

Framing The Greek Memoranda (2010-2015): A Polarised yet Hollow Debate

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Abstract: This study examines the contribution of media frames to democratic debate. Focusing on Greece, the article investigates how the press frames the Greek memoranda (2010-2015) and the contribution of these frames to the construction of democratic debate. Relying on an in-depth qualitative framing analysis of the coverage of the three memoranda and combining insights from framing theory and political economy, the major frames that shaped debates on the issue and the boundaries of discourse that they set are identified. The findings illustrate that, while the application of frames might differ across outlets, a rather uniform debate around the memoranda is promoted through the press. These results raise doubts about the performance of the media in the coverage of the most significant political issue in Greece's recent history, and reveal the silencing of alternative voices that could have challenged the dominant frames of the debate.

Keywords: framing, press and politics, democracy, Greece, memoranda

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1. Introduction

The meltdown of the financial sector of the United States in 2008 evolved into an economic crisis that reached Europe in 2009. Greece became a highlight case in October 2009 and the management of the crisis consisted of three memoranda of agreement signed between Greek governments and a creditor 'troika' consisting of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission. The mediation of the crisis was particularly interesting for scholars who focused on the coverage of the crisis by global media outlets (Touri and Rogers 2013; Touri and Koteyko 2014; Mylonas 2012; 2015; Tzogopoulos 2013). Some attention was also paid to how domestic media covered the crisis, examining the discursive mechanisms employed to legitimise the first and second memoranda (Doudaki 2015), and the frames that promoted a de-contextualised neoliberal discourse (Doudaki et al. 2016) found in the Greek press. However, there has not yet been a study that focuses on the coverage of all three memoranda and examines the contribution of the frames to democratic debate.

In this article a qualitative frame analysis is performed on news articles and political party announcements in order to address a twofold research question: how did the Greek press frame the Greek Memoranda debate, and how did these frames set boundaries to the debate by including and excluding advocate frames? This article offers a comprehensive analysis of the coverage of the Greek crisis, revealing the role of the media in its naturalisation.

2. Framing and Democratic Debate

Matthes describes frames as “selective views on issues, views that construct reality in a certain way leading to different evaluations and recommendations” (2011/2012, 249) and argues that these interpretations are negotiated and contested over time. Entman suggests that framing has four functions and that frames are selective representations of an issue that “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (1993, 52). Therefore, frames are clusters of information that bring forward parts of reality in such a way as to promote some aspects of an issue and the connections among these aspects. Van Gorp (2007) argues that frames originate in culture and are situated externally to individuals, who only make use of them. Media workers apply some cultural frames in news content, whereas politically motivated sponsors try to influence the media, in order to get their preferred framing of the event (2007). Tewksbury et al. call the persuasive instruments employed by these sponsors “advocate frames” (2000, 806), which are generally the primary material employed by journalists to cover an issue.

Frames in culture can be reconstructed through an analysis of media content, in which they get embedded when journalists structure a news message such that many elements refer to that frame. Van Gorp operationalises frames as “frame packages” composed of three parts: “the manifest framing devices, the manifest or latent reasoning devices, and an implicit cultural phenomenon that displays the package as a whole” (2007, 64). Framing devices can be word choices, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments and visual devices. Frames in news media are manifested through these devices, and through a central organising principle that is the actual frame that provides the structure to the frame package, usually a cultural phenomenon (2007, 64). The reasoning devices complement the frame package, as cultural phenomena cannot define and understand events, issues, and persons (Fisher 1997, quoted in Van Gorp 2007).

Van Gorp explains that framing is a form of metacommunication (2007, 65), arguing that the connection between the reasoning devices found in a text and the actual frame happens “during the interpretation of the message by the journalist and the audience on the basis of a cognitive process” (2007, 65). Therefore, the media text does not merely provide information about an issue but ways in which that issue should be understood. The implicit information conveyed by the frame contextualises information provided by the news, whereas the content of the media evokes individual schemas that are congruent with the frame (2007, 65). It is probable that a media text will contain elements that are incongruent with the dominant frame or that the receivers will decode the frames in different ways; however, as Entman (1993) demonstrates, one of the effects of framing is making the elements that are included in the frame more salient. This function of frames has important implications for political communication through the media. As frames bring forward some explanations for social reality while obscuring others, audiences are led to interpret political issues in a specific way. It then becomes evident that politicians compete with one another and with journalists over which interpretation will be depicted in the media (Entman 1993). Therefore, Entman argues that:

Framing in this light plays a major role in the exertion of political power, and the frame in a news text is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text. Reflecting the play of power and boundaries of discourse over an issue, many news texts exhibit

homogeneous framing at one level of analysis, yet competing frames at another (1993, 55).

Consequently it is possible that even when the same frame is applied, alternative reasoning devices will be in contest, or that the frames will produce a homogenous debate, setting the limits of discourse over an issue. As a result, unpublicised views have little to no effect on public opinion, whereas political proponents using alternative terms to those widely accepted will be perceived as lacking credibility (Entman 1993). And this is precisely where the power of framing lies and why looking at framing contests in news texts reveals the boundaries of discourse in a debate around a political issue. The media are an important battlefield where alternative framings of social reality vie for domination, and journalists have a processing role in deciding which frames will be applied in their texts. Therefore, a comparison of the frames applied in media messages with the advocate frames promoted by political sponsors can shed light on how the media constrain democratic debate over an issue by making some sponsors appear included in the conversation and others that fail to adapt to the dominant frames as 'out'.

3. The Role of the Media in the Reification of the Crisis

This article understands the economy as always political, following Mylonas' argument that "capitalism is a closed socio-political system, established and naturalized by political interventions, norms and narratives, organizing social life according to capital's demands" (2014, 306). Rancière (2006) argues that elites are increasingly uncomfortable with democracy, whereas Žižek (2010) and Klein (2007) understand crisis as an opportunity for these elites to dismantle popular decision-making structures of liberal democracy in favour of technocratic forms of governance. Harvey (2010) sees systemic capitalist crises as moments when capitalism reconfigures its development patterns through political means; however, this process is not linear or without struggle. Downing (2014) argues that cultural frameworks are challenged in moments of crisis and that the media play an important role in the temporal construction of hegemony. In order to explain the process through which publics consent to or even endorse, for considerable periods of time, the policies and strategies of the governing circles, Downing (2014) utilises Gramsci's concept of hegemony, the cultural frameworks that explain the authority of ruling elites and that are challenged when crisis occurs. Equally relevant is the concept of "reification" (Lukács, quoted in Mylonas 2012), which describes the objectification and rationalisation of capitalist social relations that are then collectively imagined as normal, rational, and natural. Žižek argues that "the establishment proposes a de-politicized naturalization of the crisis" (2010, 85), which promotes cultural explanations of the crisis as the hegemonic frameworks that defend the main logics of capitalism. The management of the crisis is therefore political, despite efforts to promote apolitical and ahistorical frameworks that seek to present the capitalist economy as natural and inevitable. The role of the media in crisis is to mediate the necessary cultural frameworks for the construction of public consent in favour of the continuation and reconfiguration of existing capitalist social relations in production.

This article proposes combining the theoretical approaches of framing and political economy to probe the frameworks that the Greek media promoted in order to manufacture public consent during the investigated case. McChesney (2004) argues that one of the main dimensions in the political economy of communication investigates the relationship between the media and the social structure of society by

examining how media systems reinforce, challenge, or influence existing class and social relations. McChesney argues that “the critical position [...] is to try to understand why the range of legitimate debate is so constricted compared to the range of what is possible and what would be best for all society, not just the contending business interests” (2004, 48). Garnham makes a similar argument:

A delimited social group, pursuing economic or political ends, determines which meanings circulate and which do not, which stories are told about what, which arguments are given prominence and what cultural resources are made available and to whom. The analysis of this process is vital to an understanding of the power relationships involved in culture and their relationship to wider structures of domination (1990, 65).

Here lies a useful link between political economy and framing, as frames ultimately shed light on which elements of stories are circulated and given salience by the media. Therefore, framing theory can contribute to this dimension of political economy: frame analysis can reveal the limits of debate and expose the frames as mechanisms that achieve this process of constricting the range of debate, achieving the manufacturing of public consensus. The economic crisis has been an important challenge towards established cultural frameworks and an analysis of its framing can shed light on how the Greek media fostered a polarised yet hollow democratic debate assisting in the naturalisation of the crisis.

4. Data and Method

4.1. Data

To answer the research question, articles from two daily newspapers and the announcements of four political parties are analysed. The centre-left *Ta Nea* and the conservative *Kathimerini* were selected to cover the mainstream of political opinion in Greece. Furthermore, four parties that participated in the parliament throughout the investigated time frame are examined, as they cover a broad range of opinions in the Greek political scenery within the left-right spectrum. These parties have distinct political ideologies, with Nea Dimokratia (ND) being the conservative and liberal party, PASOK the social-democratic, SYRIZA a coalition of leftist parties, and KKE a Marxist-Leninist party. Furthermore, these parties held different positions on the memoranda. Nea Dimokratia was initially against the first memorandum, but signed the second, and has been in favour of their political logic since then. PASOK was in favour of the memoranda from the beginning, having been the government that signed the first one. SYRIZA was the poster child of the so-called ‘anti-memorandum’ camp, a position that propelled the leftist party to the government in 2015, until the signing of the third memorandum, which signalled the shift of SYRIZA’s position. Finally, KKE refused to take a side in the memoranda debate, arguing that the real problem was the capitalist system itself and not the memoranda *per se*.

Articles and announcements were collected from three different time periods signalling different stages of austerity and governance in Greece. These periods comprise the voting on each memorandum by the Greek parliament, so the timeframes from which data were collected were the periods between February and August 2010, December 2011 and June 2012, and May and November 2015. These moments were key in the shaping of debates. It was also deemed important to include three months of reports before and after each moment in order to be able to

notice framing patterns. Approximately 600 announcements and 1000 news articles were collected from the websites of each party and the online databases of each newspaper. Each time segment, each newspaper, and each political party were analysed separately. The unit of analysis was the article and the singular announcement. However, there was a consideration for multiple frames, or even contradictory frames coexisting within a unit.

4.2. Method

A qualitative frame analysis was conducted on both datasets in order to reconstruct news and advocate frames. The two sets of frames were compared in order to shed light on the boundaries of discourse in the media and the actors featured in this debate. The approach taken in this research is inductive, allowing the researcher to tackle news stories without a particular set of pre-defined news frames, so the reconstructed frames emerge from meticulous analysis. This approach has been criticised for relying on small samples and for being difficult to reproduce; however, it can offer deep insights and a more focused level of analysis (De Vreese 2005) and can therefore shed light on the finer details of the debate around austerity policies. Furthermore, the qualitative approach was preferred as it 'tends to give greater emphasis to the cultural and political content of news frames and how they draw upon a shared store of social meanings' (Reese 2010, 18). Therefore, the qualitative approach is more suitable for bringing the cultural and political significance of the frames to the fore.

In order to reconstruct the frames, Van Gorp's (2007) approach was preferred over other relevant approaches, as it allows the dissection of political and cultural meanings attached to the frames and can shed light on how cultural frames are applied in media messages. To identify the reasoning devices of the frame, Entman's (1993) definition of frame functions was employed as a template, but the categories were also amended based on an inductive analysis of the material. The reasoning devices located were 'causal attribution', which looks for the cause of a problem, 'treatment recommendation', which looks for solutions, and 'problem definition', which identifies the central topic of the frame. The analysis of the material did not yield enough quotes for the 'moral evaluation' category so the frames were reconstructed to omit this category. The political and technical nature of the case could explain the lack of moral reasoning. Various framing devices were also uncovered that pointed to the same core idea, and each frame was bound together under the heading of a central organising theme.

Each framing package was represented in a matrix. To get to the point of reconstruction an analysis of each newspaper's articles was performed and logical chains of framing and reasoning devices across the texts were identified. Twenty to thirty articles from each newspaper and ten announcements from each party were initially analysed. Of course the analysis was performed on all articles and announcements, and any new devices that came up were noted and ascribed to the relevant frame package accordingly. The central idea of the frame package was then used as a heading for each frame, as the association of the frame with a cultural phenomenon achieves a certain degree of generalisation to other cases in similar situations (Van Gorp 2007).

The frames reconstructed were then analysed in two ways. Firstly, there was a microanalysis of the frames that investigated their constituting elements, comparing them with the advocate frames in order to shed light on which frames were applied in news messages and which were muted, and which advocate frames were also

amended. The second level of analysis was a macroanalysis, mapping the development of frame patterns throughout the periods investigated. The patterns noted on how those frames were applied reveal the boundaries of discourse set by them and the development of these boundaries through time. By comparing the frames promoted by political parties to the frames found in the media, and the differences in their devices, light is shed on which parties are winning the framing struggle. This analysis of the frames answers the research question, as by looking at the complete list of frames the limits that these frames pose on democratic debate are exposed.

5. Findings

5.1. Kathimerini

The frame analysis of the articles of *Kathimerini* in 2010 yield six frames (Table 1). Right-wing ND sponsors two frames ('Anti-memorandum', 'PASOK as a villain') applied by *Kathimerini* in this period. Although both frames are also sponsored by left-wing SYRIZA, *Kathimerini* mainly reproduces the versions of ND, shifting the blame towards the government and focusing more on the impact of the memorandum for business. The SYRIZA version of the frame is countered in a number of articles, but is nonetheless involved in the conversation. *Kathimerini* also applies two PASOK frames ('Harsh but necessary', 'Crisis as an opportunity') but silences PASOK's framing of the previous ND government at the causal attribution level. Therefore, the newspaper endorses the legitimacy of the problems and the defence of the memoranda, but at the same time defends the previous ND government.

Frames	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Crisis as an opportunity' frame	Crisis as an opportunity narrative	Public Sector, Politicians	Corruption, systemic Greek issues, delaying reforms	Structural reforms
'Anti-memorandum' frame	Anti-memorandum narrative	The government is to blame	The memorandum does not support business, causes recession	Alter the memorandum, faster exit from the memorandum
'Colony' frame	Colony and lab rat metaphors	Government	Loss of sovereignty, lack of democracy	Different government, change the memorandum, cancel the memorandum
'Harsh but necessary' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative, pain and sacrifice metaphors	The government is to blame	The country is threatened with bankruptcy	Implement the memorandum

'PASOK as a villain' frame	The PASOK government in the villain archetype	PASOK government	The government is failing	Elections, National Unity government
'Unions as villains' frame	Unions in the villain archetype, Soviet metaphor	Trade unions, PASOK government	The unions are enjoying unjust privileges	Liberalise trade

Table 1: Kathimerini's Frames in 2010

Looking at the 2011/12 period the frame analysis yields seven frames (Table 2) that indicate a support of the logic of the memoranda, instead of a particular political party. This is demonstrated by the 'Harsh but necessary' frame and the reframing of its treatment recommendation dimension. Whereas ND calls for immediate elections, *Kathimerini* takes a stance in favour of extending the mandate of the technocrat government. Additionally, the 'The memorandum was not implemented' and 'Changing European climate' frames reflect the pro-EU and pro-Memorandum stance of the newspaper. The 'Drachma Nightmare' and 'Populism' frames are quite interesting, because no political party has promoted them and they appear to be the newspaper's response to the electoral rise of SYRIZA. Therefore, these frames manifest that the newspaper is taking an active position against the leftist party.

Frames	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Harsh but necessary' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative, pain and sacrifice metaphors, comparison with Ireland	The Greek political system, the structure of the EU	The country is threatened with bankruptcy	Implement the memorandum, technocrat government
'The memorandum was not implemented' frame	Greece is a special case narrative, crisis brought the memorandum narrative	Government, the state	The memorandum's implementation is slow	Proceed with structural reforms
'Drachma Nightmare' frame	Blackmail and nightmare metaphors	The left	The possibility of a Grexit and return to the drachma	Remain in the Eurozone
'Changing European climate' frame	European climate is changing narrative	Germany	Austerity, Exiting the Eurozone	Election of Hollande in France, relax austerity, stay in Europe

'Anti-memorandum' frame	Anti-memorandum narrative	Troika, Merkel	The memorandum is causing a recession	Government of the Left
'Colony' frame	Colony metaphor	Troika, PASOK	Lack of democracy, Loss of sovereignty	Popular uprising, cancel memorandum
'Populism' frame	Populism keyword	Opposition Parties	The opposition is offering easy solutions	Vote for parties that are not populist

Table 2: Kathimerini's Frames in 2011/12

In the 2015 period the frame analysis of *Kathimerini* yields six frames (Table 3). Three of these frames are applications of advocate frames promoted by the opposition parties PASOK and ND ('Deal or disaster', 'Tsipras' Memorandum', 'SYRIZA negotiation cost'). The 'Greece is a special case' frame defends the memoranda. Finally, two frames are applications of advocate frames promoted by SYRIZA ('Anti-memorandum', 'Colony'); however, the members of SYRIZA that opposed signing the memorandum sponsor these frames. In general the editorial stance of the newspaper remains unchanged in the defence of the logics of the memoranda. *Kathimerini* applies the 'Tsipras' Memorandum' and 'SYRIZA negotiation cost' frames, which are promoted by ND and PASOK. However, the newspaper applies its own version of the frames, altering the treatment recommendation dimension by welcoming the change of SYRIZA's politics and the signing of the memorandum. On the other hand the newspaper is not sympathetic towards the SYRIZA government, given their ideological differences.

Frames	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Deal or disaster' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative, pain and disaster metaphors	SYRIZA, Tsipras	The country is threatened with bankruptcy and Grexit	Sign and implement an agreement with the institutions
'Anti-memorandum' frame	Anti-memorandum narrative	Government	The memorandum is bringing social misery	Return to the drachma, cancel the memorandum
'Colony' frame	Colony and lab rat metaphors	Troika	Lack of democracy, loss of sovereignty	BRICS, reject the memorandum, rupture with the EU

'Greece is a special case' frame	Greece is a special case narrative, disease metaphor, success stories	Greek past governments	Greece did not make reforms in time, clientelism	Structural reforms, implement the memorandum
'SYRIZA negotiation cost' frame	Cost of SYRIZA narrative	Government, Tsipras	The government is wasting time, returns the economy to a recession	National negotiating team
'Tsipras' memorandum' frame	Tsipras' memorandum narrative	Tsipras, Government	The deal signed is harsh	Technocrat government

Table 3: Kathimerini's Frames in 2015

5.2. Ta Nea

The centrist *Ta Nea* applies seven frames in 2010 (Table 4). The newspaper reproduces two PASOK frames ('Crisis as an opportunity', 'Harsh but necessary') and two news frames ('Social memorandum', 'War'), which grant support to the government and its decision to sign the memorandum as a necessary decision, or paint the government as forced to sign the deal but also working to alleviate its outcomes. Frames that work against the government are present, but they are altered in their dimensions and ultimately in their meaning. In the 'PASOK as a villain' frame the newspaper shifts the blame to individual members of the government by superimposing its own framing devices, whereas by omitting the treatment recommendation dimension of the frame, *Ta Nea* actually supports the government by not reproducing the advocate frame's proposed solution, which is a call for elections. Furthermore, the 'Anti-memorandum' frame is also applied in the newspaper, but at the same time countered in a number of instances.

Frames	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Crisis as an opportunity' frame	Crisis is an opportunity narrative	Systemic Greek issues, previous governments	Corruption, Clientelism	Proceed with the reforms
'Harsh but necessary' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative, pain metaphor	Previous governments, public sector	The country is threatened with bankruptcy	Implement the memorandum

'Anti-memorandum' Frame	Anti-memorandum narrative, recipe metaphor	Government, Troika	The memorandum was not properly negotiated, it is recessionary	Adjust or cancel the memorandum
'Colony' frame	Colony metaphor, WW2 similes	Troika, government	Loss of sovereignty, lack of democracy	Reject the memorandum
'War' frame	Battlefield metaphors	Troika	The troika is pressuring the government	N/A
'PASOK Government as a villain' frame	Government in the villain archetype, "fiefdom" metaphor	Government	The government is failing	N/A
'Social Memorandum' frame	Memorandum of growth narrative	Memorandum	Lack of social care	Government passes social relief measures

Table 4: *Ta Nea's* Frames in 2010

The analysis of articles in *Ta Nea* in the 2011/12 period yields eight frames (Table 5). The frames applied reflect an editorial stance that embarks from that of the previous period, but is not settled. The newspaper reproduces two advocate frames by PASOK and ND, the governing parties at the time ('Harsh but necessary', 'European climate is changing'), as well as another frame that is positive towards the government (the 'Hard bargain' frame). The 'Memorandum was not implemented' frame found in this period signals a framing shift as it blames the previous PASOK government for the failure of the first memorandum. The 'Harsh but necessary' frame indicates another framing shift, as the newspaper counters the frame by claiming that the threat of bankruptcy is a false dilemma, a criticism lacking in the 2010 period. During this period the support of *Ta Nea* towards a specific political position is uncertain, as some frames are positive for SYRIZA and the anti-memorandum position, while others support ND. What is certain is that ongoing major shifts are reflected in the framing, and are arguably caused by the precipitous decline of PASOK in the 2012 double elections. Another frame that illustrates this volatile editorial stance is the 'European climate is changing' frame, which is applied in similar fashion to the PASOK and ND versions, but at the same time, quotes from SYRIZA MPs that counter the frame are reproduced. Furthermore, two SYRIZA frames ('Anti-memorandum', 'Colony') are applied without being countered. However, the coverage of *Ta Nea* cannot be described as positive towards the leftist party. The 'Drachma nightmare' frame links the leftist party with the highly unpopular possibility of returning to the national currency, which would dissuade moderate voters from supporting SYRIZA. The most interesting frame applied in 2011/12 is the 'False Dichotomy' frame, which mostly consists of quotes from KKE, whose frames are

mostly ignored by the media in the periods examined. The frame is partially applied and reframed from the original KKE frame, and it is only found after the elections in May and SYRIZA's rise on the second position. A possible explanation for the application of this frame is that leftist voters were split between KKE and SYRIZA, and the polls were suggesting that potentially more KKE voters would vote for SYRIZA in the second election. Therefore, *Ta Nea* takes a stance against SYRIZA winning the elections by promoting a partial frame of a party that could cost voters for the left-wing party. Furthermore, the frame is partial and reframes KKE quotes so that they attack the main electoral slogan of SYRIZA, namely the Anti-memorandum stance, instead of focusing on the wider critique of the Greek political system promoted by KKE's advocate frame.

Frame	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Harsh but necessary' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative, pain metaphor	Politicians, Troika	The country is threatened with bankruptcy	Implement the memorandum, move forward with reforms
'The memorandum was not implemented' frame	Memorandum was not implemented narrative	PASOK government, Greek political system	Structural issues of Greece	Implement structural reforms
'European climate is changing' frame	The EU is changing narrative	Germany, Merkel, Sarkozy, Government	Austerity, Greece could destabilise the Eurozone	Hollande is elected in France, growth policies are put forward
'Colony' frame	Colony metaphor	Merkel	Lack of democracy, Loss of sovereignty	SYRIZA is elected
'Hard Bargain' frame	Tug of war, poker game, hard bargain metaphors	Troika	The memorandum needs to be enhanced	Equivalent measures to help weakest in society, growth
'Anti-memorandum' frame	Anti-memorandum narrative	PASOK government, Troika	The first memorandum failed, caused unemployment and recession	Growth, SYRIZA is elected, cancel the memorandum
'False dichotomy' frame	N/A	Industrialists, capitalists, bourgeois parties	Anti-memorandum is a false dilemma	Support KKE

'Drachma nightmare' frame	Nightmare, ghost, Armageddon metaphors	Business interests, those that talk about the drachma	Drachma would be a disaster for the Greek economy and society	Remain in the EU
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Table 5: Ta Nea's Frames in 2011/12

The frame analysis of *Ta Nea* in 2015 yields seven frames (Table 6). Three of those are applications of advocate frames promoted by the opposition parties PASOK and ND and indicate the ambivalent stance of the newspaper towards the new government, especially in comparison to the application of the same frames in *Kathimerini*. The treatment recommendation dimension of the 'Deal or disaster' frame presents the government as an actor that can provide solutions, especially after the signing of the agreement. Furthermore, in the 'Tsipras' Memorandum' and 'SYRIZA negotiation cost' frames, analysis reveals that *Ta Nea* includes SYRIZA's evaluative positions in some cases. The newspaper applies the frames promoted by the opposition parties, and attributes blame to the government. However, counter-frames reflecting the position of the government on the issues are included, indicating an opening of the newspaper to the new power in politics. Three frames promoted by SYRIZA are applied ('Anti-memorandum', 'Colony', 'Blackmail'). The opening of *Ta Nea* to the new government is also confirmed by the existence of the 'Blackmail' frame, which is promoted by the left-wing party and is not applied in *Kathimerini*, pointing to the differences in framing among the two newspapers. Finally, the 'Greece is a special case' frame defends the logic of the memoranda.

Frames	Framing Devices	Causal Attribution	Problem Definition	Treatment Recommendation
'Deal or disaster' frame	Harsh but necessary narrative	Tsipras, Government	The country is threatened with bankruptcy, Grexit	Sign and implement an agreement that the opposition supports
'Greece is a special case' frame	Success stories narrative	Governments in Greece	The memoranda have not been implemented	Structural reforms
'Tsipras' Memorandum' frame	Tsipras' memorandum narrative	SYRIZA, Tsipras	The memorandum is striking the weakest in society	Growth policies, cooperation government, equivalent measures
'SYRIZA negotiation cost' frame	SYRIZA negotiation cost narrative	SYRIZA	The sacrifices of the previous years have been lost	Implement structural reforms

'Anti-memorandum' frame	Anti-memorandum narrative	Government	Austerity, the memorandum is suffocating the country	Vote against the memorandum, return to the drachma
'Colony'	Colony metaphor	Creditors	Lack of democracy, loss of sovereignty	BRICS
'Blackmail'	Blackmail metaphor	Troika	The creditors are delaying	Honest compromise

Table 6: Ta Nea's Frames in 2015

6. Discussion

The examination of the news frames reveals the range of the debate fostered through the mainstream press. The first memorandum is discussed mainly in terms of the division between those for and those against it. The parties arguing in favour of the memorandum employ the 'Harsh but necessary' and 'Crisis as an opportunity' frames, whereas the frames against the memorandum are the 'Anti-memorandum' and 'Colony' frames. Therefore the media frame the debate around the good and bad qualities of the memorandum. The framing of the newspapers follows the advocate frames of the two larger parties PASOK and ND, while SYRIZA also manages to be included. None of them includes the frame of KKE. The muting of KKE's frame from the debate – since its frame would not contribute to the reification of the crisis – is a significant finding that reveals the limits of the liberal consensus. Therefore, the analysis of the frames in 2010 reveals that positions promoting a wider criticism of the capitalist mode of production fall outside the acceptable limits of debate.

The four main frames construct the debate around issues of efficiency and necessity of the measures, their economic and societal impact, and issues of sovereignty and democracy. The causal attribution dimension revolves around the parties accusing each other regarding the crisis, while there is also some blame attributed to the troika and a discussion around domestic structural issues. Finally, solutions concern the future of the memorandum, with positions ranging from the necessity of its successful implementation, to its adjustment or complete cancellation. The newspapers' application of the frames is not identical, reflecting a multitude of evaluative positions. Nonetheless, the debate is set around the memorandum without addressing wider-reaching topics and alternatives that would question the economic system, which was under a crisis in global terms. This framing of the debate cuts off the Greek crisis from global developments and treats it as an issue of system management, to be solved by the system itself. Marxist and Keynesian scholars have argued extensively on why this crisis is a systemic capitalist crisis (e.g. Harvey 2010; Krugman 2000) and the fact that the crisis originated in the United States but ultimately impacted a number of European countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Ireland) as well as Greece points to its global character. The absence of frames that point to this global and systemic character of the crisis ultimately assists in the naturalisation of the capitalist system of production, and the reification of the crisis.

Frames that fall outside the limits of acceptable political discourse, such as the frames of KKE that promote a systemic critique of capitalism, were excluded from the debate in Greece's mainstream press. Of course this research focuses on parliamentary politics, but in the same sense it can be argued that the media also

excluded opinions expressed by grassroots organisations or anarchist collectives. In any case, it would be difficult to imagine that media owned by powerful capitalists with multiple ventures outside the media business would promote criticisms of capitalism. Mosco (1996) argues that those with control over markets, in this case the powerful owners of the Greek media, have the ability to fill channels with material embodying their interests and to limit the range of possibilities of interpreting media content. Furthermore, economic circumstances have led Greek journalism to be characterised by a tradition of advocacy reporting with more emphasis on political commentary and opinion (Hallin and Mancini 2004), whereas the political parallelism of the press is represented through the editorial stance of each newspaper (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). These tendencies have shaped public debate in Greece, which has been described as “apolitical overpoliticization”, meaning the passionate propagation of political positions without their overall criticism (Spourdakis 1989, quoted in Papatheodorou and Machin 2003, 35), something that appears to be relevant in the unfolding of the debate in 2010. Therefore, the framing of the debate by the media reflects the interests of the owners of the Greek media, their internal struggles and how they had related to political power at each moment of the crisis, expressed through the peculiarities of the Greek media system.

The main point of division in the 2011/12 period is, again, the stance towards the memoranda. *Kathimerini* applies frames that support or defend the memoranda, whereas *Ta Nea* is not so easy to classify, because although it applies frames that defend the memorandum, at the same time frames that are against the memorandum are not contested. The frames of KKE are once again excluded in their majority from the debate, with the exception of *Ta Nea*, which applies a partial KKE frame for a brief period in order to pursue a political goal against SYRIZA in the elections. The two newspapers focus on the same issues and frames, producing a vibrant and polarised debate.

The political developments at the time in Greece gave rise to various frames that addressed them. So in addition to the debate that was already taking place about the memorandum, using the ‘Harsh but necessary’, ‘Anti-memorandum’, and ‘Colony’ frames, new debates also sprang up. The ‘Populism’, ‘False Dichotomy’ and ‘Drachma Nightmare’ frames addressed the rise of SYRIZA. The failure of the first memorandum to achieve its targets gave rise to the ‘Memorandum didn’t fail’ frame, applied in both newspapers. A lot of attention is paid in this period to the negotiation process, with the ‘Hard Bargain’ frame arguing that the government is a tough negotiator, and the ‘Papademos Government as a villain’ frame presenting the government as soft and unable to negotiate. Finally, the discussion about Greece exiting the Eurozone intensifies during this period, and the ‘European Climate is changing’ and ‘Another EU is possible’ frames contain arguments in favour of Greece’s EU membership that are promoted from both sides of the new political bipolarity between ND and SYRIZA.

Therefore, the debate in 2011/12 is constructed around four pillars. The first concerns the efficiency and implementation of the memoranda, their economic and social impact, and issues of democracy and sovereignty. The causal attribution dimension is constructed around Greek political parties and the government, or the troika, shifting the blame for the outcomes of the memoranda. The solutions provided range from the implementation of the memorandum as it is to its adjustment or complete cancellation. The second pillar concerns the negotiation between the Greek government and the troika and whether it is a hard or soft negotiation. Depending on the frame, blame is shifted between the Greek government and the troika and

solutions stem either from the government itself or from its replacement by SYRIZA. Furthermore, a discussion is formed around the European aspect of the crisis that was absent in the previous period. While all the frames strategically converge on the acceptance of Greece's participation in the EU, different visions about the future of Europe are put forward. The final pillar concerns the rise of SYRIZA, and that debate is structured around the possibility of Greece exiting the euro as an outcome of electing an anti-memorandum party. The solutions suggest supporting parties that do not engage in populism and believe in Greece's participation in the EU. Therefore, the newspapers' framing of the debate in 2011/12 fosters a very polarised debate within constrained limits and options. The discussion focuses on the memorandum itself, without criticising or questioning the fundamentals of the economic system. Developments are not contextualised and are mainly discussed as part of the political game of the country. The European aspect of the crisis is introduced in this period; however, a very polarised but strategically converging debate is constructed. The positions taken do not question participation in the EU, but only diverge on visions regarding its future, as well as the issue of Greece's national currency, albeit while remaining in the wider European framework. Frames questioning Greece's participation in the EU, such as KKE's 'Wolf pack' frame, are muted, indicating where the limits of acceptable political discourse lie in this period for the Greek press.

Finally, a significant break in the construction of the debate around the memoranda takes place in 2015, due to SYRIZA's ascension to power. The debate moves on from the division between positions for or against the memoranda. The frames promoted by the parties against the memoranda are still applied. However, since SYRIZA, the largest party sponsoring those frames, signs a new memorandum, the situation changes. These frames are now less commonly applied, mainly sponsored by dissident SYRIZA MPs and associated with a return to the national currency. Therefore these frames are moving towards the sidelines without an important political sponsor because of their association with an unpopular exit from the Eurozone. Therefore, the signing of a memorandum by SYRIZA brings about a shift in framing. The main framing topics in this period are the stance towards the government, the framing of the new memorandum and that of the negotiation that brought it about.

In this period the debate is constructed around three main pillars. The first pillar concerns the negotiation, as it is the first time that the government is formed by parties that are against the memoranda. The 'Harsh but necessary' frame evolves to the 'Deal or disaster' frame and is sponsored by ND and PASOK. The reason behind this is that they are no longer in the government: the frame is no longer justifying their actions but urging SYRIZA to sign an agreement. However, the structure of the frame remains similar with the past. The 'Blackmail' frame, promoted by SYRIZA, also concerns the negotiation; it frames the negotiation as a resistance of the Greek government to blackmail by creditors. The 'SYRIZA negotiation cost' frame, on the other hand, links the negotiation with the new memorandum, and argues that the latter could have been avoided without the lengthy process of the negotiation. Therefore the debate promoted by mainstream media about the negotiation is framed around the necessity of signing a deal or resisting the creditors, whereas blame for stalling on the agreement is assigned either to the government or to the creditors. Both frames strategically converge on the necessity of signing an agreement. The only advocate frame promoted explicitly against the agreement and arguing for alternatives outside the EU is the 'Colony' frame, which is not as commonly applied during this period as previously. The second pillar concerns the outcome of the

negotiation, namely the third memorandum. The frames applied in the press are the 'Tsipras' Memorandum' and the 'Worst memorandum' frames, which set the limits of the debate about the new memorandum. The first frame assigns the ownership of the new memorandum to the Prime Minister, whereas the second is a similar variation that frames the third memorandum as the worst one yet. Both frames attribute blame to the government for signing a harsh agreement and the solutions proposed verge from the introduction of equivalent measures from the government and the further negotiation of the agreement to the appointment of a technocrat government to implement the deal. The final pillar concerns the general implementation of the memoranda in Greece and it consists of the 'Greece is a special case' and 'Anti-memorandum' frames. The debate is constructed around the efficiency of the memoranda, with the first frame arguing that they have failed in Greece due to domestic factors, and the second frame arguing against the logic behind the memoranda policies. The two frames offer different interpretations and assign blame either to the current government for signing the agreement, or past governments for failing to reform the country in time. The solutions discussed verge from the implementation of structural reforms predicted by the memorandum, to the disengagement of Greece from the Eurozone and a return to the national currency, which is the first time that this is openly advocated within a frame.

The evaluation of the debate in 2015 reveals some changes in comparison to previous periods. The debate remains very polarised and one could argue that the tension between the press and the new government has increased the seeming intensity of the confrontation. However, the political developments have further shrunk the limits of this confrontation, as after SYRIZA signs the third memorandum, the frames that criticise the lending agreements are left without a significant political sponsor and therefore exit the forefront. With the new focus of the debate being on the government, the crisis itself leaves the media spotlight, despite the persistence of economic and social problems plaguing Greece, and therefore the process of naturalising and reifying the crisis through the media is completed. The wider and European implications of the Greek case are not discussed in this period, but even the management of the problems, namely the memoranda, is being normalised. This is an outcome of the process of presenting a debate that is focused on the political managers of the memoranda providing an increasingly simplistic view of the case of the Greek crisis, and reflects the even more constrained limits of acceptable debate in 2015.

In conclusion, the examination of the framing of the debate around the memoranda during 2010-2015 reveals a lively and polarised debate within constrained limits of opinion. This debate is mostly reflective of the political developments in Greece and it is led by the most powerful political sponsors of each period; however, at the same time the exclusion of other political sponsors points to structural factors that are impacting the construction of the debate. These factors deserve to be brought to light through an examination of the frame-building process that investigates how power impacts this process and accounts for the exclusion of political points of view that fall outside the spectrum of what's commercially and politically relevant for the media. Of course there are other viewpoints that are not reproduced due to the lack of a political sponsor. However, this article has mainly probed the reproduction of political opinion as the main parties of Greece represent it. It can be argued, therefore, that the media not only reflect political power but also at the same time enhance it by making opinions appear more relevant and legitimate,

while at the same time making opinions that fall outside this scope seem out of place and therefore not legitimate.

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