

# Reluctant Europeans

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## Negotiating Greek Identity during the Macedonia Crisis\*

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European, Christian Orthodox alliance. Western media attention fell on Andonis Samaras (first Greek Foreign Minister, then leader of the renegade, nationalist Political Spring Party) who campaigned for an aggressive diplomatic response to any European state which recognized the new sovereign. Samaras received even more media attention when he made public his desire to form an alliance of Eastern Orthodox states (including Serbia and Russia) to defend Greek national interests against Western pressure and a perceived Islamic threat in the Balkans.

On the surface, this well-publicized international crisis seems to demonstrate that as political ideologies wane in the post-Cold War era, a primordial affinity resurfaces which lumps nations into alliances based on broad civilizational (mostly religious)

## INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the independence of the Republic of Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> as such, created a nationalist uprising in Greece. Massive rallies took place throughout Greece highlighted by well-publicized mottoes such as "Macedonia is Greece" and "Macedonia: 4,000 Years of Greek History." At the same time, Greek politicians and diplomats scrambled to defend the perceived usurpation of Greek history and culture at the hands of what they called this 'mini-state', this 'pseudo-state', this 'Republic of Skopje', and attacked what they perceived to be European complicity behind the 'Skopjans' historical and cultural distortions. Western European politicians and the press developed the impression that Greece was acting in an uncivilized, hysterical manner and that it was moving headlong into an anti-

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1 The decision to use the name Republic of Macedonia to refer to the territory of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia reflects a general use of toponyms in this paper according to self-designation. Items appear in quotation marks insofar as they are alternative names given to a region, state or people by non-members.

groupings. Indeed, that argument is made both in the press and in scholarly works (e.g., Huntington 1993 and 1996). This paper, however, analyzes the two main political camps in Greece to argue that Greek identity is complex and in perpetual negotiation, especially in times of heightened social crisis. Following the collapse of Yugoslavia and the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, a complicated political discourse took place in Greece revolving around the European dismissal of Greece's perceived national interests. Mostly through textual analysis, I will demonstrate that a pattern developed during the early and mid-1990s in which the *major* right and left-wing parties negotiated their positions in Greek society and Europe through different, often opposing cultural symbols. Whereas more left-wing currents tended to employ cultural symbols of Orthodoxy and Balkan identity ironically, the moderate right-wing party and its supporters in the media, hoping to legitimate Greece as part of Europe, made much use of the ancient past and its generative role in western civilization.

The main contribution of this article is to dispel the monolithic image of Greek nationalism. An imagined national community (Anderson 1991) certainly exists in Greece, but the imagination is limited insofar as Greek nationalism, like all nationalisms, is open to discourse and negotiation among elite and societal groups which navigate with competing historical and cultural guides. It is wrong to assume that nationalism has a predictable or standardized goal and, thus, a predetermined place in a particular civilization. Culture is a grouping of symbols used selectively and often contentiously in times of crisis by actors with social and political goals in mind. The set of cultural symbols available, moreover, depends on the structuring role of history and shared experience (e.g., Swidler 1986 and Therborn 1995). In the end, neither 'European' nor 'Balkan', neither 'Western' nor 'Orthodox', win. Identity matters insofar as it is used by agents in perpetual competition with each other and in response to perceived external forces.

This article first outlines the recent Macedonian crisis and the heated diplomatic exchange between Greece and Europe in a section titled "Greek Diplomacy and Its European Critics (1991-94)." The following section, "Making Cultural Artifacts (Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Greece)," discusses the construction of the modern Greek state and its relevant cultural symbols. It argues that Western institutions and culture have not been sloppily papered over any so-called inherent Orthodox civilization. Rather, the experience of constructing the state and building the nation has produced a structured set of cultural and historical symbols that political actors evoke selectively in times of crisis. The analytical section, "The Politics of Identity and Uses of the Past in Post-Cold War Greece," discusses how the socialist and moderate-right political camps have deployed these cultural and historical symbols according to their conceptions of Greece's identity.

### GREEK DIPLOMACY & ITS EUROPEAN CRITICS (1991-94)

As Yugoslavia unraveled in 1991, the government in Skopje resolved to part company with Belgrade. The Republic of Macedonia's declaration of independence as such on 17 November 1991 elicited an immediate and defensive response from Athens. "Officially the Greek government refused to accept any name for the republic which included the word 'Macedonia' in any form whether as a noun or as an adjectival modifier" (Danforth 1993: 10). Athens argued that the use of the name Macedonia by Skopje denoted the entire geographical area and thus implied territorial claims to the northern region of

Greece. The Greeks' official claim was that the name Macedonia could only apply to their part of geographic Macedonia.<sup>2</sup>

The diplomatic impasse worsened in August 1992 when the nascent republic raised a new flag featuring the sixteen-point sun, a symbol of the ancient dynasty of Alexander the Great (ELIAMEP 1993). Greek officials accused the 'Republic of Skopje' and the 'Skopjans', as they contemptuously called their northern neighbor and its inhabitants, of categorically usurping Greece's ancient heritage, despite the irony that the symbol was discovered in archeological digs in the 1970s and thus was never deployed as a historical artifact in the construction modern national identity (Danforth 1993). Under extreme pressure from Athens, the European Union (EU) repeatedly deferred recognition of the Republic of Macedonia, and only after great diplomatic wrangling was the new state admitted to the United Nations under a temporary name (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and without the right to fly its flag.

Although the European Union demonstrated its willingness to recognize and thereby stabilize the Republic of Macedonia while addressing some of Greece's concerns, most EU member states became thoroughly frustrated with Greek policy. Many journalists and politicians spoke freely against the perceived diplomatic farce. In 1992, a correspondent attacked the Greek position commenting that "Greece is reminding the world that it too is a Balkan country, the inhabitant of a region where history often induces hysteria ... the situation has all the markings of a tragedy, which Aristotle, another great Macedonian, who was Alexander's teacher, defined as the result not of wickedness but of foolish pride" (Talbot 1992: 31). In the Winter of 1993, Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Elleman-Jensen abruptly put an end to diplomatic niceties at an EU summit, admonishing the Greek representatives: "Greece has acted unreasonably. I am ashamed of the Greek attitude. The other 11 countries have just had enough of Greece's obstruction ... We have bent to the demands of a member state which feels threatened by a country smaller than itself" (*Greek Press* 1993a). The European response to the Macedonia impasse was to (re)draw the cultural borders of Europe to exclude the Balkans.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the political situation within Greece became unstable. Konstandinos Mitsotakis, the conservative Prime Minister, dismissed Samaras, his uncompromising and chauvinistic Minister of Foreign Affairs. Samaras broke ranks with the conservatives (New Democracy) and publicly accused Mitsotakis of not putting enough pressure on Skopje. Samaras roused public opinion through the media and called for a

2 For those unfamiliar with the conflict, here is a brief summary of relevant pre-Cold War events: Although the Balkans experienced an extended period of peace during the Cold War, Greek, Bulgarian and Yugoslav relations wavered between ambivalent friendship and muted hostility. The shifting nature of relations was largely a function of the pernicious 'Macedonian Question' which was perceived in Athens as nothing short of territorial design. The official position of the Greek government and of many Greek academicians was that the Macedonian nation and language are inventions of the Tito era. In short, following Tito's rift with Stalin, the Yugoslav government sanctioned a separate ethnic and linguistic identity for the Slavs of Yugoslav Macedonia to prevent the possibility of the local population imagining itself as part of the (pro-Soviet) Bulgarian nation. The invention of Macedonian nationality was also a step in the direction of creating a separate Socialist Republic of Macedonia which would incorporate the Yugoslav, Greek and Bulgarian regions of Macedonia and function as a satellite state under Belgrade's control (see Andriotis 1991; Koursi 1991).

3 Throughout 1993, the attacks on Greek foreign policy intensified and unflattering comparisons between ancient and modern Greece became a recurring theme. In a survey on Greece, *The Economist* blasted Athens' foreign policy using a tone replete with condescending jokes. The article concluded with an ancient Greek analogy. "[The Greeks] must avoid the fate of Tantalus. The tantalizing apple just above their heads is acceptance as a full member of the western world. The Greeks have kept reaching up for it, and it has kept slipping through their fingers" (*The Economist* 1993).

massive rally to halt the betrayal of national interests as he perceived them. Nearly one million people, one tenth of the national population, demonstrated in Thessaloniki, the Greek Macedonian capital; an opinion poll taken at the time recorded that 72 percent firmly opposed any compromise on the name issue, and 20 percent claimed they were willing to fight over it (*The Economist* 1993).

Samaras's political clout strengthened considerably. He hastily organized an ultra-nationalist party under the euphemism Political Spring, which robbed New Democracy of its narrow parliamentary majority through defection. The conservative government collapsed and new elections were announced. The more coherent socialist party (PaSoK), led by the late Andreas Papandreou, found itself in a highly favorable position. Papandreou promised to stand firm on national issues and comfortably won the sudden elections at the expense of the divided conservatives (*Balkan News* 1993). Most EU states expressed their displeasure at PaSoK's stunning comeback, expecting little progress to be made on the Macedonian impasse.

One by one, during the winter of 1994, the EU countries recognized the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as such, and accused Athens of attempting to destabilize the region. The US followed suit on 9 February 1994. The Greek reaction was again swift and hostile. Thousands rallied in Thessaloniki, and, in the Macedonian provincial town of Drama, 10,000 converged to watch the major as he renamed all streets bearing American names (*Greek Press* 1994). On February 16, Papandreou upgraded the oil embargo on the landlocked republic to a total economic blockade. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel condemned the blockade, stating that the move was "contrary to acceptable behavior among civilized European countries" (*The Daily Telegraph* 1994). Furthermore, the Greek Foreign Minister's meeting with rump-Yugoslavia's Milošević, which aimed to avert NATO airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs, confirmed European suspicions that Athens was flaunting its pro-Serbian, anti-Western bias (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 1994).

#### MAKING CULTURAL ARTIFACTS (NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY GREECE)

The modern Greek state came into being largely due to the intervention of the Great Powers who were, more often than not, in hostile opposition to the Ottoman Empire. The uncertainties of diplomacy coincided with a revival of the classics in Europe in which many political elites and intellectuals, British and French in particular, mingled with Greek scholars who lived abroad. Together, they idealized classical Greece as the root of Western civilization and dreamed of resuscitating antiquity in a modern Greek state. "Indeed the war was reported in the western press as a virtual replay of the Battle of Marathon and the Persian Wars. Brought up on a diet of romanticized classicism, the West offered to the Greeks a version of their ethnic identity they were simply in no position to refuse" (Just 1989: 83).

The Kingdom of Greece, which emerged in 1833 poor, tiny, devoid of infrastructure and run by entrenched local notables, found itself primed to inherit the honorific title of the source of European civilization (Herzfeld 1986). Many members of the Greek elite, in particular intellectuals and folklorists, treated antiquity as an issue of positioning and strategy (Friedman 1992). They used the past as defined by an enlightened collective of western scholars and statesmen to forge a cultural identity which would be instilled in the masses though the institutions of the state and would facilitate the cultural and

political shift of Greece from a waning, autocratic East to a waxing community of Enlightened western nations.

Membership in the perceived West, however, required that the state reach deep into the trenches of society and lift local loyalties and identities up to the realm of the nation-state. Identities had been tied to locale (i.e., village or city of origin), and the peasantry had not yet experienced a unity expressed through a nation-state (Just 1989; Kitromilides 1990). Elites and intellectuals, both in the state and in conjunction with it, standardized and nationalized culture through the military and pedagogical institutions of the state. Peasants in the army, collected from all parts of the country, now lived under the same shabby barrack roofs and became aware of each other's existence. Dialects were shamed out of existence as the army operated in standard Greek (Kitromilides 1990). The schools had a similar function, teaching children about their glorious past and propagating a form of purified Greek known as *katharevousa*. *Katharevousa*, the officially de-Turkified and archaizing language, was both an attempt to win Western approval and to re-enforce the modern Greek's awareness of his or her Hellenic descent (Herzfeld 1986: 21).

As Hellenic descent offered Greece a legitimate place among western states, Greek scholars were quite protective of their theories on cultural continuity. The Falmerayer Thesis is one case in point. Jakob Philipp Falmerayer, a nineteenth-century pan-German nationalist, rejected the idea that Greeks had an ancient ancestry, and alleged that they were nothing less than a heavy mix of most of the Balkan's ethnic groups. Scholars and political elites in Greece denounced Falmerayer in unison and presented counterarguments to his thesis (Herzfeld 1986: 76).

The state's classical bearings also brought the cultural and upper echelons of the state in conflict with the Orthodox church. The Patriarchate had opposed the state's aggressive cultural connections with the pagan world. Moreover, the church was seen as an Ottoman political institution which could impede the state's project to co-opt local, religious identities. The obsession of the Greek state with the classical ancestry was relaxed as the nineteenth century wore on. Scholars began to elaborate cultural continuity theories which included the Byzantine Empire as a crucial link between classical and modern Greece. Competing Slavic nationalisms also gave a sense of urgency to the state and church to cooperate in a nation-building project. The creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in the 1870s – an independent Orthodox church which began acting according to Bulgarian national interests – is one event which further tied the Orthodox church to the nationalizing Greek state. The tension between the secular, classical bearings of the Greek state and the Orthodox ideals was never truly resolved, although creating strict dichotomies between the two is difficult. What is clear is that the state- and nation-building experience of the nineteenth century established a set of cultural artifacts which referred to several glorious Greek pasts, most notably classical Greece and secondly Orthodoxy. Before discussing the uses of these cultural symbols in the 1990s, it is important to contextualize them in the irredentist project of the Greek state as it scrambled with other Balkan states to profit from Ottoman decline.

In nineteenth-century Macedonia, it was increasingly difficult for the Ottoman authorities to administer the unique blend of Greek, Slavic, Turkish, Jewish, Albanian, and Vlah (or Aromanian) peoples. The Serb, Greek and Bulgarian nation-states, in particular, built schools in Macedonia and allowed brigands to infiltrate the province in order to terrorize each others' ethnic communities and to foster mass-based, state-oriented conceptions of nationhood among their irredenta. Each particular ethnic group had developed its own nationalist organizations, not necessarily connected to any proximate states, including the Macedonians (of Slavic extraction) who sought to

distinguish Bulgarian from Macedonian national aspirations and who wanted to create a literary language out of a chosen Macedonian dialect (Friedman 1993). Bulgarian nationalists, concerned about the possible erosion of a Greater Bulgaria which was to include most of Macedonia, attacked them as separatists.

The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 are a watershed in the history of the peninsula. By 1913, the Ottomans had been rolled back to Eastern Thrace, Albania had gained nominal independence, and Greece and Serbia had annexed most of Macedonia, leaving just 10 percent to Bulgaria and a swath of several dozen villages to Albania.<sup>4</sup> Assimilation to the respective ethnic group of the annexor was the rule rather than the exception, and throughout the twentieth century the once "bewildering set" of ethnic groups and subgroups (Lunt 1986: 730) was steadily simplified. The Greek, Serb and Bulgarian states, moreover, resettled refugees in their respective sectors of Macedonia to dilute minority populations.

#### THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY AND USES OF THE PAST IN POST-COLD WAR GREECE

As discussed previously, the Europeans quickly realized that Greece would stand firm on its Macedonia position. As time wore on, they became increasingly irritated, dismissing Greek policy as stubborn and unreasonable. The western press gradually came to feel comfortable in characterizing the Greeks as uncivilized and un-European. On many occasions, antiquity was juxtaposed with modern Greece to show how far the Greeks had fallen. The West, perceiving classical Greece as the source for its own civilization, delegated itself the authority to symbolically revoke the modern Greeks' European status by invoking an unflattering comparison.

The Europeans perceived an ideological and political shift in Greece toward an alliance with Christian Orthodox states which would be anti-Western and anti-Muslim – which is somewhat ironic, given that the Republic of Macedonia is a nation in which the Christian Orthodox Church plays an important political role. The West cited increasingly close Greek-Serbian ties as evidence of the Greeks' un-European behavior. A political commentator alleged that "the spokesmen for the main political groupings, the most widely read editorial-page writers and television commentators, a number of academics who should know better, and the entire Greek Orthodox church hierarchy – have flaunted their pro-Serbian bias" (Rizopoulos 1993: 18). The press connected the shift in Greek foreign policy and anti-Western sentiment to Skopje's declaration of independence (see Hope 1994). Much concern was expressed over ex-foreign minister Samaras and his ultra-nationalist campaign. *The European* cited Samaras's ambitious plan to form an alliance of Christian Orthodox states stretching from Cyprus to Russia. Of particular interest in this case is the article's comment that "this is the first time a politician has attempted to involve the Greek Orthodox Church in the modern political process" (Kassimeris 1993). The Europeans perceived the massive protests, street-name changes and nationalist politicians as clear evidence that modern Greece was not European but instead the antithesis of its classical heritage. According to the West,

4 During the First Balkan War, Montenegro, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria attacked the Ottoman Empire. During the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria attacked Greece and Serbia in apparent dissatisfaction with its territorial gains but was counterattacked and rapidly defeated by Greece, Serbia and Romania.

Athens had guaranteed itself "the opprobrium of decent people everywhere" (Rizopoulos 1993: 19). And the Greeks took such statements to mean non-European, Balkan, uncivilized, hysterical.

A controversial article by Samuel Huntington titled "The Clash of Civilizations?" offers an explanation of the Greek-European dialogue that emerged from the Macedonia impasse. Huntington argues that the collapse of ideologically defined states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union allows traditional ethnic identities and hatreds to reemerge with a vengeance (Huntington 1993 and 1996). Furthermore, economic modernization compromises the nation-state as the source and focus of identity. As a result these two processes, broader civilizational affiliations will become the decisive components of identity. Religion is the most likely determinant of civilization, and thus Europe can be divided into three religious zones: Latin, Orthodox and Muslim. The future, according to Huntington, may very well bring confrontation and conflict between these civilizations.

Huntington's argument, on the surface, seems to apply to Greece. Since the demise of Cold War political ideology, Greece has increasingly identified with Christian Orthodox Serbia and Russia at the expense of the Latin West and Muslim Turkey. Papandreou, before his stunning comeback to power in 1993, criticized the conservatives' foreign policy warning that Greece "should not betray Serbia" (*Greek Press* 1993b). Serbia's defeat would deprive Greece of a natural ally, upgrading the role of Turkey and the West in the Balkans. Furthermore, the bitter exchange regarding the status of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia superficially seems to verify Huntington's thesis. The West supported this circumlocutory republic, full of brainwashed Serbians or Bulgarians as many Greeks alleged, to keep the Orthodox countries divided. Many Greeks also alleged that Turkey was supporting the significant Albanian and smaller Turkish minorities in the republic in an attempt to create a greater Muslim sphere of influence in the Balkans.

The most hostile developments in the Greek press, and perhaps the most noticed by the West, also support Huntington's thesis. One article explicitly proposed the partition of 'Skopje' between Serbia and Albania. Although Albania is Muslim and pro-American, this partition plan would extend Serbia's borders down to Greece, "dismembering the Muslim and pro-American arc" and preserving Greece's "vital interests" (Apostolopoulos 1992).<sup>5</sup> A second article dismisses the international vilification of the Serbs and recalls World War II atrocities committed against the Serbs by Catholic Croatian fascists (Ustasha) and Muslims. The Orthodox Serbs are clearly the persecuted nation, once martyred by Ustasha and now massacred by the Muslims "who with axe and fire are preparing the way for the spread of Islam in Europe" (Mavroidis 1992). One series of commentaries, written by a church official, advocated the creation of an "Orthodox Front" by tightening relations between Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia (Hristodoulos 1992a). Papal expansionism and Muslim domination were also treated as threats to Christian Orthodox civilization.<sup>6</sup>

5 This and all subsequent translations are mine.

6 One article written by Hristodoulos regarding the Orthodox struggle merits quotation: "In Bosnia the Serbs are fighting ... with a cross in one hand and a gun in the other. They see the Muslims on the other side, trained by fanatic Mujahedin who have come from various Islamic countries to fight in the name of Allah, to destroy churches, to rape, to massacre non-combatants and children without restraint. [The Serbs] see the 'Christians' of the West giving supplies [to the Muslims], which are actually filled with weapons. They witness the embargo which leaves them without medicine and fuel ..." (Hristodoulos 1992b).

The Huntington thesis would lead us to believe that what has transpired over and beyond the Macedonia issue is an inherent trend where religious and cultural ties supplant Cold War political ideology, forming tight civilizational alliances that are bound to clash with one another. The aforementioned articles clearly demonstrate anti-Western and anti-Muslim sentiments in the Greek press. These articles were largely a response to European critics who called Greece uncivilized, hysterical and typically Balkan. Mass demonstrations likewise influenced the West's perception of Greece. Following EU recognition of RM, the innumerable egg-hurling protesters in Thessaloniki, led through the streets by the city's bishop, alarmed most western observers. "No one came out to open the door of the consulate [where the protesters converged]," reported one news source, "not even the US consul, James Bradford, even though the angry metropolitan constantly banged at the door of the consulate with his scepter" (*Macedonia Information Liaison Service* 1994). The symbolism of this manifestation is unmistakable: Orthodox masses, led by a religious leader, demanded retribution against the West. The divisions between civilizations are deepening. Eggs and scepters, Huntington would have us believe, will soon be exchanged for deadlier weapons.

Yet the political climate in Greece was favorable for more than a simple revival of suppressed Orthodox culture. Contrary to what political think-tanks, media sources and some scholars claimed, the response to the Europeans did not consist of primordial cultural divisions. Instead, following the collapse of Communism, a complex political discourse emerged in Greece. The right and left-wings negotiated their positions in Greek society and Europe through two historically opposed cultural concepts, the 'ancient past' and 'Orthodoxy', which respectively implied being European and not European. The ancient past has been used traditionally and for the most part by the moderate right to legitimate Greece's economic and cultural integration into Europe. Despite all the work of nineteenth-century folklorists and political elites, certain political leaders felt that Greece's European identity was not entirely secure. The moderate right (New Democracy) promoted the ancient past and emphasized Europe's passivity during the colonels' dictatorship (1967-74), often portraying the latter as having enslaved Hellenism and the world's oldest democracy. Thus, the existing members of the EC "were soon falling over themselves to ease the path to entry of the country which they liked to hail as the foundation of European civilization" (Clogg 1992: 177).

One of the most unexpected and illuminating instances in which the conservative government deployed the ancient past was in the tourism sector. Just as the Macedonia issue was becoming a serious concern in Greece, the National Tourist Organization launched a curious advertising campaign that can best be described as a hybrid of tourism promotion and political propaganda. This campaign largely targeted European markets with the slogan "Greece: Chosen by the Gods." Commercials, advertisements and government sponsored trade shows portrayed Greece as a place with "a rich cultural heritage, the foundation of Western civilization" (GNTO 1991). Aeolos, Zeus, Dionysus, and Athena sponsored Greece, entering the political offices, travel agencies and homes of western Europeans. The campaign's purpose was dual. Besides the obvious economic benefit that upscale European tourists would bring to the Greek economy, a political agenda underscored the initiative. The Europeans would come to see Greece as part of Europe through the emphasis on their common Hellenic underpinnings.<sup>7</sup>

7 What must be noticed, however, is that the campaign's aggressive promotion of antiquity completely neglected any kind of a portrayal of modern Greek culture or the modern individuals. Ironically, the native-less slogans and photographs of the campaign detached ancient from modern Greece and facilitated the appropriation of antiquity by the Europeans without the inclusion of the Greeks.

As the political situation in the Balkans deteriorated, the campaign intensified, and the political agenda usurped the primacy of tourism development. One government poster designed for international promotion carried the title "Macedonia: 4,000 Years of Greek History" and emphasized the Hellenic qualities of Alexander the Great and Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> The "Chosen by the Gods" logo appeared at the bottom of the posters, yet in the place of the usual clichés on warm hospitality and crystalline seas, other themes appeared: historical fragments on the Greekness of Alexander the Great and his tutelage under Aristotle.<sup>9</sup> Under the guise of tourism promotion, the moderate right set out to justify the Greek stance on the Macedonia issue while reminding the Europeans that, as borrowers of Hellenic thought and culture, they ought to support Greece against the un-European and un-Hellenic Slavs to the north.<sup>10</sup> 1993 being the European Year of Solidarity, the government was eager to remind the Europeans of their roots, thus compelling a conflation of political and cultural solidarity. Fittingly, across the bottom of the poster the logo "The Year of Solidarity ... come to Greece and visit Macedonia" appeared, reminding the Europeans that the Greeks shared the formers' continental identity.<sup>11</sup>

An overview of the moderate right press confirms the assumption that New Democracy's political officials and sympathetic media organs used the ancient past to affirm the European orientation of Greek identity as a response to Western criticism. In *Eleftheros Tipos*, a conservative newspaper, Yiannis Lampsas angrily rejects the Danish Foreign Minister's criticism of the Greek position on Macedonia (recall section 2 on Greek diplomacy). The correspondent bitterly responded to the Minister's demand that the Greeks "behave like Europeans and not like Balkan people." "What kind of racism is this distinction between European and Balkan?" writes Lampsas, "Does the Danish Minister forget that the word 'Europe' and all it symbolizes came from ancient Greece? Or maybe he believes that Homer was a Turk and Aristotle a Slav?" (Lampsas 1992). Implicit in the journalist's response is a connection with the ancient past. Although Lampsas rejected European versus Balkan as a racist distinction, he nevertheless attached the former identity to Greece by emphasizing that the ancients were neither Turks nor Slavs (i.e., Balkan people).

Conservative publications were preoccupied with the European-Balkan distinction which they hoped to solve in favor of the former by emphasizing cultural continuity and thus Western affinity. In a *Kathimerini* article written around the time when Greek officials were calling for a boycott of European goods in response to proliferating criticism, one writer suggested that a more beneficial course of action would be to teach the Europeans that the Greeks were not Balkan mongrels and that Hellenism and the

8 For a contrasting view of Greek history which was not written by the winners, I refer the reader to Olmstead's *A History of the Persian Empire*. I am grateful to Victor Friedman for this information.

9 *Makedonien: 4.000 Jahre griechische Geschichte* [promotional poster]. Athens: GNTO.

10 This theme constantly appeared in government publications that were directed to the Europeans. In a lavishly bankrolled documentary, *Macedonia: 4,000 Years Greek Civilization*, the narrator spoke of Alexander the Great who carried "the torch of Greek culture to the East: above all the language and technology, arts and letters, and also customs, traditions, ways of life, religion - all things which combine to constitute civilization in the broadest sense ... The Persians read Homer and children in Susa and Gedrosia chanted the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles ... [Alexander] planted Greek ways of life and community practices in Asia where they had formerly lived in ignorance" (from Unit 5). Besides reaffirming the Greekness of the Macedonian dynasty, this film reasserts the generative role of Greek civilization in the world. The narrative might well have substituted West for East, Europe for Asia and France for Persia. The Europeans, as most conservative and pro-European Greeks would argue, also built their civilization on Hellenic foundations.

11 *Makedonien: 4.000 Jahre griechische Geschichte*. [promotional poster]. Athens: GNTO.

*Hellenes* never disappeared. Rather, the Greeks simply replaced the name *Hellene* with *Rum* since the Church equated the former with paganism and idolatry.<sup>12</sup> Ethnic and cultural purity was maintained under a different name until 1821, when "with every right" the name *Hellene* was revived (Gheorghontzos 1992). The author suggests that a correction of history, rather than a hasty anti-European boycott, is the best way for Greece to make its case for Macedonia. By emphasizing the continuity of Greek civilization and distancing Greece from the Skopjans, which the author describes as a bastardized soup of Albanian, Slav and Muslim blood, the Greeks can extricate themselves from the Balkans and rightfully join the Europeans.<sup>13</sup>

Much to the embarrassment of the moderate right, the Europeans began measuring Greece's unwieldy diplomacy against the allegedly more tempered, civilized and rational ancient past. *Eleftheros Tipos*, a pro-government paper, criticized New Democracy for not addressing European concerns effectively. To say or print "Macedonia is Greek" is not enough. That Alexander the Great embodied Hellenism is self-evident. Rather, "we must convince [the Europeans] that we are reliable European associates, that we can play the role of a *stability factor* in the area, with responsibility and credibility. In this both the government and the opposition must show *political accord* above and beyond national consciousness. In this way Greek society will be seen as healthy and mature" (*Eleftheros Tipos* 1992; emphasis mine). This article assumed that the Greek character of Macedonia and historical descent was not in doubt. However, what was in doubt was the modern Greeks' ability to live up to the standards of the ancient Greeks and the Europeans who internalized classical civilization. In short, the decisive factor in the Macedonian impasse was not the degree of philhellenism in a particular European country but the degree of classical (and thus European) demeanor of the Greek polity.

The Greek response to European criticism demonstrates that Greek identity was in a period of intense renegotiation, a process that is poorly explained by arguments which insist that a type of intrinsic Christian Orthodox affinity is resurfacing in the post-Cold War era. Western politicians and the media have made the same mistake, and it is for this reason that they have perceived even the highly pro-European New Democracy government as tilting towards a Serbian-Greek axis (e.g., Pettifer 1992: 194). It cannot be denied that the conservatives were sympathetic toward the Serbs. After all, Belgrade steadfastly defended the Greek stand on the Macedonian affair. Yet despite the harsh and condescending criticisms emanating from European capitals, the primary goal for most moderate-right political elements is to 'become a part of Europe'. European 'kinship', economic and cultural, can come only with the permission of the Europeans who, much to the dismay of the right, see Greece as a Macedonia-crazed, Balkan backwater whose Christian Orthodox characteristics are a far cry from classical civilization.

The Greek political system is truly polarized, and a seemingly anti-Western, statist left can easily capture the loyalty of a plurality or even an absolute majority. Greece has long extricated itself from the Ottoman Empire, and the European appeal, given myriad interventions and occupations by Western powers (Clogg 1992 and Psomas 1978), is no

12 *Rum* is a derivation of *Romios*, a reference to the Greeks' being part of Byzantium, or the second Rome. *Rum* was in common usage in the Ottoman Empire.

13 Victor Friedman, Professor of Balkan Linguistics at the University of Chicago, brought an interesting point to my attention. Ironically, the above author's description of the 'Skopjans' is virtually identical with Falmerayer's description of the nineteenth-century Greeks.

longer quite so obvious. PaSoK's rhetoric arguably served a domestic purpose: Papandreu's confrontational diplomacy had a certain therapeutic effect on the national psyche, as the general public came to believe that Greece's sovereignty was being restored after 150 years of Great Power bullying (Rizopoulos 1993: 21). During the rushed election campaign in September 1993, Papandreu extensively used anti-Western (and anti-capitalist) rhetoric stating, "the homeland falters, democracy is being tested, the economy is being dismantled, our national wealth is being sold off" (*Balkan News* 1993). Implicit in this is a condemnation of Western economics as well as European intervention. It is significant that as an anti-welfare-state political climate spread throughout Europe and Greece, PaSoK attempted to stem the anti-welfare-state tide by hitching it to a nationalist campaign that merged state organizations such as telecommunications with national interests. Subconsciously, the public was to associate the future of the state sector and public industries such as OTE with the survival of the nation which was being threatened by a monolithic West.

Also worthy of note is the somewhat disappointing performance of Samaras's Political Spring Party in the 1993 election and its gradual slip into mediocrity thereafter. Samaras's relative lack of charisma and his party's competition with highly institutionalized parties certainly contributed to his lackluster electoral performance. His marginalization, however, arguably was a consequence of the Socialists' ability to bundle together a convincing anti-European, nationalist, welfare platform and the relative ease by which New Democracy monopolized a nationalist, Europeanist, anti-welfare state platform; Samaras in the end was left with a rather redundant and unappealing nationalist, Orthodox front platform, which also campaigned for economic reform and privatization.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding, this article will briefly touch on the following three points: the use of culture in crafting identity and positioning identity in an international context; the uses and conceptions of being European at the level of the individual; and the post-crisis period beyond 1994.

The position taken here is that identities which "become relevant for politics are not determined by some primordial ancientness. They are crafted in benign and malignant ways in print and electronic media, in textbooks and advertising ... in all the places and all the ways that self and other, us and them, are represented in an expanding public culture" (Rudolph and Rudolph 1993: 29). The cultural and religious symbols which appeared in response to European criticism of Greece's foreign policy are a reflection of the renegotiation of political and economic power and status. To legitimate Greece as European, the moderate-right responded to criticism by reference to the ancient past, whereas the left tended to respond with angry distancing comments, placing Greece in a non-European association of Orthodox underdogs. In the process, both parties selectively emphasized their respective values and symbols and standardized them for both domestic consumption and the international response. These symbols were selected among a set of cultural artifacts which are residues of the state and nation-building processes begun in the nineteenth century. The general lessons from the Greek case are that nationalism and cultural identity are contested from within a given nation by groups that have different goals in mind. Particular groups, such as political parties, use historical properties selectively to move identity in a direction they see as favorable. It is short-sighted to treat nationalism or cultural identity as coherent blocks.

They are open to discourse and, consequently, do not fit predictably in primordial civilizations.<sup>14</sup>

If we take into account political affiliation, we discover that individuals who identify with the left political spectrum tend to be more hostile toward an imagined collective of European states while rightists tend to engage in rhetoric which laments Greek corruption and disorder, the very things that, in their eyes, Europe has brought under control. At the same time, ethnographers who focus on Greek society are quick to deny such simple compartmentalization. Peoples' conceptions of the European and not so European can be rather fluid. In a study of the residents of a Cretan coastal town, Herzfeld discovers that "European culture is both a goal and an imposition, a dream of incorporation into the civilized West and a nightmare of cultural colonization" (Herzfeld 1991: 25). A partial explanation for this might be that European life has penetrated Greek society and has altered many patterns of interaction. Herzfeld uses the 'European' model of family life as a case in point.

Until a few years ago, for example, people thought it 'completely unnatural' for a man to sit in the street with the women. It was the women who, with their gossip, would probe the defenses of each other's domesticity; men had no place in this exchange except as objects of rivalrous discussion. Today, a husband may spend long hours at home and may sit with his wife and her friends in the street on the long summer evenings when such social gatherings still occur. This urban, 'European' model of family life is a new idiom and, to many, still a source of unease. (Herzfeld 1991: 43)

One possible conclusion to draw about local society and individual conceptions of European identity is that on a personal level, people are less constrained by the camera's eye and the standard platform than journalists and politicians who must appear consistent and engage in generalizing rhetoric. Individuals are not required to maintain the same consistency toward their Europeanness, or lack thereof; they are actors who are both influenced by the rhetoric of the parties with which they are affiliated and by the 'European' social forces which have changed their everyday lives.<sup>15</sup> Individuals are ultimately able to spin the rhetoric of being European in ways that fit the nuances of the daily routine.

14 This conclusion makes it seem ironic that both sides of the political spectrum in Greece tended to speak of the West in monolithic terms and often did not distinguish between Europe and West. This Occidentalism is interesting because certain EU states were certainly more sympathetic to the Greek position than others. Britain and France were slightly conciliatory (although as time passed they became highly frustrated with Greece's position toward the Republic of Macedonia) while Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands were hostile from start to finish. Even when responding to the statement or action of an official from a particular European state, Greek politicians and journalists often acted as if it was representative of a European or Western collective. PaSoK and New Democracy had different motives for generalizing about European hostility and conflating Europe and the West. The moderate right, for instance, spoke of a greater West in part because they perceived that ancient Greece had generated a western collective to which modern Greece deserved accession. The socialists arguably turned the West into a hostile unit largely because the concept of a united West allowed them to justify a Balkan or Orthodox cultural front of disgruntled states.

15 As an aside, Sofka Zinovieff conducts an interesting study of sexual predation taking place between young Greek men and European women at a sea-side resort. Her study concludes that these Greeks conceptualize Europe in a variety of ways, both negative and positive. For instance, they are highly antagonistic toward European economic and political domination and by seducing foreign tourists feel that they are symbolically avenging Greece. Nonetheless, they simultaneously idealize Europe as an economic utopia which offers an escape from their economic marginalization in Greece (Zinovieff 1991).

Finally, during the second half of the 1990s, as the Macedonia issue has become relatively marginalized both in Greek and EU politics, the selective use of cultural properties has become less patterned, and the deployment categories such as European, Balkan and Orthodox become more scattered throughout the political spectrum and Greek society. Although articles on 'Skopje's' intransigence still appear in the Greek press, a host of longer and more interesting feature articles began appearing in newspapers as early as 1996. One of the most interesting is a lengthy feature article, titled "Travels in the Country without a Name," which appeared in *To Vima*, a left-leaning weekly. The author reflects on the social composition of RM and its cultural contrasts:

The first impression of this *country without a name* is a feeling of movement in space and time. In space, toward the East: Colorful open-air bazaars, a bustling population, horsecarts in the roads of the capital side by side with shiny German-made cars ... In time, toward the past: Racial harmony among those who elsewhere dragged each other down in their own blood, churches aside minarets, Gypsies and Albanians, such are the basic elements of a city which reminds one of something between today's Turkey and yesterday's Greece (Pretenderis 1996: A3, A4).

The Republic of Macedonia, according to the author's narrative, remains outside Europe even though it struggles to become part of it. It is a strange coexistence of Balkan culture, Islam and smatterings of Western technology and consumerism. Its contrasts and backwardness remind one of perceptions of the declining lands of the Ottoman Empire, annexed by proximate nation-states. This new republic is not European and perhaps never will be. And if this landlocked republic which has still not shaken off its Ottoman legacy is stereotypically Balkan or Eastern, then Greece can only be European or Western.

It is tempting to end this article with the idea that, when all is calm, Greece is confidently European, given that a journalist of a left-leaning newspaper draws clear distinctions between the East and Greece. Nonetheless, a closer reading suggests that the author's conceptions of space and time betray his indecisiveness regarding a firm categorization of Greek identity. If subjective continuums of space and time create distinctions between Greece, the 'Country without a Name' and Turkey, these continuums certainly allow for distinctions between Greece and an idealized Europe. And these distinctions, as the Macedonia crisis demonstrates, are a consequence of the convergence of international pressures and domestic socio-political actors who compete with each other with varying cultural symbols.

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## Communities in Transition

### Problems of Constitutionalism and Narrative Identity in Europe\*

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### 'WE EUROPEANS'

In the wake of the fundamental political and social transformations in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the eighties, intellectuals and politicians in the region have been struggling to find new foundations for the political and cultural identities of their societies. It seems that despite efforts to revive a common cultural and political tradition at the end of the 20th century, East-Central Europe is little more than a geographical marker. The common cultural heritage of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy – with its flourishing *fin-de-siècle* intellectual life in the cultural centers of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest – is constructed more from elements of nostalgia and cultural memories than a continuous social and political tradition. The differences among these societies have more to do with contemporary political and economic relations than ideological or cultural traditions, as Austria's anxiety over the possibility of Hungary and the Czech Republic joining NATO and the European Community makes clear.

Authors as diverse as Immanuel Wallerstein, Jenő Szűcs, István Bibó, and Michael Stürmer have grappled with the idea of the cultural and political *Mitte* position, which is based on a geographically demarcated and historically imagined uniqueness of Central Europe (cf. Szűcs 1983, Stürmer 1986). Most descriptions make a simple move from geography to politics and culture: the existence between different cultural traditions calls, in a sense, for acting as a 'bridge'. In this view, the middle position invokes a sympathetic understanding of these cultures: the geographical middle position becomes a cultural middle ground, which is prone to produce 'middle-men' in and for the interaction between the different cultural poles.

In his book *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias interprets the cultural, social, and political differences between the West and the *Mitte* through his description of the notions of *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* (Elias 1982). In his opinion, the 'West' went through a process of *Zivilisation*, establishing clear boundaries of communal and individual identity in countries like France and England. This process served as the cultural basis

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