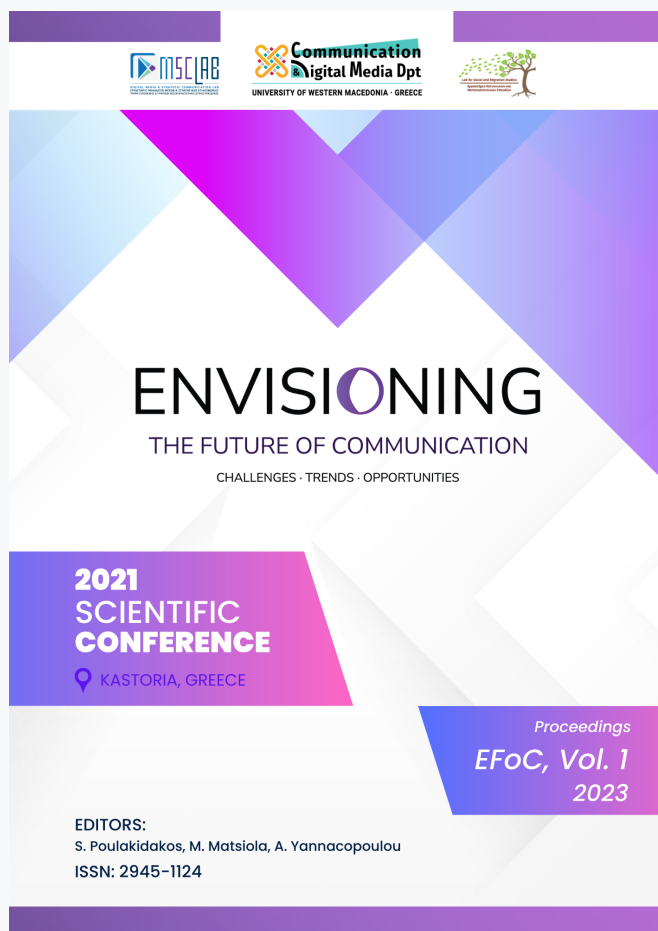


Envisioning the Future of Communication

Vol 1, No 1 (2023)

Envisioning the Future of Communication - Conference Proceedings vol.1



Foreign Policy on the Internet. The Case of the Prespa Agreement

Maria Karafotia

doi: [10.12681/efoc.5329](https://doi.org/10.12681/efoc.5329)

Copyright © 2023, Stamatis Poulakidakos; Maria Karafotia



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Foreign Policy on the Internet. The Case of the Prespa Agreement

Maria Karafotia*

Abstract

The Prespa Agreement is connected with the Macedonian issue, which has been a long-standing, intricate and controversial one within the Greek public sphere so far. In the academic debate it is widely recognized that the Macedonian issue has been covered not only in a nation-centered way in/by the Greek media, but furthermore in a strongly nationalistic one. Thus, the subject of the present effort is to study the ideology and the discourse of nationalism through their manifestations in the Greek news websites concerning the Prespa Agreement. According to my analysis, which is based on qualitative methods, the changes detected throughout the research sample regarding the media coverage of the subject under investigation are mainly attributed not to a profound transformation of the way media cover the foreign policy affairs in Greece so far, nor to the internet as a new medium, but to the fact that the Greek media have realized that the Macedonian issue is not the proper one to demonstrate the ideology and the discourse of nationalism through it anymore.

Keywords: Prespa Agreement, nationalism, foreign policy, internet.

Introduction

The Prespa Agreement was signed on the 17th of June 2018 as a result of the most recent and common try between Greece and the Republic of Northern Macedonia aiming to arrange the differences between the two states. It relates to the Macedonian issue, which has been a decades-old, intricate and contentious one within the Greek public sphere so far (Ellinas, 2010; Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010; Skoulariki, 2007; Zeri et al., 2018), as well as a matter of great political and symbolic importance for both foreign policy and domestic affairs in Greece ('national issue', Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). Thus, the main subject of the present effort is to study the ideology and the discourse of nationalism throughout their manifestations in the Greek news websites concerning the Prespa Agreement. The main goal is, first, to trace the mainstream perceptions about national identity, the national 'other' and the relation between them in the research sample; second, to detect the probable changes in the way new media covered the Macedonian issue recently in comparison with the way legacy media have done so during the previous years; third, to study the various conditions under which the representation of the Macedonian issue has been shaped within the Greek media.

The choice of the Prespa Agreement to study both the ideology and the discourse of nationalism is not a random one. First, the broader public debate over the Macedonian issue has been a

* MA in Politics and the Internet, Department of Communication and Media Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (mkarafotia@media.uoa.gr).

representative case of a strongly nationalistic coverage in the old Greek media (newspapers and television) (Armenakis et al., 1996; Demertzis et al., 1999; Ellinas, 2010; Madianou, 2008; Panagiotopoulou, 1996; Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010; Skoulariki, 2007; Terzis, 2007). Moreover, the Macedonian issue is regarded as a crucial factor of both the construction and the spread of a new type of the nationalistic discourse in Greece in the nineties (Skoulariki, 2007). It is also related to the crisis of the Greek national identity and perceived as the Greek version of the re-emergence of the nationalism throughout the Balkans after the rapid and profound political transformations in the region and in Europe as well, towards the dusk of the twentieth century (Armenakis et al., 1996; Skoulariki, 2007; Zeri et al., 2018). Consequently, since the Macedonian issue, on the one hand, is discussed in the public debate during the early nineties (1991-1993) mainly in terms of nationalism, national identity, history, language and tradition and, on the other hand, returns in the public debate through the journalistic accounts as the most important issue of the Greek foreign policy in specific times ('the daily national issue', Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2013), then the Prespa Agreement, as a part of the Macedonian issue, is regarded as an appropriate case study concerning the manifestation of the nationalism in the Greek media.

Another dimension considering in this effort is connected to the internet as a new medium and the possibilities of it either to go further than the national prism and present a broader, cosmopolitan outlook towards international affairs or to follow the dominant – in legacy media – ethnocentric/nationalistic model of coverage over foreign topics and events. This question derives not merely from the initial connection of the internet with the technological innovation (Qiu, 2019; Snowden, 2019), but is furthermore a result of the broader political, social and cultural conditions which contributed to the emergence of the internet as a medium of resistance towards the strong alliance between the political and the communicational establishment of that era (Pleios, 2011; Smyrnaio, 2018).

In the following sections, I try to shape the general outline of the corresponding public debate. I start with a literature review, then proceed with methodology and finally discuss my findings before presenting my conclusions.

Foreign policy in the media

The subject under investigation is placed within the broader context of the public debate about the representation of social reality in the media in general and the coverage of foreign policy in particular. The discussion is connected with a wide range of topics, e.g. the relation between the political system and the media (Papathanassopoulos, 2017); the specific characteristics of the system of communication in a society (Hallin & Mancini, 2004); the type and the political orientation of the medium, as well as the current stage of the political event under investigation (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010); the journalists' political orientation (Tiliç, 2000); the level of the development of the civil society and the type of nationalism within the political culture in a society (Demertzis et al., 1999).

In this work, initially, I focus, on the fact that ethnocentrism is widely recognized as a common characteristic of the journalistic narratives over foreign policy internationally (Curran et al., 2013; Demertzis, 1996; Paterson & Sreberny, 2015). What is different, however, in the Greek case is the fact that the foreign affairs are covered not only in an ethnocentric way, but, moreover, in a strongly nationalistic one (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). Furthermore, it seems to be a self-evident situation, not a problematic one, and the media are thought to have largely contributed to this (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). Since the nationalistic ideology can be traced in the content and through the verbal elements of the journalistic narratives as well, then it is of utmost importance to examine both (Galasińska & Galasiński, 2003).

Second, according to the assumption of the ‘mediatization of politics’ (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), the journalistic accounts over foreign affairs are not considered to match, more or less, the real world, as the model of the ‘watchdog’ argues (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). What these accounts tend to do, however, is rather to project the dominant ideology in a society. As a result, foreign policy is perceived as a composition of policy and diplomacy in conjunction with the media coverage of them (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010).

An additional factor which fuels – and is fueled by – the coverage of foreign affairs in/by the media is the broader historical and ideological context in which the media content is produced, distributed, and perceived within. In Greece this context is largely dominated by the cultural – rather than the political – nationalism (Demertzis, 1996). In addition, it is a long-term shaped, concrete, and cohesive narrative, which focuses on the national identity as the most important identity of all and, as well, on the priority of history, language, religion and tradition, all perceived unambiguously and regarded as the most important criteria of both shaping and applying the foreign policy. The media seem to align with the dominant national narrative due to their dependence from the political and financial elites, and this dependence has been intensified even more especially after the recent economic crisis (Pleios, 2013).

Since the old media are sufficiently recognized, first, as agents both of the ideology and the discourse of nationalism and, second, as crucial factors in the shaping of the national identities according to cultural nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Demertzis, 1996; Madianou, 2008; McLuhan, 1990; Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010), then there are two important questions to be addressed subsequently. The first one deals with the representations of the Macedonian issue in the old Greek media from 1992 up to 2018. The second one investigates whether the internet as a new technology and a global medium follows the strongly nationalistic model of coverage in the traditional Greek media concerning the Macedonian issue or offers an alternative view on it. It is to the first question I now turn to.

Nationalism and the media. The Macedonian issue in the traditional Greek media (1992-2018)

The decision of the people of the Federal Socialist Republic of Macedonia to establish an independent state under the name ‘Republic of Macedonia’ in December 1991 resulted in the revival of the Macedonian issue in the early nineties. It also caused international diplomatic mobility, much public debate, and massive mobilization on both the Greek and the Northern Macedonian side (Skoulariki, 2007). The tension was reduced in April 1993, when the neighboring state was recognized temporarily by the United Nations Organization as ‘Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ (FYROM). The emergence of the Macedonian issue in the public sphere at that time coincided with enormous social, political, and financial changes not only in Greece, but also in Balkans and internationally as well (Armenakis et al., 1996; Skoulariki, 2007). Under these circumstances, a diplomatic/political affair was diverted into a subject of severe danger against the national identity in the public debate in Greece (Skoulariki, 2007).

The research over the coverage of the Macedonian issue at that time (1991-1993) trace numerous similarities in the political and the journalistic narratives. To begin with, the main subject of the relevant publications refers mostly to the Macedonian issue, rather than the more general topics concerning the war in former Yugoslavia and the broader context of international affairs (Armenakis et al., 1996). Since, first, the approach to the subject is strongly sentimental (Armenakis et al., 1996; Skoulariki, 2007), second, the relevant publications focus mostly on the main characteristics of the cultural nationalism (e.g. history, language, national symbols, tradition) rather than the Greek national interest (Skoulariki, 2007), third, the national ‘other’ is represented as an enemy and thus a threat against the Greek national identity (Skoulariki, 2007; Terzis, 2007), forth, the journalistic narratives are dominated by offensive adjectives against the neighbouring state and its people (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010; Skoulariki, 2007), then, it is argued that the Greek media abstain from treating the Macedonian issue as an opportunity for reasonable thinking based on political arguments and the rules of the contemporary international law (Panagiotopoulou, 1996).

The nationalistic heat in the Greek media was gradually replaced by more neutral publications from 1993 up to 1995, when negotiations took place within the United Nations Organisation which resulted in an interim accord between the two states. According to Demertzis et al. (1999), the new Agreement was not of primary importance in the Greek press. In addition, the ethnocentric approach was replaced by a rather polycentric view. Since these changes did not result from a profound transformation within the Greek press, they were attributed rather to the political circumstances, which fostered the diplomatic solution.

After the aforementioned accord (1995), the negotiations of 2008 during the NATO Summit in Bucharest gave Greek media the chance to treat the Macedonian issue not only as a ‘national issue’, but, moreover, as ‘the daily national issue’. In other words, not only was it the most

important topic among all the ‘national issues’ and international affairs in general, but it also operated as an agent of nationalistic ideology (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2013, p. 16). In addition, the traditional Greek media emphasized mainly the conflict, the suspicion and the threat, leaving no space for approach and collaboration between the two states, since the relevant accounts focused more on the topics of dispute rather than the wider political, economic, social and cultural context. Thus, according to Pleios and Frangonikolopoulos (2010), the coverage of the negotiations both in the press and on television remained ethnocentric/nationalistic, though indirectly.

It was not earlier than 2018, when the Macedonian issue returned in the Greek media narratives due to the Prespa Agreement. According to Demetriades (2018), the subject under investigation remained ‘the daily national issue’ and was once again covered in an ethnocentric and nationalistic – though indirectly – way. It is also remarkable that the media narratives of that time seem to be sometimes neutral, in comparison with the nationalistic heat of the 1991-1993 era, maybe because the Greek media took under consideration the wider political conditions which fostered the approach between Northern Macedonia and Greece.

If the Macedonian issue in general has been covered in the old Greek media so far in an ethnocentric and strongly nationalistic way, either directly or indirectly, then the time has come to examine the second question addressed above concerning whether the internet as a global medium follows the strongly nationalistic model of coverage in the old Greek media as far as the Macedonian issue is concerned or offers an alternative, more outward-looking view over the subject. As Curran et al. (2013) argue, online news is strongly national-centered, since the vast majority emphasizes domestic affairs, the financially and politically powerful states, and the neighboring countries. Additionally, the Greek websites like legacy media, cover international affairs to a limited extent and tend to relate foreign news to domestic concerns explicitly. This convergence is attributed, on the one hand, to the ‘colonization’ of the new media by the leading media conglomerates (Curran et al., 2013; Meyer & Hinchman, 2008) and, on the other hand, to the wider political and ideological context across all the media in a specific society (Curran et al., 2013). Consequently, online news over the Prespa Agreement is expected to be much like news in the old Greek media.

Based on the aforementioned studies, the main topics traced in the coverage of the Macedonian issue in the old Greek media so far are connected, first, with the notion of cultural nationalism as the dominant ideological context of the correspondent representations; second, the prevalence of the ‘national issues’ view; third, the connection of the Prespa Agreement with the crisis of the Greek national identity; fourth, the construction of the national ‘other’ as an enemy and a threat towards the Greek nation. With my research I aim, first, to detect any possible change in the topics above and, second, to find the possible reasons for these changes.

Methodological note

Based on the definition of the subject under investigation and the theoretical context I have examined so far, the main question of my research is ‘In a time of approach between Northern Macedonia and Greece, is the coverage of the Prespa Agreement in/by the Greek news websites constructed in an ethnocentric/nationalistic way? If this is the case, which notions and perceptions construct it as such?’ It is divided into two sub-questions. The first one is ‘Which are the dominant representations in my sample regarding the national identity?’ and the second is ‘Which are the mainstream representations that construct the Prespa Agreement as a political/diplomatic event in the publications under investigation?’*

The sample online articles were published within the period which started on the 12th of June 2018 – when it was announced that the two states had come up with an agreement – and finished on the 21st of June 2018 – when the Agreement was no more of top priority in the news bulletin on the Greek television (Demetriades, 2018).

With respect to the sampling strategy, I first excluded online versions of printed newspapers since I aim to examine the internet view on foreign affairs. Then, I searched for the top Greek news websites according to alexa.com (alexa.com, 2020) during the period of the research, which was the summer of 2020, since there was no possibility for access to the percentages of visits during the period mentioned above (12th of June 2018 - 21st of June 2018). Additionally, I selected news websites with accessible files of publications and a search engine. Thus, my sample consists of news247.gr, newsbeast.gr, and newsbomb.gr. I also included The Press Project, since, although is not placed high in the visits list, it covers hard news more often than the other websites do.

Having chosen the news websites, I visited them, used the search engine and entered various key words like ‘Prespa Agreement’, ‘Macedonian issue’, ‘FYROM’, ‘Skopje’, and ‘Northern Macedonia’. The results of the search are organised in Table 1. My sample thus consists of 25 articles from four Greek news websites. Since my sample derives from Greek websites and the selected articles are therefore written in Greek, I have translated the quotations in the following section into English.

Table 1: Sample of the research

	Name of website (in alphabetical order)	Number of articles (Date of publication: 12/6/2018 – 21/6/2018)
1.	news247.gr	5
2.	newsbeast.gr	6
3.	newsbomb.gr	9
4.	The Press Project	5
Total	4 news websites	25

* This paper presents a part of a wider research with four sub-questions. Due to practical considerations, however, the present effort is based only on two of them.

It was important to select the research method which best suited the aims of my work. The first step was to identify the main topics which the articles dealt with; the second was to understand which meanings and perceptions they embodied on the subjects of national identity and national ‘other’; and the third was to make connections with theory (Guest et al., 2012). Furthermore, appreciating that social reality derives from social and cultural experiences and is the result of a discursive, historical, and social construction (Burr, 2006, pp. 31–41), I chose qualitative research methods. More specifically, I applied thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) to the collection and scrutiny of my data. I also used critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) as a means of more detailed investigation.

The construction of the national identity

In this subsection my aim is to trace the prevailing accounts over national identity in the sample which I have presented above (Table 1). I then try to investigate whether these specific accounts fit with those traced in the academic debate presented in the relevant sections of my work. I choose the following quotations because in my view they are representative of the trends traced in the original sample.

Concerning the construction of national identity there are two trends traced in the sample. On the one hand, the first trend is detected in those publications which construct ‘national self’ on the base of language, history and the past as the only source of glory for the contemporary people. In other words, national identity is constructed on the base of the main ingredients of the cultural nationalism (Demertzis, 1996). Moreover, it seems that the journalistic accounts aim to the nationalistic reflexes of the Greek society, changing the issue of national identity into a pretext for political controversy (Ellinas, 2010).

The following quotation is taken from an article regarding the reactions of the opposition leader at the time in Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, after the Prespa Agreement was signed and approved by the parliament of Northern Macedonia (20/6/2018). Additionally, the article is followed by a photo of the Greek politician who is accompanied by an army officer during his visit to the Balkans War Museum at Kilkis, a small town in the Greek Macedonia (Image 1).



Image 1: K. Mitsotakis’ visit to the Balkans War Museum at Kilkis (source: <https://cdn1.bbend.net/media/news/2018/06/21/895022/main/4489105.jpg> newsbomb.gr, June 21, 2018)

Mr. Tsipras (the prime minister of Greece at the time) and the parliamentary majority ceded Macedonian nationality and Macedonian language to the neighboring country. The Prespa

Agreement is a ‘bad’ agreement as far as the name of Skopje is concerned. My party will vote against it when it will be discussed in the Greek parliament’. (newsbomb.gr, June 21, 2018)

The negative comments over the Prespa Agreement in the aforementioned quotation derive from the fact that the Greek side ceded in topics of great importance according to the cultural nationalism (Demertzis, 1996), which are the language, the name of the new state, and history. All of them contribute to the cohesion of the society and, therefore, their absence could threaten its coherence. The quotation above is representative concerning the revival of the threat, which is a dominant implication in the corresponding accounts during the era of the nationalistic heat (1991-1993) (Armenakis et al., 1996; Skoulariki, 2007; Terzis, 2007). This may be a probable reason why the quotation is accompanied by a photo (image 1) in which the Greek politician can be seen in the Balkans War Museum together with an army officer.

Moreover, although the term ‘Skopje’, first, has never been a formal one for the neighboring state as it happened with the term ‘FYROM’ and, second, lacks scientific basis, still it is used – against the international law – in the Greek public sphere as the quotation above shows. It is also remarkable that the vast majority of the examined publications are tagged with this term, and it is evidence of nationalism, though indirectly (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). Furthermore, the disapproval of the Agreement transforms an issue of foreign affairs into a subject of domestic political controversy, which is a common trend in the public debate in Greece (Ellinas, 2010; Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010).

The notion of giving up concerning the rights of the Greek side returns in the following quotation through which a very popular in the media representative of the Greek Church, Amvrosios, is given the opportunity to express himself over the Prespa Agreement.

Mournfully ring the bells of the churches in the region of Kalavrita today under the instructions of Amvrosios due to the naming of Skopje. ‘Macedonia belongs to Greece, not to Skopje’, he argues adding at the same time that accepting the Agreement is a national betrayal. (newsbeast.gr, June 13, 2018)

In the quotation above, Amvrosios, a highly placed representative of the Greek Church, expresses his opinion not over a subject of his own responsibilities, but over a pure political one. However, being engaged in foreign affairs is a highly demanding and complicated activity which demands scientific knowledge, interdisciplinary approach, careful planning, diplomatic experience, political arguments (Skoulariki, 2007), in other words knowledge and abilities not accessible to everyone. Giving the speech to popular athletes, artists and priests, rather than to politicians, diplomats, scientists specialized in relative fields and journalists with the proper knowledge, the media seem to regard them all as capable enough to contribute to shaping and applying the foreign policy. Thus, it seems that the point of utmost importance concerning the media representations of international relations is not the understanding of the affairs under investigation, but the projection of the dominant ideology in a given society – the cultural

nationalism in the Greek society in particular – through the media coverage of these affairs (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010).

The focus on the ingredients of the cultural nationalism seems to fade in the publications which refer to the politicians in favour of the Agreement. In the following quotation, Alexis Tsipras, the prime minister of the time, makes a general evaluation of the Agreement.

The Agreement takes back our history. It is sustainable and serves the mutual interest. I am addressing people who feel annoyed due to the term ‘Macedonia’ to ask themselves which they think is the patriotic national interest. When you are engaged in foreign policy, then your first priority is the interests of the country. I am not afraid of the citizens’ reactions, I respect them. Arranging a long-standing harassing issue is a pure patriotic interest. (The Press Project, June 14, 2018)

The quotation above is, in my view, a representative one regarding the transition from the cultural to the political nationalism in the coverage of the Macedonian issue. It happens, since, first, the repeated use of the term ‘interest’, either the national or the mutual one, indicates the change from the ‘national issue’ view into the ‘national interest’ sight, which is the current trend in the international relationships (Heraclides, 2001, p. 74). Second, since the interest is mutual, the national ‘other’ is neither constructed as a threat anymore, nor as a financially and politically inferior, as it was very common during the nationalistic heat of 1991-1993 (Skoulariki, 2007). On the contrary, he is treated as an equivalent partner, who enters the dialogue accepting the rules of international law. Third, the main goal of foreign policy is claimed to be the arrangement of a long-standing controversial issue rather than the conflict. Fourth, together with the notion of interest, the home nation is fueled by the notions of citizenship. In my view, such references sign an indication of the media proceeding from the cultural nationalism towards the political nationalism (Demertzis, 1996). Even though this trend has been also noticed earlier in the coverage of the Macedonian issue (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010), there is no sufficient evidence that it indicates a profound transformation of the Greek media. What can be said, however, is that it is attributed to the current political conditions, which encourage the approach between Northern Macedonia and Greece. Moreover, this change sheds light on the possibilities of the media having a minor role in shaping and applying of foreign policy, when political authorities are determined to follow a specific schedule (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010).

The construction of the Prespa Agreement as a political/diplomatic affair

In the sample websites there are two trends traced concerning this topic. On the one hand, the affair under investigation is treated in terms of political cost/political benefit. On the other hand, it is contextualized not only as a binary issue but also as a political/diplomatic affair with international dimensions.

The following quotation is a representative one regarding the first trend and is taken from an article about the reactions of the Greek opposition parties towards the Agreement. The quotation refers to a specific political party, PASOK, placed at the centre of the political spectrum.

People in charge in PASOK argue that it is now the golden opportunity to make profit against SYRIZA (the political party of the prime minister of the time). They think that, if they vote against the Agreement, Tsipras will lose a lot of his voters in the forthcoming elections and that they will gain largely. They also pay little attention to the criticism that they align with New Democracy (the leading opposition party of the time). Additionally, they don't care about the disapproval of the European Social Democrats, and they finally think that they will benefit a lot if they show a negative attitude towards the Skopje issue. (news247.gr, June 14, 2018)

According to the aforementioned quotation, the Agreement is a significant matter in the context of domestic policy and political controversy (Ellinas, 2010). In my view, what the quotation reveals is the national-centered focus of the Greek media rather than the emphasis on the international dimension of the event. This is what Pleios and Frangonikolopoulos (2010) call 'domestication of the foreign affairs' and deem as a main ingredient of the Greek media coverage of international news.

According to the second trend traced in numerous sampled articles, great emphasis is given on the importance of the Agreement not only for both signatory countries, but also for the wider region of Balkans and the complicated relations within supranational organizations like NATO, United Nations Organization, and European Union. Representatives of these organizations, leading politicians of the Balkan countries as well as of powerful ones, like United States and Germany, evaluate the Agreement very positively talking about 'a historical step', 'a historical achievement', 'a historical agreement' and 'a historical moment'. The following quotations are the titles of different websites articles:

Dithyrambs by NATO over the Agreement of FYROM (The Press Project, June 13, 2018)
 Rama: Balkans is now a better place to live in. Tsipras, Zaev, thank you (newsbeast.gr, June 13, 2018)
 The silent diplomacy of the US concerning the naming of Skopje. The Brookings Institute analysis over the name 'Democracy of Northern Macedonia' (newsbeast.gr, June 13, 2018)

In the vast majority of the sample articles, the quoted politicians treat the Agreement as a result of a common try of both Northern Macedonia and Greece. However, by giving the speech to numerous officers in favor of the Agreement and, additionally, referring to a great deal of media worldwide (e.g. Deutsche Welle, Der Spiegel, Le Monde, France Soir, France 24, Independent, Guardian, BBC, El Pais, World Street Journal, Washington Post, Associated Press, ABC, and USA Today), show, in my view, that the sample articles deem the Prespa Agreement as an affair of great international interest and importance. The following quotation is representative of this

trend: “According to Spiegel, the Agreement supports stability and security in Balkans and reduces the influence of Russia and Turkey” (news247.gr, June 13, 2018).

What I have tried to investigate in the present subsection is the construction of the Prespa Agreement as a political/diplomatic affair. According to the analysis above, the Agreement under investigation is covered, on the one hand, in terms of political benefit/political cost within the context of the political arena in Greece (Ellinas, 2010). This trend is deemed as a sign of the national-centered view of the media coverage on the foreign affairs both worldwide and in Greece (Curran et al., 2013; Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010). On the other hand, the Prespa Agreement is represented not only as an important binary issue, but also as a significant, complicated affair with multiple international dimensions (Demetriades, 2018). This may be an indication that the media deal with foreign affairs in a realistic way, when the political authority has a specific goal to achieve and moves towards it with no deviation (Pleios & Frangonikolopoulos, 2010).

Conclusion

What I have so far tried to investigate is the coverage of the Prespa Agreement in the Greek news websites through the theoretical prism of nationalism. Although it seems that the nationalistic bias is reduced in comparison with previous stages of the Macedonian issue, especially the early nineties, when strong and blatant nationalism was extensively detected in the Greek media, still the national-centred and nationalistic view remains present, though inexplicitly.

However, there are remarkable changes detected in the coverage of the subject under investigation: first, a transition from the cultural towards the political nationalism; second, a movement from the crisis of national identity towards the logic of approach between Greece and Northern Macedonia; third, a conversion from the concept of ‘national issues’ to the notion of ‘national interest’; fourth, the coverage of the Macedonian issue not only as a binary one, but also as a subject of international interest. In my view, the aforementioned changes are mainly attributed not to a profound transformation of the way media cover foreign policy affairs in Greece so far, nor to the internet as a new medium. What it seems, instead, is the fact that the media present a realistic attitude, due to the fact that the broader political conditions foster the approach between the two states. It also seems that the Greek media have realized that the subject under investigation is not the proper one to demonstrate the ideology and the discourse of nationalism anymore, in a time when other topics emerge as more appropriate for this task, such as the coverage of the refugee/migration flows.

Acknowledgement: The author would like to express her sincere thanks to the reviewers for their helpful comments on the present work.

References

- Alexa.com. (2020). Top sites in Greece. <https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/GR>
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.
- Armenakis, A., Gotsopoulos, N., Demertzis, N., Panagiotopoulou, R., & Charalambis, D. (1996). Nationalism in the Greek press: the Macedonian issue from December 1991 to April 1993. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 89, 188-231 (in Greek). <https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.692>
- Bajomi-Lázár, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Media in Third-Wave Democracies. Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. L' Harmattan.
- Burr, V. (2006). *An introduction to social constructionism*. Routledge.
- Curran, J., & Hesmondhalgh, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Media and Society*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Demertzis, N. (1996). The nationalist discourse. Ambivalent semantic field and contemporary tendencies. Sakkoulas (in Greek).
- Demertzis, N., Papathanassopoulos, S., & Armenakis, A. (1999). Media and nationalism. The Macedonian question. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 4(3), 26-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X99004003004>
- Demetriades, S. (2018). The Prespa Agreement coverage in the news bulletin of the Greek television. Unpublished Master's thesis. National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (in Greek). https://repositoryesdda.ekdd.gr/bitstream/123456789/269/1/%CE%94%CE%97%CE%9C%CE%97%CE%A4%CE%A1%CE%99%CE%91%CE%94%CE%97%CE%A3_%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%95%CE%A6%CE%91%CE%9D%CE%9F%CE%A3_%CE%A4%CE%95.pdf
- Ellinas, A. (2010). *The media and the Far Right in Western Europe, playing the nationalist card*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. Longman.
- Galasińska, A., & Galasiński, D. (2003). Discursive Strategies for coping with sensitive topics of the Other. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(5), 849-863. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183032000149604>
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., & Namey, E.E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Hallin, D., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Heraclides, A. (2001). Greece and the danger from the East. *Sideris* (in Greek).
- Kontochristou, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Identity and media in contemporary Greece*. Papazisis (in Greek).
- Madianou, M. (2008). Nation, identities and television in contemporary Greece. *Patakis* (in Greek).
- McLuhan, M. (1990). *Media: the extensions of man*. Kalvos (in Greek).
- Meyer, T., & Hinchman, L. (2002). *Media democracy: how the media colonize politics*. Polity Press.
- [News247.gr](https://www.news247.gr/). (2020). <https://www.news247.gr/>
- [Newsbeast.gr](https://www.newsbeast.gr/). (2020). <https://www.newsbeast.gr/>
- [Newsbomb.gr](https://www.newsbomb.gr/). (2020). <https://www.newsbomb.gr/>

- Panagiotopoulou, R. (1996). The construction of the national-centred stereotypes in the press regarding Macedonian issue. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 89, 232-274 (in Greek). <https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.692>
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2017). Greece: A Continuous Interplay between Media and Politicians. In Bajomi-Lázár, P. (Ed.). *Media in Third-Wave Democracies. Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. (pp. 75-89). L' Harmattan.
- Paterson, C., & Sreberny, A. (Eds.). (2015). *International news in the twenty first century*. Sideris (in Greek).
- Pleios, G. (2013). Media against crisis. The priority of the logic of elites. In Pleios, G. (Ed.). *Media and crisis*. (pp. 87-134). Papazisis (in Greek).
- Pleios, G. (Ed.). (2013). *Media and crisis*. Papazisis (in Greek).
- Pleios, G. (2011). The informative society. News in modernity. Kastaniotis (in Greek).
- Pleios, G., & Frangonikolopoulos, C. (2013). Foreign policy and the Greek media: the 'Daily National Issue'. *Media dialogues. Journal for research of the media and society*, 6(1), 9-29.
- Pleios, G., & Frangonikolopoulos, C. (2010). 'National issues' in the media. The Macedonian issue, the Greek-Turkish relations, and the Cypriot issue on television and in press. *Sideris* (in Greek).
- Qiu, J. L. (2019). The global Internet. In Curran, J., & Hesmondhalgh, D. (Eds.). *Media and Society*. (pp. 3-20). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Skoulariki, A. (2007). The public debate over nation on the occasion of the Macedonian issue (1991-1995): context, representations and media. In Kontochristou, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Identity and media in contemporary Greece*. (pp. 61-103). Papazisis (in Greek).
- Smyrnaio, N. (2018). *Internet oligopoly: the corporate takeover of our digital world*. Emerald Publishing.
- Snowden, E. (2019). *Permanent record*. Metropolitan Books.
- Strömbäck, J., & Esser, F. (2014). Mediatization of Politics: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives. *Journalism Studies*, 15(3), 243-255.
- Terzis, G. (2007). The construction of controversial identities. The case of the Greek press. In Kontochristou, M. (Ed.). *Identity and media in contemporary Greece*. (pp. 39-60). Papazisis (in Greek).
- The Press Project. (2020). <https://thepressproject.gr/>
- Tiliç, D.L. (2000). Journalism in Greece and Turkey. 'I'm ashamed, but I'm a journalist'. Papazisis (in Greek).
- Zeri, P., Tsekeris, C., & Tsekeris, T. (2018). Investigating the Macedonia Naming Dispute in the Twitter Era: Implications for the Greek Identity Crisis. *GreeSE – Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, 127. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Assets/Documents/Publications/GreeSE-Papers/GreeSE-No127.pdf>