



Coverage of February 2023 Türkiye Earthquakes in Greek Media: Is This a New Earthquake Diplomacy?

Oktay Kirazoluğu ¹

Abstract

Past recollections of problems provide an essential context for present-day Greek-Turkish relations. The news value of a major disaster is higher in its neighboring country than in other countries. From the past to the present, on occasion of great disasters, considerable public empathy has been provided on both sides, and this situation has been reflected through the media. This article aims to analyze the news coverage of Greek media to determine whether the "earthquake diplomacy" activities were carried out after the February 2023 Türkiye earthquakes, as happened in the 1999 earthquakes. In this context, relevant news in the sample (Kathimerini, Avgi, Naftemporiki) newspapers were analyzed in content for three weeks. Analysis findings show that the newspapers convey earthquake news in line with geographical and emotional proximity values. Earthquake victims' stories have been covered in search of an emotional connection with the reader. The contacts of senior officials on both sides were widely covered in the newspapers, but the officials' statements could not go beyond the earthquake issues and the goodwill wishes. In addition, a significant amount of criticism of the Turkish government in the Greek media, which is a catalyst in bilateral relations, emerges as a negative factor in the direction of relations. It was observed that most of the discourse on disputed issues focused on blaming the other party for current problems and taking little responsibility for the solution of these problems. The limited scope of the small amount of positive discourse seems ineffective for a possible acceleration in bilateral relations. As a result, since the conditions in 2023 are different from those of 1999 and the conditions are not necessarily favorable for bilateral relations, it is perceived that adequate earthquake diplomacy activities cannot be carried out for a new rapprochement phase between the two countries.

Keywords: Earthquake News, News Values, Earthquake Diplomacy, Türkiye-Greece Relations.

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Yunan Medyasında Şubat 2023 Türkiye Depremleri: Yeni Bir Deprem Diplomasisi mi?

Oktay Kirazoluğu ¹

Öz

Geçmişteki sorunlara ilişkin bellek, günümüzün Yunan-Türk ilişkilerine temel bir bağlam sağlamaktadır. Meydana gelen büyük bir felaketin haber değeri diğer ülkelere oranla komşu ülkesinde daha yüksektir. Geçmişten günümüze büyük felaketlerden sonra her iki tarafta da hatırı sayılır bir kamuoyu empatisi sağlanmış ve bu durum medya aracılığıyla yansıtılmıştır. Bu makalede; 1999 depremlerinden sonra yürütülen “deprem diplomasisi” faaliyetlerinin Şubat 2023 Türkiye depremlerinden sonra da icra edilip edilmediğinin tespiti için ilgili haberlerin Yunan mediasında yer alışı şekli incelenmiştir. Bu kapsamda örneklem olarak Kathimerini, Avgi ve Naftemporiki gazeteleri üç hafta boyunca içerik olarak analiz edilmiştir. Analiz bulguları, gazetelerin deprem haberlerini coğrafi ve duygusal yakınlık değerleri doğrultusunda aktardığını göstermektedir. Depremzedelerin hikâyeleri okuyucu ile duygusal bir bağ kurma arayışı içerisinde ele alınmıştır. Üst düzey yetkililerin temalarına gazetelerde geniş şekilde yer verilmiş ancak bu temalarda yer alan açıklamalar, her iki tarafın iyi niyet dilekleri ile deprem konularının dışına çıkamamıştır. Ayrıca, ikili ilişkilerde bir katalizör olan Yunan mediasındaki yazıların, Türk hükümetine yönelik önemli miktarda eleştiri içermesi ilişkilerin yönü açısından olumsuz bir faktör olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Gazetelerde yer alan tartışmalı konular ile ilintili söylemlerin çoğunluğunun, mevcut sorunlar için diğer tarafı suçlamaya ve bu sorunların çözümü için çok az sorumluluk almaya yoğunlaştığı görülmüştür. Az miktardaki olumlu söylemlerin sınırlı kapsamı ise ikili ilişkilerdeki muhtemel bir ivme için etkisiz görünmektedir. Sonuç olarak, 2023 yılındaki koşulların 1999 yılından farklı olması ve ikili ilişkiler açısından yeterince elverişli olmaması nedeniyle, iki ülke arasında yeni bir yakınlaşma aşaması için yeterli deprem diplomasisi faaliyeti gerçekleştirilemediği görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Deprem Haberleri, Haber Değeri, Deprem Diplomasisi, Türk-Yunan İlişkileri.

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Introduction

During the last two decades, in addition to the current problems regarding the Aegean Sea between Türkiye and Greece, the unilateral exploitation of natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean by the Greek Cypriot Administration and Greece, the determination of the borders of the Exclusive Economic Zone and the arming of the Aegean islands by Greece contrary to the agreements have increased the tension. The earthquakes seemed to be a turning point in Greek-Turkish relations, as both countries set aside their differences to unite in the face of tragedy. Some studies (Çarkoğlu & Kirişci, 2020, p.3; Mavrogenis & Kelman, 2013, p.76; Tsakonas, 2010, p.25) assert that the so-called "earthquake diplomacy" resulted from previous reconciliation activities initiated after the Imia / Kardak crisis. Accordingly, earthquake diplomacy played a facilitator role in the rapprochement of the two communities. In 1999, the relationship between the two countries saw a positive shift. The media covered the acts of kindness and compassion shown by both countries in the aftermath of devastating earthquakes. Greece showed sympathy for Türkiye after the İzmit-Gölcük earthquake, and Türkiye reciprocated by sending aid after the Athens earthquake. This mutual support and appreciation fostered strong empathy between the neighboring nations. There have been interactions on many levels. In just a few years, there has been a substantial increase in civil society interactions between the two countries. Sports-related connections commenced and increased that ceased during nationalist tensions. Both countries' media have begun to view their bilateral relations more positively. There has been a significant increase in dialogue and cooperation between government-level affairs. Furthermore, the recognition of Türkiye's candidacy for the European Union was facilitated during the European Council's decision at its Helsinki Summit in 1999.

Not long ago, in February 2023, Türkiye faced devastating earthquakes in the country's southeast region. This shocking event covered the front pages of the newspapers for several days, not only in the world but also in a neighboring country, Greece. In the aftermath of the event, Türkiye asked for international assistance, and several countries, including Greece, offered aid for the recovery. The earthquake is covered extensively in foreign news media. The focus point of the coverage in foreign newspapers is the event, "earthquake" related news, and the "aid/rescue operations" driven by that country. According to the Deutsche Welle (2023), earthquake diplomacy was re-established between Greece and Türkiye, and the US Secretary of State supported the earthquake diplomacy between the two countries. During the visit of Greece Foreign Minister to earthquake site, Turkish Foreign Minister iterated that they do not need wait for another earthquake to improve the relations (Aydoğan, 2023). Furthermore, his Greek counterpart similarly stated that there is no need for a natural disaster to improve the relations between the two states (Nellas, 2023). US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held contacts in Greece after visiting the earthquake region in Türkiye. He called for dialogue between the two states to resolve their disputes (Berberakis, 2023).

Türkiye and Greece have tense relations before the earthquake due to nine US bases in Greece and its threat perception to Türkiye. Besides, the Greek officials started to point to Türkiye as a military threat by conducting joint exercises with the US. The ongoing problems are exacerbated by recent developments reflected by each side's statements. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs (NTV, 2022) stated that they (Greece and the US) assert these are the bases set up against Russia, which is not a credible argument for

him. He noted that the tweets of the US Ambassador in Greece were entirely pro-Greek, and the balance of the US regarding the two countries had broken. He added that these actions would further distance Greece from the solution. The Turkish President stated that "these islands have military bases, and if the illegal threats continue, there will be an end to patience" (Kostidis, 2022). Later on, the Greek Prime Minister pointed out Türkiye's growing isolation and urged to return to "essential dialogue" (Ekatimerini, 2022). Moreover, Greece conducted several joint military exercises with the US and other countries (Berberakis, 2022). Thus, the tension had already aggravated until the earthquake in February 2023. This disaster would have helped to release the tensions between the two countries, as happened in 1999. However, the catalyzer mission of the earthquake did not work due to the absence of predisposing factors. The officials' statements pointed to this issue under the influence of elections in both countries in 2023. Greece's prime minister said he was not naive about the relations and added that countries' foreign policies did not change from one day to the next (Doulgkeri, 2023). From all these statements made through the media, it can be understood that there is not enough impetus for an optimistic approach to the current relations. However, the media's role in contending international issues is still questioned. Therefore, the coverage of earthquake news in Greek Media might give hints on this issue. The theoretical frames on the problem will be about proximity and scope as a news value, the effect of earthquakes on Türkiye - Greece relations, the so-called "Earthquake Diplomacy," and the role of media.

Literature Review

Proximity and Scope as a News Value

An event can be covered in multiple stories, each with a different focus or emphasis. The news media often control the scope of a story and can vary depending on their perceived audience and the goals of the publication. As a common idea, proximity mainly affects whether an event becomes news. The extent and type of coverage can also be determined by proximity (Shapiro & Schofield, 1986, p.55). Journalists and scholars have assumed that people are generally more interested in things closer to home than those farther away (Bridges & Bridges, 1997, p.826). "Proximity" is commonly used in literature to describe physical and psychological closeness. Proximity as a determinant in news coverage relates to local (Morton & Warren, 1992, p.1023) and international (Hargrove & Stempel, 2002, p.46) news stories. According to Stevenson (1984, p.134), proximity is a crucial news value journalists consider when selecting which stories to cover. They tend to focus more on news happening in their immediate region than other parts of the world. Cohen and Cohen (2012, p.218) suggested that there is a psychological component to proximity. People tend to perceive patterns of conflict among social systems, with geographic proximity partitioning a person's schematic pattern into international, national, and local levels.

It is interesting to consider how our physical surroundings may influence our perceptions. According to Adams (1986, p.120), economic, political, or culturally connected nations are more likely to cover one another's news. Besides, newspapers prioritize the most relevant news to their readers. An event may be covered with different scopes in different stories. Thus, the scope is controlled by a judgment of the news regarding its importance locally within the province, region, or between countries (Shoemaker et al., 2007, p.233). Moreover some studies (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006,

p.233; Cohen and Cohen, 2012, p.27) stress that closely connected nations are more likely to feature in each other's news. It certainly makes sense that the more intertwined two nations are, the more likely they are to impact each other's actions and politics.

Even though proximity is a physical constraint, the scope is a cognitive variable representing journalists' judgments of the event's psychological closeness to the audience. The scope is on the scene when media cover high threshold issues like the earthquake in Türkiye. Local journalists worldwide rely on big news agencies to dispatch information about the disaster. Then, the media contextualizes the news and presents it to the reader. Such events have a news value of magnitude (Harcup & O'Neil, 2001, p.278), and in the absence of proximity, journalists seek emotional connections to the story (Waller, 2017, p. 90). The concept of physical closeness is not always straightforward. On the other side of the world, or at least in a neighboring country, when the earthquake in Türkiye is reported locally or nationally, the readers probably think about how lucky they were that the earthquake did not happen in their residential area. Thus, the reader relates to the event emotionally, bringing the event closer to them and making a psychological bond.

The evolution of technology has made it easier for news organizations to cover events from different parts of the world and distribute their messages to specific geographic locations or a worldwide audience. Thus, the physical distance between the event and the news organization's offices has become less critical. With the rise of the World Wide Web, physical geography is not a significant factor since addresses are digital identifiers from the virtual community of the Internet. This shift raises questions about how proximity affects news reporting and consumption. Besides, it is vital to consider the event's proximity to the audience. This consideration can be complex since journalists may write for multiple audiences in different physical locations. For instance, one journalist may write for an international audience while another is for a local community. Even with the availability of satellite-transmitted cable news television networks or the Internet, journalists still need to determine how physically close their audiences are to the events they are reporting.

Turkish and Greek Relations and the Role of Media in Relations

Interestingly, Turks and Greeks have shared the same geographical area for a millennium. However, despite their coexistence, they do not have a positive memory of their mutual experience, especially after Greek independence from Ottoman rule. According to Evin (2020, p.5), the shared history of Greeks and Turks has served to separate them from one another. It seems that how this history has been remembered and interpreted has been quite different on either side of the Aegean Sea. Greek nationalism was strengthened by the fervor of the romantic era, which led to the rejection of any notion of a shared history with Türkiye. For the Turks, Greek independence marked the start of a painful chapter in their history - the eventual loss of a once-great empire. As a result, memories of any common experiences were effectively suppressed. The Greek plans on Türkiye, exemplified particularly by the Greek occupation of the Aegean region after the First World War, made an indelible mark on the Turkish collective memory. The impact of Greek influence on Türkiye is undeniable, especially when considering the occupation of the Aegean region following the First World War. This period of history left a lasting impression on the collective memory of the Turkish people. The partitioning of Turkey according to the 1920 Sèvres Treaty and

the subsequent occupation of Western Anatolia by the Greeks in pursuit of the Megali Idea served to reconfirm Turkish suspicions. On the other hand, the problems faced by Greece in the Second World War and the idea of helping this country were heavily covered in Turkish newspapers in the summer of 1941. The fact that the press constantly brought this issue to the agenda increased the attention and sensitivity of the Turkish public towards the troubles in Greece. Consequently, the ships' aid sent to Greece via the Turkish Red Crescent which scarcely met the requirement (Bakar, 2008, p.418).

The history of Greeks and Turks goes back a long way, but unfortunately, it has not resulted in a strong sense of trust and understanding between the two nations. Textbooks in both countries reproduce a Manichean dualism of the two countries' modern history based on "good" and "evil." (Heraclides, 1980, p.16). This construction of "the other" formed a "national culture" based on introversion, xenophobia, siege mentality, and conspiracy theories (Tsakonas, 2010, p.36). There seems to be a mutual sense of suspicion and mistrust that still affects foreign policy considerations today. Both countries have been heavily influenced by popular and populist constraints and public opinion. According to a study (Çarkoğlu & Kirişçi, 2020, p.13), among the Turkish public, not all nations are perceived similarly. However, the Turkish public is generally negatively predisposed toward the Greeks. Greek suspicions of Turkey were deeply rooted in the fear of a more powerful neighbor. The Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974 only heightened these suspicions. Greek governments have actively opposed the US and NATO military assistance to Türkiye since the 1960s, guided by this concern. There has been a suspicion in Türkiye that Greece aims to limit and isolate Türkiye politically and strategically while trying to reduce its global significance in the recent past. During the 1990s, Greece's policy towards Türkiye was mainly containment, which meant Türkiye was not allowed to join the European Union.

According to Barchard (1985, p.48), the strategic balance between the two countries has gradually shifted in Türkiye's favor since the days of the Lausanne Treaty. In terms of population, Turks outnumber Greeks by eight times. Türkiye's gross national product is four times Greece's (World Data, 2023). In the future, Türkiye is poised to become a significant regional power. However, the problems that have been inherited from the past remain, and the disputes are centered on particular issues. The main problems can be summarized as the Cyprus question, the Aegean Sea, the status of ethnic minorities in Western Thrace, and Greece's official action within the EU.

In agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 2017, p.105), it has been outlined that the media tell people what to think about. As a part of the media, the newspapers ascertain which issues will be put on the public agenda for discussion. These issues might not only be about internal politics but also foreign affairs. International news covers a noteworthy place in media outlets through journalistic rules. Journalists have added another dimension to their role as reporters of world events. They have become active in the conduct of diplomacy and participants in state relations (Stover, 1981, p.113). The CNN effect, which allows for the constant dissemination of news worldwide 24 hours a day, has had a significant impact on the way governments operate. This phenomenon has created a situation in which governments are forced to make decisions and take actions based on public opinion, whether they like it or not. This indirect pressure can be powerful and may lead to significant changes in government policy (Robinson, 2002, p.1). These changes might lead to conflict between countries. Some may wonder why it

is necessary to keep an eye on the media coverage of the critical issues that consistently cause conflict between the two countries. Therefore, it is essential to mention that a crisis occurred in January 1996, nearly leading the two countries to war. The problem was the sovereignty of islands and islets in the Aegean following the Greek Parliament's decision to ratify the International Law of the Sea. The Turkish Parliament followed the lawsuit with a resolution authorizing the government to use all measures to protect Türkiye's rights in the Aegean. The Kalymnos/Kelemez island mayor raised the Greek flag on the uninhabited islands, and the next day, the flag was removed and replaced with the Turkish flag by the *Hürriyet* (a mainstream newspaper in Türkiye) correspondents who flew to İmía/Kardak by helicopter (Vlaidis et.al, 2022, p.103). *Hürriyet* newspaper recreated a central role in galvanizing Turkish public opinion into a belligerent mood during the İmía/Kardak crisis in 1996 (Batur, 2003, p.1). Thus, the crisis was a media-centralized event supporting government actions that contributed to the outset of the crisis in Türkiye and its escalation in Greece. The role of journalists was so pushy that various international institutions took steps to retrain journalists to avoid a similar situation in the future (Ozgünes, 2000, p.405). The study of Kostarella (2007, p.23) contributes to the understanding of the portrayal of the other and exhibits the role of the press in constructing national identity. The Greek press during this crisis reveals a prevalent tendency toward negative stereotyping of Turks regarding hostility, which is dependent on time and event. Therefore, media has a considerable effect in creating a public view in a crisis if the audience's cognitive bias on a related issue is supported.

The Effect of Earthquakes on Türkiye - Greece Relations, the So-Called "Earthquake Diplomacy" and the Media

In case of a natural disaster, there might be periods in international relations that can strengthen or change the course of existing relationships between the states and societies. Self-serving approaches of states in diplomacy are conjoined by humanitarian attitudes in these periods by the thrust of their society. Humanitarian assistance is the focal point of this relationship. Humanitarian diplomacy is an independent direction of diplomatic activity focused on the issues of protection and assistance to populations in conditions of natural disasters. It is an effective tool for creating humanitarian space, negotiating, gathering resources, developing political-humanitarian influence, and creating a system of formal and informal partnerships necessary for the ever-expanding scope of humanitarian action (Bogatyрева, 2022, p.1365). Earthquake or disaster diplomacy might be a part of humanitarian diplomacy activities but may also differ in terms of specifications such as the role of a catalyzer between the states. There are two notions of disaster diplomacy according to current literature. Proponents of disaster diplomacy argue that it can promote cooperation and communication between countries, such as the US and Cuba after Hurricane Sandy, or India and Pakistan after the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. Critics also claim that it politicizes disaster response and goes against the humanitarian principle of impartiality, such as the US using disaster relief to promote its interests in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan. Countries may deliberately use disaster diplomacy to improve relations or occur more passively without necessarily intending to strengthen ties (Stelgias, 2023, p. 36). According to Mustafa (2006, p.35), earthquake diplomacy or disaster diplomacy are the diplomatic initiatives that change the course of relations between two countries following a natural disaster. For Keridis (2006, p.207), a humanitarian disaster can have a positive impact through earthquake diplomacy, providing the framework for new thinking in foreign

policy and a breakthrough in long-standing bilateral stalemates. Scholars focus on three points in the relevant case studies. First, to engage in activities, there must be a pre-existing basis that could strengthen diplomatic ties. Second, disaster diplomacy could emerge if the parties with power decide it should be pursued. Third, factors such as geographical proximity, who offers the help, and with what intent may influence disaster diplomacy (Stelgias, 2023, p. 37). In his study, Stelgias (2023, p. 49) studied two waves (in 1999 and 2023) of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy and asserted that the tensions developed over decades due to conflicting interests, values, and priorities are too complex to solve only via disaster-related acts. Focusing on specific issues allows countries to make progress without becoming entangled in more critical and intractable problems.

Media's involvement in diplomacy is becoming increasingly vital as heads of state and non-state actors increasingly use the media as a significant instrument for communication and negotiation. Notable journalists have even sometimes taken the role of diplomats in crises. These media significantly uses the impact of the conduct and coverage of diplomacy (Gilboa, 2001, p.23). For this reason, the use of media and its effect on Greek-Turkish relations comprise a remarkable sample. Private radio and television stations emerged in Greece and Türkiye during the 1990s. These stations often operated with emotion rather than logic and tended to cultivate antagonism to each other. It was rare for them to present the other side's point of view. While some journalists recognize the problems with this approach, they hesitate to change their ways for fear of losing audiences, which could ultimately affect their job (Ozgünes, 2000, p.410).

The events of 1999 marked a turning point for Greek-Turkish relations. The massive earthquakes that occurred during that year were not the only catalyst for this change. Improving relations with Türkiye was an effective and appropriate way out of Greece's quagmire, and the rapprochement process had already begun before the earthquakes following Öcalan's capture. Two disastrous earthquakes in Türkiye and Greece in 1999 precipitated an "earthquake diplomacy" phenomenon between the two countries (Kinzer, 1999). It is interesting to note how natural disasters can sometimes bring people together, even those who may have had strained relationships. At that time, the two countries' responses to each other's calamity set the stage for a spectacular reproaching phase, termed "earthquake diplomacy" (Keridis, 2006, p.207). Thus, the tension melted away after the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis. In the case of Greece and Türkiye, the earthquakes of 1999 catalyzed a shift in thinking and a new understanding of their shared destiny.

It is heartening to think that positive change can occur even in tragedy. One of the factors that have contributed to the improvement of the political climate is the shift in the attitude of the Turkish and Greek press. For many years, these media outlets had been fueling chauvinistic nationalism in order to gain more readers and viewers. However, following the 1999 earthquake in Türkiye, they have drastically changed their stance. Leading Greek and Turkish news commentators agreed to publish their columns in each other's newspapers. Besides, there has been a noticeable change in the public discourse, with a broader space for collegial debate and a diminishing influence of populist views with the aid of the media.

The media has started to embrace a positive perspective on bilateral relations. This shift has created an environment where political decision-makers can take more realistic steps toward progress. After the 1999 earthquake, several dialogue mechanisms were established for political consultations, such as exploratory contacts regarding Aegean Issues, and High-Level Cooperation Council meetings (MFA, 2023). Greece and Türkiye initiated confidence-building measures, such as opening more border posts, signing agreements in the fields of culture and education, and establishing a direct communication line. They also collaborated in trade, tourism, energy, and combating organized crime and terrorism. There have been visits from military personnel in terms of confidence-building measures. Moreover, journalists published each other's columns in their newspapers.

However, studies infer that the Greek-Turkish rapprochement was not the outcome of the 1999 earthquakes, whereas the rapprochement was a process that had already started before them. Actually, diplomatic dialogue between the two countries began two months before the earthquake (Aksu, 2001, p.167). According to (Mavrogenis & Kelman, 2013, p.76), rapprochement has two reasons. The Europeanization process supported the post-earthquake policy changes in bilateral relations for the political elite in both countries. Besides, the earthquakes acted as a stimulus for social change that overcame the perceptions, which bred mistrust on both sides. Although the disaster-related activities in 1999 were crucial for bringing the two countries closer, the initial wave of disaster diplomacy was short-lived, and significant problems reignited during the following decades (Koukis et al., 2016, p.31).

Just before the February 2023 earthquakes, the problems between the two countries not only remained but also augmented at a steady pace due to the issues mentioned in the introduction. Despite their disagreements on various issues and approaches to foreign policy, just after the earthquake, the two neighbors put aside their differences and restarted a positive dialogue through different channels such as diplomatic, political elites, civil societies, and the media. According to Stelgias (2023, p.45), post-disaster activities had all the necessary elements to improve diplomatic relations between the two nations, such as the foundations for diplomacy, the political will to focus on joint disaster relief, and the genuine participation of civil society. Nevertheless, these elements might not be sufficient for a rapprochement phase as happened during 1999. The media had a vital role in boosting or calming the tension between the related adversaries. Greece Foreign Minister Dendias visited the area immediately after the disaster by bringing the first tranche of humanitarian aid. According to Avgi (15 February 2023, p.6), in terms of climate, Greek-Turkish relations are getting better every day since earthquakes and disasters always bring to the surface the best characteristics of the two neighbors: compassion and solidarity. The media's focus on specific issues can lead the public to perceive them as essential and demand action. Besides, the media's role in contending bilateral relations is important as a mediator or an influencer of public perception. Therefore, the news coverage might hint at whether the two countries carried out the so-called "earthquake diplomacy" activities just after the February 2023 earthquakes.

Method of Analysis

This article aims to analyze the coverage of the February 2023 earthquakes in Greek media to track the traces of earthquake diplomacy between the two countries.

Therefore, the research question is formed as follows: “Has there been the so-called earthquake diplomacy activities carried out by the two countries in the aftermath of the February 2023 Türkiye earthquakes, as happened in 1999 earthquakes according to the coverage of the Greek newspapers?” Three newspapers (Kathimerini, Naftemporiki, Avgi) are selected as samples from the research universe (Greek news media). These newspapers are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of content regarding the earthquake and bilateral relations news after the earthquakes for a three-week period. Krippendorff (1989, p.403) described content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. It seeks to analyze context within specific data given the meaning ascribed to them. Therefore, earthquake and bilateral relations associated news are categorized as topics and counted in each issue. The categorizations depend on the quantity of news, which aims to indicate the importance of the topics for the newspaper. Then, the narratives are searched that might indicate bias in mutual relationships in these articles. News media bias is the unjust favoritism and reporting of certain ideas or standpoints. It is hypothesized negatively in the absence of objective news reporting (Lichter, 2017, p.404). It can be prevalent by omission, selection of source, story, placement, labeling, or emphasizing in a negative way. The articles related to the earthquake and bilateral relations are defined and grouped to determine the narratives' bias. Then, the content of these articles is analyzed to determine whether they have positive or negative deductions. The interpretation of these deductions is made in accordance with the research question. Prospective expectations regarding the study will be established if found.

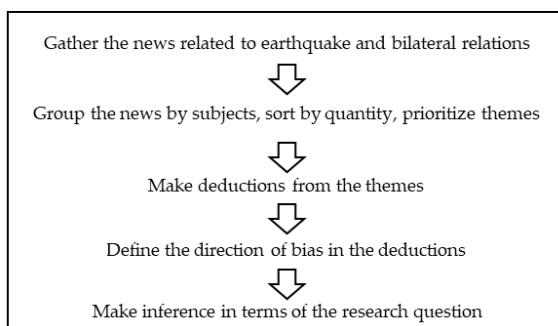


Figure 1. Schemata of the content analysis methodology

The archive issues of the newspapers have been reached from an online platform, the Press Reader. Therefore, the selection of the newspapers is limited to the platform's service and accessibility of the newspapers. Sample newspapers are selected in different political orientations to observe different views on the issue. Kathimerini (Greek Edition, Η Καθημερινή, The Daily) is a leading political and financial daily newspaper that is close to the liberal center view. Naftemporiki (Η Ναυτεμπορική) is a conservative-oriented financial daily newspaper. Avgi (Η Αυγή, The Dawn) is a left-aligned political newspaper. In parallel with the aim of the study, the newspapers are analyzed in content as a whole and the focal point of the study, which are named as deductions will be presented in a merged table. If found, the disparities among the newspapers will be clarified in the content analysis.

Content Analysis of the February 2023 Türkiye Earthquakes in Greek Media

The earthquake-related news was covered in international media the day after the event. Considering the event's magnitude and effect, newsmakers covered the earthquake according to the universal news values. As the news poured from official or other sources, the news outlets started to spare headlines in line with journalistic rules. As a neighboring country's newspaper, selected newspapers also covered this valuable news in her journalistic codes. The article numbers and the sum of that day's topic numbers are different since there is more than one subject in an article of the related news. A quantitative analysis (Table 1) is made to show the importance of this news through its coverage quantity according to the news outlet.

Table 1. Coverage Quantity of News on Earthquake / Bilateral Relations in Kathimerini, Avgi and Naftemporiki

Coverage / Day (February 2023)	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Avg	Tot Page	%
Kathimerini	3	3	3	2,5	2,5	5	-	3	2,5	1,5	1	1	-	-	0,8	-	0,5	-	1,5	1,9	32	6
Avgi	3,3	3	1,2	2	0,5	1,2	-	1,2	0,7	-	0,7	0,2	0,7	-	1	1	-	0,7	0,3	1,1	24	4,4
Naftemporiki	2,2	2	1,3	2,2	1,2	-	1	1	0,8	1,5	1,4	-	-	0,5	0,6	0,3	0,3	0,3	-	1	32	3,1
Average	2,8	2,7	1,8	2,2	1,4	2,1	0,7	1,7	1,3	1	1	0,4	0,2	0,2	0,8	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,6	1,3	29	4,5

During the three-week period, the average coverage quantity of the news is % 4,5 of the newspapers, which is a more than sufficient allotment in terms of proximity value. In the meantime, Kathimerini spared twice the pages compared to Avgi and Naftemporiki. Each newspaper has other agendas, considering its specialty, political alignment, and the countries' agenda. During the research period, the main agenda is the parliamentary elections in May 2023. Therefore, the news coverage of these newspapers is mainly concentrated on this issue. Avgi's agenda for the elections is incredibly intense since the newspaper has close ties with the main opposition party, Syriza. Naftemporiki mainly focuses on business and economic affairs; thus, the related coverage remained at the lowest level compared to other newspapers. We have different politically aligned sample newspapers representing the liberal, left-aligned, and conservative views. As such, Naftemporiki is expected to cover and emphasize the related news from a conservative political point of view. Whereas in the articles' content, the earthquake coverage is mainly limited to the economic consequences of the disaster, which is also in the field of the news outlet. Kathimerini and Avgi covered the 2023 earthquake news from a humanitarian perspective, as expected from the 1999 earthquakes. Kathimerini's coverage of bilateral relations is mainly focused on the unsolved problems between the two countries and the criticism of the Turkish political elites. This coverage is a divergent discourse iterated after the 1999 earthquakes. Kathimerini covered the related news more than the other samples from a populist view; therefore, it might be necessary to emphasize the coverage quantity.

Table 2. Coverage Quantity in Kathimerini

Coverage / Day (February 2023)	07	08	09	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	21	23	25	Avg
Article Numbers (Headlines)	7	8	10	8	9	10	11	7	5	3	4	4	2	4	6,6
Total Page Coverage	3	3	3	2,5	2,5	5	3	2,5	1,5	1	1	0,8	0,5	1,5	1,9
Covered in First Page	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Pictures / Figures	9	13	20	10	10	9	4	4	6	3	5	1	2	3	7,1

Kathimerini is analyzed separately regarding the news quantity, as shown in the above Table. Although the articles in the newspaper had different subjects, they mainly relate to the earthquake and differed in size. The average number of articles per issue is 6,6; articles augment in the first seven days (avg. 9) and then decrease (avg. 4,1) according to the newspaper’s agenda. The average page coverage per issue is 2,2 in the analyzed 14 issues. The page coverage per issue is also more in the first week and decreases considerably within the second week. The number of pictures and figures related to earthquakes is remarkably higher in the first week (avg. 11,8) than in the second week (avg. 3,5). The priority given to the news can also be measured by its covered page in the newspaper. The first page of the issue has particular importance in the news outlet. The earthquake-related news is covered on the first page within the following nine issues; then, the event comes down to the interior pages. The news accumulates in the politics and international sections of the newspaper. The second page, issues, updates, views, and economy sections of the newspaper covered the news from its particular perspective.

The earthquake and bilateral relations topics in the research sample are categorized, and all 44 topics are ranked to designate their importance according to the newspaper, which can be seen below Table. During the research period, the article subjects and their coverage differ depending on the newspaper's agenda. The most covered subjects are impressions from the earthquake area and stories related to the victims (23), damage of the earthquake and deceased-lost people (17), Greece's official rescue team's rescue stories (16), and descriptions of the earthquake and its consequences (15). It is noteworthy that the term "earthquake diplomacy" has been used in more than 20 articles in the sample newspapers. Therefore, it is an established term, especially after 1999. According to Avgi (8 Feb 2023), with a commendable automatism, the "earthquake diplomacy" reflexes of 1999 were immediately activated to express their solidarity with the neighbor. As stated in the news value of proximity, the economic, political, or culturally connected nations are more likely to cover one another's news; therefore, sample newspapers extensively covered the earthquake news in their neighboring country. Although proximity is a physical constraint, the scope is a cognitive variable representing journalists' judgments of the event's psychological closeness to the audience. Considering the earthquake's effect, the journalist's judgment regarding the importance of the earthquake news far outweighs the other news. Thus, earthquake-related news is covered more than other news.

Table 3. Number of Article Subjects Per Issue

Article Subject / Day (February 2023)	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Total
1.Impressions / Stories of the Victims	1	4	4	1	4	4		4	2	3			3						1	31
2.The seriousness of the Disaster (Damage / Deceased-Lost People)	3	4	4	5	3	4		4	1	1						1				30
3.Description of the Earthquake and its Consequences	4	4	5	5	3	3	1	3							1					29
4. Rescue Operations / Rescue Stories including EMAC	1	4	3	5	1	3	1	2	2	1										23
5.Greek Aid / Donation Efforts	3	2	3	3			1	2	2	2			1							19
6.Turkish Official Statements	1	2	1	2	3				4	1					1				1	16
7.Criticism of the Turkish Government		1	1	2	2	3		2	2		1									14
8.Earthquake and Elections in Türkiye		2	1	2	1	3		2	1	1										13
9.International Aid Efforts	2	1	2	3				1			1				1					11

10.Other Rescue Operations	1	1	2		1	1	1	1		1	1										10
11.Collapsed Buildings and Construction Quality	2	1	1	2		1		2			1										10
12.Contacts of the High-Level Officials (Greek-Turkish)	2						1	4	2		1										10
13.Building Quality in Greece / Earthquake Preparedness					1	2		1		1		3				1					9
14.Consequences on the Political Stage	1		2	1	2	1		1	1												9
15.Need for Help and Assistance	1	4	2		1			1													9
16.Greek Politicians / Official Statements	2	2	1					1	1	1					1						9
17.Condolences in Media	3	2	1	1			1	1													9
18.Expectations on the Earthquake Diplomacy					2	2	1	1	1						1						8
19.US Efforts on Bridging the Relations										1	1		1	3	2						8
20.Economy - Interest Rates – Stock Exchange in Türkiye		1	1	1				2	1	1										1	8
21.The Situation of Historic Temples / Ancient Monuments	1	2	2		1																7
22.Seismologist / Expert Views on an Expected Earthquake in Greece	2			1	2	1		1													7
23.Earthquake Housing		2	1	1	1	1		1													7
24.Turkish State's Aid Efforts		1	1		2	2															7
25.Opinions of Prominent Individuals	1				1			1	1			2									7
26.Contacts of the High-Level Officials (Other)									1	1	1				2		1				6
27.Seismologist / Expert Views on Earthquake in Türkiye					1	1		1		1		1									5
28.Expectations on Postponement of Elections								1	2			1								1	5
29.Views on Turkish Public Opinion	1		1	2								1									5
30.Earthquake-related Health Problems / Chance of Survival					1	1		1		1	1										5
31.Greek Orthodox Community		1	2																		4
32.Turkish Media Coverage			1	1					1			1									4
33.Opposition Party Opinions				1	1	1				1											4
34.Consequences on the Turkish Economy				1	1	1		1													4
35.Concerns on Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant	3					1															4
36.New Facts and Inputs in Relations							1	1		1	1										4
37.Support of the US to Greece, including Bases												1		1	1		1				4
38.Consequences on Refugee-Related Issues / Syrians					1			2												1	4
39.NGO Activities		2	1																		3
40.Looting in the Affected Area			1		1	1															3
41.GASC Presidential Elections								1	1	1											3
42.Views of Previous Earthquakes Eye Witnesses						2															2
43.Earthquake - Theological Issues									1			1									2
44.Missing Children - Prosecutions								1		1											2
45. Sweden's Membership in NATO										1	1										2
46.Earthquake and Press Freedom in Türkiye				1																1	2
47. Türkiye's Role in Energy Corridor																					1
48. Türkiye's Agenda in Central Asia																					1
Total	33	45	41	42	37	39	8	43	28	23	9	3	14	4	12	3	3	3	3	9	399

News stories of the victims, damage, death, loss in numbers, and description of the earthquake and its consequences cover the most space in the sample newspapers as the main topics. News on Greece's official rescue operation team came forward during the first week for the reader, which might create a psychological closeness to the victims. Other rescue operations and aid efforts are also covered broadly in the newspaper. The newspaper remarkably covered the consequences of the earthquake on the upcoming elections in Türkiye. The main point in the articles on this issue is that the government's fate would be tied to earthquake-related issues. Accordingly, there is ample coverage regarding the criticism of the Turkish government for not taking adequate precautions and being late on rescue operations. In mentioning the earthquake-related news, sample newspapers covered Turkish officials' statements as a reliable source, which took place in the international news section. The news about historic temples and ancient monuments covered as much space as the news on collapsed buildings and construction quality. This situation shows the priority given to the news on historic sites by the news outlet. Moreover, expert views on an expected earthquake in Greece are covered more than those on Türkiye, which aligns with the proximity news value. The newspapers, as expected, covered Greek aid and donation efforts during the first week. The sample newspapers cover Turkish media coverage and public opinion to see the reflections of their coverage in Türkiye.

Expectations on the earthquake diplomacy and contacts of the high-level officials on earthquake relief issues are covered considerably in the news. United States-related news as a third party in Greek-Turkish relations is also placed in the news outlets. The news coverage is significant in numbers, which may mean there is an effort to improve the relations because of the earthquake. Nevertheless, in addition to the quantity of this news, the content might give exact clues on the intent of the relation. The content related to earthquake diplomacy or bilateral relations is defined and grouped in terms of the narrative's main point in the Table below. The number of deductions affecting earthquake diplomacy is at its highest at the end of the first week. In contrast, it decreases in the second week depending on the newspaper's agenda.

Table 3. Number of Deductions from the Articles in Relation with the Earthquake and Bilateral Relations

Deduction / February 2023	Bias	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	23	25	Total
1.Put aside the differences temporarily.	+	1	3			1		1	2	1	1		2						12
2.Criticism of Government actions.	-			1	1	1	3		1	1		1				1			10
3.Earthquake is an opportunity for a communication channel.	+	1					2	1	2	1		1				1			9
4.Optimistic on Relations (Earthquake Diplomacy).	+	1	2					1	2	1									7
5.The remaining big problems.	-		1				1		2	1								1	6
6.A warm welcome to EMAK.	+				1		1	1	1	1	1								6
7.Uncertainty of relations in the pre-election phase.	-								1	2	2	1							6
8. Expressing condolences.	+	2	1	1	1				1										6
9.Pessimist on Relations (Earthquake Diplomacy).	-	1			1	1	1											1	5
10.The threat of the refugee wave.	-				1	1			3										5
11.The change in Ankara's tone and rhetoric.	+								2			1						1	4
12.Appreciation of the Greek aid.	+							1				1	1					1	4
13.US urge to open communication channels.	+															1	3		4

come suddenly one night" and use of aggressive rhetoric. Stress on dictatorship. Ankara's unwillingness for a reconciliation. Türkiye's revisionist policy. Humanitarian assistance should not be confused with diplomacy. Ankara is trying to promote its goals due to the earthquake." The negative deductions include the above-mentioned issues but are not limited to those inferences, as stated in Table 3. Some negative deductions recur in different topics/articles in the sample newspapers. They mainly concentrate on specific issues of the newspapers depending on the agenda. Negative deductions accumulate in the Kathimerini's narratives. Negativity is a bias, and people tend to follow negative news more than other others, excluding some exceptions. Earthquakes itself is already a negative news source. Besides the earthquake-related issues, bilateral issues are also represented negatively in the articles. The representation of the current situation is a willing choice of the news medium in terms of its ideological inclination and journalistic rules.

Although less covered when compared to Kathimerini, Avgi's discourse on bilateral issues is mainly on two neighbors' common interests and the region's stability. Its narratives are ample in quantity on supporting aid and donation efforts. Besides, the stance of the Greek government on bilateral relations is partly criticized in Avgi, which is an expected discourse because of the ideological inclination of the news outlet. When compared with the other newspapers, Kathimerini's narratives are more cautious in the anticipated bilateral relations by emphasizing Turkish government's approach to the unsettled issues. Kathimerini's views on bilateral issues are more populist than Naftemporiki's, which mainly focus on the financial effects of the earthquake.

Not only does the number of negative discourses display the current situation in relations, but the content of these narratives also tells us more about the intent of future relations. As mentioned, it can be understood from the deductions that the circumstances are different from the 1999 rapprochement. Besides, the limited coverage of positive discourses seems ineffective for an impetus. Therefore, it can be inferred from the analysis that since the conditions are not favorable enough and there is not enough preceding impetus on the bilateral relations, there has not been much space for earthquake diplomacy coverage.

Conclusion

Media, specifically newspapers, play an essential role in building or disrupting the relations between the two countries. The Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996 was a media-centralized event that contributed to the outset of the crisis between two countries with the aid of pushy journalists. Afterward, there was a noticeable change in the public discourse with the aid of the media in the 1999 Türkiye earthquake. The media reflected a positive perspective on bilateral relations after the earthquake with the previous impetus for recovering relations. Consequently, due to so-called "earthquake diplomacy" activities, both countries' media began to view their bilateral relations more positively. Nevertheless, just before the February 2023 Türkiye earthquakes, the two countries' main problems seemed to remain unsolved. Moreover, the relations became tenser due to each country's threat perception and exacerbated by each side's statements. After the disaster, it became an expectation that "earthquake diplomacy" would be held between the two countries. In order to analyze the issue, the research question is formed as, "Has there been the so-called earthquake diplomacy activities carried out by the two countries in the aftermath of the February 2023 Türkiye

earthquakes, as happened in 1999 earthquakes according to the coverage of the Greek newspapers?" Sample newspapers (Kathimerini, Naftemporiki, Avgi) are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in content to see the media coverage of earthquake diplomacy activities.

According to the analysis, the news coverage quantity regarding the earthquake is % 4,5 per issue. Hence, the newspaper covered the earthquake news in line with the proximity and scope news values more than the other news within the first two-week period. The newspapers contextualized and presented the news in search of emotional bonds to the reader since the impressions or stories of the victims and rescue stories reached a significant number (54 articles) in two weeks. Sample newspapers cover the related news in line with their ideological inclination. Kathimerini's coverage of bilateral relations is mainly focused on the unsolved problems between the two countries and the criticism of the Turkish political elites. This coverage is a divergent discourse iterated after the 1999 earthquakes. Kathimerini covered the related news more than the other samples with a populist view. The contact of high-level officials is covered considerably in the news, which might be a starting point for opening communication channels. Nevertheless, the agenda and statements in these contacts did not go out of either side's good deeds and the earthquake-related issues. Moreover, there is too much criticism coverage of the Turkish government, which is a negative aspect for the Greek media as a catalyst in relations. The number of deductions from the narratives affecting earthquake diplomacy is at its highest in the first week. Two-thirds of these deductions are pessimistic and are counted as negative discourses. The main content of these discourses concentrates on blaming the other for the remaining problems and displaying little responsibility for the solution of the problems. Therefore, according to the content of the newspapers, it can be asserted that there have been "earthquake diplomacy" activities, such as high-level official contacts, rescue teams, aid and donation efforts, solidarity and condolence messages, NGO activities that are carried out in the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes. On the other hand, after the 1999 rapprochement phase, mentioned "earthquake diplomacy" activities were also carried out. Moreover, there have been activities such as the establishment of dialogue mechanisms, exploratory contacts, High-Level Cooperation Council meetings, opening border posts, signing agreements on culture and education, establishing communication lines, collaboration in trade, tourism, energy, and combating organized crime and terrorism, military personnel visits, and journalists collaborations. If we compare these activities, we can clearly assert that the activities depending on the 1999 rapprochement phase are much more than the ones in the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes.

By controlling the agenda, the media can influence public opinion and political outcomes, as asserted by the agenda-setting theory. Mainstream newspapers constitute a crucial part of media by affecting public opinion from their standpoint, and the newspaper's coverage regarding the mentioned issues is not an exception to this rule. The negative discourse displayed in media on the related issue of quantity and quality might affect bilateral relations. The coverage analysis results of the news are not in line with the previous results because the Greek-Turkish rapprochement started before the 1999 earthquakes due to Europeanization process. The rapprochement previously acted as a stimulus for improving relations before the earthquakes. However, in this case, although there are traces of stimulus, depending on settled disputes, expecting a more potent catalyst for enhancing the relations would be unwise. As Drosopoulos (2023) has

stated, "without political commitment and a future-oriented vision, the existing bottom-up initiatives that are (re)flourishing will remain, once again, just a beautiful page in history."

Past memories of problems influence present-day Greek-Turkish relations. The media has the power to affect the public if the necessary conditions are met. Thus, public empathy can be facilitated through media on both sides. After the earthquake Kathimerini and Milliyet newspapers opened a channel of communication with articles from their top editors addressing each other's audience. According to both newspaper editors (Ekathimerini, 2024), to maintain the existing good climate, it is important to communicate directly more often and it is essential to learn to share instead of divide for both parties. Hence, it is better to focus on resolvable problems step by step rather than the stalemates between the two nations that should be assisted through the media. This study is focused on the sample Greek newspapers' point of view, which is essential for determining the context of public view on the Greek side. As a recommendation, Turkish media's coverage should be analyzed to see the traces of earthquake diplomacy and to perceive the realization of its expectation. Therefore, a qualitative comparison can be made between the two nation's media outlets' efforts on this critical subject matter.

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