

The Greek Revolution Through the Foreign Press. The Case of Newspaper the London Times in the Period 1821-1828

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Abstract—In 1821, the Greek Revolution movement, under the political influence that arose from the French revolution, and the corresponding movements in Italy, Germany and America, demanded the liberation of the nation and the establishment of an independent national state. Published topics in the British press regarding the Greek Revolution, focused on: a) the right of the Greeks to claim their freedom from Turkish domination in order to establish an independent state based on the principle of national autonomy, b) criticism regarding Turkish rule as illegal and the power of the Ottoman Sultan as arbitrary, c) the recognition of the Greek identity and its distinction from the Turkish one and d) the endorsement of Greeks as the descendants of ancient Greeks.

The London Times is a print publication that presents, in chronological or thematic order, the news, opinions or announcements about the most important events that have occurred in a place during a specified period of time. A combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis was applied. An attempt was made to record Greek Revolution references along with the usage of specific words and expressions that contribute to the representation of the historical events and their exposure to the reading public.

Key finds of this research reveal that a) there was a frequency of passionate daily articles concerning the events in Greece, their length, and context in The Times of London, b) the British public opinion was influenced by this particular newspaper and c) the newspaper published various news about the revolution by adopting the role of animator of the Greek struggle. In fact, this type of news was the main substance of the The London Times' structure, establishing a positive image about the Greek Revolution contributing to the European diplomatic development. These factors offered a change in the attitude of the British and Russians respectively assuming a positive approach towards Greece.

Keywords—Greece, Revolution, Press, The London Times, Great Britain, Mass Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE Greek Revolution of 1821 is a special and important event that took place in the European continent during a period of great uprisings and revolutionary movements. By studying the news and character of The Times of London newspaper, a person can establish that the newspaper contains significant primary material and is a valuable historical source concerning the developments taking place in Greece.

For many decades, a debate has been going on in the public sphere about the role and place of the mass media in shaping public opinion. The dominant view in the debate among scholars is that the media have acquired a dynamic of influence on public opinion, which is the key element in shaping public opinion. It is also noted that the media also play a mediating role in the relations between power and institutions in the context of a social dialogue between the media and civil society. This paper attempts to document and interpret the way in which the British newspaper The Times of London depicts the Greek Revolution of 1821 for the public opinion. The study and recording of the developments from page to page of a famous British newspaper, the language and style are elements for the study of social and political conditions and customs and contribute to the cultivation of critical thinking of the reader. By analyzing the discourse of a historical British newspaper, the content of the news, researchers and scholars can ascertain the trends of expression, the perceptions in the news taking place and shape the public agenda of the era, during which important and historical events occur and are published in the columns of that newspaper.

II. THE ROLE OF PRESS

With the outbreak of the Greek Revolution, the British newspaper *The Times* publishes news about the Greeks' demand for freedom. Korais himself highlights the role and importance of the press, since he advised his compatriots to establish a newspaper "for the dissemination of news". In 1821, *The Times* published news on the declaration of the Revolution by Germanos of Old Patras.

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Our aim is to highlight the role of the press after studying it. We consider the press as a field of research, that circulates and takes a stand daily through its published material, in the public social sphere on a global level. Newspapers have even influenced the history of states, as they are a driving force of culture and an ideological guide to public opinion [2]. Newspapers include in their columns plenty of information about the past, and this is why historians, educators, researchers, often point out their value for the general public, emphasizing their role in education and lifelong learning. (Stoker, 1999; Papaioannou, Pange, Toki & Pange, 2011).

Reading news concerning the past, from page to page of a well-known newspaper, the syntax and style of a traditional medium, all contribute to the study of the conditions prevailing at the time when the newspaper was published. Researchers of the press, particularly of a historical newspaper, as in the case of *The Times* of London, depict the conditions prevailing 200 years ago in relation to the Greek Revolution and shape the reality of the time through the news published.

At the same time, as primary material, the newspaper publishes unaltered information, which the researcher or scholar then gathers the material for study, investigation and discovery. In our case, we consider that the British newspaper *The Times* of London is reliable and carries historical value in terms of its content.

In order to understand the range of issues and questions that arise when approaching the material of a historical newspaper, we will focus on the contents of a newspaper published 200 years ago, in the 18th century. In the initial stages of managing the material of a historical newspaper, the character of the newspaper, its role and “place” in the place and time of publication, and the validity of its contents should be explored and defined. This paper studies the Greek Revolution and the foreign press and focuses on the case of *The Times* of London.

III. THE TIMES OF LONDON NEWSPAPER

The Times, referred to in Greek as “Τάμις του Λονδίνου”, is a British newspaper that has now completed 247 years of circulation, having been first published on New Year's Day in 1785 in London (Tate). As a publication, it is accepted that it is part of the press published in Great Britain. The publication of this newspaper was favored by the free press and social principles of Great Britain. Consequently, *The Times* of London is therefore part of the history of the British press and it is still in circulation in Britain today. By studying this British newspaper, we notice that its subject-matter is not limited to the events taking place in Great Britain and Greece, but extends to Europe, Asia, America, Africa. The hierarchy of political news is shaped by their importance and by the size of the reactions they provoke in the powerful countries of Europe. A typical example is the reports on the Greek Revolution, which feature prominently in the newspaper.

Today, the newspaper is owned by News Corporation group of publishers of the tycoon Rupert Murdoch. At the time, almost universally, the name *The Times* was used by many newspapers around the world. Back then, we had *The Times* of India, *The New York Times*, *The Irish Times* etc. A distinctive feature of *The Times* of London is that it uses the Times New Roman font,

which in the opinion of its editors offers high readability [11]. As Loules (1987) writes, this newspaper –conservative in its official line, but with some degree of independence from political factions– was founded in 1783. It was distinguished for its authoritative information on legal and parliamentary matters and advocated religious freedom and freedom of trade. According to usage statistics for the print and online versions of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, it touches a record of 16 million readers a month. [10].

IV. METHODOLOGY

The need to organize and present the information of a newspaper becomes particularly imperative when the newspaper is characterized as an incunabulum and has historical value in terms of its content. In order to understand the range of issues and questions that arise when approaching the material of *The Times* of London, we will focus our attention on the contents of a newspaper circulating in the 18th century.

This paper employs the rich archive of *The London Times* archive by quoting extracts from publications of that period, to convey the British public perspective regarding the Greek Revolution from its beginning until the London Protocol of 1828. Furthermore, analyzes the publications of the British newspaper in terms of the number of references to the Greek revolution, front page and editorial references as well as the size of publications on the revolution during the period 1821-1828.

The purpose of the study is to document the Greek Revolution through the British newspaper *The Times*. We recorded news items concerning the revolution as published in this newspaper. The archive of *The Times* of London newspaper is available at <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/archive/> and it allows subscribers to search by keywords. In this case we used the term “Greek revolution” and limited the search for the years 1821-1828. The results occurred from recording the news items - publications that were relevant to our topic (132 in total) between January 1821 and December of the year 1828. More specifically, we examined news items in *The Times* of London and the way in which they portrayed the Greek Revolution to public opinion. The research involved setting up an inventory of news items and identifying the main news stories that contribute to shaping the coverage of the Greek Revolution.

Firstly, we read and identified the empirical material, i.e. the news item(s) related to the study. In the second phase, we isolated the news items relevant to the topic. In the third phase we did the classification, i.e., we put the topics into categories. In the final phase, the data is presented, analyzed and interpreted. It is the final phase where conclusions are drawn. The thematic analysis helps us to answer questions such as, for example, what the image of the Greek revolution is and what the image of the foreign press is, with special emphasis on the British newspaper *The Times* of London. Also, by classifying and categorizing the news items we can have specific different positions/opinions expressed. We have chosen the years 1821 - 1828 because it was the years from the beginning of the Greek Revolution until the establishment of the Greek state. The method of approach we used is content analysis. It is a method

of analysis that can be applied to all forms of written discourse, such as texts, documents, news, etc. [4].

More specifically, the study utilizes content analysis for news items dealing with issues related to the Greek revolution. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, an attempt was made to record references to the Greek Revolution, as well as certain words and expressions that help to portray the events and convey them to the readership. Attempting to determine the framework of reference of the news, we classified news items into positive, negative and neutral. This distinction in this newspaper is interesting since it determines the position of a foreign publication and whether there is a balanced news coverage, since The Times of London have a balanced thematic framing with regard to the Greek revolution. They target a readership that prefers in-depth and detailed analyses of news. In other words, the British newspaper offers more up-to-date information, while placing an emphasis on news items, reportages and letters.

V. RESULTS

The statistics for the newspaper with separate reports concerning front-page news published during the chronological year 1821-1828 regarding Greeks and the Greek revolution appear below in graphs and in a table.

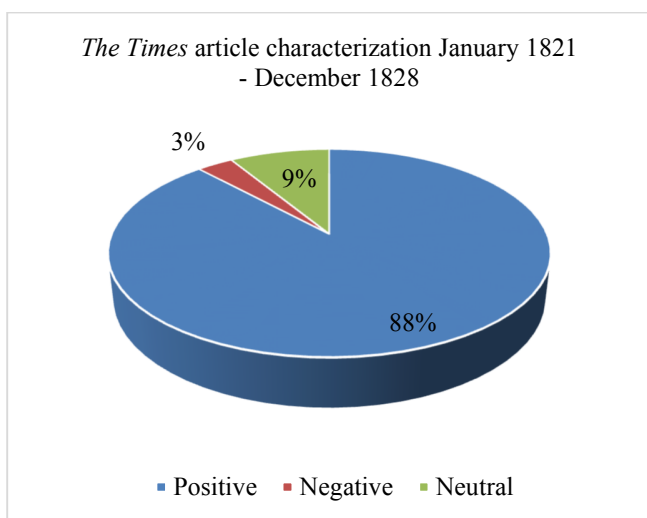


Fig. 1 Characterization of articles

In the variable “Characterization of Articles” (Figure 1) of the news items in The Times we observe that a high percentage of news has a positive character regarding the Greek revolution. That is, 88% of the news items have a positive character while 9% have a neutral character. Articles with a negative character are at 3%. From the percentages of this newspaper, we can conclude that there is a strong tendency for positive coverage of the Greek Revolution.

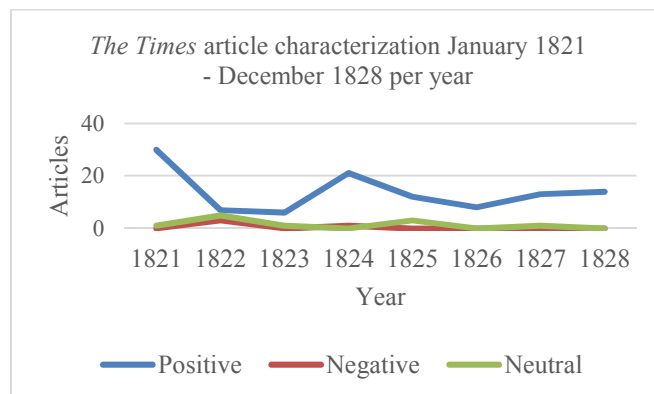


Fig. 2 Article Characterisation per year

TABLE I
AMOUNT OF NEWS ITEMS

News items regarding the Greek revolution of 1821 in The Times.	Years 1821-1828	Total	%
1821	31	31	25
1822	15	15	12
1823	7	7	6
1824	22	22	17
1825	15	18	12
1826	8	8	6
1827	14	14	11
1828	14	14	11
Total	126		-
%			100

Our variable describes the Article Characterization by year (Figure 2) and the amount of news items about the Greek revolution (Table I). We observe that in 1821, the year the Greek Revolution began, The Times published the most news stories compared to subsequent years. In that year, 25% of the news items are positive as well as in the following years 1822 with 12% and 1823 with 6%. It is worth noting that in the year 1824, the percentage of positive news rises to 17% and in the following years 1825, 1826, 1827 and 1828 the news with positive character amount to 12%, 6%, 11% and 11% respectively. In general, the British newspaper supports the Greek revolution.

TABLE II
SIZE OF ARTICLE

Size of article (cm ²)	Years 1821-1828	Total	%
Small	83	83	66
Medium	39	39	31
Large	4	4	3
Total	126	126	--
%			100

Our variable describes the “Size of article” (Table II) where small-size articles outnumber medium-size articles by 35 points (66%). Small-size articles cover very short but - in many cases - very valid, substantial and pertinent news while medium-size articles cover the news in general terms; large-size publications cover the whole page of the newspaper where such news is

published in the British newspaper with a percentage of 3%.

TABLE III
PAGE OF ARTICLE

Page of article	Years 1821-1828	Total	%
Page 1	3	3	2
Page 2	81	81	64
Page 3	27	27	21
Page 4	8	8	7
Page 5	5	5	4
Page 6	1	1	1
Page 7	1	1	1
Total	126	126	--
%			100

In the variable “Page of article” (Table III), we observe that in the 126 articles that we collected in total, category “Page 2” has 64 per cent which shows the importance and the weight of the news about the Greek revolution which earned them a place on the second page, followed by category “Page 3” with 21 per cent.

TABLE IV
ORIGIN OF SOURCES

Origin of sources	Years 1821-1828	%
French papers	30	33
Anonymous	25	27
Ionian Islands	3	3
Mesologgi	3	3
Parliamentary intelligence	2	2
Leghorn – Livorno	2	2
Constantinople	2	2
Zante	2	2
Journal of a Voyage up the Mediterranean	2	2
Vienna	1	1
London	1	1
German Papers	1	1
Hamburg Papers	1	1
The Greeks	1	1
Journal des Debals	1	1
Aberdeen	1	1
Corfu	1	1
British Traveler	1	1
Salona	1	1
Athens	1	1
Greece	1	1
Cambridge quarterly review	1	1
Greek committee	1	1
News of Literature	1	1
Hampshika Telegraph	1	1
Algemcine Zeitung	1	1
Journal de Debate	1	1
Oriental Speclator	1	1
Quotidienne	1	1
Total	91	
%		100

The variable “Origin of sources” (Table IV) shows us the value and importance given to news published outside the

country that appear in the newspaper. Moreover, the origin of news and the manner in which it is communicated influences the public sphere. In our research, we observe that a high percentage of sources originate from French papers (33%), which demonstrates the close relationship between the British newspaper and French papers. It is worth noting that in the country where the events take place, anonymous sources account for 27% due to the explosive and unstable situation in the country at the time. *Ionian Islands and Mesolongi* follow due to the uprisings that occurred against the Ottoman rule. Then we observe Leghorn - Livorno and Constantinople with 2% due to the geographical location where the Greek revolution took place since it is adjacent to the two cities. An important observation concerns the percentage of sources (1%) in other cities such as Vienna, London, Genoa, etc. due to the presence and activity of the Greeks of the diaspora and foreign philhellenes.

TABLE V
PLACE OF REVOLUTION

Place of revolution	Years 1821-1828
Morea (Peloponnese)	17
Wallachia and Moldavia	15
Ionian Islands	13
Ydra	11
Mesologi	6
Ionian Islands	5
Patras	5
Tripolliza	5
Tripoliza	5
Thessaly	3
Corfu	3
Cephalonia	3
Psara	3
Archipelagos	3
Vassiladi	2
Macedonia	2
Salonica	2
Candia or Crete	2
Calamata	2
Cyprus	2
Corinth	2
Preveza	2
Thermopylan	2
Zante	2
Sciros	2
Spezzia	2
Navarino	2
Tripoli	1
Marathon	1
Corinth	1
Acarmania	1
Patra	1
Ismos	1
Zifouni	1
Thermopylan	1
Livadia	1
Vrachori	1
Malvasia	1

“open questions”).

A dataset of articles were collected in the context of the current work. All collected newspaper articles underwent preprocessing so as to derive meaningful words. We isolated words and phrases that were representative from the articles and removed stopwords for example: new Greek army, the Turks after bombarding the town of Patras and burning many houses had been reinforced from Lepanto and Trippoliza and they finally obliged the Greeks to fly to Zante in great numbers. Many Greek priests and other inhabitants had been killed and a church demolished, Greek refugees who have escaped from the fury of the Turks. Preprocessing was conducted with the help of Natural Language ToolKit (NLTK - <https://www.nltk.org/>.) and personally developed code in Python.

```
import nltk
from nltk.corpus import stopwords
import pandas as pd
from wordcloud import WordCloud
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
sw_nltk = stopwords.words('english')
text=""
words = [word for word in text.split() if word.lower() not in
sw_nltk]
text = ''.join(words)
word_cloud = WordCloud(
    width=3000,
    height=2000,
    random_state=1,
    background_color="blue",
    colormap="Pastel1",
    collocations=False,
).generate(text)
plt.imshow(word_cloud)
plt.axis("off")
plt.show()
```

Regarding the variable “News Topic”, for the years 1821-1828, we observe that the dominant pattern in these news items is the war - conflict landscape. Specifically, the News Subject Wordcloud, is a form of visual representation of the frequencies of words contained in a news text or a collection of texts. As mentioned earlier, the wordcloud is used to present the main topics of the text. The size of each word in the representation reflects the number of times it appears in the text. So here too, as shown in the figure above, the wordcloud is presented, in which the words have a size proportional to the number of news items in which they are published in the press. Towards this direction, we observe from the wordcloud that certain words appear with high frequency, such as “revolution”, “fight”, “army”, “Ypsilantis”, “church”, “priests”, “refugees”, “inhabitants”, “war”, “Patras”, “independency”, “nation”, “region”, “decapitation”, etc. This indicates the disorderly situation in which the country was in. From the words that appear in the above table, the relationship between the militants and the church and the Orthodox faith becomes obvious. The church played an important role in the Revolution of 1821 as it became a place of invitation for the fighters in the liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire. For example, the

churches became centres for the gathering and care of fighters, while clergymen died on the battlefield and others were tortured by the Turks.

Moreover, the words used by the news editors such as “Greek nation”, “Greek flag”, “Greek vessels”, “Greek army”, “Greek forces”, “burn the Turkish vessels”, show the persistence of the revolutionaries in the armed struggle and the desire of the Greeks to gain their freedom. The struggle of the Greeks for the establishment of a free state also received relative support from foreign powers, but it was the Church, the merchants, the members of the Secret Society, the shipowners who supported the struggle in every way and by every means and at every opportunity, with the Greek flag as their banner, they organized revolts against the Turks.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Times of London takes a stance of support towards the Greek revolution since, from the beginning of April 1821, it publishes news describing trends in Greece through revolutionary actions aiming to overthrow the Turkish rule, after centuries of living in slavery and desiring freedom. Our aim was to place an emphasis on news related to the Greek revolution because we believe that *The Times* - especially at that time - was a beacon of information for the public opinion.

Moreover, the British newspaper emphasizes the desire of the Greeks for freedom and is not dependent on the intrigues of foreign governments. There is also mention that Russia and Austria would benefit from the establishment of a Greek state. This indicates the disposition and position of the newspaper regarding the development of the Greek revolution and thus guides public opinion.

An analysis of the data in *The Times* of London in 1821-1828 revealed the following:

- The size of the article as well as the page of the article has its importance. The press has the ability to publish news which, depending on their size, reflect the importance of the news. For example, the start of the Greek Revolution is focused on the page to catch readers’ attention and highlight the importance and content of the news.
- We observe that the articles have a strong positive character since they describe the struggle of the Greeks for freedom and overthrowing of the Turkish rule.
- The newspaper has as sources French papers, Leghorn - Livorno, Constantinople while the variable “Focus on the Protagonists” assigns a 9% on Alexander Ypsilantis, who outperforms Ali Pasha, King George, Emperor Alexander of Russia and the Austrian Chancellor Metternich who have 10% respectively. This proves that *The Times* of London has access to the events that happen and are published in its columns.
- As to the place of revolution Wallachin and Moldavia, Morea (Peloponnese), Patra, Tripolliza are considered important places where the Greek revolution is taking place due to the specificity of the Treaty of Bucharest (1812) and due to the presence and participation of prominent personalities of the revolution such as Alexander Ypsilantis.

Another important event that shows the newspaper's support

for the Greek revolution is the execution by hanging of the Patriarch of Constantinople, a fact that recorded the dissatisfaction of the British people and stressed that British interests are calling on the country to create a relationship of trust between the British and the Greeks in order to promote their own interests and not those of Russia. For the British, the Ottoman Empire is considered to be broken and the news published stresses the need for an intervention by Britain and other European countries so that a solution can be found.

In August 1821, the newspaper openly expresses its opinion, since the Turks are referred to as "infidels" against whom England must turn in order to defend the Greeks. At the end of the same month, news is published stating the need to support Greeks, since they are a people with a European perspective. In order to achieve this protection, it is argued that the Great Powers must make an agreement with Turkey for the liberation of the Greeks.

In conclusion, the Greek revolution was the result of the Greeks' thirst for freedom and this enabled the "Great Powers" to support the Greeks' desire to overthrow slavery and tyranny. The Greek Revolution broke out at a time when national liberation movements were swamped by bloodshed. The Great Powers, in the context of serving their own interests, aided the Greek struggle and without their intervention it is uncertain when and if it would have succeeded. However, no one can deny that the blood and sacrifices of the people revolting were the spark that lit the flame of liberation and without them the realization of the national ambition would not have been spared by foreigners.

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Research Interests

- The Liberation Struggle in Cyprus (1955-1960) and the Greek Cypriot press.
- Agenda setting in press.
- Media policy and communication.
- Post-colonialism.