MIGRATION
UNDER THE LENS

THE PORTRAYAL OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE GREEK MEDIA

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, immigration has become a major issue for societies over the world. Europe has seen large arrivals of people coming from the Middle East and Africa. These developments have impacted how immigration is perceived by the media and elites and, consequently, how it has been portrayed, politicised and even securitised. Greece, among other countries in the Mediterranean, is on the frontline of the migration flows into Europe and has experienced the shift of migration trends: Greece rapidly transformed from being a country of emigration in the 1950s and 1960s to being a host country, particularly after the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

This study highlights various aspects of how immigration is framed in the Greek media. It begins with a presentation of the theoretical foundation of framing theory and the definition of its essential components. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1987): 'A frame is a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning' to events related to an issue. Entman (1991) brings the research a bit further to claim that framing unfolds information, rendering it 'more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences'. In other words, the framing process 'can be considered as a latent message from the journalist oriented towards the receiver, representing a suggestion or a stimulus to understand the news message in accordance with the idea expressed through the frame' (Van Gorp, 2005).

The study then proceeds to review the current literature on framing theory, exploring a widely neglected part of this literature. After going through the literature on the categorisation of frames, this report concludes that a systematic and thorough examination of the arguments used in the media brings us beyond the traditional liberal-security framing schema. Based on Habermas' (1993) research on European integration, this work demonstrates that there are three general types of frames to media narratives on migration that can assist us in the effort to code more consistently the arguments used by the media: *identity-related*, *moral-universal and utilitarian frames* (Helbling, 2014). These general types include subcategories which allow us to conduct a deeper and more systematic analysis of the arguments broadcast by the Greek media: *nationalistic*, *multicultural*, *humanitarian*, *economic*, *security economic*, *security*. All the categories mentioned are subject to the general logic of distinguishing the frames between the liberal vs security schema, and the securitised vs desecuritised arguments.

Finally, this study explores framing through an analysis of how migrants and refugees were portrayed in the Greek media following four key incidents:

2016: EU-Turkey statement

2020: Greek-Turkey border crisis in Evros

2022: Case of 38 immigrants on the Evros River

2023: Pylos shipwreck

The media sample for this study involves four agenda-setting online media outlets, including two conservative (Proto Thema and Iefimerida.gr) and two liberal/left (Efimerida ton Syntakton and News 24/7) ones. Due to the extensive time frame and the large number of events that have taken place during this period, the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) research team selected four weeks: one week after the ratification of the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016, one week after the incidents on the Evros River in February 2020, one week after the incidents in August 2022 involving 38 migrants being trapped on an islet on the Evros River and one week after the deadly shipwreck in Pylos in June 2023.

The study encompasses a total of 160 articles, with an average of 10 articles per incident. Despite the restricted implementation period, the present study is a pilot project that provides valuable insights into the media discourse on immigration issues in Greece and documenting the prevailing trends through an adequate media sample analysis. However, it does not capture the overall narrative as it only includes part of the content. Therefore, the content that was subsequently excluded could be addressed in a potential follow-up phase of the project.

The key argument extracted from the analysis of the articles spanning these four events is the prevailing contrast between nationalistic and humanitarian arguments. The latter has become even stronger since 2020 and in the aftermath of the incidents on the Evros River. During this period, mainstream media coverage, regardless of political affiliation, covered the developments in highly securitised terms, identifying migrants not merely as a general security concern but specifically as a threat to Greek national security. This has marked the ongoing trend towards heightened securitisation, with discussions increasingly revolving around matters of national sovereignty. Migrants, when discussed in security terms, have been mainly portrayed as 'intruders', 'weapons', an 'unconventional threat', etc.

On the other hand, the 'liberal' or 'desecuritised' frames used in all four incidents consist mainly of 'moral-universal (humanitarian)' arguments. This choice is reasonable considering the dramatic nature of the events under study which revolve around the harsh treatment faced by refugees and migrants attempting to cross maritime and land borders.

2. FRAMING THEORY

Framing theory emerged as a theoretical trend mainly in the second half of the 20th century. It has evolved from various disciplines and dominantly from the theory of agenda setting, which was first developed in the 1970s. In particular, while the agenda setting theory explores how the media defines public issues by selecting which topics to present to the audience, framing theory focuses on how these issues are described to and therefore perceived by the audience (Scheufele and Tweksbury, 2007, p. 14).

Through the years, framing theory has been named as the most prominent theoretical tool to explore concepts of communication, media and, more recently, the role of political actors. Bryant and Miron (2004, p. 695) highlight that framing has become the most commonly used theoretical trend of the 21st century, with the prospect for further development in the coming years as it has been largely unexplored.

This becomes evident from the fact that defining and delimiting framing theory has proven difficult. In fact, the definitions of the term are diverse and come from different academic domains. Framing literature traces its origins in literature in 'cognitive, constructionist and critical studies' (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 870); 'sociology, economics, psychology, cognitive linguistics and communication' (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p. 9); and 'political science, sociology, and media studies' (Hertog and McLeod, 2001, p. 139).

Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143) define a frame as a straightforward concept: 'A frame is a central organising idea or storyline that provides meaning' to events surrounding an issue. Similarly, Entman (1991, p. 53) explains that framing shapes information to make it 'more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences'. In essence, the framing process acts as an implicit message from the journalist to the audience, offering a suggestion or prompt to interpret the news in line with the perspective conveyed through the frame (Van Gorp, 2005, p. 487). Bryant and Miron (2004), in their study 'Theory and research in mass communication', mention that approximately 18% of the articles published in academic journals have dealt with the building of that theoretical trend, which is still under construction. However, most researchers agree that there are difficulties in determining the definition of framing theory and, most importantly, that there is not a single way of applying the theory in research projects. Entman (1993, p. 51) insists that framing theory requires researchers 'to identify [their] mission as bringing together insights and theories that would otherwise remain scattered'. However, this theoretical diversity could be seen an asset: 'Theoretical and paradigmatic diversity has led to a comprehensive view of the framing process' (D'Angelo 2002, p. 871).

It can be argued that framing theory is a twofold process. On the one hand, it can be seen as the conceptual linkage between the journalistic approach of shaping the news within a frame of reference and following a latent structure of meaning; on the other hand, as the stimulation

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of the public to adopt these frames, viewing reality as journalists do (McQuail, 2005, p. 555).

According to Carragee and Roefs (2004), this particular theorisation of framing allows us to explore a broader context of the political and social exercise of power that exists in the framing processes. Hence, framing is not just about how media affects people; it's also about understanding the bigger picture of how political and social power is used through framing processes. So, framing is more than just a media effect; it is tied to power dynamics in society.

Sociological vs psychological analysis

Drawing on framing literature, it is claimed that framing has a dual nature: sociological and psychological. The sociological aspect (Entman, 1991; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974) focuses on the 'frames in communication' (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 106), which implies that the primary aim here is to depict the first level, that of the construction of the news through 'words, images, phrases, and presentation styles' (Druckman, 2001, p. 227).

According to Goffman (1974), who was one of the first thinkers to study the framing concept, frames, or 'schemata of interpretation', facilitate the organisation of everyday life by the people (audience). In other words, frames are cognitive structures that guide both the understanding and the representation of reality. This implies that the receiver of the message (audience) is affected by the way that an action is depicted or structured in a given frame.

Gitlin (1980) takes it a step further and argues that frames help journalists to 'package' large

amounts of information for their audiences. Gitlin explains that frames are 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation of selection, emphasis and exclusion'. This particular tactic of organising information may have serious consequences for the way that the meaning of the message is constructed. As he explains: 'the use of frames makes the world out of our sight to seem logical' (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6) and thus uncontested.

Entman (1993) follows and enhances this argument when he states that 'to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). From these definitions, we can conclude that framing is a process in which some issues become salient either through the media or another actor and some others are silenced.

Another important element which is closely linked with the abovementioned definition of frames as 'packages' is the meta-communicative character of frames. Seeing frames as 'packages' means that they include all these indicators by which the frame can be identified: metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, framatic characters, etc. (Gamson and Lash, 1983; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Tankard, 2001; Van Gorp, 2005). Apart from the framing devices, there are reasoning devices which are linked with the four functions of framing: defining a problem, assigning a responsibility, passing a moral judgement and reaching possible solutions (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2005)

Although these devices are sometimes explicit and manifest, it is also important to stress here

that whenever a reasoning device is not clear and explicit in a news text, it will become evident from the general frame message in the interpretation process of the audience. This assumption leads us to claim that the framing process could be defined as a latent message from the journalist to the receiver/audience that points to a particular way of understanding news, which will be related to the idea expressed through the frame. Thus, a frame is a meta-communicative message. According to Bateson (1972, p. 188), the frame 'gives the receiver instructions or aids in his [or her] attempt to understand the message included within the frame'.

In dealing with the conceptual part of framing literature, it is important to highlight another aspect as well. It is assumed that a frame is not pregiven. In this respect, a frame is not 'included in the occurrence that is turned into a news event by the journalist' (Van Gorp, 2006, p. 487). Thus, according to Entman (1993), four locations in the communication process remain open for discussion: the communicator, the text, the receiver and the culture. Frames belong to the fourth category: culture. Drawing on Goffman's (1981, p. 63) theorisation of frames: 'Frames are a central part of a culture and are institutionalised in various ways.' In other words, we cannot argue that there is an 'individual frame'.

Also, frames do not represent something objective that exists in a news text, independently of the readers of the texts. The process of framing requires the intervention of individuals (readers) in order to be fulfilled. The latter manage to link 'the framing and reasoning devices in a text with a frame as a cultural phenomenon' (Van Gorp 2006, p. 487). In other words, frames are evident within a text by means of framing and reasoning devices and the view of frames as cultural motives (e.g., myth, value, stereotype,

shared belief). However, the connection of these elements cannot be fulfilled, unless the individual intervenes with his or her understanding of the news text.

Besides examining the sociological aspect of frames, or in other words besides looking at frames from the media's viewpoint, it is also necessary to explore the influence of frames in the formation of people's views. The psychological aspect of framing theory was introduced by Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984). In their famous work *Choices, Values and Frames*, the two scholars suggest that the way an issue is framed has a significant impact on information-processing and decision-making processes. First, they both highlight 'how different presentations of essentially the same information can have an impact on people's choices' (Van Gorp, 2006, p. 248). In this study, Kahneman and Tversky introduce the idea of 'equivalency'. According to this, individuals are more likely to take risks when 'losses' are highlighted. However, on the other hand, when 'gains' are highlighted individuals tend not to take risks.

Another attempt to approach the relation between frames and the audience is the concept of 'emphasis'. According to this, emphasising particular aspects in an issue which is presented as a message can lead individuals to focus on such aspects. Druckman (2004) argues that when dealing with political issues there is a difficulty in using 'equivalency'. On the other hand, with 'emphasis' it is more likely for individuals to focus on 'potentially relevant considerations' and act accordingly in the decision-making process.

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3. OPERATIONALISING FRAMING THEORY IN SECURITISATION RESEARCH

This theoretical discussion reflects also the process of the categorisation of frames. The actor-driven logic implies that actors with vested interests within a particular political and social context are continuously debating in an effort to properly define and present an issue according to their political positions, set of values, actions and policy recommendations (Lavenex, 2001; Scheufele, 1999). Frames do not operate within a vacuum, but they compete with each other as they are part of the broader political and public debate. The frames that have deeper roots in the specific socio-political and historical context and can be more easily retrieved from memory are more likely to dominate.

In the fields of immigration and asylum, one can identify three key frames: the 'realist frame', which traces its roots from a 'state-centric' logic, by highlighting the importance of internal security and the idea of state sovereignty. By framing migration in the realist frame, it is evident that the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees and immigrants without papers (illegal immigrants) does not really exist.

All these three categories are equal in the sense that they constitute a major threat to a state's sovereignty, internal security, stability, and prosperity. According to this framing analysis, irregular migration is a direct violation of state sovereignty and legitimacy as it undermines border controls and the security framework, which are among the remaining exclusive responsibilities of the state (Anderson, 1991). Also, through the lens of the realist frame, migration is seen as a threat to social security, the labour market and jobs as well as a burden on the economy, moral values and collective identity (Faist, 2006).

The 'liberal frame' constitutes the second major frame when approaching migration. According to this, immigrants are not considered as a threat to the society, economy and security of the state. Instead, they are perceived to be beneficial to the economy and the welfare state. Immigration is believed to be a solution to the demographic problem, and an important asset of the economy, through the payment of taxes and insurance contributions.

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Moreover, human rights are at the forefront of the debate and this element is believed to be undermined by the restrictive and securitised immigration policies that the realist frame bears (Skleparis, 2017). The 'humanitarian frame' understands migration as a natural right, a result of adverse economic conditions and war. Those who analyse migration through the humanitarian frame prioritise the security of the individual over that of the state (Huysmans and Squire, 2016).

Further research on the categorisation of framing migration so far has mainly focused either on a narrow analysis of frames that are related to particular national debates (Hänggli and Kriesi 2012; Hänggli, 2012) or they depict the general tone of a statement (negative/positive framing) (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009). Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007, p. 531) have conducted a more general analysis on the categorisation of framing migration, which offers an overview of the debate. However, three out of five categories in this study focus on Muslim migration and hence they cannot be used in assessing more general issues about migration.

However, the analysis and categorisation of immigration framing in Greece needs a more thorough, deep and systematic examination of the arguments used in the media. This study explores frames in a two-level analysis: on the one hand, arguments used as part of a general theoretical framework and, on the other, more concrete arguments used in the media narrative. Building on Habermas' (1993) research on European integration, this study identifies three main types of migration frames that help the consistent categorisation of the arguments presented by the media: identity-related, moral-universal and utilitarian frames (Helbling, 2014). Based on this first level of framing analy-

sis, individual arguments are collected and distributed into categories linked to the main concepts of immigration literature. According to this, it is understood that the identity-related frames consist of two subcategories: *nationalistic frames*, which consider arguments 'for the preservation of national boundaries and a culturally homogenous society to uphold an exclusive national identity' (Helbling, 2014, p. 24). Examples are claims which depict xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes, the domination of Greek-Orthodox dogma and the fear of losing common national traditions and values. On the other hand, *multicultural frames* include arguments that favour the respect of different cultural and religious values and groups within society.

The second category comprises *moral-universal frames*. These frames include arguments that preserve general moral principles and international human rights. Key examples of this category include civil rights (non-discrimination, humanitarian rights, rule of law) and international solidarity. Particularly, humanitarian frames are significant in this study, as in our context the clear majority of the migration flows during the 2015 crisis consisted of asylum seekers and refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Utilitarian frames include three subcategories: *labour and social security frames*, *economic frames* and *security frames*. The first two types of utilitarian frames cover the issue in a negative and positive way, respectively. *Labour and social security frames* include examples linked to possible effects on the rise of unemployment and increased pressure on the welfare state. On the other hand, *economic frames* describe immigration as something positive for the economy, offering the chance for further economic growth. An example of this type of framing is that immi-

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grants are widely considered to be a cheap labour force which affects the economy, investments and rapid economic growth. Also, it is claimed that immigrants contribute to the welfare state, by paying taxes and insurance contributions. *Security frames* are very similar to the abovementioned realist frames. Security frames include arguments that favour the preservation of internal and external security; the fight against crime, terrorism and drug trafficking; the protection of public health, etc.

Thus, if we need to make the distinction according to the realist/liberal axis or the positive/negative axis, it would be as follows: nationalistic frames, security frames and labour and social security frames resemble the realist/negative framing categorisation. On the other hand, the multicultural, humanitarian and economic categories resemble the liberal/positive framing towards migration.

	IDENTITY		MORAL-UNIVERSAL	UTILITARIAN		
	Nationalistic	Multicultural	Humanitarian	Labour and Social Security	Economic	Security
Examples	Preservation of national identity Fear of Islamisation National sovereignty Culturally homogenous society	Tolerance Respect for different cultural and religious groups and values	International human rights Non-discrimination International solidarity Rule of law	Fears/concerns about: • rise of unemployment • welfare state • wage pressure	Cheap labour force Investments Rapid economic growth	Terrorism Crime Public health Drug trafficking

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Methodology

In the context of this study, the aftermath of four events will be analysed:

- ▶ 2016: EU-Turkey statement
- ▶ 2020: Greek-Turkey border crisis in Evros
- ▶ 2022: Case of 38 immigrants on the Evros River
- ▶ 2023: Pylos shipwreck

The study analysed a total of 160 articles, averaging 10 articles per incident. The analysis was conducted through a detailed coding scheme, including three general types of frames (identity, moral-universal, utilitarian) and six subcategories (nationalistic, multicultural, humanitarian, economic, labour and social security, and security). This framing approach captures a holistic picture of the media narratives towards migrants and refugees and provides a clear categorisation. For the purpose of this study, every quote has been counted and distributed under the coding scheme mentioned above. All the number of these quotes/references were then added up.

4.2. 2016: EU-Turkey statement

In March 2016, the European Union reached an agreement with Turkey to curb the influx of migrants into EU territory. Under this agreement, migrants trying to enter Greece irregularly would be sent back to Turkey, and Turkey would work to prevent new migration routes from emerging. In return, the EU committed to resettling Syrian refugees from Turkey on a one-for-one basis, easing visa restrictions for Turkish citizens, providing €6 billion in aid to support Syrian migrant communities in Turkey, updating the customs union, and revitalising discussions on Turkey's potential accession to the EU. At that time, Turkey was the world's largest host of refugees – a position it still maintains – with the majority of its roughly 3 million refugees originating from Syria, along with significant numbers from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan (Migration Policy Institute, 2021).

The agreement was received by the Greek media with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was argued that the agreement would bring some 'order' to the management of the migration-refugee issue. It was, after all, a period when the humanitarian crisis was ongoing in Idomeni, northern Greece, where thousands of refugees had set up a makeshift camp in an attempt to cross the border into North Macedonia. On the other hand, the images of the utter misery expe-

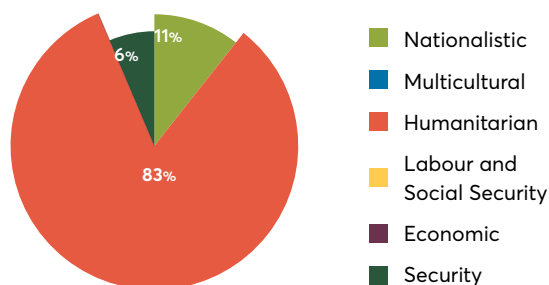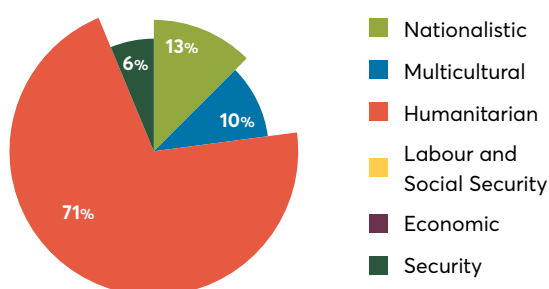CHART 1 **2016: EU-TURKEY STATEMENT (Efimerida ton Syntakton)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

CHART 2 **2016: EU-TURKEY STATEMENT (News 24/7)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

'The final EU-Turkey agreement is a blatant, gross violation of the human rights of refugees.'
Efimerida ton Syntakton, 22 March 2016

'According to the agreement, we are in effect abolishing in practice the international treaties, starting with the Geneva Convention, which provide for the granting of international protection to those in need.'
News 24/7, 21 March 2016

'Horrendous deal had been sealed shame on the EU.'
Iverna McGowan, head of Amnesty International's European Institutions Office, quoted in News 24/7, 21 March 2016

rienced by the refugees were still generating feelings of sympathy, and claims that the provisions of the agreement would deteriorate refugees' rights were considered to be valid.

In line with this, it is clear from the analysis

that the two liberal media outlets (Efimerida ton Syntakton and News 24/7) focused mainly on the adverse provisions of the EU-Turkey statement. The arguments developed in their articles predominantly focused on the humanitarian aspects that would result from the implementation of the joint statement (Efimerida ton Syntakton: 83% humanitarian arguments, News 24/7: 71% humanitarian arguments).

On the other hand, the two conservative media outlets (Proto Thema and Iefimerida.gr) expressed concern about whether and how soon the agreement would be implemented and claimed that the EU-Turkey statement sent a clear message of deterrence. At the same time, given the situation in Idomeni, they highlighted incidents of violence among migrants and other alleged crimes (rapes or attempted rapes).

'The daily clashes between refugees, mainly Syrians and Afghans, as well as incidents of crime, rape or attempted rape, are a cause for concern.'
Proto Thema, 19 March 2016

'It is now official: those who enter the country illegally are being called "Lathrometanastes".'[1]
Proto Thema, 20 March 2016

'The agreement rewards the EU's deterrence policy and ensures that Greece's borders remain closed.'
Proto Thema, 19 March 2016

1   'Lathrometanastis' is a Greek word describing one who enters the country illegally. The word has been broadly used in political and media discourse. According to Stamatinis et al. (2021, p. 347), 'Etymologically, the use of the Greek terms λαθρομετανάστευση "illegal migration" and λαθρομετανάστης "illegal migrant" attributes two different but interconnected characteristics to the process of migration: it is illegal and hence it is concealed. Λαθρομετανάστης "illegal migrant" is a compound word produced by the adjective λαθραίος "illegal, unlawful, latent, concealed" and the noun μετανάστης "(im)migrant". Migrants seem to retain the identity of the "illegal" not only when crossing the Greek borders, but also during the whole time they reside within them.'
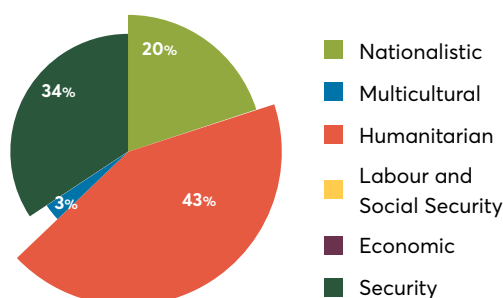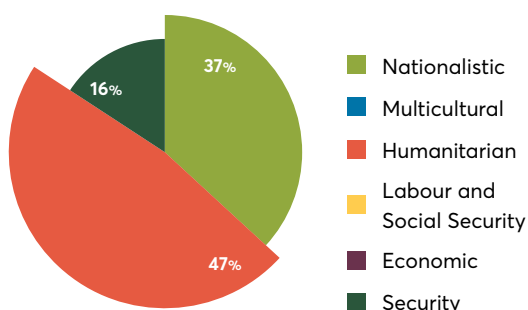
CHART 3 **2016: EU-TURKEY STATEMENT (Proto Thema)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

CHART 4 **2016: EU-TURKEY STATEMENT (Iefimerida)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

4.3.
2020: Greek-Turkish border crisis in Evros

In February 2020, Turkey announced that the country would no longer prevent refugees and migrants from crossing into the EU and that the borders with Greece would now be open. Right after the announcement, Turkish mainstream media quickly circulated messages urging migrants and refugees already in the country to move towards the border along the Evros River. As a result, families and individuals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries started gathering in the border region with the aim to move towards Greek territory, with the facilitation of the Turkish security forces (Amnesty International, 2021).
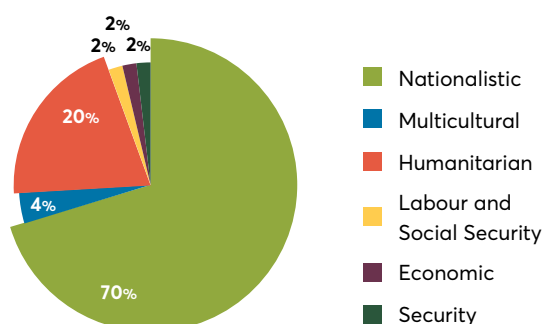
The Greek authorities responded decisively. On 28 February, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis tweeted: 'Significant numbers of migrants and refugees have gathered in large groups at the Greek-Turkish land border and have attempted to enter the country illegally. I want to be clear: no illegal entry into Greece will be tolerated.' Greece reinforced its ground border forces, deploying troops who used tear gas, water cannon and plastic bullets against those trying to cross the land border, and dispatched 52 ships to prevent arrivals on the islands. On 2 March, Greece enacted emergency legislation suspending new asylum applications for a month. Consequently, most new arrivals at sea were detained in port facilities and other locations, where they were unable to seek asylum and were at risk of being returned to Turkey or their countries of origin or transit.

In line with this, the Greek media engaged in an unprecedented public awareness campaign dominated by the harsh politicisation and securitisation of immigration by portraying migrants and refugees as scapegoats and an existential threat. Although the securitisation of migration in the Greek media was not something new, the coverage of the events in Evros in February–March 2020 was different. Until then, migrants and refugees, when described in security terms, the main emphasis was on them being a threat either to the Greek economy or to security. That is, immigration was very often linked by the media to the increase in unemployment, the exploitation of the Greek social security system through access to social benefits and subsidies and the rapid rise in crime in society. During the Evros border crisis, migration was linked the first time – in an explicit manner – with the violation of national sovereignty.
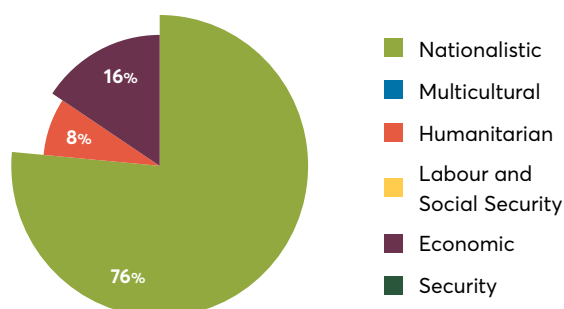
An interesting finding from the analysis, as we

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will see in more detail below, is that all four media outlets, regardless of their political affiliation, covered the events in Evros in a pretty similar way. With slight variations, the migrants and refugees were described in security/nationalistic terms, and more specifically as 'invaders', 'weapons in Erdogan's hands', while the incident itself was presented as a 'hybrid war' on the part of the Turkish state against Greece. The warlike atmosphere was also reinforced by reports which presented the security forces as preparing to go to war against Turkey, completely ignoring the fact that what they were involved with was managing a situation at the border and not preparing for some kind of combat against another state. Thus, there were reports showing members of the security forces voluntarily interrupting their leave to participate in the operations or others showing members of the hierarchy of the Church of Greece
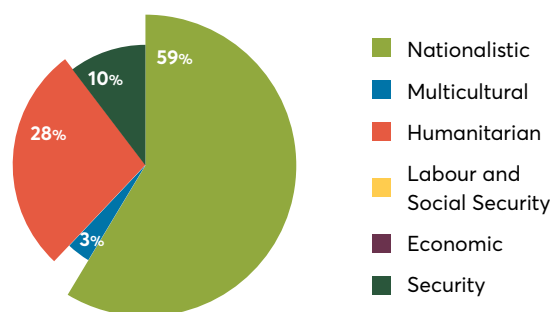
CHART 5 **2020: GREEK-TURKEY BORDER CRISIS IN EVROS (Efimerida ton Syntakton)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

CHART 6 **2020: GREEK-TURKEY BORDER CRISIS IN EVROS (Proto Thema)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

CHART 7 **2020: GREEK-TURKEY BORDER CRISIS IN EVROS (News 24/7)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

blessing troops and security forces. Another common trend that appeared in all the media was the daily recording of the number of pushbacks at the borders, a number that amounted thousands every day, thus inflating the sense of threat and insecurity in Greek society.

With regards to the coding analysis, the nationalistic framing ranges from 59 to 92%, depending on the media outlet (Efimerida ton Syntakton 70%, Proto Thema 76%, News 24/7 59%, Iefimerida 92%). Of course, strong humanitarian arguments were also put forward, mainly regarding the excessive use of violence at the border and the violation of human rights during the events, although this trend is clearly not the most prevalent.
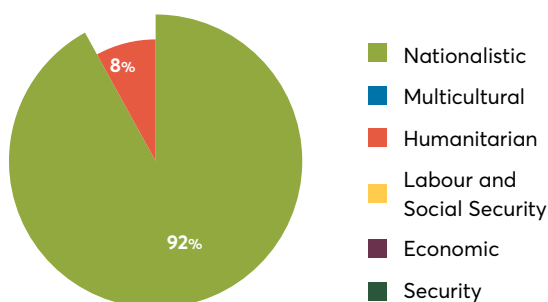
'In his statements, the Archbishop expressed his emotion and pride [for the security forces guarding the border] but also his solidarity with the refugees. The Archbishop presented the men of the security forces with a New Testament, while he performed a service singing the Hymn of Praise together with the local authorities of the region.'
Efimerida ton Syntakton, 5 March 2020

'Strong army and police forces have been deployed, creating an impenetrable wall.'
Proto Thema, 29 February 2020

CHART 8 **2020: GREEK-TURKEY BORDER CRISIS IN EVROS (Iefimerida)**

Legend:
- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

Frankly, the convergent way of depicting the events of Evros in all four media examined in this study shows that the narrative of preserving national security, as well as the debate on the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees by Turkey, pervaded the media discourse across the board, beyond all ideological and political affiliations.

4.4
2022: Case of 38 immigrants on the Evros River

In August 2022, a significant humanitarian event unfolded on the Evros River, which forms part of the border between Greece and Turkey. A group of 38 migrants, comprising 22 men, 9 women and 7 children, found themselves stranded on a small islet on the waterway. This situation brought to light the ongoing and complex issues surrounding migration in the region. The exact circumstances of how the group of migrants, reportedly from Syria, ended up there remain contested between Greek and Turkish authorities.

Immediately after the detection of the migrants, there was a diplomatic standoff between Greece

'The army is sending a strong message to Turkey, which is escalating its aggressive policy. In a statement, the Fourth Army Corps announced that it will conduct live-fire firing on Monday, with machine guns, rifles and pistols, in Evros 24 hours a day.'
Proto Thema, 5 March 2020

'At noon, a strong police force prevented the mass entry of dozens of migrants at the Evros border at Kastanies between Greece and Turkey, with the mob remaining inside Turkish territory after limited use of chemicals [tear gas] and stun grenades.'
News 24/7, 28 February 2020

'Greece has borders. Europe has borders. And we Greeks guard our borders.'
Michalis Chrisochoidis, Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, quoted in Proto Thema, 29 February 2020

and Turkey over who was responsible for them. Each country accused the other of pushing the migrants towards the border and of subsequently neglecting their plight. This standoff delayed the offering of immediate assistance to the stranded individuals. Reports emerged about the dire conditions faced by the migrants, including the lack of food, water and medical care. The plight of a five-year-old girl who died on the islet due to a scorpion sting highlighted the severity of the situation and drew worldwide attention, with international organisations and news media calling for an urgent response.[1] Eventually, after several days, the Greek authorities conducted a rescue operation. The mi-

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1   On 13 August, UNHCR stated that: *'We continue to be gravely concerned for the safety and wellbeing of some 40 people allegedly stranded on an islet at the Greece-Türkiye border. According to reports received a child has tragically already died. Unless urgent action is taken, we fear further lives remain at stake'* (UNHCR News on Twitter, 13 August 2022, available at: https://bit.ly/3ooj5kD.

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grants were brought to safety and given necessary medical attention and support.

This particular case drew the media's attention and the public's interest, sparking a 'public debate' about the facts. It fuelled numerous press releases, interviews and statements in the Greek Parliament.

Framing analysis shows that all four media outlets approached the issue largely in humanitarian terms, highlighting the very bad conditions experienced by the stranded refugees on the Evros islet, the drama with the reportedly dead girl and stressing that it was a critical humanitarian issue. On the other hand, there was frequent reference in the reports to the disputed status of the islet and that Greece should not have intervened to rescue them, while some re-

CHART 11 **2022: CASE OF 38 IMMIGRANTS ON THE EVROS RIVER (NEWS 24/7)**
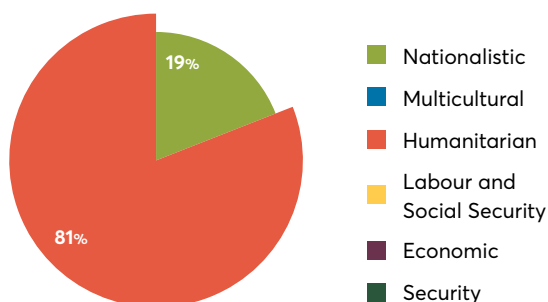
ports suggested that the incident probably formed part of a wider tactic on the part of Turkey to put pressure on Greece as a component of its hybrid warfare on the border, by instrumentalising migrants and refugees.

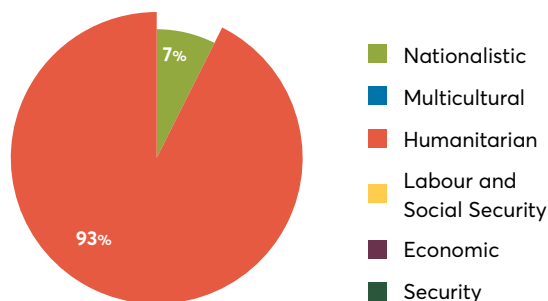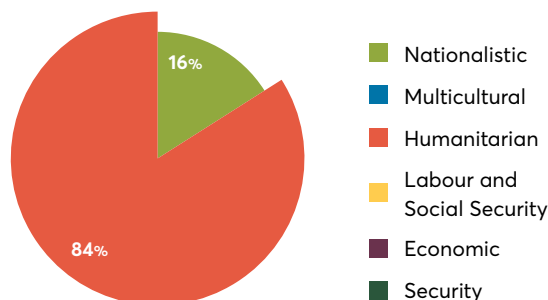CHART 9 **2022: CASE OF 38 IMMIGRANTS ON THE EVROS RIVER (Proto Thema)**

CHART 10 **2022: CASE OF 38 IMMIGRANTS ON THE EVROS RIVER (Efimerida ton Syntakton)**

'One after the other, international and domestic organisations for the protection of human rights of refugees and asylum seekers have intervened and asked the government, which continues to turn a blind eye, to take action and provide the assistance required by morality, solidarity, law and court decisions, to the refugees from Syria trapped for nine days on an island on the Evros.'
Efimerida ton Syntakton,
15 August 2022

'It is recalled that in the previous days, in two statements, the police had pointed out that the migrants were on an island in Turkish territory. For this reason the Greek authorities could not take any action.'
Proto Thema, 15 August 2022

'Once again the hybrid war that Turkey has long declared in Greece, instrumentalising migrants and refugees to achieve this, seems to have claimed as victims 40 migrants and refugees who have been abandoned for several days on an island on the Evros River.'
News 24/7, 11 August 2022

4.5.
2023: Pylos shipwreck

The Pylos shipwreck of June 2023, where a fishing boat carrying approximately 750 migrants sank off the coast of Pylos, a town in the southwestern part of Greece, was a devastating maritime disaster. The boat had set off five days earlier from Tobruk in eastern Libya and was destined for Italy. It was carrying mainly young men from Egypt, Pakistan, Syria and Palestine, but also 100 women and children. While this was not the first migrant shipwreck in the Mediterranean, what made this this case unique is the fact that Greek and European authorities observed the vessel for over 13 hours without intervening, despite numerous mayday calls. The rescue began only after the boat capsized in calm waters, which was too late. Only 104 people survived; 82 bodies were recovered but only 58 identified. More than 500 people were presumed dead. All involved parties have denied any misconduct.

The incident drew widespread international condemnation and renewed calls for more effective and humane migration policies in the EU. Human rights organisations highlighted the need for safer legal pathways for migrants and better search and rescue coordination in the Mediterranean.

From the very first moment, the Greek media covered the event with continuous reports. As the analysis shows, most of the reports in the

first seven days after the accident concerned the circumstances that led to the shipwreck, the responsibilities of the Greek authorities and the search and rescue mechanisms. There were also many reports on the human stories that accompanied the tragedy. On the other hand, there were several reports on the smuggler networks operating in Libya, 'who exploit refugees and migrants seeking a better life in Europe'. Finally, there were also frequent reports that the people on board themselves refused any kind of assistance from the Greek and European authorities involved in the search and rescue process, which amounted to an attempt to put blame on the victims of this tragedy.

Framing analysis shows that all four media outlets approached the issue largely in humanitar-
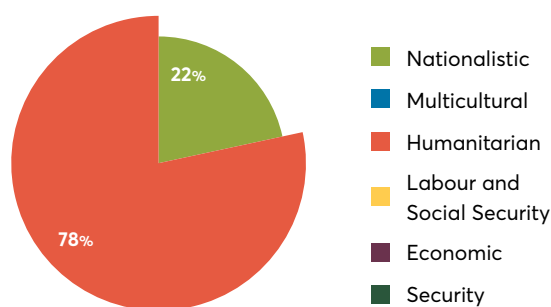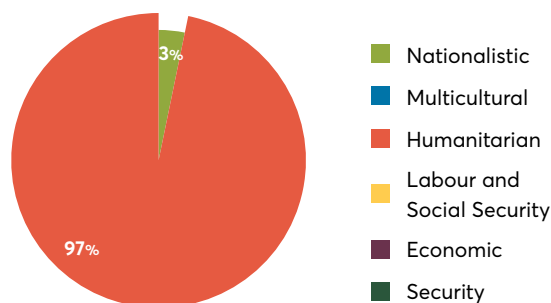
CHART 12 **2023: PYLOS SHIPWRECK**
(Efimerida ton Syntakton)

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

22%
78%

CHART 13 **2023: PYLOS SHIPWRECK (Proto Thema)**

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

3%
97%

19

ian terms (Efimerida ton Syntakton 78%, Proto Thema 97%, News 24/7 70%, Iefimerida 92%). On the other hand, several security arguments were also made, in the sense that while the Pylos shipwreck was an indescribable tragedy, Greece should not stop its policy of deterrence at the borders.

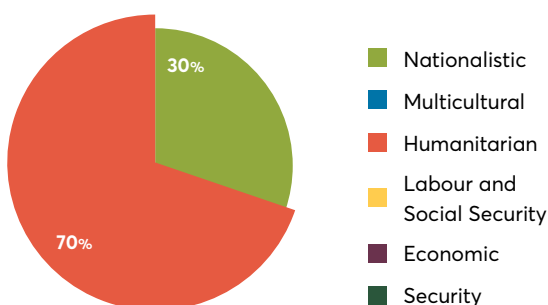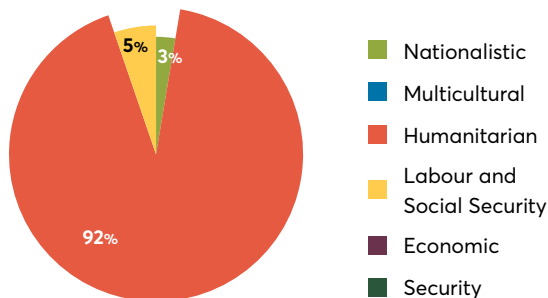CHART 14 **2023: PYLOS SHIPWRECK (News 24/7)**

30%
70%

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

CHART 15 **2023: PYLOS SHIPWRECK (Iefimerida)**

5% 3%
92%

- Nationalistic
- Multicultural
- Humanitarian
- Labour and Social Security
- Economic
- Security

'Despite the fact that our country is obliged under the Geneva Convention to give refugees access to the asylum procedure, that is, to allow them to file and examine asylum applications, the Mitsotakis government has made it its official policy to bypass the convention, applying the doctrine of refugee deterrence, which Greece is known to engage in even through illegal and inhumane repatriations.'
Efimerida ton Syntakton,
19 June 2023

'What is clarified in the statement [of the Hellenic Coast Guard] and causes concern is the fact that for almost six hours and despite frequent communications with the fishing boat, it was repeated that it was not desirable to provide any assistance from Greece.'
Proto Thema, 14 June 2023

'A shocking moment: He found his brother while he thought he drowned in the wreck in Pylos.'
Iefimerida, 16 June 2023

'In the aftermath of the deadly shipwreck off Pylos, the UN considers it necessary that "urgent and decisive" measures be taken in order to avoid similar tragedies.'
News 24/7, 16 June 2023

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the profound impact of immigration on media discourse in Greece. By applying framing theory to the analysis of Greek media coverage of key incidents from 2016 to 2023, it has identified a persistent tension between nationalistic and humanitarian frames. The securitised portrayal of migrants as threats to national security has gained prominence, reflecting broader political and societal anxieties. Meanwhile, humanitarian frames, though present, are often overshadowed by security concerns, particularly in the aftermath of significant events. This pilot study provides critical insights into the framing dynamics within the Greek media, highlighting the need for further research to capture the full spectrum of media narratives on immigration. As migration continues to shape public discourse and policy, understanding these framing processes is essential for fostering an informed and balanced public debate.

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Migration under the lens:
The portrayal of migrants
and refugees in the Greek media

This briefing was written by **Kostas Vlachopoulos**, a researcher at the
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