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Foreign Policy and the Greek Media: the ‘Daily National Issue’

Professor **GEORGE PLEIOS**,

Chair of the Department of Communication and Mass Media
at the University of Athens

Assistant Professor **CHRISTOS A. FRANGONIKOLOPOULOS**,

School of Journalism and Mass Communications,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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ABSTRACT

Greek foreign policy affairs are codified within and outside the media as “national issues”. Previous work on the subject, as well as our extensive bibliographical and empirical research (in television and the press) shows that although interna-

tional affairs are covered to a limited extent on the Greek news, this is not the case for the so-called “national issues”. Since the mid-1970s, and in particular after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, these not only prevail catalytically in the coverage of international/external affairs, but also supply the “daily national issue”. This phenomenon may be defined as the condition whereby the tension, frequency and hierarchical position of one “national issue” is reduced, either for political or communicative reasons, and replaced by a different one, which not only enjoys an advantageous and predominant position in the content and coverage of international news, but also operates as a conduit of nationalist ideology. At the end of the naughties, however, the ‘daily national issue’, and the degree of its manifestation in the news, appears to be larger in private television and smaller in newspapers and public television. Understanding, therefore, the phenomenon and the intensity of the “daily national issue” in the Greek media, requires an examination not only of the Greek nationalist discourse and its manifestations in the coverage of foreign policy, but also of the factors related with the characteristics and categories of the media.

KEYWORDS: *Greek media and foreign policy, media and ‘national issues’, media and nationalism, communications.*

INTRODUCTION

Greek foreign policy is characterized by an intense anxiety of in-security (Tsoukalis, 1997, pp. 280-281). Political and public discourse is dominated by the emphasis not on „national interests” or “issues of national interest” but on “just” and “deservingly national issues” - in particular with reference to Cyprus, Turkey¹ and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)² - (Heracleides, 2001, p. 74). The nationalist perspective of the political system facilitates the reproduction and reinforcement of an ethnocentric discourse, sustaining a representation of Greece as a nation under “threat” from the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the USA, and its neighboring countries (Turkey, FYROM). In addition, the media play a significant 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 (Frango-

¹ This is attributed to Greece’s „memory” of traumatic experiences resulting from a long, and in some cases painful, process of nation building (Asia Minor 1922), as well as from the constant, as far as the perception of external “threat” is concerned, display of Turkey’s revisionist stance in the Aegean (from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, onwards).

² The development of bilateral relations between Greece and FYROM began with the signing of the Interim Agreement on 13th September 1995. The issue of the country’s name, however, remains unresolved. The Greek side calls for the adoption of a definitive composite name with geographical qualification of the term Macedonia, for all purposes and for all uses.

nikolopoulos, 2007, 2010). As the Anan Plan for Cyprus in 2004 indicates³, the media reflect and feed public opinion, perpetuating and reinforcing the tension by putting considerable pressure on the government to react “tough”⁴ (Panagiotou, 2006).

Thus, with the aim of analyzing the content and significance attributed by the media to the so-called “national issues” towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, we undertook, together with the Laboratory of Social Research on the Mass Media (University of Athens, Department of Communication and Media), a research project entitled “International Relations and Foreign Policy in Greek television and Press.” Our research spanned from September 1st 2007 to April 30th 2008, during which time we collected and analyzed 729 television news and 1.803 articles on external, foreign policy and international issues. Television news were selected from six national broadcasters, four from the private sector (Mega, Alpha, Alter and ANT1) and two from the public sector (ET3, NET). Newspaper articles were collected from national presses covering the entire political spectrum. These were: *To Vima*, *Rizospastis*, *Kathimerini*, *Eleutheros Tipos*, *Ethnos* and *Augi*. Our research method was content analysis combined with discourse analysis, conducted on the basis of two protocols, one for television and one for the press. The television protocol included 213 variables, whereas that of the press 207. The data were entered into SPSS and then analysed. Concisely, these variables dealt with the following:

- the general and specific thematic content of the news stories/articles,
- the countries and organizations (regional and international) involved,
- their source (internal, external) and national origin,
- the “talking heads” that commented on and discussed issues of international relations and foreign policy, as well as their political and institutional identity,
- the position of the journalists, the politicians and other actors on the presentation and discussion of the news (i.e. what they thought and how they portrayed the news),
- the verbal-figural pattern of the news stories/articles.

Bearing that in mind, and for the analysis that will follow, we would like to note that during our research, besides the official visit of former Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis to Turkey (January 2008), the first such visit of a Greek Prime Minister since 1959, the foreign policy issue⁵ which dominated the public debate and the news was the „name” of FYROM, and in particular: (a) the negotiations of the UN’s mediator with the representatives of Greece and FYROM, (b) the proposals of the UN’s mediator on the „name” issue, and (c) the NATO Summit in Bucharest (April

³ The plan dealt with the reunification and coexistence of the two Cypriot communities within the same state entity in the form of a functional and viable bi-zonal, bi-communal confederation. The plan was subjected to two separate referenda, and was rejected by 75.83% of the Greek Cypriots.

⁴ Certainly the Greek media are not solely responsible (Dogan Tilic, 2000; Ozunes and Terzis, 2000)

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2008), where, and in accordance with the Greek position, it was unanimously decided that FYROM not only complies with the principle of good neighborly relations, but also reaches an agreement on the “name” issue as a necessary prerequisite for accession to NATO. In Greece, this development was greeted as a success⁶ as it was argued that it allows for the adoption of a definitive composite name with geographical qualification of the term Macedonia, for all purposes and for all uses, so as to avoid confusion with the Greek Macedonia.

1. WHAT IS THE “DAILY NATIONAL ISSUE”?

As it emerges from our research, international affairs are covered to a limited extent on the Greek news. However, this is not the case for the so-called “national issues”. This certainly is not a Greek phenomenon, yet, in Greece, it acquires significant dimensions as “*national issues*” not only prevail catalytically in the coverage of international and external affairs, but also supply the “*daily national issue*”.

The “*daily national issue*” reflects a particular characteristic of the media in Greece when covering issues of international and external affairs. Generally, the phenomenon can be understood as the elevation of one foreign policy matter-defined as a “*national issue*”- to the highest position of coverage, exposure and publicity in the news. In particular, the phenomenon is associated, firstly, with the preponderance of one “national issue” among external news or the totality of news; secondly, with the replacement of one foreign policy matter by another that is also defined as a “national issue”.

During the 1970s, the “national issue” that dominated the Greek media was Cyprus, while in the 1980s it was Cyprus and Greek-Turkish relations that drew media attention. Media coverage, particularly press coverage, occurred mainly within the context of political nationalism as a result of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. In addition, and given the absence of electronic media in the private sector, Greek public broadcasting reiterated official governmental policy and “*rallied behind the flag*” (Mitropoulos, 2003, pp. 283-285). During the early 1990s, following the declaration of independence of FYROM under the name “Republic of Macedonia”, the “Macedonian issue” acquired a central position among the “national issues” in the Greek media (Armenakis et al., 1996; Panagiotopoulou, 1996; Demertzis and Armenakis, 1998; Skoulariki, 2007). In the late nineties, and following the official inauguration of diplomatic relations between Greece and FYROM in 1995, the “Macedonian issue” lost the primacy it enjoyed in the national news (Demertzis et al., 1999). The dominant “national issue” was Greek-Turkish relations especially after the Imia Crisis of 1996⁷ which brought the two countries at the brink of war

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⁷ It started off on 25th December 1995, when a Turkish cargo boat ran around the Imia islet. The Turkish captain refused assistance from the Greek authorities claiming that he was within Turkish territorial

(Panagiotou, 2005). The introduction of private electronic media in the 1990s, operating within a fully commercialized communication system in the naughties (Mitropoulos, 2003, pp. 291-292), further accentuated the phenomenon of the “*daily national issue*”. An analysis of 1.879 news items in eight commercial and public television broadcasters towards the end of 2004 (Pleios et al., 2005), and given the negotiations of Turkey with the EU on the so-called Accession Framework document, showed that almost two thirds of the total foreign news were devoted to Greek-Turkish relations, one fifth to the “Macedonian issue” and less than one tenth to the “Cypriot issue”.

2. CULTURE, NATIONALISM AND THE ‘DAILY NATIONAL ISSUE’

The ‘daily national issue’, we could argue, is a phenomenon associated with countries of the “periphery” which do not play a protagonist role in international relations, and are also characterized by a strong presence of tradition in politics and society. Theoretical analysis and empirical research has shown that there is a significant difference in the issues that the media of the “centre” cover, in comparison with the media that operate in the “semi-periphery” and “periphery”. In “big” countries international developments and especially those considered to be very significant for the international system, occupy the first or one of the leading positions in the media (Wu, 2004; Soroka, 2003; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1984; Cohen, 1963). In “small” countries that play a secondary role in the international system, the content of the media is mainly on the multilateral and bilateral relations of their region and geographical neighborhood, the so-called “regionalization” of news (Hjarvard, 2001).

Greek foreign policy affairs and in particular those defined as “national issues”, are related to and dependent on the geopolitical position of the country, a reality that is transcribed to the media. External and foreign policy news concentrate primarily on the neighborhood of the country, as well as on the relations with the EU (Pleios, 2009). This contributes to the introversion and “domestication” of the news (Clausen, 2004), particularly in Greek television. According to Papathanasopoulos (1997, pp. 279-293) in 1985 the percentage of international news covered by Greece’s state-owned television ET1 was 23,7% to increase only to 33.4% by 1996. In 1993, in one of Greece’s influential private television stations Mega, the percentage of interna-

waters. On December 29 a verbal note was sent to the Greek embassy in Ankara by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and for a while the two sides were engaged in a silent dispute regarding the status of the islet. However, the diplomatic activities of the two countries were aired by the Greek commercial TV station ANT1 on January 24th 1996. The newspaper Hurriyet arrived on the island with a team of journalists and photographers, asking the mayor to remove the Greek flag and hoist the Turkish one. Hurriyet published a front page editorial depicting the Turkish journalists removing the Greek flag on the very next day, to which the Greek media replied. By January 31, the Greek and Turkish Naval forces stood opposite to 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.

tional news was 18,5% (and 15,5% in 1996). Indicative are also the results of our research. In the Greek media (television and newspapers) almost two thirds of the news are devoted to internal issues and one third to external news (international and Greek foreign policy), with the vast amount of the external news devoted to Greek foreign policy “non-national” and “national issues”, (70,3% for television and 61,6% for the newspapers). Inevitably, therefore, the smaller the number for external and international news, the larger will be the amount for Greek foreign policy, especially “national issues”, thus also supplying and enhancing the “daily national issue”.

Furthermore, in societies like the Greek one, which are characterized by the strong presence of tradition, especially in the area of political culture, the dominant form of nationalism is that of cultural nationalism and the romantic perception of the nation (Demertzis, 1996, pp.236-244). This was particularly evident during the 1990s, as the events associated with FYROM, bilaterally and multilaterally (EU, NATO and UN), cultivated perceptions associated with the prism of “Greek Exceptionalism”. At the core of this ideological position is the “*culture of the under-dog*”, basic traits of which are introversion, xenophobia, siege mentality, and a prevalence for conspiracy- related approaches and interpretations of international developments (Ioakeimidis, 2007). Such discourses mold the Greek population to believe that although they are “superior”, history has been playing tricks with them and they have been permanently betrayed by “foreign allies”.

Cultural nationalism, thus, has a permanent presence in the understanding and coverage of foreign policy. It is linked with the idea of the nation per se, forming the framework within which foreign policy is placed and negotiated. This nationalist ideology does not share the vertical character of political ideology, like liberalism or socialism, but is line with a perception according to which national identity is not only above but also excludes all other ideologies. Nationalism, therefore, operates horizontally, penetrating all political ideologies (Smith, 1991, pp. 143-178; Demertzis, 1996, pp. 56-83, 143-145). Thus, there are no “national issues” but issues in foreign policy that promote and project the nationalist prism. These issues not only alternate on the political and media agenda, but also contribute to the phenomenon of the “*daily national issue*”.

Foreign policy issues, therefore, do not have to be posed in order to instigate a nationalist approach. The nationalist ideology and discourse preexists, contributing not only to the definition of foreign policy issues as “national issues”, but also to their elevation and preponderance among the external, international or any other kind of news. Thus, the degree to which the tension, frequency and hierarchical position of one “national issue” is reduced, either for political or communicative reasons, and then replaced by another one, not only it enjoys an advantageous and dominant position in the media, but also operates as a conduit of nationalist ideology.

Culture and ideology set the notional context within which foreign policy is perceived by the media (Wanda et al., 2004; Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 2004; Ström-

bäck, 2008; Shanahn and Morgan, 1999, pp. 233-237). The media project foreign policy and the events related to it within an ideological perception and cultural framework (Hall, 1980; Gamson et al., 1992). Galasińska and Galasiński (2003) stress that in international relations the language or term used for reference to other states is not neutral but ideologically burdened. Fowler (1991) argues that media language shapes ideas and perceptions. Thus, the use of the term “national issues” as opposed to “foreign policy issues”, refers to a hostile or conflictual relationship with countries that “threaten” with different means and degrees the identity, territorial integrity and sovereign rights of the Greek nation-state. Suffering from introversion, the media not only reinforce the reactionary defensiveness and victimization mentality of the Greek public, but also its ambiguity towards European and international affairs. The consequences are severe for both the construction of the context in which foreign policy issues are discussed, as well for the content of the public discourse in foreign policy issues. Indeed, the first is under pressure from what is on the media agenda, while the latter creates a fear to pursue and accept negotiated and conciliatory solutions to long- standing problems with Greece’s neighbors.

Regarding Greek-Turkish relations, and with specific reference to the crisis of 1987⁸, Giallourides (2000, pp. 281-312) and Panagiotou (2005, pp. 112-189) have shown that the Greek papers created emotions of insecurity and threat with emphasis on Turkey’s “neo-ottoman” and “provocative” foreign policy. The crisis was analysed only in line with the Greek position and Turkey was constructed as a diachronic “danger”, with no respect for international law (Panagiotou, 2005, pp. 196). Such coverage fostered the feeling of “injustice” and “betrayal” of Greece, (Panagiotou, 2005, pp. 197-119) and presented Greek-Turkish relations as an issue that concerns the “survival” and “honor” of the nation. The media rather than reducing the dynamic of the conflict strengthened it (Giallourides, 2001, pp.271), creating as a result an offensive and non-negotiable nationalist position (Panagiotou, 2005, p.191).

On the “Macedonian issue” during the 1990s, research has shown that the papers, in their overwhelming majority, adopted ethnocentric views. The issue was covered with an introvert and nationalist approach, with 55% of the articles pivoting mainly on matters of national identity, tradition and history (Armenakis et al., 1993; Panagiotopoulou, 1996). FYROM was perceived as a “threat” to the territorial integrity of Greece and the national identity of the “Greek Macedonians”. The “Macedonian issue” was projected as the recycled conflict of Greece as a historical and ti-

⁸ t all began in March 1987, 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 licenses to the state owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation in international waters near the Greek island of Samothrace. On 28 March the Turkish survey ship “Sismik” under military naval escort set sail for Aegean Sea and the Greek and Turkish ships were placed under alert. In the end the threat of hostilities were averted when Turkish Prime Minister Ozal declared that “Sismik” would operate only in Turkish territorial waters, while Greece likewise declared that no drilling would take place in disputed waters.

meless entity within a threatening regional environment, a reality that called for a “*united national front*” and an emphasis on national identity over all other political or social identities (Skoulariki. 2007).

During the Kosovo crisis of 1999 the main topical concerns that dominated the Greek media coverage did not differ from the foci in other international media (media stories/analyses around the issues of military operations and refugees). The framing of the news and the interpretations of the developments, however, were different. As a result of the Orthodox confession, shared with the Serbs, media reports were much more concentrated on the Serbs ordeals than on the suffering of the Croats and Bosnian-Muslims. Prior to the Kosovo crisis the media had also created “moral panics” in news items regarding the formation of the “Islamic arch” 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 expenses were paid by Saudi Arabia. During the Kosovo crisis the media did not discuss the massacres committed by the Serbs. 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. 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” 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 (Kondopoulou, 2002; Tsagarousianou, 1999; Michas, 2002; Tiropoli, 2003).

Characteristic is also the position of the media during the crisis of Imia. A dominant characteristic of this crisis in the press was the understanding of foreign policy as part of internal policy (Alexopoulos, 1999; Panagiotou, 2005, p.294). In particular, the Greek political system was criticized for not having developed a “national” strategy, as opposed to Turkey’s long-term, consistent and “barbarian” foreign policy (Panagiotou, 2005, pp. 296). Indeed, 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 actor 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 during night time, as that would not allow his station to have clear pictures of the hostilities in the Aegean! (Predenteris, 1999, p. 97).

The decision of Greece in 1999 to support Turkey's candidacy for accession to EU, as shall be noted below, has 'dumped' some characteristics of this approach, especially in the press (Panagiotou, 2005, pp. 407-496). This "change", however, does not mean that the Greek media have been infiltrated with the logic of the peaceful settlement of Greek-Turkish disputes. They follow than lead the political leadership of the country, supporting the position of the government that the involvement of the EU in the relations of the two countries will end up justifying Greece. In fact, as the study of Panagiotou (2006) shows on the Anan Plan in 2004, the Greek press developed a bipartisan and united front that insisted on a dynamic and offensive policy towards Turkey. Such coverage not only influenced the reaction of public opinion, with 65% to 70% upholding a negative position, but also reproduced the "tough" and non-negotiable nationalistic approach that characterized the events of 1987 and 1996.

According to the results of our research, it was the "Macedonian issue" which occupied a position of supremacy in TV news in 2007-2008, with 80,10% of the total foreign news, followed by Greek-Turkish relations (14,80%) and the "Cypriot issue" (5,10%). Significant are also our findings in the ratio of Greek foreign policy news and other international issues. Specifically, in television over two thirds of the news (70,30%) concentrated on Greek foreign policy, followed by only 29,70% on international politics. This not only contributed to the high level of coverage the "daily national issue" enjoyed, but also instigated and exacerbated media attention to "national issues" at large. While towards the end of 2004, "national issues" occupied middle positions on the agenda of television news bulletins (Pleios et al., 2005) in 2007-2008 they became increasingly important as a result of the negotiations on FYROM's name.

Regarding the newspapers, however, the results of our research indicate that the amount of articles devoted to "non-national issues" (63, 20%) was nearly double the amount of those for "national issues" (36,80%), as compared to 35,50% and 64,50% for television. It emerges, therefore, that the nationalist intensity was smaller in the coverage of the papers. In addition, it is also evident that Greek-Turkish relations and the "Cypriot issue" not only received more coverage in the newspapers, but that the "Macedonian issue" also received a relatively smaller coverage in relation to television news, facilitating therefore the reduction of the nationalist intensity in the coverage of Greek foreign policy and the "daily national issue". Specifically, our research on newspaper coverage shows that 63% of the total foreign news was devoted to the "Macedonian issue", 23.2% to Greek-Turkish relations and 13.8% to the "Cypriot issue". As in the news of Greek television, however, there appears to be a relation between the amount of news devoted to "national issues" and the amount of

news for Greek foreign policy. Thus, in the total amount of articles for international news, the percentage of articles for Greek foreign policy (61,20%) was greater than that for international affairs (38,40%), but smaller than the corresponding one for television news.

It is clear, therefore, that the foreign policy coverage of the presses examined was and is not only influenced by current events. Theoretical analysis and empirical research has shown that it is also influenced by factors related to the operation of the media, such as economics and ownership status (Maning, 2007, pp.143-151; Hermann and Chomsky, 1988), and the interplay between the logic of politics and the logic of the medium (Eldridge, 1995; Bennett, 1999, pp. 221-260; Thussu, 2003; Schechter 2003; Meyer and Hinchman, 2008, pp:141-146; Tunchman, 1973; Tunstall, 1971, 1993). Understanding the phenomenon of the “daily national issue”, thus, also requires not only an examination of the ethnocentric discourse and its manifestations in the coverage of foreign policy, but also of the characteristics and category of the medium.

3. CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORY OF THE MEDIUM AND THE ‘DAILY NATIONAL ISSUE’

The media coverage and content of foreign policy is not only the result of the prevailing nationalistic discourse, but also of the political inclination, the “internal” or “external pluralism” that characterizes the medium (Hallin & Manchini 2004). In newspapers the logic of politics is expected to be present to a greater extent than the logic of nationalism. Usually, political nationalism is more in line (not absolutely but comparatively) with the characteristics of newspapers, as they maintain a specific political and ideological orientation. On the contrary, it appears that the cultural nationalistic and ethnocentric discourse is more acute in the electronic media, especially television, as it is directed to the wider public, avoiding a clear political and ideological stance.

Bearing that in mind, and for the purpose of our remaining analysis, we can distinguish four basic ways of media coverage when dealing with foreign policy affairs as “national issues”:

- coverage in which the ideological and nationalist prepossession is direct and intense, as with the use of the term “national issues”;
- coverage where the nationalist prepossession is indirect, expressed in the form of mild repudiation, the so-called “disclaimer” phenomenon (Van Dijk, 1998), with the use of terms that hide the “national” but codify foreign policy issues into “Macedonian”, “Aegean” and “Cypriot”;
- coverage which tries to alleviate nationalist prepossessions with the use of neutral terms and enunciations (e.g. “international” “European” or “Balkan issue”, “international law” or “regional” or “multilateral issue”);

– coverage that is in line with the logic of diplomatic correctness, where foreign policy issues are treated as “bilateral” (e.g. “Greek-Turkish relations” or “Greece’s relations with FYROM”).

According to the results of our research in 2007-2008, the media and in particular newspaper news, appeared to be in line with the foreign policy position of the government and the political system. The media accepted the political logic and strategy of the government, especially on relations with Turkey and FYROM. On Turkey, that was not politically current during the period of our research, the nationalist prepossession appeared to be smaller. On FYROM, which happened to be politically current during the period of our research, the ethnocentric-nationalist prepossession was more intense, indicating that the nationalist discourse of the media was preserved by focusing on a current and „national issue” of foreign policy.

Specifically, the majority of television news appeared to conceal the dominant ethnocentric approach with the use of indirect and mild references. This, as noted above, is the phenomenon of mild “disclaimers” in the news. Although it contributes to the mitigation of the intensity and manifestation of the ethnocentric prism, at the same time it is also a way of articulating the nationalistic perception with the use of other terms (Goodhardt et al., 1987; Galasińska and Galasiński, 2003, p. 852). Thus, and although the use of eager ethnocentric terms in television news, such as “national issues”, was low, at the same time low was also the use of neutral and diplomatically correct terms, especially on the “Macedonian issue”. Whereas the term “national issue” was used only in 34 stories, the term “Macedonia issue” was used in 153 stories. Reference to FYROM as an international or European issue was only made in 42 stories.

In the papers, on the other hand, there appeared to be a significant reduction in the ethnocentric perception of foreign policy. The percentage of the articles that were characterized by a neutral and diplomatic correct position was 54% for the “Macedonian issue”, 61,70% for Greek-Turkish relations and 51,70% for the “Cypriot issue”. The neutral references, especially on Greek-Turkish relations, indicate the strong influence of political logic as opposed to cultural nationalism. The newspapers, as they are characterized more by political logic, seem to have adapted to a greater extent to the changing positions of the political system on foreign policy. This data confirms the results of previous research on the subject (Lazarou, 2009), according to which the Greek newspapers gradually have begun to adopt a more “mild” line, supporting and mediating the efforts of Greek-Turkish rapprochement. The newspapers, thus, appear to be playing an important role in facilitating a more neutral and multifaceted examination of Greek foreign policy⁹.

⁹ Greece’s and Turkey’s governments are convinced that Greek-Turkish rapprochement on issues of soft policy and Turkey’s adaption to the community acquis as she moves towards Europe will contribute to improving bilateral relations. Greek-Turkish cooperation is developing and aims at consolidating a climate of confidence and collaboration in a considerable number of areas of mutual interest, such as

In addition, an important factor of the media when presenting foreign policy is the morphology of their content, their verbal structure (Bennett, 1999, pp.105-148). A special position in the verbal construction occupies the logic of infotainment and dramatization. Dramatization and the norms of entertainment, associated with the commercial logic of the media (Fairclough, 1994), penetrate the coverage of all foreign policy matters. This not only allows for the frequent alternation of the advantageous position a “national issue” enjoys among foreign and international news, but may also contribute to a condition whereby all “national issues” are of equal significance. This tendency is likely to be greater in television, and especially in private television, where the strategy of dramatization is more intense (Papathanasopoulos, 2001).

According to our research in 2007-2008, public television seems to attribute less attention to “national issues”. Private/commercial television devotes greater attention to “national issues”. Greek public television are penetrated to a greater extent with political logic, whereas private/commercial television more by the logic of the medium. In particular, the private and public state-owned television stations appeared to devote the same importance and more or less the same amount of news to FYROM (120 stories in private TV and 114 in public TV), as compared to the relations with Turkey and the “Cypriot issue” (28 for Turkey and 2 for Cyprus in private TV, 15 for Turkey and 13 for Cyprus in public TV). It should, however, be noted that the number of news they represented (120 and 114) is drawn from four private and two public television stations. Thus, in public television the coverage of Greece’s relations with FYROM was much greater, almost double, in comparison to private television. This can be explained not only as the result of the greater influence political logic exercises in the news of public television, but also because of the support public television traditionally displays to the policy of the government. For the same reasons, the attention of the public television is significantly greater than that of private television on the “Cyprus issue”, although it was of low “commercial” value during the period of our research.

Regarding the newspapers, our research data also indicates that papers that carry a more infotainment logic (Eleutheros Tipos, Ethos) had a greater number of articles on the “Cypriot issue” (37 articles) and Greek-Turkish relations (70 articles) in contrast to “serious” newspapers (To Vima, Kathimerini, Rizospastis and Augi), with 22 articles on the “Cypriot issue” and 24 on Greek-Turkish relations. These differences should be explained as the result of the inclination of “serious” papers to rally behind the policy of the government and to embrace a “soft” diplomatic approach towards the resolution of Greece’s disputes with her neighbors (Lazarou 2009). On the other hand, the greater presence of Greek-Turkish relations in Eleutheros Tipos and Ethnos

cultural relations, tourism, environment, combating crime, economic and trade relations, energy, agriculture. A large number of high-level meetings have recently taken place between Greek and Turkish officials, in the hope that the broadening and deepening of bilateral cooperation, as well as the frank exchange of views will create the conditions for overcoming the frictions of many decades.

is not only the result of their greater infotainment inclination, but also of the fact that they appear to adopt the positions of Greek cultural nationalism, at the core of which for a long time have been the turbulent relations of Greece with Turkey (Panagiotou, 2005, pp. 497-517, Kourkoulas, 1998, Pappas, 1999).

CONCLUSION

The position of Greece in the “periphery” of the international system encourages the media to concentrate primarily on the bilateral relationships of the country with neighboring countries. This not only contributes to the introversion of the news, but as indicated in the data of our and previous research, also allows for the dominant presence of the so-called “national issues” in the content of the media, especially television. The introversion of Greek news, as well as the use of the term “national issues”, however, is also owned to the intense presence of the nationalist ideology in the understanding of Greece’s foreign policy. This contributes to the phenomenon of the “daily national issue”, the preponderance of one or more “national issues” in the public debate and the coverage of the media according to political and diplomatic developments.

At the same time, despite the prominence of the so-called “national issues”, there also appears to be a gradual reduction of the nationalist intensity, a steady shift from cultural to political nationalism. This shift is connected not only with political logic, but also with the rallying of the media, and in particular the press and public television, behind the positions of the political leadership on foreign policy in the naughtiest. Although this is a gradual and subtle transformation, following than leading government policy change, it could facilitate the conditions whereby the media may operate as a mediating factor in the realization of a public discourse which downplays the “daily national issue” and reduces the nationalist intensity from which it originates. This is important considering Greece’s, current unprecedented financial crisis, which has caused high unemployment rates and instability, reigniting social and political conflicts, violent protests and riots, adding a volatile dimension to the countries’ economic downturn. Increasing insecurity and deterioration of living conditions facilitate the hardening of identity and framing of the “enemy”. As identities harden, differences become more pronounced, and all sides fall back on stereotypes and the stigmatization of the adversary through language or actions intended to dehumanize, thereby, justifying hostile actions against the “Other”; the asylum seeker, the refugee the immigrant, the supporters of other ideologies, the political extremists but also the “Other” European nations. In fact, the crisis has triggered intra-European tensions, Europhobia, the propagation of negative stereotypes and the rebirth of Europe’s North-South divide. This reality not only affects Greece’s relationship with third countries, mainly with regard to the immigration influx, particularly in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and Asia, but also in relation with traditional conflicts (e.g. Greece-Turkey, Greece-FYROM).

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