affairs that comprised new challenges and opportunities. The latter particularly appealed to Christodoulos, as through them he envisaged an OCG that would transcend the national boundaries that by definition restrict the scope of any given national church. He wished to internationalise as well as politicise the OCG and pursued this agenda via the route of the EU, so that to render the church an international religiocultural actor. Indeed, supranationality and polyilateralism allowed room for non-state actors to observe the decision-making processes, voice their views and engage the EU Institutions; churches were no exception to this. In fact they were actively involved in attempts to co-shape the future of the EU, partake or at least influence the decision-making processes that corresponded to their priorities and by extension, in doing so they acquired much visibility, being thus recognisable as actors.

What is more, during the era of Christodoulos even entrenched historical differences were briefly cast aside, for example between the Vatican and the OCG, so that to jointly pursue causes such as the explicit reference to Christianity in the preamble of the under-construction EU Constitutional Treaty, as a common European religiocultural denominator. This does not mean to say that Christodoulos retreated from Eastern Orthodox theology or jeopardised corresponding convictions in any shape or form; he merely evaded the domestic critique for the sake of the end goal. At the same time though, his scepticism towards the EU emanated from the challenges that the respective project had brought about, with the place of both the Greek state and the OCG in that structure being a major concern, given that they represented a religiocultural minority. Particularly in the early 2000s when Greece was the only Eastern Orthodox EU Member State, the EU enlargement eastwards including the region of the western Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean – meaning essentially Bulgaria, Romania and the Republic of Cyprus – was deemed a *sine qua non*, so that to counterbalance the dominant, established western powers, challenge them and co-shape the EU. Christodoulos erroneously held the latter possible, provided that the largely Eastern Orthodox Member States would form an Eastern Orthodox bloc and act in unison. Moreover, for the above purpose he sought to introduce into the EU discourse the idea of a future Russian membership on the basis of its potential contribution geopolitically and culturally, among other things.

The purpose of the present paper, which stems from a larger research project that investigated the attitude of the OCG towards Europeanisation in the early 21st century comparatively, is to shed light on Christodoulos' 'Russian Expectation' and his vision of an intra-European Orthodox bloc, which was rhetorically portrayed as a contemporary offshoot of the 'Byzantine Commonwealth'. Thereby it explores aspects of the politicised mythical dimension of the latent Russian gravitational pull that was instrumentalised to stimulate the collective imaginary and psyche. The importance of Christodoulos' role rests on his attempt to co-shape the fundamentals of the EU. He sought, in cooperation with the Vatican – which was unprecedented following the millennium of antipathy and animosity between Western and Eastern Christianity – to *de jure* establish a Christian European identity, while at the same time he challenged the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople by unilaterally stepping up as Orthodoxy's leading figure in the Balkans. Moreover, he morally and politically enhanced Moscow's visibility internationally, by advocating Russia's EU accession as an antipode to the bloc-actor's Western Christian domination.

The methodological approach of this research was qualitative; namely, it was a content analysis, further broken down to thematic analysis. The primary sources consisted of archival material from the official monthly bulletin of the OCG *Ekklēsia* (*Εκκλησία* [Church]), *Kathēmerinē* (*Καθημερινή* [Daily]), a high-circulation daily Greek newspaper that is broadly esteemed, the official website of the OCG,¹ and the official website of the Representation of the Church of Greece to the EU (RCGEU).² Notably, all of the accumulated material comprises events and facts, not views and impressions, and the positionality and bias of the sources has not affected the analysis. The period of interest was, the Christodoulos era, i.e. 1998 to 2008, from his enthronement to his passing, given that his successor Hieronymos II changed the course of the OCG drastically as soon as he took office. The archival research was complemented by qualitative field research. Sixteen elite interviews were conducted with scholars, hierarchs and politicians, who were in some way involved with the state of affairs during the period of interest, took part in decision-making processes, engaged and shaped the public sphere, served in government, or were professionally and institutionally involved with Christodoulos. The analysis of the accumulated primary data yielded emergent themes, which, among others, offered insights into the attitude of the church and the prevailing international political tendencies therein. Among the emergent themes the Russian gravitational pull was prominent.

¹ <http://www.ecclesia.gr/>

² During research the URL was <http://www.regue.org/>, now <http://www.regue.eu/en/>.

The permissive context of religious politics

The international political paradigm shift that ensued since 1989 with the collapse of the Iron Curtain allowed room for fundamental institutional political reviews in light of the emergent vacuums. The momentum favoured the globalist current and thereby the significant advancement of the European project – embodied in the form of the European Union (EU). Particularly the Maastricht Treaty (7 February 1992) that gave rise to the EU, introduced an advanced manner of cooperation between Member States and paved the way for the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the corresponding political union, hence it constitutes a momentous turning point. Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty (13 December 2007) consolidated the EU institutions, their powers, roles and functions, and significantly contributed to the deepening of the Union,³ within the framework of the Europeanisation process and the multifold political and institutional convergence prerequisites thereof.⁴

Supranationality and multilevel governance are constitutive aspects of the EU, with a bearing on its diplomatic practices and philosophy. The premise of pooled sovereignty entails shared and collective decision-making between Member States, while subnational actors are thereby empowered to operate at a supranational level, above and beyond their previous national constraints. By extension, such multifold additional capacities have allowed room for polyilateralism, which is best understood as an institutional upgrade of non-state actors that are now in a position to systematically engage with actors/entities not necessarily equivalent to them. This, it follows, has altered the European diplomatic landscape.⁵

³ See the *Treaty on European Union* (Brussels: ECSC-EEC-EAEC, 1992), and the ‘Treaty of Lisbon – Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community’, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 306:1 (2007). For the full texts of all treaties as well as the EU *acquis* in its entirety, see also the Official Website of the European Union, ‘EU Law, EU Treaties’, Europa.eu, 2018, https://europa.eu/european-union/law/treaties_en.

⁴ European Integration is accomplished via convergence and the deepening of the EU with power transfer to EU institutions and corresponding decision-making precedence of the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the European Parliament. See Wolfgang Merkel and Sonja Grimm, *The Limits of the EU: Enlargement, Deepening and Democracy*, Estudio/Working Paper 76/2007, (Konstanzer Online-Publikations-System, 2007), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:352-185714>, (p. 4). See also Radaelli’s definition on Europeanisation where the ‘ways of doing things’ impinges on political-cultural identity: Claudio M. Radaelli, ‘Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?’, European Integration online Papers (EIoP), 2004, <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2004-016.pdf>, as well as Thomas M. Wilson, ‘Europeanisation, Identity and Policy in the Northern Ireland Borderlands’ in Warwick Armstrong and James Anderson (eds) *Geopolitics of European Union Enlargement: The Fortress Empire* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 49–60, (p. 52), on ‘Europeanisation as the reconstruction of identities’.

⁵ Christer Jönsson and Martin Hall, *Essence of Diplomacy, Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 151–152.

Past certainties – mostly based on the contribution of major classical thinkers and social scientists – that the Enlightenment and modernisation would gradually render religion redundant in the understanding of the world, are being heavily reassessed. Modernisation or secularisation theory is faced with religious resurgence.⁶ Because, among others, religion provides legitimacy and in that way it is an instrument of considerable capacity to sway audiences, mobilise, influence policy-making processes, even provide the international system with stability.⁷ Not to mention that religion is a central constituent element of identity.⁸ After all, the paradigmatic views of the classical sociological and political theorists have been for the most part Western-centric in the assessment of the world order and its future; the understanding of the international system through the deterministic prism of a unitary, homogeneous perception of modernity is no longer essentialised, while the patterns of sociocultural and political multiplicity across states are acknowledged, rather, as manifestations of multiple modernities.⁹ In fact it would not be amiss to maintain that the latter appears as the norm while religions, strong as ever, continue to ignore Western-centric and Weberian theses and their distinctions between ‘traditionalism’ and modern ‘Occidental Rationalism’.¹⁰ Moreover, the acknowledgement of Judeo-Christian values as constitutive elements of the Western identity is no longer taboo, when in practice the influence of religious communities in co-shaping the social and political *Gestalt* across otherwise secularised European societies cannot be denied. Rather, it is valid to describe modern societies as ‘post-secular’.¹¹

In this context, the post-secular state of affairs affects the EU; more to the point, in essence it has been a Christian Democratic project from the outset and supported by the Vatican, in the post-war era when ‘the free world’ and ‘Christian civilisation’ had become synonymous’.¹² Religious institutions and organisations have been in contact with the European institutions, structures and bureaucracies already since 1957, presenting thus an array of communication typologies, which culminated in the institutionalised recognition of

⁶ Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religions into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), pp. 10–12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ‘Multiple Modernities’, *Daedalus*, 129:1 (2000), pp. 1–29, (p. 24).

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, ‘Religion in the Public Sphere’, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14:1 (2006), pp. 1–25, (p. 2).

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, ‘Notes on a Post-Secular Society’, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25:4 (2008), pp. 16, 19, 20.

¹² José Casanova, ‘Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration’ in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (eds) *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.65–92, (p. 66).

this dialogue via the Lisbon Treaty, and in the lapse of time they contributed to the European Integration process.¹³ Moreover, churches' offices of representation to the EU attest to the recognition of a religious-diplomatic dialogue in practice before this became part of the European *acquis*. At the same time, however, religion may function both in a unifying and a divisive manner, for, two opposite tendencies, the national and the supranational, are both at work.¹⁴ Indeed, the religious background of the EU constitutional order is traceable and thereby its public morality influence is identifiable as well, even though it shares the latter with cultural and humanist influences.¹⁵ The ratio and weight of these influences, however, together with the balance of power between denominations and the corresponding reach of cultural diplomatic attempts is not necessarily considered fair by all churches.

Before dealing with the diplomatic engagement of Christodoulos it would be helpful to frame what Religiocultural Diplomacy and its constituent elements mean. Cummings defines cultural diplomacy as the 'exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding',¹⁶ although, there is no absolute scholarly consensus on how it is practiced. Moreover, there are overlaps between cultural and public diplomacy, for instance, they constitute a departure from the practice of traditional diplomacy and both their target groups exceed the diplomatic corps. Yet, while cultural diplomacy is multidirectional and emphasises mutual recognition, public diplomacy tends to reach out unilaterally in promoting policies.¹⁷ Indeed, Tuch defines public diplomacy as 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies'.¹⁸ Public diplomacy, a key component in the

¹³ Lucian N. Leustean, 'Representing Religion in the European Union. A Typology of Actors', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 12:3 (2011), pp. 295–315. Also, Lucian N. Leustean, 'The Representation of Religion in the European Union', *European University Institute - Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies*, EUI Working Paper, RSCAS, 69, (2013), p.11. And, Sergei Mudrov, 'The Christian Churches as Special Participants in European Integration', *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 7:3 (2011), pp. 363–379, (p. 376).

¹⁴ François Foret, 'National Religions: How to be both under God and under the European Union?' in Luke M. Herrington, Alasdair McKay and Jeffrey Haynes (eds) *Nations under God: The Geopolitics of Faith in the Twenty-First Century*, (Bristol: E-International Relations, 2015) pp. 196–202, (p. 200).

¹⁵ Ronan McCrea, 'The Recognition of Religion within the Constitutional and Political Order of the European Union', LSE 'Europe in Question', Discussion Paper Series, 10, 2009, p. 53.

¹⁶ Milton C. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey* (Washington, DC: Center for Arts and Culture, 2003), p.1.

¹⁷ Patricia M. Goff, 'Cultural Diplomacy', in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 419–435, (pp. 420–421).

¹⁸ Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1990), p. 3.

exercise of soft power, is intended for foreign publics, interest groups, civil society, organisations and individuals, and, contrary to traditional diplomacy it is not reserved for clear-cut actors and roles. In fact, not only is it an essential diplomatic component, but it is expected to be increasingly so.¹⁹

Soft power, i.e. ‘the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment’,²⁰ relies heavily on intangible, ideational resources, with culture being prominent among them. It is an ‘attractive power’ that exceeds the bounds of simple influence as it provides political legitimacy on the basis of justifiable moral authority. In turn, culture bestows meaning to any given society in a multitude of ways and at many levels, ranging from ‘high’ to ‘low’ culture,²¹ and in that sense it is a source of identity and purpose. Hence, religion is ushered into the discussion. The relevant literature acknowledges that a ‘sophisticated understanding of religion is nowadays essential in the exercise of diplomacy’; more to the point, the comprehension of religious culture as a central determinant in the shaping of a sense of meaning and identity at an individual and a collective level is indispensable.²²

Yannaras defines cultural diplomacy as the ‘systematic utilisation of elements (or identifiers of particularity) of the culture of a state in the exercise of its external, international relations’ administration’.²³ Further, he explicitly takes religion into account and maintains that its effect is anthropologically tangible, in that it bestows existential meaning as it co-determines the hierarchy of collective needs and aspirations within the context of community and further, polis and polity.²⁴ Bearing in mind the overlaps between public and cultural diplomacy as well as the lack of clear distinctions in the relevant literature, at present, the term Religiocultural Diplomacy is opted for, in order to denote the exercise of cultural diplomacy, as defined by Cummings and Yannaras, with particular emphasis on the religious

¹⁹ Jan Melissen, ‘The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice’ in Jan Melissen (ed.) *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 3–27, (pp.4–6; 11).

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy and Soft Power’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (2008), pp. 94–109, (p. 94).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95. Also, Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 5–11.

²² David Joseph Wellman, ‘Religion and Diplomacy’ in Costas M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr and Paul Sharp (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy* (London: Sage, 2016), pp. 577–590, (pp. 577–580). See also, Peter Mandaville & Sara Silvestri, ‘Integrating Religious Engagement into Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities’, *Issues in Governance Studies*, 67 (2015), pp. 1–13.

²³ Christos Yannaras, *Πολιτιστική Διπλωματία: Προθεωρία Ελληνικού Σχεδιασμού* [Cultural Diplomacy: Pretheory of a Greek Design] (Athens: Ikaros, 2001), pp. 13–14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16; 24.

aspect of it. Moreover, public diplomacy does not quite fit the framing due to its unidirectional character, while, at the same time, Christodoulos was not targeting a foreign, but rather a domestic audience. His exchanges were by and large intended to forge links with traditional actors and institutions, whereas the Russian public sphere was not a priority.

The Russian gravitational pull

There is no doubt that Russia has a special appeal to the Greek people, which can often be politically instrumental in swaying part of the public opinion. In other words, Greece is sensitive to Russian soft power; often the folly of kinship disregards rationality, history, national interests and political realism. In this context the yearning for a 'Byzantine Commonwealth' replication can be attributed to both utilitarian motivations as well as to the collective imaginary and its workings on the sense of belonging. In contemporary Greece, Russia's gravitational pull is attested by the Pew Research Center's survey concerning the global opinion on Russia. Of all countries surveyed in 2013, only Greece and South Korea had a favourable view of Russia that exceeded 50%, while Greece had the best opinion of Russia in Europe with 63%.²⁵ In another Pew survey of 2017, although church attendance in Greece was as low as 17%, association between religion and national identity was as high as 76%, with 89% of Greek respondents considering their culture superior to others. In addition, despite Greece's EU and NATO membership and political alignment, the role of Russia in the Middle East and Putin's rapprochement with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which ultimately opposes the Greek national interests in the region, 70% of Greeks still look to Russia to counter the West.²⁶ This phenomenon, however, is variable. There is no evidence to suggest that Greeks are inherently pro-Russian *per se*, but there is historical and contemporary evidence to suggest that they do turn to Russia when relations with the West deteriorate, as was the case for example during the Greek debt-crisis of 2009. In fact the Russian gravitational pull is conditional and predicated on interest. It is mostly the mythical dimension of this relationship that renders it live and is of interest here.

History, but also popular myths and prophecies are rife with examples of the folly of kinship to Russia on behalf of Greeks as they perpetuate such perceptions. Mostly extra-

²⁵ Pew Research Center, 'Global Opinion of Russia Mixed: Negative Views Widespread in Mideast and Europe', Pew Research Center – Global Attitudes and Trends, 3 September 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/03/global-opinion-of-russia-mixed/>.

²⁶ Pew Research Center, 'Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe', Pew Research Center – Religion and Public Life, 10 May 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>.

canonical prophecies, issued usually by pseudonymous authors who foresaw the toppling of the Ottomans constitute an example as such. The fall of Constantinople constitutes a turning point, of course, as it gave rise to increased and updated prophetic output. For instance *The Prophecy of Patriarch Gennadios* that dates back to the 15th century foretold the liberation of Constantinople and its return to its rightful owners with the decisive intervention of the ‘fair-haired people’, elsewhere in literature called the ‘blonde race’; a broad interpretation may point to northerners in general but the dominant one is that he was referring to the homodox Rus.²⁷ An impressive example would also be the *Muscovite Prognosticon*,²⁸ by the German author Stanislaus Reinhard Acxtelmeier, printed in Augsburg in 1698, which was translated the following year in Greek by Konstantin Brankovan at the court of the Greek hegemony in Wallachia. Once again this piece stirs hope of intervention by the ‘fair-haired people’, namely the Petrine Russia; Constantinople would be reclaimed by the only free Orthodox great power and the Ottomans would be ousted from Europe.²⁹ Yet another example, a now monumental piece of the mid-eighteenth century that made rapport in Greece back then, would be *The Vision of Agathaggelos*.³⁰ It was allegedly written in 1279 by a monk whose name was Agathaggelos (Gr.: *Αγαθάγγελος*); an Italian version of it dates back to 1555, and it was finally translated to Greek in 1751 by Archimandrite Theokleitos Polyeidis. The booklet is actually attributed to him by researchers. The vague oracular prophecies predict the defeat of the heretic Catholics and the total annihilation of the Ottomans by Orthodoxy.³¹

Of course the 18th century emergence of Petrine Russia as a major power, capable of challenging the declining Ottoman dominance, affected the Greek psyche and further encouraged the hope of intervention. Moreover, the establishment and flourishing of Greek migrant communities in the southern Russian eparchies, which in turn provided assistance to

²⁷ Marios Hatzopoulos, ‘Oracular Prophecy and the Politics of Toppling Ottoman Rule in South-East Europe’, *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique*, 8 (2011), pp. 95–116, (pp. 99–100).

²⁸ Originally, Stanislaus Reinhard Acxtelmeier, *Das Muscovittische Prognosticon. Oder Der Glorwürdige Czaar Peter Alexowiz. Von Der gewachsenen Russischen Macht, von dem Tyrann Iwan Wasilowiz, bis unter hochsterwehnte Czaarische Majestat, Deren umstandige Kriegs-Anstalten ihr das Orientalische Reich und dero Patriarchen Sitz Constantinopel versprechen* (Augsburg 1698).

²⁹ Dora E. Solti, ‘Η Πολυτυπία στα Δημόδη Πεζά Κείμενα των Πρώιμων Νεότερων Χρόνων – Η Περίπτωση του Προγνωστικού των Μοσκόβων’ [Polytypes in the Vernacular Texts of Early Modernity – The Case of the Muscovite Prognosticon] in Zoltan Farkas, Laszlo Horvath and Tamas Meszaros (eds) *Studia Hellenica: Εισηγήσεις στα Ελληνικά κατά το 5ο Συνέδριο με Τίτλο «Το Βυζάντιο και η Δύση»*, 23-27 Νοεμβρίου 2015 (Budapest: Eotvos Jozsef Collegium, 2016) pp. 59–68, pp. 60–61.

³⁰ See the printed early 20th century version, *Ο Αγαθάγγελος: Ητοι Προφητείαί περί του Μέλλοντος των Εθνών* [Agathaggelos: I.e. Prophecies about the Future of Nations], (Εν Αθήναις: Βιβλιοπωλείον Μιχαήλ Ι. Σαλιβέρου, 1914).

³¹ Hatzopoulos, ‘Oracular Prophecy’, op. cit., pp. 100–01.

the homeland via the founding of schools, philanthropy, etc., encouraged the Russian expectation even more.³² After all, if there ever was hope of emancipation and restitution, it ought to be expected from Russia according to the chresmology that had become embedded in popular rhymes and Greek demotic songs, which secured the dissemination of such ideas faster and broader than the printing press, considering the widespread illiteracy of the time. The verses below, which I took the liberty to translate and adapt from *Koinē* (Κοινή) Greek are quite indicative:

*Yet another spring rayah, oh rayah,³³
this summer, poor Rumelia,
till the Muscovy descends rayah, oh rayah,
to bring his army to Moreas and Rumelia.³⁴*

Hence, even though the Enlightenment, and particularly the Neohellenic Enlightenment, opposed and challenged the messianist tradition that the oracular prophecies had cultivated for centuries, that does not necessarily mean that, what Kitromilides calls the ‘Russian expectation’,³⁵ subsided. In fact it was strategically utilised by the *Philikē Hetaireia* (Φιλική Εταιρεία [Society of Friends])³⁶ in order to encourage the Greek uprising in the 19th century. Its founders, Nikolaos Skoufas, Athanasios Tsakalōff and Emmanuēl Xanthos, consciously sought to make the most of the oracular prophetic tradition and its preference for the foretold ‘fair-haired people’. Thereby they disseminated across the Greek society the rumour that Russia was a reliable ally who fully backed a potential uprising, thus making the most of what they otherwise saw as an ‘age-old superstition’ of Russian homodox intervention.³⁷

³² Stefanos I. Papadopoulos, ‘Ο Προσανατολισμός των Ελλήνων προς τη Ρωσία κατά τον Κριμαϊκό Πόλεμο (1853-1856)’ [The Orientation of Greeks towards Russia during the Crimean War (1853-1856)], *Βαλκανικά Σύμμεικτα*, 3 (1989), p. 73.

³³ The tax-paying non-Muslim Ottoman underclass.

³⁴ Papadopoulos, op. cit., p. 74.

³⁵ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

³⁶ *Philiki Etaireia* was a secret revolutionary society, founded in Odessa in 1814 by the Greek colony that dated back to 1712. A similar group was established in Vienna by Rigas Ferraios which had bonds to the French Revolution and promoted the involvement of the Western European powers, while the *Philiki Etaireia* leaned towards Russia as Orthodoxy was considered a common denominator and a cultural link between peoples. See Andreas M. Wittig, *Die Orthodoxe Kirche in Griechenland: Ihre Beziehung zum Staat gemäß der Theorie und der Entwicklung von 1821–1977* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1987), p. 19.

³⁷ Marios Hatzopoulos, ‘From Resurrection to Insurrection: ‘Sacred’ Myths, Motifs, and Symbols in the Greek War of Independence’ in Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (eds) *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 81–94, (pp. 82–83).

Philikē Hetaireia saw its ranks quickly increase with the addition of primates, but also *klefts* and mariners, as Tsakalōff stirred emotions by boasting that he was acting as an emissary of the Tsar.³⁸ Also, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century religion was still central in Russia's popular appeal, particularly the misperceived symphony model where the church, the monarchy and the Orthodox nation would function in harmonious unison; and the Russian mission nourished this view, in the permissive context of the widespread Russophilia, as attested by the Russian diplomat Spyridon Destunis, who maintained that 'the Greek people remain attached to Russia, which they have always regarded and always will regard as the only power that wants the well-being of their country'.³⁹

Meanwhile, it must even in passing be stated that the founding of the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1589 by the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II constitutes a turning point. Because it signifies the emergence of the concept of the 'Third Rome' and in that way expands the ecclesiastical structure and conceptual map of what the Orthodox world comprised. A new emperor's name was now mentioned in the Eastern Orthodox liturgies. Patriarchs such as Meletios Pigas (1550–1601) and Cyrillos Loukaris (1572–1638) invested politically in the ties with the Tsar to the benefit of the church, while Loukaris mounted a very ambitious diplomatic campaign, in which Moscow occupied a central role as the sole free Orthodox monarchy. Moreover, an economic quasi-dependency eventually developed as the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem enjoyed the support of the Tsar, while, in addition, the intensified trade and travel between Russia and Greece tended to be accompanied with promising tidings from the 'Orthodox Muscovy'. In fact, it was during the rule of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich (1645–1676) who adopted the role of the leader of the Orthodox world, when the 'Russian expectation' was consolidated and took shape.⁴⁰ Not to mention of course that at a symbolic level Moscow had already assumed the role of a 'Third Rome' since it adopted as emblem the golden double-headed eagle, following the fall of Constantinople in 1452,⁴¹ with self-evident effects on the Greek collective imaginary.

It is also worth mentioning that the notion of the 'Byzantine Commonwealth' as well as its memory survived in the post-Byzantine world after 1453 in the Balkans and Eastern Europe generally. During the late Middle Ages and in the early modern period, the

³⁸ Hatzopoulos, 'Oracular Prophecy', op. cit., pp.110–111.

³⁹ Lucien J. Frary, *Russia and the Making of Modern Greek Identity, 1821–1844* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), (p. 241).

⁴⁰ Nikolas Pissis, 'Τροπές της «Ρωσικής Προσδοκίας» στα Χρόνια του Μεγάλου Πέτρου' [Shifts in the 'Russian Expectation' during the Era of Peter the Great], *Μνήμων*, 30 (2009), pp. 37–60, (pp. 38–40).

⁴¹ Wittig, op. cit., p. 135.

Mediterranean peoples constituted a ‘human and economic unit held together by transnational forces of commerce, demography, and culture’.⁴² More to the point, the Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian identities were not pronounced but rather flux and adaptable. Up until the nineteenth-century *ethnogeneses*, nationalism and emancipation struggles, Orthodoxy was among the primary identity determinants.⁴³ Moreover, apart from the post-Byzantine traces of social and cultural continuity – communities did not shift to societies overnight – the notion of a *Byzance après Byzance* can be identified in the multifold continuation of structures and institutions, albeit embedded into the Ottoman administration.⁴⁴ It would then be legitimate to speak of a Byzantine afterlife, in the shape of a cultural, political and institutional influence that lingered on due to the profound effect on the Balkan peoples and their forms of spirituality, social organisation and material culture.⁴⁵

This does not suffice though as foundation for a new ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ or an equivalent structure, but it is indicative of a pattern: a constellation of symbols, vague narratives and prophecies, and the wish to be independent, albeit while realising that Greece has no strength to claim its full political autonomy in the international system, combined with an inherent anti-Westernism that appeared to shape-shift with the political tides while preserving its basic characteristics, reproduced a pro-Russian attitude above and beyond the framework of political realism. This outline is useful in that it offers a glance into the old elements of a mythical, latent ‘Russian expectation’ that offers itself for political instrumentalisation, by way of being reanimated to stimulate the collective psyche, which is what Christodoulos appears to have done.

The term ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ as a convenience

It should be stated from the outset that the term ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ is not used literally, but as a convenience, because it was explicitly stated via the official bulletin of the OCG that Russia should accede the EU, and by extension the Orthodox grouping would then

⁴² Kitromilides, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴³ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth: Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007).

⁴⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance: Continuation de l’Histoire de la vie byzantine* (Association internationale d’études du Sud-Est européen: Bucarest, 1971).

⁴⁵ Diana Mishkova, ‘The Afterlife of a Commonwealth: Narratives of Byzantium in the National Historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania’, in Roumen Daskalov and Alexander Vezenkov (eds.) *Entangled Histories of the Balkans, Volume Three: Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 118–273, (pp. 118–120).

comprise the peoples of the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’.⁴⁶ No conflation of paradigms is being attempted here; any parallels drawn are only indicative of a rhetoric that aimed to suggest a counter-paradigm within Europeanisation in order to empower the OCG. Archbishop Christodoulos maintained that the OCG and Orthodoxy were an EU outsider and an outnumbered denomination respectively, and he wished to actively promote the intra-European formation of a *mutatis mutandis* coordinated, homogeneous bloc of predominantly Orthodox Member States, which would counterbalance the primarily Catholic and secondarily Protestant domination in the EU institutions, given the respective dominance and size of the Western European flank. To that end he thought it strategically crucial to advocate the accession of Orthodox candidate states; their joint populations, cultures, values and principles would be better promoted as they would occupy a significant number of seats at the table. After all, the post-cold-war consensus between heads of state was that of a ‘common European home of liberal democracies extending from the Atlantic to the Urals’.⁴⁷

The term ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ was coined by Sir Dimitri Obolensky. It was meant to delineate and define the religiocultural, social, economic and political linkages between the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, through Eastern Europe, and up to the Gulf of Finland. Therein, an extensive movement of goods, peoples and ideas was regularly taking place. Furthermore, their ties were organic as they dwelled within the overarching Byzantine culture, irrespective of ethnies, and adhered to a commonwealth that was presided – variably – by the emperor of East Rome. The time-span of this state of affairs – which is best understood and explained within a Byzantine framework – is notably long, as it extended approximately from year 500 to 1453. The commonwealth reached its territorial peak in the 11th century and consisted of the aforementioned regions, which were variably close to the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Byzantine Empire. At the same time peaked its cultural and political homogeneity, and while the latter gradually dissolved from the second half of the 12th century and onward, the former survived and flourished anew in the late Middle Ages.⁴⁸

Of course not all different peoples and ethnies that comprised the extended Byzantine Empire subscribed to it and its values voluntarily, nor were they necessarily well-disposed

⁴⁶ Konstantinos Cholevas, ‘Η Διεύρυνση της Ευρώπης’ [The Enlargement of Europe], *Ekklesia*, (5), (2003), pp. 376–377.

⁴⁷ Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, ‘Faith, Freedom, and Federation: the Role of Religious Ideas and Institutions in European Political Convergence’ in Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (eds) *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 34–64, (p. 34).

⁴⁸ Dimitri Obolensky, *The ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 202–03.

towards it *ab initio*. Moreover, given that for the most part they had different values and traditions and they spoke different languages, one cannot help but focus on the cultural-political instrumentality of religion. For instance, drawing from Emperor Leo VI and his work *Taktika* (*Τακτικά* [Tactics]), one identifies the strategic role of the Christianisation and Hellenisation missions of his father Vasilios I in order to control the Slavs within the Greek territory. Moreover, it would not be off the mark to maintain that the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and its aspired Christianisation of the Slavs was proven a very effective instrument in transfusing the Byzantine civilisation, thus creating a safe buffer of countries surrounding the Byzantine heartland.⁴⁹

Should one be tempted to contemplate whether the religious aspect of Byzantine diplomacy served a spiritual or a political purpose, i.e. whether Orthodox Christianisation was a means to an end or an end in its own right,⁵⁰ the answer is that those two premises are not mutually exclusive. Indeed the church's role was by definition supportive of the state's expansionist political aims, and its apostolic work among neighbouring and remote peoples was encouraged and actively supported by leading church figures such as Patriarch Photios and Nikolaos Mystikos. More to the point, they were fully aware of the political aspects of evangelisation. The Christianisation of the Bulgars and the Kievan Rus for instance, facilitated the Byzantine spiritual, cultural and political penetration and influence, even in a radius that exceeded the domain of the empire.⁵¹ Even when Christianisation had no actual spiritual meaning, the political gains counterbalanced that by solidifying the Orthodox Christian Empire; after all, the Byzantines considered evangelism their duty. Religion was a source of power, by contemporary standards soft power one might add, as it had a sway over foreign rulers and peoples. Suffice it to mention that the patriarch was less likely to be refused than the emperor.⁵² To be sure, the dissemination of the Orthodox Christian faith was a religious and spiritual endeavour, in line with the church's respective priorities, but at

⁴⁹ Vladimír Vavřínek, 'Cyril and Methodius: Was there a Byzantine Missionary Program for the Slavs?' in *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the world of the Slavs; Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου «Κύριλλος και Μεθόδιος: Το Βυζάντιο και ο Κόσμος των Σλάβων»* (Thessaloniki: Municipality of Thessaloniki Publications, 2015), pp. 18–29, (pp. 22, 25). See also George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010).

⁵⁰ Alexander Kazhdan, 'The Notion of Byzantine Diplomacy' in Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (eds) *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1992), pp.3–21, (p. 8).

⁵¹ Eleni Glykatzis-Ahrweiler, *Η πολιτική ιδεολογία της Βυζαντινής Αυτοκρατορίας* [The Political Ideology of the Byzantine Empire] second edition (Athens: Psychogios Publications S.A., 2007), pp. 57–58.

⁵² Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 113–114, 121.

present it is the political dimension of the mission that is of interest. More to the point, the political and religious aspects were not deemed as mutually exclusive.

The main pillars of the Byzantine Empire were Roman law and governance, Hellenic literature and philosophy, and the Christian faith with its Jewish roots. Those affected the Byzantine foreign policy and dictated its principles and purpose of the Empire itself, conflating essentially the *ecumene* – i.e. the Orthodox domain – with their perceived civilised world. The *ecumene* was better defined in the mid-tenth century as a commonwealth wherein each ethnic occupied a place analogous of its military power, political autonomy and cultural excellence, but no ethnic distinction was made since pagan had now become synonymous to barbarian, and what mattered was the adherence to the Orthodox Church. The Judeo-Christian tradition had bestowed upon the Byzantines a metaphysical interpretation of the political, this-worldly aspect of the empire, as they eschatologically conflated its success and consolidation with divine providence while perceiving themselves as chosen people, and considered it a precursor of the universal dissemination of the gospel and by extension of the victory of the Orthodox faith.⁵³ In fact it would not be amiss to maintain that the eschatological references can be traced back to the church fathers and constitute a characteristic of the social and political teaching of Eastern Orthodoxy.⁵⁴

It must be clarified though, that no Byzantine – or to be precise Eastern Roman – systematic, coherent political theology, nor a macro-theory as such has existed. Different approaches and models have been applied, depending on the period, the context and the exigencies and particularities thereof.⁵⁵ Yet, this does not mean that Eastern Orthodoxy is, or has been in its centuries-long history, devoid of sociopolitical content and involvement. The imperial ideology was permeated by Christian ethos, dogma and, ultimately, ideology, as the imperial office drew legitimacy and authority from the divine, while the empire was linked to the heavenly kingdom.⁵⁶ Accordingly, Byzantine church-state relations were affected. The principle of ‘mutuality and reciprocity’, also known as the ‘symphony model’ or *synallēlia*

⁵³ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy*, XIIe Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Ochride, 1961 (Belgrade-Ochride: Rapports II, 1961), pp. 8–12.

⁵⁴ Michael Plekon, ‘Eastern Orthodox Thought’ in Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (eds) *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 93–106, (p. 94).

⁵⁵ John A. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 384.

⁵⁶ Apostolos Spanos, ‘Political Approaches to Byzantine Liturgical Texts’ in Roy Eriksen and Peter Young (eds) *Approaches to the Text. From Pre-Gospel to Post-Baroque* (Pisa-Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2014), pp. 63–81, (p. 63).

[Συναλληλία]⁵⁷ has oftentimes been referenced – mostly by clerics but also by scholars – as a potential source of inspiration for a future reregulation of the place of the church, erroneously and speculatively for the most part.⁵⁸ Yet, not only this model was diametrically different to its modern interpretations, it was not even called a symphony model, judging by the 3,800 etymological occurrences and variations of the term in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, where no such instance exists as descriptive of the relations between church and state.⁵⁹ Cyril Hovorun describes this Byzantine paradigmatic model – we may call it symphony as a convenience – as a ‘single theopolitical entity’, where church and state were rather conflated, lumped together into one unitary theopolitical unit, and hence the affairs of the state and those of the official religion, taking after the Greco-Roman tradition, were being alternately interpreted via religious and political means. After all, citizenship inevitably entailed adherence to both institutions. Moreover, the this-worldly kingdom was divinely sanctioned and as such it constituted an extension of the Kingdom of God. In short, church and state were not separated, but rather, a distinction was made between their roles within the context of the single theopolitical entity.⁶⁰

This parenthesis was merely intended to demonstrate that the premodern model known as symphony is not implementable without being tailored and heavily adapted to the contemporary sociopolitical particularities and exigencies.⁶¹ In that sense, the church-state Byzantine model and the corresponding emergent patterns of political philosophy cannot be translated to applicable postmodern, post-national political theology, as defined by Carl Schmitt, who considered all notions and concepts of the modern state theory as secularised theological concepts.⁶² However, regardless of the lack of a political theology and an actually implementable, revised and adapted replication of the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ archetype, there was a discernible pattern of rhetoric as such; of a post-national religious community of homodox⁶³ peoples nested within a bloc-actor. This was insinuated, explicitly stated, but never actually pursued at an EU level; it was only brought about on the occasion of bilateral

⁵⁷ Vlasios I. Feidas, ‘Η Λειτουργία των Διακριτών Ρόλων Εκκλησίας και Κράτους και η Ευθύνη της Πολιτείας’ [The Function of Distinct Church and State Roles and the Responsibility of the State], *Ekklesia*, 3 (2001), pp. 232–47, (p. 235).

⁵⁸ Cyril Hovorun, ‘Is the Byzantine ‘Symphony’ Possible in Our Days?’, *Journal of Church and State*, 59:2 (2016), pp. 280–96, (p. 281).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 288–89.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁶² Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität*, siebente Auflage (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1996), p.43.

⁶³ Homodox (Gr.: Ομόδοξος), that is, of the same creed and dogma.

exchanges between the OCG, the Russian administration and the ROC. In the greater scheme of things, Archbishop Christodoulos utilised the means and formal diplomatic instruments that the EU membership provided in order to pursue his agenda without actually endeavouring to form an ‘Orthodox front’.

Apart from the office of Representation in Brussels, the RCGEU, in operation since 1998 and inaugurated in 2003, which constitutes a diplomatic statement in its own right as it makes a presence by merely ‘flying the flag’,⁶⁴ Christodoulos also set up in Athens a Special Synodical Committee for the Monitoring of European Affairs (SSCMEA) in 1998.⁶⁵ The object of such institutionalised channels of communication and representation was of course cultural, intellectual, by extension political, and they constituted by definition vehicles of cultural diplomacy.⁶⁶ Moreover, Christodoulos’ engagement comprised correspondence, homilies, visits, speeches, conferences, and he made sure to set up channels of communication with high-ranking and outstanding figures of the European political and religious *milieus*. For example his collaboration with the Vatican was intended to influence the preamble of the EU Constitutional Treaty so that a clear reference to the Christian heritage of Europe would be made – to no avail; also, his affiliation with the European People’s Party (EPP) constituted a strong statement of the politicisation of his engagement.⁶⁷ Essentially the OCG under Christodoulos sought to exert its soft power capacity which emanated from religion, a distinctive cultural element and an identifier of particularity that bestows meaning to a society, and legitimacy to the decision-making processes.

Participation in the EU was never considered unconditional by the late archbishop, and the place of Eastern Orthodoxy therein was a central question within the broader context of the EU identity *problématique*. An early sign, as well as a representative example, would be the exchange between the SSCMEA and the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) in 2001. It was made clear by Metropolitan Prokopios of Philippi (1974–) that Greece entered the union as a religiously homogeneous Member

⁶⁴ Anastassios Anastassiadis, ‘An Intriguing True-False Paradox: The Entanglement of Modernisation and Intolerance in the Orthodox Church of Greece’ in Victor Roudometof and Vasilios N. Makrides (eds) *Orthodox Christianity in 21st Century Greece: the Role of Religion in Culture, Ethnicity and Politics* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 39–60, (p. 53).

⁶⁵ Special Synodical Committee for the Monitoring of European Affairs, ‘Συνοδική Επιτροπή Παρακολούθησεως Ευρωπαϊκών Θεμάτων, Πεπραγμένα: 1980–2010’ [Synodical Committee for the Monitoring European Affairs, Actions: 1980–2010], Ecclesia.gr – Official Website of the Church of Greece, <http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/committees/europe/europeanaffairs.htm>.

⁶⁶ G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), p. 49. See also R.P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, fourth edition (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁷ Anastassiadis, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54.

State, being thus pervaded by this factor, but the OCG appeared prepared to make the necessary concessions for the sake of the common – among European churches – goal, i.e. the co-shaping of the EU.⁶⁸ The Roman Catholic Bishop, Joseph Homeyer,⁶⁹ reciprocated and expressed the will to overcome the tensions of the past between Western and Eastern Christianity. It must be noted that he went as far as concede that there is an imbalance and a Western dominance in Europe while the corresponding set of ideas is being transfused to the Eastern flank; to which he advocated that the opposite ought to transpire as well, i.e. an increased influence of the East on the West, so that to balance out the inequality. In fact he described his suggested course of action as Europeanisation of the EU, stressing that East and West constitute its lungs, and the EU needs both if it wishes to make progress.⁷⁰ Clearly, this constitutes an acknowledgement of the obvious and it was in line with the Greek-Orthodox viewpoint. On the other hand, in this mutually conciliatory climate Christodoulos focused on the future of the European project and lobbied against *laïcité* and in favour of an explicit Christian Europeanness, which would unify all EU citizens culturally.⁷¹ This does not mean to say, however, that the aspiration to consolidate Eastern Orthodoxy was no longer on the agenda.

The means to that end would be the, in early and mid 2000s, impending European Enlargement; thereby Eastern Orthodoxy would be upgraded to a potent actor, given that the increase in Member States, population, church representations etc., would have the analogous effect on the EU Institutions, such as the allocation of seats of the EU Parliament, while the geostrategic aspect would be proven crucial in the formation of the EU foreign policy. Not to mention the value-system and ideas that would infuse the bloc-actor and its societies. In sum the anticipated benefits would be multifold. Christodoulos considered the EU a precarious post-Westphalian domain where, in light of the pooled sovereignties, the balance of power would render Greece – and its church – obsolete; a cultural, ethnic and religious minority,

⁶⁸ Archimandrite Ignatios Sotiriadis, ‘Συνάντηση Ειδικής Επιτροπής Παρακολούθησεως Ευρωπαϊκών Θεμάτων με την Αντιπροσωπεία της COMECE’ [Meeting of the Special Synodical Committee for the Monitoring of European Affairs with the Representation of COMECE], *Ekklesia*, 1 (2001), pp. 23–27, (p. 24).

⁶⁹ President of the COMECE (1993–2006).

⁷⁰ Sotiriadis, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26.

⁷¹ Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos, ‘Η Πορεία και ο Ρόλος της Εκκλησίας στην Ευρώπη του 20^{ου} Αιώνα’ [The Course and Role of the Church in 20th Century Europe], *Ekklesia*, 2 (2001), pp. 95–99, (p. 96).

with little sway in the decision-making processes. Thus he considered an Orthodox front instrumental and the political role of the church legitimate.⁷²

First of all the accession of the Republic of Cyprus would reinforce both the Greek and the Orthodox element, and it would strategically benefit Cyprus. Moreover, he considered the latter a geocultural and geostrategic extension of Greece. In this context he believed that the churches of Greece and Cyprus ought to coordinate their strategies and act as one in the EU. To that end he sought the consensus of the Cypriot political establishment and the church. The latter in fact culminated, after Cyprus' accession to the EU, in the signing of a document of bilateral cooperation on 5 May 2007 between Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus Chrysostomos II (2006–) and Archbishop Christodoulos, during the visit of the latter to Cyprus.⁷³

Christodoulos made sure to try and exert his influence in the Balkans too, particularly where the national and religiocultural interest dictated, with the agreement of the state. This is attested for example by the visit of Foreign Minister Georgios A. Papandreou (1999–2004) on 13 June 2002 to the archbishop, who had invited him. There they discussed among others the potential of a church initiative in the Balkans, of which the foreign minister approved.⁷⁴ But even before that Christodoulos had already visited the peace-keeping Greek armed forces of Kosovo on 20 January 2001, as well as the monastery of Gracanica and the Bishop of Raska and Prizren Artemios. He also met with the Archbishop of Peć, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovac, and Patriarch of Serbia Paul (1990–2009), and delivered to him on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece (HSCG) a bank cheque of twenty million drachmas in support of the erection of a bishopric building in the region.⁷⁵ Of course that was not an attempt to win over a future EU Member State, but rather to project power, prestige and the image of an Orthodox geocultural actor in the region.

⁷² Ibid., p. 95.

⁷³ Andreas N. Mitsides, 'Η εις Κύπρον Επίσκεψις της Α.Μ. του Αρχιεπισκόπου Αθηνών και Πάσης Ελλάδος Χριστοδούλου' [The Visit of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos to Cyprus], *Apostolos Varnavas*, 68:5 (2007), pp. 208–268. Also see for example Press Office of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 'Συνάντηση του Μακαριωτάτου με τον Πρόεδρο της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας' [Meeting of His Beatitude with the President of the Republic of Cyprus], *Ekklesia*, 5 (2001), p. 441.

⁷⁴ Press Office of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 'Συνάντηση του Μακαριωτάτου με τον Έλληνα Υπουργό Εξωτερικών' [Meeting of His Beatitude with the Greek Foreign Minister], *Ekklesia*, 7 (2002), pp. 537–538, (p. 537).

⁷⁵ Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, 'Ο μακ. Αρχιεπίσκοπος κ. Χριστόδουλος Επικεφαλής Αντιπροσωπείας στο Κοσσυφοπέδιο' [His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos Head of Mission in Kosovo], *Ekklesia*, 2 (2001), pp. 105–108.

During his visit to Romania though, between 4 and 12 June 2003, Christodoulos stressed that faith and culture constitute a solid common denominator between the two peoples and countries, i.e. Greece and Romania. Moreover he promised that the OCG, as a civil society actor, would assist the Greek government during its EU presidency and support Romania's bid to enter the EU in 2007, and thus help consolidate the Eastern Orthodox flank therein.⁷⁶ Following Cyprus' accession on 1 May 2004, *Ekklesia*, the official monthly bulletin of the OCG, apart from congratulations, had an explicit reminder of the archbishop's views in store. Namely, that with the subsequent phase of EU enlargement, Romania and Bulgaria would also become Member States, and in that way the Eastern Orthodox presence would emerge even stronger. What is more, the wish of the archbishop was noted that there ought to be a place in the EU for Russia as well. Thereby the heritage of Cyril and Methodius would be ushered into the union together with peoples that comprise the Orthodox civilisation and the Obolensian 'Byzantine Commonwealth'.⁷⁷ In that way the aspiration was aired unequivocally. Yet again, on 1 July 2002, Christodoulos via his message – he was unable to attend – to the conference '*Cristianesimo e Democrazia nel Futuro dell'Europa*' (i.e. Christianity and Democracy in the Future of Europe), indirectly repeated his wish to see Russia included in the European project. He was more reserved, given that his message was read out to a *par excellence* Western European and not a domestic audience; indicatively, the President of the European Commission Romano Prodi (1999–2004), and the President of the European Parliament Pat Cox (2002–2004) were present, among others. He brought up the geographical demarcation of Europe, which extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals, being thus inclusive of Russia.⁷⁸ These are merely a few examples of his demonstrable aspiration.

In practice the strengthening of the OCG's ties with the Russian state and church was already evident since 2001 when Christodoulos visited the country. In particular, on May 7 of that year, when he visited the President of the Duma Gennady Seleznev, Christodoulos mentioned that the Greeks once looked to the Russian 'Orthodox brothers' in order to

⁷⁶ Archimandrite Epifanios Oikonomou, 'Χρονικό της Επισήμου Ειρηνικής Επισκέψεως του Μακαριωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Αθηνών και Πάσης Ελλάδος κ. Χριστοδούλου στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία της Ρουμανίας' [Chronicle of the Official Visit of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Mr Christodoulos to the Orthodox Church of Romania], *Ekklesia*, 7 (2003), pp. 523–534.

⁷⁷ Cholevas, op. cit.. See also Obolensky's, op. cit., *The 'Byzantine Commonwealth'* (1971), and *The Principles and Methods* (1961).

⁷⁸ Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos, 'Προς το Συνέδριο '*Cristianesimo e Democrazia nel Futuro dell'Europa*' [To the Congress '*Christianity and Democracy in the Future of Europe*'], *Ekklesia*, 8–9 (2002), pp. 569–571.

overthrow the Ottomans. And with reference to the present and the future he maintained that Greece ought to actively promote the accession of all homodox Eastern European states, including Russia, to the EU, so that to keep the spread of globalisation and Western proselytism in check.⁷⁹ The next day he met with the Russian President Vladimir Putin where he repeated his anti-Westernist views while praising the ‘symphony model’ of church-state relations.⁸⁰

On 6 December 2001 President Putin, followed by an array of Russian state officials, visited Archbishop Christodoulos in Greece;⁸¹ Moscow would capitalise on the opportunity to establish strong ties with an increasingly popular and political archbishop, who then appeared to be invincible, while at the same time Christodoulos promoted his agenda, according to which Russia could become a valuable non-Western ally. The international geopolitical substance of these exchanges is further attested by the visit of the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov (2001–2007) to Christodoulos on 4 April 2002. The archbishop made the usual remarks on the historical and cultural ties between the states, peoples and churches, and praised the Russian political and religious institutions.⁸² But the noteworthy statement amidst formalities was that of Sergei Ivanov, according to which Russia and Greece share the same geostrategic conditions and face identical threats and challenges.⁸³

His cultural diplomatic campaign was short-lived. Christodoulos, with his geopolitical assertiveness, worsened his already poor relationship – over jurisdictional affairs – with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople,⁸⁴ as his policies entered the domain of the latter and undermined its international role while indirectly enhancing that of the Patriarchate of

⁷⁹ Archimandrite Agathaggelos Charamantidis, ‘Η Ειρηνική Επίσκεψις του Μακαριωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Αθηνών και Πάσης Ελλάδος Χριστοδούλου εις την Εκκλησίαν της Ρωσίας’ [The Official Visit of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos to the Church of Russia], *Ekklesia*, 6 (2001), pp. 455–494, (pp. 462–463).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 468.

⁸¹ Press Office of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, ‘Επίσκεψη στον Μακαριώτατο του Προέδρου της Ρωσικής Ομοσπονδίας κ. Vladimir Putin’ [Visit to His Beatitude by the President of the Russian Federation Mr Vladimir Putin], *Ekklesia*, 1 (2002), pp. 40–42, (p. 40).

⁸² Press Office of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, ‘Επίσκεψη στον Μακαριώτατο του Υπουργού Άμυνας της Ρωσικής Ομοσπονδίας κ. Σεργκέι Ιβανόφ’ [Visit to His Beatitude by the Defence Minister of the Russian Federation Mr Sergei Ivanov], *Ekklesia*, 4 (2002), pp. 289–290, (p. 289).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Vasilios N. Makrides, ‘Scandals, Secret Agents and Corruption: The Orthodox Church of Greece during the 2005 Crisis – Its Relation to the State and Modernisation’ in Victor Roudometof and Vasilios N. Makrides (eds) *Orthodox Christianity in 21st Century Greece: The Role of Religion in Culture, Ethnicity and Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 61–88, (p. 71).

Moscow. This friction, his initiatives and conduct were considered detrimental to the national interests by the conservative party of *Nea Dēmokratia* (*Νέα Δημοκρατία* [New Democracy]), elected in 2004, which sought to put an end to the antagonism and antitheses, while containing Christodoulos' geopolitical assertiveness. After all, this had caused intra-synodical rifts too.⁸⁵ Christodoulos had no other option than to grudgingly adapt to the political realities and exigencies, even though in his view the international political landscape, particularly the European, called for a 'geopolitical pastoral consciousness' beyond the national church constraints.⁸⁶

Emergent patterns and causes

In retrospect, Christodoulos' conduct reflected his wish to elevate the church to a key actor in the domestic public sphere; more to the point, such was his interventionism on all domestic and international political issues that even his intent to establish a church political party was assumed.⁸⁷ The paradigm shift of the 1990s that reanimated the religious dimension of politics, which in turn brought analogous changes to the theorisation of Greece's near abroad policies and the role of the church under Archbishop Serapheim (1974–1998), constituted fertile ground for Christodoulos who succeeded him.⁸⁸

It should be noted that Christodoulos was consistent in his view and rhetoric, already since his service as Metropolitan of Volos and Demetrias (1974–1998), and particularly so after 1991. He envisaged an interventionist public role for the OCG, which included the political domain as well. Ultimately, he wished the church and state to engage one another as equals and co-shape the agenda, particularly as regards crucial state affairs, domestic and foreign. Apart from adversaries, he also had a significant public following, and being aware of that he invested in a discourse where the church was portrayed as the nation's most reliable institution and the ark of its identity.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ G. E., Interview with the author on 27 November 2013, Brussels [Recording in possession of the author].

⁸⁶ Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Christodoulos, 'Προσφώνησις ενώπιον της Ι.Σ.' [Address before the Holy Synod], *Ekklesia*, 9 (2004), pp. 750–753, (p. 751).

⁸⁷ Vasilios N. Makrides, 'Die Orthodoxe Kirche Griechenlands und der lange Weg zur Modernisierung', *Ökumenisches Forum für Glauben, Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West – G2W*, 10 (2010), pp. 18–21.

⁸⁸ Vasilios N. Makrides, 'The Orthodox Church of Greece' in Lucian N. Leustean (eds) *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 181–209, (p. 184).

⁸⁹ Makrides, 'Scandals, Secret Agents and Corruption', op. cit. Also, Georgios E. Trantas, *Being and Belonging: A Comparative Examination of the Greek and Cypriot Orthodox Churches Attitudes to*

In this context, The 1990s paradigm shift was promising in that on the one hand, arbitrary and hardly founded scenarios began to circulate in the public sphere, which predicted the triumph of Orthodoxy in the 21st century, even by immensely accomplished figures such as Sir Steven Runciman (1903–2000), while on the other hand a perceived new enemy, the ‘New World Order’, was emerging.⁹⁰ In addition, the international state of affairs after the fall of communism (1989–1991) led to the revitalisation of the ideologeme of the Orthodox bond between the peoples of Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The Yugoslav Wars for instance (1991–1999), with the strengthened Anti-western sentiment that was raised, reintroduced a collective sense of common Eastern Orthodox tradition in Greece. In the context of the time, the founding of an Inter-Orthodox Parliamentary Assembly by the Greek Parliament in 1994, intended to strengthen the political ties amongst the East European Orthodox peoples, was no coincidence.⁹¹

Such combinations fuel the typology of reflexes that surface when crises, radical shifts, and major adjustments to the international *status quo* transpire; and an old mix of political ideology and eschatology – essentially a fantasy – re-emerged. In fact in the mid-1990s, religious organisations and a few high-ranking clerics went as far as to speak of an ‘Orthodox front’ that would face the Islamic and the Western one.⁹² Agourides attributes this phenomenon to two main causes: a sense of inferiority when compared to Western Europe and an ‘enemy syndrome’ where the enemy is by and large imaginary.⁹³ Greeks, who, due to the strategic location of the country have collectively experienced an array of threats and enemies in the *longue durée*, are that sensitive to this syndrome that at times it surfaces as a national neurosis; whereby the reality of a threat becomes irrelevant and the enemy syndrome a refuge from dealing with the actual national traumas.⁹⁴ In the case in focus such symptoms are detectable, no less due to the poorly fathomed, imported modernity, which allows room for the church to intervene hegemonically, identify itself with the people and in turn the latter

‘Europeanisation’ in *Early 21st Century* [Erfurter Studien zur Kulturgeschichte des Orthodoxen Christentums, Band 16], (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018).

⁹⁰ Makrides, ‘The Orthodox Church of Greece’, op.cit., pp. 185, 187.

⁹¹ Vasilios N. Makrides, „Orthodoxe Kirche, Kultur und Politik in Griechenland in Folge der Wende von 1989“ in Alojz Ivanišević (ed.) *Re-Sakralisierung des öffentlichen Raums in Südosteuropa nach der Wende 1989* [Pro Oriente. Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Südosteuropäische Geschichte, 5] (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 179–200.

⁹² Savvas Agourides, *Θεολογία και Κοινωνία σε Διάλογο* [Theology and Society in Dialogue] (Athens: Artos Zois, 1999), pp. 21–22.

⁹³ Ibid., 152–153.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 154.

with Orthodoxy, while presenting itself as the people's natural representative.⁹⁵ In short, the poor relationship of Orthodoxy with the Enlightenment and modernity manifests itself as anti-Western populism.

Anti-Westernism is an obvious cause behind the yearning for Eastern Orthodox allies, particularly given the implicit trauma of loss and the inferiority complex that Greek Orthodoxy has yet to deal with as earlier stated. One can safely attribute anti-Westernism to a number of reasons. To historic instances of divergence, opposition, even animosity that have assumed a timeless, everlasting effect: such as the 'Great Schism' of 1054 between the Western and the Eastern Roman Empire, or the first sacking of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders, for which, indicatively, Pope John Paul II apologised during his visit to Athens in 2001.⁹⁶ Anti-Westernism of course is multifold as it also draws from localised political and cultural circumstances, yet in its contemporary form it is also coterminous with anti-Americanism, anti-globalism, anti-capitalism, – Yannaras goes as far as to call it in civilisational terms 'the Barbarian West' – in other words it encapsulates antitheses to Western-oriented values and systems, with which literature is rife.⁹⁷

The European Integration, i.e. the Europeanisation process, has reanimated anti-Westernism through Euroscepticism. Processes as such were never popular in Greece, neither among the people nor among elites who were critical of modernisation. This gave rise to sociopolitical rifts, with modernisers and Europeanists in their midst, based often on ideological grounds, and notably, regardless of party membership; Europeanisation was viewed as a threat to the country's cultural identity,⁹⁸ essentially to its particularity. The church's positions on the EU are for the most part ambivalent and antinomical, thereby difficult to apply in 'real world' circumstances. Even though particular European principles may be criticised and rejected, they may be accepted on a different occasion when political realism prevails, which is indicative of the EU being viewed as a necessary evil.⁹⁹ To be fair, the EU as actor has been identified with the Catholic Church, which has been positively

⁹⁵ Konstantinos Papastathis, 'Από τον Χριστόδουλο στον Ιερώνυμο: Ο Λόγος της Εκκοσμίκευσης και η Εκκλησία της Ελλάδος' [From Christodoulos to Hieronymos: The Secularised Rhetoric and the Church of Greece], *Σύγχρονα Θέματα*, 104 (2009), pp. 21–30, (pp. 22–23).

⁹⁶ Vasilios N. Makrides, 'Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today: A Hindrance to European Integration?', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 9:3 (2009), pp. 209–224, (p. 212).

⁹⁷ Vasilios N. Makrides, "'The Barbarian West': A Form of Orthodox Christian Anti-Western Critique" in Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (eds) *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 141–158.

⁹⁸ Panayiotis C. Ioakimidis, 'The Europeanization of Greece: An Overall Assessment' in Kevin Featherstone and Georgios A. Kazamias (eds) *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), pp.73–94, (pp. 76, 79–80).

⁹⁹ Makrides, 'Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today', op. cit., p. 217.

predisposed to the integration processes, already since the very beginning of the post-WWII European unification initiatives; whereas the first Orthodox country to accede the European Economic Communities (EEC) was Greece in 1981. This too had a bearing on its relevance, place, role and influence potential, and in sum Orthodoxy's engagement with the EU institutions and structures is much more recent.

In this context an emergent pattern demonstrates the unitary position that the Orthodox Churches hold towards integration: they prioritise the national interest and support the EU on the condition that the latter preserves its Christian particularity.¹⁰⁰ It is notable that members of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) have been quite critical of the EU, as they see it as the root-cause of pressure on Member States to move forward with the church-state separation. More to the point, Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, who heads the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church to the European Union (RROCEU), accused the EU of 'imposing militant secularism on Europe's believers'.¹⁰¹ Also, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Kirill (2009–), back when he was the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, expressed his Euroscepticism as well as his concern that the Western European Integration will go beyond the normative, structural and institutional framework and disseminate a pan-European cultural paradigm.¹⁰² It would also not be amiss to maintain that, among others, the divergence between the ROC and the EU stems from their opposing views on moral and ethical issues, which pertain to the antithetical or conflicting standpoints on human dignity, freedom and rights for example.¹⁰³ This is fundamental in appreciating that euroscepticism should not be reduced to politics as it touches on incompatible values as well.

Be that as it may, already since the fifteenth century, 'Third-Romism', which boils down to Moscow being the successor to Constantinople, New Rome, as the head of Eastern Orthodoxy universally, is another parameter of an issue that extends to the relationship between the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.¹⁰⁴ To be sure, the concept of 'Third-Romism' is not officially endorsed by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), nor was it germinated by it. It is rather a politico-religious ideology of which the Byzantine heritage, among others, has been formative for the Muscovite

¹⁰⁰ Philpott and Shah, 'Faith, Freedom, and Federation', op. cit., pp. 34–35, 54–55.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰² Makrides, 'Orthodox Anti-Westernism Today', op. cit., p. 211.

¹⁰³ Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights* (London, Routledge: 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Cyril Toumanoff, 'Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 40:4 (1955), pp. 411–447, (p. 411).

Weltanschauung.¹⁰⁵ However, this concept does impinge on the contemporary geopolitical thinking, in various shapes on forms, and by and large constitutes a ‘Russian Orthodox geopolitical metaphor’.¹⁰⁶

With regard to the churches in focus, a pivotal point, however, would be the February 1996 action of Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow (1990–2008) to omit the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople from the diptychs. This constituted the formal culmination of the friction between the two ecclesiastical institutions, and indeed, a challenge to the Constantinopolitan primacy.¹⁰⁷ This was no accident, but rather, a response of the ROC to the post-Soviet jurisdictional challenge of having formerly secure canonical territories outside the Russian borders. Moreover, the ROC distinguishes three geographical areas by way of jurisdiction and vital, strategic interest: its canonical territory within Russia, which is free of dispute; its canonical territory outside Russia, where the emphasis is placed on retaining its jurisdiction; and the areas outside the Russian borders and the ROC’s canonical jurisdiction, where the Russian Diaspora is located. In the latter two cases particularly, the Muscovite Patriarchate seeks universal primacy and clashes with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. To be sure, the welfare of Orthodox Christianity and the church constitutes a priority for the ROC, yet at the same time and while being co-opted by the state, as Daniel Payne argues, the ROC and the Russian Foreign Ministry collaborate in order to expand Russian influence abroad,¹⁰⁸ hence seeks to forge alliances, among others, with autocephalous churches in Western Europe, the Far East, and not least, the Balkans.¹⁰⁹ Breakaway churches, such as the Estonian or the Ukrainian, in siding with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and giving thus rise to parallel canonical jurisdictions, loyalties and ultimately political alignments, challenge the ROC’s territorial, canonical claims and exemplify the clash thereof.¹¹⁰ Clearly, the Ecumenical Patriarchate sees Third-Romism as an affront. Yet,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Dmitrii Sidorov, ‘Post-Imperial Third Rome: Resurrections of a Russian Orthodox Geopolitical Metaphor’, *Geopolitics*, 11 (2006), pp. 317-347, (p. 340).

¹⁰⁷ Serge Keleher, *Orthodox Rivalry in the Twentieth Century: Moscow versus Constantinople*, *Religion, State and Society*, 25:2 (1997), pp. 125–137, (pp. 125; 135).

¹⁰⁸ Daniel P. Payne, ‘Spiritual Security, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian Foreign Ministry: Collaboration or Cooptation?’, *Journal of Church and State*, 52:4 (2010), pp. 712-727. On co-optation see also Pedro Ramet, *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (London, Duke University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁹ Alicja Curanović, ‘The Attitude of the Moscow Patriarchate towards other Orthodox Churches’, *Religion, State & Society*, 35:4 (2007), pp. 301–318, (p. 303).

¹¹⁰ Konstantinos Papastathis, ‘Πολιτική, Εκκλησία και Διορθόδοξες Σχέσεις’ [Politics, Church and Inter-Orthodox Relations], in Theodoros Karvounarakis, *Η Διπλωματία στον 21ο αιώνα* [*Diplomacy*

on the other hand, both the Russian government and the ROC see the recognition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) as autocephalous in the same way. As a result, the relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Moscow deteriorated. Furthermore, this act was not deemed as agreeable by all members of the Greek-Orthodox hierarchy. Indicatively, ten Greek metropolitans differentiated their positions in relation to the recognition of the UOC by the OCG.¹¹¹

Be that as it may, Christodoulos, too, challenged the jurisdictional boundaries of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the ecclesiastical jurisdictional dispute between the OCG and the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the New Lands, i.e. areas, albeit within the Greek territorial boundaries, under the ecclesiastical control of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In order to fill episcopal vacancies in the New Lands, the Archbishop of Constantinople–New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (1991–), invoked the Patriarchal Act of 1928 to validate the appointments suggested by the OCG, applicable within the Patriarchal jurisdiction over thirty-six sees of the New Lands, which are subject to the OCG’s trusteeship.¹¹² Ever since the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the OCG came to an agreement, codified under the 1928 Patriarchal and Synodical Act, with the key provision that the New Lands were entrusted to the temporary stewardship of the OCG. In fact, this was later incorporated in the Greek legislation. Yet Christodoulos, giving rise to the 2003–4 crisis, maintained that for the appointments thereof, the OCG did not need validation. The matter was eventually settled via governmental intervention, namely, by the mediation of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in 2004.¹¹³ This was not a mere legality dispute. It is traced back to the frictions that emerged out of the churches’ responses to globality and territoriality. On the one hand the OCG assumed a defensive stance to the Europeanisation process, which was perceived as a threat to the modern synthesis model of the ‘national church’; on the other, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was oriented to a transnational role, seeking to function as the global mother church of all Orthodox peoples, and ultimately their institutional representative. The OCG, in seeking to be the exclusive representative of the

in the 21st Century], Conference Proceedings, 23&24 May 2013 (Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia Press, 2014), pp. 101–115.

¹¹¹ ‘Δέκα Μητροπολίτες μαζί και ο Κερκύρας, κόντρα στον Ιερώνυμο για την Ουκρανία’ [Ten Metropolitans, of Corfu included, against Hieronymos on Ukraine], *Orthodoxia*, 2019, <https://gr.pravoslavie.ru/124909.html>.

¹¹² Elizabeth H. Prodromou, ‘Negotiating Pluralism and Specifying Modernity in Greece: Reading Church-State Relations in the Christodoulos Period’, *Social Compass*, 51:4, (2004), pp. 471–485, (p. 474).

¹¹³ Victor Roudometof, ‘Greek Orthodoxy, Territoriality, and Globality: Religious Responses and Institutional Disputes’, *Sociology of Religion*, 69:1 (2008), pp. 67–91, (pp. 80–81).

Orthodox Greeks in the EU, internationalised its profile and organisational structure and challenged this narrative by having an autonomous EU representation and agenda.¹¹⁴ By extension this strengthened the Russian ‘Third-Romist’ case.

Concluding remarks

The structure, values and principles of the EU are permissive of the participation of churches, religious and philosophical organisations. This renders them both *de jure* and *de facto* partakers and observers in the polyilateral fermentations of the bloc-actor. Indeed religious institutions have been integrated within the European structure for quite some time, even as contributors in the European Integration process. Moreover, the post-Westphalian paradigm shift of the international system has allowed more room for the exercise of religiocultural diplomacy. In that sense it is no surprise that an ambitious archbishop such as Christodoulos identified the vacuums and opportunities thereof. From within that structure he sought to co-shape the EU in cooperation with his Catholic counterparts, while at the same time he maintained that he aspired to counterbalance the Catholic, and generally Western domination and its influence on the EU institutions, by the formation of an ‘Orthodox front’. Collectively all the Orthodox Member States could not suffice to accomplish that, however his long term and ambitious aspiration was to at least prepare the ground for a future Russian accession; at any rate he wished to set this discourse in motion, whereby the idea might mature via further dialogue and engagement in the lapse of time, but to no avail.

Parallel to that, Christodoulos developed closer ties between Russia and the OCG. The political content of this relationship was more than obvious and it was gaining impetus. But this was neither in line with the political direction of the Greek government, nor with the national interest – not to mention that of the EU. Disregarding the political circumstances, he sought to reanimate – at an ideational level – the ‘Russian Expectation’ time and again, and the fantasy of a post-modern ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’, assuming that this would find resonance in the collective imaginary. However, although religion is a *par excellence* vehicle for the exercise of cultural diplomacy, it does not follow that the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ serves as a model for imitation in practice, against what political reality imposes – not to mention the impossibility of a contemporary ‘symphony’ in this context.

In fact Christodoulos’ strategy did not benefit the OCG in any tangible way – it did hurt relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate by challenging it – neither in the short nor

¹¹⁴ Ibid. See also, Trantas, op. cit.

long-term. At the same time, the religious-diplomatic engagement with Russia was in itself short-lived. The EU Institutions did not adopt the suggestions of the mobilised churches, and no Orthodox front was ever formed, as the Orthodox Churches kept on pursuing their national agendas instead of converging them; the Committee of Representatives of the Orthodox Churches to the European Union (CROCEU) for instance, constitutes a structure where Eastern Orthodox cooperation is facilitated, but the limitations posed by different priorities and interests among national churches are indicative of the complexity of establishing consensus above and beyond any given national agendas and state-based approaches, in line with state policies.¹¹⁵ What is more, any latent Russian gravitational pull did not appear to be substantial, and the same applies to the afterlife of the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’, even though traces as such may sporadically survive. By relying on an exaggerated past linkage, no new narrative was generated, one with valid projections to the future and a concrete agenda and goals; on the contrary, the age-old stereotypical narrative was essentialised as the cornerstone of this relationship. And when all is said and done, this was rather a rhetorical vehicle in line with Christodoulos’ ‘geopolitical pastoral consciousness’, towards the internationalisation of the OCG, so that it would be elevated as an EU actor, equal to the Ecumenical and the Muscovite Patriarchate.

¹¹⁵ Trantas, op. cit., as well as Lucian N. Leustean, ‘The Politics of Orthodox Churches in the European Union’, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 18:2-3 (2018), pp.146-157, DOI: 10.1080/1474225X.2018.1504598.