The Media and Foreign Policy: The Case of Greece

Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine comment les médias grecs peuvent influencer le processus d'élaboration de la politique extérieure grecque. L'auteur applique le «modèle d'interaction médiatique de la politique» proposé par Robinson afin d'identifier et souligner les conditions dans lesquelles les médias influencent la politique extérieure. Pour ce faire il examine la crise greco-turque entourant la prospection en vue de localiser d'éventuels gisements de petrole (1987), la crise d'Imia (1996), le sommet d'Helsinki (1999), la guerre de Kosovo (1999) et la question «Macédonienne». Une série d'importantes questions est également posée: comment et pourquoi le processus décisionnel et la culture politique de la Grèce permettent-ils aux médias de dominer la sphère publique losrqu'il s'agit de questions nationales, des crises et des problèmes avec les voisins? Comment les médias comprennent et véhiculent le sens de l'action en politique étrangère? Comment les médias déterminent et construisent les questions nationales, européennes et internationales?

ABSTRACT

This article examines when and how the media in Greece can influence the foreign policymaking process. It applies Robinson's policy media interaction model in order to specify the conditions under which the media may play a limited or significant role in foreign policy. In so doing, it examines the Greek-Turkish oil-drilling crisis (1987), the Imia crisis (1996), the Helsinki Summit (1999), the war in Kosovo (1999) and the Macedonian issue. The following key questions are asked: How and why the decisionmaking process and political culture of Greece allow the media to dominate the public sphere on "national issues", crises and problems with neighbors? How do the media understand and mediate the meaning of action in foreign policy? How do the media determine and construct national, European and international issues?

Introduction

In recent years there has been considerable debate regarding the ability of the media to influence the course of Greek foreign policy. Some maintain that

* Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

through the proliferation of newspapers and the deregulation and liberalization of the television and radio market[1], the media have been dislodged from the traditional role of official vehicle providing information on foreign and international news[2]. According to the argument, the media have become a significant medium, operating as the main provider of information to the public. However, they are not restricted to reporting and covering issues only; instead they preserve an autonomous role by determining and constructing the context in which the foreign issues are discussed[3].

To a certain extent, the above remarks are not far from reality. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the media have become key actors in defining the priorities of politicians and decisionmakers in foreign policy. The final responsibility for the direction of foreign policy still rests with the government. Yet, the media have become an important component of the domestic and international environment which politicians and decisionmakers within any country need to consider as they develop policy. As it is rightly argued, the media may deligitimize decisions by becoming extremely critical. They can also alter the agenda of foreign policy by intentionally focusing attention on particular issues while ignoring others. They may also oblige the government under the pressure of time to develop contradictory and incorrect policies[4].

Given this context, the central task of this article is twofold: first, examine *when* and *how* the media in Greece influence the foreign policy process, and second, understand *how* and *why* the decisionmaking process and political culture of Greece allows the media to dominate the public sphere on national issues, crises and problems with neighbours. Accordingly, the first section briefly outlines the international debate on the role of the media in foreign policy and presents the theoretical model which will guide our discussion of the Greek case.

Theoretical Foundations

The debate over "[…] *the extent to which the media serves the interests of the decisions makers, or alternatively plays a powerful role in shaping outcomes, is characterized by dichotomous and one-sided claims*"[5]. Many analysts would argue that the proliferation of new communication technologies have changed the way the media influence foreign policy. The technologies provide them with considerable power in shaping, defining and determining policy responses to foreign and international events. Such views have found support in the discussion of the "*CNN effect*" and, in particular, over the ability of global communication networks to provide a constant flow of news[6]. Their

underlying assumption is that the news can make foreign policy.

Other analysts maintain that the mass media have little or no influence on the formation of foreign policy. Journalists, it is argued, operate within the governmental boundaries of foreign policy coverage and are inclined to support the stated foreign policy objectives. Governments and decisionmakers are the main source of information to the media, controlling the content of foreign news, as well as the direction of foreign policy. Political élites impel journalists and the media to understand foreign and global news in a particular way. The media, therefore, have no other role than to "manufacture consent", functioning primarily to secure support for the policy decisions of the dominant élites[7].

No one can deny that governments control the flow of information available and that they bear the responsibility of their decisions. Yet, it is also very difficult to deny the impact of the media on the foreign policy process. Reality demonstrates that the role of the media in foreign policy is more complex. Indeed, the media not only provide decisionmakers with opportunities to advance their goals but also constrain them[8].

Piers Robinson in an attempt to move beyond the simple dichotomy of the debate has developed the *policy media interaction model*. His model provides a two-way understanding of the relationship between the media and decisionmakers while specifying four conditions under which the media may play a limited or significant role in foreign policy. These conditions assert that[9]:

1. When there is governmental, political and societal consensus over an issue, the media are unlikely to produce coverage that challenges that consensus. In this case, the media operate within the "sphere of consensus" and their coverage reflects that consensus. They remain uncritical and help build support for official policy.
2. When there is governmental/political dissensus with respect to an issue, media coverage reflects the debate between politicians, decision makers and society. The media operates within the "sphere of legitimate controversy" and what we observe is a variety of critical and supportive framing in news reports.
3. When society/public opinion is opposed to the government's policy, media coverage becomes critical. The media pressures the government to change policy and acquires the potential to begin playing a more active and influential role in the policy debate. If however, there is a high level of policy certainty within the government and political élite, the government will draw upon its substantial resources and credibility to manipulate the media and public opinion.

4. If policy uncertainty in government is combined with political élite dissensus and strong opposition from society, the media can influence policy outcomes. The media may take sides in the political debate; hence coverage may become extremely critical of the government. The media can become active participants so that policy-makers feel pressured to respond with a policy or else face a public relations disaster.

The above model goes some way in reconciling the contrasting claims of the debate. It also contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between the media and policy-makers on any given policy process. It provides, therefore, an excellent starting point to examine the Greek case[10]. In applying this model, the Greek-Turkish oil-drilling crisis of 1987 and the "Macedonian" issue will be examined in relation to the first condition, the Helsinki Summit of 1999 will serve as an example of the second condition; the war of Kosovo in 1999, for the third condition, and the crisis of Imia in 1996, for the fourth condition. The following three questions will also be asked throughout:

1) given Greece's decisionmaking process, how do the media understand and mediate the meaning of action in foreign policy?
2) given Greece's populist political culture, how do the media determine and construct national, European and international issues?
3) lastly, are the media a crucial actor in influencing the national and European identity?

The Greek-Turkish Oil-drilling Crisis

In March 1987, Greece and Turkey went to the brink of war over mineral rights in the Aegean Sea. It all began when the Greek government tabled a bill to take control of the Canadian North Aegean Petroleum Company that exploited the Prinos oilfield off the Greek island of Thasos. Turkey accused Greece of having violated the Bern Protocol of 1976 and as a result granted exploration and exploitation licences to the state owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation in international waters near the Greek island of Samothrace. On March 28, the Turkish survey ship *Sismik* under military naval escort set sail for the Aegean Sea, and Greek and Turkish ships were placed under alert.

The Greek Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, responded with determined moves that increased the credibility of the war threat. He declared that all necessary measures would be taken to safeguard Greece's sovereign rights. He also accused NATO, in particular the USA, as responsible for the crisis and ordered the suspension of the communication facilities at the

American base at Nea Makri. The Greek foreign minister was dispatched to Sofia to consult with the Bulgarian President Tudor Jivkov and the ambassadors of the Warsaw Pact countries in Athens were briefed in advance of their NATO counterparts. In the end, the threat of hostilities were averted when Turkish Prime Minister Ozal declared that the *Sismik* would operate only in Turkish territorial waters. Likewise, Greece declared that no drilling would take place in disputed waters[11].

During this crisis, all of the Greek media adopted what has been termed a "cooperative function"[12], and supported the dominant post-1974 position of the Greek government and society towards the so-called Turkish provocations. Media discourse was in line with the government's definition of the situation, informed and influenced by the government's choices[13]. In particular, the Greek media, with very few instances from the newspapers of the opposition, appeared to be closely linked to the policy of the government. They supported the possibility of resorting to military means, spoke of *Zero Hour* and warned Turkey not to play with fire. Their content was dramatic, evoking feelings of insecurity, danger, threat and national unity. The Turkish state was characterized as "neo Ottoman" and "expansionist", with "military designs" on the Greek islands in the Aegean.

This alignment with the government's decisive stance may arguably be justified as a patriotic duty, or the rallying behind the flag phenomenon. Over the years, however, the media have played a major role not only by "manufacturing consent", legitimizing the claims and nationalist positions of the Greek governments, but also by contributing to the construction of an aggressive and inflexible position. By concentrating only on the threatening statements and actions of the *Other*, the media have not allowed for any type of retreat or for a serious consideration of the factors that could lead to the resolution of the Greek-Turkish differences. As the Anan Plan in 2004 indicates (see below), negotiated and conciliatory approaches have become more difficult as a result of hard line positions expressed by the media. The media both reflect and feed public opinion, creating a vicious circle concerning the perception of the Other. They perpetuate and reinforce the tension of the conflict by putting considerable pressure on the government to "act tough"[14].

The Macedonian Issue

In the early 1990s, a consensus developed among the government, policy-makers and society based on the position that the newly independent and neighbouring country (then referred to as Skopia), should not be

diplomatically recognized by Greece, the European Union and the international community if it decided to use the name "Macedonia" or any other derivative. According to public opinion polls of 1992-1993, 73% to 91% of the respondents supported this position[15].

The media supported and reinforced this position. According to a study of the Greek newspapers for the period 1991-1993, 71% of the articles examined adopted a rigid ethnocentric and nationalist line[16]. In particular, FYROM was referred to as a small, inferior political entity that should not enjoy the full rights of sovereignty and self-determination, a "statelet" or "pseudostate" (κρατίδιο). The inhabitants were described with terms connoting poverty, such as "barefoot" (ξυπόλυτοι) or "*gispy skopjeans*". Through the presentation of maps (according to which large parts of Northern Greece were represented as part of FYROM's territory-published by the nationalist political parties (VMRO) of FYROM) the "enemy" was also represented as a homogenous entity determined to deprive Greece of its territory[17].

Such coverage, however, cannot be explained only by the fact that the media could not deviate from the feeling of national unity towards the "danger". In many ways this consensus was constructed. The Greek government was under pressure to abide by the criteria of the Maastricht Treaty (reduction of the public deficit/debt, privatization of major Greek state-owned companies) and, therefore, strategically used the name issue to divert public attention from the painful consequences of its economic policies[18]. This issue also coincided with the liberalization of the media market in Greece further heightened by the desire of certain powerful media groups to penetrate various forms of entrepreneurial activities and circles of political power. Given public sensitivity to the Macedonian issue, the government could not disregard the media, which often pressured by ignoring basic rules of journalistic ethics[19].

In this context of power relations, the government diverted Greece from its real foreign policy priorities at the end of the Cold War. By insisting on the name issue, Greece became part of the Balkan problem and created difficulties for the European Union's policy towards the Balkan region, as the EU "[…] *was not used as a means to the logic of Europeanization for Greek foreign policy but, rather, as a place where European foreign policy could cater for Greek foreign policy demands*"[20]. This also had an impact on how the European Union was presented and understood by the public. In the mid-1990s, the European Union was seen no longer as a guarantor of peace and democracy but rather as a threat to Greece's national identity and national interest[21]. On the other hand, by affirming and multiplying the inclinations and expectations of the

Greek public, the media cultivated insecurity for Greece was supposedly under threat from its neighbouring countries. Such coverage created insurmountable limits to decisionmakers. Politicians who expressed the need of an alternative policy, one of negotiation on the name of the neighbouring country, were characterized as submissive[22]. Today, despite the détente in Greece's relations with FYROM, the name issue remains far from resolved.

The Helsinki Summit

At the Helsinki Summit of the European Union (10-11 December, 1999) Greece lifted its veto and Turkey acquired candidate status on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria (democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the protection of minorities). The Greek government, and in particular Prime Minister Costas Simitis, insisted on this policy change by arguing that it would shift the Greek-Turkish rivalry to a European level[23]. Turkey's "socialization" to the EU's political system, it was stressed, would also decrease the likehood of Ankara using or threatening violence to press its claims against Greece[24]. The opposition, in particular Costas Karamanlis (leader of New Democracy), however, adopted a different position. It accused the government of selling out national interests and characterized this policy change as a major retreat and defeat of fixed Greek foreign policy.

Yet the government and policy-makers were set on this course of action and could not be influenced to alter direction. NATO's intervention in Kosovo and the continuous instability in Southeastern Europe highlighted the need for an end to antagonism between the two pivotal states of the region (Greece and Turkey). In addition, the solidarity which had developed between the people of the two countries after the devastating earthquakes of 1999 did yield some positive results in promoting *low-politics cooperation* and in initiating proximity talks between the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus[25]. These incidents were covered extensively by the Greek media, especially during and after the earthquake in Istanbul. Special emphasis was placed upon the manifestation of friendship between the two countries. The impact on Greek public opinion is reflected in a poll conducted by the newspaper *Ta Nea* (December 12, 1999): 57.5% of the respondents had a more positive stance for the Turks and 51.1% believed in a positive change in Greek-Turkish relations[26].

In this context, the government was able to control and pursue its agenda, allowing little room for the media to pursue an active and critical role. The media reflected the reference frames of the debate and became promoters of the

policy preferences of the two sides, government and opposition[27]. The right-wing papers and "*Eleftheros Typos*" and "*Adesmeftos Typos*" in particular, reported that the agreement was the "*Waterloo*" of Greek diplomacy, as the government relinquished Greece's national interests, "*sold*" the Aegean and enhanced the division of Cyprus. Turkey was presented as antidemocratic, an underdeveloped, economically and socially, Islamic state, that would not adjust to European standards. Knowing this Ankara had no interest to abandon its "*expansionist*" designs and engage in a serious negotiation with Greece.

The centre-left media and in particular the newspapers (*Ta Nea*, *To Vima* and *Eleftherotypia*), which had supported the government of PASOK, welcomed the Helsinki agreement as a success of Greek foreign policy. The agreement, according to their reports, underlined the European dimension of Greek foreign policy. Greece, it was argued, achieved a diplomatic victory that met all the conditions placed on the bargaining table by the Prime Minister. The agreement was also perceived as a positive step in the improvement of bilateral economic relations and the gradual elimination of negative stereotypes between the two countries. It is was also stressed that Greece had every interest in facilitating Turkey's European prospects and in so doing would also elevate all those Turkish democratic actors, European actors and forces.

Such reports certainly contributed to cultivating a positive image of the European Union and justified the shift of foreign policy initiated by Costas Simitis. At the same time, however, they also revealed how deficient the Greek media was. Up until the Helsinki Summit, the dominant media position was that the European Union was on Ankara's side,pressuring Athens to lift its veto so as to eventually allow Brussels to admit Turkey as a full member. A position that failed to explain how and why after Helsinki the "traditional" and "long-time" European allies of Ankara had become extremely cautious and negative regarding Turkey's admission. This ethnocentric and contradictory manner generally pervades media discourse and journalistic practice in Greece and does not allow the public to understand the complexities surrounding international and European politics. Moreover, it influences, as we shall examine below, the ways the media understand and present issues concerning national and European identity.

The War in Kosovo

The NATO air attacks, as an instrument of force against Serbia to terminate the abuse of the Albanian population in Kosovo and supported by a significant part of the international community, were received much differently in Greece.

According to several opinion polls, over 95% of the population was against the war. Other opinion polls showed that 91% of the Greeks declared themselves "not at all satisfied" with the position of the European Union and 94.4% had a negative view of President Clinton[28].

Key to the climate of strong disagreement was the role of the Greek media. The main topical concerns that dominated the Greek media coverage did not differ from the foci in other international media (media stories or analyses around the issues of military operations and refugees). The framing of the news and interpretations of developments, however, were different[29]. Putting aside their ideological and political inclinations, the Greek newspapers collectively condemned the "humanitarian" rationale of the NATO bombings[30]. Television coverage portrayed them as a manifestation of Western and NATO aggression. There was an ongoing preoccupation with visual teasers announcing dramatic footage and documents that proved NATO "atrocities"[31]. In general, the Greek media rejected the actual logic of NATO, which claimed that the bombings were a necessary tool for protecting the Kosovo-Albanian population against Serbian aggression. NATO, it was stressed, was fighting an "unjust war" against a weaker military country. Integral to Greek media anti-war advocacy was also the extensive announcement and coverage of protest demonstrations in many parts of the country. The frequently live broadcast coverage of numerous protest marches and concerts, organized by worker's unions, activist groups and the Greek Orthodox Church, demonstrated a united front[32].

Despite such coverage, the media were not able to influence the official government line. The Greek government was by no means pro-war, as it constantly advocated diplomacy as opposed to military action. Nonetheless, and according to Prime Minister Costas Simitis, it was also clear that participation in NATO implied obligations which the country had to fulfill. The government -as well as the Greek Conservative Party- supported the view that Greece was right not to veto the decision of NATO to bomb Serbia. The main concern was to promote Greek interests and the only way to do so was to support every unanimous decision made by the allies. The government's slogan at the time was that "Greece comes first"[33]. According to Theodore Pangalos, the foreign minister at the time, "[…] *Greece had more important issues to think of for the sake of its own national interests, namely the problem of Cyprus. A country cannot pose two vetoes at the same time. It would have been like trying to carry two water melons under the same arm*"[34].

At the same time, with a crisis in Greece's backyard, the government and the

political élite felt that anti-Americanism could work as a uniting factor. Therefore, despite the argument that Greece's obligation was to support NATO, the majority of the Greek political community denounced the war by developing the following arguments. Firstly, that it was against the dogma of preserving the *status quo* in the region. Any alternation of borders, it was stressed, would not only create a large number of refugees, but could also encourage territorial claims by neighboring countries[35]. Secondly, that the USA were responsible for the war in Kosovo and not Milosevic. The allied bombing of Serbia, it was argued, was another opportunity for Washington to throw its weight around the global arena. Costas Simitis acknowledged NATO's role as guarantor of European Security but at the same time he pointed out that he would not like to see NATO extending its influence beyond Europe and becoming a global policeman. Karolos Papoulias accused the USA of undermining European integration, by creating sources of instability in the Balkans. Costas Karamanlis, then leader of the opposition, argued that the USA would from now on feel free to invade any country in any part of the world, in the name of protecting human rights[36].

Such positions, as Elizabeth Tsakona rightly argues justified the government's ambivalent position. In "[…] *that sense it could be said that America was the scapegoat for the government's inability to deal decisively with the situation in Kosovo. On the one hand Greece was a full member of NATO and the European Union, on the other hand it was so adjacent to the crisis that the threat of a spill-over was imminent*" [37]. The important issue, however, is that the awkward balance between the national sentiment of resentment against NATO and the country's commitment to its alliance duties, reinforced the media's and the public's selective and biased position – empathy with the Serbs not with the Kosovars. Of course, this was not something new, as it repeated a pre-existing pattern of media coverage of the wars in the Balkans. As a result of the Orthodox faith that Greeks share with the Serbs, media reports were much more concentrated on the Serbs' ordeals than on the Croats' and Bosnian-Muslim's losses[38]. Prior to the Kosovo crisis, the media had also created moral panics in news items regarding the formation of the "Islamic arc" to the north and east of Greece. In addition, reports on the Islamization of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina were also frequent. ANT1, a private television station, presented the refusal of the religious leader of the Bosnian Muslims to meet with the Serb Patriarch in Sarajevo as an act of intransigence. The Greek Public Broadcast Corporation (ET1) associated the Bosnian government with Saudi Arabia. It featured reports of Bosnian Muslims, including the republic's president, traveling for the annual *hadj* to

Mecca, emphasizing that all their expences were paid by Saudi Arabia[39].

During the Kosovo crisis the media did not discuss the massacres committed by the Serbs. Neither was the moral obligation of every human being to prevent it ever discussed. No mention was made of the fact that Belgrade controlled and manipulated the flow of information. All those actors who stood against Milosevic, the opposition, the intellectuals, the students and the workers' unions, were not worthy of consideration by the Greek media[40]. Instead, the Greek media chose to represent and act in the name of all those diverse elements of Greek society (right-wing parties, left-wing parties, religious and cultural groups), which took the form of a united front, an "Unholy Alliance"[41] against the invasive and imperialistic forces behind the NATO bombings. Given the country's experiences (Junta 1967-1974, Cyprus 1974) the readers and audiences in Greece may have felt comfortable with reports against the USA and NATO. The question, however, was not only NATO. In Europe and other parts of the world, many were the journalists, newspapers and television stations that disagreed with the bombings. In so doing, however, they did not disregard the massacres committed by the Serbs. The Greek position facilitated the construction of a national identity dissociated from the European values of pluralism and freedom[42]. It is also indicative, as shall be argued in the last section of this paper, of the populist political culture of Greece and the introvert way that media treats and covers European and international news.

The Imia Crisis

The crisis over the islet of Imia in 1996 is "[…] i*n retrospect, a ridiculous but most convincing example of how the media brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war*"[43]. The cause triggering the crisis occurred on December 25, 1995, when the Turkish cargo boat the *Figen Akat* ran aground on the islet. The captain of the Turkish vessel refused assistance from Greek authorities claiming that he was within Turkish territorial waters. It was only on December 28 that the boat was finally freed and towed to the Turkish port of Gulluk with the aid of a Greek salvage company, and only after a continuous exchange of verbal notes between the Greek and Turkish authorities. Following that, on December 29, a verbal note was sent to the Greek embassy in Ankara by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, claiming that the islet constituted part of Turkey's territory. This move initiated a silent exchange of verbal notes between the two countries. In fact for a month the two sides remained engaged in a silent dispute regarding the status of the islet[44].

This silence indicated that both foreign ministries considered the matter minor and unworthy of public opinion. However, the diplomatic activities of both countries were aired by the Greek commercial TV station ANT1 on January 24, 1996. This "revelation", it could be argued, was a consequence of the change of government in Athens. The moderate and reformist Costas Simitis won the election in PASOK's parliamentary group to succeed ailing Andreas Papandreou as Prime Minister. The loser, Gerasimos Arsenis, then Minister of Defense, as well as the opposition New Democracy, had converging reasons to challenge the new Prime Minister on what they considered his soft, conciliatory approach to Turkey and international relations. That the matter was first revealed by a pro-New Democracy channel and that the PASOK Mayor of Kalymnos (an island next to Imia), known for his leanings towards Arsenis rushed to plant the Greek flag on Imia on January 25, provided crucial concurring evidence[45].

All this was not enough to bring the two countries to the verge of war. Only when the Turkish side responded did matters get worse. The newspaper *Hurriyet* with a team of journalists and photographers arrived on the island, asking the mayor to remove the Greek flag and hoist the Turkish one[46]. The action took place, and of course *Hurriyet* could not refrain from triumphantly publishing the photograph of the journalists removing the Greek flag on its front page the very next day. To which the Greek media replied. In particular, the Greek TV stations intercepted from the Turkish channels the episode with the flag and showed it tens of times to the Greek public with the following humiliating and war-mongering statements: "we lost the flag", "they took our flag". Turkish actions were reported using direct war vocabulary. The Turkish journalists' activity on the islet, for example, was characterized as "landing", "invasion" and "agents' assault"[47].

Greek artists, intellectuals, academics, politicians and former officers of the Greek armed forces, were asked to express their opinion on televised and live shows. A famous actress went so far as to donate her jewelry to the Greek Navy! It is also reported that a journalist requested the leadership of the Greek Navy not to undertake any operations in the night, as that would not allow his station to have clear pictures of the hostilities in the Aegean![48] All this created a psychosis of war and continuous appeals for aggressive and heroic acts – "Let's answer with new Thermopylae, Marathons and Salamines", "Ciller for Imia? We for Constantinople"[49], "Ciller threatens us with war, Ciller wants 1,000 islands", "We must be armed to the teeth, the Turks understand no other language", "We will answer Tsouler [slight change of Ciller's name to remind

the reader/viewer of 'tsoula', meaning 'hussy' in Greek], "If the Tourkalades want, they should come and take them. We are ready for war, how do they humiliate us?", wrote the newspapers and reported the TV stations[50].

As a result, the government was suddenly faced with an unexpected dispute that the media portrayed as crucial. Moreover the government was expected to react promptly in order to save the nation's pride. Lacking an official agenda and troubled by the ongoing inner party disputes of PASOK, Costas Simitis responded by ordering the Greek Navy to change the flag. In Turkey, Prime Minister Ciller, head of new coalition government after tough negotiations, also picked up the issue and adjusted it to her own interests. In statements to the Turkish media she declared that there are 1,000 to 3,000 islets in the Aegean that are part of the Turkish territory. The Turkish media reinforced this policy line. "Not only nine pallikaria [Greek for brave young men], but the whole of whole Greece will get a slap in the face if it goes there [to Imia]", "Turkey can overwhelm Greece in 72 hrs", wrote the Turkish papers[51].

By January 31, the Greek and Turkish Naval forces stood opposite each other in the Aegean. A group of Turkish people landed on the islet opposite Imia and a Greek helicopter had crashed into the sea costing the life of one pilot. Fortunately enough, however, the media did not have overall control of the crisis, due to the entrance of the USA which prevented the situation from escalating into a military showdown between the two countries. The USA government, as it is rightly argued, "[…] *proved more influential on the policy lines followed by the two governments. That was because, despite the increasing pressure the media put on the two actors regarding the cost they would have if they withdrew, the cost of the information conveyed by the USA was much greater, threatening the two actors about the costly consequences they would have in case of a war*"[52].

This crisis constitutes, however, a perfect example of those factors that make the media a powerful actor in the policy process. Not only did they operate as a constraining factor, disrupting the silent diplomatic process[53] but judging from the way they presented and framed the issue, they also pursued a protagonist role[54]. When in December 1995 the diplomats of the two countries were exchanging silent routine notes, no one seemed to believe or even realize that this event would prove serious enough to bring the two states to the brink of war. By triggering and putting the issue on the policy agenda, by transforming it into a public spectacle and *thriller* and by aggravating the dispute, the media did not allow for dialogue and cooperation. They put considerable pressure on both governments to react "tough" [sic] in a conflict that carried a special danger

of escalation. But there will not always be a Bill Clinton and his telephone, instructing the leaders of both countries to calm down.

Concluding Remarks on the Greek Case[55]

Taken together, the above case studies illustrate that *policy certainty is a major factor in determining whether or not the media can influence the process of foreign policy*. As shown through the Imia crisis, when there is no policy certainty (combined with political dissensus and strong opposition from society), media influence will not only disrupt the policy process, but will also direct the policy agenda and dominate the discourse of the public sphere. When there is policy certainty, as in case of the oil drilling crisis, the media will pursue no active role. It will rally behind the flag thus supporting the position and claims of the government.

Furthermore, the examples given above show *that when the government and policy-makers are determined to pursue a particular action, they are unlikely to be influenced by the critical coverage of the media and the opposition of society*. This is clear in the Kosovo war, where the government and political community of the country strategically manipulated the discourse of the media and society to promote its ambivalent position[56]. It is also clear in the Helsinki Summit, where despite the skepticism and criticism of opposition parties, the media was not able to pursue an influential role. Rather, the media took sides on the debate surrounding this important shift and landmark of Greek foreign policy.

Lastly, we see *that media influence is not only greatest when it is extremely critical* (Imia, Kosovo), *but also when it is framed in such a way as to multiply the perceptions and expectations of the public* (Macedonian issue). In Greece, this has led to the reproduction and reinforcement of ethnocentric and nationalist discourse, sustaining a representation of Greece as being a nation under threat from the EU, the NATO alliance and the USA, and from its neighboring countries (Turkey, FYROM). The media contribute to the aggravation and perpetuation of tension, and the cultivation of a siege mentality that "[…] *makes Greeks defensive and oversensitive, which helps exaggerate risks and turn them into threats*"[57]. Greek governments, as result, not only remain under pressure from what is on the media agenda, but also fear to pursue and accept negotiated and conciliatory solutions to long-standing problems as they involve a loss of face. A good example in this direction was provided by the Annan Plan (2004) for the settlement of the Cyprus conflict.

As in the case of the Imia crisis, the absence of a clear and determined stance in the newly elected government of New Democracy, as well as the dissensus

that characterized the political community of Greece (George Papandreou favoured acceptance of the plan), allowed the media to dominate the public sphere. The negotiations in Switzerland were reported as a victory for Turkey. "Turks and Turkish Cypriots celebrate," wrote the Greek papers. In this context the rejection of the Annan Plan was projected as "inevitable". "National unity" was considered essential in face of "imperialist plans" (EU and USA) and the "Turkish danger". Turkish-Cypriot positions were not presented and Greek-Turkish arguments were praised in accordance with international law. Even the media with center-left inclinations came in sharp contrast with the position of PASOK. *Eleftherotypia*, for example, wrote on the "Holy Case" of Cyprus and reported of "agony and disappointment in Greek Cyprus"[58].

Such coverage not only influenced and defined public response (65-70% against the plan according to public opinion polls of the time), but also repeated the discourse on the Cyprus issue that has dominated in Greece since 1974. According to this discourse, any third party intervention (the UN, EU or USA) should take into consideration and justify only the claims of the Greek side, rejecting the arguments and "truths" of the Turkish side[59]. This logic, combined with the negative, sensational and dramatic media reporting, explains the reaction of the Greek public which saw its long nourished expectations and anticipations collapse in the face of diplomatic reality. This reality, however, is not only the result of the principles governing foreign and international news coverage, but also the product of Greece's deficient decisionmaking system which is combined with a certain populist political culture that refuses to bear the political cost. If we ignore this reality, we remain unable to understand fully why the media have directed and dominated the public sphere on "national" issues, crises and problems with neighbors.

As Professor Ioakimidis has rightly argued, the absence of effective and legitimized mechanisms for the design and implementation of Greek foreign policy allows for the predominance of political personalities (prime minister/foreign minister) in the decisionmaking process. As a result, the exercise of foreign policy is also largely motivated by the need of maximizing electoral impact and popularity. Public opinion, therefore, becomes a fundamental source of decisions and priorities, facilitating the adoption of inflexible and irrational positions (for example, the embargo on the FYROM). This not only leads to antagonism and alienation with the country's allies, but also does not allow public opinion to accept negotiated solutions and conciliatory compromises. It effectively multiplies the perception of a country under siege from external pressure while not allowing the government and the policy-makers to evaluate their priorities. They thus loose the initiative,

become reactive, driven by impulses, public opinion and demagoguery[60].

Under such conditions, the media are encouraged by the general disappointment of public opinion, as well as their commercial motives, and promote a highly nationalistic perspective. Claiming that they represent the national sentiment and collective consciousness of the nation, the media adjust their coverage and framing to the dominant, popular and comfortable views and perceptions of society[61]. Journalists and owners of media conglomerates fear that if they adopt an alternative position, one that differs from the rigid and closed ethnocentric ideas and norms of the public, it will be rejected by the viewers and audiences[62]. Suffering as they do from "introversion", few are the correspondents the Greek media assign to report from international organizations. Not surprisingly, there is no in-depth research and analysis of today's international developments and complex problems. Journalists are asked to translate and reproduce foreign texts and reports. Traveling abroad is not encouraged as it is considered costly and useless. Such journalistic practices and commercial anxieties, however, not only reinforce the reactionary defensiveness and victimization mentality of the Greek public, but also its ambiguity towards European and international affairs. No where is this clearer than on the perceptions regarding Greece's position in the European Union.

Greece in general has a pro-EU profile, as presented by the *Eurobarometer* over the last ten years. Yet therein lies a paradox. All findings illustrate that loyalty to Greece comes first. The symbolic cultural elements of Greek identity score very high; whereas, the corresponding elements for identification with Europe score very low[63]. According to opinion polls, 50% to 60% of the respondents feel that within the EU Greece's identity is endangered[64]. Greece's pro-EU profile is mainly linked to the social and economic benefits of the country's membership. It is also linked to the insecurity of the Greek public and political community towards the so-called threat of Turkey. The European Union is perceived as a "security umbrella", a reality that gives rise to contradictory positions towards the admission of Turkey. According to an opinion poll from October-November 2005, only 28.8% of the respondents were in favour of Turkish admission. At the same time, however, 55% declared that with Turkey in the European Union Greece would be "safer". It is also interesting to note that in a opinion poll of June 2005, 19.6% of the respondents declared that they would, if given the opportunity, vote against the European Constitutional Treaty so as to prevent the admission of Turkey. Before the elections for the European Parliament in June 2004, two months after the rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek-Cypriots, 70.6% of those surveyed also declared

that they were highly disappointed with the policy of the EU on Cyprus[65].

The Greek media also represent the European Union in the same way. Very little importance is given to the values on which the European Union project rests or should rest[66]. In most cases the interests of the nation are the dominant factor in the political and media discourse[67]. The press comments more on the "national interest" in relation to the events or matters of the European Union and the television concentrates on sensational events, e.g., demonstrations during European Summits[68]. The Greek public is thus ill-informed of events and developments in the European Union, as illustrated by the contradictory and ethnocentric 2003 positions of the Greek public towards the enlargement process. According to a 2003 opinion poll, some 52% of the respondents declared that enlargement would strengthen the European Union; 55% said that it would weaken the decision making system of the European Union; 69% stated that it would provide new markets to Greek products; 71% said that it would open the doors to immigrants; 56% thought that it would create many problems for Greek agriculture; 57% said that it would reduce the amount of economic assistance Greece received and 44% asserted that Greeks would find it difficult to work in the new member countries of the European Union[69].

All of the above are quite disquieting given Greece's challenges in the twenty-first century. Firstly, as Professor Couloumbis argues, the Aegean, Cyprus and "Macedonia" are not Greece's only national issues. The refinement of the country's public sector, the improvement of its educational system and the elimination of corruption, are also extremely important national issues. Indeed the "treatment" of these issues will make a difference between a Greece which finds itself relegated to the margins of the European Union and a Greece which strives and eventually reaches the European average[70].

Secondly, on all issues of Greek foreign policy there is a significant gap between what Greece can achieve on the basis of international legal norms and geopolitical realities and what is expected by public opinion. Nothing is being done to reduce this discrepancy. The government, the broader political community and the media have made no effort to discuss and explain the country's realistic options, the need for conciliatory compromises and what those imply. Greek citizens need to know before they take a position[71]. Only in that way may the lack of confidence and political will that characterizes the decisionmakers in dealing firmly with national issues be overcome. Greece's national issues cannot appropriately be handled through the use of inflexible and rigid positions nor with the hope that the future holds something "good for us". This is how Greece dealt with Macedonia and Cyprus in the past and it did not "win".

Given the new geopolitical environment gradually and steadily developing around Greece, in the Balkans (Kosovo), Turkey (Kurdish minority) and the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria), decisionmakers need to develop alternative versions and scenarios of foreign policy. They need to be more constructive and in so doing re-examine the way in which they have dealt Greece's foreign policy issues over the past three decades. The formulation of a flexible and effective foreign policy should be a continuous process of analysis and re-examination of not only new developments but also the basic parameters according to which Greece has developed its foreign policy. In today's rapidly changing world, in addition to military power and membership in regional and global alliances, *self-knowledge* and *self criticism* are basic prerequisites for success[72]. By working in this direction, Greek citizens will be able to overcome their victimization syndrome and the incompatibility between their preceived reality and perceptions of global politics. Greece enjoys the benefits that are secured by the preponderance of the West and also has benefited from being a member of the European Union[73]. Greece needs to acknowledge this reality. Indeed, if Greece wants to secure its rights, the country must enhance and upgrade its international role, position and capabilities as well as promote effectively its national interests through active participation and intervention in global politics.

In a turbulent world, where the global agenda is so complex and multifaceted, the political élite must encourage the projection and exchange of views on contemporary complex issues, as well as the creation of new frameworks for communication, cooperation and concurrence. In that sense, the Greek media should also provide multiple sources of information and multiple points of intervention. They need to project and discuss the developments of our global village, thus contributing to the creation of an informed critical citizenry by adopting a cosmopolitan perspective, acknowledging and appreciating different cultures and respecting their differences. To acquire an understanding of today's world and Greece's position within it, the media need to be sincere, yes, but also studious in order to engage in dialogue and an exchange of views. Regional and global developments should not be dealt with using the facts and ideological frames of the past. The dialogue should promote identities other than the national. What is needed is media content that will reveal different aspects of Greek and neighboring societies, including the aspirations, achievements and cultural life of their individuals' common economic, social and environmental problems[74].

Greek shares borders with countries and regions that are suffering from protracted and unpredictable crises which could affect the country's political,

social and economic position. The media should therefore be able to assess and value the complexity of these crises[75]. They should benefit from the geographical position of the country and develop a constructive and intricate mechanism of correspondents and "insiders" on the assessment of the problems and crises surrounding Greece's region. In so doing, it is important that they work to contribute to more and in-depth communication between journalists and media practitioners, reflect a more balanced view of the realities of the Other, seek a more active role by carrying out informational campaigns detailing the costs of conflicts, explore the conflicts and seek resolution and common ground while reporting, promote interaction between media gatekeepers and owners, as well as with youth, political actors and non-governmental organizations[76]. The challenge might seem insurmountable but should not be ignored if Greece does not want the crises and problems of her neighbouring countries to affect her development and position negatively. Simplified, one-sided, rigid and ethnocentric approaches to foreign and international developments lead to deadlocks.

NOTES

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