

***Agenda Setting in Greece:
Press, Party and Public Agendas in the 2004 General Election***

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Abstract Agenda-setting theory has evolved significantly over the years. In its traditional, classical definition, the agenda-setting theory is concerned with the transfer of salience of issues from the mass media to the public agenda. Further studies have examined in more detail the contingent conditions that enhance or reduce the agenda-setting effects on the public by focusing on the substantial effects of the media influence on public attitudes and opinions. Within that context, parties compete with each other in order to influence the media agenda and promote their own area of concern. Issue-voting theories argue that people will vote for the party that manages to dominate the media agenda.

The purpose of this study is to apply/test the agenda-setting and issue-voting theories in the context of the 2004 general election in Greece. This article identifies and analyses the election campaign agenda based on the content analysis of press coverage over the official campaign period, party manifestos and press releases. The results are compared with the public agenda, as this was identified by public opinion polls taken prior to the official campaign period and the day after the poll day. Differences between the three agendas are examined and the influence of issue agendas on the election outcome is investigated.

Keywords Agenda-setting, Content Analysis, Political Parties, Media, Public Opinion

The news media constitute the primary, and often, sole source of political information for the voters. The public lacks the means to access directly all the information surrounding an event. McCombs & Shaw argue that that people's knowledge and experiences of the political arena is based on a 'tiny sample of the real political world', on a 'second-hand reality' (1977: 7). This 'tiny' sample, or else Lippmann's (1922: 15) 'pseudoenvironment' emphasises the core theoretical idea of agenda setting.

Within the same context, the traditional approach of agenda setting theory argues that the news media have the ability to influence not only what people 'think' but what they 'think about' (Cohen, 1963: 13; Norris et al., 1999: 68; McCombs & Shaw, 1972: 177). McCombs and Shaw in their Chapel Hill study argue that the 'mass media have the ability to set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues (1997: 177). By comparing the public and the media issue agendas, they concluded that the mass media can influence the voters' agenda, that is, the public perceptions of which were the most important political issues of the campaign. The media can play an important role to the significance people attribute to various issues and to how they rank them. Therefore, the priorities of the press at the time can become the priorities of the public, constituting what Erbing et al. characterised as 'the simple mirror-image model of media effects' (1980: 16-28). Later studies have developed the agenda setting theory under other conceptual frameworks centred to incorporate the direct and indirect effects of issue salience and the impact they have on the election outcome (Becker, 1977: 121-31). Dearing & Rogers produced a more systematic approach of agenda setting as a process that 'offers an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not other issues, is available to the public and how public opinion is shaped and why certain issues are addressed (...) while others are not' (1996: 2). Agenda setting is based upon the underlying competition among the proponents of different issues in order to gain access to the media, the public and the policy elites (Ibid: 5). Within the political campaign context, the competition between journalists, political parties and the public define 'who sets the agenda'.

Later studies have expanded the agenda-setting model to a 'second level' emphasising the attitude change of the audiences and how they develop their political preferences (Entman, 1989; Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; Golan & Wanta, 2001). Within that context, the media may not only tell us 'what to think about' but they may also tell us 'how and what to think about it, and even what to do about it' (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004: 38). In a similar vein, the way people think and act politically is based in a great extent, on the information they take from the media. The media act as the main 'contributors' to the formation of public thinking (Entman, 1989: 366). As a consequence, political parties strive to influence and in some cases to control the media agenda in order to impinge on the electorate's preferences.

Theories of issue-voting attempt to interpret the relationship between issue perceptions and attitudes to vote. The general assumption that electors vote for the parties that serve their preferences and vote against those, which do not, is insufficient as it 'ignores the considerable potential of competing parties and alternatives to influence electors' reactions' (Budge & Farlie, 1983: 21). Salience theory, therefore, assumes that parties, at a first stage, compete with each other in order to promote their own area of concern by putting selective emphasis on the issues that are more advantageous to them (Ibid: 24-25). Within an identical line of reasoning, Kleinnijhuis and De Ridder, in their study of the electoral outcomes in Germany

and the Netherlands in 1994, discussed two main issue-voting theories. The issue ownership theory and the issue position theory (1998: 415-19). The issue ownership theory argues that voters will prefer the party, which manages to dominate the media agenda and promote its own issues. Within that context, a party 'owns' an issue when the general public believes that it emphasises this particular issue or issues. Therefore, voters relate particular issues to certain parties. At the other end of the spectrum, the issue position theory suggests that people will vote for the party whose current issue positions resemble their own issue position.

The aim of this article is to test these theories in the context of the 2004 parliamentary elections in Greece. Starting with the identification of the election campaign agendas, then this study examines whether the control of the issues of the media agenda and the relationship between the party and public agendas contributed to the formation of the election result. The analysis is based on the content analysis of newspaper articles, party manifestos and press releases. The results are compared with the public agenda, identified by public opinion polls that were carried out prior to and immediately after the election day. The agendas of the press, the two major parties and the public are compared.

Data Analysis – Methodology

The study consists of a content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980; Phillips, 1992; Semetko *et al.*, 1991; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Harris & Kolovos, 2001; Harris *et al.*, 1999) of four Greek newspapers, party manifestos and press releases, during the period 2 February to 5 March 2004. This particular campaign period was selected in order to cover the official and part of the unofficial campaign.

Four of the most popular national daily newspapers were chosen for analysis: one morning paper *KATHIMERINI* and three afternoon papers *TA NEA*, *ELEFTHEROS TYPOS* and *ELEFTHEROTYPIA*. Those papers were selected due to their size of circulation, their political affiliations and spread of readers. In aggregate, according to the Athenian Daily Newspapers Owners Association, the four newspapers make up 55% of all the copies of morning and afternoon newspapers sold in Greece during the month of February 2004. The second important criterion for the selection of these newspapers was based on their political stances. Two of the chosen newspapers pledged allegiance to PASOK - *TA NEA* and *ELEFTHEROTYPIA* - and two to New Democracy - *ELEFTHEROS TYPOS* & *KATHIMERINI*. The editions were collected daily, from Monday to Friday. Saturday and Sunday editions were excluded for two reasons. Firstly, the national Greek Sunday press is independent of the weekly editions. Secondly, some Greek newspapers (eg. *TA NEA*) combine the Saturday and Sunday editions in one. Therefore, in order to ensure comparability, only the daily Monday to Friday editions were collected and analysed.

The identification of the media agenda was based on the collection of front-page articles and editorials. The latter category includes the comments featured usually on the second page of the newspapers representing the position and attitude of the newspaper. The selection of the front-page articles was based on the assumption that each newspaper usually puts the stories that thinks to be of the most importance and interest on the front-page (McCombs & Shaw, 1977: 13; Harris *et al.*, 1999:542). Nonetheless, the issues featured on the front-page have to be important as well as newsworthy. The newsworthiness is associated both with the

newspaper's political stance, which in Greece is a very significant factor, and with the size and spread of its readers. Moreover, each article relating to the election campaign was categorised according to the covered issue or issues. That is, when the article referred to more than one issue, it was mentioned in more than one category. Finally, the articles were classified taking into account only the topic they covered and not the attitude of the article towards any particular party or leader. The content analysis of the total press coverage produced the figures shown in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

The study of party agendas consists of the content analysis of manifestos and press releases of the two major parties, PASOK and New Democracy (ND). Each press release issued during the official campaign from the central offices of each party was categorised according to the issue or issues being covered. In analysing the manifestos the indicator of importance that was used, was based on the amount of space given to an issue, measured using word count (Phillips, 1992: 33). The results of this analysis are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The issue categories used to classify the contents are based on the public opinion agenda, as this was identified by the use of nationwide survey data collected prior to and after the campaign period by Eurobarometer as well as the Greek Public Opinion Poll Institutes, V-PRC and Metron Analysis. The polls asked voters to identify what were the major problems of the country at the time. The top issues are demonstrated on Table 4.

[Tables 2 & 3 about here]

Analysing the Different Agendas: Media Agenda vs. Public Agenda

The findings so far, confirm that a significant amount of campaign news was not devoted to the discussion of policy issues but to the presentation and analysis of the campaign itself, including news about the parties' internal politics, the two leaders and high profile candidates. As is displayed in Table 1, the press devoted half of its total front-page coverage to the campaign activity of the two mainstream parties whereas paying less attention to the policy issues of the campaign. Nonetheless, a considerable number of issue news coverage appeared throughout the five-week period. These issues were coded and analysed.

[Table 4 about here]

The first aim of this article is twofold. First, to identify the media/press agenda in relation with the public agenda and thus, to examine several aspects of agenda setting effects during the Greek general election campaign period. Second, to correlate the changes of the public agenda, which took place throughout the election campaign period with the media agenda. Therefore, several questions emerge and have to be answered: Did the press agenda associate to the public issue agenda as the latter was formed before the beginning of the campaign period? In other words, did the issue priorities of the media mirror the public concerns? What was the impact of the media agenda on the public agenda throughout the election campaign period and how this was made out on the post-election public agenda?

Within that context two main hypotheses are considered:

Hypothesis 1: *The issue agenda presented in the press throughout the election campaign period will reflect the subsequent public issue concerns as these were identified before the beginning of the official election campaign.*

Table 5 & Figure 1 illustrate the eight most prominent issues according to the voters and the relative salience attributed to them by the public opinion and the press coverage respectively. The second column of the table refers to the public and displays the percentage of the degree of salience attributed to each issue by the voters. The ranking of each of the issues is shown in brackets. Accordingly, the last column refers to the press and indicates the salience of each policy issue on the aggregate press agenda.

[Table 5 & Figure 1 about here]

Three points should be made clear about these figures. First, they present a tough test of the relationship under examination. Taking into account the results of all press coverage categories, it appears that the press has its own agenda, identified through the amount of coverage of the various issue categories. The aggregate press coverage agenda shows different subject priorities from the public agenda. This is consistent with the Harris and Kolovos findings that the 'newspapers tend to have similar journalistic norms and criteria of newsworthiness' (2001: 1125). That is, as confirmed by Table 6, that the aggregate press agenda substantially represents the four newspapers. Second, the figures in Table 5, even if they do not indicate a striking pattern of direct association between the public and the press issue agendas, are consistent with the first hypothesis as long as the overall match between the two is concerned. 'Economy' and 'Unemployment' are displayed between the top four issues by both; however, 'Crime' and 'NHS', which are highly ranked in the public agenda, are ignored or rarely mentioned by the press.

[Table 6 about here]

Third, the figures show a significant variation between the salience attributed to each of the main eight issue categories of the public agenda. In terms of Table 4, the percentages referred to the public agenda indicate a sharp decline of importance between the top two issues and the rest. In more detail, although 'Unemployment' and 'Economy' are regarded as salient by the 38.5% and 30% of the population respectively, the next important issue of the public agenda, 'Crime' attracts only 10.5% of the public's interest. This pattern is not indicated on the press agenda. By contrast, the four top issues are placed within a +/- 3% of each other. Although that this observation is not directly associated with the relationship of the public and press agendas, it has an effect on the overall evaluation of the two agendas.

In general, it appears that the press and the public agendas seem to have substantial similarities as 75% of the topics correspond to each other, although that they do not share a common view of the relative importance (ranking order) of the issues. Overall, the most important conclusion to be drawn from this first analytical approach is that although there are substantial similarities between the public issue agenda and the respective coverage that the

press devoted to each topic, this relationship is not strong enough so as to justify an overall reflection of issue salience between the media and the public agenda.

Hypothesis 2: By the end of the campaign period, the press issue agenda will have an impact on the public agenda.

This hypothesis is primarily based on the most popular view of agenda setting, as initially established by McCombs and Shaw (1972), according to which media influence is significant in shaping the problems the public considers as most salient. At this stage, two rather important implications are to be taken into account. In the first place, it is the size of the agenda, whether it is the press, the public or the party one. As Shaw and Clemmer pointed out, the number of significant issues that the voters pay attention to and keep in mind is not more than five to seven at any given time (1977: 43). This is consistent with the opinion poll results, according to which only two issues attract the highest share of the public's interest and only a couple more are assigned a double figure percentage rate. In general, while the 'official' public agenda is put into place, there seems to be a consensus among the voters regarding the top issue priorities. In the second place, it is very likely that the issues, which form the official public agenda, will change throughout the campaign (Ibid.). Even if this change does not affect the subject categories themselves, it might as well have an impact on the importance of an issue. That is, voters may show a stronger attitude towards a particular issue because the media have set it up as very significant on their agenda. For example, as shown in Table 4, although that the issue of 'Corruption/Scandals' was not included in the pre-election public agenda, it is one of the top eight issues of the post-election roster of public issue salience.

Before continuing with the current line of analysis of the media influence, it is worth taking into account a considerable factor relative to the media function of issue salience transfer. This relates to the necessary time frame for the media agenda so as to have a cumulative effect on the public agenda. The issue of time lag was examined by Stone and McCombs who concluded that it takes two to six months in order for a topic to 'move' from the media agenda to the public agenda (1981: 51-55). Furthermore, their study pointed out that more people tend to pay more attention and to think about the public issue concerns as the election date draws nearer (Ibid.: 55). Therefore, the closer the election date the more influential the media agenda turns out to be. In view of the above observations, it should be noted that the time frame selected for the present analysis consists of the five weeks prior to the election date, something that may limit the scope of research analysis. On the other hand, three implications have to be taken into account. First, the observation made by the abovementioned scholars that 'it might take' two to six months, implies that the time frame may deviate from the abovementioned one. Second, in the context of the present study the pre-election public agenda was monitored three months prior to the election date rather than a few weeks. Lastly, the period under examination consists of the five most intense weeks of the election campaign.

A closer examination of the public and media agendas (Tables 4 & 6) indicates that there is no strong relationship between them. As it is indicated, the public ignores the second most salient issue on the press agenda that is 'Foreign Affairs' and whereas 'Unemployment' is the top ranked topic for the public, it shows in the fourth place on the press agenda. This is,

predominantly, consistent with the observation made previously that there is a lack of a strong relationship between the media and the public agenda. This, however, is but one conclusion. Looking at the post-election public agenda, one can identify two important inferences. First, the issue of 'Crime', which was ignored by the press during the election campaign period, does not appear to be salient for the public any more. This is, it is no more included within the top three public concerns. Second, the subject of 'Corruption & Scandals' which was attributed a substantial amount of news coverage, became important for the voters who ranked it as the seventh most important topic on their agenda.

Analysing the Different Agendas: Party vs. Public Agendas

Political parties compete in an attempt to promote their own favourable issues and to influence both the media and public agendas. However, it is important to bear in mind that the press in Greece is assumed to be highly partisan and the newspapers, especially during an election campaign period try to promote the interests of the party they are allegiant to. In this case, as Harris and Kolovos (2001) argue, it is crucial that the parties and their candidates should stick to the issues of their agendas and avoid the strategy of 'trespassing' on the issue of another party, as there is the risk of unwillingly promoting their opponent. Inevitably, the following questions emerge: What was the relationship of the press agenda and the issue agenda of the two major parties? Did the media influence the parties' priority issues during the election campaign period? Which party received the highest issue-related coverage? What was the relationship between the parties' agenda and the public agenda? Did the party whose issues were closer to the public's concerns managed to win more votes?

In light of the above, the main focus lies on three main concerns. First, to compare the press and party agendas to determine whether the two are consistent. Second, to find any possible association between the party and public agendas. Third, to examine whether there is a viable support for the issue ownership theory. Accordingly, three more hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 3: *Party agendas will be associated with the press agenda.*

Hypothesis 4: *The party whose issue-agenda received the highest press coverage attracted the largest inflow of votes.*

Hypothesis 5: *The party whose positions were closer to the public's concerns attracted more voters.*

Firstly, the agendas of the two parties were compared in order to define whether they attributed similar importance to issues (Table 2 & 3). The results of the manifestos' analysis show that the party agendas relate to a level of 62%, as five out of the eight top categories on their agenda refer to the same issues, indicating that the parties have identified the same policy issues as important. That is, despite their ideological differences, both parties targeted the same group of undecided voters, who rank themselves at the centre of the ideological spectrum (Vernadakis, 2004: 57-82). It also suggests that both parties have a moderately similar opinion of what the public prioritised (Harris & Kolovos, 2001: 1127). Nonetheless, although the overall association is high, this is not the case with the ranking order of the issues. On the one hand, PASOK focuses on issues that are seen as its strong points, as the

'Economy', 'Foreign Affairs' (the fact that the new leader was a successful foreign minister played an important role) and 'Education'. On the other hand, ND prioritises issues that the incumbent government's policies were less successful, like the 'NHS', the management of 'Public Sector', and 'Agriculture'. 'Education' is an issue that is highly rated by New Democracy as well, as it is a territory that the public is very keen about. As Figures 2 & 3 show the public seems to trust the incumbent government for the issues of 'Foreign Affairs' and the management of the 'Olympic Games', but regards New Democracy as the most suitable party for dealing with all the other major policy issues, like 'NHS', 'Education', 'Unemployment', 'Public Sector' and even the 'Economy', which used to be a strong PASOK territory. Ultimately, the essential point is that the party agendas were closely correlated content-wise but they ranked the issues in a very different way.

[Figures 2 & 3 about here]

The content analysis of press releases showed some interesting facts. First, the vast majority of the press releases issued by both parties refer to campaign rather than policy issues. Specifically, 63% of PASOK's press releases and 44% of New Democracy's emphasised their campaign activities. Regarding the policy issues, the degree of the association between the two parties lies at 50%. That is, both parties issued press releases on four out of the eight most important issues according to the public. Second, as shown in Table 3, New Democracy published a large number of press releases on issues dissimilar to the ones included in its manifesto. That is, ND changed its agenda during the last five weeks of the election campaign, relating it strongly to the media and public agendas. In general, New Democracy demonstrated the strongest relationship with the aggregate press agenda while PASOK had its own issue agenda. The relationship between the party and the public agendas is also very interesting (Table 7). Content and rank order comparisons showed that this relationship was very weak, although that the parties' agenda was formed after the measurement of the public opinion. Once again, though, New Democracy was the party, which responded to the public concerns during the election campaign period.

[Table 7 about here]

The above observations suggest that New Democracy managed to alter its initial agenda and relate it to the press and the public issue priorities, whereas PASOK although that it was closer to the press agenda initially, it failed to follow the changes that occurred to the other agendas throughout the election campaign period.

Discussion

Thus far, it can be argued that the results of the comparison among the press, party and public agendas are not straightforward but rather confusing. The findings indicate that there is no clear strong association among any of them and each agenda assigns different importance to different issues. Despite the fact that New Democracy's initial agenda differs substantially from the press agenda, throughout the campaign period and by producing a large number of press releases the conservative party (ND) managed to redefine its issue priorities and to relate considerably with the press and the public agenda. On the contrary,

PASOK although that it showed a quite substantial agreement with the press agenda at the beginning of the campaign period, it failed to reinforce it throughout the campaign period.

Overall, the 2004 general election results showed an interesting tendency in the allegiance of the electorate. As shown in Table 8, despite the closeness of the 2000 election result, in 2004 New Democracy managed to get a substantial difference of almost 5% of the total vote. Still, it is interesting to note that, during the 2004 elections New Democracy managed to increase its total share of the vote up to 3% compared with its previous percentage rate, while PASOK lost 3% of its share. Furthermore, Table 9 demonstrates the fluctuation of the parties' share of the vote during the defined campaign period. An important point that needs to be taken into account is that, up to three months before the election day, all opinion polls showed that New Democracy was clearly ahead of PASOK. However, when the former PASOK's leader Kostas Simitis decided to leave its position to Georgios Papandreou, the son of the party's founder and previous leader, the political expectations seemed to change (Mavris & Symeonides, 2004: 28). Indeed, for the first time, both parties were attributed the same share of the vote (Table 9– Week1). The overall change of the political climate, though, never happened. According to an overall estimate of the Public Opinion Institute VPRC, during the election campaign period New Democracy gained 1-2% whereas PASOK lost 2.5-4% of the vote-share (Ibid: 31).

[Tables 8 & 9 about here]

The above findings are in line with the theories of issue ownership and position, as these were analysed previously. According to Kleinninjenhuis and De Ridder (1996), the voters tend to vote for the party whose agenda dominates the media and relates with the public concerns. Initially, the agendas of both parties seemed to have the same media exposure, however, New Democracy's agenda, as it radically changed throughout the five weeks of the campaign period, showed a stronger relationship with the press agenda. It should also be noted that New Democracy's agenda was substantially associated with the public agenda. This is a situation, which could have facilitated New Democracy's electoral victory. However, before concluding towards this line of reasoning, one should bear in mind the polarised political environment that was created in favour of New Democracy long before the beginning of the election period. Whether the political campaign did manage to play a definite role to the election outcome is still debatable (Mavris & Symeonides, 2004: 28-32).

Conclusion

The Greek press seems to play a role similar to the one in other European countries and the US, in linking parties and voters and in transmitting issue emphasis (Kleinninjenhuis & De Ridder, 1998: 433; Semetko et al., 1991). Due to the very close relationship that exists between the Greek media owners and the Greek political parties, one should expect that the parties would have influenced the formation of the press agenda. According to Missika and Bregman's (1987) study the media agenda is shaped through the interaction between the media owners and the politicians. Under these circumstances, the media agenda does not reflect the public concerns and thus, it alienates the electorate. However, as the data analysis shows this trend is not observed during the 2004 Greek general election. Despite the great disparities found between the press and the public agenda, the relationship between the

press agenda and the party agendas of both PASOK and New Democracy, as these were defined by their manifestos, appeared considerably weak especially, at the beginning of the campaign. During the last few weeks of the election campaign, New Democracy redefined its issue priorities and through the distribution of a large number of press releases addressed the issues that were prioritised by the press (Table 3). Within that context, the press had a significant impact on the conservative party's policy issue agenda.

In respect to the relationship between the press agenda and the public agenda, the findings are quite confused. Initially, the association between the two agendas was not particularly significant. The aggregate press coverage showed different subject priorities from the public agenda. The only noticeable correlation was related to the content of the issues addressed but not their salience. Therefore, there was no ground to justify an overall association between the press and the public concerns. Nonetheless, the change of issue priorities on the public agenda as this was measured the day after the election, indicated that there might be an interaction between the media agenda and the public agenda. Although that the relationship between the two was not strong, nor with the pre-election neither with the post-election public agenda, at the end the public agenda has been influenced by the press issue coverage. Finally, in view of the quest for establishing a relationship and possible interaction between the press and public agenda, it should be noted that the present report is limited in scope as it deals only with a narrow number of cases within a particular time frame. Furthermore, although that the public agenda has been clearly identified, this is not the case with the actual positions of the press, which, for the purpose of the study are based on the overall press coverage. Another limitation lies to the fact that the broadcast media were not included. Hence, those limitations do play an important role on the outcome of the analysis. The findings should indicate a 'might be' relationship rather than a definite one.

Similarly, the examination of the relationship between the public and the parties' agendas showed a very weak association between them (Table 7). This outcome is particularly interesting as the public agenda was measured well in advance before the formation and presentation of the parties' manifestos, which constituted the basis for the measurement of the party agendas. Both PASOK and New Democracy took no notice of the public concerns at least initially. PASOK either misread or ignored the public signals. On the contrary, New Democracy despite its initial failure to pay attention to the public agenda, at the end it managed to respond to the concerns of the electorate.

The observation that the press agenda in terms of the relative importance assigned to issues differs from both the party and the public agendas is a prominent one. This result is in discord with the traditional agenda setting theory, which emphasises the significant role of the press in shaping the issue priorities of the public. Although that the analysis showed that there is an overall agreement between the four newspapers about the newsworthiness of certain stories during the election campaign, there was no strong association between the different agendas. It is intriguing to note that although 75% of the issues covered by the press correspond to the public concerns, the relative salience assigned to them is greatly dissimilar. Going a step further, this may imply that one of the journalistic criteria of newsworthiness relates to the public agenda concerns, (as it was the public agenda, which was formed before the media agenda) although that a close cause-and-effect relationship is very difficult to be established. This line of reasoning is based on the simple assumption that the newspapers, as commercial

media, do follow or as Newton and Brynlin put it, are prisoners of the 'laws of market supply and demand' (2001: 266). Therefore, in order to survive in a highly competitive market the media do adjust sensitively to these market laws so as not want to alienate its audience (Ibid.). In general, it is very difficult to pin down the direction of the cause-and-effect relationship of 'who sets the agenda' question, especially when this refers to 'who sets the agenda of the agenda-setter'. However, it should be noted that the readers do tend to pay more attention to the issues they view as important and thus, are more concerned about (Donsbach, 1991).

One theory of issue voting was examined within the context of this study. Issue ownership theory argues that the party, which dominates the news with the issue it owns, wins the elections. Within the traditional framework of the issue ownership theory a conservative party would win when the media agenda was dominated by the issues it 'owned' for example, the economic policies. However, as indicated in the previous chapters during the 2004 general election there were no clear-cut boundaries between the issue positions of the two main parties. In fact, New Democracy altered its initial policy issue agenda when its consultants found out that the issues that they promoted did not reflect the media and public concerns. On no single issue there were clear-cut viewpoints attributed to each party. This 'trespassing' that took place was based on three factors. Firstly, both parties had moved towards the centre of the left-right spectrum and thus, they promoted policies within the same ideological context (Downs: 1957). Secondly, both parties had to fight in order to win the same group of undecided voters. Finally, the change of leadership within PASOK, meant that there was no incumbent party leader available to promote the successes of the government and therefore, both parties fought the elections starting from the same basis.

The study places considerable emphasis on the analysis and comparison of the election campaign agendas and the examination of their relationship and the possible interaction among them. The results of the analysis of the agendas of the press, the two major parties and the public suggest a divergence among them, which was considerably evident at the beginning of the election campaign period. In addition, the initial comparison among the agendas shows that despite the considerable similarities on the content of the prioritised issues on each agenda, there are great disparities among them regarding the salience attributed to each subject. Although that each agenda focuses on different topics and there is no striking match between them, a closer in-depth analysis implies a substantial interaction among the press, the public and the party agendas, which took place during the last weeks of the election campaign. As the campaigns unfolded a number of changes took place. First, although that PASOK presented an agenda, which was closer to the ones of the media and the public, failed to promote it efficiently and to reinforce it throughout the election campaign period. Second, New Democracy presented a substantially distinct agenda from both the press and the public ones. However, during the last weeks of the campaign ND issued a large number of press releases in an attempt to change the priorities of its agenda and to respond to the needs of the media and the electorate. The campaign strategy literature of issue ownership could be a good model for the present analysis. The conservative party's agenda was the one closer to the media agenda and subsequently, managed to win the elections. However, a closer look to the 2004 elections in Greece suggests that the clear victory of New Democracy was the outcome of many mutually connected factors. As this study showed, issues did play a vital role to the political campaigns of the parties. What is difficult to be established is the actual extent of this role. Despite the initial divergence of the

different agendas there seemed to be a substantial interaction among them. What remains debatable is the direction of this relationship and how this adapts and changes as the campaign unfolds.

Table 1: The aggregate press coverage

<i>Subject of Article</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Georgios Papandreou	10.6%
Kostas Karamanlis	9.45%
New Democracy (ND)	9.3%
PASOK	8.4%
Polls	5.6%
Economy	5.6%
Foreign affairs	5.3%
Televised Debate	4.8%
Social Issues	4.5%
Jobs	3.9%
Other parties	3.7%
Pasok leadership	2.9%
Olympic Games - Athens 2004	2.9%
Internal party politics-PASOK	2.8%
Education	2.6%
Cyprus	2.33%
Internal party politics-ND	1.9%
Scandals	1.6%
EU affairs	1.2%
Manifestos	0.8%
National Health System	0.2%
Other	9.5%
TOTAL	100.00%

TABLE 2: Party Policy Issue Agendas at the beginning of the campaign

ISSUE CATEGORY	PASOK	New Democracy
AGRICULTURE	4.4%	12.6%
CULTURE	7.6%	2.6%
DEFENCE	1.8%	3.0%
ECONOMY	24.8%	8.2%
EDUCATION	9.4%	14.8%
ENVIRONMENT	6.1%	4.2%
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	7.5%	4.9%
HEALTH / NHS	3.3%	16.4%
JUDICIAL SYSTEM	-	1.3%
MERCANTILE MARINE	1.7%	4.0%
OLYMPIC GAMES	7.0%	-
PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT	3.1%	16.0%
PUBLIC SECURITY (CRIME)	3.2%	2.4%
SOCIAL INSURANCE & PENSION	3.9%	-
SPORTS	3.5%	3.3%
TECHNOLOGY	-	1.9%
TECHNOLOGY	6.7%	-
TOURISM	3.4%	4.3%
UNEMPLOYMENT	2.9%	-

TABLE 3: Party Press Releases

PRESS RELEASES		
ISSUE CATEGORY	PASOK %	NEW DEMOCRACY %
UNEMPLOYMENT	0.0% (5=)	2.2% (5)
ECONOMY	7.4% (2=)	5.2% (2)
CRIME	0.0% (5=)	0.0% (7=)
NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM	11.1% (1)	3.0% (4)
EDUCATION	3.7% (4)	0.7% (6)
IMMIGRATION	0.0% (5=)	0.0% (7=)
SOCIAL INSURANCE & PENSION	0.0% (5=)	4.4% (3)
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	7.4% (2=)	5.9% (1)
POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ISSUES	63.0%	43.7%

Table 4: The Aggregate Public Agenda

ISSUES	Pre-Election	Post-Election
UNEMPLOYMENT	53.5%	32.5%
ECONOMY	41.5%	17.0%
CRIME	14.5%	4.5%
NHS	10.0%	10.0%
EDUCATION	6.0%	11.0%
IMMIGRATION	5.5%	-
SOCIAL INSURANCE & PENSION	5.0%	7.0%
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	2.5%	-
CORRUPTION/SCANDALS	-	4.0%
PUBLIC SECTOR	-	3.0%

TABLE 5: Public & Press Issue Salience

ISSUES	PUBLIC	PRESS
UNEMPLOYMENT	38.5% (1)	17.6% (4)
ECONOMY	30.0% (2)	25.4% (1)
CRIME	10.5% (3)	0.0% (7)
NHS	7.2% (4)	0.7% (6)
EDUCATION	4.4% (5)	12.0% (5)
IMMIGRATION	4.0% (6)	0.0% (7)
SOCIAL INSURANCE & PENSION	3.6% (7)	20.4% (3)
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1.8% (8)	23.9% (2)

TABLE 6: Press Agenda – Top Issues

ISSUES	KATHIMERINI	TA NEA	EL. TYPOS	ELEFTHER OTYPIA	AGGREGATE/MEAN RATE *
ECONOMY	5.7% (2=)	6.3% (1=)	6.3% (1)	4.3% (2=)	19.0% (1)
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	15.7% (1)	1.9% (5)	0.6% (5=)	4.3% (2=)	25.9%(2)
SOCIAL ISSUES	2.1% (5=)	6.3% (1=)	4.4% (3)	4.9% (1)	15.3% (3)
JOBS/UNEMPLOYMENT	2.1% (5=)	3.8% (4)	5.6% (2)	3.8% (4)	13.3% (4)
EDUCATION	2.9% (4)	4.4% (3=)	0.6% (5=)	2.7% (5)	8.8%
CRIME	0.0% (8=)	0.0% (7=)	0.0% (7=)	0.0% (7=)	-
SCANDALS/CORRUPTION	3.6% (3)	0.6% (6)	1.2% (4)	1.1% (6)	6.8%
NHS	0.7% (7)	0.0% (7=)	0.0% (7=)	0.0% (7)	0.7%

* Note: "Olympic Games/Athens 2004" was an issue that received extensive coverage by the press (10.2%). It is not included in this particular table as it is not within the top ten issues of the public agenda.

Table 7: Public Agenda vs Party Agendas

ISSUES	PUBLIC OPINION	PASOK (manifesto)	PASOK (press releases)	New Democracy (manifesto)	New Democracy (press releases)
UNEMPLOYMENT	53.50% (1)	-	-	-	2.2% (5)
ECONOMY	41.50% (2)	24.8% (1)	7.4% (2=)	8.2% (5)	5.2% (2)
CRIME	14.50% (3)	-	-	-	-
NHS	10.00% (4)	-	11.1% (1)	16.4% (1)	3.0% (4)
EDUCATION	6.00% (5)	9.4% (2)	3.7% (4)	14.8% (3)	0.7% (6)
IMMIGRATION	5.50% (6)	-	-	-	-
SOCIAL INSURANCE & PENSION	5.00% (7)	-	-	-	4.4% (3)
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	2.50% (8)	7.5% (4)	7.4% (2=)	5% (6)	5.9% (1)

Table 8: Election Results (2000 & 2004)

Political Identification	2000 general elections (%)	2004 general elections (%)
with PASOK	43.79	40.55
with NEW DEMOCRACY	42.74	45.36

Source: www.greekelections.com

Table 9: Election Opinion Polls

Share of the vote (%)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
PASOK	44.7	40.1	41.8	39.7	39.4
ND	44.8	48.7	48.4	48.9	48.9

Source: VPRC Institute

Figure 1: Public Agenda and Press Issue Coverage

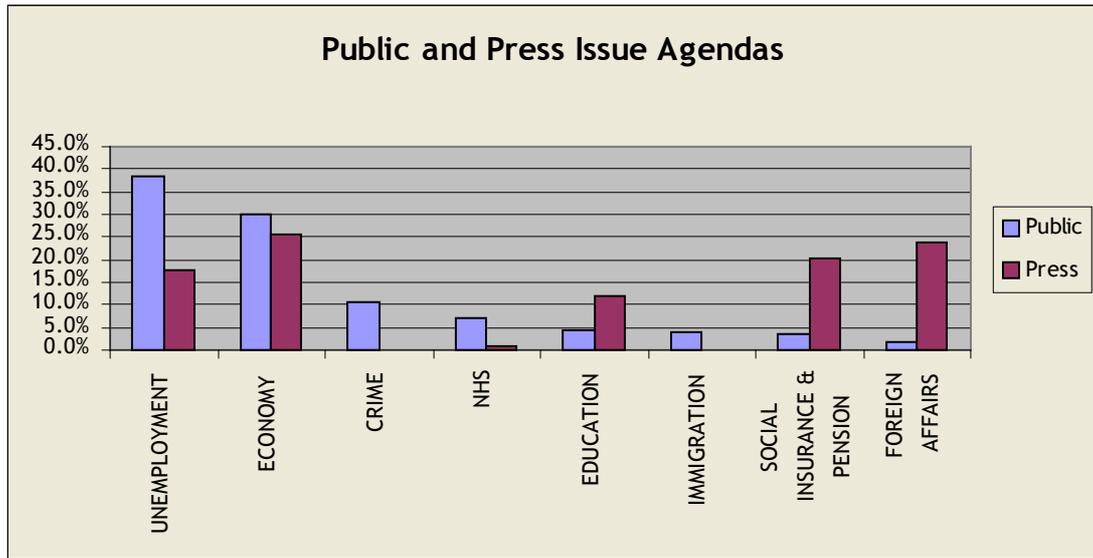
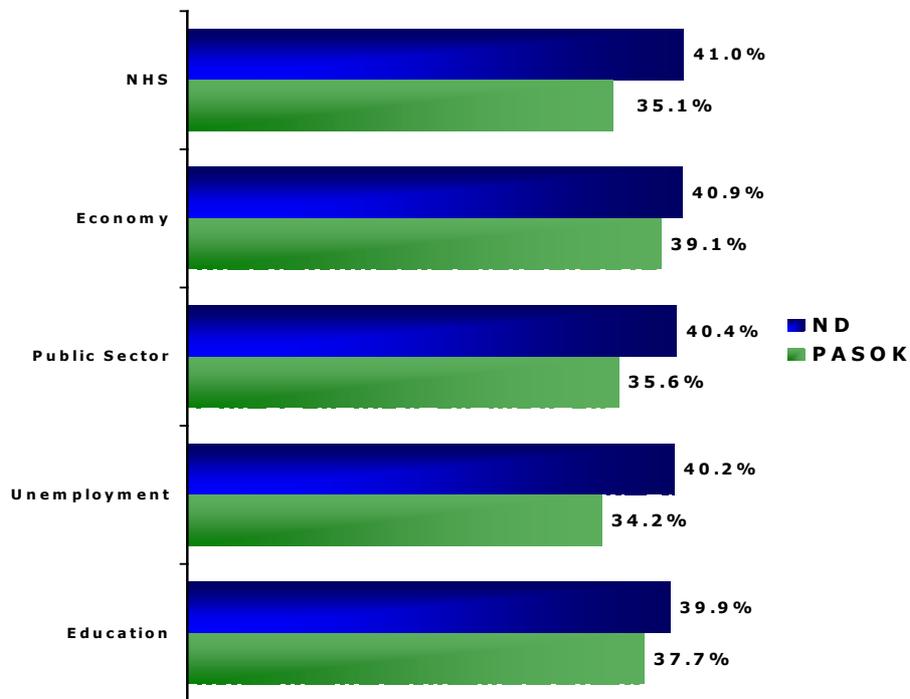
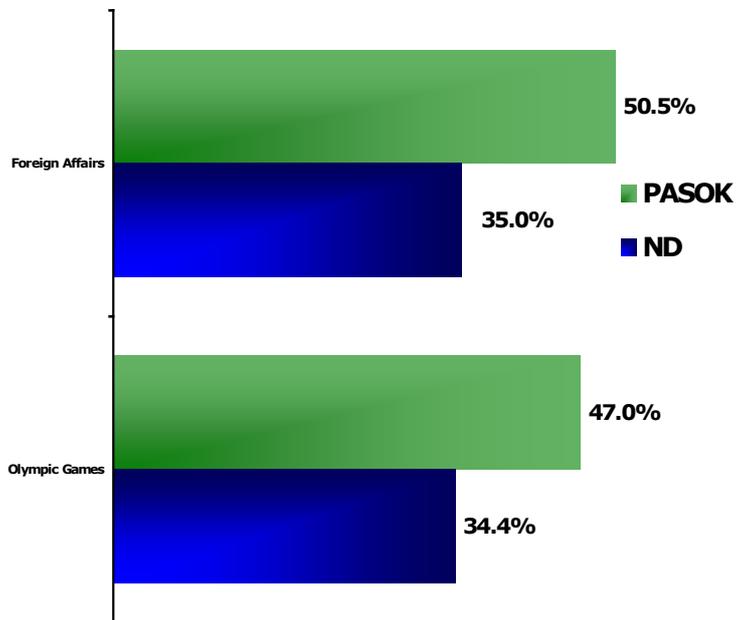


Figure 2: Public Perceptions: New Democracy's lead



Source: MetronAnalysis

Figure 3: Public Perceptions: PASOK's lead



Source: MetronAnalysis

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