Religion, securitization and anti-immigration attitudes: The case of Greece

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Abstract

This article revisits securitization theory of the Copenhagen School by addressing an empirical overemphasis on political actors and offering a quantitative extension to typically qualitative assessments of the theory. Using Greece as a case study, it explores the dynamics of competition and the relative discursive power of two actors, political and religious elites, regarding migration. After first documenting a divergence in the two actors’ rhetoric through discourse analysis, it proceeds to measure the relative impact of their discourses on public immigration attitudes, employing structural equation modelling of European Social Survey data. Findings demonstrate that exposure to the securitizing religious discourse through church attendance immunizes citizens from the softening effect of the political message. This, in turn, explains the survival of the security frame on migration in Greece, even as political elites begin to move towards the desecuritized pole of the continuum. Crucially, the analysis of this case suggests that a methodological synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research methods to study securitization is possible despite limitations. The authors call for greater efforts to combine the two methods which would allow for a better understanding of securitization and desecuritization processes.

Keywords

Greece, migration, qualitative–quantitative synthesis, religion, securitization

Introduction

Since the 1980s and particularly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, migration in the European Union has been viewed through a security prism (Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis, 2007). Migration is perceived by many as a threat to the identity, safety, economic development and, ultimately, the quality of life of citizens, who have been alarmed by the recent arrival of third-country nationals in the European area. In explaining high levels of xenophobia, qualitative approaches have focused on the ways discourses of danger are constructed, with most prominent among them the security framework, developed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998).

The Copenhagen School argues that instead of examining security as something tangible, scholars should consider the process by which actors construct issues as threats to security, a process they call ‘securitization’ (Waever, 1995). The social construction of security is typically associated with political elites presenting an issue as an existential threat, although in issues such as migration, other societal actors may also be involved in the process by supporting or opposing political discourse. Among those, religious elites are likely to be very influential, particularly in countries where national and religious identities are closely interwoven.

Despite the prominence of the Copenhagen School approach in security studies, only a few attempts have been made to study the securitization of migration empirically by analysing political discourse (e.g. Buonfino, 2004; Ibrahim, 2005). Even scarcer are attempts to systematically analyse religious discourse on migration, although religiosity is itself often linked to prejudice (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). This emphasis of empirical work on political discourse, thus, fails to capture the complexity of a process where multiple actors may develop complementary or competing discourses on migration, the relative impact of which cannot be determined with the use of discourse analysis alone.

Our aim in this article is to fill a lacuna in securitization theory by incorporating in a single analytical framework both political and non-political actors and evaluating how their potentially antagonistic discourses materialize into public acceptance or rejection of a (de)securitization move. We hypothesize that in cultural contexts where religion holds a prominent place in the public sphere, the influence of religious elites on public attitudes may even outweigh that of political elites. This is because while political actors usually construct rational – or at least apparently rational – arguments in an appeal to logic, religious actors require a ‘leap of faith’ on
behalf of the individual, since faith discourses by definition make universalistic claims of primacy and infallibility (Laustsen & Waever, 2000).

To investigate this hypothesis and measure the relative impact of each discourse, we propose a methodological advancement of securitization theory with the inclusion of public opinion evidence to complement discourse analysis. Although measuring securitization is faced with inherent limitations – not least the simplifying character of most quantitative analyses – we consider this a first step towards bridging the theoretical gap between rhetorical constructions and public threat perceptions (see Stritzel, 2007).

Greece has been chosen as a critical case study for this attempt (Yin, 1994) because of its dual characteristic as the most religiously and ethnically homogenous country, with also the most negative attitudes towards immigrants in the EU (European Social Survey, Round 1). The role of the Greek Orthodox Church as guardian of national identity increases the prospects for the involvement of religious elites in the securitization of migration, which is a prerequisite for our analysis. Similar patterns may be observed in other countries where ethnicity and religion overlap (e.g. Serbia, Israel, Cyprus and Poland).

Our argument is developed progressively over three interconnected parts, with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. The first part engages with the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen School and explains its application here. The second part examines the discourse of political and religious elites on migration in Greece. Discourse analysis reveals a softening of the political message in the new millennium, which however found opposition from the Orthodox Church. The final part attempts to quantify and measure the impact of religious discourse on immigration attitudes in Greece. Using structural equation modelling of data from the first two rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS 2002, 2004), we find not only that religiosity is a strong predictor of anti-immigration attitudes, but also that exposure to the religious discourse immunizes churchgoers from the softening effect of the political message. Results unveil the importance of a non-political actor in the securitization process, with implications for future immigration policies in Greece, as well as for securitization theory.

Constructing (in)security

In light of debates calling for a redefinition of the concept of security, the Copenhagen School has offered one of the most influential alternatives to the state-military approach prescribed by realism. The cornerstone of this approach is the concept of securitization, a process that occurs when a political actor pushes an area of 'normal politics' into the security realm by using the rhetoric of existential threat. In other words, securitization is the process through which an issue becomes a security one, not necessarily because of the nature or the objective importance of a threat, but because the issue is presented as such. Therefore, according to Waever (1995: 55), we can regard security as a *speech act* 'the word security is the act', pronounced as such by elites in order to produce hierarchical conditions in which security issues are dramatized and presented as supreme priorities of the state or the actor in question.

To study securitization, the central question that needs to be addressed is 'who can do or 'speak' security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions, and with what effects' (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 27). The Copenhagen School refers to those actors that 'are placed in positions of power by virtue of being generally accepted voices of security' as securitizing actors, whereas actors such as the media that popularize the security discourse are referred to as functional actors. In the case of migration, the securitizing actors are typically the 'holders of the collective identity' who value the importance of safeguarding and reproducing a language, a set of behavioural customs, or a conception of ethnic purity (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 23). The success of a securitization move depends on their ability to specify a threat to a collectivity and mobilize a 'we' against a supposedly threatening 'them'. In turn, such discourses of danger draw communities together by emphasizing the differences between members of the community and those on the outside, which implies that the construction of the 'Other' is inseparable from how the self is understood (cf. social identity theory and self-categorization in Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Although the scholars of the Copenhagen School argue that in principle, nobody is excluded from becoming a securitizing actor, their view of security as a 'structured field' (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 31) suggests that political and security elites are more likely to have the knowledge and social capital to write legitimate security discourses. However, religious elites can also be involved in the securitization of migration. Religious teachings have been found to promote 'attitudinal conformity' among congregants by stressing the importance of some values and denigrating the importance of others (e.g. Wald, Owen & Hill, 1988). Additionally, the authority of religious elites is transcendental, since their messages are considered to be direct interpretations of God's wisdom (Laustsen & Waever, 2000). Consequently, religious actors can themselves be powerful discourse entrepreneurs and therefore influential in securitization processes.

The content of their message and the relative ability of religious elites to influence immigration attitudes are context-dependent. Previous research has shown that religion can both reduce and exacerbate prejudice and insecurities towards the 'Other', although all religions include 'love thy neighbour' principles. A review of the literature demonstrates that 37 of 47 studies published between 1940 and 1990 showed a positive relationship between religiosity and prejudice, while just

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1 For this reason, the Copenhagen School has been criticized for being state-centric (McSweeney, 1999).
two studies indicated a negative relationship (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

Our point of departure in this article is to uncover the under-researched role of religious actors in securitization theory, as already suggested by Laustsen & Waever (2000). The case we have selected for our analysis provides a most-likely setting for the observation of this phenomenon, that is, the involvement of the Greek Church in the securitization of immigration. In the period under examination, a national religion is already involved in political debates under the leadership of a vocal prelate (Archbishop Christodoulos), while there is a noticeable influx of non-Christian Orthodox immigrants into the country, which makes religious authority relevant in migration debates.

For these reasons, in the second part of this article, apart from the political discourse on migration, we also analyse the discourse of the Orthodox Church in Greece. However, the inclusion of two actors, political and religious elites, in a single analytical framework raises two further questions, one theoretical and one methodological, relevant to our application of securitization theory that need to be addressed.

The theoretical point has to do with the Copenhagen School’s understanding of desecuritization as the optimal long-term option for societal issues. Desecuritization is the reversal process of securitization, referring to ‘the shifting of the issues out of the emergency model and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere’ (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 4). However, the exact process through which this occurs is not clearly explained by the Copenhagen School. A change in the political rhetoric, even if it aims to challenge the security discourse, may fail to reduce public threat perceptions towards an issue, since the debate continues to be conducted in security terms, thus reinforcing previously internalized fears (Huysmans, 2002). Furthermore, even if the social power relations that facilitated the securitization of an issue have changed, other actors not previously involved in the construction of the security discourse may continue to reproduce it. Bigo (2002) refers to the example of ‘security professionals’ such as police officers who are opposed to the desecuritization of migration because this would challenge their professional legitimacy. Similarly, we expect that religious elites may also sustain the security frame on migration, despite moderation of the political message, particularly when they perceive themselves as guardians of national identity. The Greek case highlights the difficulties in desecuritizing a societal issue such as migration, where multiple actors may articulate competing discourses, a process that remains under-theorized (see Roe, 2004).

The potential for competition in the discourses of the two actors examined here raises a second question about the methodology used to study securitization. The ‘obvious method’ for the Copenhagen School would be discourse analysis, since securitization is ‘a specific rhetorical structure that has to be located in discourse’ (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 176). The underlying assumption is that language is structured into patterns that play an important role in shaping our understanding of reality. Foucault (1986) explains that the participants in the discourse attempt to present their view as ‘objective’ or ‘true’. When such presentations of reality achieve an authoritative status and become dominating, then discourse becomes socially influential and appears as the only right and possible perspective.

However, discourse analysis can only point towards the influence of a securitizing actor without being able to gauge the impact of the security language on public threat perceptions. The only option available to the Copenhagen School is to assess acceptance of a securitizing move based on the willingness of an audience to tolerate exceptional policy responses and violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 26; on the problematic vagueness of this definition, see Jackson, 2006 and Stritzel, 2007). To overcome this limitation, we propose the inclusion of public opinion evidence to complement discourse analysis in studying securitization. The qualitative–quantitative synthesis will allow us to examine the securitization of migration from more than one standpoint and determine the relative impact of competing religious and political discourses on public attitudes. This model is further developed and explained in the third part of this article. Before that, the next section discusses the securitization of migration in Greece, analysing political and religious discourses.

**Securitization of migration in Greece**

For the most part of its modern history, Greece had been a country of emigration. However, following the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe, Greece very rapidly and unexpectedly became host to a great number of immigrants. According to the 2001 census, 7.27% of the total population in Greece was composed of foreigners, with unofficial figures provided by NGOs and the scientific community raising the immigrant population to 10%. Albanians constitute the largest immigrant group (65%), followed by the Kurds, Pakistanis and Afghans. Although no official data exist on the religion of immigrants, Mehmet Imam, the President of the Panhellenic Federation of Supporting the Muslims in Greece claimed that more than 200,000 Muslim immigrants lived in Athens alone (Antoniou, 2003: 166).

A survey by the European Parliament (1985: 43–44) on the rise of fascism and racism in Europe in 1985 showed that Greeks were ‘tolerant and xenophilic and generally free of racial prejudice’. However, as immigration to Greece grew, so did public anxieties and insecurities towards immigrants. For instance, a national survey in 1993 revealed that 90% of respondents thought that immigrants take jobs from Greeks, while 84% considered them a public danger (Kiprianos, Balias & Passas, 2003: 154). The Copenhagen School framework can shed light on the techniques employed to construct the security discourse on migration in Greece.
Political discourse

Official discourse concerning migration in Greece became highly securitized in the early 1990s. Discourse analysis reveals a strong offensive language towards immigrants, which served as the main legitimizing factor for restrictive policy responses. The Greek political and security elites used symbolic language, metaphors, exaggerations, inaccuracies and a criminalization of the 'Other' in order to actively promote the construction of migration as a threat, as opposed to a multidimensional social phenomenon.

The foundations for the securitization of migration in Greece were laid down with the introduction of the 'Law for Aliens' of 1991 (Law 1975/1991), which came to replace the previous law dating back to 1929. Presenting the law to the parliament, the government explained the security reasoning behind its introduction by emphasizing the threats that migration posed to the economy, society and Greek national interests. Pointedly, its sponsor used the word 'problem' twenty-eight times in total:

There are many problems that our country is faced with because of the mass migration of these people to our country. These are social problems; employment problems; health problems; criminality problems, that we are all witnessing every day.2

Such linguistic representation of migration was common in the political debate during the 1990s, holding immigrants responsible for many social problems and assuming that it is common sense that the 'aliens' constitute a serious threat ('we are all witnessing every day'). Typically, political discourse exaggerated the number of legal and irregular immigrants in Greece, their participation in crime and their burden on the economy. For instance, Minister of Public Order Stelios Papathemelis noted in 1993 that 'the indicators of Albanian criminality are increasing constantly' (Karydis, 1996: 130). Two years later, his successor, Sifis Valirakis, argued that 'aliens are responsible for an increase in the crime rates, which for some types of criminality have risen up to 40%' (Karydis, 1996: 131). Criminology experts have repeatedly rejected these claims. Yet, such statements coming from the highest authority in the Public Order Ministry should have had a securitizing impact on the public mind. Ultimately, the securitization of migration in Greece was reflected in the policies of the state that were primarily restrictive, concerned with addressing short-term needs and inconsiderate towards the human rights of immigrants (Baldwin-Edwards & Fakiolas, 1999).

Unsurprisingly, content analysis reveals that during the 1990s, a large part of the Greek media adopted a similarly xenophobic standpoint (Triandafyllidou, 2002). The sensationalist coverage presented migrants as people who come to Greece only to exploit available opportunities, emphasizing also their responsibility for the crime wave and thus contributing to a particular reinforcing slant to anti-immigrant sentiments (Mitropoulos, 1999). However, the role of the media in constructing the security discourse was subordinate to that of the political elites. Triandafyllidou (2002: 156) noted that normally in Greece, news related to migration is reported from the perspective of dominant political actors, such as the government, state authorities or the police. In that way, the Greek media was a transmitter of political discourse, objectifying claims that immigration is a threat with reference to official statements and the official version of events, even when these were often inaccurate. Therefore, in line with the Copenhagen School, the Greek media was not a securitizing actor per se but a 'functional actor', who significantly influenced the securitization of migration by popularizing the security discourse and reproducing negative stereotypes.

The security discourse on migration remained almost unchallenged until the end of the 1990s, when various factors contributed to a gradual softening of the political message. These factors included, among others, the realization of economic benefits from immigration, the improvement of bilateral relations between Greece and neighbouring, sending countries and the intense pressure from NGOs to improve the human rights conditions of immigrants. Initially, there was no consistency in the new approach, with some political elites continuing to reproduce the security rhetoric (Dimitras, 1999; Triandafyllidou, 2000). However, the moderation of political discourse became increasingly crystallized when the government prioritized boosting the international image of Greece as a modern, progressive democracy in order to maximize the benefits from hosting the 2004 Olympic Games (Lesser et al., 2001). As a result, political discourse on migration, previously focusing almost exclusively on the threat that the 'aliens' posed to the state and society, started to reconstruct some of the myths that had rendered immigrants to be dangerous and inferior, a shift that was also reflected in media coverage (Triandafyllidou, 2002).

For instance, Public Order Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis admitted that 'the criminality of foreigners has not risen as much as it is believed' (Dimitras, 1999), while in 2003, Labour Minister Dimitris Reppas highlighted the benefits of immigration to the economy. He argued that these can be found 'in the restructuring and resurgence of the agricultural sector, the reinforcement of mainly small and medium-sized businesses ... as well as in the increase of contributions to the social insurance funds from legal immigrants' (Tzilivakis, 2003b). Similarly, Anna Karamanou, member of the European Parliament for socialist PASOK, depicted migration as a 'natural' phenomenon that could counterbalance the country's ageing and declining population and fill in gaps in the labour market, since migrants generally do 'jobs most Greeks do not want to do any more' (Tzilivakis, 2003a). Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Interior Minister for the newly elected New Democracy government confirmed in 2004 that 'forging a substantial and effective immigration policy within a modern

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framework and with respect to human rights is this government’s top priority’ (Tzilivakis, 2004). Tellingly, a central theme of New Democracy’s electoral campaign in 2000 was immigration, framed as a threat, whereas such messages were omitted from the 2004 campaign (Mantouvalou, 2005: 134–135).

Religious discourse

This section turns its attention to the discourse of religious elites, focusing mostly on the period after the turn of the century, when the political message became more moderate towards immigrants. The weight of religious discourse in the public debate on immigration can be understood in the context of two factors. First, although the Greek constitution attempts to guarantee the de jure separation of church from state, the Orthodox Church continues to be very much identified with the state, both symbolically and effectively (Kyriazopoulos, 2001; Anastassiadis, 2004). More specifically, the constitution identifies Eastern Orthodoxy under the authority of the autocephalous Church of Greece as the ‘prevailing religion’ of the Greek population (Article 3) and grants the Church legal privileges (Art. 18) compared to all other ‘known religions, namely Judaism, Islam, Catholic and Protestant denominations’ (Art. 13).

Second, Eastern Orthodoxy has consistently overlapped with Greek national identity. During the Ottoman occupation of Greece, the Orthodox faith was the distinguishing characteristic emphasized by an emerging nationalist movement. This was a useful platform for differentiation of the local population from Muslim authority, equating commitment to the Orthodox dogma with Greek identity (Martin, 1978; Mavrogordatos, 2003). Following 19th-century independence, the first constitutional texts of modern Greece did not distinguish between the notions of ‘Greek citizen’ and ‘Greek Orthodox Christian’, thus highlighting ‘the crucial role of Orthodoxy in identifying “Greekness” in a rather exclusionary manner’ (Chrysoloras, 2004: 40). The classification of members of the Greek minority in Albania as immigrants entitled to special privileges, based exclusively on religious grounds (rather than linguistic or ethnic), serves as one of many examples of the continuing treatment of religion as a substitute for nationality (Mavrogordatos, 2003).

Religious discourse became openly politicized after the rise of a dynamic Archbishop, Christodoulos, who succeeded the moderate Seraphim as the head of the Greek Church in 1998 (Stavrakakis, 2004). In response to the government’s modernization and Europeanization agenda, Christodoulos sought to redefine public debate in a purely religious/nationalist context. His high popularity and his claim to speak ‘both in the name of the people (and not in the name of Orthodoxy), as well as in the name of God’, gave his discourse ‘an unusual status of infallibility and influence’ (Chrysoloras, 2004: 47). More importantly, Christodoulos’ discursive construction of a social antagonism between ‘the people’ and a wide range of perceived enemies that posed existential threats to them echoes the key elements of securitization theory.

In his inauguration speech and repeatedly after that, Christodoulos set the tone, saying that Orthodoxy ‘is indeed a condition for the very survival of Hellenism. The historical truth is that a fundamental element of the unity and cohesion of our people is Orthodoxy’ (Gilson, 1998). Such rhetoric marked the revival, not of religion as such, ‘but rather of nationalism identified with Orthodoxy’ (Mavrogordatos, 2003: 130). Although the Church did not usually target immigrants directly, its nationalist discourse, deriving from a self-declared role as custodian of national identity, was clearly hostile to those that did not belong to the in-group, that is, that were not born Greek Orthodox.

For example, in 2000, when the government decided to omit the declaration of faith from state identity cards, the inclusion of which had until then encouraged discrimination against non-Orthodox individuals, the Church conducted an unofficial referendum, collecting approximately three million signatures without, however, managing to overturn the decision (Molokotos-Liederman, 2003). Christodoulos forcefully attacked the government, stating that ‘they want to make Greece publicly pretend to be atheistic so that it will be recognized as progressive, to appear as if it is denying its history and traditions, which are Greek Orthodoxy’ (Gilson, 2000). On another occasion, the decision of a school to allow an Albanian A-grade student to carry the Greek flag at his school parade during a national holiday in 2000 and again in 2003 caused widespread reaction from members of the local community and the clergy. In response, Christodoulos argued that immigrants were threatening Greek national identity, stating that ‘we are in danger of becoming refugees in our own country’ (Gatopoulos, 2000).

The divergence of political and religious discourse on migration becomes clearer when examining the debate concerning the construction of a mosque in Athens. Acknowledging that Athens is the only European capital without an official mosque, in June 2000, the government committed to constructing an Islamic cultural centre and mosque in time for the 2004 Olympics. Foreign Minister George Papandreou argued that the mosque will be built ‘in the spirit of the multicultural democratic Europe of which Greece is a part’ and explained that ‘migration has made the necessity for a mosque even greater, because Athens’ Muslim population has got that much bigger’ (Smith, 2003).³ Government planning identified an area for the mosque in Peania, close to the international airport, yet construction never began, largely due to objections from the Orthodox Church.

³ The inclusion of the law for the construction of the mosque in legislation concerning the preparation for the Olympics (Antoniou, 2003) suggests that considerations about the country’s international image contributed to this more positive political message on immigration, as discussed earlier.
Until 2006, the construction of any religious building in Greece required the permission of the local Orthodox bishop, thus giving the Church a significant say on the issue. Christodoulos and Church representatives repeatedly stated that they did not oppose the construction of the mosque, since 'everyone has the right to worship their god and to practise their religion' (Tzilivakis, 2003c). However, the Church raised several objections along the way, which revealed its uneasiness with developments. Church spokesman Father Epiphanios noted that 'we are concerned that the mosque will be the first thing of Greece foreigners visiting the country will see from the aeroplanes', which would send the wrong message about predominantly Christian Greece (Tzilivakis, 2003c). A year earlier, in 2002, Father Epiphanios had rejected the idea of a mosque in downtown Athens 'because the average Greek cannot yet accept the idea of a minaret in the city centre' (Tzilivakis, 2003c). The Islamic cultural centre provoked further reaction from Christodoulos, who argued, in an implied reference to Islamic terrorism, that 'its existence contains dangers which are known from similar centres in other European countries' (Smith, 2003).4

4 In 2006, in a sudden change of heart, the Church proposed the construction of the mosque in Elaionas, near the city centre, a proposal that was accepted by the government.

Religious discourse and securitization: A quantitative view

The above qualitative evidence indicates an antagonism between religious and political rhetoric on migration during the early years of the millennium. The moderation of the political message, although not supported by adequate policy change (see Skordas, 2002; Fakiolas, 2003), could be interpreted as a first step towards deconstructing some of the myths associated with immigration, thus paving the way for its desecuritization. However, revival of nationalism in church discourse, with its implied representation of immigrants as a threat to Greekness, could override the political message. To explore the relative impact of these competing discourses on public attitudes, this section introduces a quantitative element to the study of securitization.

We begin our investigation with a baseline model that will serve as the building bloc for subsequent elaborate formulations, more specific to our theoretical concerns. The postulated recursive model we employ first evaluates the central place of religiosity in shaping reactions towards immigration. The expected relationships are illustrated in Figure 1. For the sake of parsimony, this model provides a simplified version of competing theories regarding immigration attitudes, especially economic and cultural ones. We consider it adequate for examining the theorized powerful influence of religiosity on...
mass belief systems, especially within the framework of a national religion.

As posited in Figure 1, our central anticipation is for a direct effect of Greek Orthodox commitment on boosting negative feelings towards immigrants, even after controlling for various socio-economic characteristics. The negative bias of religiosity is also expected to work indirectly through factors identified below as the foundations of anti-immigrant sentiments in European societies, especially ideological predisposition and exposure to media coverage of current political issues. In short, we treat religiosity as a structuring principle for public reactions towards immigration threats to the nation, influencing, at the same time, other major predictors of the same phenomenon.

Data and measures

Theorized relationships between political and religious discourses on the one hand, and anti-immigration attitudes on the other are evaluated with data from two ESS rounds collected between September and December 2002 and 2004, respectively. The ESS is a cross-national survey, with a minimum target response rate of 70% and rigorous translation protocols (details in Jowell et al., 2005). The method of administration consists of hour-long face-to-face interviews with particular emphasis on immigration, citizenship and socio-political issues. Datasets include representative samples of the Greek population in both rounds.

Crucially, the timing of the surveys offers a rare opportunity to assess our reading of securitization theory. The ESS team has administered two measurements in the period under consideration: one lies closer to the time when the religious and political messages were overlapping, while the second covers a phase when the political message becomes consistently moderate on immigration threats. We take advantage of this quasi-experimental element in the data and use the tension between discourses as a testing ground for our hypothesis. Samples contain 2,566 cases for the first round and 2,406 for the second. Throughout the analysis, these numbers are reduced slightly, since the small number of Catholic and Muslim respondents is filtered out. A similar treatment is applied to participants without Greek citizen status.

Additionally, the ESS is useful because the framing of questions on immigration attitudes directly touches upon securitized discourses of existential threat and survival. This allows us to construct a composite measure of the main variable in this analysis, which we arbitrarily title 'immigration threat'. The latent variable consists of three items, which correspond to the most commonly observed sources of insecurity towards immigrants (Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002): identity, the economy and – in want of a better indicator – a generic feeling of well-being. For closer connection with the theoretical discussion, high scores in this new variable, purged from random measurement error, denote a higher feeling of threat. The exact question wording of this and all variables of interest appears in Appendix A. The reliability of the underlying construct is acceptable across both rounds, as well as across subsamples used later in the analysis (Cronbach's alpha varies between .81 and .89).

The first key independent variable in the analysis is measured through a standard indicator of religiosity. The survey question asks respondents to determine how religious they are on a 0 to 10 point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very religious'. Alternative and sometimes more appropriate indicators of religiosity exist in other surveys. Such indicators tap religious salience (importance of religion in life) or biblical inerrancy (literal interpretation of the meaning of holy texts) (see examples in Leege & Kellstedt, 1993). The ESS, however, has not been designed to cover such religious characteristics. For the same reason, we cannot construct a more reliable, multi-item scale of religiosity.

To operationalize the second key independent variable, that is, political discourse, we use a measure of hours spent watching political programmes on TV. As discussed earlier, the role of the media in securitizing an issue is viewed as subordinate to the political elites. This is because journalists, 'blinded by the myth of objectivity', are often reduced to a role of reproducing the discourse of the dominant ideology (Erjavec, 2003: 99). In the case of migration, journalists tend to objectify claims about whether an issue is an existential threat or not with reference to the official version of events, as presented by state institutions. In that way, the media become a transmitter of the political elites' discourse, which legitimize with supporting evidence from the officials that created the discourse in the first place.

Following the relevant literature, we also consider other possible influences on immigration attitudes. Quantitative research, for example, has found educational attainment to be associated with greater tolerance towards racial and cultural 'Others' (e.g. Citrin et al., 1997; McLaren, 2001; cf. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik & Levinson, 1950). Lower income strata and those in lower status (more vulnerable) occupations will generally feel threatened by immigrants, seeing them as competitors in the low-wage job market and in social welfare services (Fetzer, 2000; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). Right-wing ideology is typically associated with a more inward-looking perspective on the nation, which predicts negative attitudes towards newcomers (Chandler & Tsai, 2001). The social contact thesis also claims that exposure to out-group members (e.g. friendship with immigrants) helps counter negative stereotyping of such out-groups (Hayes & Dowds, 2006). Finally, men tend to see immigrants as a threat since they participate in the economy more than women (Hernes & Knudsen, 1992).5

In order to explicate the vertical constraint exerted by religiosity on a host of other political features and eventually on

5 The combined use of data from two rounds of the ESS does not permit a test of the social contact hypothesis. Also, owing to the absence of a traditional class cleavage in Greek society, we have excluded occupational and income indicators. However, we have included a question on satisfaction with personal financial circumstances (also see note in Figure 1).
increasingly anti-immigrant attitudes, we opt for a structural equation model, estimated with full-information maximum likelihood by Amos 6.0 (Arbuckle, 2005). This choice makes the use of the latent endogenous variable straightforward and exemplifies the hierarchical, direct and indirect role played by Orthodox commitment in the belief system of Greek citizens. This role would have been obscured by a single regression analysis of the kind used in most treatments of immigration attitudes (although it could be explored in a more complicated alternative by a bloc recursive model; for example, see Miller & Shanks, 1996, Appendix D). Since the present analysis brings attention to the foundational effect of religiosity in Greece, the relationships between religiosity and economic evaluations, but also among ideology, media discourse and economic evaluations were left unanalysed, without assumptions made on the direction of causality (i.e. only correlations or error correlations between the aforementioned variables were implied in the models).

Goodness of model fit is evaluated with the following conventional criteria (Arbuckle, 2005): the $\chi^2$ test / degrees of freedom ratio, in which values less than 5 are desirable with large samples; the incremental fit index (IFI), which makes adjustments for sample size and the complexity of the model, taking into account degrees of freedom, should score close to .90 and above; the comparative fit index (CFI), which again accounts for small sample sizes and should be greater than .90; finally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), where values should be lower than .08.

**Results from the baseline model**

The main results from the structural equation model are summarized in Table I. To begin, the model obtains an acceptable fit to the data from both rounds. It becomes immediately evident that the effect of religiosity does not vanish, even with the application of standard demographic controls. Moreover, this effect also works indirectly through ideological predisposition in both cases ($\beta = .279$ in 2002; $\beta = .256$ in 2004), providing a strong clue as to the constraining role of Greek Orthodoxy regarding socio-political attitudes.

However, we identify two differences between the two rounds, which we consider as critical for further empirical elaboration. Although only two snapshots are available, the direct effect of religiosity on perceptions of immigrant threat seems to strengthen with time. For example, while the influence of religious commitment on anti-immigrant feelings ranks fourth in strength compared with other predictors in 2002 ($\beta = .070$), it is the second most powerful in 2004 ($\beta = .163$), only lagging behind economic evaluations ($\beta = .181$).

Second, with the progress of time, the impact of religiosity also begins to work through exposure to media discourse, which in the case of immigration we take to reproduce political messages, as discussed earlier. In 2002, the effect of religious commitment is irrelevant to experience of political discourse in the media ($\beta = .037$, $p > .05$). The effect of commitment on political exposure through TV is much stronger in 2004, with the more religious avoiding political discourse in the media ceteris paribus ($\beta = -.107$). Although we can only speculate at this point, our coverage of the divergence between religious and political discourse in the period covered by the data directs us to a plausible conclusion. This divergence could somehow explain why the more religious begin to avoid political messages. We examine this in more detail in the next part.

The same argument serves as an explanation for the appearance of the neutralizing (negative) effect of media exposure on anti-immigration concerns, as we move from 2002 to 2004. The absence of this relationship in 2002 should be related to the cancelling out of contradictory political cues from the media ($\beta = -.027$ at $p > .05$). At the time, political programmes on TV must have been disseminating a mix of...
We now present a more direct test of our expectations for the Karyotis & Patrikios 51 phenomenon regarding the effect of external political cues. Making the church a political community alternative to the media.

However, with political discourse in the media becoming differentiated from religious discourse, its hypothesized causal path should make a difference regarding public attitudes. It seems that this divergence is what lies behind the softening (negative) effect of political discourse on anti-immigration concerns ($\beta = -0.053$).

### The conditional effect of religious discourse

Results hitherto provide a general impression of the power of Greek Orthodox commitment to affect immigration attitudes through a securitizing perspective, above and beyond other influences usually considered more important in cross-national research. Our attention to generic religious commitment, however, has so far ignored the specific emphasis placed on Greek political actors on migration for most of the 1990s, which we base on frequency of church attendance, a practice well established in the relevant literature (Leege & Kellstedt, 1993). Frequent attendance will be taken as an indication of wider exposure to the church discourse, which should ‘protect’ citizens from the opposing messages originating in the political sphere. To test this expectation, our baseline model will now be re-estimated for two subsamples, frequent and infrequent attenders, across the two time points (the cutoff point is ‘monthly or more frequent attendance’, which demarcates the frequent attenders group; see Appendix A).

The zero-order relationships in Table II suggest that exposure to church messages leads to consistently stronger anti-immigration feelings. Frequent attenders are clearly more prone to internalize the securitization of migration compared with infrequent attenders, as evident by the higher means among the former. This is the case for both rounds of data, even with a decreased sample size in Round 2. Furthermore, inspection of the standard deviations for specific items across the two groups reveals that attitudes among churchgoers are persistently clustered around the group mean, more so compared to the second group (see also note a in Table II). Although only at the bivariate level, this points towards the lower diversity of attitudes within this group, that is, towards greater cohesiveness around the group norm. In other words, we interpret this as illustration of the ‘homogenizing’ effect that church discourse has on congregant anti-immigration attitudes.

### Table II. The effect of church discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>Freq. attenders</td>
<td>Infreq. attenders</td>
<td>Difference (t-test)</td>
<td>Freq. attenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: cultural threat</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.79 (2.29)</td>
<td>6.35 (2.55)</td>
<td>$-0.43^*_{a}$</td>
<td>6.53 (2.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: economic threat</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.83 (2.55)</td>
<td>6.21 (2.72)</td>
<td>$-0.62^*_{a}$</td>
<td>6.48 (2.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: life threat</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.87 (2.24)</td>
<td>6.58 (2.25)</td>
<td>$-0.29^*$</td>
<td>6.85 (2.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ESS Rounds 1 & 2.

$p < .05$, $** p < .01$. Unequal variances assumed (Levene’s statistic significant at $p < .05$).

The religiosity variable is removed from these models, as a precaution against selection bias when adding the attendance variable. For instance, the average score of religiosity for frequent attenders in Round 1 is 8.4 (scale 0–10). This also breaks the normality assumption required for structural equation modelling (Bollen, 1989). Subsamples contain the following number of cases: 1,324 frequent and 1,051 infrequent attenders in Round 1: 1,210 frequent and 1,025 infrequent attenders in Round 2.

Securitizing and de-securitizing speech acts, confounding the effect of political discourse on attitudes towards immigration. However, with political discourse in the media becoming differentiated from religious discourse, its hypothesized causal path should make a difference regarding public attitudes. It seems that this divergence is what lies behind the softening (negative) effect of political discourse on anti-immigration concerns ($\beta = -0.053$).
Building on our initial findings, results from the main multivariate analysis are presented in diagrammatic form in Figures 2 and 3. As expected in 2002 (Figures 2a, 2b), at a period without marked antagonism between religious and political rhetoric, messages from the pulpit make no difference as to individual exposure to political discourse (the effect of exposure to political discourse in the media is insignificant for both subsamples). All causal paths are roughly similar for both groups, a potent indication of the trivial influence of church exposure in this phase. We attribute this absence of effects from political media discourse on immigration attitudes to the overlap between religious and political messages; that is, at a period of similar religious and political messages there would be no expectation for the latter to make an independent contribution.

A different picture is produced with inspection of the estimates from the 2004 data. In this period, we already established that official political discourse had departed from the security rationale maintained by the Church. Figures 3a and 3b show that messages from the pulpit make a perceptible difference regarding exposure to political discourse. While infrequent attenders seem to partly base their attitudes on the political messages they receive from TV ($\beta = -0.092$ in Figure 3a), it becomes clear that the church environment shields congregants from the softening effect of political cues on anti-immigration attitudes ($\beta = -0.057$, $p > 0.05$, omitted as insignificant in Figure 3b; intergroup differences are significant). These results reveal the supremacy of religious discourse over political discourse, a phenomenon connected to the divergence in the content of the two. On the whole, findings highlight the crucial role that religious elites play in the survival of the security logic on migration in Greece.

**Conclusion**

Our study revisited securitization theory, by addressing an empirical overemphasis on political actors and offering a quantitative supplement to typically qualitative assessments of the theory. The melding of national and religious identity in Greece served as the starting point for arguing that religious elites can be a significant stakeholder in securitization processes, when the church’s defence of faith is equated with its defence of national identity. Using qualitative methods, we documented a divergence between political and religious discourses in the early years of the millennium. This, in turn, offered us an invaluable opportunity to gauge the relative impact of each discourse. The evidence from the quantitative analysis of public threat perceptions reveals that, as expected, religiosity is one of the strongest predictors of
Figure 2b. The effect of exposure in 2002 among frequent attenders

Source: ESS Round 1.
N = 1288; χ²/df = 3.140; IFI = .983; CFI = .983; RMSEA = .041.

Figure 3a. The effect of exposure in 2004 among infrequent attenders

Source: ESS Round 2.
N = 1027; χ²/df = 2.847; IFI = .987; CFI = .987; RMSEA = .042.
anti-immigration attitudes in Greece. Significantly, the revival of nationalism in the discourse of the Orthodox Church under Christodoulou appears to have been detrimental to the dominance of more moderate interpretations of immigration, even when political elites supported such alternative discourses.

Admittedly, our ability to establish definite causation between religious discourse and anti-immigration attitudes is hampered by limitations in the available data. The ESS data used do not allow us to robustly test whether church attendance actually causes exposure to religious cues on immigration, although past studies have shown this to be true (Wald, Owen & Hill, 1988; Jelen, 1992). Future, more sophisticated research should provide one of two types of primary contextual information: survey questions asking parishioners whether the sermon contains messages on immigration, and what the nature of those messages is; alternatively, data collected through direct observation of such messages in a qualitative sample of carefully selected congregations. The same limitation applies to our use of media exposure, which in the absence of better data, only serves as a proxy for exposure to political discourse.

The qualitative-quantitative synthesis advocated in this article represents our main contribution to securitization research. One objection to this could be that we cannot combine the two methods because securitization is essentially a discursive process. Securitization theory typically utilizes discourse analysis to identify how existential threats are rhetorically constructed. Evidence that the relevant audience has accepted such securitization moves is then solely sought at the policy level, as the unopposed adoption of exceptional measures. However, despite its limitations, the incorporation of survey data to supplement discourse analysis allows for a more comprehensive investigation of outcomes stemming from competing discourses in at least two significant ways.

Firstly, by measuring the relative impact of the discourse of different actors on public attitudes, we can assess who the most influential securitizing actor is. Our analysis highlights the overlooked ability of a societal actor, in this case the Orthodox Church, to act as an important discourse entrepreneur, even outweighing political rhetoric in influencing public attitudes on immigration. This finding, albeit perhaps not surprising given the intertwined nature of Greek religious and national identity, calls for greater attention and empirical research on the role of non-political actors in securitization processes. Variations of our methodological strategy could be used to examine the involvement of other actors, not just religious elites, in the securitization of an issue.

Secondly, by investigating the impact of elite discourse on public attitudes, we can also partly evaluate why certain
policies materialize over others. Public threat perceptions could indicate the success/failure of discursive securitization or desecuritization moves, even before policy change is initiated. In the Greek case, the relative strength of religious over political messages on immigration among churchgoers offers a plausible explanation for the persistence of high anti-immigration attitudes. This in turn, should prepare us for opposition to policy change, even as political elites begin to move towards the desecuritized pole of the continuum. Nevertheless, since the temporal interval examined here is rather short (only two time points), further analysis is needed as data become available, before establishing the existence of a clear trend. The enthronement of the moderate Archbishop Ieronymos as the Head of the Church, following Christodoulous’ death in January 2008, may herald a new era, since Ieronymos, unlike his predecessor, has pledged to avoid interfering in politics.

Finally, from the above derives a more persistent, theoretical question about the Copenhagen School’s understanding of desecuritization. As shown, desecuritization may not depend on a rhetorical deconstruction of existing threat perceptions by those actors that constructed the security discourse in the first place (i.e. the political elites). This is because, as with the Orthodox Church, other influential actors in the field may find the maintenance of the ‘threat’ frame beneficial and thus continue to reproduce it. Additional empirical research and theoretical study is therefore required to explore the full dynamics of desecuritization as a process.

Replication data
The dataset, codebook and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article can be found at http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets

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References


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## Appendix A

Question wording and coding of variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>say you are? [RLGDGR]</td>
<td>(not at all)</td>
<td>(very religious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you attend religious services nowadays? [RLGATND]</td>
<td>(every day)</td>
<td>(never)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: cultural threat</td>
<td>And, using this card, would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? [IMUECLT]</td>
<td>(enriched)</td>
<td>(undermined)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: economic threat</td>
<td>Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coming to live here from other countries? [IMBGECO]</td>
<td>(good)</td>
<td>(bad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration: life threat</td>
<td>Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>here from other countries? [IMWBCNT]</td>
<td>(better place)</td>
<td>(worse place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic evaluations</td>
<td>Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>household's income nowadays? [HINCFEL]</td>
<td>(very difficult)</td>
<td>(living comfortably)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Using this card, where</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>right? [LRSCALE]</td>
<td>(left)</td>
<td>(right)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media discourse (exposure to)</td>
<td>On an average weekday, how much of your time watching television is spent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>watching news or programmes about politics and current affairs? [TVPOL]</td>
<td>(no time at all)</td>
<td>(more than 3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ESS.