

## **Shaping the European Identity through Metaphors**

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In national media, European matters are mainly discussed foremost in the context of domestic public debate within member states (Hegendus, 2011). Thus any link to the European identity is filtered through perceptions created on a domestic level, where two identities are created: the national and the European one. Based on the constructivist perspective, identity is not fixed and predetermined (Dawisha, 2002; Theiler, 2005) and is socially constructed through discourse (Bordieu, 1999; Hall, 1992).

Conceptual (cognitive) metaphor refers to the understanding of a concept in terms of another (e.g. "Politics is business", "Life is a journey"); based on this definition, metaphors shape not just our communication, but also the way we think and act – generally, they are seen in language in our everyday lives (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Papaioannou-Spirouli, 2009). Metaphor, due to its symbolic representation, serves as understanding and experiencing concept X in terms of concept Y by placing arguments, identities and thoughts into a wider dimension of meaning that is experientially based (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/1999/2003). As figurative linguistic concepts and heuristic devices, metaphors shape the representation of identities via providing an opportunity of understanding and evaluating social surroundings under various perspectives. Hence people are expected to apply to politics the same information shortcuts they have learned to use throughout life (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), metaphors not only shape identities but underline the heuristic connection between concepts (Bougher, 2012). McGraw and Dolan (2007) proposed that personifying the state has consequences on attitude formation. In addition, this personification can be embodied in different ways in particular through prominent elected leaders, dictators, monarchs or any other figure that is salient in each political system (Takas and Papaioannou-Spirouli, 2015). Since Europe is a more abstract political and financial construct further research is needed to explore through which metaphorical mechanisms its identity is being constructed or delegitimized. Focusing on Greece, the financial and social turmoil and the subsequent measures of three Memorandums triggered shifts not only in domestic political communication but in the representation of the identity of Europe. Many debates were held regarding the role of Europe in the Greek paradigm. Based on the above, our analysis focuses on the Sunday central themes of three major Greek newspapers serving different political perspectives in order to respond to questions as:

- a) Which is the use of metaphors regarding Europe in the Greek Press?
- b) Which are the most characteristics of the European identity are salient through personification?
- c) How could personified characteristics of Europe shape the Greek political perspective of the European identity?
- d) Is there a differentiation of metaphorical representation of Europe due to the political orientation of each newspaper?

Content analysis is deployed in order to pinpoint and categorize each metaphor regarding Europe along with the fundamental characteristics. Researchers are expecting to reveal interesting aspects of the European public political knowledge and political identity via processing the wide-used metaphors in the Greek press.