

ELECTIONS, MEDIA AND THE MINORITIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE GREEK PRE-ELECTORAL TELEVISION AND PRESS COVERAGE OF MUSLIM MINORITY CANDIDATES FOR THE 2006 PREFECTURAL-MUNICIPAL AND 2007 GREEK GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Introduction

- ▣ This study attempts to examine whether Muslim minority candidates have equal chances like other candidates to present their own images and voices in mainstream media and at the same time,
- ▣ create and control their own media.
- ▣ Using as our case study the Muslim minority in Greece

The theoretical discussion

- ▣ There are various contradictions running through media representations of minority people:
- ▣ Sometimes, they are romanticised and portrayed as the victims of an unfair society.
- ▣ Other times, they are demonised as urban criminals.
- ▣ In many cases, minority people are underrepresented in mainstream media

3 basic theoretical approaches to explain ethnic minorities' media representation

- ▣ Critical Theories : according to which media cover the minority issues in a negative way and as a result they reproduce a racist ideology
- ▣ Pluralistic Theories: supporting that media function according to the media code of ethics and they equally represent minority reality
- ▣ Third Stream: supporting that minorities lack efficient coverage by the media, without necessarily being racistically reported

Research method and sample

Content analysis with the use of coding frame of

- ▣ prime-time TV news bulletins of 5 nationwide TV stations (NET, ET3, ALTER, ANT1, MEGA) and
- ▣ articles of 4 nationwide newspapers (Kathimerini, TO VIMA, Rizospastis, Eleftherotypia)

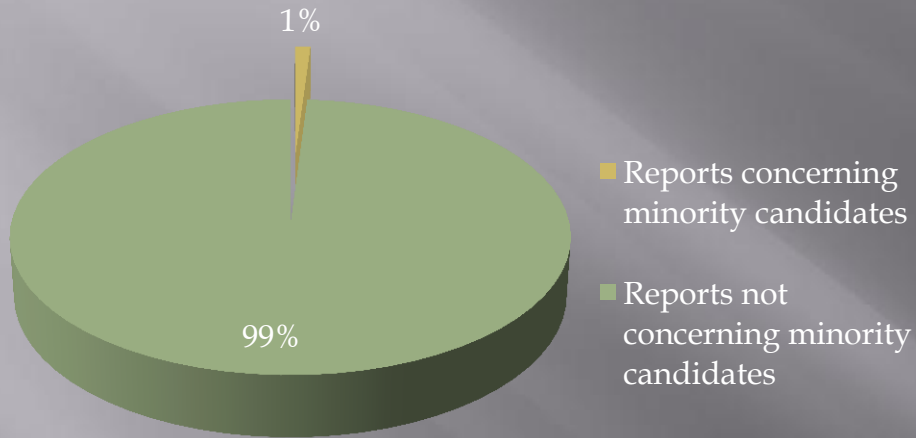
presented the last month of the pre-electoral periods of the Municipal and General Elections (15th September-15th October 2006 for the Municipal elections and 16th August- 16th September 2007 for the General elections)

Main research question, research hypotheses

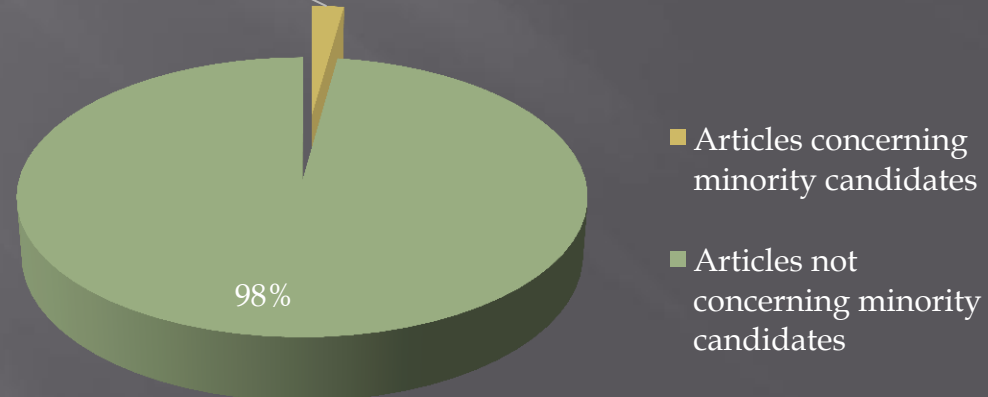
- ▣ In what way in terms of both quantity and quality are minority candidates and their political arguments being presented during the pre-electoral periods through the main national range television channels and nationwide political newspapers?
- 1. We expect the coverage of the minority candidates to be particularly low compared to the amount of news articles or stories concerning the two electoral periods
- 2. We expect that whenever minority candidates are being presented, this will be done in an exaggerated way in order to underline their marginal role to a white, European, orthodox dominated society
- 3. We expect the minority candidates to get very few chances to express their own political views either on issues of their interest or on issues concerning the Greek political scene in general

Quantitative Analysis

Percentage of electoral TV news reports
concerning or at least referring to
minority candidates

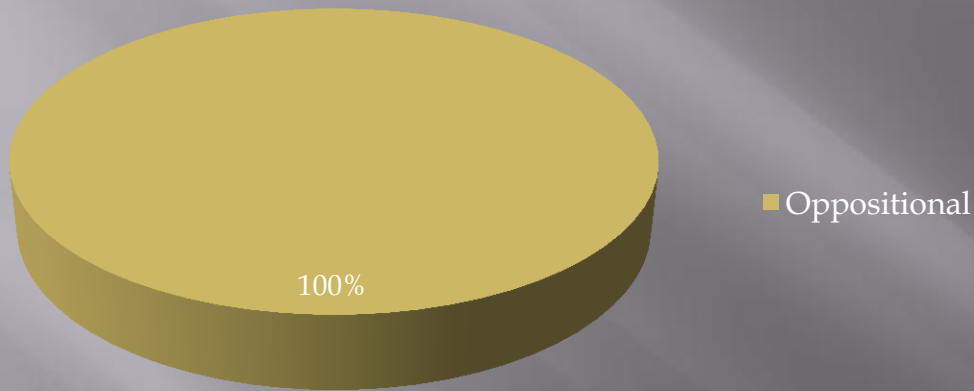


Percentage of electoral newspapers'
articles concerning or at least referring to
minority candidates

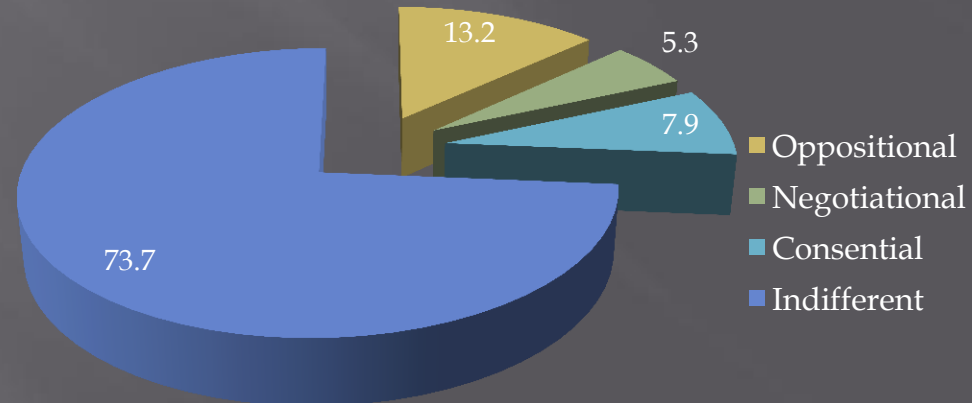


Quantitative findings for TV (left) and the press (right) 1

Framing of news stories concerning minority candidates

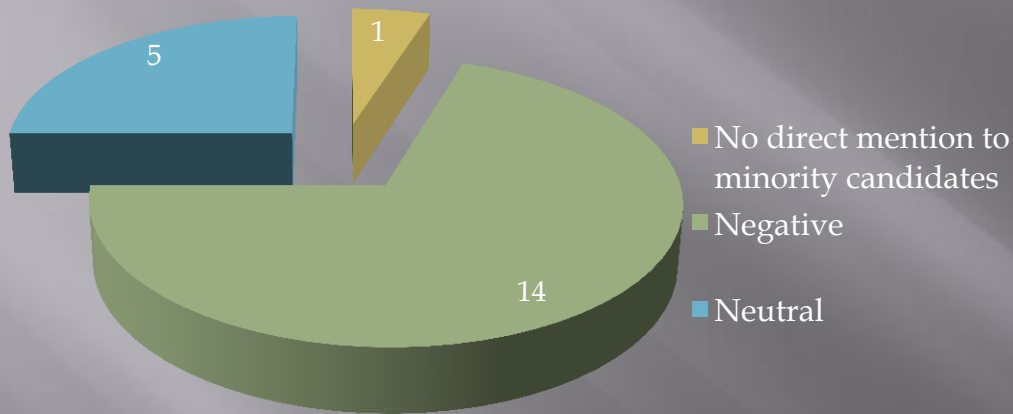


Framing of news articles concerning minority candidates

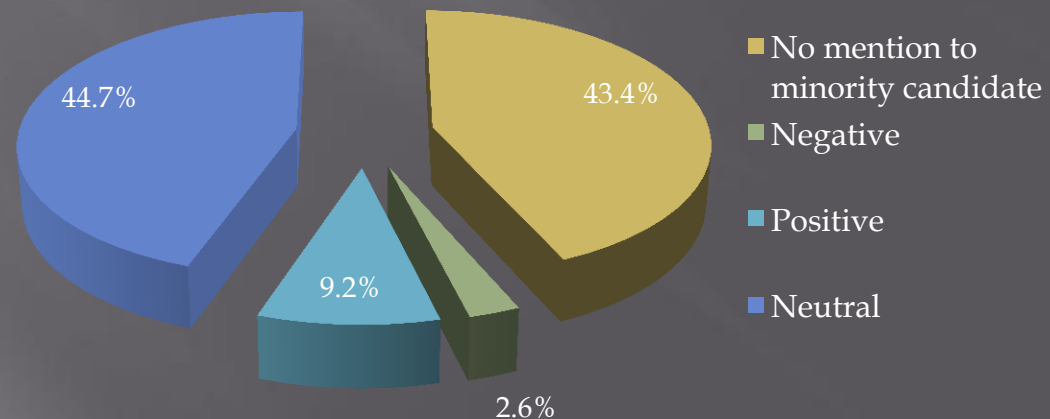


Quantitative findings for TV (left) and the press (right) 2

Opinion expressed by journalists

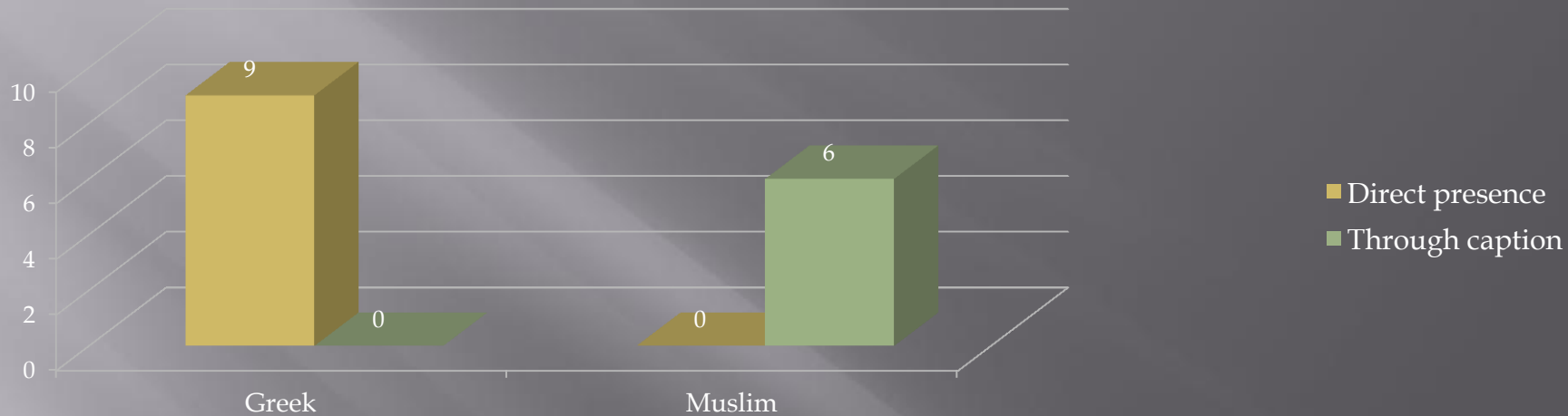


Opinion of journalists for minority candidates

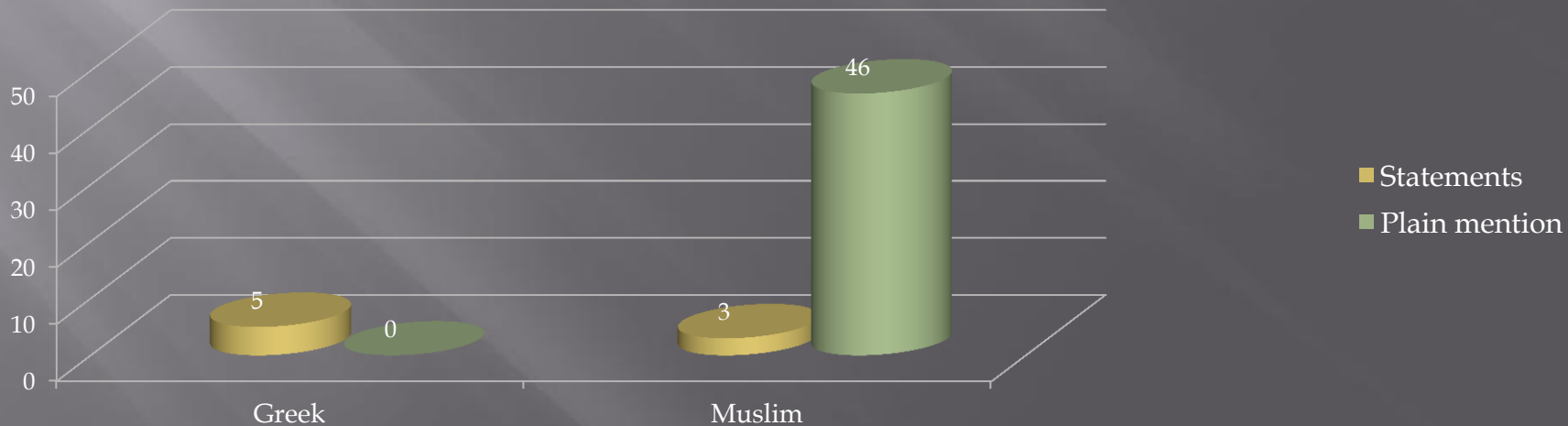


Quantitative findings for TV (up) and the press (down) 3

Presentation of talking head's statements



Presentation of politicians according to their nationality



Qualitative remarks for TV...

- ▣ In all 8 news stories of our interest, the minority candidates presented were treated as **defendants** having to apologize for their supposedly politically false statements to other media
- ▣ In no case were the candidates able to express their opinions on basic issues concerning minority populations, nor to present their initiatives or opinions on true and fundamental issues of Greek political reality
- ▣ In one case the journalists commenting on the news report mentioned the word “Turk” in a very depreciative way

...and the press

- ▣ The newspapers when they don't adopt a neutral attitude, they follow their supporting party strategy, by promoting the minority candidates of the same ideological background, avoiding in most to refer to other parties' candidates in a negative way
- ▣ 9 out of the total of 13 (almost 70%) articles having to do with the General elections' minority candidates, are actually publications of the official lists with the parties' candidates in all peripheries, definitely neither a journalistic article, nor a way of promoting minority candidates' political views

Conclusions 1

- ▣ In television the presence of minority candidates seems to fit more properly to the critical theoretic stream
- ▣ The qualitative intensity of negative portrayals of Muslims speaks volumes about the extent of institutionalised racism in the television
- ▣ There was rather a public trial rationale surrounding the presence of minority candidates in television news bulletins
- ▣ From all 17 minority candidates of the various parties taking part in 2007 general elections, only one made his way on the television screen under the “defendant” scheme

Conclusions 2

- ▣ The press appears to deal in a more neutral way with the candidates, avoiding the exaggerations of television. The vast majority of the articles report the candidates in a neutral way
- ▣ Under this scope, we would argue that the press coverage of minority candidates, follows the theoretical stream supporting that minorities lack efficient coverage by the media, without necessarily being racially reported

Conclusions 3

- ▣ Therefore the Greek media appear to adopt a slightly different publicity strategy for the minority candidates **mostly in qualitative terms, even though they don't differ significantly in quantitative terms.**
- ▣ This differentiation can be justified by the different ways the television and the press function and the differences between their virtues codes (mainly profit for the former, political ideology support for the latter)

Instead of epilogue...

- ▣ We need to take responsibility and initiate a significant change in the culture of our newsrooms, so as **to give the minority populations the voice they deserve**
- ▣ We all have the same rights and obligations
- ▣ Why shouldn't we have a more rightful access to the media?