

Greek-Turkish Relations: The Role of the Media amidst Two Crises

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to examine the crises that appeared a few days apart, the effort of refugees-migrants from Asia and Africa that are temporarily residing in Turkey to cross the Greek-Turkish border on the Evros/Meric river, and the health crisis caused by the arrival of coronavirus in the other state. On February 28, 2020, Turkey opened its borders or even urged the tens of thousands of refugees and migrants who remain in its territory to cross the Greek-Turkish border on the Evros/Meric River and either settle in Greece or continue their journey to Central Europe. Contrary to what happened in 2015, the Greek government took measures to prevent the violation of the Greek borders by refugees and immigrants. As this situation continued, the coronavirus health crisis became very serious in all European countries, Greece, and Turkey. The two countries took measures to deal with the pandemic, suppress economic and social activity, and completely cut off the road, rail, and air communication between them.

Keywords: Greece, Turkey, the Greek Turkish border, media, crisis

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Methodological Approach

The paper will examine whether these two events, the refugee crisis, and the health crisis, have occupied the media in both countries. Whether they covered to the same extent, or coverage was more intense for one of the crises if the news and their position on the agenda-setting¹ were the same or even similar in the two countries' media. If all media had the same stance on events, being supportive of their governments' actions according to the theory of "rally round the flag,"² or if part of the media proved to be critical of their respective governments. Suppose Piers Robinson's policy media interaction model applies to both countries.³ Finally, whether the news for the other country has a dominant position or occupies a significant part of the international news agenda.

This research was quantitative and not discourse analysis research. The usual approach to discourse analysis in journalism studies is multidimensional and takes into consideration headlines, graphic elements, and story framing. Nevertheless, in order to make a comprehensive sampling of texts from all news media outlets, we did discourse research according to what is valid in these studies. The primary keywords were Refugees Borders / Refugees border crossing / Border Crisis and Covid 19 Turkey / Covid 19 Greece, both in Turkish and Greek.

Greek and Turkish Media and the Crisis in the Aegean in 1996

One may question the importance of monitoring the two countries' media on the central issues on which the two countries are in almost constant conflict. Firstly, it should be noted that in January 1996, there was a crisis that brought the two countries to the brink of war and which was averted by the USA diplomatic intervention. The concern was

¹ For agenda setting theory see Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176, <https://doi.org/10.1086/267990>; Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Evolution of Agenda-Setting Research: Twenty-Five Years in the Marketplace of Ideas", *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 2 (1 June 1993): 58-67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01262.x>.

² See the first appearance of this theory at John E. Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson," *American Political Science Review* 64, no. 1 (March 1970): 18-34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1955610>.

³ Piers Robinson, "The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy, and Intervention" (London & New York: Routledge, 2002).

the sovereignty of islands and islets in the Aegean after the Greek Parliament decided to ratify the International Law of the Sea on June 1, 1994. The Turkish parliament followed suit on June 8, 1994, with a resolution authorizing the government to use all measures to protect Turkey's rights in the Aegean.⁴

On January 25, 1996, the mayor of the Greek island of Kalymnos raised the Greek flag on the uninhabited islands of Imia/Kardak [Greek name/Turkish name]. The following day, the Greek flag was removed by a team of journalists of the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* (correspondent Cesur Sert, cameraman Osman Korkmaz, pilot Kemal Suler) who flew to Imia/Kardak by helicopter and raised the Turkish flag. The event was recorded and broadcast on the NTV national channel on the same night. The journalists acted of their own volition and did not have the support of the Turkish armed forces.⁵ The Turkish government then questioned the Greek sovereignty of the Imia/Kardak islands and many other islands. Turkey recognized these as Italian with the appendix of the Convention between Italy and Turkey, signed in Ankara on January 4, 1932. Italy also attributed these to Greece with article 14 of the Peace Treaty with Italy after the Second World War.⁶ The Greek media then pressured the Greek government to escalate the incident.⁷

Thus, the Imia/Kardak crisis was an event in which the media played an essential role in support of government actions and contributed decisively to the start of the crisis in Turkey and its escalation in Greece.⁸ It should be mentioned that these actions would not have occurred

⁴ Tozun Bahçeli, "The Potential for Conflicts in Greek-Turkish Relations", in *Jahrbuch Für Internationale Sicherheitspolitik 2000*, by Erich Reiter (Hamburg: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 2000).

⁵ Stratis Balaskas, in *Eleftherotypia*, January 19, 1999: Interview with the former *Hürriyet* photo-reporter Cesur Sert.

⁶ Treaty of Peace with Italy, Multilateral Agreements 1946-1949 signed at Paris, February 10, 1947, p. 318.

⁷ Maria Touri, "Domestic Institutions and Decision-Making in Foreign Policy and Conflict Situations: The Role of the News Media and the Greek-Turkish Paradigm," in *Global Affairs in a Turbulent World: Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. Yannis Stivachtis (Athens: ATINER, 2008), 233-54; Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos, "The Media and Foreign Policy: The Case of Greece," *Études Helléniques / Hellenic Studies* 15, no. 1 (4 May 2007): 172-73.

⁸ Katharina Cramer-Hadjidimos, "The Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish Relations: Co-Production of a TV Programme Window by Greek and Turkish Journalists" (Place of publication not identified: Robert Bosch Stiftungskolleg für Internationale Aufgaben Programmjahr, 1998), 9.

without the political will of each country to confront the other.⁹ Private radio and television stations had begun operating in both countries after 1990 and therefore had a short history and performed with emotion rather than logic and cultivated opposition to each other. Rarely did they present the other point of view. Journalists usually understood the error in their ways. Still, they did not change the way they operated as they feared a possible drop in audiences and viewership, which could affect their employment.¹⁰

This episode is not an isolated incident. There have been many reports where the media tries to manipulate and form a public opinion covering certain controversies and conflicts in the news cycle. The ability to offer news worldwide on a 24-hour basis after the 1990s, known as the CNN effect,¹¹ has also contributed to this phenomenon of exerting indirect pressure on governments. As a result, governments make decisions and take actions guided and under the pressure of public opinion.¹² Even though the media has not replaced politicians and foreign policy experts, they can change the agenda.¹³

In fact, in the case of the crisis in Imia/Kardak, the role journalists had was so intrusive with more than the ownership and management of the media that various international institutions took measures to retrain

⁹ Neslihan Ozgunes and Georgios Terzis, "Constraints and Remedies for Journalists Reporting National Conflict: The Case of Greece and Turkey," *Journalism Studies* 1, no. 3 (January 2000): 409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700050081759>.

¹⁰ Neslihan Ozgunes and Georgios Terzis, "Constraints and Remedies for Journalists Reporting National Conflict: The Case of Greece and Turkey," *Journalism Studies* 1, no. 3 (January 2000): 410, 414 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700050081759>.

¹¹ Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy, and Intervention* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002); Eytan Gilboa, 'The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations', *Political Communication* 22, no. 1 (16 February 2005): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600590908429>.

¹² Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East* (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Philip M. Seib, *Headline Diplomacy: How News Coverage Affects Foreign Policy*, Praeger Series in Political Communication (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997); Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy, and Intervention* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002); Timothy E. Cook, *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*, Studies in Communication, Media, and Public Opinion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Robin Brown, 'Getting to War,' in *Media and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 57–81, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403980335_3.

¹³ Christos A. Frangonikolopoulos, "The Media and Foreign Policy: The Case of Greece," *Études Helléniques / Hellenic Studies* 15, no. 1 (4 May 2007): 162.

journalists to avoid a similar situation in the future.¹⁴ Most important was the initiative of the Robert Bosch Foundation in collaboration with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Istanbul branch of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, which funded a 13-month program involving 20 young scientists on the role of the media on Greek-Turkish relations. The program's object was the production of a television program by both Greek and Turkish journalists.¹⁵ Also, at the same time, more actions were taken to promote peace journalism.¹⁶

The Current State of the Media in Turkey and Greece

However, these actions did not bring positive results. Even before the changes that took place after 2016, the media outlook in Turkey was primarily determined by the country's general policy towards its neighbours. The media reflected whether the country's general policy was negative or positive at the time.¹⁷ Generally, the same happened in Greece, where the media presented Greece as a nation facing threats from its neighbours.¹⁸

Of course, this is not always the case with the will of the media. The pressure on the media in both countries, directly or indirectly, is very significant. The working conditions of journalists and freedom of speech in the two countries are not at the same level as in other European countries. Greece was ranked 65th in the Reporters sans Frontiers World Press Freedom Index 2020 (no improvement compared to 2019) due to the

¹⁴ Neslihan Ozguness and Georgios Terzis, "Constraints and Remedies for Journalists Reporting National Conflict: The Case of Greece and Turkey," *Journalism Studies* 1, no. 3 (January 2000): 405–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700050081759>.

¹⁵ Katharina. Cramer-Hadjidimos, "The Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish Relations: Co-Production of a TV Programme Window by Greek and Turkish Journalists" (Place of publication not identified: Robert Bosch Stiftungskolleg für Internationale Aufgaben Programmjahr, 1998), 9.

¹⁶ Neslihan Ozguness and Georgios Terzis, "Constraints and Remedies for Journalists Reporting National Conflict: The Case of Greece and Turkey," *Journalism Studies* 1, no. 3 (January 2000): 409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700050081759>; Nafsika Papanikolatos, "Hate Speech": (Re)Producing the "Opposition Between the National Self and the "Others,"" in "'Hate Speech' in the Balkans," ed. Mariana Lenkova (Vienna: ETEPE; International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 1998), 10; Panayote Dimitras, "The Apotheosis of Hate Speech: The near Success of (Greek and Turkish) Media in Launching War," in "'Hate Speech' in the Balkans," ed. Mariana Lenkova (Athens: ETEPE; International Helsinki Federation of Human Rights, 1998), 65–68.

¹⁷ L. Dogan Tilic, "State-Biased Reflection of Greece-Related Issues in Turkish Newspapers: From Being 'The Other' to 'We,'" *GMI: Mediterranean Edition* 1, no. 2 (2006): 19–24.

¹⁸ Roza Tsagarousianou, "Mass Communications and Nationalism: The Politics of Belonging and Exclusion in Contemporary Greece," *Res Publica* 39, no. 2 (1997): 271–80.

inclusion of the public television ERT and the ANA-MPA general news agency directly under the control of the Prime Minister¹⁹ and because journalists face difficulties in carrying out their work.²⁰ On the other hand, Turkey is in a much worse position, ranking at 154th, due to changes in media ownership, government pressure on the media, and the imprisonment of journalists for more than a year.²¹ Therefore the journalistic texts cannot be significantly differentiated from the official position in Greece and not at all in Turkey.

Coverage of the Refugee Crisis and the Health Crisis March-April 2020

Media outlets with a prolonged presence in each country were selected to examine the journalistic coverage of the two crises. The purpose of this research was to receive news from traditional media with the vertical structure in the administration and production of news and, of course, with the presence of gatekeepers - pundits of information, who still operate with the purpose to inform citizens through the media without being influenced by the citizen's interests. The gatekeepers degrade and eliminate issues that they deem insignificant, and as a result, they increase the visibility of what they consider to be the main issues (amplification).²² The agenda-setting theory is characterized by priming and framing, which are present in our case.²³

The most popular media in Turkey are the news channels that maintain news programs 24 hours a day and follow social media.²⁴ Even though television was the most popular media in Greece until recently, most people say that online media and mainly social media inform

¹⁹ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic, "Presidential Decree 81," *National Printing House*, 2019, 1 edition, sec. 119.

²⁰ "Greece | RSF," 2020, <https://rsf.org/en/greece>.

²¹ "Turkey: Massive Purge | Reporters without Borders," RSF, 2020, <https://rsf.org/en/taxonomy/term/145>.

²² Maxwell McCombs, "Building Consensus: The News Media's Agenda-Setting Roles," *Political Communication* 14, no. 4 (October 1997): 433-43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846097199236>.

²³ David Weaver, Maxwell McCombs, and Donald L. Shaw, "Agenda-Setting Research: Issues, Attributes, and Influences," in *Handbook of Political Communication Research*, ed. Lynda Lee Kaid, 1st ed. (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Publishers., 2004), 257-83.

²⁴ Nic Newman et al., "Digital News Report 2020" (Reuters Institute, 2020): 85.; Can Ertuna, "Producing Opinion and Building the Agenda on TV Discussion Programs during the State of Emergency in Turkey," *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications* 6, no. 2 (3 April 2020): 114, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajmmc.6-2-3>.

them.²⁵ Due to the lack of human resources, we could not monitor the TV news bulletins on a 24-hour basis and the social media of the two countries.

Three news media outlets were selected from each country to be monitored in order to find out how the media covered the crises in question.

- The newspaper *Kathimerini* (liberal-pro-government),
- the newspaper *Proto Thema* (pro-government populist),
- the newspaper *I Efimerida ton Syntakton* (left anti-government, SYRIZA oriented)

were chosen in Greece. The media selected by Greece are popular, as well as the three belong to the top 15 brands (%) weekly usages (*Kathimerini* 17%, *Proto Thema* 15%, *Efimerida ton Syntakton* 9%). The same media are considered reliable sources of information as they are in the top 15 of the trust brand score. Specifically, *Kathimerini* is 1st with a score of 62% “trust” and 17% “do not trust,” *Efimerida ton Syntakton* 11th with 54% “trust” and 21% “do not trust” and *Proto Thema* 13th with 52% “trust” and 25% “do not trust.”²⁶

The sources of information in Turkey were:

- *Anadolu Ajansı* (public news agency),
- *Hürriyet* newspaper (pro-government after its sale to the Demiroren group in 2018), and
- *Ahval* (independent internet site owned by the Gülen movement according to the Turkish authorities).

AA is a popular medium as it belongs to the top 15 brands (%) weekly usage (23%), as does the *Hürriyet* newspaper (30%). Both AA and *Hürriyet* are considered reliable sources as they are in the top 15 of the trust brand score, AA 8th with 65% trust and 27% do not trust, and *Hürriyet* 10th with 64% trust and 23% do not trust.²⁷ *Ahval*, on the other hand, is a new source of information (launched in 2017), left-center to left biased based on story selection and editorial positions, opposed to Turkey’s right-leaning government, comparable to *Efimerida ton*

²⁵ Nic Newman et al., “Digital News Report 2020” (Reuters Institute, 2020): 71.

²⁶ Nic Newman et al., “Digital News Report 2020” (Reuters Institute, 2020): 71.

²⁷ Nic Newman et al., “Digital News Report 2020” (Reuters Institute, 2020): 84.

Syntakton. It is well known to European media, although it is rated Mixed for factual reporting due to a lack of transparency regarding funding and propaganda accusations.²⁸

All the media selected for Greece and Turkey were constantly dealing with the issue of refugees, mainly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and illegal immigrants, especially in 2015, when more than 1,000,000 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean. The policy of each media outlet towards refugees and immigrants differs depending on the political developments in Syria, Europe, Greece, and Turkey and the image that the readers of each media outlet maintain about the refugees. However, refugee issues have always been on the headlines of these media.

The first news articles about the refugee migration crisis started on February 26. By May 10, mentions of this crisis and the situation with the coronavirus in Turkey and Greece had disappeared from the news agenda. The team of this paper monitored the news on the two topics in Greek and Turkish for the period February 26 to May 10, 2020. The monitoring showed that there are common points and points of differentiation.

The Qualitative Analogy

Both the refugee migration crisis on the Greek-Turkish border and the effects of the health crisis in the neighbouring country occupied the media of both countries significantly. They had an essential role in their journalism. The refugee and immigration crisis has led to more news articles in Greece and Turkey concerning the health crisis.

Both issues concern the media in question in the two countries to the same extent whether they support their respective governments or not. The only exception was the newspaper *Hürriyet* which did not deal with the health crisis in Greece at all. This could be a direct result of the newspaper's management's policy.

The two news outlets that oppose the government in Greece and Turkey, *Efimerida ton Syntakton* and *Ahval*, cover both issues to the same extent as the totality in total. Even though the news coverage of the

²⁸ "Ahval News," *Media Bias/Fact Check*, accessed 4 January 2022, <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/ahval-news/>.

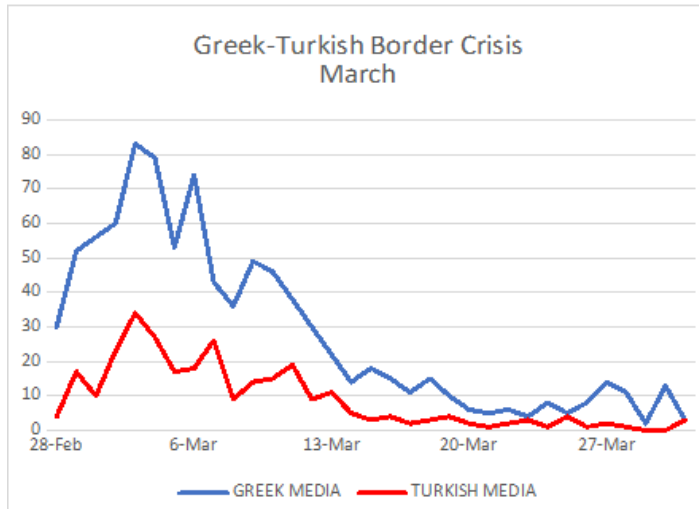
refugee crisis was most extensive from February 28 to March 3 in most news outlets in Greece and Turkey, the two that are in opposition seem to have published most of their texts during March 3-12. The above shows that they are concerned with more than just the initial coverage of the immigration of refugees and the reaction from Greece.

The Qualitative Disparity

The Turkish media produce the same or even more significant amount of news items daily than Greek media. However, they devoted much less news to the two crises than the Greek media. The Turkish media are not interested in covering the problems on the other side of the Aegean to the same extent as the Greek media cover what is happening in Turkey. This must be because Turkey is more extensive in land and population and deals mainly with its internal affairs than other European countries. The issues about Turkey in the Greek media far exceed the Turkish media's coverage of events in Greece. A noticeable difference is that the Greek media are much more interested in Turkish affairs, not only on issues involving Greece but also the internal Turkish issues. They believe that Turkey always has the initiative in all bilateral matters and shows blatant or covert aggression and that Greece is always on the defensive. Most Greeks feel threatened by Turkey and, when asked about the base of this fear, they point to the fact that the Turkish population outnumbers the Greek people by 7 seven times.²⁹

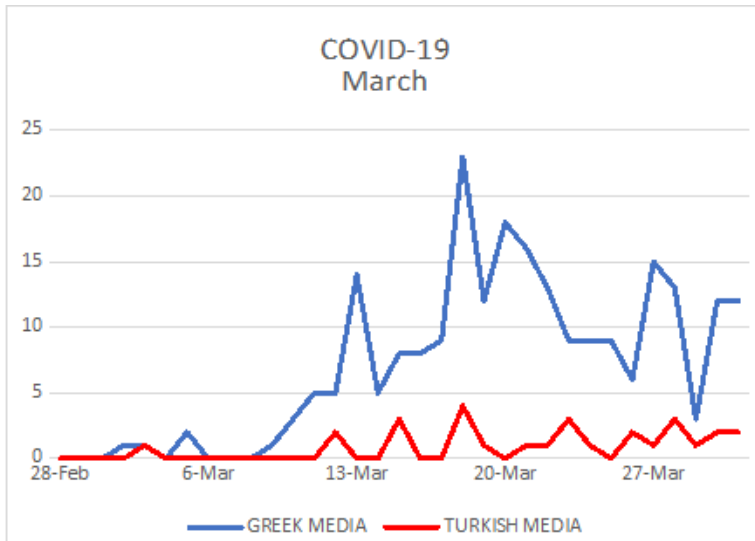
There is a significant difference in the number of texts written about the crisis at the border by Turkish and Greek media. In March 2020, the Greek media published daily about the crisis on the Greek-Turkish border, criticizing Turkey. Most news items were posted on March 3, 4, and 6 with 83,79 and 74 texts. Most of the news items for the border crisis were published in the Turkish media on March 2, 3, and 4 (23, 34, and 27 articles).

²⁹ Katharina. Cramer-Hadjidimos, *"The Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish Relations: Co-Production of a TV Programme Window by Greek and Turkish Journalists"* (Place of publication not identified: Robert Bosch Stiftungskolleg für Internationale Aufgaben Programmjahr, 1998). 6.

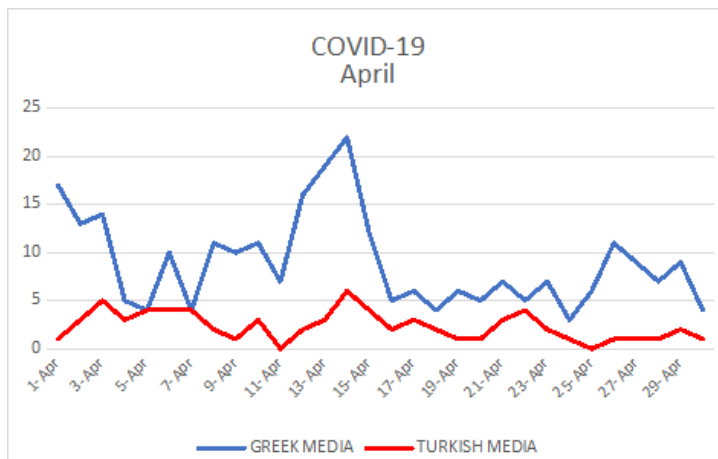


In the case of the coronavirus health crisis, the media of each country gave significant publicity, but significantly less than the refugee-immigration crisis. The Greek media published more articles than the Turkish ones. The first text appeared on March 2; they produced texts daily, while on March 18, 20, 21, 27, they gave 23, 18, 16, 15 readers. Respectively, the Turkish media first covered the issue of coronavirus in Greece on March 12 and never published more than four texts. One reason why the coverage of the refugee crisis on the Greek-Turkish border was not high on the agenda of the Turkish media, at least in the first week of the crisis, must have been the loss of 34 Turkish soldiers from airstrikes in Idlib, Syria, on February 27.³⁰ The Turkish media initially limited themselves to describing the pandemic situation in Greece. It is expected that such an issue would have attracted the Turkish media’s attention and the public’s interest and kept the interest in the crisis on the Greek-Turkish border low for at least the first week of March. Overall, however, the refugee crisis receives more significant publicity than the health crisis on the other side of the borders. This could be attributed to the fact that Greece set strict, repressive measures from the beginning even though the number of cases was much lower than Turkey’s uncontrollable situation in the first phase of the pandemic.

³⁰ “At Least 34 Turkish Soldiers Killed in Air Strikes in Syria’s Idlib: Syrian Observatory,” *Reuters*, 27 February 2020, sec. Emerging Markets, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-toll-idUSKCN20L32S>.



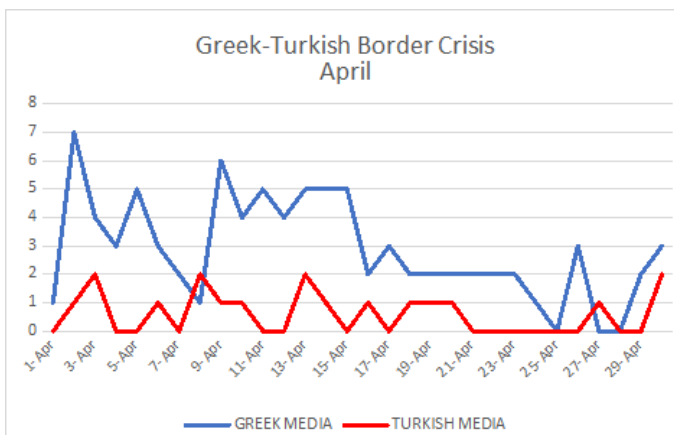
In April, the situation was reversed, and the coronavirus health crisis came to the fore, and the refugee immigration crisis took a back seat. The Greek media hosted at least four articles about coronavirus in Turkey every day, while there was a period (1-4, 13-14) that hosted more than 15 articles. The pandemic in Turkey occupied the Greek media almost daily, making daily comments and sharply criticizing the measures taken or not taken by Turkey. Here we notice that in Greece, with the government’s strict criteria, things were relatively calm, and the news in the Turkish media concerning Greece in the pandemic was minimal.



In contrast, in Turkey, the situation with the coronavirus in Greece was covered with 3-5 articles daily, while only on April 6 did more than five texts appear. Overall, the texts on the pandemic situation in Greece are few.

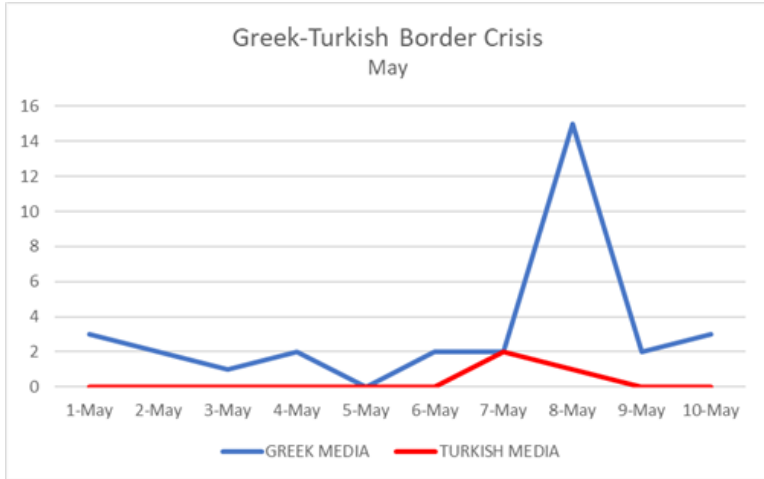
Only *Anadolu Ajansı* maintained a different policy for coronavirus. On March 3, AA published the first text on the consequences of coronavirus in Greece as expected as it is the news agency of Turkey. So, it has correspondents in Greece and channels the Turkish media market with texts, photos, and videos from other countries and Greece.

Anadolu Ajansı continued to cover coronavirus in Greece throughout March and April to a greater extent than other Turkish media outlets. In April, they gave up to 2 texts daily on the course of the health crisis in Greece, while *Anadolu Ajansı* on April 3 gave four texts and on several other dates three texts per day. We should not conclude that *Hürriyet* and *Ahval* reproduced *Anadolu Ajansı's* texts as the agency had no correspondence for covid 19 from Athens on 19-26 April, while *Ahval* gave 1-2 readers daily in the period 19-25 April and *Hürriyet* gave 1-2 texts daily in the period 19-28 April except for April 24. So the two media outlets pursued an independent policy or had other sources and did not rely on writing texts in *Anadolu Ajansı* alone.

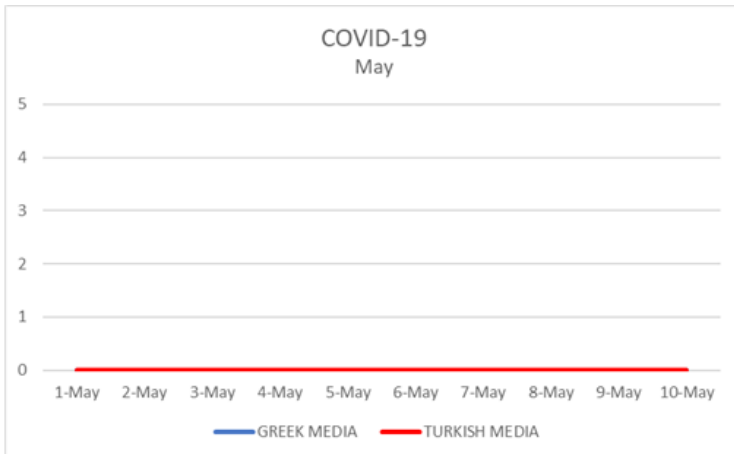


In April, the refugee crisis virtually disappeared from the columns of the Turkish media in question as it never exceeded two articles a day. While there was a similar decline in Greek media, the texts

in total were doubled, and there were days when 6 and 7 texts appeared on April 2 and 9.

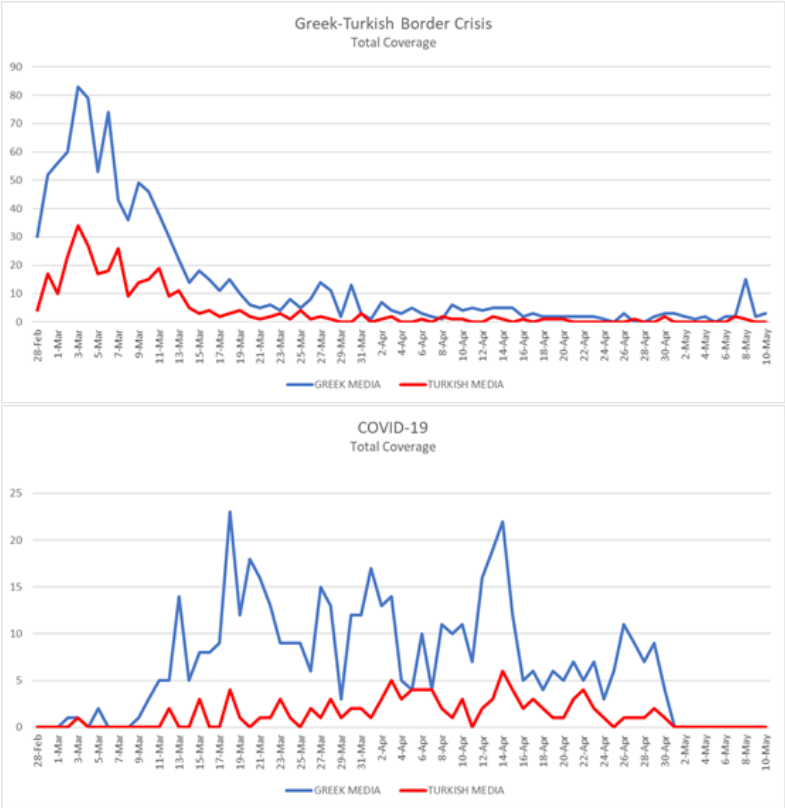


In May, very few texts were published in Greek and Turkish media. The main exception was May 8 for the Greek media when 15 texts were published. All other days it never exceeded three texts a day. For the Turkish media, the Border crisis was eliminated, and only on May 7, two texts were published by *Ahval*.



Publicity for the coronavirus virus in the other country was eliminated, as not one text was published on the Greek and Turkish media during the 1st-10th of May.

In general, the publicity for the border crisis and the coronavirus crisis was as follows:



Attempts to Interpret Media Behaviour

Which is the most suitable theory to interpret the policy of the Greek and Turkish media during the two crucial events in March and April of 2020?

Can the CNN effect that Piers Robinson studied concerning the crisis in Imia/ Kardak be applied in this case? It cannot be used as in the refugee immigration crisis on February 28, international media and news agencies reported that the Turkish authorities instigated or encouraged the refugee movement.

(DW,³¹ AFP,³² Euroactiv³³). Even if Turkey had just opened its borders to Greece (BBC News,³⁴ Vice News³⁵), the crisis was not a creation of the media for the two countries to take a stand on the refugee immigration problem. As by the international media information, the initiative stands with the Turkish authorities and the Turkish media. The Greek media covered the event with continuous news coverage while taking into account the official positions of each country.

Another reason why the CNN effect does not apply in the current crisis is that the media are under the direct control of President Erdogan and the AKP government in Turkey. As a result, they cannot express different views and opinions from Erdogan or steer, directly or indirectly, the Public Opinion in a different direction from that of the country's president. There is no other pole of power, as, after the coup attempt of 2016, extensive purges were made in the Turkish Armed Forces and the Turkish administration. However, the Economist Intelligence Unit Report for 2020 noticed an increased willingness of citizens in Turkey to participate in demonstrations and improved confidence in political parties. The civil liberties score for Turkey, at just 2.35, remains the lowest in Western Europe.³⁶

³¹ Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "Turkey Encourages Migrants to Cross into EU" | DW | 29.02.2020, accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-encourages-migrants-to-cross-into-eu/av-52591266>. Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "Greek Police Fire Tear Gas at Migrants on Turkish Border" | DW | 29.02.2020, accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/greek-police-fire-tear-gas-at-migrants-on-turkish-border/a-52582096>.

³² AFP News Agency, "Migrants at the Turkish Border Attempt to Cross over into Greece" | AFP, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_Oin50nYoQ&ab_channel=AFPNewsAgency.

³³ Georgi Gotev and Sarantis Michalopoulos, "Erdogan Drops the "Human Bomb" on EU," *Www.Euractiv.Com* (blog), 29 February 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/erdogan-drops-the-human-bomb-on-eu/>.

³⁴ "Turkey Says Millions of Migrants May Head to EU," *BBC News*, 2 March 2020, sec. Europe, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51707958>.

³⁵ VICE News, "Migrants Trying to Enter Europe Are About to Be Stuck Between the Greek Army and Turkish Police," 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIKuT_CDUDQ&ab_channel=VICENews; VICE News, "What the Hell Is Happening With Migrants in Greece?," accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3a8mny/what-the-hell-is-happening-with-migrants-in-greece>.

³⁶ "Democracy Index 2020: In Sickness and in Health?" (LONDON: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021), <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>.

Similarly, in Greece, the media could not oppose the state agenda during the March-April 2020 crisis. They could not put pressure on the government into overturning its planning, as, after the economic crisis of the 2010 decade, the Greek media were severely weakened. The government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis (New Democracy party) emerged after elections in July 2019. He achieved a clear victory with a percentage of 39.85% and had the full support of the parliament. The opposition (SYRIZA, KINAL parties) does not have to propose different positions in foreign policy. Also, the former head of the Army under SYRIZA Alkiviadis Stefanis is Deputy Minister of Defence in Mitsotakis' government, and the head of the Greek Armed Forces was promoted to this position the previous SYRIZA government and enjoyed the support of the New Democracy government. The choices of individuals in the field of Defense show that there is continuity in the policy of Greek governments on the issue of Defense. Therefore, the Greek media could not publish critical news or even create a different agenda to this of the government.

In the case of the coronavirus crisis, the Greek and the Turkish media, at least the ones we monitored, tried to use each other's countries as an example to be avoided. Either they are simply presenting the situation so that their audience knows that the other country is also dealing with the same health crisis, or they are criticizing the other's government's actions. In the case of Turkish media, after the first days, the issue was highlighted, the texts about the situation in Greece were significantly reduced. It is believed that this was due to the successful management of the health crisis in Greece, so the Turkish media had no reason to show the situation in Greece as it had the best possible outcome. On the other hand, the Greek media show the situation in Turkey where the government initially proudly announced that there were no coronavirus cases³⁷ and then found it challenging to impose social protection measures.³⁸ When the refugee flows stopped, and the situation with coronavirus was under control, the Greek media stopped covering these two issues in Turkey (see the charts).

³⁷ "Why does Turkey insist - unconvincingly - that it does not have coronavirus cases?," Skai, accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.skai.gr/news/world/giati-i-tourkia-epimenei-xoris-na-peithei-oti-den-exei-kroumata-koronoiou>.

³⁸ "Coronavirus - Turkey: Scenes of chaos and panic after the new measures," Skai, accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.skai.gr/news/world/koronoios-tourkia-skines-xaous-kai-panikou-meta-ta-nea-metra>.

There is a case of priming/framing of agenda-setting theory in the coronavirus crisis. It is used negatively as it does not decide the leading news that needs to be at the forefront, but it is used to hide events that are not of interest. However, in both cases, Greek and Turkish media promote or conceal the situation in the other country, not to pressure their governments, but to show their audience that the situation is better inside their country than in the neighbouring country. Therefore, the theory of the CNN effect does not apply in the second case either. Instead, the agenda-setting theory is used to support the work of government by the media of each country.

Let us consider another theory, that of the relationship between the interaction of state and media and, even better, the influence of the state, indirect or even direct, in media, especially in Southern Europe. Shanto Iyengar and Adam Simon showed that politics significantly affects news presentation in countries with robust media control, even in the private media.³⁹ Does this also apply in the case of Greece and Turkey?

In Turkey, there have always been strong press and media groups. However, after 1980 the relations between the media and the government were not good. Many journalists were imprisoned or assassinated. When the parties came to power, they gave much money in advertisements on social media, and at the same time, they put significant pressure on the other media.⁴⁰ In Greece, this was expressed but client state until the 2000s, when political parties used the state not to suppress the media but to provide facilities, loans, or grants to the media to gain their support towards the parties for as long as they were in power or to help them regain power.⁴¹ According to many scholars, the political parties, companies, and especially banks and the media had created a great network of relations and mutual support based on serving the same

³⁹ Shanto Iyengar and Adam Simon, "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing," *Communication Research* 20, no. 3 (June 1993): 365-83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365093020003002>.

⁴⁰ L. Tilic Dogan, "Journalism in Greece and Turkey," trans. Elias Kolovos (Athens: Ekdoseis Papazisi, 2000): 402-410.

⁴¹ Daniel C. Hallin and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, "Political Clientelism and the Media: Southern Europe and Latin America in Comparative Perspective," *Media, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (March 2002): 175-95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344370202400202>; Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, "Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics, Communication, Society, and Politics" (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 121, 125, 135. L. Tilic Dogan, *Journalism in Greece and Turkey*, trans. Elias Kolovos (Athens: Ekdoseis Papazisi, 2000): 411-412.

interests in the absence of the people (entanglement).⁴² The participation of the media was ensured either directly or indirectly through state loans with the government grant. The loans to the media had reached the amount of 1,270,000,000 Euros in the previous decade.⁴³

The relationship between the state and the media has deteriorated even more in recent years. Freedom of the press has declined in both Turkey and Greece. After the failed coup attempt of 2016 in Turkey, 101 journalists were in prison.⁴⁴ In Greece, journalists are often subjected to police and private violence,⁴⁵ as are foreign journalists.⁴⁶ Many media associations and most notably the International Press Institute and the Reporters Without Borders, believe that there is no environment for journalists to practice their profession safely in Greece in 2020. In the above direction, they call on the European Union and the Member States to ensure a safe working environment for journalists, remove all restrictions on information and expression, bring to justice those responsible for attacks on journalists, and take action against fake news and hate speech.⁴⁷ Moreover, as previously mentioned, the media in Greece have a significant financial problem due to the economic crisis.⁴⁸

⁴² Dina Kyriakidou and Stephen Grey, 'Special Report: Greece's Triangle of Power', *Reuters*, 17 December 2012,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-media-idUSBRE8BG0CF20121217>; Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, "Greece: Press Subsidies in Turmoil," in *State Aid for Newspapers: Theories, Cases, Actions*, ed. Paul Murschetz, Media Business and Innovation (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2013): 240-242; Petros Iosifidis and Dimitris Boucas, "Media Policy and Independent Journalism in Greece" (Athens: Open Society Foundation, 2015): 14-16, <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/6034>.

⁴³ Tassos Morfis, "Five (Simple) Reasons Why Greece Urgently Needs More #PressFreedom," *Medium*, 4 May 2017, <https://medium.com/athenslivegr/five-simple-reasons-why-greece-needs-urgently-more-pressfreedom-58d91ceaf4cb>.

⁴⁴ "Reporters Without Borders, Turkey: State of Emergency, State of Arbitrary," 19 September 2016: 5 available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57e133eb4.html> [accessed 22 February 2021]

⁴⁵ "Greek Police Must Be Trained to Respect Journalists, RSF Says | Reporters without Borders," RSF, 26 November 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/news/greek-police-must-be-trained-respect-journalists-rsf-says>.

⁴⁶ "Reporters in Greece Must Be Protected from Attack by Anti-Migrant Residents | Reporters without Borders," RSF, 4 March 2020, <https://rsf.org/en/news/reporters-greece-must-be-protected-attack-anti-migrant-residents>.

⁴⁷ IPI-Admin, "EU and Member States Must Create Safe Environment for Journalists Reporting in Greece," *International Press Institute* (blog), 5 March 2020, <https://ipi.media/eu-and-member-states-must-create-safe-environment-for-journalists-reporting-in-greece/>.

⁴⁸ Petros Iosifidis, "Greek Media and Independent Journalism under Austerity," *OpenDemocracy*, accessed 22 February 2021,

The two states, or rather their leaders, each imposed their will on their countries' media. International media report that Erdoğan took advantage of the crisis to put down on the few media outlets he does not control, including independent journalists,⁴⁹ and to force social media companies to establish a headquarters or representative office in Turkey to obey the decisions of the Turkish courts so that they are also under its direct control. In the case of Greece, the pressure was indirect as the Greek government funded several media outlets to better inform the Greek society about the coronavirus. The International Press Institute welcomed the Greek government's decision to donate € 20,000,000 to 1,232 media outlets to help deal with the pandemic but expressed concerns about being included in the list of 200 online media outlets not included in the Online Media Register of Greece, some of them inactive, some with frequent visits and some media that oppose the government has been excluded.⁵⁰ Therefore, we can say that this was how the Greek government tried to impose on the media complete alignment with its policy.

However, is that the case? Media researchers believe that in both countries, Greece and Turkey, on national issues (ethnic origin, minorities, borders, Aegean Sea islands status, Cyprus problem), journalists consider that they only represent their state and attack the other side. They cannot be objective when presenting these issues. So, they often express Greek and Turkish nationalism and practice propaganda, sometimes consciously.⁵¹ This is true for journalists, but it is also true for the media. In cases of wars or national crises, the media and even opposing political forces and the people feel the need to support the one who exercises power and stands with the state in the struggle against the enemy. It is the theory of "rally round the flag."⁵² For example, during the Evros/Meric crisis, refugees were portrayed as Erdoğan's

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyyuk/greek-media-and-independent-journalism-under-austerity/>.

⁴⁹ Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "Turkey's Erdogan Clamps down Further on Media amid Coronavirus Crisis | DW | 21.04.2020," DW.COM, accessed 22 February 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-erdogan-clamps-down-further-on-media-amid-coronavirus-crisis/a-53192898>.

⁵⁰ IPI-Admin, "Greece Urged to Ensure Fair and Transparent Media Support Scheme," *International Press Institute* (blog), 15 July 2020, <https://ipi.media/greece-urged-to-ensure-fair-and-transparent-media-support-scheme/>.

⁵¹ L. Tilic Dogan, "Journalism in Greece and Turkey," trans. Elias Kolovos (Athens: Ekdoseis Papazisi, 2000): 443-445.

⁵² William D. Baker and John R. Oneal, "Patriotism or Opinion Leadership?: The Nature and Origins of the 'Rally 'Round the Flag' Effect," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 5 (October 2001): 661-87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002701045005006>.

instrumentalization and, subsequently, dehumanized by the media in the public's eyes as a threat.⁵³

Nevertheless, can the refugee-immigration crisis and the health crisis of coronavirus be national issues and unite the people and the media around the current government? As Bethany Albertson and Shana Kushner Gadarian have shown, people react in the same way to the effects of illegal immigration and pandemics. This is because people feel anxiety, fear, and insecurity when public health is threatened, and that is why they turn mainly to the state health institutions.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The media in Greece and Turkey, even those that are not pro-government, sided with their respective governments during the refugee and health crises. Contrary to previous incidents between the two countries, the media did not contribute to these crises, nor did they pressure their governments to pursue specific policies. Instead, the governments took action, and the media supported them. Even though their governments may not have pressured them to advance government policy, they considered it their duty to side with the government. A different approach could have had negative consequences for the media.

Even if the owners and journalists in the Greek and Turkish media did not indirectly feel pressured by the state, they would have probably still followed the same policy as it is common for journalists to support state policy in national affairs concerning the two countries, and they believe they express the Public Opinion. The theory of S. Iyengar & A. Simon would find its full or even partial implementation. Nowadays, societies consider pandemic and illegal immigration essential issues like foreign policy. Both the Greek and the Turkish media dealt with the two crises in question as if they were a national issue and the two countries were going to war and tried to have a catalytic effect on the formation of public opinion in their respective countries by supporting their government.

⁵³ "Weaponizing Refugees at the Land Borders of Evros: Constructing the Other Through Fear and Danger," *Oxford Law Faculty* (blog), 3 June 2021, <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2021/06/weaponizing>.

⁵⁴ Bethany Albertson and Shana Kushner Gadarian, *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 75-88 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139963107>.

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