

Dominant and Emerging News Frames in Protest Coverage: The 2013 Cypriot Anti-Austerity Protests in National Media

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Research on news coverage of protests has revealed evidence of a protest paradigm: framing strategies that disparage protestors and diminish protest claims and significance. However, recent studies are detecting less predictable media responses, indicating the need to identify the extent of application of the paradigm and the underlying determinants for variations within media politics of dissent. This analysis of the framing of the 2013 Cypriot anti-austerity protests by three national newspapers and a public television channel indicated that the coverage deviated from the protest thesis. The results showed little emphasis on the law and (dis)order frame but validation of the protests in varying magnitudes through frames articulating national sovereignty, social injustice, and acceptance of austerity policies, wavering between blaming international and national political actors for irresponsible politics. Finally, this article examines the conditions under which news media relax some conventions of reporting protests, permitting more constructive coverage of social conflicts.

Keywords: protest news, protest paradigm, news framing, media politics of dissent, Eurozone crisis

Although the Eurozone crisis is typically identified by a singular term, it actually consists of a series of interrelated economic crises that have generated public discontent and exacerbated conflicts and divisiveness within the European Union (EU). During these national crises, a number of anti-austerity protests have taken place in EU member-state countries including Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and Spain, against the leading neoliberal rationale of the crises and austerity-based policies as the solution (della Porta et al., 2017). The scope and scale of these protests and their opposition to hegemonic doctrine on the crisis have produced opportunities for the protests to be portrayed and interpreted in multiple ways in news media, nationally and globally. As the institutional politics and social demands that animate citizen protests have become more extensively mediated (Cammaerts, 2012), examining relevant media discourses and embedded news values within the ongoing Eurozone crisis and how they bear on public deliberation in national and European political spheres is of critical significance. Accordingly, it is necessary to explore dominant and emerging strategies deployed by news media in reporting anti-austerity protests, whereby

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the conflicts between national and international governing institutions and elites and citizens are constructed (Papaioannou, 2018a).

Research on media coverage of social protests has yielded evidence of a protest paradigm: framing patterns that typically emphasize civic disorder, disparage protestors, and hinder their role as legitimate actors on the political stage. Using the public protests in the 2013 Cypriot financial crisis as a case study, this article examines whether protest coverage by four national news media outlets conforms to the protest paradigm. This study proceeds as follows. First, it reviews recent research on the protest paradigm with an emphasis on news coverage of anti-austerity protests and the increasingly more complex media politics of dissent in the Eurozone crisis. Then, it briefly describes the rescue-package negotiations between the Cypriot government and the Eurogroup/Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank [ECB], and the International Monetary Fund [IMF]) in the 2013 financial crisis and the public protests against austerity measures. Following a framing analysis of protest coverage by the news websites of three national newspapers and a public television channel, the findings indicate varying applications of protest paradigm frames among these media outlets. Finally, this article considers the conditions under which news media move away from stereotyped framings toward more constructive protest coverage, providing additional understanding of the protest thesis.

News Coverage of Protests

Research indicates that factors including the political economy of news media, journalistic values and practices, and political processes affect news coverage of protests (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). The pro-establishment orientation of mainstream news media often manifests in bias in both the selection and description of protests they choose to report (Iyengar, 1991). Reese (2007) argues that media support for the status quo is embedded in processes of gathering and framing information. News framing is a process that entails selection, emphasis, and elaboration of certain opinions and facts from particular perspectives (Entman, 1993). By presenting protests within frames from the perspective of the elite, such informational biases lead to episodic framing of news, rather than thematic framing of news. This framing serves to obscure a more objective, adequate understanding of social problems that acknowledges political complexity.

In the process of producing protest news, mainstream news media tend to follow the protest paradigm (Chong & Druckman, 2007; McLeod, 2007; McLeod & Detenber, 2006). The protest paradigm functions as a set of strategies for framing protests, focusing on limited features of protestors and portraying them as the "Other." First, the media tend to use the law and (dis)order frame, emphasizing actual or anticipated violence and socially disruptive behavior and positioning a protest as antisocial or countercultural. Second, the media often privilege official sources—information from channels within the establishment. This reliance on official sources, as opposed to providing space for protestors to express their opinions, lends news prestige and practically facilitates dominance of the voices of those in power. Third, the media often obscure the intention and context of protest actions and reduce their political significance, thus diminishing protest legitimacy. Together, these practices and values tend to coalesce into biased coverage of protests.

Within the protest paradigm that typifies news coverage of protests, evidence shows the size of a protest and the presence of violence and confrontation attract media attention (Fahlenbrach, 2016). However, as protests proliferate, confrontational strategies may become less unconventional and newsworthy for the media. Also, influenced by social, professional, and ideological values, protests advocating lifestyle politics or using tactics resonating with mainstream audiences are less likely to receive critical coverage (Papaioannou, 2018b). Furthermore, the political orientation of a news outlet affects narrative framing; politically conservative media tend to respond critically to protests that make radical claims (Weaver & Scacco, 2013).

Within analysis of media coverage of the Eurozone crisis and citizen protests, mainstream journalism has been criticized for supporting the hegemonic discourse on austerity policies by privileging political and economic elites in expressing their views (Mylonas, 2014). Austerity-based measures often result from negotiations between a national government in a liquidity crisis and the Eurogroup/Troika, the executing state agencies, and target populations. Compliance is imposed by the Eurogroup and, in turn, the government (not necessarily in agreement with the Eurogroup) on a series of decisions based on changing assumptions (della Porta et al., 2017). Considering such asymmetry of policy implementation, protests against European integration and the EU's austerity policies have gained considerable acceptance in civil society (Fazi, 2016). A major protest grievance is a departure from European integration, emphasizing the need for a revival of national political authority and policy processes. Another grievance argues that the Eurozone crisis is essentially a crisis of the late neoliberalism enforced by European institutions lacking public accountability. Such protests are against policies oriented toward reduction of investment in social services, privatization of public goods and services, and bailouts of failing banks through public financing.

Within news reporting of these protest claims, amid coverage highlighting disruption and spectacle, there are sympathetic accounts of protests in Greece, Portugal, and Belgium, to name a few, suggesting mitigating factors and emerging news values and political agendas (Papaioannou & Gupta, 2018). In addition to the characteristics of a national crisis and the context surrounding the public protests as a response to it, a number of social, political, and technological changes of wider significance might have contributed to this phenomenon. First, public protests are increasingly moving from the political margins, aligned to traditional political ideologies, toward mainstream acceptance as a legitimate representation mechanism for an expanded range of causes. Europeanization and the Eurozone crisis have also produced a new world order in which news reporting of protests has become more intricately interconnected and relevant to both domestic and international politics and audiences. Such dynamics lead in turn to more complex media interactions with political elites and representations of dissent. Furthermore, with the rising of consumer-driven politics and intense media competition, the media's own agenda in championing certain causes and issues needs consideration. Some protest issues have become more acceptable as they refer to broader social processes and values such as social equality and control and governmental policies and responsibility. Thus, the media adapt perspectives by specific protests and assimilate them into their own views, presenting themselves as critical observers of the domestic or global political establishment (Weaver & Scacco, 2013).

As in the case of Cyprus, the EU's introduction of the bail-in policy in 2013 was unprecedented in its controversial implementation. Instead of bailing out banks in financial distress, the EU imposed new bank resolution rules, requiring the failing banks' shareholders and creditors to pay their share of the costs

through a “bail-in” mechanism, taking a loss or a “haircut” on the market value of their holdings. In financial markets, a haircut refers to a reduction applied to the value of an asset. If an asset—such as holdings of a particular government bond—is worth €1 million but is given a haircut of 10%, it means it is treated as though it has a value of only €0.9 million. The compulsory compliance of the bail-in policy contributed to public disillusionment in Cyprus and the shift of government from communist to conservative leadership. Such circumstances in connection to the state of dominance of corporate interests and political influence in the media environment all impinge on the role of news media in facilitating citizen advocacy and credible journalism. In this regard, the degree of adequacy and impartiality of the accounts that news media provide on anti-austerity protests have implications for rising nationalism and public contestations over political solidarity in European policy development (Theocharis & Walter, 2018).

Further examining news coverage of anti-austerity protests in particular national and political contexts is necessary, especially when a protest or national crisis reveals unique political dynamics. Considering the preceding literature, this study investigated how mainstream news media framed the 2013 Cypriot protests. Specifically, this study examined protest coverage by the websites of Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC/PIK), *Phileleftheros*, *Politis*, and *Cyprus Mail*, all of which represent mainstream news media with extensive readership and audiences. Considering that the Cypriot protests expressed objection against national and international elites, these media organizations represented, in varying degrees, political interests and positions in connection with the government, financial institutions, and major issues in contention. In addition, the protests at the time raised issues concerning several other EU member states and brought into focus complex European interdependence—the conflicts among the protesting citizens, the state, and various international elites against the background of introducing bail-in measures.

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: What aspects of the protest paradigm are applied in the coverage of the 2013 Cypriot protests by the news websites of CyBC/PIK, Phileleftheros, Politis, and Cyprus Mail (if any)? What are the narrative frames of the news coverage? Does the news coverage reflect reliance on official sources?*
- RQ2: How do frames vary in the protest coverage of these media outlets?*

Briefly, the following section explains the backgrounds of the media organizations. Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (Ραδιοφωνικό Ίδρυμα Κύπρου) or CyBC/PIK, is Cyprus’s public broadcasting service (<http://cybc.com.cy/>). It is funded by the state and promotes government policies and national interests. It transmits on four radio and three television channels (CyBC 1, CyBC 2, and CyBC HD). CyBC 1 (or RIK 1) features political, financial, and sports news, and the broadcasting material of current production, after its transmission, is posted on the website RIK, where it remains for 15 days, giving the public free access.

Phileleftheros, “The Liberal,” is the largest daily newspaper in Cyprus (<https://phileleftherosgroup.com/about-us/>). *Phileleftheros* belongs to the Phileleftheros Media Group, which owns a publishing company, several magazines, an English-language weekly newspaper, two radio stations, and nine news websites/platforms. *Phileleftheros* is not affiliated with any parties, but it is generally

seen as a centrist-conservative newspaper that tends to be supportive of any party in government. *Politis*, "Citizen," is the second largest daily newspaper in Cyprus (<https://politis.com.cy/>). Its political views are center-right, but it is independently owned. *Cyprus Mail* is one of the two English-language newspapers, targeting non-Greek communities in Cyprus (<https://cyprus-mail.com/>). *Cyprus Mail* claims to take an independent political position with no political affiliations. The 2013 protests raised objections against a tax proposal to be imposed on bank depositors including nationals of other countries. Therefore, it is useful to include a newspaper serving the non-Greek population.

This research originally also considered *Haravgi*, "Dawn," which is among the largest newspapers and affiliated with the communist party, the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL). Initial analysis revealed that *Haravgi's* reporting attempted to empower the protestors; however, the discourse generally focused on attacking the government instead of institutional practices. Because *Haravgi* is closely associated with the communist party in opposition to the party in government, this critical narrative is mostly infiltrated by party allegiance and does not yield new theoretical insight. The final sampling excluded *Haravgi*.

Bail-in Negotiations in the 2012–2013 Cypriot Financial Crisis

The Republic of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004 and the Eurozone in 2008. Around that time, the financial crisis in the United States had begun affecting the financial stability of the region and the euro itself. The 2012–2013 Cypriot financial crisis in particular resulted from a number of factors. These included exposure of Cypriot banks to overleveraged local property companies and the Greek government bond default, the downgrading of the Cypriot government's bond credit rating to junk status by international credit rating agencies, the consequential inability of the government to refund its state expenses from the international markets, and the reluctance of the government to restructure the troubled banking industry. Within the EU, Cyprus was the fifth country, after Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and (partially) Spain, to declare a financial crisis and request financial assistance from the Eurogroup. On March 16, 2013, a €10 billion bail-in plan by the Eurogroup was announced. As part of the conditions, a one-off bank tax of 6.7% on deposits up to €100,000 and 9.9% on higher deposits was to be imposed. Unlike previous bailouts, this plan intended to have depositors in Cypriot banks partially fund the assistance. This bail-in policy raised a question about whether such a measure would even be legal, as Cypriot bank deposits were insured and thus guaranteed not to be subject to loss of value. There was also concern among other EU member states that the bail-in implementation could become the norm, although the Eurogroup had stressed that the tax proposal was to be imposed only on Cyprus. Because this claim implied unequal treatment of EU member states that had requested or would request financial assistance, it generated more anger in Cypriot society. Furthermore, taxing bank accounts initially appeared preferable to raising regular taxes because a significant number of high-value depositors in Cypriot banks were Russian investors. Even before the negotiations, the view was expressed most forcibly by German politicians that the Cypriot banks had grown too large in relation to the scale of the economy, particularly with reference to Russia–Cyprus money flows, which suggested money-laundering activities and an unsustainable, questionable model of offshore banking.

Despite public objection and under the pressure from the Troika, the government tried to move forward the proposal, which was vetoed by the parliament, and depositors started to withdraw funds from banks to avoid a potential tax. To prevent a bank run, the government shut down business activities of all

commercial banks, which had already been closed for days, allowing only a daily cash withdraw of a limited amount. On March 25, 2013, officials announced a new plan to preserve all insured deposits of €100,000 or less, but they shut down the Laiki Bank, the second largest bank in Cyprus, and tax all uninsured deposits there. There would be an approximate 47.5% tax on uninsured deposits in the Bank of Cyprus, the largest bank in Cyprus, which was forced to acquire the Laiki Bank and its massive debt. Also agreed in the negotiation was the forced sale of the facilities of three major Cypriot banks in Greece within days, costing the Cypriot banks €3.4 billion.

Beginning March 19, 2013, members of the public staged protests outside the House of Representatives. On March 21, thousands of people, mostly bank employees, gathered outside the House of Parliament, holding placards against the restructuring of the Laiki Bank. In the following days, the protests expanded as civil servants and young people joined in, many of whom were students and schoolteachers on contract. Much of the protestors' anger was directed at the Troika and the German government, which were viewed as being behind the bail-in conditions. The protests lasted until March 25, when the Cypriot parliament accepted the bail-in terms.

Method

All news items concerning public reaction to the Cypriot bail-in that appeared on the news websites of *CyBC*, *Phileleftheros*, *Politis*, and *Cyprus Mail* were examined. The time frame of data collection was from March 16, 2014, when the Eurogroup publicly announced the first bail-in plan, to March 31, 2014, six days after the government accepted the final proposal. Eighty stories in the form of news reports, feature stories, editorials and analyses, and commentaries are included in the analysis (*CyBC*, $n = 16$; *Phileleftheros*, $n = 22$; *Politis*, $n = 18$; and *Cyprus Mail*, $n = 24$). The unit of analysis was each individual news story.

To address questions about the use of the protest paradigm, this research analyzed the frames that emerged in the news coverage. Derived from Gitlin's (1980) concept of frame as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (p. 7), framing is about the empirically observable presentation of issues. Journalists organize news stories within certain frames in the effort to select, prioritize, simplify, and structure the presentation of opinions and facts with causal reasoning. By presenting sociopolitical issues within selective frames, journalists legitimate—and simultaneously limit the range of—the foundational causes and potential consequences of a social problem, as well as its possible remedies. Journalistic norms and values that undergird news production as a process of media hegemony shape representation of dissent. Consequently, frames are important determinants of how a protest story is presented.

In conducting the framing analysis, this study used the method of reconstructing frame packages—starting from a series of texts to reconstruct the frames applied therein (Van Gorp, 2016). In this inductive framing analysis, each frame is presented as a frame package in a text, consisting of framing devices, reasoning devices, and the central frame. Framing devices are manifest components of a text, lexical choices, and/or visual images that may activate the frame as an abstract idea in the minds of the readers. Reasoning devices consist of the implicit and explicit causal reasoning connected to the issue being reported:

the description of the problem, the problem definition, the cause or source of the problem, responsibility and solutions, and moral evaluation. Finally, there is the actual frame, the organizing theme that provides the frame package with a coherent structure and reinforces the central narrative emphasis. The framing package consists of variables corresponding with aspects of the protest paradigm (Spyridou, 2015), and the present research adopted this approach (Table 1). The reconstruction of frame packages requires qualitative, text-centered, open coding using the method of constant comparison against the variables in a frame package to locate frames in the news item. The frame matrix is considered complete when no additional frames could be detected in the texts.

In order to assess whether the news coverage reflects a reliance of (un)official sources, all information sources quoted directly or paraphrased in the texts are considered. Sources are considered official if they are government or authority figures or institutional or media experts. Sources are considered citizen or unofficial voices if they are quoted as participants or representatives of a protest or for their "bystander," "man on the street" perspective (i.e., protestors).

Table 1. Variables of the Framing Analysis.

Narrative Frame, Reasoning and Framing Devices	Variables Within the Protest Paradigm
Problem description	Portrayal of the protest/protestors (how the protest is described, e.g., peaceful or confrontational)
Problem definition	Description of protest claims (what the protest is all about; what the protestors demand)
Problem cause/source	Factors causing/contributing to the problem; sources/perspectives used in interpreting the cause of the problem: official vs. protestor/citizen sources
Responsibility and solutions	Description of who is responsible for the situation and providing solutions. As opposed to situating protest events in a chain of causes and outcomes of wider significance, news following the protest paradigm tends to depict protest demands as specific instances or isolated events without placing them in a broader social context. This distinction likely influences perceptions of attributed responsibility.
Moral evaluation	Moral and emotional basis for the protest; social, cultural resonance, moral reasoning, and judgment of protest actions/claims
Lexical choices	Key, recurring words or phrases within a news story about the protest or protestors

Results²

Among the news frames commonly used in protest coverage are the “law and (dis)order” and the “spectacle,” validating frames are less common (McLeod, 2007). However, all media described the Cypriot protests as expressions against the “catastrophe proposal,” drawing public attention to a matter of national emergency. Nearly 60% of the stories had direct references and descriptions of the demonstrations, banners, and posters. While these tactics garnered media coverage, few reports contained descriptions of confrontation. Several newspaper stories mentioned the presence of the police, the size of the protests, and the emotional state of the protestors, using descriptors such as “massive,” “dynamic,” “peaceful,” “angry,” and “tearful.” CyBC detailed incidents that a crowd burned the German flag, left sheep hair at the presidential palace, and pushed the police line in an attempt to enter the parliament. Such descriptions demonstrated the resistance of spectacles in protest coverage, particularly in TV reporting, largely due to the need for attention-grabbing visual material and the dramatization of an issue (Miloni & Avraamidou, 2018). Nevertheless, the protestors were mainly presented as “raising valid objections” not radical deviants. This validation was present in the coverage in varying magnitudes through frames articulating national sovereignty, social injustice, and acceptance of austerity policies—some constituted elements of common themes among all media, others illustrated variations (Table 2).

Table 2. Narrative Frames in the Protest Coverage.

Narrative Frame	Problem Description	Problem Definition	Cause or Source of the Problem	Responsibility and Solution	Moral Evaluation	Lexical Choices
National sovereignty	Massive, dynamic and peaceful protests; undignified and angry citizens challenge foreign/EU politicians for proposing an illegal haircut; references of the police; description	The proposal violated Cyprus's sovereignty and would further jeopardize Cypriot economy; citizens question integrity and solidarity in EU governance	The Troika, German political actors, and the Cypriot president	It is the government's responsibility to reject the proposal; national and international political actors blame each other for proposing the haircut; the people call for a referendum; the president seeks alternatives	Citizens are protecting national sovereignty; the proposal is illegal; the imposition of the proposal is taxation injustice; Cyprus is being caught in geopolitics (i.e., Germany's accusations of Russia–Cyprus	“Raising valid objections”; “for the people of Cyprus”; “illegal and outrageous”; “lethal procedure”; “Troika go home”

² Quotes from media sources in this article were translated into English by Elizabeth Charalambous and the author.

	of people burning German flags and weaving anti-EU banners				money laundering)	
Social injustice	Pending negative economic developmen t; bank employees and angry students protesting against job loss	Austerities would lead to massive unemploy ment and instigate potentially disastrous social cost	Troika; the president of the Central Bank of Cyprus; the banks	Not to close down Laiki Bank; secure jobs and pensions	Unemployme nt and social instability would increase, particularly among bank employees; families would lose savings; non- Greek communities would also be affected	"Fears for a chain reaction in the international market"; the bank employees are "angry," "fearful," and "panicking"; "The banks should pay, not the people"
Acceptance of austerity	It is too late to protest; bank employees are protesting out of fear of personal loss	Accepting the haircut to avoid bankruptcy of the country; the previous governmen t led to the huge debt	The previous government; Troika/ EU	Accepting the haircut is inevitable; there is no alternative	The extraordinary circumstance s must be rectified with a painful solution; people will need to endure the austerities and rebuild the economy	"People are protesting out of anger and fear"; "There is no way out of the blackmailing dilemma of Troika"; "We asked for the loan because we generated a huge debt ... had chosen an incompetent government"

Narrative Frames

The frame of national sovereignty described rejecting the proposal as the government's obligation to protect the country, questioning the legitimacy of the proposal and the government's management of the negotiation. Within this frame, contextualizing the proposal within the EU's intention of restructuring the Cypriot banking industry, all media presented the EU and German politicians as imposing illegal measures to the detriment of the Cypriot economy. This frame contained references of moral rage among the public about not only the unprecedented, arbitrary introduction of a haircut and its magnitude but also the proposal in its totality, including closing down banks, privatizing utility companies, and introducing labor flexibility laws. *Phileleftheros* and *Politis* described the protestors as "undignified and angry" citizens, protesting to preserve national sovereignty against unlawful decision-making. *Phileleftheros* reported on March 19, 2013: "The goal of the protest is to send a message inside and outside Cyprus that decisions made by some central decision-making bodies outside Cyprus will not be accepted without strong reactions from the people" (p. 5).

Politis defined the proposal as political injustice against the Cypriot people, rendering a touch of patriotism to the protests: "They are experimenting with Cyprus. This is outrageous and illegal" (March 19, 2013, p. 3). Stories in *Cyprus Mail* depicted the protestors weaving the Greek and Cypriot flags and featured slogans showing public anger toward the Troika—"Troika Go Home," "Hands off Cyprus," and "Merkel, Hitler—the same s * * *."

Articulated within national sovereignty, all newspapers supported the idea of holding a referendum. Either the parliament would vote against the proposal or the government should hold a referendum. *Phileleftheros* emphasized in reports that "the citizens have demanded a referendum" (March 19, 2013, p. 5), whereas *Politis* echoed the idea that "a decision needs to be made by the Cypriot people" (March 20, 2013, p. 4). *Cyprus Mail* interviewed citizen groups, featuring statements such as "The major demand of the people is that a referendum is held, nothing should be passed unless the people pass it" (March 20, 2013, p. 1).

This national sovereignty frame also embedded the debate of (ir)responsible politics—whom to blame for the situation. The coverage reflected personalization of blame in connection with an alleged relapse in the supranationalization of the European decision-making processes. Recent research suggests increasing levels of personalization in media coverage of political news; the focus of news coverage has shifted from parties and organizations to leaders and candidates (Van Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2012). One hypothesis of the Eurozone crisis is that it is resulted from the structure of the European economic governance that is of supranationalization of the decision-making processes (Hubé, Salgado, & Puustinen, 2015). The Lisbon treaty institutionalized a dual constitution, supranational in the single market's policies and intergovernmental in economic and financial decisions. However, the Eurozone crisis seems to have empowered the states (i.e., national governments) over the European Commission and certain states (e.g., Germany) over the others. This lack of an integrated structure for policy making and the absence of a unified voice caused confusion in the EU's management of the crisis.

This interpretation was reflected in media narratives of whom to blame for proposing the haircut, personalized around Cypriot, German, and EU politicians. For example, CyBC constantly reported, "We will be watching all the developments in the European capitals . . . [with] the leaders playing a significant role

in the present situation.” CyBC defended President Anastasiades in the blaming politics—it was the German/EU politicians (rather than the president) who were responsible for proposing the haircut, and the president had no intention of accepting the proposal but rather would pursue an alternative. For that matter, all the newspapers mentioned a minority opinion of exiting the Eurozone to avoid financial control from the EU. Yet more attention was given to the possibility of Cyprus seeking rescue from Russia, although none mentioned allegations against Cypriot banks including the suspected money-laundering from Russia, as reported by some international news media (Papaioannou, 2015). The coverage focused on international politicians evading blame. For example, on March 19, 2013, CyBC reported, “Schäuble insists that the decision on the bail-in under 100 thousand was the government’s idea, but Christos Stylianides [the government’s spokesperson] emphatically denies it” (“New International Decisions on the Eurogroup’s Decision,” CyBC, March 19, 2013). The following day, another story reported, “President Anastasiades . . . while answering the questions of members of the parliament, denied the statements of Schäuble, that it was the Cypriot Government that suggested the bail-in on low deposits” (“The Banks Will Remain Closed Tomorrow and the Day After,” CyBC, March 20, 2013). Quoting various party leaders, the reports sympathized with the president being trapped in “a blackmailing dilemma of Troika.” In a story with that title on March 21, 2013, Marios Karoyian, president of the Democratic Party, stated, “Whatever is happening in Cyprus at the moment is brand new, they are using us as guinea pigs, well, it is our obligation to protect not only our dignity but also our people, our democracy” (“A Blackmailing Dilemma of Troika,” CyBC, March 21, 2013). George Perdikis, deputy of the Cyprus Greens, said, “It is proven by now that our interlocutors in Europe cannot be trusted, and today we have asked the president to study the scenario of getting us out of this lethal procedure” (“A Blackmailing Dilemma of Troika,” CyBC, March 21, 2013).

The theme of incohesiveness among the political actors was present in the coverage of *Cyprus Mail* and *Politis*, revealing confusion in the institutional accountability of these actors. For example, EU officials were reportedly insisting that the Cypriot president, the European Commission, and the ECB all agreed on the levy while the Cypriot government was said to negotiate a second proposal. Commenting on this, ECB President Dijsselboem stated he was “open to a more fair approach to the way the levy is structured” (*Cyprus Mail*, March 22, 2013, p. 2) while German politicians accused him of “organizing a massive loss of confidence in Europe” (p. 2).

The second dominant frame was social injustice. Many reports emphasized the pending negative impact of the haircut. CyBC heavily reported negative reactions of international markets and politicians to the proposal, especially when Cypriot banks remained closed for days while the parliamentary voting on the bail-in was postponed, instigating fear in the international community of a bank run. In the story, “Euro Walking on a Tightrope! Fears of a Chain Reaction in the International Market,” CyBC reported that negative developments in the international stock exchange led to “an urgent session of the Eurogroup meeting. . . . Putin claims that this decision is dangerous and Moscow appears alarmed. . . . Medve is warning for a revision on economic collaboration with Nicosia” (March 20, 2013).

In comparison, reports of *Cyprus Mail* drew attention to unfair job loss that resulted from institutional failure. *Cyprus Mail* interviewed protesting students about their parents losing jobs and being unable to support their children’s education. In stories on the merging of banks, *Cyprus Mail* depicted how angry employees protested for the resignation of the governor of the Central Bank of Cyprus, who supported

the merge. The protestors were bitter about being the main target of the proposal when the collapsing of the banks was largely brought on by unregulated expansion. In addition, some feature stories shed light on the predicament of bank staff. Bank employees, relatively well paid in Cyprus, were considered part of the troubled banking system and benefited from its unregulated activities in the past. In anticipation of rising unemployment, some segments of society did not sympathize with bank employees protesting for their "privileged" rights. This can be seen in the following excerpts from a *Cyprus Mail* story published March 27, 2013: "A man protesting outside the Presidential Palace said, 'They have forced us to take these austerity measures and the people have done nothing wrong. The banks, the banks should pay, not the people'" (p. 2). A bank employee said, "Nobody cares about the bank. They have accused us of being highly paid" (*Cyprus Mail*, March 27, 2013, p. 2). *Cyprus Mail* also included reports on how the non-Greek communities in Cyprus were concerned that the proposal would affect them unfairly.

However, within this measured sympathy, spectacle frames were present, portraying the protestors as powerless victims and highlighting emotional drama. *Politis* and *Phileleftheros* described the bank employees as "angry," "fearful," and "panicking," quoting them expressing anxiety about losing their jobs. *Phileleftheros* reported on March 23, 2013, "Anger and anxiety outside the Parliament . . . Desperate bank employees, who in [recent] days have been living under the decision of whether they will lose their jobs, burst into tears" (p. 1). The reports presented the protestors' demands under the umbrella of "Troika go home," "Hands off Cyprus," or "Shame," blaming the political actors for making the banks the main target of the austerity—the Troika, the EU, Germany (Merkel), and President Anastasiades. In this respect, although the frame of social injustice premised the protests on the moral basis of unfair job loss, the bank employees were largely seen as motivated by their self-interests. The coverage gave little attention to the grievances of malfunctions within Cypriot banks beyond criticizing specific individuals.

Finally, the acceptance frame presented a different perspective on the (final) proposal and thus a different definition of the protests. The first two frames presented the protests as being provoked by the bail-in proposal. Angry citizens rightfully protested against violation of national sovereignty and the taxation injustice of the proposal. The acceptance frame, however, focused on accepting the proposal to avoid national bankruptcy—there is no way out of the "blackmailing dilemma of the Troika." This frame gained more presence in the coverage when the government was pressured to accept the second, final proposal. The frame justified the president's position and shifted the blame away from the current government. For example, on March 29, 2013, CyBC quoted national party leaders, supporting the president's acceptance of the haircut: "Demetris Syllouris, president of [European Party] Evroko, said: 'The loan contract should be as such so that when we have the financial means we will have the right to escape from this inexplicable trap set by the so-called European solidarity'" ("The President Said in Reality Nobody Loses, Not Cypriot or Any Other Investor," CyBC, March 29, 2013).

Within this frame, both *Phileleftheros* and *Politis* blamed the previous government, led by communist AKEL in opposition to the current administration, as mostly responsible for the financial crisis. Although both papers presented protestors' grievances against the governor of the Central Bank of Cyprus and the previous governor, who played a key role in the unregulated expansions of Cypriot banks, the analysis focused on individual irresponsibility instead of governmental failure in providing financial transparency and accountability. The newspapers disparaged the previous president and his party for having

led the country into a financial crisis, and it was too late and meaningless to protest against the current government or Troika, which would actually help prevent a national bankruptcy. This narrative also signaled the newspapers' negativity toward the efficacy of social protests. Here is an excerpt from a story published by *Phileleftheros* on March, 31, 2013:

But with it [the loan] we avoided bankruptcy. . . . We asked for the loan because we generated a huge debt. And we generated this debt because we had chosen an incompetent government. . . . Back then, no one did anything. Demonstrations, protests. Instead of when the problem was rooted, they happen now. . . . It is very late to protest against the memorandum, the Troika, even the euro. (p. 25)

Several of their reports documented the €17 billion debt AKEL left the current government that has instigated the Troika investigation and tax proposal. Referencing international economic analysts and media reports as well as Cypriot expatriates living abroad, stories of *Cyprus Mail* supported the idea that since the government had to accept the proposal, the people should look ahead and be prepared to rebuild the economy.

Inclusion of Official and Citizen Information Sources

The results indicated that all media included both official and citizen sources for information; however, national and international political leaders had higher levels of presence, suggesting a tendency of overpoliticization and personalization of the negotiation (Table 3).

Table 3. Inclusion of Information Sources in Protest Coverage.

Media Outlets	National Political Leaders (%)	International Political Leaders (%)	Economic Actors, Experts, and Media Analysts (%)	Protesting Citizens, Standbys, and Representatives of Citizen Groups (%)
CyBC	42.5	32.5	18	7
<i>Phileleftheros</i>	36.9	26.9	19.2	17
<i>Politis</i>	35.8	26.3	17.3	20.6
<i>Cyprus Mail</i>	30.5	31.5	16	22

The national political actors led the coverage across the media, particularly by CyBC. The news stories included statements from President Anastasiades, the Cypriot finance minister, leaders of national political parties, the government's spokesperson, the president of the Central Bank of Cyprus, the chairman of the Cypriot parliament's finance committee, and other members of parliament. The second group of information sources constituted international political actors including Merkel, Schäuble, and Putin; the presidents of the Eurogroup, the IMF, and the ECB; the prime ministers of Greece, Spain, and the United Kingdom; and some EU finance ministers. As seen in the descriptions of major narrative frames, the media quoted national political leaders in support of the narratives that the haircut violated national sovereignty and taxation justice. These statements expressed criticism of international political actors and revealed

conflicts among the Cypriot government, the Troika, Germany, and other EU member states. For example, *Politis* quoted Merkel and Schäuble insisting on pushing the proposal forward; however, Eurozone finance ministers disagreed whether Cyprus should place the burden on smaller investors. Reports from *Cyprus Mail* quoted the Luxembourg prime minister saying that taxing the small deposits was socially unjust. Other reports also included statements from British officials who questioned the EU's handling of the Cypriot crisis.

Among international sources, Merkel, Schäuble, Putin, and the presidents of the IMF, Troika, and ECB were the most visible, indicating the importance of represented economies and institutions in the negotiation. Reports by *Cyprus Mail* also mentioned the president of the European Council and the prime minister of Luxembourg, who voiced alternative perspectives. Some articles quoted international officials reproaching the malfunction of the Cypriot banks and referring to the economic model as the "casino economy," although few sources offered well-informed explanations. Overall, conflicting opinions between national and international political actors and incohesiveness in European decision-making obscured protestors' advocacy of accountability at both national and European levels. In this regard, the protests were framed from the perspectives of national and international officials as reactions to restructuring the (troubled) banking industry. This treatment marginalized the public's grievances, although shutting down the Laiki Bank had triggered the protests.

Economic actors, experts, and media analysts were also present in the coverage. Relevant reports included traders, fund managers, business owners, analysts in economic journalism, and comments from national and international news reports. These sources offered interpretations of official announcements or economic data in light of their impact on political development. For example, CyBC and *Politis* included information from financial news reports of Bloomberg, the *Financial Times*, and *The Economist* when covering the reactions of the international markets. All newspapers included statements from economic analysts, traders, and fund managers, commenting on the possible merger of banks. However, these statements were not placed within a discussion of solutions but rather given as justification of political actions and decisions. Few sources offered clear explanations of the European institutions and mechanisms and consequences of (leaving) the euro system.

Protesting bank employees and students, bystanders, and citizen groups were also present in the coverage, conveying their anger and anxiety about the proposal. As seen in the excerpts in the previous discussion, the protestors were depicted as having suffered economic injustice. However, the media did not offer them a voice equal to that of the institutional actors. The protestors were mostly expressing anger and fear. By accentuating the protestors as hopeless victims rather than citizens demanding dialogue about institutional solutions, this approach in effect served to elevate the importance of political elites.

Discussion

This study found evidence that the media coverage of the protests deviated from the protest paradigm. The results also revealed differences in coverage between the news outlets, indicating possible mitigating effects as well as more resistant frames within the protest thesis. With reference to the political economy of the news media in Cyprus and their norms and practices concerning reporting protests, these results provide contextualized understanding of the application of the protest thesis.

The media validated the protestors as undignified citizens who were rightfully angry about a proposal imposed by the EU. Furthermore, this validation was present in varying magnitudes in frames articulating national sovereignty, social injustice, and acceptance of austerity policies, wavering between blaming European and national political actors for irresponsible politics.

Within the frame of national sovereignty, the protests were depicted as societal anger toward a proposal that violated national autonomy; it was the government's responsibility to reject the proposal. Within this narrative, the media placed blame on international actors and portrayed the government as searching for alternative solutions in order to circumvent the pending austerities.

Through the frame of social injustice, *Philelefttheros* and *Politis* defined the protests as understandable reactions to austerity policies that would exacerbate unemployment among other economic consequences. This restrained sympathy for personal job loss, however, was expressed without policy discussion of what led to the collapse of the banking system and thus proper restructuring. The coverage by *Cyprus Mail* included broader segments of society, reporting alternative perspectives from the non-Greek communities and international politicians. This frame of injustice endorsed the protestors but had a propensity to the protest paradigm repertoires of emotional drama and episodic coverage without analysis of regulating the financial system and improving political accountability.

The latter theme was more present in the frame of acceptance of austerity. Shared among all media outlets, this frame portrayed accepting the bail-in as the inevitable choice and reduced validation of the protests. As opposed to blaming European politicians for a proposal that violated national sovereignty and imposed economic injustice, accepting the proposal would prevent an imminent national bankruptcy caused by the previous government. In this frame, validations of the protests were overtaken by fear of a potential Eurozone exit and the rationalization of no alternative to capitalist control. The protests were neutralized as a normal reaction of people experiencing extraordinary circumstances that must be rectified with a solution, albeit painful.

Furthermore, all media included both official and citizen information sources in their coverage, although political actors had higher levels of presence, suggesting a tendency toward politicization and personalization of the crisis and negotiation. Protests may refer to values that are shared by news outlets and their public; however, news media might still highlight political actors for their interpretations and overshadow the claims of protests (Fahlenbrach, 2016). This emphasis on national and international political leaders contributed to perceptions of conflict within the political interdependency of nations in the Eurozone crisis and the simplification of economic issues. In addition, when news coverage focuses on political leaders rather than institutional factors, which are often more essential for understanding relevant issues, this leads the media to personalize events, leaving the impression that only (certain) elites play a key role in the crisis. In this case, the haircut negotiation was portrayed as national political leaders maneuvering in conflicts with the Troika and Germany while economic and media experts commented on the decisions either against or for the Europeanized solution but from national economics perspectives. The citizens were not absent in the process; however, their voices were used to criticize foreign actors or support the national government without engaging in deliberations about political transparency and the social rights of citizens.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study found evidence that the news media under certain conditions had some latitude to relax the protest paradigm. The validations of the protestors may have resulted from the following factors. First, the protests were large and essentially peaceful, making them difficult for the media to ignore. The spectacles were limited to the size and emotional drama of the protests. Second, the articulation of national sovereignty and taxation injustice resonated in society and insulated the protestors from marginalization. Third, (some of) the goals of the protests were consistent with the interests of the media and their audience, depending on the political circumstances and their development.

In examining the media's own agendas and agency in championing certain causes, the political contingencies and dynamics at work in contemporary protest and media reporting inform media interactions with political elites and their representation of relevant issues. In other words, the news media's stance toward protests is contingent on the immediate political circumstances, the wider surrounding political culture, and the (un)certainty of the policies involved. These interactions often manifest in terms of the news media gauging their responses to the degree of elite consensus (Cottle, 2008). Elite consensus or dissensus, at both national and international levels, is an outcome of economic processes of globalization that have produced disruptive and differential impacts on national interest groups; this mitigates the imposition of one dominant economic or political view and opens up new representational possibilities.

The bail-in negotiation created an opportunity for political contestation, and the society-wide significance of the issue led the media to differentiate their interests under the circumstances and subsequent (re)alignment with the elites in contention. In the struggle to reach an agreement, the Cypriot government, the Troika, and Germany all attempted to defend their positions and interests and shift policy blame onto the others. When the first proposal was rejected by the Cypriot parliament and generated concern in national and international communities, the disordered decision-making within the EU in relation to the geopolitical interests of Germany and the incohesiveness within the Eurogroup exacerbated policy uncertainty among the elites. This made them targets of criticism of varying nature and degrees. Yet the criticisms of the austerity policies were more acceptable within the interests of the media in the context of their interactions with the international political elites, albeit not the national, economic power structure. The national sovereignty dimension of the protests was relevant to all media, and this prompted positive coverage, positioning the protests as upholding national interests, in particular, against international political actors and practices.

Regarding this point, as a public broadcaster with considerable state interest, CyBC adhered more closely to the protest paradigm and employed a wider pattern of associated strategies. Its reporting defended the government's role in solving the problem and only within this context described the protestors as discontented citizens concerned with national sovereignty. When the government accepted the final proposal, the media credited the government for having avoided a possible economic meltdown and shifted the blame to the previous administration. Furthermore, the private media's interests within the country's economic power structure muted criticism of financial accountability and transparency. Possibly yielding to public pressure and potential loss of readership, the media, particularly *Phileleftheros* and *Politis*, employed a selective approach. Their coverage offered visibility into protest grievances of job loss, but largely omitted allegations of institutional corruption within the banks and the government's tolerance of it. This approach also embedded sentiments of protest futility, which might be more prevalent in a small, divided Cyprus that

exhibits high levels of dependence upon the EU for economic and national security (Spyridou, 2015). In this regard, the frame of "there is no alternative" provided ideological cover for accepting austerity policies and concerted capital control in the country's economic restructuring.

All media privileged political actors as information sources and abstained from substantive, informed analysis of economic issues or alternative policy solutions. Moreover, this case showed a focus on governmental level of politics influenced by the progression and certainty of the events in which only a few governmental actors had effective visibility and power. This type of framing might facilitate the perception of the Eurozone crisis through national lenses rather than as a challenge that demands a coordinated European solution. Such practice underscored a normative tension between media representation of dissent and responsibility, calling for a careful (re)consideration of media self-interest within specific political cultures in relation to the legitimation of economic policy and European governance.

Conclusion

This article examined how Cypriot mainstream news media framed the public protests in the 2013 financial crisis, offering insight into the possibility of news media conditionally breaking away from the protest paradigm toward more validating coverage. The results showed little emphasis on the typical law and (dis)order frame but affirmation of the protests in varying magnitudes through frames articulating national sovereignty, social injustice, and acceptance of austerity policies. Despite some positive representations of the protests, all media were in a position to better contextualize and explain the social and political factors leading up to the protests. In this sense, many critical issues with mobilizing consequences were ignored. Very little coverage explained the mechanisms and consequences of the euro system or the powers of European institutions. Coverage portrayed European institutions as important to the crisis but providing an ineffectual, chaotic response. Discussion of the issues in this way affirmed the importance of certain national leaders even though the citizens expected the European institutions to provide fair, coordinated leadership. This has significant implications for the development of European governance and how future issues might be reported and perceived.

Finally, within the context of the lingering Eurozone crisis and increasing global uncertainty, never before has the need for both the public and news organizations seeking and fostering informed public discourse been more important in nurturing the national, European, and global public sphere. An issue perhaps more critical than whether the media are able to convey the voice of the protestors is whether political institutions are able and willing to enter into dialogue with the affected public. Only such consideration will principally improve the media representation of protesting citizens to ensure that their concerns are integrated into decision making, contributing to the empowerment of social protest.

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