
Media Commercialization and Journalism in Greece

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ABSTRACT

■ This article analyses the effects of media commercialization and market expansion on Greek journalism and argues that although journalism appears to be a profession which plays a more active social and political role in Greece, giving the impression that it sets the agenda and represents the ordinary citizen, it is heavily influenced by the constraints imposed by news organizations. The article first discusses to what extent the 'professional model' of journalism can be applied to all countries. Second, it provides a brief account of the contemporary media landscape. It then discusses the implications of media commercialization on Greek journalism drawing from original and other research. ■

Key Words Greek press, journalism, media owners, objectivity, politics, professionalism

Introduction

Dominant academic literature suggests that there has been a process of convergence among media systems and journalistic practices, regardless of their parochial particularities. As Denis McQuail has noted, with the growth of an international media industry we see evidence of an 'international media culture', which can be recognized in similar

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European Journal of Communication Copyright © 2001 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi), Vol 16(4): 505–521. [0267–3231(200112)16:4;505–521;020062]

standards worldwide as well as in content forms, genres and the actual substance of communication (McQuail, 1994: 28–9). It has also been suggested that this is a consequence of globalization, which affects social structures, relations and cultures, as well as of the rapid adoption of the ‘free market’ principles and philosophy in most western countries in the postmodern era (McQuail, 1994: 11–12).

Although there are similarities in the issues concerning media systems around the globe, this article argues that each national system still differs in many respects when compared to others. The same applies to journalism, its practices and its professional culture, since media organizations reflect the differences between political systems, political philosophies, cultural traits and economic conditions. In this globalized media era, one sees many common issues, such as deregulation, privatization, commercialization, concentration of ownership, an increase of the profile and role of journalists. However, it is still risky to say that journalism has adopted an international, for some the Anglo-American model, or a model of objective, straightforward, informative reporting and culture in terms of its practices and its professionalism.

The Greek experience could function as a case study against which some generalizations of the ‘spreading’ professional model for journalism practice and theory will be challenged. The case of Greece offers an example of how the changing structure of the media system does not automatically impact on journalists’ perceptions of their work, i.e. the way the profession of journalism is organized and practised in any uniform way. In other words, the case of Greece illustrates that in the age of globalization and Americanization, the similarities across media systems and practices are not exceeding the differences in terms of media people.

This article attempts to describe the effects of media commercialization and market expansion on Greek journalism. It argues that although journalism appears to be a profession which plays a more active social and political role in Greece, giving the impression that it sets the agenda and represents the ordinary citizen, it is still heavily influenced by the constraints imposed by news organizations. This article first discusses to what extent the ‘professional model’ of journalism can be applied to all countries. Second, it provides a brief account of the features of the contemporary Greek media landscape. It then discusses the implications of media commercialization on Greek journalism, drawing from original and other research.

A global model of professional journalism?

As noted in the preceding section, the development of media systems in each country is influenced by various factors. When we speak about the changes to the profession of journalism, we mostly refer to the 'professional model', which is heavily influenced by the Anglo-American liberal tradition (Tunstall, 1977; Chalaby, 1996). Paolo Mancini (2000: 285) argues that regardless of its various names – liberal or social responsibility model, Anglo-American model or professional model – it is the 'only model, which has been widely theorized, discussed and diffused' around the globe.

According to McQuail (1994: 145; 1992: 184–95) central to this model are the concepts of objectivity or neutrality. Objectivity is a particular form of media practice, particular to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination:

The main features are: adopting a position of detachment and neutrality towards the object of reporting (thus an absence of subjectivity or personal involvement); lack of partisanship; attachment to accuracy and other truth criteria and lack of ulterior motive or service to a third party. (McQuail, 1994: 145)

The notion of journalistic professionalism, which forms the basis for journalists' claims of autonomy, is connected with the idea that journalists serve a public interest that transcends the interests of particular parties or owners of social groups. To what extent can this model be applied to other countries, especially to those which have experienced a different political culture and development? How can this model be applied to everyday practices of other countries, especially in those societies where a sense of public interest transcending particular interests has been increasingly difficult to achieve?

Paolo Mancini (2000: 266), referring to Italy, notes that: 'In reality [in other countries] journalists act in a different way: they follow a different model of journalism.'

This is the case in Greek journalism as well. One can say that due to the political particularities of Greek society, it is difficult to develop a culture of journalistic professionalism faithful to the Anglo-American model. This is because journalism always reflects and embodies the historical processes within which it has developed and the contemporary social conditions within which it is made (McNair, 1998: 64). One has to note that western democratic practices and functions in Greece, especially since the restoration of the parliament in 1974, have influenced the performance of the mass media. At the same time, there are some

persistent particularities of Greek society and, consequently, of the Greek media, which, as in the case of Italy, indicate that the Anglo-American professional model cannot be applicable in all countries. This is because:

Journalism does not grow in a vacuum: it is the fruit of the interaction between different actors and systems and such differences in social structure and context have to be taken in to account even when theorizing models of journalism. (Mancini, 2000: 267)

Although Greek journalists in theory state that they adopt the neutral and objective model of journalism, which performs a watchdog function, in practice facts and comments are freely intermixed in Greek news reporting. Moreover, interpretative reporting, nearly as old as Greek journalism itself, remains the dominant model of Greek news coverage and sets the journalist at the centre of the story, regardless of the commercialization of Greek media and the market-driven orientation of the news media. At the same time, the interests of their news organizations influence Greek journalists heavily. This was (and still is) the basic framework of today's Greek journalism. It is heavily related, on the one hand, to the particularities of Greek society, and, on the other hand, to the instrumentalization of the dominant, privately owned media.

The main features of the contemporary Greek media system

In the recent history of the Greek media, one can observe three phases of development. The first was in the mid-1980s and affected the newspaper market. The second came in the late 1980s due to the deregulation of the state broadcasting monopoly, which resulted in the creation of numerous private, national and local television channels and radio stations. In the mid-1990s, there was also an expansion in the magazine sector, and a proliferation of new magazines (from 400 to 800).

In the 1990s, Greek newspapers faced the biggest challenge in their history: increasing competition from electronic media and the need to harness the publishing tools offered by new technologies (Leandros, 1992; Psychogios, 1992: 11–35; Zaoussis and Stratos, 1995: 171–87). For newspapers these challenges required the reconsideration of traditional publishing goals and marketing strategies (Zaharopoulos and Paraschos, 1993: 67). However, the political affiliation of newspapers is always manifest in periods of intense political contention, especially election periods (Komninou, 1996).

The Greek broadcasting system underwent spectacular changes in the late 1980s. From a broadcasting environment with two public television channels and four public radio stations, to an overcrowded environment comprising 160 private television channels and 1200 private radio stations broadcasting in the early 1990s. In addition, Greece has undergone a broadcasting commercialization, adopting a market-led approach, resulting in more channels, more advertising, more programme imports and more politics. And, as in other Mediterranean countries, the publishers and other business-oriented interests have made impressive inroads into the broadcasting landscape.

The entry of private channels was disastrous for the public broadcaster, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT). In fact, few other public broadcasters in Europe have suffered as badly from the introduction of private television. ERT has accumulated a debt of 38 billion drachmas, while its channels have sharply declined in ratings – 10 percent (ET1 5.6 percent and NET 4.4 percent) in 2000 – and advertising revenue (ERT's market share of advertising income in 2000 was 5.3 percent of total television advertising).

Since the mid-1990s, various efforts have been made, although without success, by the government to regulate the sector (especially with regard to radio and television licenses, advertising time, programme quotas, protection of minors and media ownership). But the awarding of television and radio licences has up to the moment of writing, not been regularized. The result is an overcrowded and unregulated broadcasting environment propelled by market forces. While the regulatory structure of Greek television has remained hazy, the owners of the main commercial television stations, who are also owners of newspapers, magazines, radio stations as well as business persons in other sectors of the economy, have dominated the field (Papathanassopoulos, 1999).

In the past, the debate about the electronic state media in Greece before the deregulation of the broadcasting sector was focused on governmental control and interference in television news programmes. Nowadays, the debate is centred on the fact that the media sector is concentrated in the hands of a few influential media and business magnates. The new audiovisual landscape is similar to the printed press: there are too many stations for such a small market. In effect, all television stations face severe financial problems. As a result analysts wonder about the real motives of their owners.

Even though the developments in the Greek media sector may not entirely respond to the needs of the industry, the Greek media system has been surprisingly adaptable and flexible in the face of new developments.

To understand this, one must remember that this system has worked under western democratic rule for only 26 years, and it is now having to face all the upheavals that other western media systems have taken years to deal with (Papathanassopoulos, 1997a).

The effects of commercialization on journalism

The fast and haphazard deregulation and commercialization of the Greek electronic media have affected journalism as well. Four intrinsic changes have taken place: first, a shift away from 'hard' news, especially parliamentary news (Demertzis and Armenakis, 1999), foreign news, culture and investigative stories; second, an almost total visualization of news stories; third, a convergence with a tabloid agenda, including police and crime news; and, fourth, more features focused on the problems encountered in everyday life (Papathanassopoulos, 1997b). On the other hand, 'the vast majority of Greek media are unabashedly partisan, sensational, and political' (Zaharopoulos and Paraschos, 1993: 96).

Once again, this is related to the particularities of Greek political history. Prior to the breaking up of the state broadcasting monopoly, the broadcaster's television news was a kind of primitive 'ideological state apparatus'. In effect, television news during the state monopoly era was exclusively concerned with the institutionalized public sphere, i.e. principally the political parties and the party in office, and, to a lesser extent, trade unions and state organizations. (Papathanassopoulos, 1997b: 274–88).

Deregulation and commercialization of Greek television has led to substantial changes in the form and content of television news. Although nowadays Greek television news, especially on the private stations, still gives preference to individual political leadership, it is no longer based on abstract political ideas as in the past, but rather focuses attention on the contest among politicians and clashes within their parties. Television news on the private channels no longer merely reports official statements from members of the cabinet, it usually goes beyond the bounds of official discourse and statements (Papathanassopoulos, 1997b, 1999). Television journalists not only interpret the news but also act as professional mediators, who stand above political ideology by presenting themselves as representatives of the 'ordinary citizen' and public opinion. Current television news programmes devote attention to the private citizen, in sharp contrast with the past. While in the past, television news only voiced the views of organized participants in the political process,

nowadays Greek viewers see ordinary people speaking about their personal problems (Papathanassopoulos, 1999).

Moreover, the news bulletins present more 'exclusives' and more sensationalism, while the rhythm of the news has become faster and every story has to be accompanied by video images. The structure of a report is a narrative structure: the reporter sets the scene, describes the stakes, and even concludes with an interpretation of the event. Furthermore, in the new television era the average duration of the main television news bulletins has expanded considerably, from 30 minutes to one or even two hours (Papathanassopoulos, 1997b, 1999). Live coverage is now used in all hard news, while commercials interrupt the bulletins towards the end. In comparison to the past, the main preoccupation of television news directors is to achieve high ratings (Paraschos, 1995). A consequence of this is not only the increasing sensationalism of television news, but also a complete reshaping of the agenda of the news bulletins.

This television journalistic approach has become a model for all media. In the state broadcasting monopoly era, the tight governmental control over the electronic media curtailed their public credibility. This gave the newspapers a comparative advantage. In effect, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that the Athens daily press back in the 1970s and in the 1980s was regarded as the key mass medium in the dissemination of political information for the Greek citizens (Carmocolias, 1981). With the entry of the private channels, this comparative advantage was lost. The onslaught of private radio and television has exacerbated the crisis in the press, drastically changing the ways in which the public acquires information. What most newspapers did was to mimic the model of television journalism with which they could not compete (Papathanassopoulos, 2001).

On the other hand, with a few exceptions, the printed press has remained obtrusively partisan, colourful, excessive, at times cross-patronizing and in some cases laced with adjectives that in most western media would be considered incompatible with fairness (Zaharopoulos and Paraschos, 1993: 96). In fact, the print and electronic media are markedly different from their counterparts in other western societies. Not that the media in other European countries or in the US are unconcerned with politics or never follow a 'political line' (Paterson, 1996, 1998). The difference lies in the fact that once a newspaper, radio or television station has established its political ties and identification, it loses any semblance of independent judgement whenever issues have political implications. In a deeply politicized society, even the most innocuous 'human interest' news item can be turned to political use, and often is. A recent example

were several cases of criminal behaviour by illegal immigrants (mainly Albanians). Media with political ties to the opposition criticized the government for its inefficiency and ineptitude, claiming that the party in opposition, New Democracy, would be sorting out the problem as soon as *it* came into office. In this context, it is easy for the media to set the public agenda.

The effects of commercialization on journalists

One would expect the commercialization of the Greek media to have affected the underlying journalistic norms and imperatives according to the western model. But, the extent to which commercialization has affected journalists' professional values, status and culture is debatable.

Effects on the professional value system

One can say that the commercialization and the rapid development of the Greek media market have increased the social and professional status of Greek journalists. In fact, television journalists and especially television news anchorpersons have become public figures. They have adopted the role of authorities, i.e. they present their views and interpret social and political reality. They do this by presenting themselves both as professionals with the right to make judgements and as representatives of the people. By taking on both these roles, they increase their public profile and authority. In hard contrast to the era of state broadcasting monopoly, the journalists of the electronic media not only express their views, but are also accepted as members by the Union of Journalists, which until then did not accept as members journalists who did not work in print media.

But it is questionable whether a Greek journalist can stand above ownership influences, since his or her views can hardly be independent from his or her paper's 'line' (Komninou, 1996). This lack of independence is not new. It can be seen in the various calls by leading journalists to adopt principles of objective or neutral journalism, mostly related to the adoption of a media ethics code and the creation of university faculties in journalism (Tzanetakos, 1985: 150; Kominis, 1985: 25).

Although schools of media in universities were created in the early 1990s, public opinion and many journalists still consider that a journalist is formed on the job. In 1998, while 58.6 percent of journalists held a university degree, only 7.8 percent of them have media degrees (V-PRC, 1998).

But what actually constitutes the concept of neutral journalism or objectivity was never clear in the Greek case. This is not unique, however. Journalists in various countries differ in their understanding of the notion of objectivity (Donsbach and Klett, 1993). As Brian McNair notes, 'concepts of objectivity and balance have complex socio-historical roots which reflect the values and ideas of the societies in which [they emerge]' (McNair, 1998: 64). For Greek journalists, the concept of the 'fourth estate' seems to equal its function to serve the public and national interest. Critical views, creative questioning, respect for human values and the improvement of democracy should in principle accompany news reporting. However, what in reality neutrality, objectivity or even pluralism mean is also open to various interpretations.

In theory, Greek journalists believe that journalism should be neutral, objective and independent from political and social powers, performing a watchdog function. In practice, they are forced to act in a different way. It seems that for Greek journalists neutrality or objectivity are closely linked to freedom of expression and accountability in news reporting rather than to factuality. In other words, while neutrality or objectivity is supposed to refer to political pluralism and fair play, in daily practice political neutrality is (or is forced to be) abandoned for the political position of their news organization (Konstantinidou, 1992: 248–52).

With the end of state broadcasting monopoly, Greek journalism has moved rapidly from politically affiliated, if not politically biased, journalism to market-oriented journalism, which requires a neutral approach to the issues of the day. However, this rapid transformation has not corresponded entirely to the concept of neutral journalism. This, as noted earlier, has to do with the fact that in Greece there has never really been such a tradition with respect to what constitutes objective journalism in practice. It is not, therefore, a coincidence that in this new era Greek journalists appear somewhat incapable of defining a consolidated and consensually acceptable body of ethical and professional principles which would apply to all journalists, regardless of the owners that employ them. It is not a coincidence that the various efforts which have been made to form a code of ethics in the profession have not been fruitful. The last effort to form a code of ethics was initiated by the Union of Journalists in 1997, but it has not yet been applied.

On the other hand, one could argue that the commercialization of Greek media, especially television, has replaced the political intervention of Greek journalists. This is also partly true. In reality, leading Greek journalists have aligned themselves to political parties and are very close

to becoming active politicians themselves. It is not a coincidence that since 1990 the number of well-known journalists who have become members of the Hellenic parliament has increased, nor that in the national election of 2000 journalists ranked high in the preferences of the Greek electorate. In a country where politics and the media maintain a very close relationship, politics has not been a *terra incognita* for Greek journalists, nor can one distinguish journalism from politics or vice versa.

Effects on professional status

The process of commercialization has created a new situation of disparity among media workers. The media explosion has created an explosion in the profession – it is estimated that the Greek media employ approximately 8000 full-time and freelance journalists. One can distinguish an elite (about 200–300 journalists), mainly television journalists, who are well paid and can maintain a professional status and form of independence from politicians and owners; the rest of them are underpaid and constantly insecure. For example, in a survey on Greek journalists conducted by the V-PRC Institute (1998), it was found that they are very sceptical about their profession. They believe they are dependent on the media owners. They believe that the media do not monitor power, but they actually exercise it, and they feel they are not able to exercise their profession freely. This quantitative research, which is, up to the moment of writing, the only one concerning the characteristics and perceptions of Greek journalists, was conducted via face-to-face interviews. Its representative sample consisted of 239 journalists working in the Athenian media – the press, magazines, radio, television and the Athens News Agency – between 25 October and 10 December 1998.

Moreover, regarding working conditions, the same survey showed that Greek journalists feel very insecure financially in their profession: 54.8 percent of the respondents believe their financial status for the next year will either remain the same or deteriorate; 39.8 percent of the respondents expect that their financial status will be slightly better; only 2.9 percent of the sample considers that its financial status will improve substantially. This insecurity is also apparent when one out of two respondents claim to have a second, even a third job in different media. Concerning their future, only 11.3 percent feel secure; 41 percent of them are pessimistic about their work in the future. Women journalists are more insecure: only 6.4 percent of them feel secure about their future in the profession (15 percent for men) and 24.5 percent feel no security at all

(12.6 percent for men). In fact, according to the Athens Union of Journalists – the country's largest with more than 3000 members: 'Most employees [in the media] receive very low salaries for working long hours, without overtime and compensation for working on Sundays' (*Athens News*, 2001).

According to the latest salaries assessment, the minimum annual salary for reporters ranges from 3.2 million drachmas (US\$8575) for a new entrant to the profession to 10.7 million drachmas (US\$28,062) for a 41-year-old veteran. Greece's average per capita income is about US\$14,000.

In my own research, which I conducted between March and June 1999, interviewing 20 'ordinary' (or underpaid) and 10 'well-paid' journalists from leading Athenian newspapers, I found that both sides regarded themselves as 'workers' in their news organizations. However, the underpaid ones were feeling more insecure about their job. What is also interesting is that both underpaid and well paid had (or were looking for) second jobs in other media outlets (for example, television channels, radio stations and magazines). On the other hand, the lower paid journalists seemed to be more honest, saying that although they followed the 'line' of their newspaper, they were still critical of their media owners. Well-paid journalists, although they accepted the influence of their bosses, appeared in theory more independent. Concerning the fact that they were well paid, one told me that:

In this profession, most of the criticism comes from our fellows, we [journalists] are like snakes, who want to bite each other. Yes, we are well paid, but underpaid in comparison to other professions like football stars, since we are both parts of the entertainment business.

Effects on the professional culture

As noted earlier, Greek journalism has been led by the needs of competition rather than by a solid, or unanimously accepted, professional culture. Due to the increased consolidation of media ownership, Greek journalists believe they are more dependent on their employers (the media owners). In contrast to the past, the average journalist has less power, since the market has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few media owners, who are also active players in the Greek economy. The editor of a leading Athenian newspaper commented on this in my interview with him:

In such a media and economic environment, journalists do not have many options. Either they compromise and become employees of their news

organization and lose all the excitement of journalism, or they will have to abandon their profession and look for something else.

It is no coincidence, for example, that there were no major strikes by workers in private media since the deregulation of the media system. The only strikes have been at the state broadcaster. The 24-hour strike on 9 April 2001, in support of better working conditions, was the first general strike since the deregulation of broadcasting in Greece, and will be meaningless if it remains the only one (as it seems to be). In the V-PRC (1998) survey, journalists were asked to assess the freedom of the press in Greece and their own level of independence and personal autonomy. Approaching half, 45.2 percent, stated that they were only slightly or not satisfied with the extent of press freedom, and only 13.8 percent said they were very satisfied. They also feel that they are not able to exercise their profession freely (they are subject to intervention and self-censorship). In response to the question 'Do journalists exercise their profession freely nowadays or are they subject to intervention?', only 7.9 percent said that they exercise it freely; 65.7 percent stated that their work is subject to intervention; and 24.3 percent said that they censor their own work (Table 1). In response to the question 'Who do you believe determines the image and politics of the mass media?', the majority of journalists (74.3 percent) believe the 'line to be taken is that of the owners of media enterprises'. Only 8.4 percent of journalists believe that the main determinant is the public, while 10.7 percent believe that journalists themselves play a decisive part, and only 5 percent believe that politicians and political parties determine the media approach (Table 2). These views of journalists are also confirmed by Aris Terzopoulos, publisher of several successful magazines in Greece. In his article regarding 'media and vested interests wars' in Greece, he points out:

Table 1 Perceived autonomy: self-censorship: 'Do journalists exercise their profession freely nowadays or are they subject to intervention?'

<i>Answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
They are subject to intervention	65.7%
They are not subject to intervention	24.3%
They work freely	7.9%
Don't know/no reply	2.1%

N = 239 journalists.

Source: V-PRC (1998).

Table 2 Perceived autonomy: 'Who do you believe determines the image and politics of the mass media?'

<i>Answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Media entrepreneurs/owners	74.3%
The public	8.4%
Politicians and parties	5%
Journalists	5%
Don't know/no reply	1.7%

N = 239 journalists.

Source: V-PRC (1998).

The reasons that journalists cannot investigate or publicize certain hot issues is easily understandable, if one only takes into account the potential commitments that may exist from and towards various directions. Due to these [commitments] there has been formed an idiosyncratic 'balance of terror'. (Terzopoulos, 2001: 15)

However, one has to note that this perception of autonomy is not new. Greek journalists had expressed similar views in a qualitative study conducted in 1990 (Serafetinidou, 1991a, 1991b). Journalists in my interviews, especially the lower paid, expressed similar, if not identical views.

On the other hand, 46.9 percent of the respondents believe that the media not only monitor power, but also actually exercise it. Another 36.6 percent of those polled said that the media do not exceed their traditional role (only monitor power) and 14.2 percent believe that the media neither monitor nor exercise power. Senior journalist Stamos Zoulas (personal interview 1999) commented on this:

Over the last years our country has witnessed a new and probably unprecedented type of newspaper. These are 'friendly' newspapers, which do not serve the party they supposedly belong to; instead, they treat the party as their organ and subject. Their reports and commentaries do not express ideas, but rather try to impose a party line. This is not carried out through advice and recommendations, but by means of accusations, renunciations and condemnations of dissidents within 'their' party.

Greek journalists seem to realize this well. In the V-PRC (1998) survey, the majority of the respondents (51.5 percent) believe that there are many corrupt journalists. In my qualitative research, most interviewees expressed similar views. But more important was that the majority of them spoke, 'off the record', of arrogance, dependence and irresponsibility. One, however, went further saying:

Table 3 Views on professional and ethical roles: 'What characterizes the Greek journalist?'

<i>Answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Exaggeration	28.9%
Arrogance	19.3%
Dependence	12.5%
Cynicism	12.2%
Irresponsibility	9.5%
Seriousness	4.6%
Objectivity	4.4%
Honesty	4.3%
Education	3.5%

N = 239 journalists.

Source: V-PRC (1998).

It is the media, not media workers like us, which influence power, mainly to their owners' interests. But, we sometimes glean an advantage from it in our day-to-day relationships with the political power and other interests in order to facilitate [*sic*] some of our personal interests. We are humans after all.

This also demonstrates a strong trend towards low self-esteem among journalists concerning the phenomena of cynicism or lack of ethics in the media today (Table 3). On the other hand, it shows that solidarity in the profession is rated low, while self-criticism in terms of ethics is high. This is also evident when they are asked to speak about their own influence in the public agenda: only 15.9 percent of journalists perceived themselves as the 'fourth estate'.

Concluding remarks

At present, two opposing models of Greek journalism are emerging. One is a more traditional journalism related more to print media and the second is a more market-oriented journalism related to electronic media, principally television. With respect to the press, especially in relation to political coverage, newspapers remain an arena for confrontation between contrasting politics and ideology. Even though the media operate in a market framework, the Greek press offers information, analysis and comments produced by a few elite groups who address other political, cultural and economic elites in order to send messages and start up

negotiations. With respect to television, it has adopted a rather infotainment journalistic approach, but is still coloured by politics.

However, it has been argued that this is related less to journalism, and more to the interplay between media owners and political power centres and the battle for control of the public agenda. In other words, a journalist, as a media worker, is forced, directly or indirectly, to pass along these messages.

This is due, on the one hand, to the particularities of Greek political history, and on the other, to the fact that the modernization of the Greek mass media system has taken place in the absence of a strong, truly independent journalistic body of ethics, capable of expressing the rules and conditions of professional behaviour in its own right. Greek journalism, once defined by ideological and ethical influences, imposed by the political power, is now limited by the influences, rules and constraints imposed by the intense competition in the media sector.

It seems furthermore that Greek journalists have realized (since they know it at first hand) that Greece has entered a new era of 'interplay' between media owners and political power. The reason is rather obvious. Commercial interests cannot be the only motivation for entrepreneurs and other business interests to enter such a small media market. It seems that they have entered for other purposes as well. The entry of business people, shipping company owners and other business interests into the media scene is an important way for these interests to try to influence public opinion and to exert pressure in the political arena to the benefit of their business interests. It is obvious that Greek media owners want to have the means to put pressure on politicians because of the huge financial interests they hold, such as telecommunications, shipping, refining, etc. This pressure is useful when fighting for government contracts. This is due to the structure of the Greek economy, in which the state plays a much larger role than in developed capitalist countries and so many important decisions affecting entrepreneurs rest in the hands of politicians. Being able to influence public opinion has become an important business tool for the media owners.

In effect, Greek journalism has always represented (and still does) and defended the interests of the parties to which is linked, echoing the point of Herbert Altschull (1997: 259) that 'the content of the news media inevitably reflects the interests of those who pay the bills'. In such a small market, with too many media outlets, it is the media owners who pay the bill in order to profit from their other business interests in the wider economic sector.

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