

This is the **Accepted version** of the academic journal *The Communication Review*

The **Final Published PDF/EPUB Version** can be found here:

Karyotakis, M.-A. (2022). Framing the Macedonian Name Dispute in Greece: Nationalistic Journalism and the Existential Threat. *The Communication Review*, 25(3–4), 152–180. Copyright © 2021 (Routledge & Taylor & Francis Publications)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2022.2129125>

Framing the Macedonian Name Dispute in Greece: Nationalistic Journalism and the Existential Threat

In the Macedonian Name Dispute (MND), the Greek media promoted the country's main nationalistic narrative that treats the compromise between Greece and its neighboring country (now-named North Macedonia) as a national crisis that could even lead to an existential threat to Greece and its people. To investigate the recent events related to the MND, this study examined 615 news articles throughout 2018 and 2019 to identify how the news media framed the events associated with the MND and the Prespes Agreement. The results revealed that most news stories framed the MND incidents as a political or mobilization tool of the public and an existential threat to Greece. Furthermore, the news coverage showed that several news stories employed the patriotic and nationalistic frame to support or undermine the country's then-government. These findings offer insights into the use of territorial name disputes as a communication tool, how news articles and journalism promote the idea of an existential threat connected to the MND, and the alarming non-critical news coverage that could lead to a further democratic backsliding of Greece.

Keywords: existential threat; framing, Macedonia; nationalism; Prespes Agreement

Introduction

The Macedonian Name Dispute (MND) is considered one of the oldest name disputes in the world as it is connected with the Macedonian Question, the collapse of Yugoslavia, and the emergence of the nation-state called at this moment Republic of North Macedonia. The dispute is around 150 years old, and in the last 30 years, it was developed between Greece and North Macedonia. The main problem was that Greece did not want to give its neighboring country the name Macedonia, as it is an essential part of the Greek cultural heritage. By agreeing to name Greece's neighboring country Macedonia, the Greeks would have lost essential identity elements. For instance, the heritage of Alexander the Great would not be anymore a monopoly of Greece.

Moreover, in the country's national narrative, there could even be territorial losses despite the plethora of agreements securing the borders of both states (Heraclides, 2019).

The MND seemed to be solved at the beginning of 2019 with the ratification of the "Prespes Agreement" that gave Greece's neighboring country the name Macedonia. This accord was perceived as national treason by several prominent news outlets and provoked many prominent demonstrations. Moreover, the government that realized the accord was led by the radical left party called Syriza (2015-2019). Syriza became the main rival of New Democracy's (ND) right-wing party taking the position of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) in 2012 as Greece's second most popular party after the unprecedented financial crisis that shook the country and its political system in 2008. The Greeks believed that the "Prespes Agreement" was the realization of the existential threat (loss of Macedonia's monopoly) that they were so afraid of. Subsequently, they empowered ND in the local, European, and national elections in 2019. ND won all the elections, and despite its claims for altering the "treacherous Prespes Agreement", nothing changed. On the contrary ND started promoting the "Prespes Agreement" and the stronger ties with North Macedonia (Kitsantonis, 2018; Antonopoulos, 2020b; Amna.gr, 2019; Ekathimerini.com, 2019; Hall & Hope, 2019).

After the win of the national elections, the new government of ND, with the help of several news outlets, started to hide the truth, as Kyriakos Mitsotakis and ND were eventually in favor of the agreement that gave the neighboring country a part of Greece's identity (Macedonian, name, language, and ethnicity). Furthermore, there seemed to be several cases of censoring press releases, altering facts, and forgetting to report issues related to the MND (Kanellopoulos, 2020; Michalopoulos, 2019; 2020; Left.gr, 2019). As a result, it can be argued that it was not an accident that throughout

2018 and 2019, several influential news outlets were promoting statements like those mentioned above.

The dissemination of the non-solution for the MND in order to support the downfall of the then-government is linked with the electoral and mobilization power associated with the MND. From the 1990s until the national elections of 2019, almost all of the most prominent politicians and parties have exploited it to gain significant electoral power. Furthermore, the MND has provoked some of the most massive demonstrations in the history of the country, including probably the largest one on 14th February 1992, in which around a million Greeks gathered in Thessaloniki to protest in favour of the Greekness of Macedonia. In addition, the protesters were arguing that the people of North Macedonia were trying to steal parts of the Greek identity (Heraclides, 2019).

In the Greek state's main nationalistic narrative, Macedonia can only be Greek, and, thus, the majority of the news media have not actually challenged this narrative (Demertzis et al., 1999; Ellinas, 2010). After all, the Greek news media are known for low professionalism and are not keen on preserving their watchdog role. In addition, the Greek media system is characterized by a constant interplay between the media and the politicians based on clientelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Papathanassopoulos, 2017).

Clientelism is a phenomenon that has become more prominent around the world, as it can play a decisive role in the democratic backslide and the form of new regimes, such as despotisms (Keane, 2020; Chowdhury & Keane, 2021). Adding to this, Greece is considered one of the most prominent and successful examples of nationalism in creating an independent nation-state worldwide (Smith, 2010). Nationalism is used as a media and populist tool for mobilizing the public through different tactics, such as spreading hate and creating existential threats (securitized issues) (Karyotakis, 2021a).

However, there is no research focusing on the news coverage of the recent events of the MND that led to the so-called “Prespes Agreement” that was received as a solution to this everlasting dispute by many prominent global actors such as Germany, the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), to name a few (Vankovska, 2020). MND has been used for many years as a tool for electoral power (Ellinas, 2010). As a result, the current study investigates how news articles and journalism promote the idea of an existential threat connected to the MND and a dominant narrative that is strongly associated with Greek nationalism.

It is known that the news media can empower a group’s ethnic identity through the dissemination of nationalistic news stories promoting the idea of a unique nation that is different from any other (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007). Nevertheless, the solution to the MND with the “Prespes Agreement” seemed to empower Greece’s position in the Balkans. For example, Greece started policing the airspace of North Macedonia (Kampouris, 2019).

Therefore, the current study explores the news media’s frames (615 news articles from 127 news outlets) of the recent events associated with the MND through a qualitative interpretative method of framing analysis as such an approach “examines the keywords, metaphors, narratives, and so on, in context of the text as a whole” (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2008, p. 369). In particular, the manuscript focuses on the Securitization Theory (existential threat), nationalism, and nationalistic journalism, to explain the dominant frames and topics of three different periods (14-28 January 2018, 19 May-3 June 2019, and 30 June-14 July 2019).

The Importance of the MND

The MND belongs to the territorial disputes that are developed between state-actors.

Because territories are essential parts of the nation-states' dominant nationalistic narratives, the countries usually go against each other. As a result, they are considered a powerful resource for the mobilization of people. Those disputes are usually preserved in the people's collective memory to remind them of how vicious the neighboring countries are. It is not a surprise that their use can provoke extreme actions, such as a war between the conflicting sides. Nevertheless, these disputes are used as proxies for realizing other more essential goals. The territorial claims are not the main reason for waging war or provoking public rage (Dunbar, 2000; Chubin & Tripp, 1993; Hayton, 2017).

One such recent example can be the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Both countries wanted to secure the disputed area for reasons that are not related so much to their nationalistic narratives. Therefore, that is one reason why there is substantial interference by Iran, Russia, and Turkey in that particular conflict (Waal, 2010; Cornell, 1998). Turkey's reasons for helping Azerbaijan are not related to the emotional arguments of its President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who argued that Turkey and Azerbaijan are "two states, one nation" (Trtworld.com, 2020). Turkey has strong financial interests in Azerbaijan concerning the energy industry. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can disrupt the gas and oil exports of the region. Azerbaijan plays a vital role in the energy industry for Europe and Central Asia (Cfr.org., 2020; Winrow, 2009).

Despite the common use of the name "Nagorno-Karabakh," Armenia seems to prefer to refer to the region as "Artsakh" in order to maintain the idea that the region belongs to Armenia instead of Azerbaijan. "Artsakh" was a region of the ancient Kingdom of Armenia thousands of years ago. On the other hand, the Azerbaijani side and its news outlets tend not to refer to the disputed territory as "Artsakh" to empower

the Armenian claims (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2012; Ghazanchyan, 2020; Antonopoulos, 2020a; Dabaghyan, 2011).

In Nagorno-Karabakh, there are actual territorial claims, and one of the communication techniques for preserving these nationalistic narratives and arguments is the use of a different name. However, what happens if there are different names in a territorial claim with no actual territorial claims?

The MND, like other important disputes of the globe, such as The Persian Gulf/The Arabian Gulf, has no actual territorial claims, as there are international treaties that secure the warring sides' borders. Nevertheless, the territorial dispute remains prominent throughout the years, leading to a contentious communication process that involves extreme accusations against the involved sides and an influential war of words in the public discourse. Each side uses a different name to overwrite the other conflicting narrative and maintain its own as the legitimate one (Isidoros, 2017; Kostopoulos & Psarras, 2018). Despite the prominence of this communication phenomenon and its power, the game of names in territorial disputes has not been researched from a communication and journalism perspective.

Consequently, the current study examines the news coverage frames throughout the years 2018 & 2019, in which the MND dominated the public and media discourse in Greece. Thus, it will also provide insights into the game of names in territorial disputes, the ways journalism promotes the idea of an existential threat, and dominant narratives that empower nationalism.

MND, like other territorial name disputes, has been used for many years successfully in empowering those politicians and news outlets that repeat the main nationalistic narrative of the country that forbids the reference to Greece's neighboring country as "Macedonia." The research of the news outlets' frames throughout that

critical period is believed to provide insights into the news outlets' tactics in their coverage and shed light on the under-researched topic of the game of names in territorial disputes.

Nationalism, the Existential Threat, and Nationalistic Journalism

Nationalism has not a standard definition, but there is a consensus that it is a movement that promotes and supports the ideas expressed by a dominant community for a common ideological construction that includes a shared identity and the potential of creating a nation that aims in preserving its governance and sovereignty. That shared constructed identity is preserved and empowered by the unity and the enlargement of this group based on the shared common characteristics (Smith, 2010; Crawford, 2012).

For keeping alive this shared ideological construction called nation, the community has to preserve the main narrative that will be passed down from one generation to the other. That procedure is mostly happening with cultural products (e.g., media) and their dissemination through each country's nationalistic education, which involves selecting specific narratives and representations of a historical truth that highlights the group's importance against the others. These historical facts, along with national legends and myths, tend to strengthen and maintain unchallenged this large community that forms a nation (Baycroft, 2005).

Therefore, according to Anderson (2016), these constructed entities called nations were imagined communities, as they were created through imagined elements, including the selection of a convenient past for each nation. Language also was one of those elements that contributed to constructing the common identity that shaped a nation-state. That is why it is essential for the Greeks that their national ideology the non-recognition of the Macedonian language. By recognizing the Macedonian language,

Greece would have to accept that there is a clear distinction between the Greeks and the Macedonians. Besides, it has to be considered that Greece was one of the most prominent examples worldwide that exploited the element of language for revolting against the Ottoman Empire, claiming their territorial sovereignty and creating eventually the nation-state called Greece. Furthermore, the idea of the barbarians occupying the territory of ancient Greece who had forgotten their true identity was shared amongst prominent intellectuals in Europe. Subsequently, the barbarians had to regain their true self through the common Greek values and become once again the proper ancestors of the ancient Greeks (Anderson, 2016).

For the construction of a nation-state, there is also a need to create and disseminate an existential threat. The manufacture of an existential threat (or security threat) through a communication process can be explained by the Securitization Theory (ST), which comes from the field of International Relations (IR). In the beginning, ST was supposed to develop an improved theoretical framework and understanding for revealing the different dimensions of war, including the construction of an existential threat. Therefore, it is believed that such a securitization process can provoke powerful emotions and even result in a consensus amongst the government or state officials and the public (Balzacq, 2005; Buzan et al., 1998). The construction of an existential threat (or security threat) goes beyond the security studies tradition. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde created securitization Theory in their book *Security: A new framework for analysis* (1998). The main difference between this new approach and the tradition of IR is that Buzan and his colleagues pointed out that a security process can include various incidents and concepts, such as the identity and the Environment, raising, in the meantime, questions about the moral aspects of creating such a threat (see Floyd, 2019; Floyd & Croft, 2019).

Waeber was the one that presented first his ideas about this new approach in security studies by arguing that there must be a more in-depth focus on the existed societal discourse. For Waeber (Lipschutz, 1995), there was already a common understanding amongst people about a security issue (or threat) in society, as society is thought to be a more harmonious and pleasant place if there is more security. Therefore, Buzan et al. (1998) argued that researchers must focus even on non-military issues, as even unimportant topics can become actual existential threats in the mind of the people. However, in order to do so, there must be a successful securitization process:

A successful securitization thus has three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency actions, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules. The distinguishing feature of securitization is a specific rhetorical structure (survival, priority of action ‘because if the problem is not handled now it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure’) (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26).

In addition, securitization studies have pointed out that every aspect of society and every incident can become a security (or existential) threat and evoke fear throughout a process that involves communication. For example, McInnes and Rushton (2013) have proved that even health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, can be successfully securitized. Another example is the refugee crisis (Stivas, 2021), or Covid-19 with the securitization processes worldwide regarding this issue, with some scholars talking even for hyper-securitization (Stivas & Smith, 2020). The creation of fear through an existential threat in securitization studies can be explained with a widely accepted theoretical framework, which shows that every aspect of society can become an issue that evokes fear in citizens.

On the other hand, the existential threat and the emotion of fear of ethnic nationalism come from the idea of belonging and that people are born with unique characteristics that distinguish their group from the others. The core element of the

sentiment of nationalism is the individual and the group that he/she belongs to. The group and the individual are distinct from the others, and it must preserve and protect these differences; otherwise, there is a creation of fear of losing its unique characteristics (Handman, 1921; Baycroft, 2005). In particular:

The ordinary emotions and instincts become attached to them, mildly or intensely, according as these experiences are deep and tumultuous or merely superficial and passing. Under proper conditions, this system so organized may show itself in behavior as an agitated and agitating concern with the life and honor of the group (Handman, 1921, p. 104).

Adding to Handman's thoughts, "the nationalist believes that not only the others are hell, but everything which is not his (Serbian, Croatian, French...) is alien to him" (Kis, 1996, p. 14). However, for promoting these ideas throughout society, there must be several news outlets that practice nationalistic journalism. According to Ginosar (2015, p. 292) "nationalistic journalism, on the other hand, is journalism that echoes what authorities want to say or what citizens want to hear." Several post-colonial societies, for example, Ireland and Greece, are practicing often nationalistic journalism when national interests are at stake (Foley, 2004; Demertzis et al., 1999; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

This particular kind of journalism is based on nationalistic ideology, as it uses several of its elements. For example, glorifying the country's history and past or using symbolic narratives for justifying claims about territories that are lost and must be regained. Furthermore, nationalistic journalism follows the authorities' requests and supports the dominant narratives as they are dictated by the country's nationalistic truth (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007). Besides, it "establishes loyalty toward the state power and nationalistic elites, recreates the dichotomy of an "us-versus-them," "my-country-right-

or-wrong” version of reporting, and forges a sense of national pride and patriotism” (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007, p. 81).

The main problem with nationalistic journalism is that it goes against one of the main values of western journalism, which is to maintain a critical opinion about the governments and the state, empowering, in the meantime, the citizens. The journalists’ voice must not be the same as the governmental one (Elliott, 2004; George, 2018).

With the continuous repeating of the same nationalistic narrative, the idea of an existential threat regarding national issues can be reactivated to gain the public’s support. Due to that dominant narrative, including the element of an existential threat, the public will think that demonstrating against a compromise or a possible agreement, serves its essential role of protecting the nation and protecting the “in-group” from the “out-group.” A similar case can be made for the journalists and the news outlets that choose this coverage. In their mind, they are probably fulfilling their role of helping the people and the nation-state (Neiger & Rimmer-Tsory, 2012).

This recycled nationalistic narrative can also preserve the hostility towards these out-groups and mix the past with additional elements from future events to highlight why the focus on this conflict is significant and must be covered. Thus, there can be a disproportionate coverage of nationalistic issues, which under different circumstances, would not be so extensively covered (Zelizer, 2017).

Methods and Data

The news stories analyzed in the current research were collected during three periods (table 1). For studying the frames of the news coverage, the current research paper uses a qualitative interpretative method of framing analysis for presenting and also analyzing the dominant frames of the news coverage, as in the case of the MND, it seems that the coverage of news media has played a crucial role in provoking people to

express nationalistic ideas and to demonstrate against a possible solution between Greece and its neighboring country.

[Table 1. The characteristics of the study's sample.]

Framing analysis is considered a popular method for analyzing how the news media influence collective thought and provoked mobilization. For example, Olesen (2015) explained in detail through the use of framing based on Gamson's ideas that the media globally can diffuse collective meanings and values shared by certain groups. The result is to demonstrate in favor of protecting these values and meanings. He also pointed out that these shared symbols are produced through politics, creating a socio-political consciousness worldwide. As a result, Olesen's idea might be relative to the study of territorial name disputes, such as the MND. The reason is that all these disputes seem to share common characteristics despite occurring in other parts of the world. Furthermore, the warring sides in territorial disputes justify their claims and actions by promoting morality as another aspect of claiming what is rightful (Yorgason, 2017).

Framing is a core idea for helping individuals set up a storyline for interpreting all the related events of this storyline. In other words, the frame is supposed to be the essence of the topic (Cacciatore et al., 2016). However, Robert Entman was the scholar that made the Framing theory popular amongst researchers in the communication field. For him (1993, p. 52), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."

Gamson (1990) was the scholar that explained the importance of the role of mass media organizations during events of collective actions. His framework points out that the collective actions agents require the media to help them distribute their messages. On the other hand, news organizations need collective actors to attract the audience's interest and increase their profits. In other words, Gamson and his colleagues were the first scholars that focused on interpreting the connection between collective and media actors. Building on Goffman's (1974) arguments about framing analysis, they formed an approach that is based on the tradition of sociology (Cacciatore et al., 2016).

A frame is a core idea that creates a specific narrative and, therefore, specific meanings. Moreover, frames are components of the public discourse, a more extensive "package" that includes signifiers and policies from which "symbolic devices" are generated. Journalists are crucial in that process (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). The "symbolic devices" that construct the frames are the following ones: (a) catchphrases, (b) depictions, (c) exemplars, and (d) visual images (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

The "symbolic devices" in the exemplars are highlighted in bold. As the study included 127 news outlets (for the detailed list of the study's news outlets, see table 3 in the appendix), there cannot be a detailed presentation of each news story. Thus, the most suitable examples (exemplars) were chosen to highlight the main dominant frames that were identified through the reading of all the full articles of the study (table 2).

[Table 2. The dominant frames of the study.]

The qualitative framing analysis was used to focus on the socio-political and cultural meanings that deal with complexity (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2008;

Gitlin, 2003). More specifically, qualitative framing analysis “examines the keywords, metaphors, narratives, and so on, in context of the text as a whole” (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2008, p. 369). Also, it “identifies what was left out of the frame as well as what was included” (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2008, p. 369).

Subsequently, the current study examines the specific dominant narratives-frames promoted by the Greek news outlets during the periods mentioned earlier.

The Three Different Periods of the Frame Study

The search of news articles for the study was performed through Google Search Engine and included every possible news story and news outlet in Greece based on Google Search, aiming to provide a big picture of the media content of that period.

RQ: What are the dominant frames of the news coverage of the Prespes Agreement in the Greek media?

The first period covered was from 14 to 28 January 2018. At the end of January, the public discussion started concerning a possible solution to the MND. The coverage period straddled the date of probably the most important MND demonstration in Greece for the recent MND events, on 21 January 2018 at Thessaloniki (Dw.com, 2018).

Thessaloniki is considered the capital of the so-called Land of Macedonia (the region that includes the Macedonian territories that expand into nations such as Greece, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria). Consequently, Thessaloniki had always been an important symbolic power for the MND (Mazower, 2006). Moreover, it was the city that has experienced probably the most massive demonstration in Greece’s history. That demonstration was for the MND in 1992, in which around a million people flooded the city to express their anger against a solution with North Macedonia (Chrysopoulos, 2018).

The collection of the news stories was conducted by using the keywords “Macedonian Issue” (Μακεδονικό/Makedoniko) and “Skopjan issue” (Σκοπιανό/Skopiano) in Greek. The search with the keyword “Macedonian Issue” (Μακεδονικό/Makedoniko) provided 178 news stories, and the other one with the keyword “Skopjan issue” (Σκοπιανό/Skopiano) gave 173 news stories (208 was the initial number of the search, but it ended up as 173 after removing the duplicate news stories with the “Macedonian Issue” (Μακεδονικό/Makedoniko).

The keyword (“Skopjan issue”) was used in the Greek media and public discourse as it is the preferred term for referring to the MND. For some Macedonians, the term “Skopjan” is racist, as it is continuously used by the Greeks to undermine the neighboring country and its claims. It is also a term that promotes the idea of a Greek cultural and economic superiority over North Macedonia (Macedonianhr.org.au, n.d.).

The second period studied was from the 19th of May to the 3rd of June 2019. The collection of the news stories was performed by using the keyword “Prespes Agreement (Συμφωνία Πρεσπών/Symfonia Prespon) in Greek. It provided 137 news stories.

That timeframe was selected to explore the frames during the coverage of the local and European elections on the 26th of May 2019. In the Greek electoral system, the two most prominent candidates for becoming mayors in each city that they could not collect more than 50% percent of the votes had to compete in a run-off on the 2nd of June 2019. The local and European elections were significant as the incumbent Syriza suffered a heavy defeat by ND. That electoral defeat led Syriza’s leader and Greece’s then-Prime Minister to announce earlier the national elections that instead of happening at the end of 2019, were organized on the 7th of July 2019 (Euractiv.com, 2019; Thenationalnews.com, 2019).

The third and last search of the study covered the period of 30 June until 14 July 2019. The collection of the news stories was performed by using the keyword “Prespes Agreement (Συμφωνία Πρεσπών/Symfonia Prespon) in Greek. It provided 127 news stories. That timeframe was chosen to investigate the national elections (7 July 2019) that led to the defeat of Syriza that realized the “Prespes Agreement,” the change of the Greek government with the win of ND, and the election of Kyriakos Mitsotakis as the new Prime Minister.

Results

The Events as Political & Mobilization Tools for Electoral Power

The use of the MND as a political and mobilization tool was the most common frame of the examined news articles (figure 1). The warring sides, mostly the two main political parties of Greece (ND & Syriza), were accusing each other of exploiting the MND to gain electoral power. For Syriza, the use of the MND seemed to be strongly associated with the effort of ND to attract the interest of the extreme right-wing individuals and to obtain their votes (Exemplar 1).

Exemplar 1: Opinion column

The **extreme right turn of Mr. Mitsotakis**, due to the fear of founding a party “on the right” of ND after the rally in Thessaloniki, has **opened Aeolus’ bag inside the ND**. The leader of the official opposition’s position **in favor of the rallies** and his assessment that the solution for the “Macedonian issue” “**should be sought in another situation**” brought to the **surface the dichotomy inside the ND** (Avgi.gr, 2018).

[Figure 1. The number of news stories and their frames during the three different examined periods.]

On the other hand, in the beginning, ND seemed not to take a clear stance against solving the dispute. However, after the massive demonstration in Thessaloniki, many of its members started to be more critical of a possible solution. In addition, some members that were not so extreme regarding their stance against North Macedonia were removed from their positions to give space to those politicians that wanted to support the “Greekness of Macedonia” and the idea that Greece cannot give the name Macedonia to its neighboring country. Such a prominent example was the case of Vasiliki Eftaxa, the Chairman of the Governing Committee of ND in Thessaloniki, who “had advised the local executives to keep their distance from initiatives such as rallies or the signing of announcements/texts for the Skopjan issue” (Enikonomia.gr, 2018).

Despite the initial response of ND, which was not clear enough if the party was against a possible solution to the name dispute, the other two examined periods for this study showed that the tactic of supporting the extreme opinion concerning the Greekness of Macedonia became more powerful and more evident. Several of the most influential ND politicians were accusing Syriza of trying to solve the dispute to win the support of those who were more progressive and with left-wing ideological backgrounds, instead of listening to the people’s voice that demanded not to realize such an Agreement (Exemplar 2).

Exemplar 2: Interview with an ND politician

It is obvious that **people feel betrayed. The vast majority did not agree to the signing of the Agreement but this was ignored by the government.** The **Prespes Agreement** did not solve the old problem but **added new ones to the region** (Petropoulou, 2019).

Lastly, the examined news articles revealed a disproportionate coverage in favor of the voices against a solution to the dispute (figure 2). In particular, during the incidents related to Thessaloniki’s demonstration, many articles were promoting radical

or far-right-wing ideas from the rallies' organizers who were branded as neo-Macedonian Fighters (Makedonomachoi) from the Macedonian Struggle (Gounaris, 2007; Fotopoulos, 2019). However, the promotion of their initiatives was declined after the rumors of creating a new right-wing party that would express the viewpoints of all those in favor of Macedonia's Greekness.

[Figure 2. The number of news stories favoring (Yes) or opposing (No) a possible solution to the MND (e.g., Prespes Agreement), and the neutral ones (Neutral) during the three examined periods of the study.]

Existential Threat: Securing or Losing Greece's legacy and identity

The second most common frame throughout the examined period is the idea of an existential threat promoted by different influential actors who hold power in Greek society. The two main narratives connected with the idea of an existential threat were arguing that in the case that there is no solution, then the results will be dreadful for Greece, as it is probably the last chance for the country for agreeing with North Macedonia and securing its true legacy that is exploited by the neighbouring state. The politicians that were in favour of the "Prespes Agreement" mainly promoted that narrative (Exemplar 3).

Exemplar 3: Senior diplomat quoted in a news story

If FYROM joins NATO without the constitutional ratification of the new name and the deletion of the redemptive articles in the Constitution, Greece will have no more leverage, and any agreements will probably remain a blank slate (Enikonomia.gr, 2018b).

The other narrative claimed that with the agreement, Greece is losing parts of its legacy and identity, and, thus, it is of the greatest importance of securing the non-

ratification of the accord and the fall of the government that is betraying the people's will. Furthermore, the existential threat frame in both cases seemed to preserve an idea of territorial losses against Greece in the future. If there was no Agreement, Turkey would have developed closer connections with North Macedonia to undermine Greece's influential position in the Balkans (Exemplar 4).

Exemplar 4: Interview with an ND politician

The **Prespes Agreement is nationally damaging**. This is already visible to everyone, as **problems and threats arise everywhere**, with the crowning of the issues of the so-called "Macedonian" identity that the government has given to its northern neighbors... **nothing is over** (Euractiv.gr, 2019b).

The frame of the existential threat and its association with the name dispute resolution was detected almost exclusively in articles against Syriza and the parties that seemed willing to support a solution. Those news articles were based mostly on statements from ND's politicians. In addition, many news outlets were disseminating the idea of an existential threat by interviewing celebrities favoring the Greekness of Macedonia. Therefore, Syriza seemed not to promote the idea of the existential threat against Greece firmly if there was non-ratification of the "Prespes Agreement." After the massive demonstrations and the loss of the local and EU elections by the ND, the then-government tried to highlight patriotism, which is with the nationalistic frame of the other most common frames identified in the current research.

Greece's Superiority to North Macedonia (Nationalistic Frame) versus Securing Greece's Influence in the Balkan Region (Patriotic Frame)

During the coverage of the events related to Thessaloniki's demonstration, the use of the nationalistic frame was more prominent. The new media were underling the Greek national narrative's core ideas about Macedonia and that it can only be Greek, as it is

linked with the essential parts of the Greek identity. Those news stories' characteristic was that they supported an idea of Greece's superiority over North Macedonia. As a powerful country with a significant cultural heritage and legacy, Greece should not accept that a little country like North Macedonia is trying to steal its history and traditions. Consequently, there should be no negotiations and discussions with the neighboring country (Exemplar 5).

Exemplar 5: Interview with an ND politician

First of all, the **Macedonians are never going to call the Slavs "Macedonians."** **For us, Macedonia is an exclusive Greek heritage, part of our history, part of our soul.** And this heritage is not fragmented. **History is not rewritten, and our soul is not sold.** We will work, therefore, to develop and highlight everywhere in the world, **the eternal Macedonia. And it is good for our neighbours to remember that their journey to Europe passes through Athens** (Tovima.gr, 2019).

Contrary to the nationalistic frame, the then-government tried to frame its actions through its news media and members' statements for realizing the "Prespes Agreement" as a patriotic act. Despite the harsh arguments of the opposition parties, that particular act of patriotism was securing Greece's interests and influence in the Balkan region. Moreover, it was bringing back Macedonia to Greece, as the signed accord was clarifying that the heritage linked with the ancient kingdom of Macedonia and its leading figures, such as Alexander the Great and his father, are associated with Greece. Besides, it was clarified that the Macedonian language is indeed a language with Slavic origins. As a result, there can be no connection between the language and ancient Greece or Macedonia's ancient kingdom. Consequently, such an important agreement that secures and empowers Greece can only be perceived as a patriotic act, especially if it is considered that Syriza was the only party that supported and ratified

the agreement from the beginning despite the apparent loss of electoral power (Exemplar 6).

Exemplar 6: Interview with a Syriza politician

The populism that prevailed in the media and the opposition parties is unbelievable. Monstrous things have been said that have nothing to do with the truth. **If one reads the Prespes Agreement, Greece has taken back its own history.** Whereas before, **the people of Skopje appropriated Greek history.** **Nowadays, this is not happening. Today the neighboring state is called North Macedonia for everyone, not “Macedonia”** (Arcadiaportal.gr, 2019).

Prespes Agreement as Peace & International Affair

The least two common frames promoted by the news media were the peace and international affair frame. The first one was based mostly on statements by those politicians and parties that supported solving the MND. As a result, the “Prespes Agreement” was an essential step for the further peaceful development amongst the Balkan countries. In addition, the news stories based on the peaceful resolution of the dispute were also disseminating the importance of the accord for the European Union’s future. Therefore, it was not a surprise that all the stories using this frame favored the “Prespes Agreement” (Exemplar 7).

Exemplar 7: Syriza’s politician quoted in a news story

For the **Prespes Agreement**, he [Euclid Tsakalotos] described it as a “**landmark in Greek society and Greek politics**”, not only as he said, “because the Left managed to provide **a solution to a problem that had been pending for 23 years** but because it showed that it is part of the solution and not the problem. **Peace and development in the Balkans is a strategic choice**” (Naftemporiki.gr, 2019).

The news outlets that framed their articles as an international affair were mostly focused on prominent politicians who were usually not Greeks. The statements and the news articles’ framing were almost exclusively positive for the then-government and its

efforts to solve the name dispute. However, a few negative ones argued that the solution is being imposed by other most powerful countries to Greece, such as Germany and the USA, to fulfill their greater plans for gaining more power in the region. Greece had to follow their wills and advice, as the “Prespes Agreement” was not a bilateral issue but a dispute that impacted an international level. According to this narrative, the then-government through the “Prespes Agreement” would get more help from those major countries (Exemplar 8).

Exemplar 8: News story

Alexis Tsipras’ interview with the Financial Times had **a cynical confession regarding the opening of the case of the name of Skopje** that led to the Prespes Agreement and the name of North Macedonia... **He describes a meeting they had in Berlin and a discussion about the financial crisis, the debt, the surpluses, and the memoranda** (Parapolitika.gr, 2019).

Despite that the news organizations framed the events related to the MND and the Prespes Agreement as an international affair that promotes peace or an accord forced by the more powerful nations, what is missing is the frames and the viewpoints from the part of North Macedonia. The Greek news outlets in the examined timeframes seem not to pay at all efforts to present the other side’s frames of the name dispute.

Discussion

In the examined case, despite the known polarized Greek media system, Syriza needed to rely almost exclusively on its news media to disseminate its narratives about the MND. Yet, Syriza’s news outlets are not popular, such as Avgi.gr and Epohi.gr. These facts prove that there is no crucial pluralistic coverage despite the different news media included in the study. That finding is similar to the news coverage of the Mati wildfire, another event that dominated the discourse and harmed the popularity of Syriza’s

government in the summer of 2018 (Karyotakis, 2021b).

However, it should be underlined that during the Prespes Agreement, the government led by Syriza seemed to have a say in the coverage of the events by the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), as ERT took the controversial decision of not covering the first rally in Thessaloniki despite its importance on 21 January 2018 (Tsakiroglou, 2018). As the relevant literature suggests, ERT, despite being an independent public service broadcaster, is subjectable to political pressures (Iosifidis & Papathanassopoulos, 2019).

That problematic news coverage is alarming, as it can cause a further decline in the democratic progress in Greece and further empowerment of clientelism that can play a crucial role in the democratic backslide and the form of new regimes, such as despotisms (Keane, 2020; Chowdhury & Keane, 2021). These phenomena have been observed in other countries globally, including European Union nations such as Hungary and Poland (Csaky, 2021), that have “moved from attacking the liberal principles that underpin democracy to setting new norms themselves and openly spreading anti-democratic practices” (Csaky, 2021, p. 2).

Journalism plays a vital role in securing a prosperous, democratic development, as the journalists and the news outlets hold accountable those in power for their mishandlings. Journalism ethics and western democratic principles call for accountability (George, 2018). Furthermore, according to George (2018, p. 474), “journalism needs autonomy from government if it is to fulfil its duty to help citizens hold the government to account and to inform them about their political choices.” However, this is not happening in the Greek case, in which there seems to be democratic backsliding and freedom violations under the Mitsotakis’ government (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Kolvani et al., 2020), leading to alarming thoughts

about Greece slowly becoming the new “Hungary” in the EU (Christopoulos, 2021). Greece seems to belong to the “newly autocratizing countries” (Boese et al., 2022).

Moreover, the current paper tried to provide insights into the news coverage of territorial name disputes by focusing on the MND. These kinds of conflicts, despite their prominence, have not been researched from a communication and journalism perspective. The study revealed that most news articles covering the periods related to the recent events of the MND were recognizing that the territorial name dispute is a crucial mobilization and political tool for electoral power.

A few articles, though, were explaining how that fact is connected with the MND. Almost all of the news stories that used that frame were focused on the accusations of influential politicians who were blaming other parties and individuals for using the events concerning the possible solution for winning the public opinion. As a result, it seems that the news organizations did not challenge the dominant narratives, a finding that has been identified in past studies (Demertzis et al., 1999; Ellinas, 2010). Furthermore, the superficial coverage of a significant issue that is based almost exclusively on political quarrels and statements has been spotted again in other influential issues in Greece, such as the separation of the State and the Church (Karyotakis et al., 2019).

Moreover, there seemed to be a populist approach (i.e., appeal to the public and promote narratives against those that designed and completed the Prespes Agreement) from several politicians, but the news outlets did not accuse them of a populist stance. The territorial name dispute and the relevant news coverage seemed to aim to provoke the public’s rage to support different political sides. That finding aligns with the idea that territorial struggles are actual symbolic disputes used as proxies to realize other goals (Dunbar, 2000; Chubin & Tripp, 1993; Hayton, 2017). However, it has to be

mentioned that it was quite surprising that one of the most prominent newspapers in Greece, Kathimerini, which is known for its right-wing stance and support of ND (Eurotopics.net, n.d.), supported the solution to the MND. That tendency might be linked to the fact that, except for the Greek political parties, the majority of the political parties in the EU supported the solution. In addition, it can be linked with the notion of patriotic journalism, as the newspaper could believe that a solution to the MND could be more beneficial for Greece than a non-solution, as patriotic journalism “keeps in mind what citizens need to know to make educated decisions for self-governance” (Ginosar, 2015, p. 292).

Concerning the existential threat frame, there is no surprise that several news articles were promoting this idea, as an existential threat can justify extreme measures that can be adopted for dealing with the threat along with the provocation of powerful emotions that can shape a consensus amongst the government or state officials and the public (Balzacq, 2005; Buzan et al., 1998).

As a result, both parties, but mostly the ND, seemed to use the existential threat to protect its actions. The then-government used it to win public opinion and to realize the “Prespes Agreement” without a major decline in its electoral power. Nevertheless, that frame seemed to be employed mostly by the right-wing parties and politicians, such as ND, to empower themselves and to lead to the fall of the government and an easy win in the national and local elections in 2019. The news outlets that were using that frame are believed to maintain a closer connection with the ND. A similar approach has been observed in another influential topic of that electoral period, the wildfire of Mati, in which there was coverage that supported ND (Karyotakis, 2021b).

In all the frames of the current paper, the news articles that were in favor of Syriza were almost exclusively coming from the party’s news media. The promotion of

frames that were against the then-government might be associated with the notion of nationalistic journalism, as the journalists that exercise that type of journalism tend to repeat the information and ideas that are promoted by the most powerful actor in the political system (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007; Ginosar, 2015). In the examined case, ND is the most influential party in Greece and had governed the country several times compared to Syriza that from a small party, formed a coalition government in 2015. These findings are also associated with the Greek media system, which is known for polarization, low professionalism, and not focusing on its watchdog role. In Greece, there are strong connections between influential politicians and the news media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Papathanassopoulos, 2017).

Similarly, the nationalistic frame was employed almost exclusively by the politicians and the news organizations that were against the then-government and the possible solution to the MND. Their main goal seemed to be the preservation of the Greek nationalistic narrative for Macedonia's Greekness and to support those voices that were against the solution. The emotion of fear promoted by the nationalistic and the existential frame is based on the idea that one group is better than the other and it has to protect these unique characteristics. Otherwise, the losses can undermine the group's superiority (Handman, 1921; Baycroft, 2005).

Contrary to the nationalistic frame, the news outlets supporting or owned by the then-government disseminated the idea that their stance was not related to nationalism. The promoted solution was an act of patriotism as the "Prespes Agreement" was securing the country's national interests that were not protected by the former governments or the parties rooting for a non-solution to the MND. Like nationalistic journalism, "patriotic journalistic behavior can be found in the coverage of any type and size of national or ethnic confrontation or crisis" (Ginosar & Cohen, 2019, p. 15).

However, as mentioned above, patriotic journalism tries to educate and inform the citizens instead of reproducing dominant narratives like nationalistic journalism (Erjavec & Volčič, 2007; Ginosar & Cohen, 2019).

In addition, along with patriotism, there was a promotion of the viewpoint that the solution was a peaceful act that will benefit Greece and the EU, and the Balkans. Therefore, the “Prespes Agreement” should also be perceived as an international affair that aims to empower Greece at an international level. However, the international affair was not promoted by every news organization as a positive frame, as it was believed that the solution for the name dispute was imposed by other powerful countries, such as Germany and the USA, and, thus, it was undermining Greece’s sovereignty and role in the Balkans and the EU. The idea for the foreign countries that want to undermine Greece’s power is associated with the country’s ideological narrative that reproduces the viewpoint that Greece is maintaining its existence by its endurance against external threats and forces (Avdela, 2000).

Conclusions and Limitations

The current paper shows that the news coverage of the events associated with the “Prespes Agreement” was not critical of the powerful political actors using the MND to promote their own agenda. The news media were not in the ideological battle over the MND, as they supported the narratives mainly from the country’s two big parties, Syriza and ND. If we take a closer look, the paper reveals that the majority of the most prominent news outlets from the 127 that the study included, except Kathimerini, that are branding themselves as independent (i.e., not belonging to the parties or the state) are actually lining towards the ND and Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

The paper studied 615 news stories in three different periods from 127 news outlets in order to provide a bigger picture of the news coverage regarding the MND and the Prespes Agreement. It identified four dominant news frames through a qualitative approach. The news stories were framing the Prespes Agreement and its relevant events as a political and mobilization tool for winning electoral power, as an existential threat for Greece, as a patriotic act that goes against Greek nationalism (or the opposite), and as an international affair that promotes peace or an agreement that is imposed by the more powerful nations to Greece. Apart from these frames, the absence of frames that explain the viewpoints of North Macedonia about the Prespes Agreement should be highlighted.

Moreover, the current paper revealed that in the coverage of a name dispute, such as the MND, the journalists tend to follow nationalistic arguments and narratives that do not support the journalistic ideals of holding those in power accountable or offering various viewpoints for such a controversial issue. That pattern might be similar in other name disputes across the globe, as such conflicts are usually around competing for narratives that promote a dominant truth.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the current paper focused on the MND to explore its framing through a qualitative framing analysis. Also, it tried to investigate every possible news story and news outlet in Greece based on Google Search to provide a big picture of the media content of that period in three different periods. Other research methods with different study periods can offer other insights into the incidents related to the “Prespes Agreement.” Furthermore, a quantitative framing analysis could possibly shed light on other aspects of the “Prespes Agreement” events. Finally, the investigation of several other similar territorial name disputes can provide more insights and common news patterns. Subsequently, future studies can focus more closely on

examining the communication that takes place during the territorial name disputes exploiting a plethora of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Acknowledgments

The author wants to thank the editors of the special issue for their efforts.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Amna.gr. (2019, June 30). *Katrougalos: Revelations about Karamanlis' letter highlight ND's hypocrisy over Prespes*. Retrieved from <https://www.amna.gr/en/article/373365/Katrougalos-Revelations-about-Karamanlis-letter-highlight-NDs-hypocrisy-over-Prespes>
- Boese, V. A., Alizada, N., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Natsika, N., Sato, Y., Tai, H., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). *Autocratization Changing Nature? Democracy Report 2022*. Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem).
- Anderson, B. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised edition). London New York: Verso.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Cacciatore, M. A., Scheufele, D. A., & Iyengar, S. (2016). The End of Framing as we Know it ... and the Future of Media Effects. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1068811>
- Antonopoulos, P. (2020, October 24). “Artsakh is Armenia”: Solidarity signs begin appearing in Australia’s most Greek suburb. Retrieved from <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/15/artsakh-is-armenia-solidarity-signs-begin-appearing-in-australias-most-greek-suburb/>
- Antonopoulos, P. (2020b). *Pan-Macedonian Union denounces government’s inaction on the Prespa Agreement*. Retrieved from <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/05/28/pan-macedonian-union-denounces-governments-inaction-on-the-prespa-agreement/>
- Arcadiportal.gr. (2019, July 5). *Papailiou: We have kept our commitments, we are moving forward in the fair social development of the country* (In Greek). Retrieved

- from <https://www.arcadiaportal.gr/news/papailioy-tirisame-tis-desmeyseis-mas-prohorame-sti-dikaii-koinonika-anaptyxi-tis-horas-picsvid>
- Avdela, E. (2000). The teaching of history in Greece. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 18(2), 239-253. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2000.0025>
- Avgi.gr. (2018, January 28). *The beginning has been made; the difficult continuation is pending* (In Greek). Retrieved from https://www.avgi.gr/politiki/265350_egine-i-arhi-ekkremai-i-dyskoli-syneheia
- Balzacq, T. (2005). The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context. *European Journal of International Relations*, 11(2), 171–201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066105052960>
- Baycroft, T. (2005). *Nationalism in Europe 1789-1945*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Pub.
- Cacciatore, M. A., Scheufele, D. A., & Iyengar, S. (2016). The End of Framing as we Know it ... and the Future of Media Effects. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(1), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1068811>
- Cfr.org. (2020, October 23). *Global Conflict Tracker: Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/nagorno-karabakh-conflict>
- Chowdhury, D. R., & Keane, J. (2021). *To Kill A Democracy: India's Passage to Despotism*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198848608.001.0001>
- Christopoulos, D. (2021, May 7). *Could Greece turn into another Hungary?*. Retrieved from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/could-greece-turn-another-hungary/>
- Chrysopoulos, P. (2018, January 22). *When Greeks Rallied Against FYROM Name in 1992*. Retrieved from <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2018/01/22/when-greeks-rallied-against-fyrom-name-in-1992/>
- Chubin, S., & Tripp, C. (1993). Domestic politics and territorial disputes in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. *Survival*, 35(4), 3–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442709>
- Connolly-Ahern, C., & Broadway, S. C. (2008). “To Booze or Not to Booze?” Newspaper Coverage of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. *Science Communication*, 29(3), 362–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547007313031>
- Cornell, S. (1998). Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh: A Delicate Balance. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34(1), 51-72. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283917>
- Crawford, E. (2012). Them and us: Why they are nationalists and we are not. An analysis of journalists' language in relation to others. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 13(5), 620–638. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911431369>
- Csaky, Z. (2021). *Nations in Transit 2021: The Antidemocratic Turn*. Freedom House. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/NIT_2021_final_042321.pdf

- Dabaghyan, A. (2011). Place renaming practices in post-war Karabakh/Artsakh. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 56(2), 403-427.
- Demertzis, N., Papatthanassopoulos, S., & Armenakis, A. (1999). Media and Nationalism: The Macedonian Question. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 4(3), 26–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X99004003004>
- Dunbar, C. (2000). Saharan Stasis: Status and Future Prospects of the Western Sahara Conflict. *Middle East Journal*, 54(4), 522–545. www.jstor.org/stable/4329542
- Dw.com. (2018, January 21). *Greeks rally over name row with neighbor Macedonia*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/greeks-rally-over-name-row-with-neighbor-macedonia/a-42246009>
- Gitlin, T. (2003). *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, With a New Preface*. University of California Press.
- Ekathimerini.com. (2019, January 25). *Greek MPs pass Prespes deal with 153 votes in 300-seat House*. Retrieved from <https://www.ekathimerini.com/236998/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-mps-pass-prespes-deal-with-153-votes-in-300-seat-house>
- Ellinas, A. A. (2010). *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (first edition). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elliott, D. (2004). Terrorism, Global Journalism, and the Myth of the Nation State. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 19(1), 29–45. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327728jmme1901_3
- Enikonomia.gr. (2018, January 17). *Mitsotakis “removed” Vasiliki Eftaxa from ND Thessaloniki - Who is replacing her* (In Greek). Retrieved from <http://www.enikonomia.gr/timeliness/177815,o-mitsotakis-xilose-tin-vasiliki-eftaxa-apo-ti-nd-thessalonikis-p.html>
- Enikonomia.gr. (2018b, January 22). *Athens’ Message to Skopje: Change Now Your Constitution for the Name and “Redemption” issues* (In Greek). Retrieved from <http://www.enikonomia.gr/timeliness/178183,minyma-athinas-pros-skopia-allaxte-tora-to-syntagma-sas-gia-onoma.html>
- Erjavec, K., & Volčič, Z. (2007). The Kosovo Battle: Media’s Recontextualization of the Serbian Nationalistic Discourses. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 12(3), 67–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X07302943>
- Euractiv.com. (2019a, June 3). *New Democracy sweeps Greek local elections*. Retrieved from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/new-democracy-sweeps-greek-local-elections/>
- Euractiv.gr. (2019b, May 23). *Anna-Michelle Assimakopoulou: Greece will have to fight in the European Parliament* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://www.euractiv.gr/section/ekloges/interview/anna-misel-asimakopoyloy-i-ellada-tha-chreiatei-na-dosei-agonas-sto-eyrokoinovoylio/>
- Eurotopics.net. (n.d.). *Kathimerini*. Retrieved from <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/148651/kathimerini#> (accessed December 27 2020).
- Floyd, R. (2019). *The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108667814>

- Floyd, R., & Croft, S. (2019). European Non-traditional Security theory: From Theory to Practice. *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 3(2), 152–179.
- Foley, M. (2004). Colonialism and journalism in Ireland. *Journalism Studies*, 5(3), 373–385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670042000246115>
- Fotopoulos, N. (2019, August 1). *The “Makedonomachoi” are waiting for... Mitsotakis* (In Greek). Retrieved from https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/koinonia/205856_oi-makedonomahoi-perimenoy-n-ton-mitsotaki
- Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.1086/229213>
- Gamson, W.A. (1990). *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- George C. (2018). Journalism, Censorship and Press Freedom. In in T. P. Vos (ed.). *Handbooks of Communication Science 19: Journalism* (pp. 473–492). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Ghazanchyan, S. (2020, October 24). *What’s happening in Artsakh is a tragedy: Alexis Ohanian appeals to American and German leaders*. Retrieved from <https://en.armradio.am/2020/10/24/whats-happening-in-artsakh-is-a-tragedy-alexis-ohanian-appeals-to-american-and-german-leaders/>
- Ginosar, A. (2015). Understanding Patriotic Journalism: Culture, Ideology and Professional Behavior. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 30(4), 289–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2015.1082915>
- Ginosar, A., & Cohen, I. (2019). Patriotic journalism: An appeal to emotion and cognition. *Media, War & Conflict*, 12(1), 3-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635217710678>
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gounaris, B. C. (2007). *IX. National Claims, Conflicts and Developments in Macedonia, 1870-1912*. Retrieved from http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/HistoryOfMacedonia/Downloads/History%20Of%20Macedonia_EN-09.pdf
- Hall, B., & Hope, K. (2019, December 3). *Greek PM challenges Macron over move to block EU enlargement*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/c821ec3e-143b-11ea-9ee4-11f260415385>
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790867>
- Handman, M. S. (1921). The Sentiment of Nationalism. *Political Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 104. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2142664>
- Hayton, B. (2017). When Good Lawyers Write Bad History: Unreliable Evidence and the South China Sea Territorial Dispute. *Ocean Development & International Law*, 48(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00908320.2017.1265362>
- Heraclides, A. (2019). *The Macedonian Question 1878-2018* (In Greek, second edition). Athens: Themelio Publications.

- Iosifidis, P., & Papathanassopoulos, S. (2019). Media, politics and state broadcasting in Greece. *European Journal of Communication*, 34(4), 345–359.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119844414>
- Isidoros, K. (2017). The View from Tindouf: Western Saharan Women and the Calculation of Autochthony. In R. Ojeda-Garcia, I. Fernández-Molina, I. & Veguilla, V. (Eds.). *Global, Regional and Local Dimensions of Western Sahara's Protracted Decolonization: When a Conflict Gets Old* (pp. 294–311). Palgrave Macmillan US. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95035-5>
- Kampouris, N. (2019, May 21). *Greek Fighter Jets Begin Policing North Macedonian Airspace*. Retrieved from <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/05/21/greek-fighter-jets-begin-policing-north-macedonian-airspace/>
- Kanellopoulos, D. (2020, October 16). *Who altered the OPEN poll?* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://www.makthes.gr/k-mitsotakis-stis-ekloges-diakyveyetai-i-ischyri-entoli-226246>
- Karyotakis, M.-A., Antonopoulos, N., & Saridou, T. (2019). A case study in news articles, users comments and a Facebook group for Article 3 of the Greek Constitution. *KOME*, 7(2), 37–56. <https://www.doi.org/10.17646/KOME.75672.31>
- Karyotakis, M.-A. (2021a). Communicating Hate on YouTube: The Macedonian Identity in Focus. In I. Chiluya (Ed.), *Discourse and Conflict: Analysing Text and Talk of Conflict, Hate and Peace-Building*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76485-2_8
- Karyotakis, M.-A. (2021b). Covering the Wildfire of Mati in Greece: Undermining the Systemic Human Impact on the Environment. *Journalism Practice*, 1–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1969986>
- Keane, J. (2020). *The New Despotism*. Harvard University Press.
- Kis, D. (1996). On Nationalism. *Performing Arts Journal*, 18(2), 13–17.
- Kitsantonis, N. (2018, June 17). *Macedonia and Greece Sign Historic Deal on Name Change*. Retrieved from
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/17/world/europe/greece-macedonia-name-dispute.html>
- Kolstø, P., & Blakkisrud, H. (2012). De facto states and democracy: The case of Nagorno-Karabakh. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 45(1–2), 141–151.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2012.03.004>
- Kostopoulos, T., & Psarras, D. (2018). *Why the Macedonian Dispute is not solved* (In Greek). Athens: Efimerida ton Syntakton.
- Kolvani, P., Pillai, S., Edgell, A. B., Grahn, S., Kaiser, S., Lachapelle, J., & Lührmann, A. et al. (2020). Pandemic Backsliding: Democracy Nine Months into the Covid-19 Pandemic. *V-Dem Institute Policy Brief*, 26. Retrieved from
http://homepage.ntu.edu.tw/~hanstung/Home_files/v-dem_policybrief-26_201214_v31.pdf https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/13/1a/131a6ef5-4602-4746-a907-8f549a5518b2/v-dem_policybrief-26_201214_v31.pdf

- Left.gr. (2019, July 10). *May spoke to Mitsotakis about the Prespes, but we would never know...* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://left.gr/news/i-mei-eipe-ston-mitsotakia-tis-prespes-alla-den-tha-mathainame-pote>
- Lipschutz, R. D. (1995). *On security*. New York ; Chichester : Columbia University Press. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/25130907>
- Macedonianhr.org.au. (n.d.). *The “Skopian” Case*. Retrieved from https://www.macedonianhr.org.au/images/stories/pdf/skopian_case.pdf (accessed September 27 2020).
- Mazower, M. (2006). *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (Reprint Edition). Vintage.
- McInnes, C., & Rushton, S. (2013). HIV/AIDS and securitization theory. *European Journal of International Relations*, 19(1), 115–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111425258>
- Michalopoulos, S. (2019, April 26). *Greek centre-right party accused of ‘censoring’ EPP’s Weber*. Retrieved from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/greek-centre-right-party-accused-of-censoring-epps-weber/>
- Michalopoulos, S. (2020, September 28). *Historic or not? Greece and US lost in translation over North Macedonia*. Retrieved from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/historic-or-not-greece-and-us-lost-in-translation-over-north-macedonia/>
- Naftemporiki.gr. (2019, May 21). *Eucl. Tsakalotos: The time of the Left is here* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://m.naftemporiki.gr/story/1477861>
- Neiger, M., & Rimmer-Tsory, K. (2012). The war that wasn’t on the news: ‘In-group nationalism’ and ‘out-group nationalism’ in newspaper supplements. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884912453281>
- Olesen, T. (2015). *Global Injustice Symbols and Social Movements*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing Analysis : An Approach to News Discourse. *Political Communication*, 10(1), 55-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2017). Greece: A Continuous Interplay between Media and Politicians. In P. Bajomi-Lázár (Ed.), *Media in third-wave democracies: Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (pp. 75–89). Budapest: L’Harmattan.
- Papathanassopoulos, S., Karadimitriou, A., Kostopoulos, C., & Archontaki, I. (2021). Greece: Media concentration and independent journalism between austerity and digital disruption. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 177–230). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-5>
- Parapolitika.gr. (2019, May 20). *Tsipras proposes a solution for the Skopjan issue to Merkel – The surprise and the reference to Samaras* (In Greek). Retrieved from

- <https://www.parapolitika.gr/politiki/article/1000054/o-tsipras-proteine-ti-lusi-tou-skopianou-sti-merkel-i-ekplici-kai-i-anafora-ston-samara/>
- Petropoulou, M. (2019, July 5). *Synthia Sapika: To create a state foreign language department at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://www.thestival.gr/eidiseis/vouleutikes-ekloges/463254-synthia-sapika-na-dimiourgithei-kratiko-ksenoglossotmima-sto-aristoteleio-panepistimio-thessalonikis/>
- Smith, A. D. (2010). *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (second edition). Cambridge: Polity.
- Stivas, D. & Smith, N. R. (2020, March 11). *Coronavirus: China's attempts to contain the outbreak has given it new levels of state power*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-chinas-attempts-to-contain-the-outbreak-has-given-it-new-levels-of-state-power-133285>
- Stivas, D. (2021). Greece's response to the European refugee crisis: A tale of two securitizations. *Mediterranean Politics*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2021.1902198>
- Thenationalnews.com. (2019, May 27). *Greek PM calls for early election after EU election defeat*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/greek-pm-calls-for-early-election-after-eu-election-defeat-1.866541>
- Tovima.gr. (2019, July 3). *Stavros Kalafatis: The country cannot stand even an hour of lack of governance* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://www.tovima.gr/2019/07/03/politics/stavros-kalafatis-i-xora-den-antexei-oute-mia-ora-keno-eksousias/>
- Trtworld.com. (2020, October 25). *Erdogan warns of Europe's self-destructive Islamophobia*. Retrieved from <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/erdogan-warns-of-europe-s-self-destructive-islamophobia-40865>
- Tsakiroglou, B. (2018, January 22). *Rally for Macedonia: Rage on twitter against government and ERT* (In Greek). Retrieved from <https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/752858/sullalitirio-gia-makedonia-orgi-sto-twitter-enadion-kuvernisis-kai-ert/>
- Vankovska, B. (2020). Geopolitics of the Prespa Agreement: Background and After-Effects. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22(3), 343–371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2020.1739880>
- Waal, T. (2010). Remaking the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process. *Survival*, 52(4), 159–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2010.506830>
- Winrow, G. M. (2009). *Turkey, Russia and the Caucasus: Common and diverging interests*. London: Chatham House.
- Yorgason, E. (2017). Eastern Asia's revitalization of the state ideal through maritime territorial disputes. *Political Geography*, 61, 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.09.012>
- Zelizer, B. (2017). *What Journalism Could Be* (first edition). Polity.

Appendix

Name of the News Outlet	Number of Articles
902.gr	1
Agonaskritis.gr	1
Agrinionews.gr	3
Aixmi.gr	4
Alfavita.gr	1
Anexartitos.gr	1
Aphafreepress.gr	1
Arcadiaportal.gr	2
Athensvoice.gr	8
Avgi.gr	26
Capital.gr	19
Cnn.gr	10
Contra.gr	2
Creatalive.gr	3
Cretapost.gr	2
Dailythes.gr	2
Difernews.gr	2
Dikaiologitika.gr	8
Documentonews.gr	12
Dw.com	5
Economico.gr	1
Efsyn.gr	15
E-grammes.gr	1
Ekirikas.com	2
El.gr	2
Eleftheria.gr	3
Eleftheriaonline.gr	1
Eleftherostypos.gr	2
Empisteutiko.gr	1
Enikonomia.gr	19
Enikos.gr	12
Epiloges.tv	1
Epixirimatias.gr	2
Epohi.gr	3
Eproodos.gr	1
Ermisnews.gr	1
Ert.gr	5
Ethnos.gr	10
Euractiv.gr	3
Euro2day.gr	16
Euronews.gr	4
Europost.gr	1
Flashnews.gr	1
Gargalianoionline.gr	1
Gazzetta.gr	1
Haniotika-nea.gr	3
Huffingtonpost.gr	9
Iefimerida.gr	15
Ilialive.gr	1

Imerisia-ver.gr	1
In.gr	10
Inboxnews.gr	2
Indicator.gr	2
Insider.gr	9
Kalamatajournal.gr	2
Kathimerini.gr	36
Kavalapost.gr	1
Kefalonitikanea.gr	1
Kourdistoportokali.com	1
Kozan.gr	3
Kozanilife.gr	1
Liberal.gr	2
Lifo.gr	12
Lykavitos.gr	1
Madata.gr	5
Makthes.gr	9
Mikrometoxos.gr	1
Mononews.gr	1
Naftemporiki.gr	22
Neakriti.gr	1
Neoskosmos.com	3
Newpost.gr	13
News.gr	6
News247.gr	6
Newsbeast.gr	5
Newsbomb.gr	4
Newsit.gr	4
Newspost.gr	1
Offsite.com.cy	4
Pagenews.gr	1
Parallaximag.gr	3
Parapolitika.gr	5
Paraskhnio.gr	2
Paratiritis-news.gr	2
Paron.gr	2
Patrasevents.gr	2
Pellanews.gr	4
Periodista.gr	1
Philenews.com	3
Politis.com.cy	1
Politisnews.gr	1
Politisonline.com	1
Presspublica.gr	1
Proininews.gr	1
Protagon.gr	7
Protothema.gr	13
Reader.gr	1
Real.gr	4
Redlineagrinio.gr	1
Reporter.com.cy	1
Rodiaki.gr	1

Sdna.gr	1
Serraikanea.gr	1
Showbiz.gr	1
Sigmalive.com	3
Skai.gr	2
Sofokleousin.gr	5
Sport24.gr	2
Sport-fm.com.cy	1
Sputniknews.gr	4
Star.gr	4
Tanea.gr	14
Thebest.gr	4
Thecaller.gr	6
Thepresident.gr	1
Thepressproject.gr	2
Thepressroom.gr	1
Thestival.gr	2
Topnews.gr	1
Tovima.gr	16
Tribune.gr	3
Tvxs.gr	21
Typos-i.gr	1
Vetonews.gr	1
Voria.gr	34
Xronos.gr	3
Zougla.gr	4

Table 3. The study's news outlets and their articles in alphabetic order.

<i>Study's Timeframe</i>	<i>No. of News Stories</i>	<i>Keyword (In Greek)</i>
14-28 January 2018	178	Macedonian Issue (Μακεδονικό/Makedoniko)
14-28 January 2018	173	Skopjan issue (Σκοπιανό/Skopiano)
19 May-3 June 2019	137	Prespes Agreement (Συμφωνία Πρεσπών/Symfonia Prespon)
30 June-14 July 2019	127	Prespes Agreement (Συμφωνία Πρεσπών/Symfonia Prespon)

Table 1. The characteristics of the study's sample.

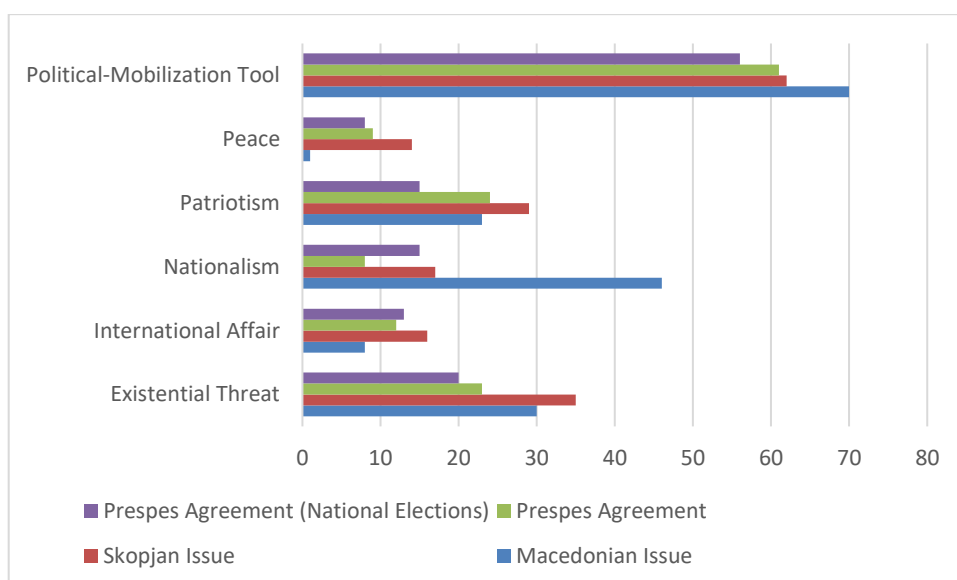


Figure 1. The number of news stories and their frames during the three different examined periods.

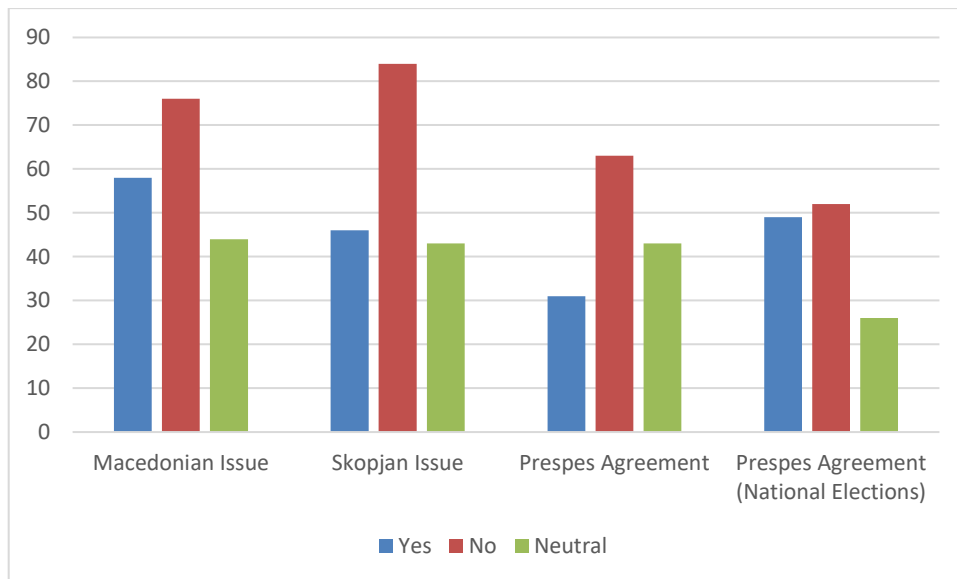


Figure 2. The number of news stories favoring (Yes) or opposing (No) a possible solution to the MND (e.g., Prespes Agreement), and the neutral ones (Neutral) during the three examined periods of the study.

Dominant Frames	Description
The Events as Political & Mobilization Tools for Electoral Power	The events were presented as incidents that are used to mobilize the public for electoral power, as political events orchestrated by political groups and parties to win the public and realize political ambitions.
Existential Threat: Securing or Losing Greece's legacy and identity	These stories presented the Prespes Agreement as an existential threat for Greece, as the country was losing the monopoly of the name Macedonia and, thus, a part of its identity.
Greece's Superiority to North Macedonia (Nationalistic Frame) versus Securing Greece's Influence in the Balkan Region (Patriotic Frame)	The nationalistic frame refers to Greece's nationalistic narrative, promoting the uniqueness and superiority of Greece over North Macedonia. The patriotic frame goes against the nationalistic frame, arguing that the Prespes Agreement is an act of patriotism.
Prespes Agreement as Peace & International Affair	Prespes Agreement is presented as an accord that promotes peace and international relations.

Table 2. The dominant frames of the study.