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Understanding Society

Master Track Management of Cultural Diversity

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Abstract

The present study has a twofold aim: to pinpoint the reason/s why the Greek state applies institutions of a specific ethnoreligious shade as national in a culturally diverse populated regional unit and to explore how these are received by and in turn shape the views of Muslims of Western Thrace in respect of the character of the Greek nation. The target group are the Slavic-speaking Muslims known as 'Pomaks'. Issues raised in 2017 during the celebration of a national commemoration in the city of Xanthi stress the need to track down how a minority views the wider national community of the state within which it lives. The Kohn dichotomy has been employed so as to lay my findings on the ethnic/civic continuum. Participants' views were elicited through semi-structured interviews and relevant data was also collected during my fieldwork. Minority members appear to construct an ethnocultural understanding of Greek nationhood when reflecting on the said institutions. Further recommendations are given that could pave the way for the democratization of national culture.

Keywords

cultural diversity management, religion and nationalism, national commemorations, civic/ethnic nationalism, Greece, Western Thrace, Pomaks

Foreword

Contents

Introduction

'The memory of the past had vanished utterly and nothing remained save a vague tradition among the peasants that their forefathers had once been free. I questioned some boys from a remote mountain village near Ohrid (...) in order to discover what amount of traditional knowledge they possessed. I took them up to the ruins of the Bulgarian Tsar's fortress which dominates the lake (...). 'Who built this place?' I asked them. The answer was significant - 'The free men'. 'And who were they?' - 'Our grandfathers'.
'Yes, but were they Serbs or Bulgarians or Greeks or Turks?'
They weren't Turks, they were Christians!'

This prefatory excerpt, gleaning from the travelogue of a British journalist's (Brailsford, 1906: 99) roamings in Ottoman Macedonia at the dawn of the 20th century, captures quintessentially the intricacies and antinomies of religious and national identities in Southeastern Europe. It is around this explosive, volatile, as manifested in its most loathsome form during the late bloodstained Yugoslavian Wars of the 1990s (Mojzes, 1993), mixture of the two, that the said thesis revolves.

The Balkan peninsula had been for many centuries, according to Professor Obolensky (1971: 58), 'a bridge between Byzantine and Latin worlds'. Its geomorphological trappings (ibid.: 5-41), the diverse itineraries of successive migratory waves (ibid.: 42-68), their encounters with the region's receiving societies, and the ensuing diffusion of cultural patterns across the region and beyond, did turn the Balkans into a threshing floor of peoples of distinct cultural varieties. 'Culture' should be understood in its Geertzian sense (1973: 95), as 'a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life'. Maria Todorova, one of the eminent historians of the Balkans, while objecting to readings of the region that present it - in a rather essentialist fashion - as 'cursed with too much history per square mile (...) and, as a result, with unmasterable ancient hatreds' (2004: 180), contends that 'there is not one single (Balkan) culture. The beauty of the Balkans is precisely in its excessive richness of manifold cultures (...). It is hard for a minimalist to depict the Balkans. We need a broad and spirited baroque brush' (ibid.: 178-179).

The existence of a plethora of cultural patterns broaches though the question of how their diversity ought to be managed. This is not a cultural fundamentalist (Grillo, 2003: 165) reading of the region's miscellany, that is one that treats its constituent cultures as incommensurable, mutually destructive and 'by nature' hostile - thus in need of a spatial segregation but rather a concern fueled by liberal democratic sentiments. Similar

concerns had also been preoccupying almost two centuries ago the mind of Rhigas Velestinlis, one of the most fervent zealots of the Enlightenment tradition in Southeastern Europe - how could the multi-level pluralism of the Balkan society be organized in a free modern state, that would replace the Ottoman rule, in order to set the foundation for peaceful coexistence among the many groups that made up the population of Southeastern Europe? Rhigas' vision involved the radical constitutional reconstruction of the vast geographical space and the establishment of institutions of governance, representation and participation. His republican project envisaged an inclusive, civic state open politically to members of all ethnic and cultural groups as long as they shared its political values. It did focus nonetheless mostly on the moral and political dimension of citizenship; ethnic traits were downplayed and dismissed as artificial, thus not potent to obscure the principles of equality and fraternity of all human beings (Kitromilides, 2003a).

As noted at the outset, religion, along with the gamut of identities it engenders when fused with nationalism, is the present work's focal point. Religion is, for Clifford Geertz (1973: 129), sociologically interesting 'not because it describes social order but because it shapes it'. He takes it to be 'a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and longstanding moods and motivation in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the mood and motivations seem uniquely unrealistic' (ibid.: 97). In the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans, the major religions have been three: Orthodox Christianity, Sunni Islam and Judaism. Forms of religious syncretism between the former two have also been documented, especially during the Empire's late period (1789-1918) (Clayer, 2017: 107-108). Paschalis Kitromilides (1996a; see also 2003b) sheds light on the seminal role that religion did hold in orchestrating the life of the Empire's Orthodox populations. Based on gleanings of autobiographical testimonies of contemporaries, he deduces that the Orthodox subjects' collective outlook was being moulded by five elements: (i) the ecclesiastical calendar as a regulator of an individual's sense of time: the passage of time was felt to revolve around the succession of Orthodox feast days. Daily life was punctuated by Saints' days that marked the changing of seasons and shared the organization of harvests, fairs, family events etc.; (ii) the places of worship as a regulator of one's spatial horizon: shrines and chapels, places of pilgrimage, worship and martyrdom were forming a 'geography of faith' (ibid.: 180); (iii) the active quotidian presence of the supernatural. This presence was mediated by objects of religious worship and was canonized in the ecclesiastical practices; (iv) the entwinement of one's life with the sacramental life of the church and its prescribed religious practices; (v) the interplay of sin, repentance and forgiveness as a recursive theme in an individual's experience (ibid.: 177-179).

But how did religion come to be such a powerful marker of people's collective sense of identity? The answer should be sought to the Ottoman *millet* administrative system based on which the Empire was divided not along ethnolinguistic lines but along religious affiliation (Poulton, 1997b: 16). Braude (1982: 69-74), tracing the term's semantic changes in a diachronic fashion through a conceptual periodization, shows that the connotations that *millet* holds in contemporary scholarship date back to the early 19th century. He argues that the vagueness of the term, when seen within the frame of an imperial state of numerous institutions with specific titles and explicit purposes, implies that *millet* should not be classified as an institution but as 'a set of arrangements, largely local with considerable variations over time and place' (ibid.: 74). For Kemal Karpat (1982: 141), *millet* came as a response to the Ottoman administration's efforts to manage the various religious and ethnic groups it ruled. He equates it to the *nation*, save for the latter's political connotations (ibid.: 149). It is taken to be a sociocultural and communal framework based primarily on religious and then linguistic, communal, ethnic and familial ties. Within its frame, religious groups could preserve their culture while being subject to 'Ottomanization' in other domains (ibid.: 142). Its constitutional basis was the Muslim concept that recognized the monotheistic believers, Christians and Jews, as the 'Peoples of the Book' and accorded them protection (ibid.: 148-149). Kymlicka (1995, quoted in Katsikas, 2009: 187) conceptualized it as 'a federation of theocracies that was characteristic of a deeply conservative and patriarchal society and was antithetical to the ideas of personal liberty endorsed by liberals (...)'.

During the 17th and 18th century, Ottoman society underwent profound structural changes. Those affected the *millet* in three ways. At first, it allowed for rural notables to rise to power, then for the birth of new entrepreneurial elites in the Empire's major urban centers and, at last, for the emergence of a secular intelligentsia. Those developments assumed social and political significance due in large measure to the fact that non-Muslim subjects formed the latter two groups (Karpat, 1982: 152; see also Issawi, 1982). Moreover, temporally they coincided with the historical event that convulsed Europe in the heyday of the 18th century, the French Revolution. Liberal ideas formulated in large urban centers of Western Europe were percolated in the continent's southeastern extreme, through enclaves, such as the Ionian Islands and the Dalmatian provinces, that were not under Ottoman control, exponents of revolutionary ideas traversing the region and fomenting insurgencies among Balkan peoples, the Balkan diaspora in Western Europe and the Habsburg domains, and, at last, through fledgling revolutionary movements that aspired to bring change (Kitromilides, 2000: 33-71). To the two parameters thus orchestrating one's life within the Ottoman Empire, i.e. religion and the imperial administrative frame, a third was added: the idea of Europe as a broader civilized world (Kitromilides, 1996a: 185).

The idea of Europe, subsumed under the Enlightenment thought, brought radical changes by its implantation to the Ottoman lands. Conventional perceptions of time were progressively secularized and redirected from a sense of a shared past drawn on religious lines to one focusing on distinct historical lineages (Kitromilides, 2010: 41). This shift is reflected on the sharp turn that contemporary historiographical tradition took (Kitromilides, 2004). Similar transmutations are also encountered in conceptions of geographical space. Traditional geography of religious pilgrimages, the description of which had for centuries defined the geographical space beyond the local community (Kitromilides, 2012: 254-255) gave way to a novel geography of civilization that focused on Western Europe (Kitromilides, 2010: 41). Local attachments, often expressed in the veneration of local saints, were superseded by national loyalties and the quest for uniformity (Kitromilides, 1996a: 177). The most groundbreaking development though had been the redefinition of the context of collective existence. At the micro level this was translated to a replacement of the status of subject-hood with that of citizenship, while at the macro of the *millet* with that of the secular *nation*. The two bear resemblances since both refer to a group of people identified as sharing a number of real or perceived characteristics, such as common ancestry, language, religion, culture, historical tradition and shared territory. The difference lies in that in the case of the latter the group members are not united only through the foregoing ties but also through some form of political organization (Baycroft, 1998: 3).

The infiltration of the nationalist doctrine's core tenet that 'the people or the *nation* is held to be the only true source of political power' (Baycroft, 1998: 5) in the Balkans gave rise to successive nationalist movements (Stavrianos, 1958: 230-268, 269-299, 339-363, 364-380) which from the early 19th to the 20th century asserted themselves and gained independence. The emerging Orthodox Christian states, namely Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Montenegro, were essentially ethnic-based (Poulton, 1997b: 25), built on the ideology that the state is the natural territory of one dominant national group (ibid.: 26). Muslim communties within them were thus regarded as alien remnants from the old regime (Poulton, 1997a: 82) and presented, according to Bieber (2000: 25), with three options - (i) they could withdraw further southeast to the ramshackle Empire's shrinking borders, (ii) assimilate into the newly-built Orthodox nation-states, or (iii) form new nations by establishing their own states. Where the latter project failed, Muslims were designated as *minorities*. What has been interesting though is that, as Todorova (1996: 68, quoted in Tsitselikis, 2012: 30) points out, 'Balkan nationalism, which irrevocably destroyed the imagined community of Orthodox Christianity, managed to preserve a frozen, unchangeable and stultifyingly image of the Muslim community, and consistently dealt with it in *millet* terms'.

I take the latter remark as a point of departure since the community on which I focus, the Muslims of Western Thrace, instantiates it. My research concerns Greece, a country in

which the Orthodox faith had been, both before and after its accession to independent statehood, as Livanios (2008) demonstrates, 'the only connecting bond that could ultimately forge the Greek nation' (ibid.: 261-262). I should also underline that in my study there are allusions only to *historical*, nonimmigrant minorities, i.e. groups whose historic homeland has been incorporated into a larger state either through colonization, conquest, or voluntary federation (Kymlicka, 1999: 132). I start by outlining the Greek state's complex, tumultuous relation with its non-ethnically Greek citizens. I proceed with discussing Western Thrace as a locus of Greek and Bulgarian nation-building and as a chunk on earth's surface put at the negotiation table in Lausanne. Before addressing my research question, I also shed light on the enigmatic identities of the Muslims of Western Thrace. This admittedly extensive historical retrospection is essential, for the reader to get a full grasp of the whole image since the institution that I study goes back to very early days of the erstwhile Greek kingdom.

Minorities:
Greece's perceived 'Nessus Shirt'

Greece's longstanding uneasy symbiosis with its statewide dispersed non-ethnically Greek populations has been a lingering 'non-existent' issue, a question that largely remains unconfessed. Hercules Millas, member himself of Istanbul's *Rum* (Greek Orthodox) minority, notes (2002: 21-22) that up until 1980s one could hardly find any detailed studies pertaining to minorities in Greece while students expressing an interest in carrying out relevant research were regularly being victimized by the Greek authorities. Indeed, pertinent academic works published later on stirred fierce reactions coming both from public and state officials. Researchers have been rebuked, their equivalent works castigated, and the outcry reached even the level of Ministries (see Karakasidou, 1997: 229-237). Similar attitudes appear to permeate and dominate public discourses, that seem to be bound by rules which seek, as Christopoulos (2009: 15) argues, to normativize the 'visible' and the 'invisible', the 'existent' and the 'non-existent'. Hence those who favor to engage with the study of minorities in Greece can lay claims to a methodological uniqueness since they engage with the study of something that is *de jure* 'non-existent', a *de facto* field though that is open for any ideological instrumentalization but from which the official Greek thesis tenaciously remains absent (ibid.: 18-19).

The 'minority' concept

Before exploring the motives underlying such an attitude, a brief glance will be given to the *minority* concept and aspects of its historicity. In line with Franseco Capotorti, former Special Rapporteur of United Nations' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, I define *minority* as 'a group that is numerically inferior to the rest of a state's population, in a non-dominant position, whose members, being nationals of the state, possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed toward preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language' (cited in Clogg 2002: xii).

   In the European context, the first rather short-lived measures adopted to safeguard the protection of minorities concerned religion and started being developed after Martin Luther's nailing of his ninety-five theses at Wittenberg in 1517 AD. All three ensuing acts, the Edict of Nantes (1598), the Treaty of Nijmegen (1678) and the Treaty of Ryswick (1697) enshrined certain religious freedoms for Protestant and Catholic populations inhabiting lands where majorities were adhering to a different Christian denomination. This emphasis on religion however was soon supplanted by one towards culture and language, the latter being considered the former's main manifestation, based on ideas disseminated by the French Revolution. Undeniably, a figure whose contribution marked

this development has been the German philosopher Johann Gottfired Herder, who, being a fervent exponent of language as the means of group identity, posited that a human being could realise his/her potential only fully as a member of a *Volk*, i.e. the nation defined in cultural terms. For Herder ergo, the most natural state would be 'a community with its own national character', a *nation-state* (Alcock, 2000: 5-11). Virtually though this axiom appeared to be rather utopian (Divani, 1999: 24). The first concern thus given for the protection of a *national minority* was to be included in the Final Act of the Vienna Congress (1814-1815) when Russia, Prussia and Austria guaranteed the protection of their ethnically Polish citizens (ibid.: 25).

Equally decisive for the fate of minorities have been two later developments: (i) the birth of the principle of 'self-determination' - as resolutely articulated during the Paris Peace Settlement (1919-1920) in its Wilsonian sense; (ii) the establishment of the League of Nations. The former's breakthrough lies in the inauguration of the right of communities to self-government, assigning thus moral agency and political authority to nations (Brubaker, 1998: 274). Harking back to the Anglo-American tradition of civic nationalism, lending thus weight to an individualistic component, the right of 'self-determination of peoples' marks a watershed since it affirmed that 'the people' should have a say in their own political fate (Baycroft, 1998: 73; Alcock, 2000: 40; Lynch, 2002: 424), being also entitled to form their own states (Brubaker, 1998: 274). The Central Empires so, that were once dominating, in the words of Woodrow Wilson (quoted in Emerson, 1960: 297), 'alien peoples over whom they had no natural right to rule', having now been forced into political bankruptcy, were to have the ensuing vacuum filled by several states of fledgling sovereign nations (Stavrianos, 1958: 732). Notwithstanding the fact though that 19th century nationalism was prescribing monocultural states *par excellence*, the demarcation of frontiers did once again leave millions of individuals as inhabitants of states in which their culture differed from the majority's. To ensure their protection within the umbrella of international declarations a system was thus set up and put under the supervision of the organization known in history as the *League of Nations* (Alcock, 2000: 44-52).

The establishment of the League of Nations is characterized by Divani (1999: 42) as the first official endeavor to raise awareness of the plight of minorities at an international level. Its uppermost aim had been *inter alia* to facilitate cooperation among nations and stave off malevolent competition so as to preserve peace (Baycroft, 1998: 75). Unlike its successor, the United Nations, it was exclusively political in concept and had no humanitarian aim (Alcock, 2000: 83). Its edginess, in terms of minority affairs, lies in that such issues were for the first time addressed as bearing a universal dimension that axiomatically rendered the global community liable for their resolution (Divani, 1999: 32). Despite several shortcomings and thorny issues that hampered its operation (Baycroft,

1998: 75-76), the League survived until 1946 when in the maelstrom of the Second World War it had been rather weak to oppose the belligerence of the Great Powers.

Greece

Greece's first official assumption of the obligation to accommodate *allogeneis*, i.e. persons of a different *genos*, a notoriously untranslatable term that linguistically bears connotations of lineage through blood and ancestry (Livanios, 2008: 251), was ushered in along with its own sovereignty's declaration by the Convention of Constantinople and a number of Protocols signed in London from 1829 to 1832. By the Third Protocol, signed in 1830, Greece pledged to guarantee freedom of religion and worship along with equal political rights for its Catholic inhabitants (Divani, 1999: 52). Muslim dwellers, numbering around 11,500, were ensured their protection via relevant Protocols. These also provided them the right to reciprocal optional migration to the Ottoman lands for Christians of the Empire as well as the right to those who desired to continue residing in territories allotted to the independent Greek state to be granted full amnesty and security in their person and properties. Yet early attempts to ethnically homogenize the country and the expropriation of former Ottoman lands led gradually to their exodus (Tsitselikis, 2012: 31-34).

The state's territorial expansion in the years that followed brought new challenges. By the Treaty of London (1864), through which the Ionian Islands were ceded to Greece, the latter was bound to protect and allocate rights to the Catholics living there (Divani, 1997: 173). The state's encounters with Islam was renewed in 1881 when it annexed the provinces of Thessaly and Arta. Forty thousands Muslims, along with other 'Greek citizens by birth', mostly Jews and aliens, living in urban centers, had their political, civil and religious rights enshrined. The conventional structure of their communities was also respected. Besides, they were given to Greek citizenship. Should they choose though to uphold their Ottoman, they had to leave Greece (Tsitselikis, 2012: 34-36). These '*new*' Muslims (Immig, 2009), a qualifier implying the shift in their political status from a privileged majority to a relegated minority, continued to fully participate on all levels of political and socio-economic life. As demonstrated by relevant documents, the central governments, being aware of the economic repercussions that the region would suffer by their emigration, applied policies that sought their integration. Being subject to maltreatment at the local level though, along the inability of central governments to fully control local authorities and enforce their policies, instigated their departure for regions still under Ottoman governance (ibid.; Katsikas, 2013: 61).

Diversity management was brought to the fore though at the dawn of the 20th century, when, following the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the First World War, the Treaties of Bucharest (1913) and Neuilly (1919) Greece was awarded the East Aegean Islands,

Epirus, the island of Crete, a part of Ottoman Macedonia and Western Thrace. These territories, except the latter are known as the 'New Lands' (*Nees Hores*). By their annexation, Greece's landmass and population were increased by 68%. As such, a non-negligible number of non-Orthodox and non-Greek speaking peoples came to be Greek citizens, establishing thus a solid minority presence. The first reaction of mainstream policy makers to this unprecedented reality did not aim to their assimilation but rather to the preservation of the Ottoman-established regulated coexistence under the condition of loyalty to the Greek state. Soon though, following the dominant *zeitgeist*, they sought to 'ethnicize' these erstwhile mixedly populated lands by various means and techniques, ranging from the re-assignation of toponyms to population exchanges, deportations and expulsions, all aiming to minimize minority presence (Tsitselikis, 2012: 47-52).

The legal regime governing the Muslim populations of these territories, numbering, according to official estimates of 1912 more than 560,000, were progressively set up by Conventions and Treaties signed throughout the following two decades. The first step was taken by the Convention of Athens, concluded between Greece and the Ottoman Empire in 1913. By this, the legal responsibility of the Muslim communities was safeguarded, freedom of worship was secured and a spiritual link between them and the leading Islamic clergy of Istanbul was established (Tsitselikis, 2012: 60-61). The latter provision has been significant since it assigned the appointment of the highest Muslim leader of Greece, the chief *mufti*, to the official approval of the *Sheikh-ul-Islam*, the highest religious leader of the Empire (Katsikas, 2009: 181). The Convention's legal validity is though disputed; As Tsitselikis (2007:15-16; also Alexandris, 2003: 123-124) explains, once the political status of two *muftis* of the Muslims of Thrace got enhanced and they started being involved into the ebbs and flows of Greek-Turkish controversies, the mode of their selection got elevated into a matter of discord. Notwithstanding the fact that during the 20th century their election derived through the consensus of minority elites and Greek authorities, the latter's unilateral decision to enforce a Law (1920/1991) according to which the *muftis* were to be appointed by the state, led to a breach of the relation of the two. Hence nowadays in Thrace four *muftis* coexist: two elected by the minority's Turkish community and two appointed by state authorities. The Turkish Embassy of Athens and the Turkish Consulate in Komotini maintain exclusive ties with the popularly elected *muftis*. Representatives of the Greek authorities, on the other hand, drawing the boundaries of 'permissible diversity' (Parekh, 1994, see Mahajan, 2005: 96-100), argue that no country in the Muslim world enables its citizens to elect their religious officials (for a statement of the Spokesperson of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see *Al Jazeera*, 2020) and accept as legal only the acts of the appointed *muftis*.

The two salient treaties nonetheless that mark a turning point in, and partly govern, modern Greek state's engagement with its *allogeneis* are the abortive Treaty of Sèvres

(1920) and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The former inaugurated Greece's participation on the League of Nations (Stavros, 1995). By this, Greece, coming out of the First World War as a 'significantly enlarged' state, having been awarded territories where substantial Muslim populations were settled, such as Eastern Thrace, a zone of influence in Izmir, and the Aegean islands (Psomiades, 2000: 21) was entering the League's system of minority protection - this nevertheless concerned exclusively populations inhabiting lands annexed by Greece after the Balkan Wars (1913) (Divani: 1999: 63). The Sèvres Treaty though, despite having been signed by the Ottoman delegation, was never ratified by the parliament in Ankara amidst an ambiance of burgeoning Turkish nationalism. This development, along with the crushing defeat of the Greeks by the Turks in Asia Minor (1919-1922) (Stavrianos, 1958: 587-589) led eventually to renegotiations for a new settlement three years later at Lausanne (Psomiades, 2000: 22). It has been the Protocol 16 of this treaty about to be discussed in more detail further down, that did bring into force the already stipulated at Sèvres clauses that delineate the general framework of minority rights and relevant obligations of the Greek state (Tsitselikis, 2012: 81-82).

Quite revealing also in order to detect the latter's outlook towards the *allogeneis* living within the Greek domain is the perspective of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Divani, 1997). At this point it shall also be underlined that the above mentioned Ministry holds even nowadays the coordination authority for legal and political decisions that relate to minority issues, even for those living in Greece, a fact that is by itself telling (Tsitselikis, 2007: 6).

It behoves us to bear in mind that early in the Interwar period Greece, after its defeat in Asia Minor, was in a frail diplomatic position while at the same time holding embittered relations with all the neighboring countries. To add to this, it was desperately in need of international support that would guarantee its own security but also of a loan in order to finance the settlement of the Greek Orthodox refugees coming from Turkey after the population exchange agreed at Lausanne. Lest being castigated then it thought of the strict implementation of its own obligations as a step in recasting its credibility. Thus, according to the Ministry's standpoint, ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse populations were to be categorized as such: (i) 'most dangerous' ones; (ii) 'less dangerous' ones; (iii) 'unique' ones. The first category included ethnic communities living in Greece but leaning towards adjacent states, namely the Muslims of Western Thrace, the Slavophones of Greek Macedonia, and the Chams, an Albanian-speaking Muslim group inhabiting northwestern Greece until the end of the Second World War. These were deemed to lean respectively towards Turkey, Yugoslavia and Albania. The second category concerned those considered to have a kin-state that did not share borders with Greece. These were the Vlachs, a Latinophone group affiliated with Romania, the Armenians, and the Jews. The last category were the Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian monks who were settled in Mount Athos.

In the aftermath of the turbulent events that indelibly marked the first century of the Greek state's lifespan, the latter attained to emerge as the most homogeneous national state in the Balkans. According to the census of 1928 (displayed in Mavrogordatos, 1983: 227), Greece comprised 93.8% ethnic Greeks, which translates to 5,819,742 out of 6,204, 684 inhabitants, while ethnic, national and religious minorities, numbering 384,942 persons, constituted only 6.2%. The communities forming the latter three categories were the following: Turks (86,506), Slav-Macedonians (81,844), Sephardic Jews (63,000), Armenians (31,038),Greek Catholics (27,747), Vlachs (19,679), Chams (18,598), Pomaks (16,755), Greek Jews (9,090), and 30,685 *aliens*. This homogeneity was only enhanced after the Second World War, when the Cham community of Epirus, members of which collaborated with the Axis Powers were violently expelled (see Tsitselikis, 2012: 310-312), numerous Slav-Macedonians were driven out of Northern Greece due to their participation in the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) (see Poulton, 1993: 175-180), and the Sephardic Jews of Thessaloniki, along with other Jewish communities, were exterminated by the Nazis. The census of 1951, the last census to record religious affiliation, mother tongue and ethnic origin, attests that 97.9% of Greece's inhabitants are Orthodox Christians (7,472,559 out of 7,632,801) and that 95.6% have Greek as their mother tongue (7,297,878) (Clogg, 2002: xi).

Shrewd observers of the Greek polity, such as Christopoulos and Tsitselikis (2003: 83) argue that it has been this dwindling of culturally diverse populations that set the foundation for today's credo - one that considers the existence of minorities rather as an anomaly. Similar views have been also expressed by Kitromilides (2008: 266). Alluding to the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange (see below), he remarks: 'By reducing ethnic pluralism through such radical means, the exchange prevents the modern national societies that emerged from it from learning the skills and internalizing the values necessary for the practice of toleration, mutual respect of social groups and recognition of otherness. This can explain in turn the seemingly incomprehensible insecurity often encountered in Greece over 'nationally sensitive' questions'. Adamantia Pollis (1992: 173-174) has traced its origins to the Greek social edifice's kernel. For her, the fact that historically the dominant ideology in Greece cherished organic social units, such as the extended family, had serious repercussions in the way that autonomous individual civil or political rights are viewed. With the rise of nationalism, and its fusion with the prescribed principles of unity championed by Eastern Orthodoxy, the nation and the state, the latter being in effect the former's embodiment, emerged as social units of the same organic nature limiting thus profoundly the fertile soil for the cultivation of a Western-type individualism. The individual and his/her rights and autonomy were ergo negated and subordinated to the superior whole, namely the modern state and the titular nation.

Similar attitudes are also reflected at the level of the normative framework of the legal texts that deal with minority issues. Harking back to the *millet* system, the Greek state,

laws and governments recognize the existence of only two minorities, defined by their religious identity: the Muslims of Western Thrace and the Jews. The former's rights are enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty while the latter received legal recognition in 1920 (Pollis, 2003: 152) - any other linguistically, culturally or ethnically diverse group is denied minority status. Concerning minority languages, Christopoulos and Tsitselikis (2003: 81-82) argue that these are approached as falling under the overarching *millet* frame, thus often seen as derivatives of religious beliefs. The linguistic rights enjoyed by the Turkish-speaking population in Thrace and the Ladino-speaking Jews shall be seen in this light. At the same time, the systematic efforts to efface all other 'alien' languages and dialects spoken within the state's territorial domain shall be seen in light of a project that aimed to boost centripetal forces at the expense of regionalism and establish the centralized state authority. 'Greece', according to Tziovas (1994: 119), 'has aspired to conceal historical ruptures, ethnic impurities and linguistic hybridities and has achieved that by projecting seamless continuities and imposing cultural monoglossia'. At last, designations that ascribe an ethnic or national character to cultural groups are strongly opposed. According to Mavrogordatos (1983: 227), this is down to the connotations that the terms 'national' and 'ethnic minority' may hold, namely the fact that groups which bear such appellations may identify with another, often conterminous state to which they aspire to incorporate through secession, or even to accede themselves to independent statehood. To counter such real or imaginary pretensions, state officials tend to address these groups as 'Greeks' bearing a different linguistic or religious identity (see below).

Such intolerance is also illustrated in conventions of the Greek legal and administrative order that were, at least nominally, active until the late 1990s when Greece started taking a (still ongoing) positive turn within the context of European integration. Stavros (1995: 11-12) alludes in his work to several of them introduced during the Interwar period. Anderson (2002) and Pollis (2003) touch upon issues of religious freedom, one of them being the caveat that stipulates the subjection of any non-Orthodox religious institutions to state surveillance and authority. This at first glance may seem as a blatant infringement of the constitutionally enshrined freedom of religious conscience, it is however warranted since, again by constitution, it is stipulated that only 'known' religions are authorized to hold 'houses of worship'; which are those religions though is not clarified. Another provision that has sparked numerous debates is the one which prohibits acts of proselytism, since it does not seem to apply in the case of the Greek Orthodox religious courses taught in primary and secondary schools (Pollis, 2003: 152).

Equally repressive have been the measures and practices of the legislature and the judiciary against persons or groups holding Greek citizenship but expressing a different ethnic identity. As the United States Department of State's Report on Human Right Practices of 2019 underlines, 'individuals who define themselves as members of a minority group find it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their

culture'. Citizens identifying themselves as Turks, Pomaks, Vlachs, Arvanites or Macedonians continue to seek official government identification as ethnic or linguistic minorities, unsuccessfully though. Greek courts moreover object to the use of the word 'Turkish' when based on ethnic or national grounds. Tsitselikis (2012: 242-253) analyzes in detail the case of the Union of the Turkish Youth of Komotini which got disbanded in 1984 due to the use of the term 'Turkish' in its appellation. Even though the European Court of Human Rights defined this as a violation by the Greek authorities (Iliadis, 2013: 419) positive steps are yet to be taken.

The state's diachronically strained relation with *allogeneis* was indelibly stained after the enactment of the infamous, as of 1998 abolished (see Anagnostou, 2005a), Article 19 of the 1955 Greek Code of Citizenship. By this it was stipulated that 'a person (Greek citizen) of non-Greek origin who leaves Greece without the intention of returning back may be deprived of his/her Greek citizenship'. This measure was applied on a massive scale against minorities who were considered to 'undermine national homogeneity', namely the Muslims of Thrace, the Slav-Macedonians who fled Greece after the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) (Kostopoulos, 2003a). The degree of arbitrariness that defined the clause's application had been outrageous. Hugh Poulton (1993: 185) cites the case of two Thracian Muslims who were refused re-entry and deported after having paid a temporary visit to their son in Istanbul. It is estimated that in the forty years of its application around 50,000 people got deprived of their citizenship (ibid.: 60) while roughly 500 stateless persons may nowadays live across Western Thrace (ibid: 64).

The enactment of Article 19 also spurred the State Council to provide an official definition of the term '*allogeneis*'. Thereby, by Decision 57/1981, *allogeneis* are defined as those 'whose origin, whether distant or not, is from persons coming from a different nation and who by their actions and behavior have expressed sentiments testifying the lack of Greek national consciousness, in a way that they can not be considered as having assimilated into the Greek nation'. 'The Greek nation', it continues, 'consists of the persons who relate to each other by way of common historic tradition, desires and ideals' (quoted in Christopoulos & Tsitselikis, 2003: 82). The official elucidation of the term, as proved later on, was not enacted within an ideological vacuum. One year later, in 1982, by the Ministerial Decision 106841/1982, political refugees who had lost their Greek citizenship after the Civil War were given permission to repatriate; it was underlined though that free to return were only 'those who are of Greek descent' (*Ellines to genos*). The authorities' ulterior motive had been to exclude those Slav-Macedonians who would declare themselves as 'ethnically Macedonian'. An objective criterion applied in order to test one's affiliation had been the form in which the individual's place of birth was displayed. Persons whose documents referred to Slavic toponyms were denied their repatriation. The decision was justified on the grounds of 'lack of national consciousness' (Kostopoulos, 2003a: 58-64).

Greece, evidently, has for a long time now been reticent to build a *modus vivendi* with its non-ethnically Greek citizens. The habituation of an anti-minoritarian persuasion both at the state and public level has moreover led to the crystallization of a state of affairs in which a culture of dialogue between the authorities and members of minority groups is lacking (Tsitselikis, 2012: 51). To add to this, in the last few decades Greece not only appeared spearheading, along with Romania and Bulgaria, the 'anti-minoritarian' club (Heraclides, 1997b: 222) but often even supported regimes that abused groups it considered antagonistic, such as Kosovo Albanians in Milošević's Yugoslavia (Heraclides, 1997a: 33). Reasonably thus it got disreputed among the circles of the Council of Europe, the European Union and Human Rights NGOs (Heraclides, 1997b). Without any purpose of exculpating Greece, I believe that it would be equally prudent to trace the motives underpinning its stance. Clogg (2002: xiv) remarks that it is often hard for individuals coming from states whose frontiers have been long established and never disputed to embrace the anxieties of the citizens of a state whose final borders were drawn in 1947. In what follows thus I schematically represent six points which, in my opinion, a researcher shall take into account when studying minorities in Greece.

First, for the Greek state the existence of minorities across its boundaries is a question of law. Minorities, their rights and host-state guarantees should be derivatives of treaties or legislation. For an ethnic, cultural or religious group to be granted minority status and rights it is necessary to be sizable and spatially concentrated. Minority rights are recognized as individual, not collective ones. This means that individuals have the right to self-identify themselves as they wish but only at a unitary level, not as a group bearing a distinct identity (Heraclides, 1997b: 216-217). This approach nevertheless, on the basis of which the Greek minority policy is often formulated, emphatically contradicts the verdict of the Permanent Court of International Justice that stipulates that the existence of minorities is simply 'a question of fact' (Stavros, 1995: 9; Tsitselikis, 2012: 3). Thus the remarks in the confidential report of the former Special Consultant on Balkan Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that describe the Greek minority policy of the early 1990s as one that 'did not aspire or manage to follow the developments that took place at the European level but remained anchored in the standards of the post-Second World War period, fortified in legal, or rather legalistic relics' (quoted in Heraclides, 2004: 43) is still highly topical.

Second, the legal framework that regulates the quotidian practices of the officially recognized minorities and safeguards their religious and cultural autonomy is largely based, in organizational terms, on the pillars of the Ottoman *millet* (Katsikas, 2013: 65). Tsitselikis (2007) coins the term 'neo-*millet*' to allude to the established regime as one that combines pre-modern legal divisions based on religion with elements of modern citizenship. Exemplary is the case of the Muslims of Western Thrace, in which the *millet*-like institutions granted by the Lausanne Treaty (see below), such as the

appointment of *muftis* and the right to self-administer the *vakifs* (pious foundations), are addressed by the legal order in such a manner that keeps the minority trapped within old communitarian patterns. Muslims thus are mostly considered exclusive members of a religious community rather than citizens of a modern state.

Third, when minority issues are touched upon it is important to bear in mind that these concern gloomy pages of Greece's history, presumably the Civil War that ravaged the country as well as the rise of Communism in the Balkans in the Interwar period (see Mavrogordatos, 1983: 232-236). This, according to Clogg (2002: xiii), justifies the sensitivity that defines such issues, one that is often puzzling for outsiders given the petty numbers of *allogeneis*. Such sensitivity, as Diamandouros has contended (1983: 55), further indicates the incompleteness of the process of national integration initiated two centuries ago. Heraclides (1997b: 226) argues that for Greeks the word 'minority' bears exclusively negative overtones - it is even worse when it refers to non-legally recognized ones. At the grassroots level, minority rights are often strongly opposed, any form of cultural diversity is instantly regarded suspiciously, and toleration is thought of as an 'ideal' imposed by intergovernmental, supra-national organizations (Heraclides, 2004: 49).

Fourth, a paradox that holds great sway over the foregoing attitudes concerns the semantic confusion that stems from the translation of the terms 'ethnic' and 'national' into Greek. The paradox lies in that notwithstanding the fact that 'ethnic' is of Greek derivation its meaning is more easily graspable in the West. Yet when translated into Greek to describe a minority's character it stands as *ethnotiki mionotita* (ethnic minority) which is aurally close to the term *ethniki mionotita* which stands though for *national* minority, the latter implying the existence of a kin-state entitled to patronize the minority (Clogg, 2002: xv; Heraclides, 2004: 55). Misinterpretations have been striking, and became even more glaring during 2018 when opposition parliamentarians were cited inveighing against the government for signing the Prespa Agreement with North Macedonia by blaming it for acceding to the official recognition of a 'Macedonian nationality' by using the term *ethnotita* (ethnicity) *(Kathimerini*, 2018).

Fifth, it should be noted that the state's intransigence and negation of the existence of minorities with its own domain does not axiomatically mean that its own foreign policy designs are free of dubious objectives, especially when these concern weaker states. Exemplary is the case of the Greek minority living in south Albania (Heraclides, 1997b: 222-223). Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002; also Mylonas, 2013) demonstrate how geopolitical interests led to the ascription of a *sui generis* status to this group by the 1998 Greek immigration policy. Aiming to discourage their migration to Greece, in order to uphold a leverage in Albanian domestic affairs, it curtailed, mostly through opaque practices, their right to relocation despite considering them 'co-nationals'. Concomitantly, putative 'co-ethnics' from former Soviet states were given full rights 'to return to their

homeland' since by their state-directed settlement they could satisfy domestic policy interests, namely the dilution of the Muslim minority's tightly-knit presence in Thrace.

Sixth, when one undertakes minority research projects in Greece, he/she should invariably hold a critical gaze towards official population censuses and ethnological registers, especially those dating to the early 20th century, and not omit to question the methodological tools employed in order to classify populations. Particularly illustrative are the works of Kaliakatsos (2013) and Kostopoulos (2003b). The former reveals the ways Greek propaganda used to cunningly manipulate figures and ascribe certain meanings to typologies appearing in censuses aiming to gain over European public opinion and promote its territorial claims in Ottoman lands. The latter respectively, examining the censuses of 1907, 1920, 1928, 1951 and 1961, extrapolates that any attempt to enumerate various ethnic or linguistic groups can hardly be verifiable due to anti-minoritarian state-directed policies. Quite interestingly, official perceptions towards cultural diversity is eloquently expressed in the introduction of the 1961 census: 'In any case the issues of religion and language are no longer interesting, statistically speaking, because of the homogeneity of the population' (quoted in Kostopoulos, 2003b: 60).

The Question of Thrace

The historical space of Thrace is limited to the north by the Balkan mountains, to the east by the Black Sea and the Bosporus, to the south by the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean Sea, and to the west by the Nestos river. It comprises three parts: (i) Northern Thrace or *Eastern Rumelia*, which is part of modern-day Bulgaria. The term *Eastern Rumelia* was coined in the Congress of Berlin (1878) and got *de facto* repealed in 1885 when the region unified with the Principality of Bulgaria; (ii) Eastern Thrace, that is part of contemporary Turkey; (iii) Western Thrace, that is part of modern Greece.

During Ottoman times, the Thracian space, one of the last Balkan regions to undergo the transition from Ottoman suzerainty to incorporation into successor states, had been of major geopolitical importance chiefly due to: (i) its proximity to the Ottoman capital, Istanbul (Konortas, 2010: 164); (ii) its large Muslim population, refugees in their majority who had fled there after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 (Poulton, 1997a: 82) turning Thrace into a unique mosaic not resembling any other part of the peninsula at that time (Konortas, 2010: 164); and (iii) its southern part being a corridor to the Aegean Sea, fact that made it a prime objective of Bulgaria's foreign policy since by its annexation it could ensure its longed-for access to the sea (Divani, 2000: 553-554).

The Thracian miscellany, comprising multifarious disparate ethnographic entities, Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Roma, Jews, Pomaks and Armenians to crudely name a few, came into being after three periods of significant migratory flows that range from the last quarter of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th: (i) the displacement of nearly 370,000 Muslims from Bulgarian lands between the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and the outbreak of the Balkan Wars (1912); (ii) a major population movement following the decision of the Allies to cede the administration of Western Thrace to Greece in 1920, coupled with a Greco-Bulgarian population exchange that took place in 1919 (see below) - by this, Bulgarians, one of the three main ethnic groups in the area, were entirely uprooted from Thrace's western part; (iii) The large numbers of Greek refugees that

arrived and settled there after the collapse of the Greek campaign in Asia Minor and the subsequent signing of the Mudanya Armistice (1922) and the Lausanne Treaty (1923) that concluded the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922. Out of the ashes of Greek irredentism, expressed through the political programme *of Megali Idea* (*Great Idea)* (see below), the ethnic mix of Western and Eastern Thrace changed for good. In the former, erstwhile Muslim majorities were turned into a minority and Greeks emerged as the dominant ethnic group, while the latter, in terms of anthropography, became Turkish in its entirety (Featherstone et al., 2011: 14-17; Psomiades, 2000: 33-36; Divani, 2000: 608-610).

In the present section, an account of the trajectory of Thrace's fate in the twilight of the late 19th and on the eve of the 20th century will be provided. Certain events, major turning points in the region's history and dynamics will be outlined. Literary evidence of the mid-19th century discloses a remarkable pattern of interaction between Christians, Muslims and Jews in the Thracian urban centers, like Edirne, before the advent of corrosive national antagonisms (see Clogg, 1996a: 253-254). By the time though it started being felt that the crumbling Empire was breathing its last few breaths, Thrace turned into an arena for three contending fierce nationalisms: one expansionist, in effect irredentist, the Greek, claiming the region within the context of *Megali Idea*, and two nascent, the Bulgarian, which after the Treaty of San Stefano (1878) (see below) was craving for glories of national unification and expansion towards the Aegean Sea, and the Turkish, galvanizing support thanks to the linguistic and religious affinity of the local Muslim population (Divani, 2000: 553; Featherstone et al., 2011: 24). Incipient manifestations of an independent Thracian statehood appeared to be rather frail since the plethora of divergent identities in the region had not been conducive to nurture a shared sense of nationhood (see Featherstone et al., 2011: 24-33). Hence the aforementioned nationalist projects were about to pick up the torch and clash with each other for around fifty years.

Lord Strangford, an Anglo-Irish diplomat who was interested in the history of the Balkan peoples, wandering around the peninsula in 1863 remarks that 'the limit of the Greek race - however they might have extended themselves thirty years ago - are now defined by that uprising of the Bulgarian nationality (...) The Greek can not overcome the Bulgarian, nor lead him, nor incorporate him' (quoted in Stephanove, 1920: 354). This quote did only foreshadow the impending struggle for Thrace. To gain an understanding of the conflicts though, one shall first come to grips with the fermentations that took place on the fringes of Southeastern Europe in the course of the 19th century as well as the inherently ambivalent term *Rum*.

The 'Great Idea'
& Greek Nation-building

After its accession to independent statehood in 1830 the Greek state had been a 'nationalizing state'. Rogers Brubaker (1996b: 83-84) coined the term to accentuate the dynamism that characterizes the political activism of a state entity whose undertaking to become a nation-state, a state *of* and *for* a particular nation defined in ethnocultural terms, is yet to be realized. In this case, the policies designed and implemented hinge upon claims made in the name of a 'core nation' considered as the state's 'legitimate owner'. What is presumed is that although the latter 'owns' the state, its interests are not sufficiently expressed due to its own weaknesses - be them cultural, economic or demographic, all thought of as corollaries of the discrimination it had been subject to before attaining independence. To (re)gain a favorable position thus the state adopts nationalizing policies that aim to promote the nominally state-bearing nation's language, cultural flourishing, demographic predominance and political hegemony.

In this line, Greece's main objective as a 'nationalizing state' had been the imprintment upon social groups whose ethnic definitions were still malleable, and could thus evolve in a plethora of alternative ways, of the concept of Greek national identity. All the state-advanced cultural resources were ergo employed and translated into policies envisaging the national integration of the newly independent state. The cultivation of national identity became an integral part of domestic statecraft and foregin policy and unfolded, as Kitromilides (1990b) demonstrates, along two dimensions: (i) an internal, that comprised initiatives of nation-building *within* Greece; (ii) an external, that involved the orientation of the Greek state towards territories of the Ottoman Empire that were inhabited by Greek Orthodox (*Rum*) populations considered as integral parts of Greece's cultural identity and heritage known as *Hellenism*. It had been the dynamic interplay of these two processes that essentially gestated and spawned Greek self-conception.

Domestically, nation-building focused on bridging the cleavages between the nascent Greek state and the traditional society upon which state institutions were to exercise control. This was endeavored through the propagation of a homogenizing national identity. What had been a daunting task from early on was the mending of social ruptures bestowed from conflicts among factions dating back to the years of the War of Independence (1821-1830). The regional sectionalism subverting the state's authority was addressed through the formation of a regular army. By their conscription, recruits were to be brought together into a common social experience, and through their geographical mobilization were to gradually wipe out existing loyalties based on local attachments and bolster self-identification with a larger 'common homeland'. The army had also been one of the most effective mechanisms of the society's linguistic homogenization (Kitromilides, 1990b: 35-38). To align the widely divergent forms of Greek spoken by communities

dotted in the Near East, the state also adhered to the propagation of a standardized form of Modern Greek which, as Kitromilides (2011: 59) notes, rather disrupted the development of several neo-Greek languages on the model of the several neo-Latin languages of Europe.

The consolidation of national identity was also sought through two more ideological initiatives, namely the creation of an autocephalous national Church and of a national university; (Kitromilides, 1990b.: 39-42). Autocephaly provided administrative ecclesiastical autonomy to Orthodox inhabitants of independent Greece fostering their identification with a distinct cultural, linguistic and ethnic community (Walters, 2002). The transformation of the Church from a communal institution operating within the context of a multiethnic empire into a branch of the administrative structure of the national state had been an act of high symbolism since, as Greek proto-nationalists did assert, 'the clergy in the liberated part of Greece should not owe allegiance to the Patriarch of Constantinople, for as long as the Patriarch remains captive and is elected by the former tyrant of Greece (…)' (quoted in Kitromilides, 2010b: 43). The university respectively, besides its onus to train personnel for state institutions, looked beyond the kingdom's borders and aspired to transmit the domestically incubated ideological nationalist doctrine that pervaded the external dimension of Greek nation-building, known as 'Great Idea' (*Megali Idea*).

The political program of 'Great Idea' is often described as the Greek kingdom's craving for uniting under its banner, and through its territorial expansion, all the Greek Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire. It blended, as Roudometof (1999: 435) put it, 'millenarian hopes for a restored Christian Empire with secular Greek-state sponsored nationalism'. This rather vague and fluctuating in terms of projecting a definite vision of territorial space program (Kazamias & Stouraiti, 2010: 21-32) on which Greek politics pivoted for the first century of the state's independent existence was firstly elaborated in light of a domestic debate over the assignment of equal political rights to autochthon and heterochthon Greeks, the latter being Orthodox incomers from lands still under Ottoman rule (Clogg, 1996b: 253-254; Kitromilides, 1990b: 39). In a context of ample discontent about the state's corrupt status, the need of resolving internecine rivalries by placing them under the banner of 'one state, one purpose and one power, one religion and one constitution' and of buttressing the dogma that presented the nation as an entity fixed in a historical territory with no temporal discontinuities (Kazamias & Stouraiti, 2010: 19-20; see also Kitromilides, 1998), the local ethnological traditions of the Empire's Greek Orthodox subjects were regarded as politicizable, thus convertible to a particular set, Greek essentially, of national values (Kitromilides, 1990a).

But what did that virtually mean? A person theretofore designated as *Rum*, that is a non-national qualifier bearing exclusively religious connotations, harking back to the tradition of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and coined during Ottoman times to

designate the Sultan's Orthodox subjects who formed the Greek Orthodox *millet* (*Millet-i Rûm*) (Vermeulen, 1984: 227-229), the latter being a disparate community comprising Orthodox Christians of Arab, Albanian, Bulgarian, Vlach, Serbian, Romanian and Greek linguistic and cultural identities (Konortas, 2010: 165), was offered membership to an 'imagined community' extending its boundaries beyond the puny realm of Greece (Veremis, 1990: 11). By acceding to that community an individual was becoming a *Hellene*, a designation deriving from Greek antiquity and inaugurated in the late 18th century by European secular nationalists building an bond between the nascent Greek kingdom's citizens with the Greeks of Classical antiquity who were cherished in the West (Vermeulen, 1984: 227; Konortas, 2010: 166).

It is against that backdrop, that regarded Greek nation-building as an open-ended project (Kazamias & Stouraiti, 2010: 13-14), that its external dimension should be studied. In the second half of the 19th century, angling for instilling a Greek national feeling to the Empire's *Rums*, and taking advantage of the Ottoman state's tolerance towards cultural initiatives and intellectual movements among non-Muslims (Kitromilides, 1990a: 9), the Greek state deployed a plethora of channels through which it sought to transplant its domestically gestated norms of national identification to Orthodox populations beyond its borders and to present itself as their 'national centre' (Kitromilides, 1983). Given that the most daunting challenge was the *millet's* linguistic diversity, since it complicated the question of who and according to what criteria was to be considered a *Hellene*, a 'crusade of national education' was embarked upon that sought to imprint on the *millet's* conscience its identification with the Greek nation (Kitromilides, 1990b: 43). This 'crusade' was carried through two complementary institutional networks, that of the Greek consulates dotted around the Balkans and Asia Minor, and that of Greek schools. The former, epitomizing the role of the state as a nation-builder (Kitromilides, 1990a: 9), served two functions, namely the dispensation of Greek citizenship to local Christians of large urban centers who could claim some form of participation in the Greek War of Independence and the dissemination of the Greek kingdom's press through local channels spreading thus news about independent Greece.The latter respectively proceeded with the linguistic Hellenization of the non-Greek speaking *Rums* (Kitromilides, 1990b: 43-46). Remarkable had also been the educational and cultural propaganda carried out by cultural associations (Clogg, 1996b: 270).

This range of policies though did not operate in a vacuum but coincided with an excess of fermentations taking place within the circles of the *millet* during the era of reforms in the Ottoman Empire known as *Tanzimat* (1839-1876). At the climax of diffusion of nationalist ideas in Southeastern Europe the term '*Millet-i Rûm*' begins so to acquire a new meaning pertinent to the 'minority concept (Konortas, 1999: 173; Balta, 2008: 41, 44) inciting thus the various intra-*millet* linguistic communities towards the espousement of a distinct national status.

In parallel, three more key-developments spurred the reappraisal of the Orthodox *millet's* status. First comes the multiplication of autocephalous Churches. Following Greece's example, local Churches in the Balkans started cutting ties with the Patriarchate in Istanbul and converting themselves into national institutions. In this way the *millet* was transmuted from a group that embraced all Orthodox subjects into one that was largely Greek in character given the centuries-old well-established Greek tradition of the Patriarchate (Clogg, 1982: 193-194). The diminution of the latter's sway over the non-Greek Christians of the peninsula ushered in the second key-development that concerned the increase of the lay's influence on the *millet's* affairs. While up until the 1850s those were administered by an oligarchic system of power-sharing between the incumbent Patriarch and a group of metropolitans, amidst a climate of exponential secularization marking the era, wealthy Ottoman Greeks raised demands for their formal representation in the administration. Major institutional changes thus ensued, authorizing both lay dignitaries and representatives of parishes to elect the Patriarch - the *milletbaşi*, the head of the Orthodox *millet*. The significance of those developments lies in that the laity, through its formal presence in the administration, was given outlets to graft its own expediences, nationalist aspirations and irredentist politics among them, exerting thus influence on the Patriarchate's policies towards the Orthodox flock (Kitromilides, 2019b, 48-49). At last, the introduction of *Tanzimat* reforms not only favored the demographic and economic blooming of the Empire's Greek Orthodox population but even encouraged the migration of Greek nationals from independent Greece. The existence of the kingdom though did not cease to offer an alternative focus for the loyalties of the former, undermining ergo gradually the *millet's* existence and precipitating its eventual collapse (Clogg, 1982: 195-200).

Those developments did also induce a redrawing of the *millet's* collective identity through the demarcation of its external and inner boundaries. In the former case, the process took place along national lines. Flourishing nationalist movements attached to fledgling Balkan states employed, while raising claims over the share of the *millet's* population, ethnocultural criteria, such as language, history and geography, upon which they sought to buttress their argument over a common identity and thus differentiate their nationals from other Orthodox subjects. In the latter, symbolic boundaries were drawn within the 'national body' itself. Besides the national 'other', it had also been the 'other' within the community that now had to be redefined (see Exertzoglou, 2008).

It is against that setting that the struggle for Thrace was unfolded. Greek policies found a receptive audience in the Balkans as longtime established conventions gave them a leverage. Pivotal had been the eminent status of the Greek language, the medium that guaranteed the cultural unity of the region's diverse and often mutually incompatible traditions (Kitromilides, 2010a: 43-44). What existed on the ground, to be more precise, had been a case of 'diglossia without bilingualism' (Detrez, 2015: 63) - the peasantry

spoke various vernaculars and only elites did hold a command of learned Greek. Significant sway over the Orthodox flock had also been held by the fact that education and church services were in Greek; in view of this, Greeks could unassailably uphold a vantage point in controlling two cardinal institutions, i.e. the school and the church - education went hand in hand with religion since it was a prerogative of the confessional community (Aarbakke, 2015: 30) - and to entrench by them their cultural domination in the Orthodox *millet* (Vermeulen, 1984: 229) promoting ergo the latter's nationalization (Kitromilides, 2019b: 50). To add to that, the Greek language had often been an object of praise due to the fact that knowledge of it provided access to the writings of the Fathers of Church (Tachiaos, 2010: 16).

Another parameter orchestrating the dynamics of the Thracian question had also been the fact that in the second half of the 19th century the term *Rum* began to designate a distinct social identity and status. Thenceforth a person by self-identifying as *Rum* professes a politico-religious affiliation and accepts the Greek culture's political and cultural domination. Contrasting the Slav-speaking peasantry who were also *Rums* by definition due to their membership in the Orthodox *millet*, the *Rum* is now a *par excellence* city dweller, a Greek-speaking member of an emerging petty bourgeoisie. Hans Vermeulen coined the term 'cultural division of labor' (1984: 231) to describe the phenomenon of unequal distribution of ethnic groups over social classes, occupation or economic niches. Progressively though, juxtaposing the *Rum*, an ethnically Bulgarian bourgeoise arose aiming to reverse the impact that the aforementioned institutions had on the peasants of the southernmost Balkans and cultivate upon them a Bulgarian conscience. So far, the appellation *Bulgar* did hold the connotation of the poor Slav-speaking peasant - it expressed one's linguistic, cultural but also occupational identity and status. For quite some time the two qualifiers had not been antinomical when used by Slav-speaking peasants for their self-identification - *Bulgar* expressed one's present socioeconomic status and linguistic affiliation while *Rum* one's religious and political allegiance as well as desired socioeconomic status (ibid.: 234).

Aarbakke (2015:31) mentions that Bulgarian accounts of the nationalist era refer to a 'double yoke' which they had to squirm out, implying the Ottoman rule and the Greek domination of the Orthodox *millet*. Being aware of their insufficient presence in major urban areas and the drawbacks of not having a moneyed middle class, Bulgarian nationalists pushed for the introduction of Bulgarian language in schools and religious services. The Greek clergy, lest that would disrupt the context within which the hellenizing policies of *Megali Idea* were working, vehemently opposed such demands (ibid.: 238), unsuccessful though, since in 1870, with the acquiescence of the Ottoman state, another Church, the so-called Bulgarian Exarchate, and a new *Bulgar millet* were founded (Konortas, 2010: 167). The former's excommunication by the Ecumenical Patriarchate came two years later, blaming it for *phyletism*, i.e. the equation of the Church

with a particular nationality (Payne, 2007: 837) - a norm that contrasted the Orthodox doctrine's fundamental principle, *ecumenicity*, that regards the Orthodox people as a community within which ethnic divisions and racism are alien (see Kitromilides, 1996b).

Those developments inoculated the centuries-old frame of intercommunal symbiosis with nationalism, sparking off conflicts as territories planned to be under the Exarchate's jurisdiction were overlapping with those already under the Patriarchate's, bringing ergo to fore the question of the guardianship of the culturally diverse Orthodox population and of the criteria that rendered one a *Patriarchist*, i.e. member of the *Rum millet* and faithful to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, or an *Excarchist*, i.e. member of the *Bulgar millet* and loyal to the newly founded ecclesiastical authority (Konortas, 2010: 168). A national flavor was soon grafted to the competition of the two institutions that had a bearing on the term 'Greek'. The Greek kingdom, tapping into the semantical affinity of the terms 'Greek Orthodox' and 'Greek', accentuated the subjects' religious identity and their subsumption to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Bulgarian nationalists, on the other hand, lended weight to language as an essential of Bulgarian ethnic and national identity (Aarbakke, 2015:30). To temper Bulgarian claims, being aware of the existent vast Slav-speaking enclaves in Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace, the Greeks contrived two more novel terms that would putatively justify one's national belongingness, that of 'national descent' and of 'national consciousness' (Livanios, 2008: 260). It is at that time that terms such as '*Voulgarizontes Ellines*' (Bulgarian-leaning Greeks) or '*xenophonoi Ellines*' (foreign language-speaking Greeks) dominate national discourse and appear in censuses (see Kostopoulos, 2003b: 66; Exertzoglou, 2012) to refer to Patriarchists/*Rums* who were not ethnically Greek or Greek-speaking. Following the aforementioned affinity of *'Rum'* and 'Greek', those populations were arbitrarily considered, and thus counted, as Greeks.

When the two opposing nationalisms clashed in Western Thrace, still part of the Empire in the twilight of the 19th century, their target had been the extremely diverse rural Slav-speaking populations (Aarbakke, 2015: 32) who were still members of the *Rum millet*. Both sought to enlist them in their respective national community by transmuting their *millet* consciousness into national. Adherents of the Exarchate and Bulgarian nationalists demanded that Slav-speakers should divest their conventional *Rum* identity and subjugate themselves to the Exarchate's spiritual authority, an act that would be translated as their accession to the *Bulgar millet* and by extension to the Bulgarian nation. Proponents of Greek nationalism, on the other hand, invoked the Ottoman law that acknowledged the community's subsumption to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and considered them as fellow Greeks. The agencies employed by both camps are by now known - schools, consulates, priests, teachers, local notables and violence. Their goal was to persuade as many villages as possible to embrace their national ideology (Konortas, 2010: 168-172).

Realities on the ground were much more fluid and puzzling though. A consular report of September 1905 (quoted in Konortas, 2010: 171) mentions that 'the census commission (...) refused to register the inhabitants of the village Osmanli as *Rum* Orthodox, insisting on issuing their identity cards as *Bulgar*, because they had been registered as such in the old census [of 1882]. But the inhabitants protested and said that even if they speak Bulgarian and Turkish they are 'Greeks' [Hellenes] and faithful to the 'Great Church of Christ' [the Ecumenical Patriarchate]'. Lyberatos (2016) also cites the interesting case of some Thracian *Rums* who, facing severe socio-economic difficulties due to an incumbent agricultural crisis, decided to migrate to independent Greece as laborers. Taking advantage of the Greek naturalization law, they managed to acquire citizenship and return back to their village, now as Greeks, enjoying at the same time the privileges of protection and tax exemptions conferred on Greek subjects according to signed Greek-Ottoman agreements. Naxidou (2015) respectively demonstrates how the espousement of different historical narratives at the micro level instigated the individual's identification with a particular national community. Nation-building in Thrace, involving also the region's Muslim population, continued being a magnificently dynamic process for almost half a century until the final drawing of borders in 1923.

Thrace at War

In the ensuing years, Bulgaria started to covet Eastern and Western Thrace. When in the aftermath of the First Balkan War (1912), it became pronounced that the allocation of Thrace's parts to the warring states would be determined on the basis of military occupation of territories and their ethnological composition, it intensified its efforts to turn the latter in its favor. Coercive means were used to put pressure on people to declare themselves as Exarchists, i.e. as loyal to the Bulgarian autocephalous church. Noteworthy had been the case of the Pomaks, a group of Slavic-speaking Muslims (see below), who due to their linguistic affinity with Bulgarians were considered as 'lapsed brothers', thus were compelled to be massively baptized as Orhodox Christians. Greeks, respectively, tried to subverse Bulgarian plans sending army officers disguised as priests, teachers and merchants to promote their own cause (Divani, 2000: 572-578; Kaliakatsos, 2013).

The Bulgarian supremacy in Eastern and Western Thrace in the aftermath of the First Balkan War was partially reversed following its defeat in the Second Balkan War (1913). Numerous Bulgarians were forced to retreat. At the conference that followed in Bucharest however Bulgaria continued to lay claims to Western Thrace. Greece, chose to compromise and thus ceded the biggest part of the province. This prospect agitated both Muslims and ethnic Greeks of the region, leading to their mass exodus. The Ottoman government though, invoking the formers' protection, decided to support the formation of local guerilla groups that would fight for an autonomous Western Thrace. Due to the

protracted tension however the Great Powers urged Turkey to withdraw its support to the autonomists, provoking thus the latter's indignation, manifested through the establishment of the so-called 'Gumuldjina Republic'. The stillborn state project that survived for about sixty days was hailed in Young Turks as the first Turkish Republic, precursor to the accomplishment of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Divani, 2000: 579-587; Aarbakke et al., 2015).

In the First World War, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers coveting the Thracian littoral and Greek Macedonia. Greek Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, being convinced that the war would lead to the partition of the Ottoman joined the Allies and declared war on Bulgaria. Advancing victorious, he compelled Bulgarians to call for a truce in 1918. Bulgarian army did evacuate Western Thrace leaving its fate to the decisions of the Allies (Divani, 2000: 587-591).

In the transitory period, the *Thrace Interalliee* regime was established. Greek representatives and Venizelos' chief goal was to secure the support of local Muslims in order to convince the Great Powers that the Greek state could administer regions with culturally diverse populations. Venizelos urged members of the Greek administration to resort to benevolent actions, like the restoration of wrecked mosques, and to spread propaganda materials that would overemphasize Bulgarian atrocities. A grave achievement had been the acquisition of a memorandum signed by the Muslims of the Bulgarian Parliament that was castigating Bulgarian administration's maltreatment and was expressing their preference for the Greek authorities (Glavinas, 2005). This document had been a valuable asset for Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (Divani, 2000: 591-594).

In 1919 the Treaty of Neuilly was signed. By this, Bulgaria relinquished all its claims on Western Thrace. An at least nominally 'voluntary' population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria was also stipulated. In the spring of 1920, in San Remo, it was decided that the Greek army was to supplant the *Interalliee* and occupy both Western and Eastern Trace. This resolution was re-ratified in August when the Sèvres Treaty was signed. Two years later though, largely owing to a devastating defeat of the Greek Army in the waging Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), Greece was asked to evacuate Eastern Thrace which would pass under Turkish sovereignty. More than 200,000 refugees fled to Greece (Psomiades, 2000: 21-22, 33-36; Divani, 2000: 608-610).The fate of Western Thrace would be determined next year at Lausanne.

The Lausanne Conference
and the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange:
Whose is this land, Who goes, Who stays

The intractable Question of Thrace was to be resolved by the ability of the two antagonistic states, Turkey and Greece, to reach a mutually acceptable boundary settlement. This took place in Lausanne in 1923 and ushered in a new era for both states at a domestic level but also concerning their future bilateral relations.

On Thrace

The discussion of the Thracian frontier was opened in November, 1922. The Turkish delegation pleaded that a plebiscite should be held in Western Thrace for the purpose of paving the way for the establishment of an autonomous regime in the region (Psomiades, 2000: 36). This demand was met with deafening silence by the Bulgarian side which knew that this would not be in its favor (Divani, 2000: 614). The Greek delegation opposed it and firmly asserted that only the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) was in question and not any earlier signed one. The Greek thesis was buttressed by the Allies, who, not wanting to upset the condition established by the Treaty of Neuilly (1919), by which Bulgaria resigned its claim on the lands of Western Thrace, rebutted Turkish claims by stating that 'the area did not belong to Turkey before the war'. It was moreover underlined that on these lands more than 250,000 Greek refugees who had fled the newly ceded to Turkey Eastern Thrace, Istanbul and Asia Minor were to settle. Therefore these lands would be of vital importance for the handling by the Greek state of the looming humanitarian crisis (Psomiades, 2000: 37). Hence Western Thrace remained under Greek sovereignty.

Exchanging Populations

The Convention and Protocol on the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations was signed on January 30, 1923. Professor Ayhan Aktar describes in the documentary *Twice A Stranger* the said act as an 'ethnic cleansing done in a diplomatic way'. Kitromilides (2008: 255) points out that what distinguishes the Lausanne Convention from population exchanges practiced earlier is the provision for compulsory exchange without any form of prior consultation of the people involved in it. This fact makes it an exceptional case in that it enshrined in international law a practice that many prior legal efforts sought to bring under control, if possible to eliminate, that is to prevent the dislocation of civilian populations and to protect, to the extent possible, non-combatants from the consequences of war.

Another idiosyncratic, at least for present-day standards, aspect of the Convention had been that the exchange was not based on linguistic or ethnic considerations but upon the populations' religious affiliation. Tsitselikis (2013: 288) justifies this option in that within the context of negotiations *millets* were construed as 'nationalities'. Besides, for both states religion formed the cornerstone for the formation of majoritarian national identity. For Psomiades (2000: 60) on the other hand, religious criteria were preferred due to particular state concerns. Greeks purportedly assented due to the fact that they regarded the Christians of Anatolia, despite them being Turkish-speaking, as part of the Byzantine legacy. For Turks respectively, the devoted loyalty of Muslim refugees to Islam would faciliate their transmogrification into Turks, and so Atatürk's plan to establish a Turkish nation-state.

Who goes

Article 1 of the Convention created emigrants. It stipulated that:

> As from the 1st of May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory. These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorization of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively
> (quoted in Psomiades, 2000: 113).

Article 1 set a point of departure for the demographic reconfiguration, essentially the homogenization, of both states (Akgönül, 2008: 20). As 'exchangeables' were considered those Christians and Muslims who had become refugees since the beginning of the First Balkan War and were originally inhabitants of regions whose populations were now subject to exchange (Psomiades, 2000: 114). According to official sources of the League of Nations, Greece had to absorb 1,222,489 persons, while approximately 355,000 Muslims who had left Greece were about to be absorbed by Turkey (Kritikos, 1999: 211).

But which were the underlying motives that steered the negotiating parties to resort to such a radical solution?

The Allies, that first proposed the compulsory nature of the exchange, thought of it as a means to eliminate future conflicts emerging from minority issues. They believed that such a solution would ease the task of guaranteeing the stability of the new international order, not least because the issue of minorities in Europe had been one of the causes of the First World War (Oran, 2003: 98-99). For the defeated Greece, the exchange meant the termination of its expansionist dreams as expressed by the *Great Idea*. Its main concern at Lausanne was to have lands promptly vacated in order to ensure the accommodation of the arriving refugees (Kritikos, 1999: 217). At last, for Turkey, the

completion of the programme of political and cultural reform inaugurated by the Young Turks necessitated an abrupt cut with norms and social structures of the multireligious, multilingual and multiethnic Ottoman past. The principle of an independent and highly homogenous nation-state was propounded. The ulterior motive behind the pressure exerted for the exchange was that Turkey was sceptical of the massive intervention by foreign powers that used as a pretext the protection of its Christian populations. Moreover, the memories of the collaboration of the Greek-Orthodox subjects and the Patriarchate with the Greek army were still fresh, stirring feelings of distrust and animosity towards minorities. The exchange was thus seen as an ostracism of those considered alien in the project of ethnic unification of the Turkish state (Psomiades, 2000: 59; Oran, 2003: 99).

Who stays

Article 2 of the Convention created minorities. It stipulated that:

> The following persons shall not be included in the exchange provided for in Article 1:
> (i) The Greek inhabitants of Istanbul; (ii) The Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace.
> All Greeks who were already established (*etablis*) before the October 30, 1918, within the areas under the Prefecture of the City of Istanbul, as defined by the law of 1912, shall be considered as Greek inhabitants of Istanbul.
> All Moslems established in the region to the east frontier line laid down in 1912 by the Treaty of Bucharest shall be considered as Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace
> (quoted in Psomiades, 2000: 113).

Following the Lausanne settlement, there existed 118,903 Muslims in Western Thrace and 125,046 Greek-Orthodox Christians in Istanbul (Psomiades, 2000: 63). By Article 24 it was also stipulated that the Greek-Orthodox population of the two islands at the mouth of the Dardanelles, Gökçeada and Bozcaada, which were ceded to Turkey, were also exempted (Oran, 2003: 100). The *etablis* were conferred citizenship rights, and by Articles 37-45 were given the right to preserve their identity by means of participation in community institutions. Their equality before the law and participation in all aspects of socio-economic life as citizens of the equivalent states was also safeguarded. Article 45, at last, established the so-called principle of 'reciprocity' (see below) (Tsitselikis, 2013).

For the Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos, the exemption of the Istanbulite Greek-Orthodox community had a symbolic meaning. Being an ardent exponent of the *Great Idea*, he had for long been fueling the Greek public opinion that *Ionia*, the region of present-day Western Turkey, would be incorporated into Greece. Given the eventual disillusionment, it would be hard for the public to accept the community's obliteration. Hence it was to have a remedial effect. Correspondingly for Turkey, since the expulsion of the Istanbulite *Rum* community was improbable, it was deemed necessary to develop a

symmetry through a counterpoint - that was personified in the Muslim minority of Western Thrace (Oran, 2003: 99).

The Muslim Minority of Western Thrace:
What's in a Name?

A 'Muslim minority' is, according to Ali Kettani (1986: 2), 'a part of a population [within a state] differing because its members are Muslims and which is often subjected to differential treatment by those who do not share the above-mentioned belief'. 'For such a minority', he continues, 'to be in existence it is necessary that those who share the different characteristic of being Muslim should be aware of such difference and should have attained a degree of solidarity because of it'.

Is that the case of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace? Are, in ontological terms, only, or exclusively, religious ties that did mould, or continue to mould, the minority's identity?

The complexity that defines the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, making it a stimulating subject matter, is met even at its own appellation which for a long time has been embroiled in Greco-Turkish relations. Greek officials insist on calling the minority 'Muslim', while Turkish ones address it as 'Turkish'. Such claims were uttered amid bilateral tensions while the present work was being written. During a visit paid to Thrace in February 2020, the former President of the Hellenic Republic referred to 'Greek Muslims', only for Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs' fulmination to follow: 'whatever you say, Western Thrace's Turkish minority has been Turkish for centuries, it will remain Turkish..!'; to be followed in turn by Greece's rebuttal: 'in Greece (...) there is only one minority: the Muslim minority. One only has to read the Treaty of Lausanne to realize this' (*Kathimerini*, 2020a). In short, Turkey aims at the 'nationalization' of the Muslims, while Greece seeks to subvert this process by putting forward their 'milletization' (Tsitselikis, 2012: 51), i.e. the retention of their religious identity as a core qualifier. Turkish academic and human rights activist Baskin Oran argues (1994: 310) that in legal terms both countries are right. Greece is right because the Treaty of Lausanne designates the minority as 'Muslim'. Turkey is also right because the Convention and Protocol of the Exchange of Populations refers to 'Turks'. In any case, the rigid attitudes of both sides and the unwillingness to address the designation question bilaterally or in consultation with the minority itself (Tsitselikis, 2012: 140) do not change the fact the treaty lumped together groups that had nothing in common other than their Muslim faith, fact that in subsequent stages allowed for the creation of a linkage with Turkey as a state of reference (see below) (Dragonas, 2004: 4).

Leaving aside the stringent interpretation of a century old treaty, I take the minority to be a welter of three distinct groups: (i) the Turks; the official Greek position calls them *Turkogenis* (of Turkish origin), or 'Turkish-oriented' or 'Turkophones' - in any case not 'Turks' (Heraclides, 1997b: 291). Such designations aim to relegate the importance of the

Turkish element within the minority (Tsitselikis, 2012: 143, 148); (ii) the Pomaks, a Slavic-speaking group professing Islam (see below); (iii) the Roma or 'Gypsies'. I adopt such a perspective both by virtue of my empirical approach and my intention to eschew what Brubaker (2004b: 8) calls 'groupism', that is the tendency in social sciences to presume that minority groups are internally homogeneous, externally bounded entities, and to approach their members as unitary collective actors with common purposes. Avdikos (2015) demonstrates that ethnic boundaries within the minority are always subject to change, the main variable inducing such changes and reconfigurations being the fluctuating Greek-Turkish relations. 'Pomakness' and 'Gypsyness' thus may appear to coexist or be overshadowed by 'Turkishness', the latter being not only the culture of the largest and ideologically hegemonic group within the minority but also the outlet for social advancement (Tsitselikis, 2012: 149-150). Turkish elites mostly thwart any manifestation of the other two sub-identities. A most recent eloquent example is the documentary of the Qatari-based broadcaster Al-Jazeera (2020) in which exclusively prominent Turkish figures of the minority appear and no reference to the other two subgroups is made. Relevant politicized issues though are beyond scope of analysis of my work. To espouse Tsitselikis' view (2012: 149), on the ground, Thracian Muslims 'have and will continue to exhibit overlapping different ethnic and national affiliations as their identities are always negotiable and subject to intra- and inter-group dynamics'.

There is also a lack of consensus concerning the size of the minority and its constituents. In the examined literature, figures range from 100,000 to 130,000 persons. Given that the only study published after the last Greek census (2011) is that of Tsitselikis (2012: 102), it can be argued that around 85,000 minority Muslims are permanently settled in Thrace (35% of the region's population), 15,000, mostly Pomaks and Roma, have settled in other cities in Greece while in the last few decades around 65,000 have migrated to Turkey and 25,000 to Germany. Official data concerning the size of the three ethnic and linguistic groups are also lacking. According to an Academy of Athens' publication, 48% of the minority population are ethnic Turks, 35% Pomaks and 17% Roma (Dragonas, 2004: 4). In terms of spatial spread, the minority comprises 43% of the prefecture of Xanthi, 55% of Rhodopi, and 5,5% of Evros - the three prefectures that form Western Thrace. Most live in segregated communities - out of almost 500 settlements in Thrace, only 12% have a mixed Muslim and Christian population (ibid.: 3). The majority of Muslims are farmers, merchants or shop-owners while the main source of income for those inhabiting the mountain region is tobacco farming (Tsitselikis, 2012: 130). Culture-wise, they are overwhelmingly followers of Sunni Islam while small Sufi groups, like the Bektashi and Kizilbashi orders, have been recorded (Alexandris, 2003: 123).

Returning to my introductory question, an inquiry into the ties that preserve the minority's coherence calls for a brief retrospective overview of the early fermentations that

progressively configured the minority's collective identity. Following the population exchange, very few Muslims chose to migrate. This is owing to two reasons: (i) this population, being overwhelmingly an agricultural community, were focused on the cultivation of their estates, and thus rather indifferent to the secular modernist ideology of Kemalism and developments in Turkey (Meinardus, 2002: 87); (ii) the profound religious conservatism the defined the community had started being rekindled by the arrival in the region of numerous anti-Kemalists who had been declared personae non-gratae by Ankara, known as the '150' based on a list with their names (Featherstone et al., 2011: 43). The two counterposing camps that emerged, namely the Traditionalists (Old Muslims) and the Kemalists (Modernists), came at loggerheads. Literary evidence dating back to the day presents a strikingly different image of the minority than nowadays. Particularly interesting is a petition signed in February of 1929 by the inhabitants of the village of Oreon (Yassioören in Turkish) and sent to Prime Minister Venizelos after being intimidated by rumors spread by Kemalists that an impending population would take place. 'We are true Muslims', it reads (quoted in Malkidis, 2004: 79), 'We do not cherish the new and infidel Turks. (...) In the event of a future exchange, we will never accept our migration to Turkey; in that case it is more preferable for us to be compelled to migrate to Syria or Egypt'.

The acrimonious polemics reached a climax after the proclamation of the new Latin Turkish alphabet by Ankara in 1928. The latter act sparked off a fierce dispute over its introduction to the minority's educational curriculum as well as its use for the translation of the Quran. Traditionalists strongly advocated the old Arabic script while Kemalists cherished the Latin letters. Newspaper columns of the era allude to raging verbal confrontations over the matter that often turn to fistfights (see Bonos, 2007). The Greek governments, not wanting to provoke reactions by either side, remained neutral (Malkidis, 2004: 75), obliquely galvanizing though the fervent Islamic sentiment that could serve as the only bulwark against Turkish nationalism (Dragonas, 2004). Yet this stance lasted until 1930 when both countries amidst growing geopolitical concerns, in the former's case due to Bulgarian revisionism and the rise of fascism in Mussolini's Italy and in the latter's due to Stalin's Soviet Union expanding sphere of influence (Oran, 2003: 103; Akgönül, 2008:182) a rapprochement was concluded with the signing of the Friendship Pact (1930). That moment constitutes a major watershed in the historical development of the identities of minority subjects, since the Greek government decided, as a goodwill gesture, to expel the '150' conservatives and delegate the community schools to the Kemalists (Aarbakke, 2016: 171) paving thus the way for the nationalization of the Muslims (Meinardus, 2002: 87).

From then onwards, the identity of the minority was transfigured at the interstices of emerging realities shaped by two parameters: the principle of reciprocity and the institutionalization of minority's identification with Turkey as its 'motherland'.

If Articles 37 to 44 of the Lausanne Convention clarified the religious, linguistic and educational rights of the Muslims of Western Thrace and the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Istanbul (see Akgönül, 2008; Tsitselikis, 2013), it has been Article 45 that guided their application. Despite the fact that 'reciprocity' is clearly framed in positive terms, stipulating 'parallel obligations' for both parties (Oran, 2008: 38), in the last eighty years it was rather applied reversely turning thus the respective minorities into 'hostages' of the equivalent states (Akgönül, 2008: 34), which trying to penalize each other ended up penalizing their own citizens for things that they did not bear any responsibility (Oran, 2008: 38). Reciprocity often even acquired symbolic status; for example the sign at the entrance to the Istanbul Rum Phanar Lycée was removed in May of 1970 in retaliation for the breaking of the marble sign in Arabic letters on the old Clock Tower of Xanthi (ibid.: 107). In general, both parties were circumstantially resorting to different practices to protect their co-religionists on the other side of the border. Until the early 1960s Greece mostly appealed for international intervention while Turkey, being reluctant to follow the same route, applied direct reciprocal retaliation in order to pressurize the Greek state (Kamouzis, 2008).

At last, Turkey, besides its legal justification of *droit de regard* over the minority by virtue of being one of the contracting parties at Lausanne (Tsitselikis, 2012: 170), did invest in setting up an umbilical cord between itself and Thracian Muslims. The policy pattern goes back to the Ottoman Empire's twilight years when many non-ethnically Turkish Balkan Muslims started thinking of Turkey as their state of reference chiefly due to Islam (Poulton, 1997c: 194-197). In the case of Thracian Muslims such a bond was naturally enhanced due to its legal basis. Instead of the term 'kin-state', that scholars (e.g. Tsitselikis, 2012: 170-175; Oran, 2003) often employ to designate Turkey's status, here I opt for Brubaker's (1996a: 4-5) concept of 'external national homeland'. Following the latter, a state becomes an 'external national homeland' when its cultural or political elites construe certain residents or citizens of other states as co-nationals and thus claim that this (putative) shared nationhood charges them with the guardianship of those (putative) ethnic co-nationals who live in other states and possess other citizenships. Such claims invoke an ethnocultural affinity, i.e. an affinity based on a mythical common ancestry and history (Smith, 1994: 188), and not on legal citizenship. I intentionally apply this concept in order to put forth the question of resources on which elites capitalize aiming to buttress their 'construings' given the cultural polyphony that defines the minority. Nowadays in Thrace, 'homeland' policies are implemented by the Turkish consulate of Komotini, that maintains a clientelistic network by supporting financially local journalists, teachers and religious leaders of the minority while it also grants a 'certificate of Turkishness' that gives access to privileges (Tsitselikis, 2012: 170-175). Additionally, a number of Turkish government-backed non-governmental organizations

systematically promote the positions of Turkish elites' enclaves at a European level (Hersant, 2013).

Pomaks

The question of who are the Pomaks is rather elusive. Pomaks are generally known as a Muslim group in the Balkans, speaking a Slavic dialect that is very close to Bulgarian (Turan, 1999: 69). Some scholars name that language - which does not have a written form (Apostolov, 2018: 116) - 'Pomak' (e.g. Aarbakke, 2012; Michail, 2002) (see below). They are dispersed around Bulgaria and Greece, mainly in compact settlements in the Rhodopes mountain range, in Turkey, in North Macedonia, and Albania (Apostolov, 2018: 109-118). They number around 300,000-400,000 persons. Around 270.000 of them live in Bulgaria and around 30,000 in Western Thrace, Greece. Nevertheless, as underlined above, numbers are difficult to be assessed since those populations are not counted separately in censuses. Besides, many of them refuse to declare themselves as 'Pomaks', opting for an identity that affiliates them with a larger ethnic group (Brunnbauer, 2001: 43) since, in some cases, as scholars note (Georgieva, 2001; 308), the term 'Pomak' may have pejorative connotations, denoting a backward person or a person who is a 'non-true Muslim', implying that Pomaks are merely Islamized Christians.

Neuburger (2000: 181) points out that 'no Balkan Muslim identity is more contested, more wrapped in multiple intertwining twisted webs of myth and history than the Slavic-speaking Muslims or 'Pomaks' of the souther Balkan range'. I would argue that the essentials of Pomak identity are four: (i) their Muslim faith; Turan (1999: 75) describes them as one of the most religious groups in the region, supporting that national obscurity is what incited them to closely identify with Islam; (ii) their South-Slavic spoken idiom; (iii) their long-term regional isolation and socio-economic marginalization; Brunnbauer (1999: 37; 2001: 43) mentions that Pomaks traditionally opted for a very isolated, insular way of life in villages dispersed across the mountains of Rhodopes, away from commercial and trade urban centers. They mostly relied on kinship solidarity and the local community. In the post-Second World War era they started making a living by growing tobacco; *iv*) their nationalistically-appropriated historical ethnic origin; Pomak identity, by virtue of its pre-national, noncommittal inbetweenness, has been turned, as Neuburger (2000: 183) puts it, into 'an object of desire for all the surrounding nation-state projects which saw it as gray zone ripe to be painted white or black by the pretenders to their national wills'.

The latter has been of grave importance since three states in which Pomaks live, Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, instrumentalized that opaqueness and produced national historiographies that present them as sharing the same fictive or real ancestral past with them. Anagnostou (2005b: 58), examining the Bulgarian case, notes that for the

Bulgarian national historiography the existence of this group represented 'an anomaly that had to be explained and elucidated through recurring inquiry into their origin'. This remark applies more or less both to the Greek and Turkish cases. Such cultural policies though did only achieve to obfuscate the matter of identity for these populations. Attempting thus to disentangle the intricacies of contemporary Pomak identity, I employ Verkuyten's (2018a: 25-29) three-level model of analysis of social identity. Verkuyten distinguishes among three interdependent levels of analysis to which he refers as: (i) individual; this level focuses on one's self-sense of identity and his/her ability to enact his/her sense of it; (ii) interactive; it focuses on processes of negotiation of one's identity in the context of quotidian and other situated interactions; (iii) societal; it indicates how certain state regulations, hegemonic discourses, conventions and ideologies give rise to specific, often exclusive, identity options, and thus dictate the 'legitimate' framework for an individual's identity management. In what follows, I combine data collected during my fieldwork with others coming from social scientists who have conducted more extensive research on Pomak identity.

At an individual level, a de-nationalized, essentially pre-modern, Pomak identity is pronounced. Neuburger (2000: 182; also Seyppel, 1989, quoted in Alexandris, 2003: 125) notes that the designation is rarely employed as a proactive self-identification, a remark to which I also subscribe. When it does though it often holds a strong attachment to being native in Thrace. Particularly telling are the words of an informant of Tsioumis & Michail (2004: 250): 'As concerns our identity, they have baffled us. There are some who tell us that we are Bulgarians, then some others come and tell us 'you are Turks'. I believe that we are just autochthonous inhabitants of this region who got Islamized during Ottoman times. All of you are foreigners who came to this region later on. We don't care about what you are saying - we only know one thing; that our fathers and grandfathers are from here'. During my fieldwork I encountered relevant statements underlining the group's nativeness. Georgieva (2001: 311) mentions that during her fieldwork across the Bulgarian Rhodopes she met Pomaks who, adhering to the *millet* tradition, considered themselves solely as Muslims: 'We are Muslims and that's all we need. Why do we have to be Bulgarians or Turks?'.

At the interactive level, Pomak identity fits Verkuyten's (2018b: 62-63) *instrumentalist* account. The latter suggests that individuals and groups emphasize their ethnicity or present different forms of it under circumstances they deem advantageous for them to do so; in a utilitarian manner, to put it succinctly. This pattern is discernible in the literature about Western Thrace. Turkish scholar Baskin Oran (2003: 114) argues that 'in Western Thrace, the Pomaks are known for being more Turkish than the Turks (...)'. Tsitselikis (2012: 146) concurs that they, to a certain extent, share 'feelings of Turkicism'. Social anthropologist Olga Demetriou (2004: 113) mentions that Muslim villagers she met during her fieldwork would declare themselves as Turks when she was addressing them

in Turkish, and as Pomaks when in Greek. Tsioumis & Michail (2004: 252) cite the words of a young migrant worker who argues that 'in Germany we are privileged because we have European passports. Even the ones that claim that Pomaks are Turks, when in Germany or anywhere else in Europe, they say that they are Greeks'. Identity negotiation can even get a collective dimension as appears in Tsibiridou's (2004: 350) work, in which an informant claims that a settlement's inhabitants 'used to be Pomak…they will be again…but now they are not!'. My informants attributed this constant identity shifting to the Turkish consulate's economic activism (see also U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices, 2019) claiming that when the latter stops providing privileges then Pomakness again becomes salient. In general, Pomakness is circumstantially suppressed or overlooked by both Turkish and Greek elites (see Demetriou, 2004: 99-100; Tsibiridou, 2006: 222); by the former due to efforts to consolidate the 'one homogeneous Turkish minority' tenet, and by the latter due to efforts to retain their electorate by satisfying the by far more numerous minority Turks. The identity's plasticity renders impossible its definition at a macro level since individuals appear to hold uneven understandings of its content (Antoniou, 2005: 95; Dragonas, 2004: 18-19).

At last, at the societal level, '*(hi)stories*', as Brunnbauer (1999) puts it, had been pivotal in shaping identities *for* the Pomaks. Adopting a *primordial* approach to ethnicity (Verkuyten, 2018b: 64-66), i.e. one based on the belief in ties of common descent, the three states feuding over Pomaks' historical pedigree embarked on an endeavor to bring forth national historiographies that would present them as being part of their nation since times immemorial. Quite expectedly, their validity is limited to the respective state's borders (Brunnbauer, 1999: 40). Turkish scholarship traces their descent to a Central Asian mythical Turkish place of origin and relates them to Turkish tribes such as the Cumans and the Pechenegs. It asserts that their language is an amalgam of Ukrainian, Turkish and Arabic (Aarbakke, 2012: 151-152; Turan, 1999: 71-72). In Bulgarian scholarship, Pomaks are depicted as the 'tragic victims' of the nation's 'dark ages' who were forced to convert, as 'flesh of our flesh' that 'through coercion did take on the Islamic faith', which, nonetheless, 'did not eradicate their national roots'. Their name is said to come from the verb '*matchia se*' that in Bulgarian stands for 'to suffer' (Anagnostou 2005b: 59-60). Greek scholarship sought to draw a parallel between the Pomaks and ancient Thracian tribes. Physical anthropological theories and blood testing techniques were employed. Some of them even resulted to claims that those who live on the Greek side of the border are genetically different from those living on the Bulgarian side (Aarbakke, 2012: 154-156; see also Katsikas, 2012: 452-453).

These concocted historiographies constitute the only policy uniformly applied by all three states. In Western Thrace, it resulted in the engenderment of another set of hyphenated identities, that of *Pomak-Turk* and of *Pomak-Greek* (Demetriou, 2004: 113).

At last, the extreme linguistic situation (see Michail, 2002) in which Pomaks of Greece are subject to once they enter schooling ought to be outlined; in the course of their compulsory education, they are taught the following languages: (i) Greek, as the state language; (ii) Turkish, a language which as claimed, they 'have never chosen to learn, but was imposed on us by treaties signed at the beginning of the previous century' - that is the case only for children who chose to attend minority schools; (iii) Arabic - without understanding what they read in the Quran; (iv) English and German in the secondary school; (v) Latin and Ancient Greek in the high school. All these without being able to be taught their mother tongue.

These undeniably render the Pomaks an interesting target group. I shall underline that my goal had not been, and is not, to unearth Pomaks' national identities and loyalties. Even though matters of national affiliation were obliquely glossed over during my research, I can by no means claim, nor I intend to do, that Pomaks of Western Thrace hold or manifest a specific national persuasion.

Problem Statement & Research Question

Greek politicians tend to exalt Thrace for its 'multicultural model', often describing the province as a 'symbol of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims' in which 'the achievement of two religious groups living side by side must be carefully safeguarded' (*Kathimerini*, 2019). While the present thesis was being written, on the 14th of May 2020, Greeks celebrated the 100th anniversary of Thrace's incorporation to the Greek state. A massive six hundred square meters flag was hoisted in the port of Alexandroupolis, a town in Thrace, 'to commemorate six hundred years of Bulgarian and Ottoman oppression' (*The Greek Herald*, 2020) and the President of the Hellenic Republic referred to Thrace in her ceremonial address as 'an integral part of Greek history', a 'long-suffering place that, due to its geographical location, had been a crossroads of conflicts and a melting pot of peoples and cultures, an area of open horizons' on which 'Antiquity, the Roman era, Byzantium and the Ottoman rule' left their mark, and whose 'centuries-old multicultural character' has 'broadened the mental horizon of the Thracians, strengthened their dynamism, creativity (…)'(*ANA-MPA*, 2020). Correspondingly, the Regional Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace acknowledged to the inhabitants of Thrace a special status due to 'having the privilege of bearing a special heritage, of being carriers of a perennial history of civilization that combines cultural encounters and the acceptance of diversity' (*Administrative Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace*, 2020b).

However, anthropologists' discerning eye discloses and draws another picture of Thrace's 'multiculturalism'. Olga Demetriou (2004: 98) distinguishes two kinds of 'multiculturalism': (i) the idealized model of the Greek officials; and (ii) the problematic daily-experienced one, output of a string of political practices that only alienate the minority (Demetriou, 2013: 71). A revealing episode is captured by the native anthropologist Fotini Tsibiridou (2005: 89) who refers to a cultural performance staged at the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Komotini. Tsibiridou mentions that this event constitutes the first breach with minority elites, who, claiming a wholesale Turkish identity for minority Muslims, fiercely opposed the showing of the 'Pomak' and 'Roma' traditional weddings, withdrawing at last from the event without performing the ritual of the 'Turkish' wedding. The final scene of the performance though is noteworthy: The descendants of *Rum* families who a century back fled from the other parts of Thrace pose standing upright 'protecting', as their posture manifests, other all the other ethnic groups of the region such as Roma, Pomaks, Armenians etc., all of whom sit on the floor. This frame, I argue, exemplifies a case of cultural racism, since a hierarchical segregation of

cultures emerges schematically (Grillo, 2003), in which one cultural tradition holds a hegemonic position among all others.

In this thesis, I turn my focus on the celebration of national commemorations. In October of 2017 (*Greek Reporter*, 2017), during a local celebration in the city of Xanthi, Muslim students did parade wearing their headscarves, a spectacle that was characterized by local media as 'unprecedented', becoming 'the main topic of discussion' (ibid.), instigating thus a 'meta-social commentary' (Geertz, 1973: 469) that, as Edensor (2002: 74) argues, 'celebrates and reproduces social ideals and conventions - or at least provides a context for discussions around shared performative conventions and values'. Hence, the following research question (along with subquestions) is addressed:

- Why does the Greek state apply institutions of a certain ethnoreligious content as national in Western Thrace and how does this policy shape Pomak inhabitants of Xanthi view as regards the character of the Greek nation?

(i) Which are those institutions? (ii) When were they inaugurated? (iii) Why were they inaugurated? (iv) How (ritualistic aspect) are they celebrated? (v) How are they communicated at the macro/meso/micro level? (vi) How do Pomaks conceptualize cultural diversity? (vii) What is their stance towards such institutions? (viii) How do they conceptualize the 'nation' in abstract terms? (ix) What are their views towards one's membership in the Greek nation?

Concept Elaboration

A clarification shall be made concerning the abstract nature of the term *character*. To constrict the scope of interpretations around my findings and make them more classifiable, definite and concrete, I employ the so-called 'Kohn dichotomy', named after the eminent nationalist scholar of the 20th century and coiner of the concept, Hans Kohn. Kohn thought of nationalism, the principle that holds that 'political and national unity should be congruent' (Gellner, 1983, quoted in Hobsbawm, 1990: 9), as a product of secularization. He argued that each era has its 'ordering principle'; thus for modernity nationalism has been that principle which, embedded in the Enlightenment tradition, undermined and eventually supplanted religion. The 'faith of the 19th century', he contends, 'was its nationalism, more precisely, its state nationalism' (Maor, 2017: 670). The invented 'Kohn dichotomy' refers to a chronological, political and intellectual distinction between a 'good' - known as '*civic*' - Western European variety of nationalism and a 'bad' - known as '*ethnic*' - Eastern European type.

Kohn attaches great importance to the *idea* that gives rise to nationalisms; if Western-formulated ideas - by 'West' meaning mainly France, England, the Netherlands and the US - envisaged a 'nation of citizens' as a construction of social and political factors as well as of collective will, choice and contract, then in the East - meaning

Germany and eastwards - a pre-political, 'ethnic' nation, was held together not by the will of its members nor by any obligations of contract, but by common myths of the past and traditional ties of kinship that substitute the legal and rational concept of 'citizenship' with the infinitely vaguer concept of 'folk', was conceptualized (Calhoun, 2007a). For Brubaker (2004: 133), the civic/ethnic typology translates to two understandings of nationhood; the former, characterized as 'liberal, voluntarist, universalist and inclusive', is based on common citizenship, while the latter, seen as 'illiberal, ascriptive, particularist and exclusive', on common ethnicity. At last, Wolf (1976: 666) outlines six overarching social and economic differences between the two; Western nationalism, for Kohn an offspring of the 'three great Western revolutions', the English, the French and the American, grew up in areas with a strong middle class, was thus intellectually based on traditions of the Enlightenment, emphasized rationality and individual liberties, was visionary, had been an indigenous development, tended to confine state power and aimed at global unity. On the other hand, Eastern nationalism was developed in areas lacking a middle class, chiefly as a reaction to the Enlightenment, considered collective unity as the basis of progress, emphasized a supposedly heroic and often mythical past, had been transplanted from the West, did glorify state power and was exclusivist.

Using what he terms as 'the language of the family', Brown (1999: 283) theorizes the dichotomy in temporal terms. 'The family of civic nationalism is', he argues, 'primarily the marriage family, whereby entry into the family and its territorial/institutional home from diverse sources indicates commitment to a common loyalty and destiny; whereas the family of cultural nationalism is primarily that of parenthood with the commitment of (genetic or adopted) children to the family deriving from the belief in common ancestry. Civic nationalism is just as likely as cultural nationalism to use the language of motherland and homeland, but uses it to refer to the home of arrival rather than to the home of origin'.

Following its coinage, the 'Kohn dichotomy' has been subject to numerous critiques. Many are those (Brubaker, 2004: 135; Calhoun, 2007a: 146; Jaskulowski, 2010: 299) who cast doubt on whether it is scientifically valid to categorize such heterogeneous social formations as nations, national traditions or entire states simply as ethnic or civic. Craig Calhoun (2007a: 147) underlines that the typology disregards the fact that civic nationalism ostensibly also rests on cultural constructions, allowing thus self-proclaimed cosmopolitans to be too complacent and charge ethnic nationalisms for all of the modern world's evils. His critique is complemented by many others; Jaskulowski (2010: 300) argues that cultural referents, such as shared values, myths, memories and symbols have always served as nation-building tools as by rendering complex realities and meanings tangible and graspable for all nationals they fulfill condensing functions. For Nielsen (1999: 47-50), culture shall not be *ex ante* categorized as 'ethnic', since for individuals to be a member of any nation it means also to partake in a distinctive organizational culture

in terms of which even a liberal one is defined. Kuzio (2002: 29) in turn discerns self-congratulating connotations in the 'civic' label. Along with Shulman (2002: 580), they hold that both 'Eastern' and 'Western' nationalisms share ethnic roots; the fact that the former is considered more 'ethnic' today is largely owing to the different timing of similar evolutionary processes. Brown (1999: 298-299), at last, stresses the role of the mobilizing elites' attitude and of the perceived or real external threats against which nationalisms emerge; he contends that it is those nationalisms articulated by insecure elites and developed as a reaction to threats that take an illiberal turn. By the same token, those that emerge as mobilizing movements, are articulated by self-confident elites and do not form their identity primarily in relation to a threatening other are most likely to take a liberal form.

Citizenship, the cornerstone of 'civic' nationhood, had also been subject to critique; Brubaker (2004: 141) notes that 'citizenship itself, by its very nature, is an exclusive as well as an inclusive status. On a global scale, it is an immensely powerful instrument for social closure'. Indeed, access to citizenship, even when it is open to individuals regardless of ethnicity, is always state-regulated and not a matter of one's desire. Nielsen (1999: 47) in turn underscores that even in states categorized as 'civic', citizenship is never predicated on one's commitment to democratic principles but obtained at birth and can not be stripped off in case an individual commits to anti-democratic principles or practices. Therefore, even in states where putative civic nations live, citizenship is not a matter of one's political beliefs.

Despite its weaknesses, 'Kohn dichotomy' has been applied as a tool of analysis of several concepts and on various fields. Five main ethnicity-blind indicators are often employed, according to Shulman (2002: 559), as yardsticks of a civic identity: (i) attachment to a common territory; nonetheless, only when that does not hark back to pre-modern notions of collective identity (Tabachnik, 2019: 201-203); (ii) citizenship; (iii) belief in the same political principles or ideology; *iv*) respect for political institutions and enjoyment of political rights; *v*) will to be part of the nation (voluntarism); and two of an ethnic one: (i) ancestry; and (ii) race. Scholars (e.g. Brown, 1999; Janmaat, 2006) who find problematic the 'ethnic' concept due to its ambiguity and its often underlying deterministic connotations opt for another category, that of 'cultural' identity, that is based on: (i) religion; (ii) language; and (iii) traditions. However, as Reeskens and Hooghe's (2010: 594) infer in their study of citizens of thirty-three countries on the criteria that one shall fulfill in order to be accepted as a citizen, 'it is impossible to rank countries on a civic-ethnic continuum because various items have a different meaning in various national contexts (...) The criteria for deciding on who is to be considered a full citizen are apparently idiosyncratic for various societies'.

Pertinent studies have also been conducted by many others. Shulman (2002) investigates the views of majority ethnocultural groups in fifteen Western and Eastern

countries. He finds that majorities in the 'civic' West are more likely to support linguistic and cultural assimilation of minorities, arguing that this is largely due to the fact that civic components often fall short in their ability to evoke adequate emotional attachment to the nation - they can hardly be internalized. Webb (2014) studies Mapuche youth whose identity oscillates between an ethnic and civic status as regards their belongingness to the Chilean nation. The author detects a blurring of ethnic and civic boundaries and a constant shifting of identities that aims to raise a positive image of themselves and promote their right to be regarded as equal citizens. Hansen and Hesli (2009) and Cebotari (2016) cut across the dichotomy and include and include also 'hybrid' and 'atomized' identities; in the former case, citizens hold inclusive attitudes towards societal out-groups and are supportive of democratic ideals while at the same time strongly identifying with their ethnic group; in the latter, individuals maintain negative attitudes both towards their co-ethnics and other societal out-groups; Both studies, the former conducted in Ukraine and the latter based on data collected from twelve ethnic minorities of Central and Eastern Europe, show a strong support for hybrid identity, an outcome that, as argued (Cebotari, 2016: 662), confirms the strong ethnic feelings conventionally met in Eastern Europe coalescing with aspirations and active participation of citizens in the region's gradual democratization. Muro and Quiroga (2005) applying the scheme to discourses of Spanish nationalism found that no variant had historically been either purely ethnic or civic but was rather fluctuating between liberal and traditionalist conceptions of the nation. Janmaat (2006: 71-72) accentuates the role of economic and political achievements in transmuting states' character. Citing the examples of Austria and West Germany, both once prime proponents of an ethnic conception of nationhood, he argues that it had been their post-war successes at these domains that boosted the trust of their citizens, and therefore its identification with public and political institutions, underscoring that the same could happen in Eastern Europe provided the states succeed in developing stable democracies and prosperous economies. Shevel (2011) examining the politics of nation-building in post-Soviet Russia infers that a rather vague answer comes as a response to the question of whether the Russian nation is civic or ethnic; in the said case such an indefiniteness is rather used instrumentally by Russian policymakers in order to create co-nationals in former Soviet states. At last, Ariely's (2013) study of forty five countries is one of the few that supports the Kohn dichotomy, documenting that in Eastern Europe an ethnic understanding of national identity is still dominant.

In the Greek context, the Kohn dichotomy has been applied by Mavromatis (2018) for the study of the 2015-introduced citizenship legislation. As elaborated, even though at first sight the steps taken seemed to wipe out retrospective understandings of nationhood that gave precedence to ethnocultural traits and a civic take was championed, given also that a radical Left government was in power, the new legislation appears to retain a relevant tenor by setting as a condition the enrollment of migrant children to the Greek

primary school, an ethnocentric, monoculturally oriented institution implanting attendant values.

Theoretical Framework

Banal & Everyday Nationalism

The concept of *banal nationalism* was introduced by Michael Billig in his homonymous book (1995). Billig coined the term to refer to the ideological habits that enable established nations to be reproduced. Nations, as argued (ibid.: 6), are on a daily basis indicated in the lives of citizens, reminding that 'nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition'. He names these institutionalized top-down applied reminders of nationhood '*flaggings*' (ibid.: 38). Among them, he distinguishes: (i) national flags (ibid.:39); (ii) national days (ibid.: 45); (iii) the omnipresent linguistic deictics such as 'we/them', 'this country/the country', 'here/there' (ibid.: 94) expressed through what is named a 'syntax of hegemony' (ibid.: 88) by which the part, i.e. the centralized in metropolitan areas state mechanism, claims to represent the whole, i.e. the territorial domain spreading all along the country's peripheral districts, and *iv*) illustrations and forms of deixis adorning the daily media making the homeland homely and marking it as a place where 'we', the nation living within, can conveniently imagine ourselves as some sort of a family that has the onus to maintain 'our' homeland's homeliness through a constant, conscious endeavor (ibid.: 105-119).

Save for the state-orchestrated institutions that are the subject matter of the present work, two examples of how *banal* nationalism had worked and works in the Western Thracian/Xanthian context worth being alluded to. The first concerns the strategic use of the Greek flag. It worth noting that the significance of its symbolism had early on been appraised during the negotiations for the future of Thrace in San Remo in April 1920. There it was decided that all the flags of the *Interalliee* regime adorning building where administrative agencies were housed should be replaced by Greek ones in order to communicate, according to Koutsoukos (2013: 151-152), two messages: the subjection of those agencies to the Greek administration and the local society's incorporation to the Greek nation-state. Nowadays the flag is always in view, waving on top of Xanthi's Clock Tower in the city's most central square. The ubiquitousness of *banal* nationalism was also aptly illustrated during the celebration of the 25th of March (see below) in 2020 amidst the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In view of the fact that all celebrations were suspended, the city's mayor took the initiative to fix a huge Greek flag to the city hall's facade, only for the image to be broadcasted and circulated through the national (ERT, 2020) and local (Xanthinea, 2020a) media. The second example concerns what Demetriou (2013: 69-88) names 'biopolitics of naming'. During her fieldwork in Komotini, the other big city of Western Thrace where along with the Greek majority mostly ethnic Turks live, she notices that most of the appellations inscribed upon street

plaques to denote the city's addresses refer either to Orthodox Christian figures of the Greek War of Independence and Greek toponyms, or to places in contemporary Turkey and Bulgaria where once Greek Orthodox populations lived, adding under the address the inscription '*lost homeland*' (*hameni patrida*). Such practices of course, that make tangible the majority's hegemonism through the regimented establishment of strands of its ethnic narrative, render, as argued (ibid.: 71), the minority condition ordinary.

The last few years notwithstanding, numerous critiques of Billig's (1995) book underline that he omits to provide theoretical tools for the evaluation of the effects of *banal* nationalism on individuals since the question of the *flaggings'* reception is not posted. This argument has instigated a scholarly debate around which another scholarship emerged, that of *everyday* nationalism. The latter's concern lies in setting up a methodological agenda capable of detaching itself from top-down perspectives that focus exclusively on macro-structural forces, state mechanisms in the said case, and in unveiling maneuverings at a grassroots level (Fox & Van Ginderachter, 2018), drawing attention to the ways that individuals who are exposed to *flaggings* respond (see Antonsich, 2015).

Contemporary academic grappling with the concept though has given rise to divergent opinions concerning its relation with *banal*, with scholars (Duchesne, 2018; Fox, 2018) arguing that *everyday* nationalism contradicts *banal* in that it seeks to unearth the ways that ideas about the nation are reproduced by ordinary people in the quotidian sphere, and thus shall be studied independently and not as an extension of it. Others (Hearn & Antonsich 2018), on the other hand, point out the risks looming when individual agency is studied without taking into consideration the myriad social organizational contexts within which it takes place and which one way or another mould individuals' perspectives. *Banal* and *everyday* in this case are seen as communicating vessels. The latter (ibid.) call for an emphasis on the religious and ethnic diversity that define modern nations, warning against tendencies that conceive them as monolithic, monocultural entities and overlook the ethnoculturally dominant state elites' hegemonic, normative discourse. Underscoring that 'the nation is also a product of everyday contestation and disagreement (ibid.: 598)', they stress the need for a research agenda that would identify what they name 'acts of transgression', i.e. acts that question a nation's singularity and challenge the ethnocultural group's hegemony. In the field of national commemorations, relevant remarks have been posited by Fox (2014). As argued (ibid.: 42), 'the meaning that ordinary people attach to such events, to the extent that they do so at all, are, in a word, mixed. Symbols are inherently multivocal and multivalent, and remain subject to critical negotiation and reinterpretation by their receiving audiences. But these ordinary people are not simply consumers of national meanings; they are simultaneously their contingent producers'.

The timeframe within which the present research was conducted however did not allow for such a far-reaching study of phenomena. During my fieldwork thus I focused on eliciting views of individuals on national commemorations and symbols. Given that nationalism is a mass and not an elite phenomenon (Connor, 1990: 95), aspects of which are, as Hobsbawm (1992: 10) argues, 'essentially constructed from above' and thus 'can not be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people', my goal had been to explore how members of this distinct minority subgroup, longtime Greek citizens and thus familiar with such conventions, think of them, and how the latter, if approached kaleidoscopically, mould their perception of the Greek nation's character, whether feeling or not part of it.

Methodology

To tackle my research question I worked along two lines. At first, the literature on national commemorations was browsed. Following Smith (2014: 22; also Connerton, 1989: 51), I grounded the analysis of the examined institution within its historical context since such traditions are forged through several generations. A historical institutionalist approach (Breuning & Ishiyama, 2014) was adopted, i.e. one based on the assumption that institutional rules, constraints, and the responses to them over the long term guide the behavior of political actors during the policy-making process. Works such as those of Karakasidou (1997) and Mylonas (2012), in which processes of Greek nation building in the post-1913 annexed territories are presented in detail, provided the backdrop against which my analysis unfolded. Demetriou's (2004, 2005, 2013) and Tsibiridou's (1999, 2004, 2005, 2006) anthropological works had also been instructional. Explicating the intricacies of identity matters and the field's delicacy, they navigated me to advance slowly and vigilantly once there, avoiding most importantly to touch upon, at least explicitly, matters of national belongingness and loyalties with my interlocutors. Especially informative had also been the works based on primary sources (e.g. Featherstone et al., 2011; Iliadis, 2013; Kostopoulos, 2009; Karakasidou, 2000). Correspondences, declassified policy archives of state agencies as well as recordings of deliberations and encounters of officials concerning the region of Thrace, the Pomaks and Greek-Turkish relations are further down cited verbatim. Lastly, an early concern had also been to avoid relying on literature that is in full conformity with the (Greek) state-promoted narrative and thrusts ethnic or national identities upon my target group (e.g. Hidiroglou, 1992).

A serious barrier to the study of specific state-ordained cultural policies has been the inaccessibility of the archive of the Coordinate Council of Thrace (see Iliadis, 2013). The latter had been a confidential institution, founded in 1959 and operated until the early 1970s, that was assigned to design regional policies targeting the minority. In effect all the policies applied in Thrace in the post-Second World War era until the turn of the 1990s are formulations of its committee. Its declassified archive was tracked down in early 2000s in the General State Archives of Kavala, a town in Western Thrace. The works of Kostopoulos (2009) and Iliadis (2013) are based on material retrieved from it. The archive remained accessible from 2002 to 2005, when the Greek authorities transferred it to the central archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and closed it down. Its access by researchers is nowadays denied (ibid.: 403). 'Official secrecy', writes Hill (2005: 15), 'is openly used as a justification for restricting access to situations or data necessary to

evaluate policy processes. Very much more is just kept secret without any attempt to offer a justification for doing so'.

At the second stage, I worked for the collection of rich data by conducting relevant fieldwork. Ergo I visited Xanthi from the 26th of August to the 17th of September, 2019. Xanthi is the second largest city of Western Thrace, populated, according to the municipality's official website (cityofxanthi.gr), by around 56.000 civilians. No numbers concerning its Pomak inhabitants are given, but numerous official and semi-official censuses adduced by Kostopoulos (2009: 279-291) show that most Muslims in the prefecture of Xanthi are of Pomak extraction. In their majority these city-dwellers originate from the villages that are dotted above Xanthi, stretching to the Bulgarian border, known as *Pomakohoria*. Their migration took place during the second half of the 1990s when the Surveillance Zone (see below) officially ceased to exist.

My initial goal before visiting Xanthi was to conduct twenty semi-structured interviews with Pomak adults. Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 539) consider such interviews as the most befitting method of getting people to talk *about* the nation. During the spring of 2019, I futilely tried to establish channels of communication with persons of the local society via my own network. These efforts did yield results in July. However, not having visited the region before, I soon realized that I was rather unaware of the difficulties that a researcher is confronted with when touching upon minority issues, even more when focusing on a group whose identity is often politicized. During my stay, thirteen persons were contacted. Those were collected through snowballing sampling. Eight interviews were eventually conducted since the other five participants did not correspond to later calls. All of them were of Pomak origin as they declared themselves, still they used different labels to identify themselves. Their age range from 18 to 43 years old. Two of them had been very hesitant to have their voices recorded, nevertheless I did allay their suspicions by clarifying my research objectives. It was also underscored that they could exit any time. No informed consent was asked for since I met each of the participants at least twice before holding the interviews. By those meetings I aimed to build a rapport with them. No political issues or ideological orientations that could contingently a priori charge the context within which the ensuing interviews were about to be conducted were discussed. The flawless use of Greek by my interlocutors did also contribute to the enhancement of the quality of the interview process.

For the structuring of interviews and the analysis of the collected data, comprising miscellaneous field notes, transcripts and audio fragments, the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2003) were followed. A constructivist approach was adopted, that is one that seeks to elicit participants' definitions of terms, situations, and events, aiming to unearth assumptions and implicit meanings (ibid.: 317) and build a conceptual analysis out of them. In this direction, overlapping questions were deliberately included in the protocol (ibid.: 316). Once the data collection process was concluded, the interviews were

transcribed and translated in order to proceed with the three stages of coding, namely open or initial, axial, and selective (ibid.: 319-322). The codes employed were underpinned by my research interests in combination with germane information that could be gleaned from the data. 'Nation' was used as a 'sensitizing concept' (ibid.: 319). Provisional memos were also composed before the final draft in order to detect the points of convergence and divergence of opinions. Numerous statements were also singled out; these are cited in the results section.

At last, concerning the lurking bias, given that I study a celebration that had been part of my childhood, and to which I also have participated, I tried to uphold a high degree of reflexivity at all stages of my research and to 'estrange' myself from it. Of course, in hindsight, I shall admit that the extra time frame I had in my disposal to reflect on the data and the literature had been determining in mitigating my preconceptions.

Name	Age	Education	Self-Identification	Professional Status
Pinar	27	University Graduate (BA)	(Not mentioned)	Private Employee
Hasan	21	University Student	Greek-Pomak	-
Emre	21	University Student	(Not mentioned)	-
Ezgi	18	University Student	Greek Muslim	-
Esra	27	University Graduate (BA)	Greek-Pomak	Private Employee
Zeynep	43	University Graduate (BA)	Pomak	Public servant
Melek	29	University Graduate (BA)	Turk	Self-employed worker
Mustafa	26	University Graduate (BA)	Greek citizen of Muslim faith	Private Employee

Analysis

The institution that lies at the epicenter of my work and is examined as an applied policy is the celebration of the '25th of March'. The 25th of March was promulgated as Greece's major National Independence Day during the Regency of the Bavarian King Otto (1832-1862), the first King of Greece, in 1838. It was enacted, according to the Athenian newspaper *FIMI* by the Royal Decree 980/15-3-1838. As quoted, 'Our King, aware of the fact that the 25th of March, glorious for every Greek by virtue of the celebrated Holiday of the Annunciation, is furthermore glorious and joyful by virtue of the beginning of the Greek Nation's struggle for Independence, thought of as appropriate (...) to institutionalize this day *in perpetuity* as a day of National Holiday'.

Before examining the institution *per se*, a temporal framework should be delineated. King Otto, after his arrival in independent Greece in 1832, embarked on building a centralized state along Western lines. For him, being civilized was equal to being European; dismissing thus the so far dominant Ottoman tradition and construing the Greek revolution of 1821 as an attempt on behalf of the Greeks to espouse European norms and customs, he championed a revival of Classical Greece (Roudometof, 2005: 41), the heritage of which formed part of the European Enlightenment. The Greek state nevertheless was then avowedly at a stage of infancy, bearing pre-modern trappings, and thus in need of a political modernization that would establish a system of government that would vest sovereignty in the people, or even better the *nation* (Gallant, 2015). Given though that the diffused during in the pre-revolutionary period ideas of the Enlightenment, along with liberal nationalism, were on the wane and gradually superseded by a process of desecularization combined with a totally different type of nationalism that undermined whatever impact these ideas might have had among the wider strata of Greek society (Kitromilides, 2013: 322), this task appeared to be onerous. Hence an array of policies had to be contrived and means to be employed endeavoring its eventual fruition.

Otto's main concerns had been the suppression of local bandit-rulers and the transmutation of the existing *millet* ties to *national* ones. That enterprise had been a major political challenge during the formative years of the state, when two competing worldviews and visions of the collective destiny of the Greek people were trying to vanquish one another and become entrenched in the Greek society. One was that of liberal, cosmopolitan and modernist aspirations, commonly known as Westernization. Its votaries were Westernized Greek merchants and intellectuals who were familiar with the concepts of nation and nationalism and cherished the *Hellenic* identity. The other, that

envisaged the nation's future exclusively within the framework of the Orthodox faith and cherished the *Rum* identity, was championed by non-indigenous pro-Orthodox intellectuals and old bandits. For them the identification of the nation with the state was impossible; after all their own homes were still under Ottoman overlordship (Roudometof, 2005: 40-41; Kitromilides, 2010a: 42). At the same time, the Regency's efforts to obliterate regional and factional loyalties by suppressing local bandits, along with the fact the King was a Catholic Christian, embittered and instigated an upsurge of suspicion among the peasantry who adhered to the Orthodox doctrine and regarded it as its prime cultural and political marker. Just like in post-1789 revolutionary France thus, they rallied around conventional local leaders in a struggle against the implantation of customs considered alien. In the years that followed, revolts in which religious grievances did hold a salient place broke out (Roudometof, 2005: 42). As Petropulos (1968: 192) notes, 'to understand the widespread dissatisfaction provoked one must realize (...) that the mass of Greek people were still very much non-Western in culture and that the most basic element in their non-Western cultural orientation was their religion. That is why, even though they could accept so many Western innovations with relative equanimity, their receptivity stopped short on matters of religion'.

In 1838, when the royal administration agreed to the establishment of the 25th of March as a National Holiday, it was a gesture towards several constituencies. At first, it sought to enhance its own internal legitimacy by neutralizing factional interests. The institutionalization of the celebration shall be seen as part of what Kitromilides (1990b: 36) names a 'code of unifying national values' that intended to set a normative framework that would bring the society under the control of state agencies, putting forward the tenet of a 'greater homeland' versus the loyalties and local attachments of former antagonistic regions. The fragility of novel nations, argues Gillis (1994: 9) has often been a reason for the intensification of commemorative efforts - 'if the conflicts of the present seemed intractable, the past offered a screen on which desires for unity and continuity, that, identity, could be projected'.

Second, by introducing such a tradition the Regency sought to appease the implacable proponents of the *Rum* identity (Roudometof, 2005: 44). As Veremis (1990: 10) notes, after Independence, the state's efforts to extend its authority to the periphery required considerable concessions to the dominant indigenous religious sentiments. Through the symbolic appropriation thus of the existing Eastern Orthodox traditions and their fusion with Western nation-building the Regency sought to capitalize on building sentiments of national unity. It should be underlined that originally the Annunciation Day, that is the day that according to the Christian calendar Archangel Michael heralded to Virgin Mary that God's Son is coming to Earth, had not been a special date in the Orthodox tradition. Hence, as Roudometof (2005: 42) remarks, the attention paid to this specific date came solely as a result of the deliberate attempt to use a religious symbol for nation-building

purposes. It could be argued that this process soon turned out to be quite successful. The decision to hold the celebrations of 1846 and 1847 at a prominent warrior's burial place was denounced by the press. As emphasized, 'wrongly and in a bad faith it was argued that the celebration's honor belongs chiefly to the Peloponnese (...) The celebration is not Peloponnesian, but national, since the entire nation struggled and suffered' (quoted in Koulouri, 2012: 201).

Besides the appeals that the celebration of the 25th of March was aiming to reinforce at the fringes of Southeastern Europe, it also meant to redefine Greece's ambivalent relationship (see Kitromilides, 1995) with Western Europe. Let me elaborate on this. The outbreak of the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire, the capstone of which had been the foundation of the modern Greek state, began with a series of events during February of the same year. It is debatable though whether certain acts and events, constituents of the official national narrative, took place on that particular date (Roudometof, 2005: 42-43; also Grigoriadis, 2013: 31). Its selection and standardization has thus been anything but trivial; rather it was imbued with contemporary political motivations. Coinciding with the joyful for the Orthodox Christians celebration of the Annunciation, it was intended for the day that allegedly the revolution broke out to mark a rupture with the Ottoman past and be hallmarked as a day of 'national regeneration' (Koulouri, 2012: 198). A parallel was thereby to be drawn between the prophecy of Jesus Christ's birth and Greece's 'rebirth'. That parallel, as Herzfeld (1982: 22) shrewdly remarks, was being accentuated even more by the strong overtones that '*epanastasis*', the term that in Greek stands for 'revolution', holds with '*anastasis*', which stands for 'resurrection'.

But what prompted this ideological manipulation? The answer ought to be sought in the movement of *Philhellenism* and its agents, the so-called *Philhellenists*, i.e. the European exponents of Greek nationalism and cause. Let me take a short retrospect so as to spell things out. According to Beaton (2016: 605), from the second half of the 18th century, educated Greek-speaking elites began to assimilate, translate and comment on ideas emerging from the Enlightenment in the West. In this way, they felt encouraged to start thinking of themselves as heirs to the civilization of Classical Greece. And since Europeans thought of that civilization as superior, then shouldn't its 'descendants' be marked out in some distinct way too? Thereby the way for a revival of Classical Greece was paved. It had been on same grounds that the *Philhellenes*, inspired by the ideas of Romanticism and considering modern Greece to be an indissoluble continuity of Classical Greece, did elevate the struggle of the Greeks into a European affair, exerting thus significant influence on the public opinion in Western Europe and putting pressure on European governments to support the Greek struggle and independent statehood (ibid.: 609; Roudometof, 2005: 39-40). Hence for the first generation of independent Greeks and their *Philhellenic* supporters it was patently clear and self-evident that the roots of the

Greek nation were to be located neither in the present nor in the Ottoman past, but in Antiquity (Beaton, 2016: 611). This tenet is known among nationalist scholars as 'perennialism'. The present case is more precisely a perfect example of what Anthony Smith (2010: 54) calls 'continuous perennialism', i.e. a form of perennialism that, besides being premised on the assertion that nations can be traced back to Antiquity, also emphasizes the notion of *continuity* of the nation, downplaying or relativizing its ruptures and discontinuities.

The revival of Antiquity nevertheless posed a serious dilemma. If being European was synonymous, at least in ideological terms, to being a *Hellene*, how could one be a *Hellene*, a designation that in early Christianity meant 'pagan', while still being an Orthodox Christian? Furthermore, the Western-oriented Greek intelligentsia had to cope with a grave challenge: the deplorable realities on the ground, where the vast majority of the peasantry was illiterate, along with the lack of any form of historical documents on the basis of which a linkage with the putative Classical 'predecessors' could be substantiated, were entirely incompatible with the image of Greece that the *Philhellenes*, King Otto among them, aspired to reconstitute on the chuck on earth's surface that was then the Greek kingdom (Herzfeld, 1982: 5-6). As in great detail Michael Herzfeld (1982) demonstrates in his book, the intractable ethnological question, on which the very existence of their state would depend, did soon turn into a matter of survival for the Greeks. What was necessary for the *Hellenic* identity to be defended was to re-define the *Rum* element as alien and to divest themselves of it (ibid.: 40). The task was assigned to scholars who, engaged in a form of activism known as *political Hellenism* (Herzfeld, 1982: 20), sought to present the nation of the Greeks in a light appealing to the West. The endeavor gave rise to *laography* (folklore studies), a discipline parallel to *ethnography* but with a crucial semantic distinction: *Laos* in Greek denotes the people (*Volk*) while *ethnos* at this point in time denoted the nation, the latter being the only legitimate inheritor of Classical Greece in the minds of the *Philhellenes*. To justify independent statehood in a way that could meet European anticipations it was crucial for scholars to demonstrate that *ethnos* and *laos* were identical (ibid. 13). *Laography* thus evolved into a politically committed discipline whose findings were to undergird the article of cultural *continuity* of the modern Greeks with the Ancients, and the European character of the Greek *people* in its entirety as a *nation* (ibid.: 121).

It is within this frame - underpinned by elite concerns of Western-type secular nation-state building and their juxtaposition to the Orthodox peasantry's *milletic* conscience - that the establishment of Greece's National Day should be placed. The immanent antinomies of the two, eloquently reflected on the *Hellenic* and *Rum* identities, were eventually resolved through their coalescence and emergence of a *Hellenochristian* civilization (Herzfeld, 1982: 141; Kitromilides, 2013: 328). The institutionalization of the 25th of March as a National Day is, in effect, a quintessential manifestation of the latter. It

has been the putative perenniality of the modern nation of the Greeks as legitimate heirs to the *Hellenes,* an axiom that rendered them undeniably Europeans, that allowed for its r*ebirth* - and not simply its *birth* - as a sovereign nation; a rebirth that, matching the Orthodox doctrine, was paralleled to Jesus Christ's coming to Earth. So, if, as Elgenius (2007a: 79) argues, national days make people aware of who they are, in relation to 'them' and to the 'others', then the establishment of the 25th of March as a National Day allowed for the Greek people, whether proponents of the *Hellenic* or *Rum* identity, to ponder of themselves as a resurrected, unitary sovereign nation of Orthodox Christians that, as proclaimed in its Provisional Constitution (1822), was 'wishing to advance as the equals of the rest of [our] brethren, the Christians of Europe, in the paths of civilization' (quoted in Varouxakis, 1995: 18).

Nowadays, the 25th of March is celebrated all over Greece on an annual basis. Even though my research does not focus on the ritual of the day itself, I deem necessary to stress some of its aspects that hold certain symbolisms.

Rituals hold a prominent place in modern societies since they allow citizens to identify with something larger that 'can only be seen in symbolic form' - that 'something larger' being in the said case my subject matter, the *nation* (Kertzer, 1988: 1-2, quoted in Benincasa, 2019: 172). A comprehensive ethnographic account of Greece's National Day celebration is provided by Benincasa (2019). 'On the celebration day', she sets forth (ibid.: 179-180), 'national flags flutter from public buildings and shops, which are closed. The parade usually starts at 11 am, but people of all ages start gathering earlier (...). Families, parents, grandparents go to watch and applaud their own children and grandchildren who take part in the parade (...). The atmosphere is very cheerful and children wave small plastic flags (...). Many people are dressed up, and everyone seems to be in an unusual good mood (...). A music band opens the parade, followed by those who took part in the National Resistance Movement (...). Next come local folk dance groups, divided by gender and age and dressed in traditional costume from all over Greece (...). Then is the turn of the schools (...) and the civil society. Then the army parades, playing traditional parade music (...)'. As discerned, the two basic components of the ritual are the military and school parades, performed across the country in a uniform manner, and the prominent position of the flag.

Following the example of France and Germany, military parades were introduced in Greece in 1875 (Koulouri, 2012: 208). It is the era when, as Hobsbawm (2012b: 268) notes, 'almost certainly in connection with the emergence of mass politics, rulers and middle-class observers rediscover the importance of irrational elements in the maintenance of the social fabric and the social order'. In that sense, performance has been a useful metaphor since, as Edensor (2002: 69) argues, 'it allows us to look at the ways in which identities are enacted and reproduced, informing and reconstructing a sense of collectivity' - 'by circumscribing the use of specific costumes, imposing a rigid order of

events, including pseudo-antique carriages and artifacts to form a pageantry that is saturated with the gravitas commonly accorded to ancient rituals, such events perform timelessness, grounding the nation in history, symbolizing community and legitimizing authority' (ibid.: 73). The first documented school parade in Greece dates back to 1899 (Koulouri, 2012: 208). Contemporary ones are however part of the Interwar period Metaxas dictatorial regime's legacy. At that time, the celebration's mythology was built on Christian and Ancient Spartan values, extolling militarism and body fitness (Benincasa, 2019: 181; see also Van Steen, 2010).

In the last two decades, school parades have been at the epicenter of a fierce debate, with many advocating their abolition, characterizing them as militaristic, nationalistic and obsolete (Benincasa, 2019: 172). What is more interesting and telling though is the rationale underpinning the regulations that manage the diversity that naturally defines the country's student population as ritual participants. In major towns, each school has to be represented by a delegation of six students followed by the 'body' of the students. All six are high achievers; the one with the highest mark is appointed as a flag-carrier. Law stipulates that students who shall take part in the parade ought to be defined by 'fearlessness and gallantry', 'deportment', 'seriousness' and 'integrity' (*ethos*) - all of the ascribed qualities being subject to the Physical teacher's subjective interpretation. 'Greekness' and able-bodiedness were also until 2001 among the criteria for the selection of the flag carrier (see Tzanelli, 2006; Benincasa, 2018). Benincasa (2019) construes the said regulations as part of a policy which aims to present the parade as a typification of the nation's normative models on the bodily, mental and moral level. Selection rules become instrumental in presenting the nation against the eyes of its own citizenry as a repository of the best qualities, what Edensor (2002: 75) names 'a paradigm of ethical citizenry'. The linkage, moreover, of an individual considered to epitomize the dictated model with a symbol such as the national flag allows for the establishment of value hierarchies at a national level; it is a case when one's body becomes 'a carrier of culture and identity' (Edensor, 2002: 72). Each parade, it is argued (Benincasa, 2019: 173), thus shall be seen as a mirror into which nationals regularly look in order to confirm themselves that their nation is really or still in line with the cherished models and values they feel they represent.

Concerning national flags, for Elgenius (2007b: 25) a newly established one forms 'a potent symbol, a highly condensed focus of sentiment which emphasizes the independence of a newly created unit'. 'It appears', she argues (ibid.: 15), 'as a statement of the 'modern' mass-participant nation of citizens, illustrating people's desire to express a new kind of 'sameness', nationhood and citizenship', and reflects through its novelty the egalitarian ideas of the modern nation that came to supplant earlier practices of identification of pre-modern societies'. Geisler (2005: xvii) considers such symbols as devices employed to dig individuals into a collectivity and 'their' territory, and both to a

nation. They operate as historical 'bookmarks', links to events, factual or legendary, that constitute the nation's collective past, providing a flashback reminder to individuals' collective history as a national community, a shared past bestowing them a sense of collective identity. He situates them in the nation's intersection with the state as a collective institution. 'Through the ubiquitous display of national symbols', he remarks (ibid.), 'the state legitimizes itself vis-a-vis the concept of the nation that undergirds it; on the other hand, the state also makes use of symbols to communicate its authority as a hegemonic power structure. This is yet another far more concrete way in which national symbols fuse the state with the nation'.

Accordingly, the Greek flag was inaugurated by the First National Assembly of 1822. On March 15th, the provisional government of Greece decreed by Order no. 540 the establishment of a bicolored national flag: light blue, representing the sea and the sky, and white symbolizing national purity. Their blending in the form held a dual symbolism, merging national sentiments with religious convictions (Mazarakis-Ainian, 1996: 36; Karakasidou, 2000: 226). As it has been the case with all modern nation-state flags (Eriksen, 2007: 3), its institutionalization aimed to overthrow those used by regional chieftains (Mazarakis-Ainian, 1996: 38-39) and elevate the metaphoric kin group of the nation above particularistic factions. In the Interwar era, Metaxas' dictatorial regime, lest socialists and communists would desecrate national symbols, formulated an Obligatory Law (no. 4471/1938) that sought to cultivate a feeling of respect to the country through the worship of the flag. The national flag, 'the utmost tangible symbol of the unity and substance itself of the nation as a delineated unit' as phrased in the Law, hence became a leading symbol for the people and the nation.

For Karakasidou (2000: 227), Metaxas' actions were fully justifiable, for even in the late 1930s many ethnically diverse townships in Northern Greece had not familiarized themselves with national symbols. His government decided the circulation of directives stipulating the flag's specific measurements, ordering that it should never be flown with faded colors. During days of celebration all houses and stores were to raise the Greek flag. It had been at that time that the original protocol and pageantry for the celebration of the 25th of March were also established. By Royal Order no. 791, it was stipulated that on the said day flags were to decorate schools, patriotic speeches were to be given, students were to attend mass and national dances were to be performed. Local administration had also to provide a report assessing the success of the ceremony to higher state agencies.

All these make the 25th of March an exemplary case of Eric Hobsbawm's scheme of 'invented tradition' (2012a: 1), a term coined to refer to 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (…); where possible, they normally attempt to establish

continuity with a suitable historic past'. 'Invented traditions' emerged, as argued (ibid.: 8), primarily as devices to fill the void created by liberal ideologies and rapid social changes of the 19th century which by opposing traditional patterns failed to provide for the social and authority ties taken for granted in earlier societies. They are offsprings of modernity; ergo intertwined with nations and nationalism (ibid.: 13). They occur when a society undergoes a rapid transformation, such as the Greek kingdom's accession to independent statehood, weakens or destroys social patterns, *millet* structures in the said case, and produces new, *national* edifices (ibid.: 4). Being, moreover, responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations (ibid.: 2), they encapsulate two markedly contradictory notions, namely the modern world's constant change and innovation and the attempt to structure parts of social life within it as unchaining and invariant. At last, the historic past into which they are inserted shall not necessarily be lengthy (ibid.), though in the Greek case, for reasons clarified above, a past harking back to Ancients was employed. Nevertheless, it is the Revolution itself that marks as a watershed a break with the Ottoman past at a certain date, 1821, re-establishing its own 'largely factitious' undisrupted historical past (ibid.).

Studying present-day commemorations, I shall at last focus on the discourse articulated at the macro, meso and micro levels. At the macro level, for the celebration of 2020 the Greek Prime Minister addressed the nation in the following terms: 'Two hundred years ago the Greeks asserted themselves and from being enslaved they became free. From being subjects they became citizens. They formed a nation. And founded a state of democracy and justice (...)' (*Prime Minister*, 2020). The mayor of Xanthi, correspondingly at the meso level, mentioned, among others, in his address to civilians: 'Two centuries back, the Greeks in solidarity, unity, discipline and determination, rose up against the Turkish yoke that was domineering their lives (...). Let the Annunciation of Virgin Mary be the message of the joyful news we are waiting for, gazing at the future with a sense of responsibility, hope (...). Let us symbolically raise the blue and white flag' (*Xanthinea*, 2020b). Unfortunately, no addresses of teachers of minority schools were found to discuss the micro level. Nonetheless, both the Prime Minister and the mayor's addresses, especially the latter's, did place the National Day's celebration within what Rogers Brubaker (2004c: 169) calls *particularizing* narrative framing, that is a framing in which the commemorative lens focuses narrowly on local events themselves or on their meaning for a particular socially or culturally defined group of commemorators, the ethnically Greek citizens espousing the Orthodox faith in the said case. Certain events are accentuated in that instance, such as battles and conflicts, through which national aims - national awakening, mobilization, independence - were furthered, or national setbacks occurred.

Western Thrace in the throes of
Geopolitical Developments

Having elaborated on the commemoration *per se*, I now turn to the first part of my research question. Why does the state apply an, as explicated, ethnoreligiously colored institution to a region where besides Orthodox Christians also an ethnic group bearing no such ethnocultural traits, the Pomaks, live? As I try to cogently point out, sustained geopolitical developments rendered, and still do, the constituents of Pomak identity susceptible to various interpretations and both national and extra-national stakeholders have regarded them as targets on which they could potentially capitalize so as to satisfy their goals. Hence Pomak identity came to be thought of as sinister and pernicious to being staunchly advocated, accommodated and privileged.

Beginning in the summer of 1924, and for a decade long, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) appeared to adopt the Third International's evolving policy on the Balkans advocating an independent 'united' Macedonia and Thrace. Expressed by the Communist Party of Bulgaria, and with the support of the Soviets, that policy affirmed the existence of 'Macedonian' and 'Thracian' peoples and promulgated correspondingly a 'united and independent' Macedonia and Thrace, condemning the regions' 'dismemberment' between Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. KKE's advocacy of the detachment of Thrace alarmed Greek authorities, intensifying suspicions for the party's anti-national character and setting the foundation for the development of a militant anti-communist sentiment (Mavrogordatos. 1983: 232-233). The situation was exacerbated after 1931, when the party declared Greece 'an imperialist state which conquered by force entire regions inhabited by other nationalities, opresses and subjects them to a colonial exploitation' (ibid.: 234). In Western Thrace, the state's anxieties were translated into policies concerning the Muslims, and more specifically the Pomaks. At that time, it should be reminded, the Kemalist forces within the minority were still tenuous, its identity's cornerstone was Islam and the only nuances among Muslims were linguistic, cultural and economic. Neither the Pomaks nor the Roma tended to self-identify as 'Turks'. And neither was there a sense of Thracian identity or 'nationhood' (Niarchos, 2014: 331-332).

Metaxas' dictatorial regime remained vigilant after its advent to power in 1936. Seeing the threat against Thrace in the face of Bulgaria (Featherstone et al., 2011: 65), it worked along two lines. First, it gave emphasis on building a culturally and ethnically homogeneous national identity. To that end, the instruction of Greek language, hitherto considered 'too much of a novelty' for the minority education (Aarbakke, 2016: 370, 375), became mandatory (Pelt: 2001: 159). Second, it invested on a cooperation with Turkey in order to jointly thwart Bulgarian aggression. In 1937, the Greek Premier

assured his Turkish counterpart that 'we will live in peace until our borders acquire a simple symbolic character. Besides, the firm and persistent aspirations our northern neighbors have for access to the Aegean is in itself enough a reason to support each other', only for Atatürk's concurrence to follow (quoted in/see Featherstone et al., 2011: 58-59). Apparently Greece was then concerned about the borders with Bulgaria, especially those northern districts of Xanthi that were dotted with villages inhabited exclusively by Pomaks. In a memorandum drafted by the Chief Staff of the Greek Army in 1937, the following are quoted: 'We need to increase the population of those areas with the settlement of families with undoubtedly Greek sentiments and consciousness (…). It is known that in sensitive, from a military point of view, areas there are populations with questionable national feelings' (ibid.: 66). Quite interestingly, no allusions were made to the Turkish-speaking populations inhabiting the lowlands of Xanthi. Hence, to put it succinctly, at that point the Slavic, affined to Bulgarian, dialect spoken by the Pomaks was not only 'otherizing' them but was also regarded as a sign of ambiguity over their 'national loyalty', questioning their 'national feelings'. It is worth noting that at that time on the other side of the border a campaign had been launched by Bulgarian authorities that aimed to entrench the essentialistically nationalizing term 'Bulgaro-Mohammedan' as a label for Pomak populations (Neuburger, 2000: 186).

To counter potential threats, Metaxas government established a Surveillance Zone (SZ) (Labrianidis, 1999, 2001) along the said region. This policy was accompanied by a series of restraining orders that only led to the economic and social isolation and further alienation of the compact Pomak communities. It was ordained that for one to enter the SZ a pass issued by the police was necessary. A 'loyalty certificate' was also a prerequisite for legal transactions to take place (Labrianidis, 2001: 90-91; see also *BBC*, 2020). In the ensuing years, and during the Second World War, Bulgaria collaborated with the Axis Powers, invaded and occupied Western Thrace trying once more to inculcate Bulgarian loyalties into Pomak populations (Featherstone et al., 2011: 91-157; Niarchos, 2014; also *Photos*). Greek and Turkish concerns culminated and interests continued to be in relative confluence. As early as April 1943, the Turkish ambassador in London was recorded sharing the following with his Greek counterpart: 'We are both threatened by the Slav peril, and we can face it if we are united. The present leaders of Turkey (…) and myself, realize the value of Greco-Turkish friendship and the advantages which it can confer on us both (…). No other policy is open on us (…). Bulgaria has incurred the hatred of all her neighbors, even of Russia' (quoted in Featherstone et al., 2011: 88).

In the aftermath of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War both countries emerged as NATO allies (1952) and the Iron Curtain sealed the border between Greece and Soviet-aligned Bulgaria. Despite concerns voiced in the mid-1940s (Iliadis, 2013: 409), from 1951, after a bilateral educational agreement signed with Turkey that allowed for Turkish and Turkey-trained teachers to be appointed in minority schools and

Turkish books to be distributed, as well as the signing of the Balkan Pact between Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia in 1953 (Stone, 1994), the Greek state opted for a policy of concessions regarding the affairs of the minority. In 1954 the General Administrator of Western Thrace ordered the immediate replacement of the generic term 'Muslim' with the term 'Turk-Turkish' in every state mechanism (Borou, 2009: 8) and all the teachers serving in Pomak villages were ordered to fully adopt the Latin script (Kostopoulos, 2009: 43). Hatzivassiliou (1991: 148) argues that those moves were also motivated by Greek claims over Cyprus. More specifically, it was aimed, firstly, to provide assurances to the Turks that the rights of Turkish Cypriots would be safeguarded if the island was to be united with Greece after the departure of the British rule (1960), and, secondly to allay Turkish suspicions of a new round in pursuit of the *Megali Idea*, since that would jeopardize the Greek Orthodox and the Patriarchate's fate in Istanbul. All these, alongside the ever-present threat of Bulgaria and communism, ushered in an era in which the Greek state officially pursued the Turkification of the Pomaks by favoring the Kemalist/modernist forces within the minority. That Turkification, linguistic in its incipient manifestations, found conducive grounds also due to the negative stance of the Pomaks towards their own language, owing to the still fresh in their memories assimilationist pressures exercised by the Bulgarians during Thrace's occupation (Kostopoulos, 2009: 48-50).

A policy shift came after the Istanbul pogrom of September 1955 (see Hatzivassiliou, 1991: 147-151), directed against the city's Greek Orthodox minority, led to the community's massive emigration. As Iliadis (2013: 410) notes, from that point on one question beset Greek authorities: what had to be done in relation to the minority policy in Thrace. The shift is reflected on a confidential order of 1957: 'The only right name of the minority in Western Thrace and according to Article 12 of Sèvres Treaty and 45 of Lausanne is 'Muslim Minority'. The members of this minority are Greek citizens of Muslim faith, most commonly known as 'Thracian Muslims''(quoted in Iliadis, 2013: 411). Within the next decade, all 'Turkish' signboards were again changed into 'Muslim'. The new bundle of policies, appearing in the literature as 'administrative harassment', now aimed to contain the already diffused Turkish nationalism following a 'divide and rule' principle by affirming an Islamic identity against the Kemalist one (ibid.: 411) and assisting groups with non-Turkish ethnic identification (ibid.: 408). The Pomaks were to spearhead this endeavor by receiving certain privileges, but most importantly by being 'de-Turkified' and in turn Hellenized. The 'other', as Borou (2009: 8) aptly remarks, was finally made the 'self'.

In the ensuing decades, the expulsion of the Orthodox minority in Istanbul (1963) and the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (1974) aggravated Greek-Turkish relations and made it clear that a policy reversal was unlikely to occur. The endeavor of 'making the Pomaks aware of their identity and detaching them (...) from the pure Turkish element', as the

General Inspector for Minority Schools put it (quoted in Iliadis, 2013: 409), was to be based on two policy axes, namely the construction of a 'racial' bond that could justify an affinity with the Greeks themselves (Kostopoulos, 2009: 55, 71-72) and the revitalization of 'Pomak' language (ibid.: 72; Aarbakke, 2012: 170-175).

It is in 1951 that the Slavic dialect spoken by Pomaks was first officially characterized as 'Pomak' language (in the censuses of 1920s it is recorded as 'Bulgarian') (Kostopoulos, 2009: 58). In 1967, a non-negligible state fund was granted 'for the study of the language and history of the Pomaks' (ibid.: 90). At that point, the main goal, as the archives of the Inspectorate of Minority Schools demonstrate (ibid.: 92-93), had been to underscore a putative linguistic affiliation with Greek by 'finding common words of the two and exalting them'. During the era of military dictatorship (1969-1974), the use of the Arabic script was encouraged by state authorities (see *Photos*); fueling an old-fashioned way of thinking was deemed necessary since' the new [Latin] script brings them [the Pomaks] close to the Turks' while the Arabic 'differentiates them from the rest of Turkish-speakers, which from the state' perspective is favorable' (ibid.: 97). These moves were openly denounced by Ankara. In his visit at the SZ in 1973, the Turkish ambassador in Athens propagated the abandonment of the Arabic script of the 'obscurantist' Old-Muslims and 'advised' the Greek delegates accompanying him that 'it is for the interest of Greek authorities to affirm that they [Pomaks] will forget their language, since the Greek government would not be bothered by Bulgarian claims that the Pomaks are Bulgaro-Mohammedans. The Turkification of the Pomaks will bring Greece and Turkey closer, as friends and allies' (ibid.: 104-105). It had been in the mid-1990s though that an upsurge of literary interest was professed through numerous attempts to codify the language (ibid.: 155-165). Those were accompanied by the release of two newspapers (ibid.: 165-168) and audio products in the said language (ibid.: 178-182). It is noteworthy nevertheless that a codification in the Cyrillic alphabet (the disputed language is arguably of South Slavic origin) was early on rejected as this would have illustrated its affiliation with the languages spoken in the adjacent Bulgaria and the back then Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (ibid.: 177-178).

The genealogy of the Pomaks was correspondingly traced back to the ancient Thracian tribes as constituents of the Ancient Greek world. 'Researches' conducted did mostly follow the tradition of physical anthropology (ibid.: 95-96, 118-121). 'Indigenous Thracians, descendants of the ancient Achrians', 'antique inhabitants of the wider Greek space', 'a Mediterranean tribe sharing the same pedigree with the rest of the Greeks', bearing 'obscure national consciousness', being 'tall, blonde, blue-eyed, not having any Mongolian traits' are some of the ascribed designations (ibid.: 129-130, 135-137). Other arguments deployed presented them as crypto-Christians (ibid.: 133).

At the threshold of the second decade of the 21st century however a paradigm shift in Turkey's foreign policy has spawned new challenges for Greek administration. Being the

cardinal successor state to the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic maintained for the biggest part of the 20th century an isolationist stance concerning its foreign outlook. The 'republican', as termed (Mufti, 2009, quoted in Herzog, 2015: 191), paradigm was advocated by secular political elites. It sought to repudiate the Ottoman past and nip expansionist adventurism in the bud (Herzog, 2015: 190-191). From 2002 nevertheless, when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rose to power, Turkish politics started shifting away from that direction. The alternative counter-paradigm, the 'imperial', has been characterized by a more expansive and proactive projection of Turkey as a multi-regional factor. In that regard, the latter inverted the former's rationale and instead sought to embrace, harness and instrumentalize the Ottoman past as a statecraft tool. For its reification, neo-Ottoman references were thus deployed in foreign policy discourse aiming to augment modern Turkey's linkages to erstwhile Ottoman regions in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa on the basis of a historico-cultural social heritage. These involve special concerns for Muslim and ethnically Turkish populations (ibid.: 193-196). For example, on the 14th of January 2020, the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, speaking at the ruling AKP's meeting in Ankara justified Turkey's intervention in the Libya Civil War in the following terms: 'We have no imperial desires nor are we blinded with greed for oil or money. Our sole purpose is to protect our brothers' rights and future (…) In addition to our Arab brothers (…) there are also over one million Ottoman descendants Kuloğlu Turks there' (*Daily Sabbah*, 2020).

The spokesman of the latter approach had been Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey's former Prime Minister. By his 'strategic depth' doctrine, Davutoğlu has argued that the end of the Cold War provided Turkey with a historic opportunity to become a global power as long as it followed an expansionist foreign policy that would rely on Islamist ideology (Ozkan, 2014: 119). Eyeing the Balkans he did contend that part of Turkey's 'bill of history' include the fact that the peninsula's Muslim communities 'look to Istanbul for protection and guidance' (Herzog, 2015: 199). Western Thracian cities, given their Muslim inhabitants that Turkish officials address as an entirely homogeneous, ethnically Turkish aggregation, has often been included in contemporary Turkish politicians' public rhetoric. Addressing the crowd in Sakarya on March 11th 2018, the Turkish President was quoted saying: '(…) I personally want to congratulate my brothers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Western Thrace, Crimea, Bulgaria and Romania. We send our greetings to all victims and oppressed brothers of ours in Sarajevo, Skopje, Xanthi, Komotini, Kardzhali and Mostar. We share our cordiality with these brothers whose souls and eyes are turned to Turkey (…). Every time I say it - these cities are physically located in the borders of other countries, but they are part of our spiritual boundaries. The meaning of Turkey does not fit within 780,000 kilometers. Half of our hearts are in Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Trabzon, Antalya, Izmir, and the other half is Aleppo, Kirkuk, Jerusalem, Sandzak and Bukhara' (*Euractiv*, 2018).

   I would contend thus that national commemorations have been applied from the early 20th century and thenceforward in Western Thrace as mechanisms of a rather tactfully authoritarian nation-building whose main objectives have been two, namely the maintenance of the status quo concerning state borders as those were drawn in 1923 and the deepening of the state's authority over the region. Through the annual repetition of such ritualized activities the Greek administration has sought to establish a consensus on Greek national identity, inculcate or reorient national loyalties, and cultivate ideological notions of collective identity and unity as well as bonds of solidarity (Karakasidou, 2000) among populations whose cultural identity traits have been, and are still, considered manipulable by actors of adjacent states harboring revisionist claims, threats to the Greek state's sphere of influence in the region, and by extension its territorial integrity. In her infamous *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, Karakasidou (1997: 197) includes the celebration of the 25th of March among the devices employed by Greek administration so as to solidify its command over the newly-annexed lands of Ottoman Macedonia. Purportedly (ibid.; also Karakasidou, 2000: 230), in the same era (1920s) funds were also allocated in such culturally diverse populated regions of Northern Greece for the erection of memorials to pay homage to the 'Greek heroes'. 'Temporal and topographical memory sites', writes Gillis (1994: 8), 'emerge at these times and those places where there is a perceived or constructed break with the past'. Later reports attest nonetheless that those failed to generate any enthusiasm to non-Greek speaking populations. Yet reportedly a way more enthusiastic response marked the introduction of festive ritual celebrations of national commemorations (Karakasidou, 2000: 230). This, I would argue, is much owed to what Durkheim calls 'collective effervescence', the fervent emotions generated among ritual participants which serve as conduits for the communication of group meaning sustaining thereby and enhancing group solidarity. As remarked (Durkheim, 1995, quoted in Woods & Tsang, 2014: 6), 'once the individuals are gathered together a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them into an extraordinary height of exaltation'. Following the advent of Metaxas regime (1936-1941), it was decreed that the rites' goal should be the 'enforcement of patriotic sentiment' (Karakasidou, 2000: 224) while for the military regime of 1967-1974 they were meant to serve as a bulwark against the perceived dual threat lurking at Greece's northern borders, i.e. 'Slavo-communism' (ibid.: 238). National commemorations have been an indispensable tool for making 'Greeks' loyal to the nation and devoted to the state.

Qualitative Research Findings

I now turn to the second part of my research question. National commemorations are indiscriminately applied throughout Western Thrace for a century now. As during National Days it is the nation that is addressed, I considered it research-worthy to study

how this top-down directed policy does shape the view of Pomak inhabitants of Xanthi as concerns the character of the Greek nation. In an imaginary continuum, to spell it out, at whose one end stand nations whose ontology is based on ethnic and ethnocultural trappings and on the other those attaching more importance to their citizens' civic virtues, where could the nation of the Greeks be situated according to the view of a distinct ethnocultural group when reflecting on the celebration of the 25th of March? The collected data revealed several deeply entrenched, recurrent patterns about to be analyzed in the present section.

Xanthi's multicultural model is chiefly drawn along religious lines. Linguistic and ethnic diversity are seen as of secondary importance. As Melek (29) remarked, 'here for many years we exist as two religions, others call it two peoples, we are the Muslims and the Christians. That's the concept because each religion has its own customs and mores, they have their own celebrations, they have different names, we have our minority schools, our mosques, a multicultural image...that's all about Thrace, religion is the starting point, I think'. Attitudes towards cultural pluralism, and the city's multicultural model in particular, are rather ambivalent. Emre (21) invoking his own experience argued that for one to obtain a comprehensive image he/she has to study both at the minority and the general school since 'that's how you see the 'other' and you experience both perspectives'. This was the case for seven of my eight participants; all however expressed themselves in positive terms when the foregoing concepts were discussed.

During the introductory part of the interview sessions, when the concept of cultural diversity was broached in relation to Xanthi, some interesting patterns emerged throughout the participants' discourse. These may not directly pertain to the examined institution *per se*, nonetheless they merit attention since they set the backdrop against which the national community is viewed.

In the first place, cultural diversity is conceived as a spatially confined phenomenon. Evoking memories from years spent living in other regions in Greece, Melek (29) and Esra (27) mentioned respectively: 'I believe that in other places they don't have that, they do not know of that. What I missed while being [there] was our feasts. Something was missing. While the Christians were celebrating as normal both here and there. It was a religious celebration and I was feeling like I was not celebrating' - 'We have achieved something that many think of and claim that it can not happen. Myself, while I was [there]..people were asking me..how can you live like this up there [in Thrace]?'. Correspondingly, Ezgi (18) answering affirmatively to my question if the 'culturally diverse' label does suit Xanthi, supported that 'of course garment plays a role since in other cities, where no minority exists, you won't see garments like..wearing scarves etc.', while for Emre (21) the city is culturally diverse because 'there are also the Muslims, there are Pomaks, there are the Turks, Roma (...) this element is much more pronounced because it doesn't exist in other cities'. The 'minority' as an established institution thus

comes to be regarded as the only legitimate source of cultural diversity, and Western Thrace as the exception within an imaginarily monocultural, fully homogeneous national space. All other non-ethnically Greek populations inhabiting the country are in effect invisible since they do not enjoy the legitimacy that 'the minority' does by its designated status. Such views do not come as a bolt from the blue if we consider that the legal framework regulating the protection of Muslims is applied solely in the limited geographical space of Thrace (Tsitselikis, 2012: 98-100). Hence for my participants Xanthi was seen as a hotbed of tolerant attitudes since, as Emre (21) argued, 'I was born and lived here and I consider it [cultural diversity] as natural, in contrast to some others who live in bigger cities..they may approach it differently', for Ezgi (18) to add that 'the rest of Greece does not know how it is to live with a minority, while here people are used to it'.

Strikingly converging views were also detected when the discussion centered around national commemorations. As a concept, the latter appeared to be synonymous with events marking joyful milestones in the life of nations, grave moments in countries' historical records. As Pinar (27) put it, 'I believe that it concerns an achievement, something that they have achieved through struggle, and they celebrate it, so let's say that it is the day to celebrate it'. No one approached them as days of mourning. National struggles were emphasized as reference points and commemorations were conceptualized as yearly signifiers of struggles for national liberation forming part of the life of citizens within the national state. 'It is our honor and glory and pride', remarked Zeynep (43), 'that we have such celebrations so as to remember our history, that to those events we owe our own freedom. (...) Because I believe that those events have marked the life of our country, our history, they determine the country's course, that are, I mean...so important that they have essentially changed the whole flow of history'. Their establishment was justified by the very same argument, that they mark 'moments of liberation', a term uttered by almost all the interviewees. As Emre (21) mentioned, 'when I hear about a national celebration what comes to mind is the liberation (...) you celebrate for the liberation from an oppressive situation that you were subject to. Because, well...people, during periods under occupation, were not living well, actually they were living miserably'. Melek (29), at last, expressed it even more vividly: 'What is a celebration? Something joyful. Hence before that something distressing existed - even birthday, we celebrate it after birth (...) a new beginning, (...) national...the word denotes it by itself (...) 'of all the people', we celebrate something like.. we were under oppression, something kept us depressed and it ended, and its a new auspicious beginning'.

The celebration of the 25th of March was accounted for the fact that the date marks a turning point in Greece's history. For all of my interviewees it signified, in general terms, 'the ousting of the Turks from Greece, because a big revolution broke out against the

Turks; they [the Greeks] were for five centuries under the Turkish rule and of course that makes it a significant celebration because being five centuries under another state's rule is not negligible. Hence it comes as a matter of fact that it is a big celebration for a country after so many years of slavery and oppression', as Melek (29) put it. Terms such as 'Turkish rule','yoke', and the 'five (or four) centuries' were dominant in their discourse. Early in the discussion of the relevant theme, a linkage was drawn between the celebration and the individuals' school life. School, through the teaching of the subject of history and the activities forming the celebration protocol, was pointed out as the main institution moulding one's perception. The participation in the school parade was also underscored.

Ambivalent appear to be the prevailing attitudes towards the celebration *per se* among minority members. Two groups, namely ethnic Turks and Muslims of the mountain region were drawn apart. 'As for the villagers up in the mountains', remarked Pinar (27) by citing the example of her relatives living there 'I believe that they do not hold very warm feelings because they are, you know..Muslims'. When I tried to question her claims by showing her relevant videos posted on Youtube, she mentioned: 'Concerning the religious part of the celebration, those who know about it, prefer to abstain (...) They follow the parade but they do it for national reasons; that this is something we all celebrate as 'Greece', so to speak'. Three arguments were concomitantly invoked by my interlocutors to justify their differentiation from the two groups. First, at least half of them referred to the participation of their co-ethnics in past national struggles and armed conflicts. Ezgi (18) argued that the celebration represents her 'as much as it represents any other Greek' - 'Especially in the village that I come from', she went on, 'there were many who fought along with the Greek army, and that shows that we, most of us Pomaks, belong even more than the Christians to this celebration due to the war victims that we had'. Second, membership in the territorial state was put forward as a tangible argument. As Melek (29) stated, 'I do not see that as something incompatible with me..I don't have an issue so to say that I am not going to celebrate. It's the country where I live'. 'Personally, I feel that it represents me', said Esra (27), 'because I am in this country. I believe that I am also Greek'. Third, the espousement of the ideal of freedom was stressed in its collective, macro-scale dimension. For Hasan (21) the celebration has been one that he felt like identifying with since, as argued, 'there is no commodity as priceless as people's freedom. I think that those people rose up for their freedom, for equality, for peace among people. Hence I relate with it'.

Kolstø (2006: 679) argues that symbols which are rooted in cultural pasts are likely to be more divisive than unifying since ethnic and political groups hark back to various pasts. Where these are seen as belonging exclusively to one group then, expectedly, it will be rather hard for others to relate with it and accept as their own (ibid.: 696). The divisive qualities of national symbols became manifest when the Greek flag and the

question of what kind of criteria should determine who is entitled to carry it during the parade became the focal point. For the overwhelming majority the cross embroidering the national flag forms an exclusive symbol which they would rather replace with culturally neutral symbols or others that hold universal currency. As Emre (21) stated: 'The colors of the flag exist, and we shall respect the flag, but why shall a religious view exist...you know...that the cross should be carried exclusively by a Christian, and not by a Muslim or a Jew or an Atheist. (...) I would instead insert one [symbol] that represents democracy and egalitarianism. That would represent me'. Respectively, opposing ethnocultural criteria, they opted for the adoption of bureaucratic/meritocratic ones or the individual's voluntarism. 'I believe that every Greek citizen (...) should have the right to carry the flag. Every honor student who deserves it', argued Hasan (21), while Ezgi (18) justified her stance on the fact that 'we all have been born here and we have the same nationality, that means that we also have the same history and the same past'. All of them however held the conviction that the society is more likely to privilege a Christian as a flag-bearer over a Muslim, regardless of their dutifulness as state citizens. 'I believe that we as Greek society', mentioned Emre (21), 'are not familiar with it. There are still discriminations based on religions, or based on perspectives, and we do not give emphasis on how law-abiding a citizen is, responsible and prudential in what he/she does for the whole'.

Concluding the interview process, the concept of the nation was discussed, abstractly and in relation to the Greek 'imagined community'. Participants' views hardly converge on what forms a nation; however many interesting discrepant statements were picked up that reveal a disjunction of perceptions when the concept is stressed in ontological terms and when transposed within the Greek social context. Thereby I had been able to individuate the basic elements that, according to my target group, mould the nation's character, that virtually constitutes the kernel of my research question. Below I highlight three of them.

First, Zeynep (43), when asked to elaborate on 'what is a nation', invoked territoriality as a national community's hallmark, citing an admittedly civic/inclusive definition: 'The sum of people who live within a country. Regardless of traits'. When later on though was asked about how one gains membership in the Greek nation - 'are you born a Greek or you become one' - she expressed a much more restrictive perspective, stressing national consciousness as a condition, that is in effect a cultural trait, rather illiberal since it dictates the evening of an individual's conscience with that of a collectivity. 'All are born Greeks, all those who live here but on the one hand not everyone becomes a Greek, as one can discern with regard to a part of the minority, because I think of the term 'Greek' as the one who holds a national consciousness. For me, it is different to feel that you are a Greek citizen just because I was born here and to believe that I am [something] else, from feeling that I am Greek, to live that, and how you become...from the family, from

your milieu, from all these agents that will instill the national consciousness into you', she stated.

Second, Emre (21) views the nation as an ethnocultural community - one of culture, traditions, opinions and history. It should be noted that these elements do also hold a civic strand; as Nielsen (1999: 48) argues, 'it is a mistake to equate cultural nationalism with ethnic. Ethnic nationalism, as all nationalisms, is cultural, but not all cultural nationalisms are ethnic. Cultural nationalism defines the nation in terms of a common encompassing culture. But that culture can be (...) a liberal democratic culture'. Emre's reference though to history and not *histories* (see Brown, 1999: 293; also below) suggests an ethnocultural understanding. When membership in the nation was stressed, he defended the opinion that one 'becomes a Greek'. Nevertheless, what is interesting is that in his argumentation 'becomes' is construed not as a matter of one's voluntary/civic membership in the national community but as an effect of an acculturation process to which one gets subject when politically socialized within the Greek state context. Such an interpretation is identifiable in the discourse of all the interviewees who affirmed that 'one becomes a Greek.

Third, Ezgi (18) regards the nation as a community that bears common linguistic and physical trappings - that is as in ethnocultural terms. 'Russians have blue eyes and are blondes, that's their nation', she argued. A condition was also set: nationals should consider themselves as equal. She argued that 'one is born a Greek' but in the said case 'born' was not construed deterministically, i.e. as being a member of a community by birth, but in terms of territoriality, i.e. an individual is a member of a nation when born within the country. That is a civic understanding of nationhood, since it is color/ethnicity-blind. However, continuing to elaborate she subverted her own argument. Alluding to the criteria of membership in the Greek nation, she suggested that it is not enough for one to have been born in Greece, but he/she shall necessarily 'think of him/herself as Greek. If a person's origin is from here but he/she does not consider himself as Greek and he/she shall not have the right to consider himself as Greek'. Hence the value of citizenship is rather null.

Conclusions
& Recommendations

For almost a century the constituents of Pomak identity, namely their South-Slavic spoken idiom, devoutness to Islam, indefiniteness of their origin and fixed position on the national map, had been, and will in all likelihood continue to be, both a contingent Achilles heel and an arrow in the quiver of Greek foreign policy. Its pending crystallization along with its perceived incongruence and incompatibility with the Greek national identity turned the Pomaks from natural state citizens to a strategic minority group repressed or mobilized accordingly in order to fulfill foreign policy considerations. Throughout this time span, once every year, on the 25th of March, individuals were to parade, wave the flag, and jubilate. But why? A reference to Article 43 of the Convention and Protocol on the Exchange of Populations is revealing:

> Turkish (by Article 45 it also applies to 'Greek') nationals belonging to non-Moslem (Muslim) minorities shall not be compelled to perform any act which constitutes a violation of their faith of religious observances,
> and shall not be placed under any disability by reason of their refusal to attend Courts of Law or to perform any legal business on their weekly day of rest.
> This provision, however, shall not exempt such Turkish (Greek) nationals from such obligations as shall be imposed upon all other Turkish (Greek) nationals f*or the preservation of public order* (my emphasis)
> (quoted in Psomiades, 2000: 113).

The latter clause answers essentially the first part of my research question. It is the need for suspending one's individuality to the collective whole, especially when the former is culture-wise the 'other' and seen as a contingent threat, as strand of the nation-building project, that condones the infringement of minoritarian religious identity. National commemorations, through their agglutinative qualities, can serve as a prime vehicle for fulfilling this task. 'Commemorative activity', writes Gillis (1994: 5), 'is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose result may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation'. Drawing on imageries of the past, these aligned, shared memories, derivatives of conflictual encounters of the 'local' with the 'national' and of the concomitant colonization and hegemonic control of the former's ideological and cultural sphere by the latter (Edensor, 2002: 75; Billig, 1995:

85), legitimate a social order in which experiences and assumptions of members of the society are meant to converge (Connerton, 1989: 3). Given the fluctuating official attitudes towards the Pomaks, whose identity constituents were seen through different lenses depending on the vicissitudes of geopolitical realities, the propagation of such a social order that would guarantee that the national loyalties of both the majority and minority population in the neuralgic region of Thrace would unite under the collective banner of Greek nationalism was deemed a necessity and a strategic goal. It has been through such soft power means thus that the centralized Greek state has sought to solidify its suzerainty and footing over Thrace and mitigate the claims of external actors coveting the region and trying to get a leverage in it by capitalizing, often by drawing arbitrary notional linkages between individuals and their own concocted national narratives, on its Muslim population's cultural traits, be that its language or religion.

I now turn to the second part of my research question. McCrone and McPherson (2009: 215) argue that days of national commemoration are often bounded by 'a need for recognition of the nation as a geopolitical entity and a 'moment' frozen in time for that recognition to be codified into the individuals' consciousness. 'That moment', they underline, 'symbolizes and memorializes struggle - armed or political or religious - and encourages reflection upon the significance of the past as a part of the present'. Respectively, the codification of the celebration of the 25th of March into the consciousness of my interlocutors prompted them, I extrapolate, to conceive of the Greek nation as a community which essentially holds an ethnocultural character. Reflecting on the institution *per se*, individuals did not only grope for past events to substantiate their claims, an ostensible point of a nation's ethnic properties according to the Kohn dichotomy, but also elaborated on certain concepts in such a way that attests my foregoing contention. To enhance my argument's cogency, in what follows I put forward four pinpointed patterns that substantiate the Greek nation's inferred ethnocultural kernel.

First, the concept of freedom, when stressed, is understood in parochial, collective terms. Individual rights of democratic citizenship do not appear to fall in the category of contemporary established freedoms. When asked about the message conveyed through the celebration, Ezgi (18) argued that it is 'the craving and love that *they* [Greeks] have for freedom (...) And for sure that they feel good that only they themselves form their own nation, in their own country and no-one else'. That is a profoundly ethnic understanding of nationhood complemented by an assertion supporting the nation's putative 'purity' within its territorial space. Such an understanding though is not a Greek particularity; the two esteemed historians of the Balkans, Charles and Barbara Jelavich, argued many decades ago (1965: 130-131) that 'the emphasis on the attainment of national unity (...) left little room for the development or the understanding of Western conception of personal freedom. In very few periods of the Balkan history have any of

the peoples enjoyed civil liberties in the American or British sense of the term. The word freedom in the Balkans has meant almost exclusively *national* freedom, not the right of the individuals to dissent against the majority opinion'.

Second, the multiple references to the participation of co-ethnics in past armed struggles suggest an understanding of the nation as a community in which such acts serve as the absolute litmus test of one's loyalty and devotedness to the group itself, and by extension to the state. They profess and sanction in effect the authoritativeness and validity of one's national contract. Cieslik & Verkuyten (2006: 84) detect similar arguments deployed by another historical Muslim minority group living in a majority Christian state, the Tatars of Poland, to justify their Polishness. The President of the non-state recognized Turkish Union of Xanthi in an interview with the Minority Rights Group International (2019) does also invoke his ancestors' participation in the Second World War to cement his claim that the 'Turkish' minority does not pose a threat for Greece. In contrast to all these, law-abiding attitudes and conscientious citizenhood do not seem to be equally valued. It is characteristic that all my interviewees considered that, based on social norms, a transgressive citizen of Christian faith is more likely to be qualified as a flag-carrier than a law-abiding Muslim. The overemphasis of and appeals to ancestry along with the precedence of cultural traits are indicative of the nation's perceived ethnocultural character.

Third, and closely related to the latter point, is the persistence of the idea of a common, shared past. It is characteristic that when asked if the said celebration is one of people who share common roots or common vision for the future, almost all the interviewees argued in favor of the former. '[It refers] to the past...that we share the same origins, it has to do with where we come from' mentioned Mustafa (26); even those who chose the latter, retraced the historical narrative - 'I would mostly agree with the {latter}, however the [former] are not absent as well since values and ideals had been mostly what *united them* and *drove us* to the War for Independence', said Emre (21). Inherent in those references is also another indicator of the nation's ethnocultural character, that is the salience of *one* official state-disseminated past and not of a plurality of pasts. 'So long as the historical myths of the nation celebrate diversity of the 'concocted stories' and the distinctiveness of the multiple 'forebears' who came together in the nationalist enterprise', writes Brown (1999: 293), 'then civic nationalism is maintained; but once the stories begin to employ the language of *common* descent - to refer to the national community as a national 'race' descended from founding 'fathers', 'inheriting' common attributes - then the civil culture of civic nationalism is being intertwined with the ethnic culture of cultural nationalism'. It is interesting to note that notwithstanding the fact that the narrative underpinning the celebration stretches a century back from Western Thrace's incorporation into Greece, the informants invoked stories, some them totally incompatible

with it in chronological terms, to assert the ethnic group's unassailable embeddedness to the official national narrative.

Fourth, the invocation of 'national' consciousness and sentiments as prerequisites for one's participation in a national commemoration, and by extension in the national community, is the quintessence of the nation's perceived ethnocultural character. Not only are these two concepts intrinsically illiberal since they imply the existence by default of a single dominant culture to which the individual shall adhere in order to be entitled a 'co-national', they also encroach on the citizen's cultural rights by dictating their subsumption to an imaginary whole. The application of such a tenet forestalls the burgeoning of any form of liberal political life. Moreover, the individual is subject to racial discrimination based on the value ascribed to his/her cultural identity by the national community of the state of which he/she is a citizen. Culture, again, is given precedence over civic rights and democratic citizenship.

Besides the entrenched ethnocultural patterns that attribute a rather exclusivist character to the nation, another aspect that should be foregrounded is that of the discourses bearing normative overtones. Those most often explicit assertions of my interviewees reveal a demand for democratization of the institution's strands. Such reactions do not come as a surprise; 'Modern societies', argues Uzelac (2010: 1722), 'are no longer characterized by the unquestioned acceptance of values imposed from the top down. They are societies of negotiation and reflexivity'. It is those concerns, I argue, that should inform the direction of policy making. Given that bureaucratic meritocratic criteria already apply to the process of selection of flag-carriers (*The National Herald*, 2019) and that the changing of a state's flag and symbols reaches far beyond the scope of a policy maker's work, below I outline three points that could ascribe a pluralistic tone to the institution, and by extension to the nation *per se*. These come as a bundle of recommendations extracted from the examined literature, personal reflection and my interviewees' empirical remarks and concern the macro and meso level.

First, the *particularizing* narrative frame within which state officials did place the celebration ought to be superseded by a *generalizing* or *universalizing* one (Brubaker, 2004c: 169). The latter situates the events making up the historical narrative within a broader context of longer-term processes whose significance stretches beyond the local sphere and ascribes them a pan-European or even universal appeal. References to interethnic violence, armed struggles, military campaigns and oppression could be downplayed, if not dismissed, and drained of their galvanizing particularity for the sake of other profoundly significant events marking symbolic milestones in the course of Hobsbawm's 'long 19th century' such as the introduction to constitutionalism and parliamentarism, the transition from subjecthood to citizenhood, the gradual deployment of civil society and a stride towards Greece's Westernization, the latter formulated not in an eurocentric sense. In this way, light will be shed on pages of history that have ushered

in a new era for individuals, allowing for attention to be fastened to such institutions that could ameliorate the democratic standards of a modern society, transposing thus the focus to a common past to that of a common future. Such an enterprise of course requires time to gain resonance (ibid. 195) and it is often highly likely that those who regard the national 'heritage' as a sacred text will perceive such a step towards the tradition's democratization as equal to profanation (Gillis, 1994: 19).

Second, what I consider as a setback in the process of refashioning such institutions as more inclusive is the perennial character often attributed to the nation. A textbook example is the video edited by the directorate of the Administrative Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (2020a) for the centenary of Thrace's incorporation into Greece. Not only does it present eminent figures of Thracian origin coming exclusively from the majority Greek Orthodox population, it also recounts a story of Thrace that goes back to ancient Greece hinting at the region's putative eternal Greek character and thus its rightful 'ownership' by the Greek nation due to the latter's perceived linear continuity. Conceptualizing nationhood in such terms is not only ahistorical but also deeply problematic as it obscures the novelty of the nation as a product of modernity (Baycroft, 1998: 5, 8), conceals its ruptures and disregards its discontinuities as well as its encounters with other entities across time, all of which have an impact on its ceaseless formative process. The nation is thus seen as of an immutable, unitary essence and any cultural trait deemed incompatible with those dictated by its overarching historical narrative as alien and intolerable. Such a projection justifies in effect my interviewees' exclusivist views towards national membership and the Greek national community *per se*. To add to that, the already underscored semantic confusion between 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' renders the idiosyncratic relation of the two (see Calhoun, 2007b), as well as the transition from *millet*-hood to nationhood and the subsequent shifting of identities, hardly graspable at the grassroots level. Given that individuals' consciousness of time is to large degree an awareness of society's continuity, or more exactly of the image of that continuity that the society creates (Connerton, 1989: 12), I would suggest that a more temporally situated, as well as objective and pluralistic, reading of history that would emphasize the formation of the nation as a political community that superseded the *millet* should inform the said commemorations. By renouncing rigid understandings of nationhood and allowing for past events to develop a semiotic flexibility, their imprintment in collective memories acquires even more robustness, argues Spillman (1998: 469).

Third, I would argue that the accentuation, in line with the Lausanne Treaty's designation, of the minority's religious character, often devised to outflank Turkish officials' claims, subverts in effect any attempt to propagate and establish a civic/political identity since it implies that the state's citizenry is by default distinguished along religious lines. It consolidates ergo a *milletic* understanding of nationhood that only strengthens

the positions of the above discussed incumbent Turkish foreign policy and segregates Western Thrace as a culturally 'digressive' region in the national map. That became pronounced in the ways my interlocutors conceptualized Thrace in relation to the rest of Greece. Inductively approached, such concerns stress the need for a reflection on the prevalent definitions and understandings of Greek nationhood. The relevant work of Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou (2002) demonstrates that the latter has been a dynamic, open-ended process, in the course of which the Muslim minority's existence within the national space has held great significance over time for it provides a fictitious backdrop against which the majoritarian Greek identity is negotiated and recasted. Taking that premise as a reason, I argue that a reconceptualization of Greek nationhood that would not take the ethnoreligiously colored nation's founding moment, celebrated in the 25th of March, as the kernel of Greek national identity but would follow a more holistic approach, putting forward Greece's territorial integration, could elevate democratic citizenship above religious and ethnic communalism. Such a shift, I believe, would progressively prompt groups to ponder themselves as a unitary national community and withdraw from forming their distinct identities by juxtaposing each other, often by overemphasizing perceived incompatibilities among them based on historical narratives or cultural traits. The propagation of a territorial understanding of nationhood that would combine respect for cultural diversity and address state citizens through ethnicity/colorblind lenses could yield, in my perspective, positive results as regard the cohesiveness of the social fabric. To add to that, the common supranational European citizenship of Greek citizens could of course be used as a powerful means to buttress such a position through offering an extra perspective on nationhood.

For such political outcomes though to materialize, a basic premise is the existence of a motivating political leadership (Kitromilides, 2019a: 186); one that would try to cultivate loyalty to the common state by stressing shared rather than divisive symbols, acting as a catalyst for the emergence of a viable psychological and cultural context within which majority and minority can coexist (ibid.: 187). Of course different *chronotopes* (S. Kroon, personal communication, October 23, 2018; Baldick, 2001: 40), i.e. the spatio-temporal coordinates of a setting that policymakers should take into consideration when formulating a policy, entail different policies, but in the said case history and symbolic encounters I had during my fieldwork could be informative. Let me be more precise. While exploring the Facebook page of Turkish Union of Xanthi I noticed that a central place in their association's hall hold two portraits, that of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and that of Eleftherios Venizelos, standing next to each other. One of my interviewees (Melek, 29) did also allude to the latter, during the tenure of who, as earlier discussed, Western Thrace was ceded to the Greek administration, appreciatively. Given these two points, which I considered rather insignificant at that time, it had been truly enlightening for me to unearth at a subsequent stage of my study interesting excerpts in which his

understanding of Greek nationhood is spelled out. Having been born and raised in Ottoman Crete, Venizelos strongly advocated a liberal policy towards Muslims (Turko-Cretans) in the island pushing for the insertion in the constitution of the autonomous Cretan State (1898-1913) of clauses that would guarantee their religious freedom and equality (Macrakis, 2008: 69). Addressing the Second Constituent Assembly of Cretans in October of 1906, he made the following statement (quoted in Mylonas, 2012: 121): 'It is of great interest for Hellenism to propagate that its understanding [of nationhood] is so broad and so foreign to religious doctrines so that within Hellenism can fit not only Christian believers, but also the believes in any other known or unknown religion'. Similar patterns are also discerned in his address at the Paris Peace Conference (1919): 'Religion, race, language, cannot be considered as a reliable indicator is national consciousness, the purposeful desire of individuals to self-determine their luck and to decide which national family they desire to belong to'. That is a genuinely civic understanding of nationhood, based entirely on the concept's basic component, that is voluntarism.

Limitations & Discussion

Reviewing the results of the said work, some remarks should be added concerning the overall quality and limitations of the qualitative research part. Four criteria are thus employed to appraise its soundness: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Trochim et al., 2016: 71-72).

The credibility of my research had been one of my very first concerns which as I was proceeding with the study of the local community was only raising given the polyphony and the sundry cultural, ideological and political leanings that can be met within its sum. I come to express such an claim after following, in an e-ethnographic sense, for more than a year the local majoritarian media (xanthinea.gr; xanthinews.gr; xanthidaily.gr; paratiritis-news.gr), in which minority issues are also stressed and minority members (discerned by their Muslim names) do take a stand, especially in social media; minoritarian, mostly Turkish community-guided media that publish in English or Greek (milletnews.com; birlikgazetesi.org), that have a pro-Turkish government stance and address the minority as 'Turkish', as well as blogs of independent minoritarian journalists (tiken.net; pomakohoria.blogspot.com). I would argue thus that my inferences are, at least to an extent, tentative given the limited number of my participants. Even more, my interlocutors drew a distinction between the two big cities of Western Thrace where Muslims live, Xanthi and Komotini, the former seen as modern, progressive and intercultural while the latter as conservative, having ethnically segregated neighborhoods. Relevant perspectives are also detected among Komotinian ethnic Turks in the work of Demetriou (2013: 103). Such claims make the transferability of my research findings rather improbable. To add to that, factors such as the intergenerational gap, that also translates to an important literacy gap, urban/rural differences and the attendance of minority/public school, all pointed out by my interviewees, minimize the possibility of generalizing my findings at a provincial level.

In respect of my findings' dependability, the most pivotal factor shaping the context still is the volatility that defines Greek-Turkish relations. That said, it would have been much more difficult to conduct my fieldwork during 2020 amidst bilateral tensions. Moreover, minority members tend for various reasons to approach Greece in relation to Turkey and vice versa. Therefore the political, economical, cultural, social developments taking place in both countries as well as the respective emergence of new symbolisms do always have an impact on their views towards the respective national communities often instigating a comparative approach. Additionally, the deepening of European integration

should also be considered as a macro-structural determinant as in the long durée it could give rise to more civic understandings of nationhood in the European periphery - remember the experience of Pomaks migrants in Germany (page 38). Confirmability, at last, is indissolubly connected with the instrumentality that defines Pomak identity. It is implied thus that Pomaks of different regions of Western Thrace could reformulate their positions when interviewed by a Turkish, British or Dutch researcher depending on how they, often preoccupied with dominant stereotypes and prevalent social norms, construe the researcher's national identity and to what connotations it givers rise. That of course means that my own national identity had to some extent an impact. As mentioned earlier, having that in mind I tried to contain its impact by investing on building a rapport with my interviewees.

Transient geopolitical developments and their impact continue to ascribe an open-endedness to the Western Thracian context maintaining thus its quality of giving rise to stimulating research topics. After almost a century of rather ill-conceived policies driven by foreign policy concerns and not by putting forward the minority's welfare and wider social integration, the only exception being a bundle of affirmative action measures introduced during 1990s (Tsitselikis, 2012: 130-137), it is true that the latter's relation with the state has been strained and that often attempts to bring change is seen with scepticism and suspicion (see Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2006: 34-36) if not indifferently. In July of 2020 a committee was formed after the Greek Prime Minister's initiative in order to work on issues of regional development, cultural matters being among them (*Kathimerini*, 2020b). Occasioned by the impending bicentennial celebration of the Greek Revolution in 2021, it would be wise, I would lastly argue, for state authorities to encourage a reflection on the procedural aspect of Greek nationhood, empower the community through engaging on a process of building a deliberative consensus (see Mahajan, 2005: 102-103) that could guarantee the equal representation of all subgroups and let its multiple voices be heard at a statewide, national level.

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Photos:

All the photos cited in this section were retrieved from the Facebook group 'Παλιές Φωτογραφίες της Ξάνθης - Old Photographs of Xanthi'. The official administrator of the page was contacted and asked for permission. The captions were set accordingly.

Caption (i): Turkish Minority School of Xanthi. This photo was shot during the period 1954-1972, when the designation 'Muslim' was replaced by 'Turkish'.

Caption (ii): Bulgarian occupation of Xanthi during the WW2. Muslims students of a minority school hold banners with the Cyrillic alphabet.
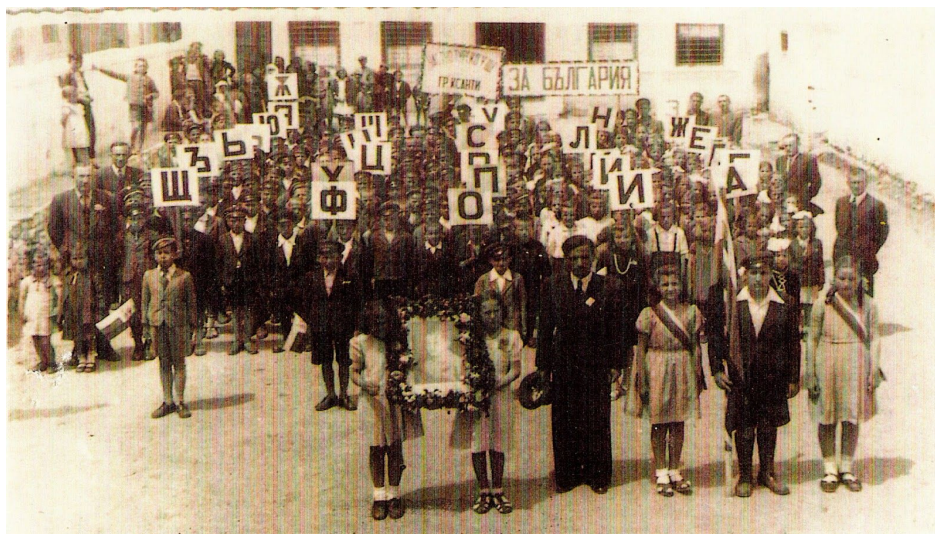
Caption (iii): Muslims of the mountain region above Xanthi parade on a National Day.

Caption (iv): Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace during a national celebration.

Caption (v): Minority students during the visit of the Turkish President, Celal Bayar, on the 2nd of December, 1952.

Caption (vi): Minority students during a national celebration (1927).
The Arabic script was still in effect.

Caption (vii): Celebrating the 25th of March during the Metaxas dictatorship
(25/3/1936).

Caption (viii): Muslim students of the mountain region on a National Day.

Caption (ix): Pages of a primer printed in 1972 (dictatorship era) in an effort to
reinstate the Arabic script (Archive of Lambros Baltsiotis).
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