



**At the Eye of the
Cyclone:**

**The Greek Crisis in
Global Media**

Andreas Antoniadis

ABSTRACT

Using discourse analysis, this paper offers an in-depth investigation of the discourse of key European and international newspapers on the Greek economic crisis. The aim is to analyse the way in which the issue of Greek economic crisis emerged in the public discourse of different countries and global regions, as well as to assess the impact that this process had on how Greece is viewed 'from the outside'. The findings point to the generation and consolidation of very negative attitudes towards Greece. During the 14-month period of examination, Greece evolves from an 'object of critique' to a 'negative reference point'. In some sense, Greece is (re)constructed in the international press as the (corrupted) other of the (rational) western society.

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All views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Athens Centre for International Political Economy (ACIPE), or of those institutions that have supported this research, the Hellenic Observatory (LSE) and the Centre for Global Political Economy (University of Sussex).

How to cite this paper: Andreas Antoniadis (2012) At the Eye of the Cyclone: The Greek Crisis in Global Media. Athens: ACIPE.

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At the Eye of the Cyclone: The Greek Crisis in Global Media¹

Andreas Antoniadis

This paper aims to assess the impact that the Greek economic crisis have had on the image of Greece at an international level. To do so, it analyses the nature, evolution and dominant themes of European and international media discourses with regard to the Greek crisis. We examine what are the defining elements of the current international image of Greece, what rationales underlie these elements and how widespread they are. Through this analysis we trace and analyse similarities and differences in the way in which the Greek economic crisis was communicated in different national and regional public discourses. In this way, we aspire to contribute to a systematic analysis of how Greece is viewed ‘from the outside’, as a result of its economic crisis.

The research focuses on eleven countries: Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Poland, the USA, China, India, Japan, Korea and Singapore. As a proxy of the public discourse in these countries, we use the highest in circulation national political newspaper (broadsheet). In France, we analyse the newspaper *Le Figaro*, in Spain the newspaper *El Pais*, in Poland the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, in India *The India Times*, and in Singapore *The Straits Times*. In the case of Germany we used the newspaper *Die Zeit*, which although it is the highest in circulation broadsheet, it is published on a weekly, not daily, basis. In Britain and the USA we used *The Times* and *The New York Times* respectively, which although they are second in circulation in their countries, they offer, according to most analysts, a better proxy for the public discourse of their countries in comparison to the *Daily Telegraph* and the *USA Today*, respectively. In China, we used the ‘official’ party newspaper that is published in English, the *Daily China*; in Japan, the English edition of the first in circulation Japanese newspaper *The Daily Yomiuri*; while in Korea, the highest in circulation newspaper in English *The Korea Times*.

Of course, no single newspaper (neither the first in circulation) can offer an accurate and complete reflection of the public discourse in a country. This is more so, if we consider the fact that each newspaper does not only reflect but also attempts to form/construct the domestic public agenda, the domestic public discourse. Yet, a systematic analysis of the way in which the first in circulation newspaper of any country covers and frames the emergence of any given issue is able to offer us important information of a significant part of the public discourse of this country. Thus, although partial, the information gained from the analysis of high-in-circulation newspapers is important on its own right, especially in a comparative cross-national research framework, as the one employed in this research.

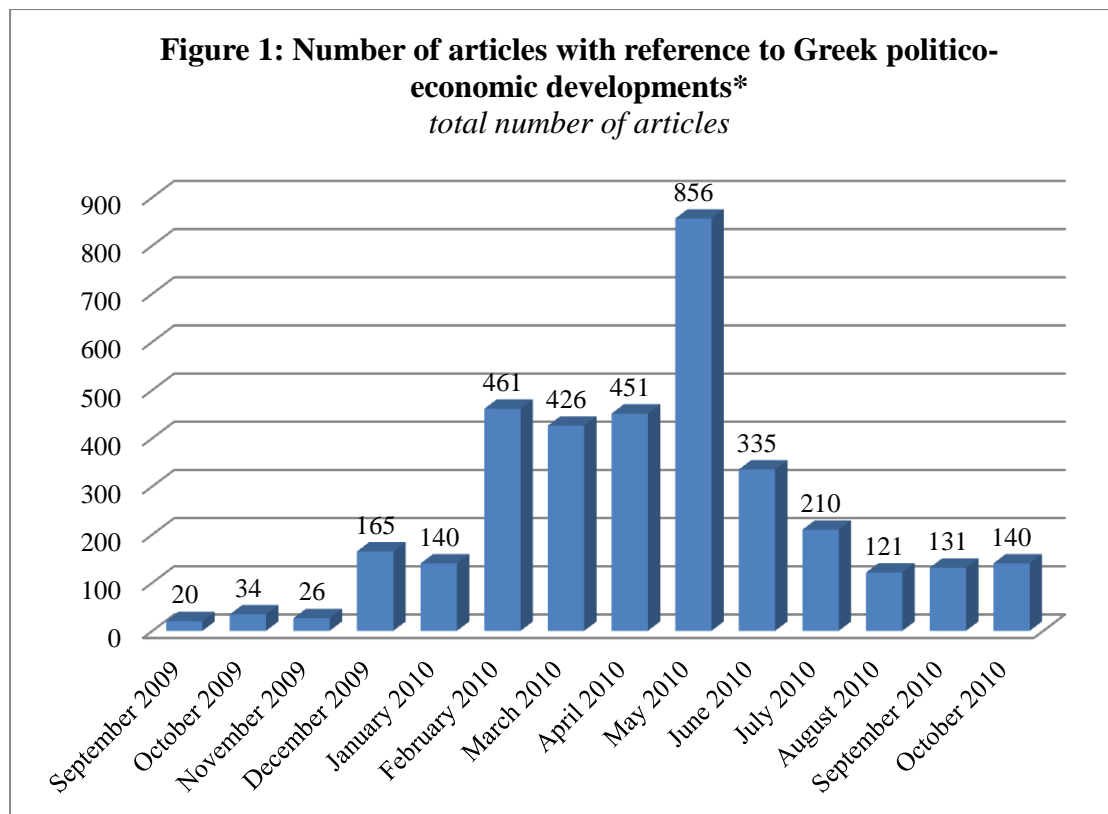
Finally, the analysis of this paper focuses broadly on the first year of the Greek economic crisis, and in particular on the period September 2009 to October 2010. Broadly speaking, this period covers seven months before and seven months after the decision of the Greek government to officially request financial support from the EU and the IMF (the official Greek request for the activation of an EU/IMF rescue package was made on 23 April 2010). The aim is to examine how the international press viewed and covered the build-up towards the official Greek request for financial

support, how it reacted to the decision of the EU/IMF to offer a rescue package to Greece, as well as what has been the impact of these developments on the international image of Greece.

Greece Centre Stage in the Brave New Debt World

This part of the paper presents and analyses aggregate quantitative data on the emergence, evolution and characteristics of the discourse on the Greek crisis in the ten international newspapers examined (hereafter referred to as the ‘press sample’).

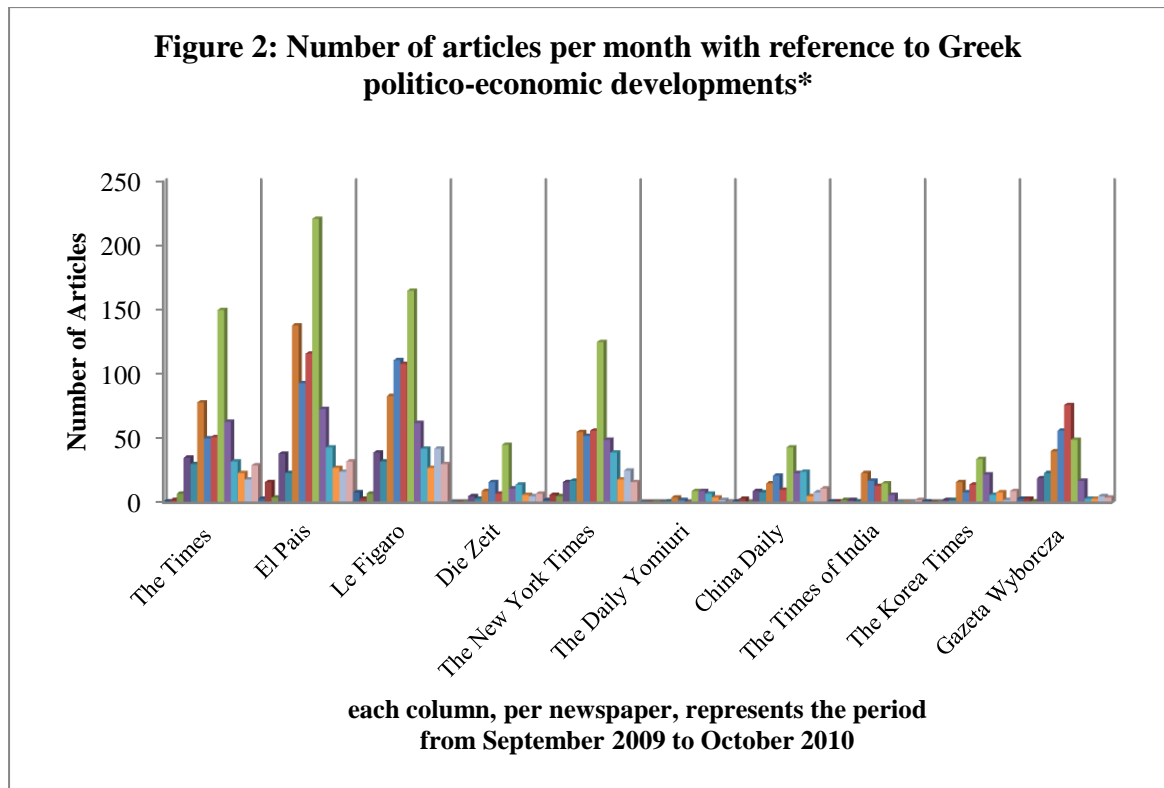
Figure 1 presents the evolution of the total sum of articles/references to the Greek crisis. It is clear that Greece enters in the radar of global media in December 2010. A number of interesting observations can be made about this very first stage of the Greek crisis.



*It includes articles in the newspapers: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Daily China*, *Die Zeit*, *El Pais*, *Le Figaro*, *The Daily Yomiuri*, *The India Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Korea Times*, *The Straits Times*, *The Times*.

Expectedly so, 85% of the December articles are in the European press. There is, however, a difference in emphasis on the Greek issue between Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), with the latter being less concerned with developments in Greece. Figure 2 demonstrates that the relevant references in the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza*, in December, are only about two third of those in Western European newspapers. There is also a considerable discourse on Greece in *The New York Times* (lower but close to that of the Polish newspaper), as well as in the *China Daily* (one fourth of the West European average). Yet, in the period before the agreement for the bailout, the peak of the attention of the international press is

reached in February 2010, when with the exception of the Japanese newspaper, there is a substantial amount of references, a ‘full-bodied’ discourse on Greece, in all the international press sample examined.



**Die Zeit* is a weekly edition (i.e. the above numbers refer to one paper per week, not seven, as in all other newspapers). *The Straits Times* is excluded from the above Figure because we have no systematic data for the period May-October 2010.

The above data trigger the following questions. Why December 2009 and February 2010 appear as turning points for the international press discourse on the Greek crisis? Why in February 2010 the references to Greece are higher than in March and April when we have the build-up towards and the request for the rescue package? It is indeed very difficult to establish solid causal links with regard to the above questions, especially taking into consideration the cross-national approach of this project. Yet, on 30 November 2009 the ECOFIN expresses concerns about the Greek debt, and the Greek prime minister states that the ‘Greek economy is in intensive care’. On December 8, Fitch downgrades Greece’s credit rating from A- to BBB+. Then, on December 14 the government announces measures aiming to cut the budget deficit by 4% within a year and this triggers massive strikes and demonstrations. On December 16, S&P downgrades Greece from A- to BBB-. Shortly, on December 19 the spread between the Greek and German 10-year bonds raises to an 8-month high, at 2.72%. Following the Fitch and the S&P, on December 22, Moody’s downgrades Greece from A1 to A2. Thus, it is clear that in December the Greek economy and its debt come increasingly under the spotlight at the European level. The same month there is also an acknowledgement of the problem with the Greek economy, with dramatic overtones, from the Greek prime minister. Moreover, the three dominant Credit

Rating Agencies downgrade Greece's creditworthiness pushing Greece further at the centre-stage of the global economic crisis. Finally, the economic measures and cuts announced by the Greek government, trigger domestic reactions that attract serious international attention. These dynamics account for the shift in the evolution of the international press discourse on the Greek crisis that we observe in December.

The second peak in the pre-rescue-package period is February 2010. It can be argued that the key issue for understanding the 'eruption' of the international interest in Greece, in February, is not what happened in that month, but rather what had not happened. February seems to represent the peak of uncertainty with regard to what was going to happen with Greece. On February 3, the European Commission approves the Greek Stability Programme, but the caveats it puts on its approval increase the uncertainty on whether this Programme is going to deliver on its aims. On February 11, the German Chancellor opposes a Greek bailout and states that Greece must deal with its problems itself. In essence, during this month Greece fails to receive any credible (re)assurances at the European level, that the EU or Eurozone member-states would step in to support Greece should there was a problem with its debt re-financing. Rather the opposite. The European leaders at all levels (EU & domestic), with their public statements and pronouncements exacerbated the uncertainty with what was going on and what may happen with the 'Greek issue'. This uncertainty reaches its peak in February, and that is why this month functions both as a turning point and as a peak in this first phase of the Greek crisis. Once this uncertainty starts to be gradually dissolved at the European level and the 'rescue mechanism' idea and modalities start to be negotiated, there is a loose in the intensity of the international Greek crisis discourse. This does not mean that the Greek issue leaves centre stage, rather the opposite. From February onwards, and at least up to June, Greece continues to be at the centre of global interest.

May 2010 represents an absolute peak in the international discourse on the Greek crisis, during the period under examination (see Figure 1). The degree of European and international attention on Greece in this month is indeed astonishing. With the exception of *The Times of India* and the *The Daily Yomiuri* (Japan), all other newspapers in our press sample published more than one article with reference to Greece per day (at least on average). Indicatively, *El Pais* published 221 articles, *Le Figaro* 165 articles, *The New York Times* 125 articles, the *GazetaWyborcza* 49 articles, and the *The Korea Times* 34 articles. The events that took place in May 2010 are equally telling. Among others, the Eurogroup and the IMF approve respectively the €80 bn and €30 bn loans for Greece, the European Central Bank states that Greek bonds will be accepted as collaterals regardless of their low credit rating score (May 3), the S&T and later Fitch downgrade Greece's creditworthiness, there are massive anti-austerity demonstrations in Greece during which three people die (May 5), the Greek parliament approves new austerity measures (May 6), and the EU reaches an agreement for the creation of a European Stabilisation Mechanism with a firepower of €500 bn.

After May the references to Greece in the international press fall significantly. Yet, the Greek crisis discourse remains vividly present in the international media. Interestingly, a qualitative change in the content of this discourse seems to have taken place after May 2010. In particular, the spotlight seems to move gradually from Greece onto the EU. That is, the focus now is not on what is happening in Greece, but

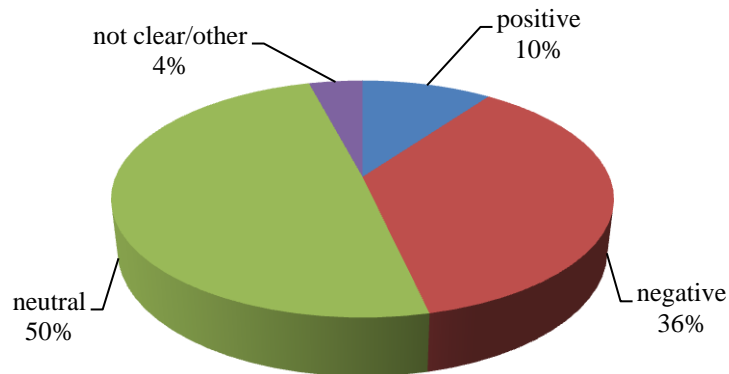
what the EU does to deal with it, as well as what the EU does to deal with the European debt crisis in general. Yet, towards the end of this period there seems to be a slight but gradual increase in the references to Greece, which signifies that Greece entered anew at the centre of the global media radar.

From Iris to Eris: The Media's Stance towards Greece

Having discussed the evolution of the volume of references, we should now turn onto the stance that was taken by the international newspapers towards Greece. In this regard, we attempt to assess the value-characteristics (positive, negative, neutral) of the entirety of the discourse on Greece produced and reproduced as a result of the economic crisis in our press sample. For instance, an article that focuses on the British economy in *The Times* may present Greece as an example-to-avoid. We take this to be part of the discourse of the specific newspaper on the Greek crisis. More so, we deem such less explicit instances of the discourse on Greece to be sine-qua-non for understanding and deciphering the actual characteristics of the international discourse on the Greek crisis and its implications on the international image of Greece.

Figure 3 demonstrates the aggregate numbers for the stance taken towards Greece in all the articles that we examined. It is clear that a substantive number of articles/references refer to the Greek crisis in a rather descriptive manner without making any explicit or implicit value judgments (at least easily discernible). These articles amount to the 53% of the total number of articles. Yet, beyond these descriptive (i.e. purely informative) references, a substantial number of articles produce or reproduce negative/diminishing comments, opinions or analyses about Greece. These negative references amount to the 37% of total references, a number that clearly surpasses the number of positive references, that amounts only to 10% of the total number of relevant articles. To put these numbers in context we should think that in the framework of public diplomacy, countries hire specialised public relations companies that attempt to get a few positive/negative articles out in top media. In the case of Greece that we examine here we have a solid (in terms of high numbers, consistency and duration) negative reporting in most international media over most of the 14-month period under examination. Clearly, this negative media blitz cannot but have had a substantial damaging impact on the international image of Greece. In other words, this negative media blitz not only reflected but also generated entrenched negative attitudes and connotations not only in (foreign) political elites but also wider in publics and populations across the globe.

Figure 3: International Press' Stance towards Greece
(% of total number of articles)



Beyond these aggregate figures, it is interesting to examine the evolution of the stance taken by the international press towards Greece. In this regard, Figure 4 suggests that the decision of the EU and the IMF to offer financial support to Greece, had a rather moderating impact on the value judgments on Greece. Thus, after the bailout agreement we observe a reduction in both the negative and positive references and an increase in ‘neutral coverage’ with regard to the Greek crisis. Noticeably, the reduction of ‘negative reporting’ is more significant than that of ‘positive reporting’, even though the negative reporting remains at a very high level.

Figure 4: Stance towards Greece before and after the EU/IMF Rescue Package
(% of total number of articles)

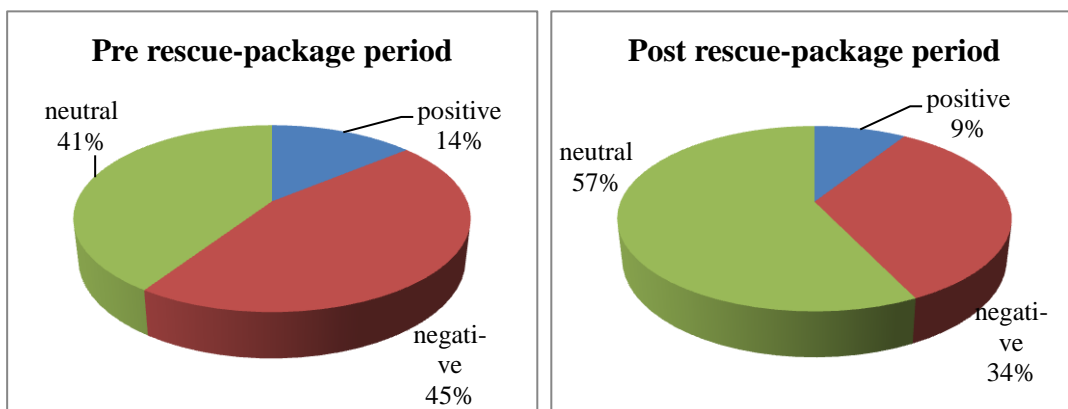
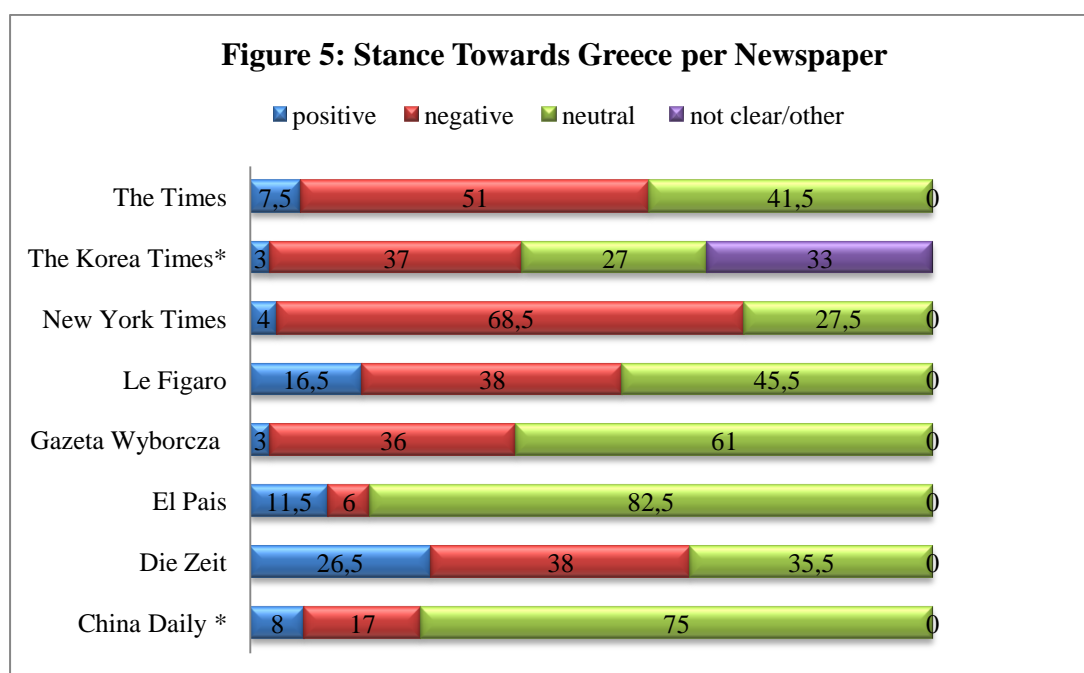


Figure 5 disaggregates the above findings, offering data on the stance towards Greece per newspaper². Interestingly, the most negative discourse is generated in the Anglo-Saxon newspapers, the *New York Times* and *The Times*, where the negative references are more than half of their respective total number of references to Greece. It is also interesting that this is so, despite the fact that the two newspapers occupy different ends in the political spectrum (*The Times* centre-right; *the New York Times* centre-

left). It is also worth underlying, however, that the percentage of negative references found in the *New York Times*, is significantly higher than those found in *The Times*. This fact may point to a difference in view at the two sides of the Atlantic that supersedes the broader Anglo-Saxon vs. Continental dichotomy.

In the continental European press the negative reporting approaches the 40%. Moreover, there is no considerable difference in the communication of the discourse on Greece between the Western, and Central & Eastern European Press. The only exception is the Spanish *El Pais*, which adopts an overwhelmingly neutral approach. Indeed, *El Pais* is the only newspaper in our sample in which the positive references exceed the negative ones; a ‘deviation’ which may partly be explained by the ideological stance of the newspaper. Yet, the deviation is so strong that should be taken to indicate a different South-European perspective on the Greek crisis.

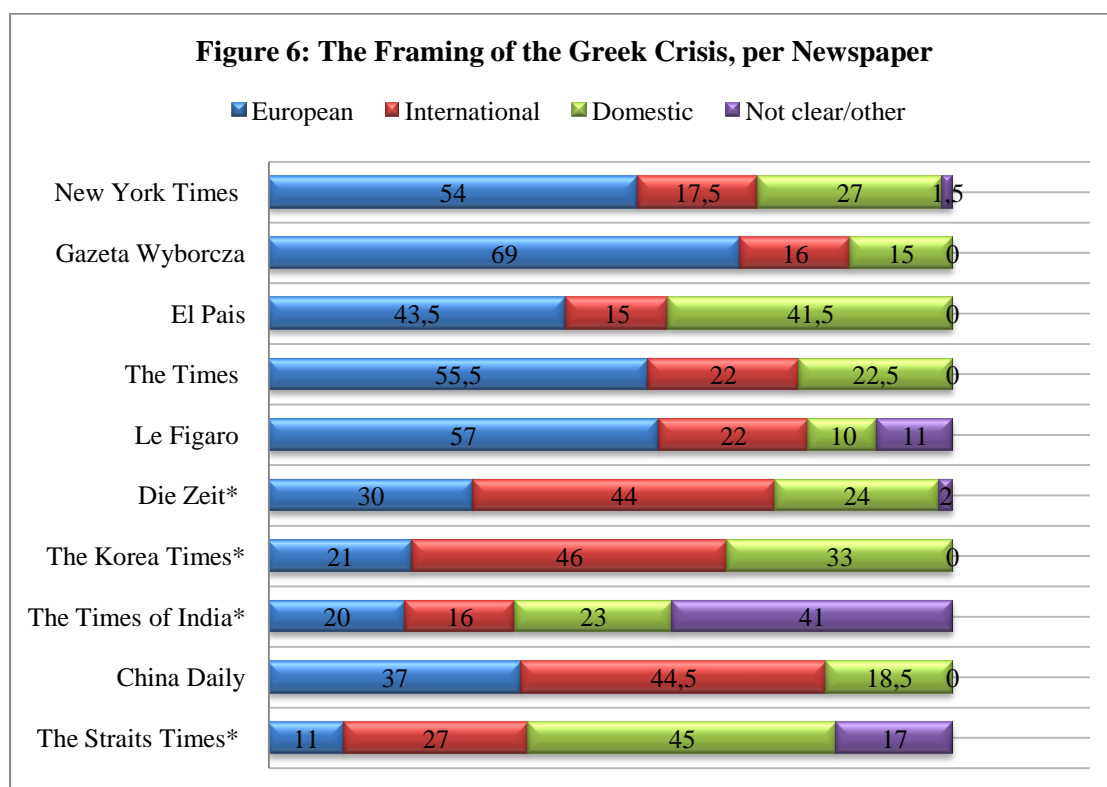
The picture is different if one focuses on positive reporting on Greece. In this regard the highest percentage of positive references is found in the German *Die Zeit* (26,5%), followed by the French *Le Figaro* (16,5%) and the Spanish *El Pais* (11,5%). Arguably, *Die Zeit*, following its tradition that favours moderation and an in-depth analysis of contested issues, was consciously attempting to offer a more balanced approach to the German public discourse that was dominated by excessively negative reporting on Greece.



*In the cases of *The Korea Times* and *China Daily* the results refer only to the period May-October 2010

The difference between the two East Asian newspapers is also interesting. In *The Korea Times* emerges a much more negative discourse, in comparison to the *China Daily* that adopts a much more neutral approach. *The Korea Times*' opinionated approach relates to the Korea's own experience from its interaction with the IMF during the Asia crisis (the newspaper criticises the IMF for being biased in favour of 'the West', and for adopting a much softer programme in Greece, in comparison to the one that was imposed on Korea).

Another important issue is the framing of the Greek crisis. Is the Greek crisis discussed as a ‘European issue’ related to broader issues of European concern? Is the Greek crisis discussed as an international issue related to the global economic crisis? Or, is the Greek crisis used to discuss domestic issues or problems? Based on these three questions, we distinguish among three different framings in the discourse on the Greek crisis. First, the ‘European’ framing, where the Greek crisis is discussed as a European issue that is related to broader issues of European (economic) governance. Second, the ‘international’ framing, where the Greek crisis is used as a means to discuss the global economic crisis and issues of global governance. Third, the ‘domestic’ framing, where the Greek crisis is used as a means to discuss domestic affairs (in each country). Figure 6 presents the respective findings.



*In the cases of *The Times of India*, *The Korea Times* and *Die Zeit* the results refer only to the period May-October 2010. In the case of *The Straits Times* the results refer only to the period September 2009–April 2010.

Analysing the different framings of the Greek crisis is important in order to understand the diverse nature and characteristics of the discourse on the Greek crisis across different countries and regions. In general, the European and the US press adopt a European frame in their analysis. The Greek crisis is approached as a European issue that needs to be dealt with by Europe, and which has repercussions on Europe itself. This frame is particularly strong in the case of the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (69% of the articles). This may point to a distinctive CEE perspective on the role of the EU in the economic crisis (of course to the degree to which the Polish newspaper can be used as a proxy for CEE attitudes). Particularly, the ‘deviation’ of the Polish newspaper from the European average may be explained by the different experience of the CEE countries from the current crisis, as well as

their own different experience from their transition-to-capitalism, and the role that the EU (member states & institutions) played in these processes.

The same frame dominates also in the reporting of *Le Figaro*, *The Times*, *The New York Times*, and *El Pais*. They all approach the Greek crisis as a ‘European news item’ and criticise the inability of the EU, its institutions and its member states to take effective and resolute action that would solve the crisis (see also below). The only ‘western’ newspaper that takes a different stance is *Die Zeit*. Despite its balanced approach towards Greece, the German newspaper seems to approach the Greek crisis not so much through a ‘European’ but through a ‘global’/‘foreign’ frame. Indeed, in this regard, the approach taken by *Die Zeit* seems to be closer to the approach taken by the *China Daily* and *The Korea Times*, rather than that of the other European newspapers.

With regard to Asia, there seems to be a divergence in the perspectives from China and India. Indeed, *The India Times* is the only Asian newspaper in our sample that favours a ‘European’ frame, whereas the *China Daily*, *The Korea Times*, and *The Strait Times* (Singapore) favour a ‘global’ frame in their analysis of the Greek crisis. Equally interesting is the fact that in all Asian newspapers in our sample there is also a very strong ‘domestic’ frame. That is, the context and main concern of the analysis of many articles that make references to the Greek crisis, is what are likely to be the main repercussions of the Greek crisis in their countries (i.e. how these countries are and will be affected by the Greek crisis), as well as how their countries resemble/differ from Greece. As analysed below a great part of the negative discourse on Greece is developed in this context, where Greece is presented as an ‘example to avoid’. It is also worth noticing that in *The India Times* and *The Strait Times* (Singapore) this domestic frame is stronger in comparison to both the European and the global frame.

The domestic frame holds, indeed, an important place in all the newspapers examined. Its particular strength in the Spanish *El Pais* (41.5% of articles) is not surprising, taking into consideration that Spain was considered close in line, after Greece, for a bailout, and the issue ‘why Spain is not Greece’ dominated in the Spanish public discourse. Yet, this frame is very strong also in the *New York Times* (27% of articles), a finding that confirms the anxiety of the US elites with the Greek (and European) debt crisis, and its potential negative impact on the US and global economy. A similar pattern is observed in *The Times* and *Die Zeit*. In contrast, the view from Poland seems to be more relaxed and removed.

Yet, the balance between the frames in each newspaper, does not remain the same throughout the 14-month period under examination. For instance, after the bailout agreement, the *China Daily* seems to rebalance its approach, paying more emphasis to the domestic implications for China. Thus, the percentage of articles that employed a global frame were reduced from 56% in the first period (September 2009 – April 2010) to 33% in the second period (May – October 2010), while those that employed a domestic frame were increased from 6% to 33% in the second period. A similar pattern is observed in *El Pais*, where the articles that employed a domestic frame were increased from 36% in the first period to 47% in the second period, and in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, where the respective increase was from 10% to 20%. Interestingly, the *New York Times* seem to move in the opposite direction. The percentage of articles

adopting a domestic frame falls from 35% to 19% in the second period, while those adopting a global frame are increased from 9% to 26% in the second period. This signifies a shift in the domestic US discourse from an instrumental use of the Greek example for domestic politics purposes, and a discussion on the strengths and vulnerabilities of the US economy, to the potential global, systemic implications of the Greek and European debt crisis. Finally, in some newspapers, such as *The Times*, there seems to be no significant change in terms of the frames used during the period under examination.

Deconstructing Greeks: Corrupt, Lazy and Morally Offside

This last section aims to sketch the qualitative characteristics that define the nature and the parameters of the negative discourse on Greece in the international press. There are at least three ‘dominant themes’ that give shape to this negative discourse: ‘corruption’, ‘lack of credibility’ and ‘irresponsibility’. The repetitive, extensive and intensive mobilisation of these ‘themes’ in relation to Greece, in all the media sample and throughout the period under examination point to a very deep damage at the image of Greece at an international level. In this context, what we observe happening is the following. During the period under examination, ‘Greece’ evolved rapidly from an object of critique, i.e. something that is criticised, to a negative reference point and to something that conveys a negative meaning. In this way, the implications of the negative discourse on Greece exceeded the sphere of the overt and the conscious and started to operate also at unconscious, subliminal ways, which are very difficult, if not impossible, to be influenced, let alone be controlled and reversed. But let us see how these dominant themes and dynamics played out on the ground.

First, the theme of corruption. Corruption is omni-present in most analyses on Greece. It emerges as the definite characteristic and a distinctive quality of Greek politics and society. No matter whether it is *The Times* or the *Gazeta Wyborcza*’s references to an ‘endemic culture of tax evasion’ or to tax-evasion as a ‘Greek habit’³; *Die Zeit*, the *New York Times* or *El Pais*’ references to the system of the ‘fakelaki’⁴; *Le Figaro*’s analysis on ‘deux familles clientélistes au pouvoir’⁵; or the phenomenon of ‘cooking the books’⁶, just to mention some examples, Greece is portrayed as a political system and a society that is permeated and defined by corruption. Thus, in some sense ‘Greece’ emerges and is consolidated as the (corrupted) *other* of the (rational) western society (especially in western media). In some regard, this shift resembles the rapid rise of the discourse on ‘crony capitalism’ that emerged during the Asian crisis of the 1990s, both as an explanation for the crisis and a re-affirmation of the superiority of ‘western capitalism’.

Second, the issue of ‘lack of credibility’. The most destabilising deficit of Greece, during the period under examination, was not its fiscal deficit but its credibility deficit. The acknowledgement of the manipulation (yet again) of its economic statistics was the last nail in a years-old coffin. Although, the acknowledgement of data falsification by the Greek government referred to the fiscal deficit for 2009, rapidly the statistics of the Greece’s entry in the common currency were put in doubt, and with it the very place of Greece in the Eurozone. ‘Greek statistics’ became a global joke. The repercussions for Greece’s image and credibility in the European and international arena can hardly be underestimated. References to Greece as an

‘unreliable’ and ‘untrustworthy’, state acquired a ‘common sense’ quality in the European (north and south) and international press⁷. The same for the ‘fact’ that Greece did not ‘deserve’ and should have never been admitted’ in the Eurozone⁸.

Third, the issue of ‘irresponsibility’. This theme is not separate from the themes of ‘corruption’ and ‘credibility’. Yet, what makes it distinct from the latter two is its emphasis on morality and ethics. What underlies this aspect of the discourse on Greece, is the notion of an *excess* in the Greek behavior and style of life – an excess that is to be found in the roots of the Greek crisis. The lexicon of this moralising discourse is not of course new. For instance, Greece is referred to as a ‘black ship’⁹, a ‘free-rider’¹⁰, a ‘profligate’ state¹¹. The Aesop’s fable of ‘the cricket and the ant’ is also prevalent here, either to describe Greece or to juxtapose the Greek (or the south) and German (or the north) way of life. *The Strait Times* write that ‘Greece was often Europe’s problem child’, and that ‘[m]ore than half of Greece’s population are state employees, and many just shuffle papers’¹², while *The New York Times* refers to Greeks’ inclination for ‘volemá’: ‘[In Greece] alongside a strong desire for reform lies a deep sense of resignation. Many Greeks find the status quo, however problematic, more convenient than a new order; they aspire to finding what is known as “volemá”, a comfortable setup within the prevailing system’¹³.

The issue of culture did not stay out of this discourse. Expectedly so, the German press has been the most outspoken in stressing this dimension. The characteristics of the Greek society put Greece in a different category in comparison to the other European societies: ‘Greeks are not Europeans’¹⁴. Yet, this rationale was many times extended to the ‘European south’ as a whole: ‘The mentality in the South is well-known; they don’t respect laws and regulations! They operate with their own laws – for the rest, they are ‘Europeans’!’¹⁵.

Thus, from the beginning of 2010 Greece has widely been used in the international press (and the national and international debates and politics reflected therein) as an ‘example-to-avoid’ and a ‘justification means’ for policy reform. For instance, as the *Daily Yomiuri* reports, Naoto Kan, the Japanese Prime Minister ‘[r]eferencing Greece’s fiscal crisis...asked those present at the meeting to commit to raising the consumption tax’¹⁶. Naoto Kan has also stated that ‘Japan must take action “before it becomes like Greece”’¹⁷. This latter warning statement, i.e. ‘not to become like Greece’, is indeed all present in the media sample that we analysed. The same applies for the respective reassuring statement, ‘we are not Greece’¹⁸ (or, for instance, ‘Spain is not Greece’¹⁹). The frequency of the usage of these two phrases is a testament of how Greece had evolved from an object of critique to a negative signifier at an international level. This is clear also in the very many different negative ways in which the name of the country is used. For instance, in the run up to the Polish 2010 presidential elections, the prime-minister Donald Tusk stated: ‘We would have now become the Greece of Central Europe, if we had followed the advices of Jarosław Kaczyński’²⁰. Such statements are indeed indicative of the way in which Greece figured in the international press from the 2010 onwards. The following Table complements this picture by presenting some more indicative negative adjectives and phrases referring to Greece from the newspapers *El Pais* and *New York Times*.

Table 1. Indicative negative references to Greece	
<i>El Pais</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
threat, indiscipline, poor relative, unreliable, epitome of irresponsibility, weak, weakest link, systematic lair, instability, Greek virus, fragile, gangrene, sick, beggar, vicious circle, abyss, Spain is not Greece	Greek style financial crisis, profligacy, precarious economy, Greece of the North, Athenian affinity for deficits and debt, Greece as the world worst performer, Tax evasion as a national pastime, The transit system in New York has turned into Greece: dead broke, we are not Greece

Last but not least, it should be noted that the analysis of the press sample reveals a significant qualitative difference between the period before and after May 2010, when the deal for the rescue package was concluded. In particular, whereas before April/May it was Greece that was under the spotlight of global media and at the heart of the critique of the international press, after April/May the spotlight seems gradually to move away from Greece and onto Germany and the European institutions, and their inability to deal effectively and timely with the crisis in Greece and wider in Europe. At that time, there appears to have emerged a unique window of opportunity for Greece. So long as Greece made headline news and was at the gunpoint of international media, any attempt to restore a sense of stability in its economy was immediately neutralized. Now, for the first time, the spotlight was gradually moving away from Greece. Furthermore, the shift of the focus and interest of global media from Greece onto Germany and the European institutions, and their failure to deal effectively with the crisis, produced some sympathy for Greece and deflected some criticism from Greece to Germany and the European institutions. Yet, soon the situation in Greece became worse rather than better, and after October 2010 Greece started to attract again the global media spotlight. An opportunity seems to have been lost.

Conclusions

Our aim in this paper was neither to analyse the veracity of the international press discourse on Greece and the Greek crisis, nor to systematically analyse its origins and mode of diffusion. Reports and articles from international news agencies, such as the Reuters and Bloomberg, were reproduced in several of the newspaper under examination. Furthermore, at least to some degree, the negative discourse on Greece from the outside (i.e. how others viewed Greece) was a reflection of the negative discourse on Greece from the inside (i.e. the debates taking place in Greece). Therefore, the origins and channels of international dissemination of the discourse on Greece were multiple and interlinked. Yet, the main aim of this paper was to offer a cartography of this negative discourse on Greece. When did it emerge? How did it evolve and why? What were its nature and characteristics? What were its defining themes? The conclusion from this analysis is not optimistic for Greece. Our research findings point to the consolidation of a very negative image for Greece at an international level. Even more worrying is the fact that Greece, during the period under examination, was transformed into a ‘negative signifier’, used as such by political, economic and media elites in all the eleven countries examined. For Greece to reverse this negative image it will take time, systematic effort, resources and imagination.

¹ This paper draws from a large research project that was conducted by the Athens Centre for International Political Economy at the Institute of International Relations in Athens. The complete results are available in Greek at the following electronic address: <http://www.idis.gr/acipe/#5>. The author would like to thank all the trainee researchers involved in the project. Thanks are also due to the Centre for Global Political Economy at the University of Sussex and the Hellenic Observatory at the London School of Economics for their valuable research support.

² Different authors adopt different stances towards Greece in each newspaper. The term ‘newspaper stance’ is used for convenience and signifies only whether the majority of the references to Greece in each newspaper is positive, negative or neutral.

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⁴ M. Thumann, ‘Griechenland’, *Die Zeit*, 17/12/2009; D. Suzanne, ‘Greeks’ Wealth is Found in Many Places, Just Not on Tax Returns’, *The New York Times*, 02/05/2010; M. A. Sanchez-Vallejo, ‘Odisea 2.0: Grecia busca cómo salir de la crisis’, *El País*, 16/05/2010

⁵ F. Hauter, ‘La Grèce prise au piège de ses incohérences’, *Le Figaro*, 11/02/2010, p.2.

⁶ Indicatively see, J-P. Robin, ‘Le défi de la BCE, réunifier la zone euro’, *Le Figaro*, 14/01/2010, p.15; I. Campbell and J. Goldfarb, ‘Lesser Lights In The Euro Zone’, *The New York Times*, 09/12/2009; ‘Greek crisis: Hedge funds ‘not to blame’’, *The Straits Times*, 08/03/2010.

⁷ Indicatively see, T. Class, ‘Europa soll es richten?’, *Die Zeit*, 22/04/2010; U-J. Heuser, ‘Der letzte Sirtaki’, *Die Zeit*, 29/04/2010; F. Cano, ‘Bulgaria, ajuste sin fin’, *El País*, 15/08/2010; A. Missi, ‘Bruselas vigilara a los Estados para evitar falsificaciones en las cuentas’, *El País*, 16/02/2010; ‘Euro design lacks cultural diversity’, *The Korean Times*, 27/07/2010; T. Bielecki, ‘Grecja dostanie 110 mld euro pomocy od krajów euro i MFW’ [Greece will get 110 billion from Euro countries and the IMF], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3/5/2010.

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⁹ R. Arnaud, ‘Le gouvernement grec cherche à reconstruire l’union nationale; Le premier ministre présente son programme d’économies pour sauver le pays’, *Le Figaro*, 14/12/2009, p.24.

¹⁰ C. Lachevre, ‘La Grèce, épreuve de vérité pour l’euro’, *Le Figaro*, 10/12/2009, p.19.

¹¹ N. Kulish & N. Kitsantonis, ‘Germany Offers No Financial Help to Ailing Greece’, *The New York Times*, 06/03/2010. N. Kulish & S. Pauly, ‘Germans Upset Over Helping Greece’, *The New York Times*, 16/02/2010. See also, U.-J. Heuser, ‘Nicht schon wieder!’, *Die Zeit*, 04/03/2010.

¹² J. Eyal, ‘Relief for EU as Greece acts on mounting debt; But doubts remain over whether govt pledges to cut spending can be kept’, *The Straits Times*, 05/02/2010.

¹³ R. Donadio and A. Carassava, ‘Greek socialists hope for comeback; But even supporters of party fear the vote Sunday can’t solve crisis’, *The New York Times*, 03/10/2009.

¹⁴ M. Thumann, ‘Griechenland’, *Die Zeit*, 17/12/2009.

¹⁵ M. Brost, ‘Griechische Tragödie’, *Die Zeit*, 18/02/2010. See also, ‘Euro design lacks cultural diversity’, *The Korean Times*, 27/07/2010.

¹⁶ ‘Shuhei Kuromi, Yuko Mukai, Yomiuri Shimbun, ‘Upper House Election 2010; Parties claim same ground on tax reform’, *The Daily Yomiuri*, 19/06/2010. See also, Editorial, ‘Prevent Greek crisis from spreading further’, *The Daily Yomiuri*, 09/05/2010; Editorial, ‘Drawing up next year’s budget a touchstone’, *The Daily Yomiuri*, 20/07/2010.

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²⁰ P. Wroński, ‘Kaczyński kontra Komorowski. Pierwsze starcie’ [Kaczyński against Komorowski: first struggle], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27/6/2010. See also, R. Grochal, ‘Tusk uderza w Kaczyńskiego’ [Tusk against Kaczyńskiego], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28/5/2010.