Framing Egypt's foreign policy in the Western press: 2018-2021

Triangulating quantitative and qualitative content analysis with expert interviews

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Abstract

The research seeks to monitor and understand the Western press portrayal of Egyptian foreign policy during 2018-2021, which marked the onset of a new term in office for the El-Sisi government. On the heels of unsettled decades following the so-called Arab Spring, the country faced numerous challenges, domestically, regionally, and internationally. Significant shifts in foreign policy principles and behaviours sought to address these challenges, prioritising interest and national security over values, and neo-liberalism reform and multidimensional diplomacy over traditional alliances. The study aims to analyse the reception and framing of these features, which underpin Egypt's middle-power aspirations, in Western press, to understand why some themes are primed while others are ignored. Building on theoretical insights in the theory of media events, framing and priming effects in agenda setting, and approaches to the study of middle-power features in the context of the MENA region; the thesis builds a theoretical framework to engage Western media selective approach to covering Egypt's foreign policy affairs. The analytical framework of the study highlights the prominence of "disruptive" frames over the "ceremonial" ones, while the literature review section of the study elucidates the key components of Egypt's foreign policy strategy as a complex, interlinked whole. Triangulating quantitative and qualitative content analysis with expert interviews constitutes the main corpus of the data explored in the thesis. First, 800 items dealing with Egypt's foreign have been selected from nine media outlets to determine the size and the nature of the coverage. Second, the foundational data revealing five prominent topics in the Western press is analysed using qualitative content analysis (QCA) to elucidate narrative tropes and frames of representation applied in the coverage during the study timeframe. Third, an interpretive approach is applied to data gleaned from expert interviews, involving ten participants representative of Egypt's foreign diplomacy civil servants, researchers-academics, and journalists and foreign correspondents, with first-hand experience in Egypt's foreign policy and Western media. The gathered data from the interviews is presented thematically to foreground competing narratives about causes underpinning the inadequate framing of Egypt's foreign policy in the Western press. The findings suggest the Western press's particular frames are selective, insofar as they reduce the complexity and composite nature of foreign policy to individual and isolated issues. This complexity does not only pertain to the region's tangled geopolitics; rather it concerns broader shifts in the exercise of foreign diplomacy as far as middle-power politics is concerned.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction, Research framework and structure.

<u>Introduction:</u>

The foreign policy of any country is the result of numerous determinants, with geopolitical, economic, social, and historical factors at the forefront. Recently, Egypt has been experiencing changes in its foreign policy, which are redefining its international stance in the aftermath of the revolutions of 2011 and 2013. The principal challenges that have contributed to the transformation in Egyptian foreign policy in terms of its aspiration to be a "middle-power" state can be divided into two main determinants which are: external factors, international and regional shifts, and domestic factors.

The external factors are represented in three pillars. The first is the regional crises surrounding Egypt's geographic location. These encompass the instability in Libya to the west, the conflict over power in Sudan to the south, Israeli aggression towards the Gaza Strip to the east, and water-related conflict with Ethiopia. This geopolitical challenge is marked by its dynamism and significant speed in fluctuations and changes, which inevitably requires Egypt to make continuous adjustments in its foreign policy approach while adhering to its core principle of maintaining national security. Secondly, the global economic depression caused deteriorating economic conditions and the depreciation of the Egyptian pound. Despite the state's fervent efforts to attract foreign investment, economic decline influenced Egypt's foreign policy by predisposing it towards dependency in its relations with the Gulf states. The third challenge is the shifts in global power balances, moving away from the notion of unipolarity and the emergence of new powers. The United States' arbitrary actions in supplying Egypt with military hardware has propelled Egyptian foreign policy towards diversifying alliances and adopting a strategy of "balance," maintaining equidistance from various international powers. These significant shifts have primarily taken shape during the presidency of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, becoming more crystallized

in his second term in office. Those observations have been outlined by Selim (2022, p. 21) in his research, wherein he noted that although in terms of its "external alignment," "Egypt's strategic pivot towards Russia and China; the decline of its traditionally strategic partnership with the United States; and its recent assertiveness on key regional questions," cannot be considered "an alliance shift on par with that of Nasser's era, it is nevertheless clear that it has brought a substantial degree of balance into Egypt's foreign relations with global and regional powers."

Regarding the domestic factors, Meital (1998) explained that Korany and Dessouki emphasized that a foreign policy process cannot be separated from the domestic social structure and political process. Their research of Arab foreign policies referred to "domestic sources of foreign policy" and "how the process of social change affects the external behaviour of developing countries. The domestic factors which affect Egyptian foreign policy are first: The new rolling system of Egypt, and the power transition from the theocracy to the military rolling which constitutes new leadership features, era, and foreign policy design, "While the rise of Sisi to power has been portrayed as coinciding with the end of revolutionary zeal in contemporary Egypt, Egypt's foreign policy has witnessed—for the first time in forty years— genuinely significant changes under Sisi's regime" (Selim 2022, p.21).

The second internal factor is the complete commitment to achieving "national security" through protection from internal and external threats. Therefore, combating violence and terrorism become an essential direction in drawing the foreign policy map. Thirdly the internal economic situation with mega-projects was also predicted to become a key influencing factor in the country's foreign policy. Egypt has embarked on an infrastructure splurge spearheaded by the military including the expansion of the Suez Canal, and the construction of a new capital in the desert. Those projects have been undertaken amid economic turmoil with the currency plummeting and inflation accelerating which pushed the motive of "national interest" to the forefront of Egypt's foreign policy agenda.

This research examines the portrayal of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press during the period 2018-2021. It offers a thorough analysis of the topics covered by the Western press regarding Egypt's foreign policy, what is emphasized, and what is overlooked in Western discourse. In addition to exploring what is primed in the coverage of Egypt's foreign policy in the Western press, the research aims to monitor how the effecting factors and new features of Egyptian

foreign policy have been framed or ignored or treated separately without interlinking each other and the surrounding factors. Additionally, the research aims to identify the frameworks employed in reporting and provides the possible interpretation of their application. The following section provides a general introductory review of the recent multidimensional diplomacy of Egypt. Then the chapter will explain the research design and structure and identify procedural concepts which are used in the study.

Factors shaping Egypt's foreign policy behaviour since 2018.

The period over which the present study has been conducted was marked by a significant lack of academic interest in, and engagement with the general orientation of Egyptian foreign policy following President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's rise to power and his re-election for a second term in 2018. The aim of this section is, first, to provide a literature review that makes up for the lack of in-depth scholarship on the subject; and second, to analyse and discuss the reasons that prevented researchers from taking changes in Egyptian foreign policy behaviour more seriously. In the broader context of the study, understanding the factors shaping Egypt's foreign policy since 2018, when the country's diplomatic orientation became more settled after President Al-Sisi's re-election, is used to contextualise the main hypothesis of the present study, namely:

> **RH1: the coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation.**

The observations drawn from this literature review will further be brought to bear on the methodology chapter of the study, underscoring:

> **RH2: There is a specific framing of certain foreign policy elements which prime topics and exclude others.**

This selective coverage, it will be argued, fails to capture Egypt's gradual shift towards multidimensional diplomacy.

Egypt's lower profile in contemporary world affairs

According to Giuseppe Dentice (2020), the analysis of Egyptian foreign policy remains a challenging task, due to three reasons: the country's history, its strategic geopolitical position in the region, and the complex role of the military on a domestic and international level. Like many researchers who tried to make sense of Egypt's contemporary foreign policy behaviour, Dentice thinks that Al-Sisi's foreign policy is a continuation of the "security approach" since Nasser's

regime and one which is perfectly aligned with the policies pursued by Mubarak. He, nevertheless, acknowledges that there has been a shift since 2018 that "re-envisaged… Egyptian foreign policy… [as] an extension of its domestic one." The question of security becomes a priority in domestic policy while safeguarding the country's interests externally is made dependent on managing security issues internally.[1] Egypt's foreign policy thus became less spectacular, in the sense that it no longer engages with mediatised shows of force or military operations such as "hard strikes or sensational actions" (Dentice 2020). Egypt's manifestations of foreign policy actions thus became less obvious to international news media that are used to covering military aggression and disruptive events (Katz & Liebes 2007; Dayan 2008) in the so-called MENA region. This point will be further developed in the coding of stereotypes of Middle Eastern countries in the sampled news content.

A more adequate frame to make sense of the more discrete work of Egyptian foreign affairs must focus on the interaction between the global and the local, the domestic and the foreign. These are keywords used in the coding of the data. This suggests the following sub-hypothesises:

RH: when the volume of Egypt's foreign policy news coverage in the Western press is significantly smaller than that of the country's domestic news, it may not be clear whether the connection between the former and the latter is explicit.

RH: There is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy matters on the ground and its coverage in the Western press.

According to Selim, the necessary re-adjustments in Egypt's foreign policy have been dictated by two historical developments at the global and regional levels:

> The first was the rising great power competition in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, which is exemplified in the Sino-Russian strategic pivot towards the region […], the second was the deterioration of Egypt's geostrategic regional environment in light of the collapse of the state in several neighbouring countries and the rise of transnational Islamist terrorism across the Middle East (Selim 2018, p. 16).

A fundamental determining factor in the collection and organisation of the data in the present study is that "any attempt to understand the foreign policies of Egypt is only possible by integrating internal domestic political factors and complexities in international dynamics" (Dentice 2020). It

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[1] The two words "security" and "interest" will become key search terms in the sampled sources for this study and will indicate whether there is a conflation of the domestic and foreign in the coverage of Egypt's foreign policy in the Western news.

remains to be seen whether this "integration" is explicit or implicit, intended or otherwise, in the surveyed source material. Dentice also notes that under the leadership of Al-Sisi's government, Egypt's foreign policy and its fields of interest and activity have become less reduced in number but higher in stakes. There is a prominent orientation towards building strategic alliances by assuming the role of mediator in major conflicts in the region. According to Dentice, the main novelty in the current orientation of Egypt's foreign policy behaviour is the pursuit of "multidimensional and multivariate diplomacy" (Dentice 2020).

"Egypt First" doctrine or "El-Sisi doctrine"

According to Dentice, the pursuit of national interests in defiance of regional or global competing forces is not entirely new in the history of Egypt's foreign affairs. Although Al-Sisi gave his name to a doctrine, in fact, he is recycling "Nasser's ideas in foreign policy" (Dentice 2020). The "Egypt First" doctrine resonates with similar recent slogans of populist regimes, such as Trump's "America First."[2] The notion of populism is another key theme that dominates the surveyed source material and is a key component of the stereotype content. Taking a different perspective, Selim (2020, p. 15) argues that Al-Sisi's doctrine must not be framed with a misleading narrative that "appeals to pro-democracy Western public opinion." He challenges interpretations that the re-election of Al-Sisi is a restoration of Mubarak's same approach to domestic and foreign policy," Selim associates this radical change with the emergence of "an assertive foreign policy doctrine that has given precedence to Egyptian national interests over those of global and regional patrons."

The emphasis on domestic security against the threat of "Islamic terrorism" while asserting national interests on a regional and global level is supported by one of the pillars of Al-Sis's doctrine, namely defending state sovereignty against foreign interference. The notion of security has thus shifted from "protecting American and European interests" (Ragab 2020) to serving and supporting national ones. Ragab critiques "Western posturing" and its "traditional security outlook" that has not yet fully understood the new realities created by the "Arab Spring" more than a decade ago. Given that the region is still unstable because of this important event, the conditions favourable to the formation of "a security complex" (Buzan & Waever 2003) are still non-existent,

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[2] The phrase "Egypt-First" doctrine is a phrase coined by authors Michael Hanna and Daniel Benaim and first appeared in *Foreign Affairs* on January 4, 2018, to describe Egypt's foreign policy since 2018. The phrase is not created by the Egyptian foreign ministry or directly appropriated by Egyptian diplomats. As such, its resonances with slogans that came to be associated with Trump is a fabrication of the Western press.

and would, therefore, require that they are built from the ground up without the intervention or patronage of the United States or Europe. The development of "cooperation and integration to achieve collective security" (Ragab 2020) is one of the main targets of Egypt's foreign policy behaviour in the region. The aim of creating interdependent security in the region is still proving difficult to achieve because this approach continues to clash with national interests. Ragab (2020) cites the dilemma of Egypt with Saudi Arabia as a key example:

> Although Egypt has supported the Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia that is taking part in the war in Yemen since March 2015, it considers the Houthi group as a faction of Yemeni society, unlike Saudis, who consider it a terrorist organisation. Egypt also considers the Grand Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia as a threat to its national security, but Saudi Arabia does not share the same point of view (Ragab, 2020).

- **Research design:**

The study aims to focus on how the Western press has portrayed Egyptian foreign policy affairs in the second mandate of the current leadership, during which significant developments have emerged. The main objective of the research is to monitor how Egyptian foreign policy affairs have been represented in the Western press. The representation in this study primarily involves framing the published news stories and articles which relate to Egyptian foreign policy components based on the theory of news framing. This framing can be derived from the general context of the texts and the use of specific words and phrases, in addition to observing the extent of the news coverage and focusing on some aspects while discarding others.

1- **Research questions.**

RQ1: What is the size and nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?

RQ2: How does the Western press frame Egyptian foreign policy components? and why?

These questions give rise to several sub-questions answered through quantitative and qualitative content analysis during the study. The research questions are as follows.

- What is the volume of coverage of foreign policy affairs in Western press?
- what are the primed subjects in the Western press regarding Egyptian foreign policy? and what are the ignored subjects?
- What frames are used to present the journalistic materials on Egyptian foreign policy?
- Which frames and contexts are deployed in representing Egyptian foreign policy?
- How are the components of Egyptian foreign policy represented in the Western press?
- How does the Western press create a "positioning" of Egyptian foreign policy?
- What sources are relied upon to find information about Egypt's foreign policy?
- Where are the shifts and goals of Egypt's foreign policy in the coverage of Western newspapers?
- How do the experts evaluate the shifts in foreign policy and Western narratives?

2- Research hypotheses.

- RH: the coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation.
- RH: There is a specific framing of certain foreign policy elements which prime topics and exclude others.
- RH: when the volume of Egypt's foreign policy news coverage in the Western press is significantly smaller than that of the country's domestic news, it may not be clear whether the connection between the former and the latter is explicit.

- RH: There is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy matters on the ground and the Western press coverage of it.

- RH: Stereotype frames are prominent in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy.

3- Literature review.

The literature review of the thesis will outline key effecting factors in Egypt's foreign policy and its agenda and strategy. This section will discuss global diplomacy, geopolitical changes, national security challenges, interest-driven foreign policy, economic reform, neoliberalism, President El-Sisi effect, the application of soft power, and public diplomacy. This section will also explore the evolution of Egyptian international relations with the international community regionally and globally. The literature will demonstrate how stabilization and national security are the keywords in the Egyptian foreign policy agenda during the study timeframe. President El-Sisi's era emerged after the three preceding heads of state (Mubarak, Sadat, and Nasser) which embodies the

pragmatic approach prioritising national interest. National interest can be determined by the sovereignty concept or "non-alignment movement" or capitalism and the influence of the International Monetary Fund. The balance which the government attempts to strike in its international relations to safeguard the national interest can be called the "grey area" which includes the application of security measures and working on a set of objectives. In the present period, the Muslim Brotherhood has been officially recognised as a terrorist threat. Consequently, the organisation is today caught between two conflicting narratives: being labelled as a terrorist group by the government and being described as a mere "obsession" to the El-Sisi government by the Western media. Egypt's foreign policy possesses a significant legacy that can be utilised as a potent tool of soft power, using components of new public diplomacy to enhance its international brand image.

4- **Theoretical framework.**

Responding to the main and subsidiary questions is done through a theoretical framework consisting of 3 theoretical approaches. Based on the theory of "multilateral diplomacy and middle-power approach" that Egyptian foreign policy has followed in the new leadership era to achieve "balance" "national security" and "national interest," the research examines the ceremonial and disruptive frames of media events theory by Dayan & Katz (1992). This approach illustrates where the ceremonial frames are used in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy which refers to the positive, achievement and development frames. Where disruptive frames have been applied, they deliver negative impressions to the readers focusing on disasters, poverty, and unstable insecure environments (Katz &liebes, 2007). News framing theory which was posited by" Batenson" in 1972 and then developed by "Goffman" in 1974 is a core approach to analysing the narratives of the Western press regarding Egyptian foreign policy. Analysing the texts and monitoring the focused topics and the ignored topics through the "selective" function of the theory adheres to the agenda of Western media outlets regarding Egypt and Middle Eastern countries on a broader scale. Furthermore, identifying and interpreting the used frames does not refer only to Egypt' positioning as a country but also to the perception of a Middle Eastern country from the Western perspective. Thus, the framing analysis in the research raises questions about whether news coverage from Western

newspapers includes the shifts, characteristics, and strategies of Egyptian foreign policy, or does it represent a gap between Western media and reality. If so, what are these concepts and what are the reasons for adhering to these concepts? Are these concepts rooted and repeated when it comes to dealing with Middle Eastern news, and do the same concepts and media approaches apply to the foreign policies of Western countries? News framing has been defined by Lechler & Vereese (2018) as "a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue." One of the core assumptions of framing effects research is the ability of news frames to affect how recipients think about an issue. Based on this theory the study explores the frameworks used in addressing issues of Egyptian foreign policy and the implications of these frameworks in terms of demonstrating the level of interest, priorities, and agendas, and the impact of discourses and contexts. The research questions whether the deployed frames reinforce stereotypes about Middle Eastern countries and the extent of Western media's openness to sudden changes in Egyptian foreign policy. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism (1977) explains how Western portrayals of the East are often stereotypical, exoticized, and biased, framing Eastern societies as fundamentally different and inferior. This concept might influence how Egyptian foreign policy is represented, focusing on differences rather than similarities or nuanced understanding. Furthermore, applying the ceremonial or disruptive frames in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy can be influenced by the idea that Western media often aligns with the political interests and foreign policy objectives of their home countries such as the "normalisation" of Arab and Muslim countries with Israel, access to the Suez Canal, and counterterrorism efforts. The research argues that there is a gap between the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press and the shifts that existed on the ground during the 2018-2021 administration era, aiming to analyse the volume and nature of coverage while providing potential knowledge from expert interviewees' interpretations.

5- **Methodology**.

The research belongs to the media studies which use "the media survey" method with its two types: the descriptive (quantitative analysis) and interpretative (qualitative analysis)

approaches (see *Understanding Media and Culture,* 2016 p. 74)[3] the methodological framework for this study requires a triangulation of different methods. Therefore, as part of its triangulation, the research employs three methods to collect and analyse the data: Quantitative content analysis; Qualitative content analysis; and In-depth expert'sinterviews. The initial phase involved doing a comprehensive analysis of the media coverage and sources that were most pertinent to the research issue, focusing on narratives published within the designated timeframe of the study. Upon data collection, the researcher proceeds to categorise a sample comprising 800 editorial items from 9 media outlets. **Quantitative content analysis** is then employed to ascertain the extent of coverage, the subjects discussed, and the subjects discarded, and the characteristics of the coverage. This analysis paves the way to discover the prevailing subjects discussed in the Western media concerning Egypt's policy. In the second step and after determining the most prominent themes, the data will be reduced to analyse the nature of framing those primed topics in the Western press. Five themes have been extracted from the quantitative analysis, they are: economy, human rights and democracy, political Islam, Middle East issues and the Nile crisis. The mentioned subjects were among the top priorities for Western newspapers about Egypt's foreign policy. The study uses a **qualitative content analysis** of the news framing employed in editing these subjects by analysing the vocabulary and overall context of the editorial content. This is done by selecting one article from each news outlet, relevant to every theme, from a total of nine chosen sources. Thus, the total number of the analysed items is (45). The objective of this analysis is to assess the approach of Western publications towards Egypt's foreign policy and to understand the approach in which this treatment is conducted, as well as the explicit and implicit messages conveyed by the communicator to the recipient. Moreover, this step illustrates the focus on some topics and particular wording while ignoring other diplomatic topics which questions the stereotyping of what's happening in Egypt's foreign policy as a Middle Eastern country. The research aims to interpret this phenomenon and to add to the knowledge of how and why the Western media represent Egypt's foreign policy in a specific way and what are the factors of positioning a Middle Eastern country in the Western media. Nine interviews were conducted with Egyptian veteran experts in the media and diplomacy spheres. The **in-depth semi-**

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[3] This book is a comprehensive guide to mass communication and media research. The author of this book is removed at the request of the original publisher.

structured interviews centred around the results of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the news sample narratives to interpret the Western media approach in representing Egyptian foreign policy from a local Egyptian perspective using the problem-centred interview approach which adheres to the individual experiences and the profession of the interviewees. The interpretation and the reviews regarding the shifts in the Egyptian foreign policy constituted a new set of data which can be described as a "competing narrative".

6- <u>The ontological approach of the thesis.</u>

The **ontological approach** refers to a method or perspective that focuses on understanding the nature of being, existence, or reality. It emphasizes examining the fundamental categories and relationships that define entities and their place in the world. This approach is rooted in ontology, a branch of philosophy that investigates what exists and the nature of those entities. The research shows the reality of Egypt's foreign policy as it is illustrated in the literature review and the expert interviews. on the other hand, presents the competing narratives of the Western perceptions. Foreign policy and global public opinion are no longer discussed by elites only, they become that subject which affect every citizen around the world. The political events recently are remarked by their dynamism and speed of change. Accordingly, the state foreign policy has been to be updated following the transformation of global politics. However, the research discusses whether those changes are caught by the Western mainstream media or whether Egypt is still under the same stereotyping position as one of the Middle Eastern countries that suffer from undemocratization, poor, opponents' suppression and undeveloped structure. The vision of a state's foreign policy may differ between how it's seen and how it's covered in the media. The government statements are distinguished from the journalist coverage and the academic and expert visions. The research discovers the different lenses of the last three parts regarding Egyptian foreign policy. This division was inspiring in the interview conducting process, it helped in terms of the interviewee's categories. The researcher divided the interviewees into 3 sections first one is the state representatives, the second is the academics and researchers, the third is the journalists.

The framing of Egyptian foreign policy in Western media reflects not only a narrative struggle but also deeper ontological assumptions about the nature of political order, security, and legitimacy. An ontological approach to studying this framing highlights how Western perceptions and representations of Egypt is shaped by assumptions about what constitutes a legitimate state, an acceptable form of governance, and a credible security threat. These assumptions influence how Egyptian actions are interpreted, categorized, and reported, revealing underlying biases and the geopolitical interests of Western states. It's proven from the literature that the Western media cover Middle Eastern events with bias and superiority, the definition of democracy, and human rights crushes with Egypt's aspiration as a middle power-seeking security and stability. The research monitors the gap between what's on the ground regarding the diplomatic orientation and how it is

covered in the mainstream media. The goal also extends to interpreting this gap and providing the possible interpretation of these coverages.

An ontological approach in the context of international relations emphasizes the importance of underlying assumptions about the nature of reality, state identity, and legitimacy. In the case of Egyptian foreign policy, Western media often frames Egypt through the lens of "order versus chaos," where stability is highly valued, but authoritarianism is criticized (Shehata, 2018, pp. 27-30). This framing reflects an ontological stance that prioritizes a certain kind of political order—often Western democratic norms—while simultaneously acknowledging the geopolitical necessity of stability in the turbulent Middle East. The narrative in the Western press often hinges on ontological distinctions between "moderate" and "radical" regimes, "secular" versus "Islamist" movements, and "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" use of force. These binary frameworks influence the way Egypt's foreign policy, particularly in relation to counterterrorism and regional alliances, is interpreted and reported (Achcar, 2020, pp. 99-102).

The ontological framing of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press does more than shape narratives; it influences policy and public perception. The way Western media depicts Egypt—as either a repressive state or a crucial ally—affects how Western publics and policymakers perceive their own governments' support for Egypt. For example, narratives that emphasize Egypt's role in stabilizing the region can justify continued military aid and diplomatic support, despite human rights abuses (Gerges, 2019, p. 222). This ontological influence suggests that the Western press is not merely an observer but an actor that contributes to the construction of international political reality. By adhering to certain ontological categories—such as "moderate allies" and "extremist threats"—the media perpetuates a specific vision of the Middle East that aligns with Western security and economic interests. However, when it comes to national security and the Middle East favours in safety and stability. Media tend to prime the topics of human rights or democracy claims.

Based on this ontological approach, the methodology of the thesis has been developed. Choosing the mixed method to provide the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy and the nature of framing it in Western media besides the expert's interpretation for this coverage. Thus, the approach influenced the selection of media outlets and the interviewees which align with the research objective.

7- <u>The researcher's positionality and perspective.</u>

As a researcher, journalist, and Egyptian citizen, I have lived through the seismic events that have shaped my country over the past decade. From the electrifying hope of the 2011 revolution to the complex and often painful aftermath, my journey has been one of documenting history as it unfolds, analyzing its nuances, and grappling with the personal implications of these events. Witnessing the January 25, 2011, uprising, the revolution of June 30, 2013, the chaotic interlude, and the subsequent wave of terrorist incidents have all profoundly impacted my professional path and personal identity. The chaos followed the uprising within the conflict on power, and local

media tangled discourse amid the fear of the citizens as the prisons were opened and the criminal groups attacked the police stations and security directorates, martyrs fell down and each street had its own men to protect its residents.

In 2011, Tahrir Square became the epicentre of an unprecedented uprising. As a journalist, I was on the ground, capturing the voices of Egyptians who, for the first time in decades, believed they could shape their destiny. The chants for "bread, freedom, and social justice" echoed through the streets, igniting a sense of unity and optimism that transcended generations, ideologies, and classes. As a researcher, I analyzed the dynamics of grassroots mobilization, the role of social media in galvanizing protests, and the political economy of authoritarianism that had precipitated such widespread discontent. As a citizen, however, I was caught up in the fervour of the moment. I remember the overwhelming sense of pride in my fellow Egyptians as they stood together against the old ruling system. Yet, even then, I sensed the fragility of this unity. The revolution was not a monolith; it was a confluence of ideologies and interests, some of which were bound to clash once the dust settled. The genuine loyalty of most Egyptian people to having a better Egypt turned out to be a tool of getting into power by the Muslim brotherhood as an original and rooted goal of the Islamist group for decades. The Egyptian fabric in fact by nature throughout history rejects the Islamic extremists, thus they preferred to embrace military power instead of being under Islamic rule by force. As a woman who witnessed this period, there would be obligations on women to wear a Hijab and restrict her empowerment at work, this has been noticed through their discourse and measures. On the other hand, there is a strong historical connection between the Egyptian people and the military organisation which witnessed a chain of struggle and unity, this special connection is noticed in the Egyptian popular movies and arts.

The Chaos Between 2011 and 2013: A Nation Adrift
The euphoria of 2011 quickly gave way to uncertainty. The power vacuum left by the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak unleashed competing visions for Egypt's future. The transitional military government faced widespread criticism for its handling of the post-revolutionary period, and the subsequent election of Mohamed Morsi in 2012 brought its own challenges. The Muslim Brotherhood, long oppressed under the Mubarak regime, now found itself at odds with secularists, liberals, and even some Islamist factions. As a journalist, I reported on the deepening polarization that fractured the revolutionary coalition. Protests became a daily occurrence, and the hope of 2011 seemed to dissipate into a haze of tear gas and distrust. As a researcher, I delved into the structural reasons behind Egypt's inability to stabilize, examining the failures of political inclusion, the economic stagnation, and the enduring influence of entrenched elites. As a citizen, these years were heart-breaking. The streets that once symbolized unity now seemed divided along ideological lines. Friendships were strained, and families were split over differing visions for Egypt's future. It became increasingly clear that the revolution's ideals were being overshadowed by competing narratives of identity and power.

The Summer of 2013: Another Turning Point

By the summer of 2013, Egypt was on the brink. Massive protests against Morsi's rule culminated in the military intervention on July 3, 2013, led by then-General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. For most of Egyptians, this was a necessary correction—a chance to save Egypt from authoritarian Islamism. For other Western countries, it was a coup that derailed Egypt's fledgling democracy. I witnessed the demonstrations on both sides, documenting the fervour of Morsi's supporters and the determination of those who opposed him. As a journalist, I was acutely aware of the dangerous polarization that was deepening. As a researcher, I began to explore the complex interplay between mass mobilization, elite interests, and the military's role in Egyptian politics. As a citizen, regardless of my support and my family and friends to the 2013 revolution, I felt conflicted. I had friends and colleagues on both sides of the divide, each with legitimate fears and grievances. It was clear that the country was at a crossroads, but the path forward was anything but clear.

Post-2013: The Fight Against Terrorism and the Return of Order

The aftermath of 2013 was marked by violence and repression. The sit-ins at Rabaa al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Squares were dispersed by force as they did not listen to the government's calls by emptying the area, leaving hundreds dead and deepening the scars of division. Terrorist incidents, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, escalated, leaving martyrs from the police and military challenging the state's ability to maintain security and stability. I covered the impact of these attacks on ordinary Egyptians and the state's response, which included sweeping counterterrorism measures. I studied the regional dimensions of this struggle, particularly the role of transnational Islamist movements and the global war on terror. I mourned the loss of life and the erosion of the freedoms we had fought for in 2011. The promise of democracy and human rights seemed to fade as the state had to prioritize security above all else. Yet, I also understood the fear that gripped many Egyptians who longed for stability after years of turmoil.

Looking Ahead: Lessons and Reflections

Egypt's last decade has been a story of resilience, struggle, and compromise. It has taught me that revolutions are not singular events but ongoing processes, shaped by history, culture, and power dynamics. It has also shown me the importance of nuance in understanding political change, particularly in a country as complex as Egypt. As I continue my work, I am guided by a commitment to documenting the truth, understanding the forces that shape our world, and contributing to a more informed and empathetic discourse about Egypt's past, present, and future. The local media discourse was completely different from the Western media discourse while the tone of the Egyptian media was around citizens' favour, safety, nationality and loyalty duties, the Western discourse only focused on the theoretical approach of human rights and democracy.

These years have left an indelible mark on me, shaping not only my professional path but also my identity as an Egyptian who has lived through one of the most turbulent chapters in our nation's history. Nowadays the Egyptian people experience the government's future plans for renaissance projects. Although the nation suffers from a deteriorating economic situation, the answer of the Egyptian people regarding the democratic process will be the same.

All the ideas illustrated above will be further explained and discussed in detail throughout the thesis within the structure which is summarized below.

8- Research structure:

The thesis consists of 9 chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces the thesis by highlighting the importance and objectives of the study. Then a brief explanation of the research design including the questions, hypotheses, literature review, theoretical framework, methods, and sampling. In **Chapter 2**, the study looks at the background of the components of Egyptian foreign policy in detail. The literature review shows the key effecting factors in Egyptian foreign policy focusing on global diplomacy, geopolitical changes in the MENA region, economic reform, the nature of the ruling power, public diplomacy, and the influence of political Islam. Those factors constitute the new features of Egypt's foreign policy map. The chapter only focuses on the events, terms and concepts which are related to this study's research questions and accordingly, the research sample. After discussing the effecting pillars which draw new strategy shifts, **Chapter 3** seeks to articulate the literature on Egyptian diplomacy evolution and Egypt's relation with the international community. The previous factors and challenges influenced Egypt's relations with other countries causing prominent shifts in the foreign policy nature, philosophy, purpose, and allies' map, showing various aspects of Egypt's ties with the USA, MENA region, EU, the UK, Russia, and China. This narrative will facilitate the following analysis which examines how those features are represented in the Western press outlets. **Chapter 4** illustrates the theoretical framework which the study employs. News framing theory explores how news media shape perceptions by selecting certain aspects and framing them according to editorial policy. The theoretical frame also presents a discussion around prioritizing Western media of using the disruptive frame and discarding ceremonial frames. This approach originally conceptualized by Dayan and Kats (1992) describes how the media can employ functional frames in its coverage, some could represent the news in positive frames while others can prefer the negative frames. The chapter highlights the multidimensional diplomacy theory and the middle-power approach as a theoretical frame that characterises Egypt's new foreign policy agenda. After reviewing the literature and the theoretical framework, the research moves to present the methodology in **Chapter 5** which provides a rationale for triangulation to make the findings more dependable. Then, the chapter discusses the features of an ideal media research methodology. The 3 methods are quantitative, qualitative content analysis and interviews. The chapter elaborates the sampling process and how each method is applied to the data in the thesis. Then the research enters the analysis stage. **Chapter 6** displays the outcomes of the

quantitative content analysis of news items illustrated by using tables and comments regarding the figures. The numerical findings on various ideas and the main themes feed into the following chapter. **Chapter 7** presents the results of the qualitative content analysis on the prominent themes of the coverage In contrast to the previous chapter, the analysis is based on the latent meaning which considers the context and wording of the news items as analysis units. The main discussions in the chapter concentrate on the representation of the delivered messages regarding the selected themes by the Western press outlets regarding Egyptian foreign policy. **Chapter 8** presents in detail a qualitative content analysis of the interviews data which interprets the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy in Western press from the Egyptian perspective within four themes that have been deducted from the coding process of the interviews data. It centred around the concept of change in Egyptian foreign policy, stereotyping, domestic influence, and the democratic concept with the culture. Finally, **Chapter 9** includes a general summary of the thesis and a discussion of the findings by connecting data with the analytical framework of the thesis. The discussions chiefly seek to answer its main research question which is how and why the Western press frames Egyptian foreign policy. Furthermore, the chapter presents its contributions to the existing literature, explains its limitations, and gives some suggestions for future studies. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the recent state of Egypt's relations and some recommendations concerning how Egypt can contribute towards better coverage of Egyptian foreign policy.

9- <u>Definitions of key terms and concepts.</u>

The main concepts of the thesis are illustrated as follows:

- **Egyptian foreign policy**: Foreign policy comprises three levels; conception, content and implementation all shaped by the realistic vision of the outside world that national policymakers have and by the cost-benefit calculations of possible gains and affordable losses for the country they serve by pursuing certain goals and taking specific risks (Bindra, 2019 p.26). Thus, the Egyptian foreign policy in this study -besides the international diplomacy- includes the components of its strategy towards the global community that cover the domestic circumstances which have a direct motive on constituting its strategic objectives such as the economic situation, the authority in power, the surrounding challenges internationally and regionally that have the fundamental role in shaping the Egyptian foreign policy and forming its strategic goals.

- **The news framing and priming:** the usage of particular words to deliver specific meaning to the readers. Framing meaning focuses on how media draws the public's eye to specific topics – setting an agenda, and then it takes a step further to create a frame, through which the audience will comprehend such information. Creating frames for stories is commonly a mindful choice by sources, reporters, journalists and/or editors (Enteman,1993). Entman's work further develops the concept of framing in mass communication, analysing how media representations can influence public perception and policy discourse. In this research throughout the study news sample, there are plenty of words that have been repeated in the study timeframe in various kinds of editorial items such as" regime" "human rights breaches" autocracy" "dictatorship" "oppression" etc. Subsequently, this wording allows us to discover the applied frames in the study themes. The priming approach is derived from the agenda-setting theory which means that in some places media can highlight topics and discard others according to a particular agenda.

- **Western press**: the official news websites which belong to British, American, or European states. Wenxin (2021) mentioned that Western media is a product of the Western political system. Regarding the coverage of international affairs, many Western media seem to have become one voice. As a result, under the influence of these media, Russia, and China in the eyes of the West, for example, are always the same no matter what: authoritarian and evil empires. Through biased reporting, for instance, BBC has become a propaganda tool of the West. Thus "Western" press within this study includes newspapers, magazines and news websites and the sample selection is based on the amount and the relativity of those outlets' content to the study subject matter.

- **Stereotyping:** Stereotyping means unfairly grouping all people with a certain trait. In the media, people and groups are often stereotyped because of their age, gender, race, or culture (Çobaner, 2020). For instance, in this study, the research hypothesis is that there is a stereotyping in presenting Egyptian foreign policy in Western press according to the rooted fixed beliefs or agendas about Middle Eastern countries which are always framed as undeveloped, ruled by authoritarian "regimes," in constant conflict, unstable, and less open for freedom and democracy principles. This stereotyping ignores the Western colonial history effect, shifts and evolutions, and the local history and cultures, particularly in Egypt.

In summary, the study derives its main significance from its interest in the Western press representation of Egyptian foreign policy, the importance stems from monitoring how the affairs of Egyptian foreign policy and Egypt's international relations are framed in the new leadership era, what's prioritised, and what's ignored. The study aims to understand the relationship between the journalistic treatment and the Western perspective on the Middle East, to determine whether there is a gap between the representation and the reality on the ground. Considering the shifts and challenges in the changed environment, both regionally and internationally the study is important to knowledge of the Western vision of Egypt's foreign policy as a country from the Middle East assuming that it is time to get rid of the stereotypical picture of the Middle East in the Western mind considering the new shifts, history, and the local culture. The thesis also can be a reference for Egyptian foreign policymakers in terms of the other's visions and the shifts in global events and their effect on future scenarios. The study also examines how and why those frames are produced in the Western media throughout the different themes of Egyptian foreign policy by acknowledging the nature of the coverage by the news analysis and interpreting this coverage approaches by the experts' interviews. Thus, the thesis debates the gap in knowledge regarding framing Egyptian foreign policy during the new administration amid determinations of domestic factors, regional influence, and global events fluctuations.

Chapter 2:
Key effecting factors in Egypt's foreign policy & public diplomacy

Introduction:

Egypt, as a key regional actor in the MENA region, has experienced significant transformations in its foreign policy approach over the years. These changes have been influenced by a range of factors, including geopolitical shifts, regional conflicts, economic reforms, domestic political dynamics, and the impact of influential actors (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2014). With these profound shifts in Egyptian foreign policy in mind, the present research aims to investigate the extent to which Western media narratives capture and reflect the intricacies and complexities of these transformations. This chapter aims to delve into the nuanced dynamics of Egyptian foreign policy and shed light on the effecting factors underpinning the shifts that have occurred since 2018, the year which marked President El-Sisi's second presidential term. Since then, the hallmarks of the new foreign policy goals and interests seem to have been articulated with clarity and implemented in concrete situations. This moment of relative stabilization followed a transitionary period of uncertainty in the aftermath of the 2013 upheavals. A critical examination of various aspects of Egypt's foreign policy at this moment of stabilization seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis that highlights divergences with narratives presented in the Western media (Gani, 2022). During the timeframe under study, five major themes have been identified as key effecting factors in Egyptian foreign policy: 1) the impact of geopolitical changes and security challenges, 2) the 'El-Sis effect,' 3) the discourse of political Islam and the qualification of the Muslim Brotherhood as 'un-Egyptian' or 'the enemy within,' 4) economic reforms and neoliberalism and 5) soft power and new public diplomacy strategies. New foreign policy features in the new leadership era have been clearly recognised. Ambassador Saad (2021)[4] identified seven new features: 1) policy of Non-interference in other domestic affairs, 2) openness and expansion of foreign relations, 3) balance in the relations which aligns with the internal rebuilding process, 4) interest-driven foreign

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[4] Ambassador "Ezzat Saad" is Former Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for African Affairs and Director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs. He publishes updates regarding Egyptian foreign policy on the official website for "Presidency of the Council of Ministers".

policy which achieve stability and security, 5) diversity of choices and multiplying the allies according to the concept of "non-polarity" world, 6) seeking Arabic national security and the region stability while resisting regional powers interference and the spread of terrorism, 7) rebuilding and deepening relations with Africa (Saad, 2021). While the new government articulates these factors and features as 'shifts' and 'changes' in Egypt's foreign policy, and a break with the old regime, Western media coverage reflects two major tendencies: on the one hand, it does not emphasize the trope of 'change', insisting on fixed themes and on the other hand, it does not consider the themes and features listed above as interlinked, and instead, treats them separately. Which proves the main research hypothesis:

> **RH1: The coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation.**

And the sub-hypothesis:

> **RH: When the volume of Egypt's foreign policy news coverage in the Western press is significantly smaller than that of the country's domestic news, it may not be clear whether the connection between the former and the latter is explicit.**

It is essential to acknowledge that this chapter does not aim to provide a definitive account of the evolution of Egypt's foreign policy but considers only key factors that impacted the government's foreign policy discourse and position within the study timeframe. While there are some changes and developments in Egyptian foreign policy and even breaks with the past, it will be shown where this change is happening highlighting the key effecting factors which contributed to shaping the new foreign policy.

1- <u>Global diplomacy and international events</u>

In *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (1955), which was once a reference book for pan-Arabism and more recently, enjoyed an upsurge of interest after the so-called 'Arab Spring,' Gamel Abdel-Nasser identified the three "circles" that Egypt's foreign policy needs to consolidate: the Arab world, African, and Islamic countries. A blueprint of domestic and foreign policy, the book was later translated into the May 1962 *Charter*.[5] In actuality, and contrary to its anti-colonial and

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[5] Although Abdel Nasser's Philosophy of the Revolution is often disparagingly described as a 'propaganda' book for Arab pan-nationalism, the May 1962 Charter is described as 'revolutionary' insofar as it presented a revolutionary

socialist aspirations, Egypt's foreign policy will soon shift from a Soviet alliance to prioritize alignment with the United States, Europe, and the Arab Gulf states since the early 1970s, under the presidency of Sadat and Mubarak. After President Sisi came to power 'new or altered foreign policy directions have been identified,' which are according to Aly (2014) summed up in 'six priorities': 1) engaging with global trade and global diplomatic relations instead of confining Egypt in its geographically-dependent position, 2) rebuilding the Egyptian-GCC coalition, 3) mounting a PR campaign to repair Egypt's image in the international arena, 4) tackling threats to water security especially in relation to the Nile, 5) "liberating" Sinai especially from the threat of Islamic jihadism and any other activities directly linked to the Palestinians' on-going war against Israeli settler-colonialism, 6) and projecting an image of stability in an unstable region. These 'six priorities' for Egypt foreign policy post 2018 represent two contradictory directions. On the one hand, by embracing a neoliberal agenda that attracts foreign investment and engages with global trade, Egypt wants to turn its back to a value-driven foreign policy, which was traditionally and symbolically leading the aspirations of Arab and African post-colonial nations to assert their national sovereignty and take back control of their natural resources. On the other hand, the opposite direction, which is dictated by the reality of regional instability, competing ideological and economic interests, and the continued domination of the U.S., NATO and its allies is still an influential factor that cannot be ignored. This means that the aspiration of Egypt's foreign policy to project an image of stability conducive to attracting foreign investment becomes a difficult balancing act. For that reason, foreign policy PR becomes another key priority in managing the reception of these two contradictory directions. If, per impossible, Egypt could move itself outside of the MENA region and even outside of Africa and relocate to another part of the world, it would perhaps be able to break entirely with the geopolitical factors impacting the new direction it wishes to take. The truth is that countries of the MENA region and a large part of Africa are not entirely autonomous to embrace the neoliberal agenda and the promises of economic globalization on their own terms. The world is still defined according to an East versus West agenda, and countries of the global south have not fully recovered from the colonial legacy. Egypt post 2018 clearly wishes to follow a model of neoliberal and interest-driven foreign policy, as for instance in the case of the

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model for Egyptian identity and served as a 'prototype not only for some Arab countries but also for some of the emerging independent nations' (Abu-Laban 1967, p. 180).

rich gulf kingdoms, or to a certain extent, in the case of Turkey, but is this aspiration achievable? This is the most dominant feature of Egypt foreign policy during the study's timeframe.[6] According to Aly (2014, p. 7), and in addition to the 'new' six foreign policy priorities listed above, there is also a need to maintain an element of 'continuity'. For Aly, continuity is contingent upon

> the restoration of the institutions that play a central role in its formation: the army, the intelligence community, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And in contrast to the pre-January 2011 era, these will now be increasingly influenced by Egyptian media and public opinion. […] The primary focus of Egypt's foreign policy will be consolidating the alliance with the Arab Gulf states, which are the key to furthering Egypt's national interests in a variety of areas: not only meeting the country's developmental needs, but also rebuilding its relations with the West and even with Africa (Aly 2014, p. 7).

For Aly, then, retaining the traditional role of the military provides an element of 'continuity' that promises to "restore" an image of peace and stability, but now, Egyptian media are expected to play a more proactive role in providing constructive criticism to these institutions in the spirit of a democracy-ruled political life. Aly does not see these "old" institutions as a return to a pre-2011 time, but as neo-liberal institutions that aim to build stronger relations with the kingdoms of the Gulf. The key word in this outlook on Egypt's new foreign policy agenda is "national interest". The pursuit of national interest thanks to a stronger alliance with the Gulf kingdom is not at all seen as potentially mined with important caveats. As will be shown later, building interest-driven alliances will sooner or later collide with the symbolic or traditional values that have once been central to Egypt foreign policy, in addition to the fact that embracing a neoliberal economic model also comes with terms and conditions that sometimes demand making difficult choices considering ongoing conflicts in the MENA region. Recent developments in global diplomacy have exerted a significant impact on Egypt's international relations, influencing its regional engagement, economic diplomacy, and security cooperation. Thus, it becomes clear that global diplomacy is a catalyst for change in Egypt's pursuit of national interests. The transformative period of the 'Arab Spring' in 2011 across the Middle East redefined Egypt's alliances and priorities. Fiedler (2021) highlights the shift in Egypt's foreign policy, where a re-evaluation of its relations with the United States took place.

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[6] This dominant feature, which places Egypt's aspiration to embrace a neoliberal and interest-driven foreign policy agenda against its traditional and symbolic value-driven agenda is revisited in the concluding chapter of the present study considering more recent events, which took place outside the research's timeframe.

Egypt's foreign policy is intricately intertwined with the complexities of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to Dunne (2020), economic aid, political support, and shared security concerns have led Egypt to realign its priorities and seek closer cooperation with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Abdelaziz (2022) argued that economic and security cooperation agreements with the GCC states have shaped Egypt's regional security priorities and its stance on conflicts like the crisis in Yemen. The support from GCC states has provided Egypt with diplomatic leverage and resources to pursue its strategic objectives. In addition, global diplomacy has played a crucial role in shaping Egypt's economic policies and trade relations. Recent economic initiatives have sought to attract foreign investment and promote economic cooperation. Egypt's engagement with international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as a reflection of its economic diplomacy (Ikram et al., 2018) demonstrates its adaptation to global trends, such as the establishment of the Red Sea Forum in 2019, amid the international economic crisis. Vertin (2019) clarified the significance of the Red Sea Forum as a platform to address common security challenges. Another challenge is balancing interests considering the evolving dynamics of regional conflicts, such as the civil war in Syria and the tensions in Libya, which present complex dilemmas for Egypt's foreign policy decisions (Fahmy, 2019). Navigating these challenges necessitates strategic diplomatic manoeuvres and ongoing engagement with global actors.

Egypt foreign policy must reckon with, on the one hand, the influence of regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey (Hinnebusch, 2018), and on the other hand, the influence of "great power foreign policy" involving global actors such as the United States, Russia, and China. The support or opposition of these actors significantly impacts Egypt's manoeuvrability on the international stage. For instance, historically the involvement of the United States in the Camp David Accords in 1978 influenced Egypt's decision to pursue a peace treaty with Israel (Carter, 2023). The changing dynamics of great power competition, particularly between the United States and China, present both challenges and opportunities for Egypt's foreign policy choices. Presently Egypt's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with China has become a significant aspect of its foreign policy, emphasizing economic cooperation and infrastructure development (Wang, 2021). The BRI offers Egypt opportunities for increased investment, trade, and connectivity, enabling the country to enhance its position as a regional hub. Egypt's involvement in the BRI reflects its desire to leverage China's economic resources and expand its infrastructure

network, such as the development of the Suez Canal Economic Zone. In addition to its strategic alignment with China, Egypt's engagement with multilateral organizations further underscores the impact of international politics (Wang, 2021). Organizations such as the United Nations and the Arab League provide platforms for Egypt to advocate for its interests, shape regional agendas, and seek diplomatic support. Dunne (2023) discussed the influence of multilateral organizations on Egyptian foreign policy, particularly in the context of regional conflicts and human rights issues.

While international politics influences Egyptian foreign policy, the nation's decisions are also constrained by domestic considerations. Selim (2020) illustrated the combination of those factors: 'While Egypt's external (global and regional) realities have dictated a set of opportunities and threats, it is the interests of the successive post-revolution ruling governments in terms of calculating the balance between external and internal threats that have determined Egypt's responses to such realities.' Selim underscores the significance of domestic factors in shaping Egypt's foreign policy choices, highlighting the interplay between domestic dynamics and international politics. Accordingly, factors such as political stability, economic challenges, and public sentiment shape the boundaries within which Egypt can act on the international stage. That leads us to the interference between international and domestic factors in terms of forming the new Egypt foreign policy strategy and agenda.

2- **Geopolitical changes in the MENA region.**

The Middle East has undergone significant geopolitical changes in recent years, profoundly influencing the foreign policy decisions of countries in the region, including Egypt. By examining the implications of regional conflicts, power dynamics, shifting alliances, and security challenges, the researcher highlights the complexities and constraints that shape Egypt's foreign policy choices.

- Regional Conflicts: Catalysts for Strategic Realignment

As a main target of safeguarding domestic security, Egypt adopted shifting priorities in the regional scope. Research published by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies[7] illustrates how Egypt is prioritizing regional stability as a steppingstone to its domestic prosperity:

> On the regional level, Egypt has become a key defender of state sovereignty and regional stability in the Middle East, thereby abandoning the sectarian agenda that had dominated Middle East politics since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In this regard, […] the deteriorated regional context in the Wider Middle East has pushed […] El-Sisi to adopt a multi-layered diplomatic and military actions. (ISPI, 2020)

Geopolitical changes in the Middle East are drawing the attention of foreign policy scholars away from the intersection between the domestic and international environments, thus reasserting the traditional approach to "great power" foreign policy analysis which considers sovereign nations like Egypt as a pawn on the chessboard of international relations. Ongoing conflicts in the region have indeed been influential in the strategic realignment in Egypt's foreign policy. The Syrian civil war, for instance, has prompted Egypt to reassess its regional priorities, national security concerns, and cooperation with key actors. According to Bahi (2016), Egypt's involvement in regional conflicts reflects its quest for stability, border security, and counterterrorism efforts. Egypt initially supported the Syrian opposition but later shifted its position to align with the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad. This change can be attributed to Egypt's priority of combating 'terrorism' and preventing the spread of Islamic radicalism in the region. Driven by security concerns and fears that the collapse of the Syrian state could lead to increased instability and terrorism spillover, Egypt's foreign policy decisions are thus primarily informed by interests rather than values or ideological agendas.[8]

In its dealing with the Libyan conflict, it is notable that once again, Egyptian foreign policy discourse is articulated to the same keywords and phrases of 'regional stability' and 'border security.' The themes of stability and security are in turn solidified in the discourse of Islamic extremism, the flow of arms and militants across its shared border with Libya. Egypt has irrevocably broken ties with its Nasserite image of Pan-Arabism and 'revolutionary socialism'. These developments are not strictly speaking born out of the post 'Arab Spring' context and go far

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[7] "Shifting Priorities: The Evolution of Egypt's Foreign Policy" 15 September 2020. This brief report is in part inspired by Alaa Elhadidi, "Egypt's Shifting Foreign Policy Priorities", *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, 29, Spring 2018, pp. 79-87.
[8] Statement of "Middle East's stability one of our foreign policy priorities" in *Middle East Monitor* October 31, 2017.

back to the shift from the Nassar to Sadat regimes. In his overview of Egypt's foreign policy between 1952- 1992, Shalby (1992, p. 109) notes that while Nasser's foreign policy resonates with "a time characterized by the search of his people and the people of the Arab world for a national hero to identify with […] under the atmosphere and considerations of the Cold War," already by the time Sadat came to power, his guiding motto was "Egypt first." The question of national sovereignty took precedence over aspirations of pan-Arabism. For Shalby, Mubarak's presidency, starting in 1981, with the rise of Western neo-liberalism, was summarized under the evocative subheading of "the balancing act" (Shalby 1992, p. 111). The restoration of 'stability' became the dominant tune of Egyptian foreign policy. In that context, stability was interpreted as a difficult 'balancing act' between Egypt's commitment to the peace with Israel, and its renewed interest and engagement with the Arab World, as in its support for Lebanon and Iraq at the time. Another example of Mubarak's balancing act materialized in his foreign policy's double engagement with the Soviet Union and the United States. When Egypt rejected Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it "enhanced its credibility as a force of moderation and stability in the region" (Shalby 1992, p. 112).[9] It is interesting to note that El-Sisi's presidency aspires to combine and embody the three main features of Egypt's foreign policy, as described by Shalaby: (Nasserite) charismatic leadership with anti-colonial struggles, (Sadatean) national sovereignty and the prioritization of national interest, and (Mubarak's) balancing act and the projection of an image of regional stability broker. As far as current regional challenges are concerned, El-Sisi's Egypt has supported the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar, aiming to combat 'terrorism' and prevent the spread of instability into its own territory. Egypt's involvement in the Libyan conflict reflects its efforts to protect its national security interests and stabilize the region (Polat, 2020). In the Yemeni conflict, Egypt added to her security strategy a factor of balancing regional interests. Egypt has been cautious in its involvement, attempting to navigate a delicate balance between the Saudi-led coalition and Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Egypt's primary concern is to maintain stability in the Red Sea region, secure maritime routes, and prevent the spread of Iranian influence. According to (Trager 2015), Egypt's policy towards the Yemeni conflict is driven by its objective of countering Iran's regional ambitions and protecting its own strategic interests. These conflicts

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[9] It is important to note that the author of this article, which revisits Egypt foreign policy during the presidencies of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak was written by the Ambassador of Egypt to Norway. Shalaby also authored two books in Arabic in the early 1980s on Egyptian foreign policy in the context of the Cold War.

have compelled Egypt to navigate carefully between different alliances, shaping its foreign policy responses. Notably, in almost all these concrete manifestations of Egypt's foreign policy choices, it is no longer a case of a 'balancing act' as in Mubarak's approach, and it is certainly not a case of 'isolationism' or 'neutrality', but on the contrary, it could be an alignment with the United States' led regional policies, not for 'ideological' reasons, but these choices are driven by 'national interest'. However, national interest here can be determined by a genuine idea of sovereignty, or by the non-alignment movement,10 or it is contingent upon the reality of global capitalism and the supra-national influence of the IMF.

-   The Balancing Act approach: Turkey and Iran

The emergence of new regional actors, such as Turkey and Iran, has challenged traditional power structures and influenced Egypt's strategic calculations. Aras (2017) highlights the evolving power dynamics in the region and their implications for Egypt's foreign policy choices. Egypt has responded by engaging in diplomatic efforts, recalibrating alliances, and seeking strategic partnerships to safeguard its national interests. Now far removed from its origins in the context of the Cold War, the long-established tradition of non-alignment has taken a new meaning, especially in light of the rivalry between Turkey and Iran, ideological differences, and geopolitical competition. Turkey, Egypt, and Iran are now key regional rivals, with competing visions for the Middle East. Turkey, under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has pursued an assertive, interventionist, and militarized foreign policy, seeking to expand its ideological and economic influence and promote its version of political Islam (Bechev, 2022). In contrast, Egypt, under President El-Sisi, has adopted a more conservative and nationalistic approach. Vohra (2022) highlighted that the ideological differences between the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Turkey and the anti-Muslim Brotherhood Egypt have exacerbated tensions and strained bilateral relations. Although Erdogan's War with Arab monarchies is over, however this rivalry has impacted Egypt's foreign policy decisions, leading to a more assertive stance in countering Turkey's regional ambitions and seeking alliances with states that share its concerns. On the other side there is a geopolitical competition with Iran whose support for proxy groups and involvement in Syria, Iraq,

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[10] Non-Alignment movement was adopted as a foreign policy guideline for almost 120 countries since the 1950s to reject siding ideologically or economically with the Soviet bloc or the Anglo-American or Western bloc. This approach enabled many developing countries to prioritize national interests over ideological alignment.

and Yemen, has raised security concerns for Egypt. Egypt, predominantly Sunni, perceives Iran's regional ambitions as a threat to its own stability and the Sunni-led order in the region. Egypt has sought to counter Iran's influence by aligning with Gulf Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who share similar concerns (Chitsazian, 2020). The containment of Iranian influence and the economic rivalry with Turkey, often masked as hostility against political Islam, are designated as high priority in Egypt's foreign policy agenda. This context is once again testing both the principle of non-alignment and the balancing act approach. Egypt has pursued a pragmatic approach, engaging with each country selectively based on specific issues. For instance, she has cooperated with Turkey on economic matters while maintaining a cautious stance on political and security issues. Similarly, Egypt has sought to manage its relationship with Iran by avoiding direct confrontation and focusing on shared concerns, such as combating 'terrorism.' Egypt's approach to Turkey and Iran thus reflects a delicate balancing act aimed at protecting its national interests without escalating tensions or destabilizing the region (Dalacoura, 2021).

3- <u>National security challenges & the 'war on Islamic terrorism'</u>

The security challenges arising from geopolitical changes in the Middle East have heavily influenced Egypt's foreign policy decisions. The rise of transnational 'extremist' groups such as ISIS have posed significant risks to Egypt's national security. Egypt has prioritized counterterrorism efforts, regional cooperation, and engagement in initiatives aimed at addressing these threats, reflecting its response to the changing security landscape in the region. In this context, the idea of 'national interest' amplified the discourse of national security. ISIS sought to establish a foothold in the region. Egypt has been targeted by these groups, especially in the Sinai Peninsula, where they have conducted numerous attacks (Abozaid 2020). Egypt has prioritized counterterrorism efforts both domestically and regionally. It has actively cooperated with regional partners, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to enhance intelligence sharing, coordinate security operations, and combat the spread of extremist ideologies (Hinnebusch, 2018). For instance, Egypt's participation in the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), led by Saudi Arabia, highlights its commitment to addressing regional security challenges collectively (Cardaun & Miller, 2020).

Political Islam, represented prominently by the Muslim Brotherhood, has had a significant impact on Egypt's domestic politics and foreign policy. By examining their ideology, rise to power, and subsequent challenges, we can better understand the complexities and implications for Egypt's international relations. Firstly, the ideology of political Islam, including the Muslim Brotherhood's emphasis on Islamic governance and the promotion of Islamist principles, has influenced Egypt's foreign policy outlook. Supporters argue that political Islam promotes a more independent and assertive foreign policy rooted in Islamic values (Hashemi, 2021). They argue that embracing this ideology allows Egypt to prioritize relations with other Muslim-majority countries and advocate for Muslim causes on the international stage. However, critics contend that this ideological orientation can lead to a narrower focus and potentially strain relations with non-Muslim countries (Boyd & Harrison, 2018). Secondly, the rise of political Islam in Egypt, particularly during the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, resulted in a shift in Egypt's regional alliances and foreign policy priorities. Morsi's government sought to enhance relations with Islamist-leaning countries, such as Turkey and Qatar, while adopting a more critical stance towards traditional regional partners like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

> Islamists in power faced immense challenges regionally and internationally. Threats of regime change, and outside financial support directed at removing them from power were persistent factors that circumscribed their ability to rule. This was most apparent in Egypt during the Arab Spring. While the Muslim Brotherhood won parliamentary and presidential elections after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, it faced persistent interference from regional powers who collaborated with the military to remove Mohammad Morsi from office (Hashemi, 2021).

This shift in alliances reflected the influence of political Islam on Egypt's foreign policy agenda. However, the subsequent military ousting of Morsi and the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood-led to a reversal of these policies, with a return to more traditional regional alignments.

Thirdly, the presence of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood has had implications for Egypt's approach to counterterrorism and security cooperation. Critics argue that the Muslim Brotherhood's association with political violence and extremist ideologies has led to concerns about the potential for domestic instability and cross-border threats (Mohamed & Momani, 2014). Consequently, Egypt has pursued closer cooperation with regional and international partners in countering terrorism, emphasizing the need to combat Islamist extremism (Selim, 2022). This

approach has influenced Egypt's foreign policy engagements, particularly in the realm of security cooperation.

Finally, the presence of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has shaped how the country is perceived regionally and globally. Some argue that the association of Egypt with political Islam has strained relations with certain countries, particularly those that view political Islam as a threat to their own stability and interests (Hashemi, 2021). This perception can impact Egypt's diplomatic standing and influence its ability to forge strong alliances and partnerships. Additionally, the international community's response to political Islam in Egypt has varied, with some countries expressing concerns about its impact on human rights and democratic processes.

The Muslim Brotherhood represents an Islamist ideology, advocating for the establishment of an Islamic state based on sharia law. They have historically focused on grassroots mobilization and social services, emphasizing their commitment to political Islam. "The myth of political Islam has been exposed in Egypt […]. The Muslim Brotherhood's identity, torn between political pragmatism and religious conservatism, shaped its political actions under Morsi's rule" (Mohamed & Momani, 2014). On the other hand, El-Sisi represents a secular and authoritarian approach, prioritizing stability, and countering extremist threats (Rutherford, 2018). This clash of ideologies has fuelled tensions and led to competing visions for the future of Egypt. Following the 2011 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood gained political influence and Mohamed Morsi was elected as Egypt's president in 2012. However, his presidency was marked by controversy and polarization, leading to mass protests. In 2013, El-Sisi, then the head of the military, removed Morsi from power. The subsequent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood resulted in its designation as a terrorist organization and the suppression of its activities (Laub, 2019). On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood's influence has endured underground, continuing to exert influence through social and political networks. The rivalry between the Muslim Brotherhood and El-Sisi has also had implications for Egypt's foreign policy. During the Muslim Brotherhood's brief tenure, there was a shift in regional alliances, with a more favourable stance towards Islamist-leaning countries such as Turkey and Qatar. However, El-Sisi's government has sought to restore traditional regional alliances, focusing on relations with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (Selim, 2022).

The presence of a terrorist threat in Sinai and its alleged connections with the Muslim Brotherhood have been subjects of ongoing debate and analysis. The Sinai Peninsula has witnessed a significant increase in terrorist activities since the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Various extremist groups, such as Ansar Beit al-Maqdis (ABM) and its successor, Wilayat Sinai, have been responsible for conducting attacks against Egyptian security forces and engaging in acts of violence. While the Muslim Brotherhood has denied any direct involvement in the Sinai insurgency, allegations of indirect support and ideological connections have been made by some experts and officials (Hermen, 2016). The Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, which advocates for political Islam, has raised concerns regarding its potential influence on radicalization and the emergence of extremist groups. Critics argue that the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and discourse can provide fertile ground for the growth of more radical elements (Aref, 2020). Moreover, the regional context, with neighbouring countries experiencing their own challenges with terrorism, has led to speculation about potential transnational linkages and support networks (Hermen, 2016). It is worth noting that concrete evidence establishing direct links between the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorism in Sinai remains limited. While some experts have suggested ideological connections and indirect support (Sharabi, 1988), Snyder (2021) emphasized in his research ideological similarities between jihadis and Muslim Brotherhood. "The Sunni jihadis seek to restore the early days of the Prophet Muhammad, yet they place jihad—not one of the five pillars of Islam—on the same level as the first pillar that proclaims the unity of God" (Snyder, 2021). The Egyptian government has accused the Muslim Brotherhood of supporting and financing terrorist activities, but these allegations have not been universally accepted and have been subject to criticism and controversy. The allegations of connections between the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorism in Sinai have had significant implications for counterterrorism policies in Egypt. The government's crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and its subsequent designation as a terrorist organization has been justified, in part, by claims of its involvement in the Sinai insurgency and suicide bombing outside the police stations. However, critics argue that this approach can have unintended consequences, potentially radicalizing some members or driving them underground, making it more difficult to monitor and address the security challenges effectively. Critics argue that the Muslim Brotherhood's association with political violence and extremist ideologies has led to concerns about the potential for domestic instability and cross-border threats (Mohamed & Monami, 2014). Consequently, Egypt has pursued closer cooperation with regional and

international partners in countering terrorism, emphasizing the need to combat Islamist extremism. Gomaa *et al* (2021) argued that political Islam in Egypt did not fail, but they placed the failure with the Muslim Brotherhood. "Thus, it is academically prejudicial to declare that political Islam failed in Egypt. Unambiguously, the failure had solely occurred with the Muslim Brotherhood, who failed to ascertain the internal crisis in Egyptian society that led to the collapse of the movement" (Gomaa *et al.,* 2021 p.132)

The so-called 'jihadist warfare' to establish the 'caliphate' was a direct outcome of the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its allies. For over a decade, these heavily armed groups have been associated in the media and in various foreign policy agendas with 'terrorism' and political Islam. Initially, the 'war on terror' was framed as a war against 'Western values.' It is interesting to note that by the time the threat began to spread to the region, even though it has primarily targeted and operated within the MENA region; from the perspective of Arab countries, it had to be reframed not as a threat to 'Western values' but as a threat to national sovereignty. As Salazar notes, the popular media discourse stereotyped ISIS as a 'medieval dementia' while it contributed to the rise of 'islamophobia' (Salazar 2016, p. 344). Cronin (2015, p. 88) challenged Obama's definition of ISIS as a 'terrorist group' demonstrating that from the perspective of foreign policy studies, a 'terrorist organization' is characterized by a reduced number of recruits, it attacks civilians, does not hold territory, and does not confront a military force. Conversely, ISIS managed to recruit thousands of followers, holds territory, owns military capabilities, and controls a large infrastructure of communication technology. Undoubtedly, the 'war on terror' and the uprooting of 'extremism' and 'political Islam' from Egypt are key objectives in El-Sis's 'national' interest agenda. However, it is important to distinguish between 'the Muslim Brotherhood' and 'ISIS' and how these groups have been treated in Egypt's foreign policy. While the Brotherhood and ISIS have traded accusations amid disagreements on tactics and strategy, elements within each group have found common ground and readily cooperate logistically and in other ways. ISIS and the Brotherhood have shared a common enemy in the form of the Egyptian government since the July 2013 ouster of Egypt's Brotherhood-centric government. Egypt outlawed the Brotherhood later in 2013, designating it a terrorist organization. Since then, the Brotherhood has been implicated in multiple terrorist attacks carried out against Egyptian forces (Counter Extremism Project, 2019). As a mobilizer, the Brotherhood has helped financially and logistically, the Afghani Jihad and both Al-Qaeda and ISIS, whether in Syria or in Egypt. The Brotherhood leadership never really

denounced terrorism without adding qualifying "buts" and "ifs" under the banners of resisting foreign powers or fighting local authoritarianism. One must look hard to find the word "terrorism" in any of the Brotherhood's basic documents. The Brotherhood's financial and propaganda machines are working at full force to delegitimize the current Egyptian political system. Incitement for the use of violence as a mode of protest is a daily practice against Egypt (Aly, 2018).

The Muslim Brotherhood constituted a problem for Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak. In the mid-1950s, Nasser imprisoned and prosecuted the Brotherhood, following a failed coup. They were thus considered as a domestic threat. Sadat, was more tolerant towards the Brotherhood but soon lost his popularity among the group after the Camp David Accords with Israel. Under Mubarak, the same policy of initial tolerance was reversed when the Brotherhood began to enjoy popular support. In all these instances, the Muslim Brotherhood was primarily treated as a domestic threat to Egypt's governments. Today 'Sisi and his allies want to crush the Muslim Brotherhood once and for all' (Cook 2016, p. 112). Zohny (2021, p. 14) notes that "political Islam" is often used in foreign policy scholarship as an umbrella term that does not enable the distinction of a spectrum from mild to radical, and from "revolutionary" to "extremist". He further contends that "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has historically been strictly centralized and obedient to a supreme leader who rules for life. And Islam has certainly not been factored into promotion of secular democracy" (Zhony 2021, p. 98). Cook argued, that Egypt's intervention in the region, which equates all manifestations of political Islam with the Brotherhood, betrays a lack of discernment and even what he calls 'an obsession'. This 'obsession' influenced the intervention in Syria and Libya. In his final recommendation, cook thinks that Egypt can no longer be considered as 'the Eastern stabilizer' because, in his view, 'it is exporting its central domestic political conflict—the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood—to its neighbours, with devastating effects' (2016, p. 120). As shown in the data collected from Western media samples and the data collected from expert interviews, these competing narratives on the issue of political Islam are quite prominent.

The extent of alignment and conflict between the Egyptian counterterrorism doctrine and the U.S. policies.

National security and counterterrorism are not just strategic imperatives but value-driven cornerstones of Egyptian foreign policy. These values shape Egypt's regional alliances, its approach to domestic governance, and its international partnerships. By elevating security and

counterterrorism as guiding principles, the Egyptian state has constructed a foreign policy that is deeply intertwined with its core identity as a protector of stability and order in a turbulent region. This approach as mentioned before gets along with the Western powers' agenda. Counterterrorism has been a cornerstone of both Egyptian and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly after the events of 9/11 and the Arab Spring. While the United States and Egypt share common goals in combating terrorism, their strategies, definitions of terrorism, and underlying political motivations often diverge. This has led to both alignment and tension in their bilateral relationship, influencing regional stability, human rights, and the broader geopolitical landscape.

1. Alignment: Shared Objectives in Combating Jihadist Terrorism
The most prominent alignment between Egypt and the U.S. in counterterrorism efforts centers around their shared goal of combating jihadist terrorism, particularly groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. The U.S. has provided significant military aid to Egypt, partly to ensure regional stability and support counterterrorism operations in the Sinai Peninsula, where Egypt has faced a persistent insurgency by jihadist groups (Cook, 2017, p. 138). The U.S. views Egypt as a crucial partner in maintaining security in a strategically important region, particularly given Egypt's control of the Suez Canal, a vital maritime chokepoint. This alignment is reinforced by the United States' long-standing military assistance to Egypt, which has amounted to over $1.3 billion annually, largely to ensure that Egypt remains a stable ally in a volatile region (Brownlee, 2020, p. 52). The Egyptian state uses this support to bolster its military capabilities, which it argues are essential for counterterrorism, thus aligning its goals with the U.S.'s broader security objectives in the Middle East.

2. Divergence in the Definition and Scope of Terrorism
Despite this shared goal, there are significant divergences between U.S. and Egyptian definitions of what constitutes terrorism. While the U.S. tends to focus on globally recognized terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, Egypt has a broader interpretation that includes political movements and domestic opposition groups, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. Since 2013, the Egyptian government has designated the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, a move that the U.S. has not fully endorsed (Lynch, 2016, p. 202). The Egyptian side suggests that the MB is a functional tool which the West uses to weaken the state in order to pave the path to colonial plans while the West claimed his innocent support to the democratic process. This divergence creates tensions, as U.S. policymakers often emphasize the importance of distinguishing between violent extremists and legitimate political actors. This broader definition has occasionally led to friction with U.S. officials, particularly concerning human rights and political freedoms.

3. Conflict Over Human Rights and Democratic Values
One of the most significant points of conflict between Egyptian and U.S. counterterrorism policies is the issue of human rights. The U.S., particularly under Democratic administrations, has emphasized that effective counterterrorism should not come at the expense of human rights and democratic principles. This emphasis creates tension with Egypt, where the Sisi government has

used counterterrorism as a must for protection measures, including mass arrests, restrictions on freedom of expression, and the curtailing of civil liberties (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019, pp. 14-15). U.S. policymakers have periodically raised concerns about the human rights implications of Egypt's domestic counterterrorism measures, including the imprisonment of journalists, activists, and political opponents under the pretext of combating terrorism (Dunne, 2021, p. 204). These critiques have sometimes led to reductions or conditions on military aid, although U.S. geopolitical interests often limit the extent of these measures.

4. Strategic Cooperation and Military Alliances
Despite tensions, the U.S. and Egypt maintain a robust military and intelligence partnership, underpinned by counterterrorism cooperation. The U.S. sees Egypt's military as a crucial asset in regional security, particularly in the fight against jihadist groups in the Sinai and Western Desert (Alterman, 2018, p. 87). Egypt has benefitted from U.S. military technology and intelligence-sharing, which enhances its counterterrorism operations and solidifies its role as a regional powerbroker. This cooperation highlights the pragmatic aspect of the U.S.-Egypt relationship, where security considerations often take precedence over ideological differences. However, the relationship is not without challenges, as instances of human rights abuses in Egypt sometimes force the U.S. to adopt a more critical stance, complicating the alliance (Brownlee, 2020, p. 60).

5. Regional Conflicts and Divergent Priorities
In the broader Middle East, U.S. and Egyptian counterterrorism priorities do not always align. For instance, the U.S. has a complex relationship with Qatar and Turkey, viewing them as valuable partners in certain contexts, despite their support for Islamist groups that Egypt considers a primary threat, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamid, 2017, p. 163). Egypt's strong opposition to these actors has led it to support the Saudi-UAE-led blockade of Qatar, a stance that has at times conflicted with U.S. attempts to maintain a balanced approach in the Gulf. Additionally, Egypt's involvement in Libya, where it has backed factions aligned with its anti-Islamist stance, sometimes runs counter to U.S. efforts to broker a political solution that includes a broader range of actors, including those Egypt views as threats (Wehrey, 2020, pp. 82-85). These regional conflicts underscore the differing priorities between Cairo and Washington when it comes to who is labelled as a legitimate political actor and who is considered a security threat each state translates the definition of counterterrorism according to its interest's agenda.

4- <u>Interest-driven versus value-driven foreign policy agenda.</u>

The notion of 'national interest' in foreign policy has long been described as 'analytically fuzzy' (Kratochwil 1982, p. 2) and required a clear theoretical frame to understand what the term 'interest' hides and in whose name it speaks. Furthermore, the field of foreign policy research also identifies the concept of 'value' as another important aspect in shaping decision-making in international relations. An interest-driven foreign policy agenda would prioritize the 'security, prosperity, and

well-being' of the many or the few, while a value-driven foreign policy agenda would seek to promote 'history and tradition' grounded in religious or cultural values (O'Brien 2013). Foreign policy does not always align its interest-driven approach with its value-driven approach, thus resulting in cases of tension, apparent or hidden contradiction, double-standards, and sometimes even public or international embarrassment.

According to Nincic, defining what constitutes 'national interest' must not be contingent on a vague 'broad consensus' in response to 'practical necessities.' One of the most dominant conceptions of the national interest 'makes security the paramount foreign policy concern of most states. Security, in turn, requires the acquisition and rational management of power, which can never be fully divorced from military force' (Nincic 1999, p. 32). According to this view, the exaggerated focus on 'security' is justified by the conception of international relations as an arena of conflict and struggles of domination and power. Consequently, people will have to be convinced or come to a consensus that it is in the national interest of Egypt to remain on top of regional power struggles. Such a 'realist' view contends that it is 'insecurity' that defines and determines foreign policy. Neo-liberalism does not, however, thrive alongside assumptions of insecurity, and would seek to strengthen the role of international institutions. A second approach to defining national interest, according to Nincic, follows the 'enumerative approach,' which builds a national consensus on a set of 'objectives', and again, in this case, the boundary of 'interest' is defined by national security. But while in the realist approach, security means the external focus on power-seeking foreign nations, for the 'enumerative' approach, security relates to social order and economic stability. In that sense, the idea of interest in foreign policy is rooted in domestic policy. By contrast, in the realist approach, it is the state of international relations that determines the idea of national interest. Nincic, however, believes that the enumerative approach is as inadequate as the realist approach because even if consensus can be secured over some objectives, it cannot be secured over all objectives. Besides, 'the problem of thresholds would remain unresolved,' because the list of objectives can be open-ended. More importantly, Nincic argues that the enumerative approach favours abstraction and vagueness. 'National security becomes "physical survival" […] Normative order becomes "liberty," implying the preservation of a "democratic way of life." Prosperity becomes "economic subsistence" …' (Nincic 1999, p. 45). Considering the shortcomings of the realist and enumerative approaches to defining the concept of 'interest' in foreign policy research, Nincic proposes a third approach. In the alternative frame proposed by

Nincic, there is a direct link between 'democratic procedure and the national interest,' which means that the judgement made on what constitutes 'national interest' can undergo a clear procedure enshrined in transparency, democratically elected governments, and robust mechanism to ensure democratic consensus. The problem would arise, according to Nincic, when 'the policy cannot be subjugated to democratic evaluation,' in which case, 'the link between foreign policy and national interest may not be *knowable*' (Nincic 1999, p. 49).

As for research concerning value-driven foreign policy, the idea of 'value' is as vague and controversial as the idea of 'interest'. Moreover, when value and interest intersect, contradictions become prominent. As Miller noted (1980, p. 143), the 'separate and collective deficiencies' of realist foreign policy grounded in interest, and idealist foreign policy grounded in value 'have plagued policymakers as they have lurched from one extreme to the other, usually claiming that their behaviour reflects the peculiarities of the international system. Issues about value-driven foreign policy agendas become apparent when dealing with human rights or, more recently, climate change, as foreign policy objectives. Also, in the context of neo-liberal globalization, maintaining traditional values and national identity, as well as the discourse of national sovereignty, are sometimes at odds with a foreign policy agenda driven towards global markets and cosmopolitan values and cultures (Hathaway, 2020).

Such approaches to theorizing 'interest' and 'value' in foreign policy research are useful to evaluate elements of change and continuity in Egypt's foreign policy during the timeframe under study. It is however important to situate these theoretical insights in concrete examples. Geopolitical changes in the Middle East have necessitated a recalibration of Egypt's alliances to safeguard its interests. Following Nincic, El-Sisi foreign policy agenda seems to reflect an idea of national interest grounded in the realist approach that focuses on the threat of power-struggles in the region, as well as an enumerative approach, which highlights a set of ambitious objectives focused on economic prosperity and social order. Nincic's third approach, which contends that when 'national interest' is not grounded in democratic processes it becomes 'unknowable,' it can be claimed that this unknowability may constitute a grey area in Egypt's foreign policy today.

The role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, has been instrumental in shaping an 'interest-driven' Egyptian foreign policy. As noted by (Stacher 2019), Egypt's alliance with the GCC states has provided economic and political support, influencing its regional stance and policies. 'The Gulf's willingness to

repeatedly bolster the Egyptian economy is due to lingering fears about the Arab Spring, a desire to exert pressure on a significantly weakened Muslim Brotherhood, and an eagerness to shore up Egypt's army—a key guarantor of regional stability and security' (Abdelaziz, 2022). Egypt has thus strategically pursued shifting alliances and a balancing act to safeguard its regional interests. Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been at the forefront of combating 'extremist' ideologies and so-called 'terrorist' organizations in the region. Their alignment on these issues has provided a foundation for closer cooperation and alliance-building (Dunne & Hamzawy 2019). In return, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states have provided substantial financial support to Egypt, particularly in times of economic challenges. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have offered financial aid, investments, and economic assistance to Egypt to boost its economy and support infrastructure projects (Farouk, 2020). This economic cooperation has not only strengthened bilateral ties but also provided Egypt with the means to address its socio-economic needs and enhance its regional standing.

The volatile security environment in the Middle East, including conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, was designated as a 'threat' to Egypt's national security, but by whom and for whose interest? Perhaps, in this case, and while abandoning the principle of non-alignment, arising from Cold War politics, Egypt's recent foreign policy alignment with Saudi Arabia and the UAE aims to counter the expansion of Iran's influence and the rise of 'extremist' groups. This is now one of the main priorities on the United States' and Europe's foreign policy agendas. Egypt's foreign policy today is determined by autonomous regional security or economic interests aligned with the foreign policy agenda of the EU and the US and restricted by the terms and conditions of the IMF, the World Bank, and other sources providing various economic aid packages.[11] Terms and conditions of foreign aid and debt apply to all debtors, debt relief is a potent tool of foreign policy. Turkey did not change its foreign policy towards Iran and maintained economic and political cooperation. In addition, Turkey declined its support to political Islam after a decade of trying to reshape the Middle East seeking The Arabs' satisfaction. "At a time when the Turkish economy is in turmoil, the shift in policy made sense. But for Erdogan, the distance between rivalry and regional cooperation was determined by the need for self-preservation" (Vohra, 2022). The case

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[11] Egypt is currently the IMF's second largest debtor after Argentina. In March 2024, The World Bank will grant Egypt $6 bln over three years subject to the group's board approval. The EU also agreed to provide $8.1 billion. (Source: *Reuters*, March 18, 2024)

of Turkey emphasizes interest-driven foreign policy. In addition, Egypt has not been restricted to any "funds" and refused to participate in the war on Yemen with the coalition of Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia (2015). We can argue then that the need for foreign debt may impose a kind of dependency on the country towards the US, however, Egyptian foreign policy did not allow this to conflict with its interests. The evidence on this point is the tension in Egypt-American relations after Washington decided to freeze American military and financial aid to Egypt which revealed American miscalculation and misunderstanding of the Egyptian people. The aid cut happened on the background of MB's expulsion from power, Obama Administration conditioned that their allies (MB) be included in the "road map" which has been rejected by the authorities and Egypt started to liberate itself from the relationship of subordination to the US by seeking cooperation with Russia (Edrees, 2013).

National security and counterterrorism as an ideologically driven basis of Egyptian foreign policy.

Egypt's foreign policy in the post-2011 era has been significantly shaped by the imperatives of national security and counterterrorism. This orientation is not merely a pragmatic response to perceived threats but also reflects an ideologically driven framework that justifies domestic and international behaviour. The emphasis on national security and counterterrorism serves to bolster the legitimacy of the Egyptian state, justify regional alliances, and consolidate political power. It could be argued that this approach stands in the centre between both the value and interest-driven foreign policy.

1. National Security as a Core of State Legitimacy.

The Egyptian state's use of national security rhetoric as an ideological tool can be traced to the challenges posed by the 2011 Arab Spring and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, the political landscape in Egypt was marked by instability and the ascendancy of the Brotherhood, culminating in the brief presidency of Mohamed Morsi (Brown, 2013 p. 12). The subsequent revolution in 2013, resulting in President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in power, was framed domestically and internationally as a necessary intervention to prevent terrorism and preserve national security (Hollis, 2016 p.28). By declaring the Brotherhood as a terrorist threat, the Sisi government reasserted its control, emphasizing the idea that political stability and national security are synonymous with the removing of Islamist movements.

This narrative has become a cornerstone of Egyptian foreign policy, with Cairo positioning itself as a bulwark against terrorism in the Middle East. The ideological framing of national security has allowed the government to legitimize its crackdowns on dissent, declare itself as a stabilizing force

in a tumultuous region, and justify foreign policy decisions that prioritize the ruling system stability over democratization (Albrecht, 2015 p.233).

2. Counterterrorism as a Justification for Regional Alliances.

The emphasis on counterterrorism has also been instrumental in shaping Egypt's regional alliances and its geopolitical strategies. Egypt's alignment with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two states that share concerns about political Islam and regional instability, is based on a shared ideological view that positions Islamism as a primary threat (Cook, 2017). This alliance has manifested in a concerted effort to oppose Turkish and Qatari influence, particularly due to their support for groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements.

By foregrounding counterterrorism, Egypt has positioned itself as a key partner for Western nations seeking stability in the region. This alignment is not only about combatting terrorism but also about securing economic and military aid from the United States and European powers, which prioritize counterterrorism cooperation in their Middle East policies. Hence, counterterrorism serves as an ideological framework that justifies Egypt's close ties with Western powers (Sayigh, 2019 p.74).

3. Ideological Use of Counterterrorism to Consolidate Domestic Power.

Domestically, counterterrorism is not just a policy, but an ideological tool employed to maintain control over the political landscape. The Egyptian government has frequently used counterterrorism rhetoric to beat opposition, including liberal and secular groups, by describing them as threats to national security. This securitization of political dissent has been a hallmark of Egyptian politics, especially under the Sisi government, where the boundaries between legitimate political activity and terrorism have been blurred (Stacher, 2020 p.102).

4. Counterterrorism as an Ideological Facade for Regional Hegemony.

Egypt's counterterrorism discourse also serves as a tool for regional hegemony. By defining terrorism in broad and often ambiguous terms, the Egyptian state has been able to apply interventions in neighbouring countries, positioning itself as a regional powerbroker. This is evident in its involvement in Libya, where Cairo has supported factions that align with its anti-Islamist stance, citing counterterrorism as a rationale for its actions (Wehrey, 2020). This point connects with the notion of "middle power" aspiration which constitutes Egyptian foreign policy strategy. Moreover, the ideological underpinning of Egypt's foreign policy is evident in its rhetorical positioning. Cairo consistently promotes a vision of a "strong state" as essential for regional stability, opposing grassroots movements. This stance is ideologically rooted in a preference for "stability" in authoritarian systems over "chaos" in democratic processes.

Egypt's foreign policy is deeply intertwined with an ideologically driven emphasis on national security and counterterrorism. This orientation serves multiple purposes: it legitimizes the ruling system, secures international alliances, and justifies domestic measures. National security and counterterrorism are not merely practical concerns but ideological constructs that shape Egypt's actions at home and abroad, reflecting a preference for stability.

National security and counterterrorism as a value-driven Egyptian foreign policy.

On the other hand, national security and counterterrorism notions can be seen as a value-driven foreign policy not only interest-driven or ideologically based foreign policy. These themes do not merely reflect practical responses to threats but embody values that are central to the Egyptian state's identity and legitimacy. The prioritization of stability, security, and citizen safety as foundational values drives Egypt's external behaviour and its alliances, particularly in the context of the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

1. Security and Stability as Core Values of the Egyptian State
Egyptian foreign policy is driven by a deep-seated value placed on state security and stability, protecting the state from external threads is a rooted doctrine in Egyptian history, identity, and culture. which are seen as crucial for preserving national unity and preventing the breakdown of authority seen in countries like Syria and Libya. These values became even more pronounced after the 2011 Arab Spring, which underscored the fragility of regional governments in the face of mass movements advocating for political change and democratization claims (Cook, 2017, p. 136).

The Egyptian state, especially under Sisi, has articulated a value system that equates stability with centralized authority, often at the expense of democratic values. This emphasis is visible in Cairo's persistent narrative that positions the state as the primary guarantor of order against chaos, a value that resonates with both domestic and international audiences worried about the repercussions of instability (Brown, 2013, p. 22).

2. Counterterrorism as an Ethical Imperative.
Counterterrorism has become a cornerstone of Egypt's value-driven foreign policy. The Egyptian government has described its actions against Islamist movements—both domestically and regionally—as a moral duty to combat extremism and preserve a secular, stable state. This ethical stance is particularly evident in Egypt's stance towards the Muslim Brotherhood, which it designated as a terrorist organization in 2013, and in its broader efforts to curb Islamist influence in the region (Hollis, 2016, pp. 29-31). Egypt's framing of counterterrorism as a value-driven imperative aligns with a global discourse that prioritises the eradication of terrorism as a fundamental good. This alignment has facilitated stronger ties with Western nations, which also prioritise counterterrorism, thus reinforcing Egypt's strategic position as a key ally in the fight against extremism (Lynch, 2016, p. 188). Shaping Regional Policy through a Security Value Lens is an important pillar in Egyptian foreign policy. The emphasis on security has significantly influenced Egypt's regional alliances and interventions. Cairo's support for the anti-Islamist

government in Libya, its alliance with Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and its participation in blockades against Qatar are all manifestations of a foreign policy driven by the value of containing political Islam and promoting regional stability (Kirkpatrick, 2018, pp. 203-205).

3. Domestic and International Legitimacy through a Security Narrative

By foregrounding national security and counterterrorism, the Egyptian state secures both domestic and international legitimacy. Domestically, the narrative of protecting the nation from terrorism and chaos resonates with a population wary of the potential for widespread disorder, as seen in the 2011 and 2013 uprisings (Stacher, 2020, pp. 105-107). Internationally, Egypt's alignment with the global counterterrorism agenda allows it to gain favour with Western powers, securing military aid and political support that reinforce the government stability.This focus on national security and counterterrorism is not merely reactive but reflects a deeper value system that privileges stability over political liberalization and sees authoritarianism as a necessary condition for order (Springborg, 2017, p. 162). This ideological foundation is crucial for understanding why Egypt consistently prioritizes security-oriented policies over claimed democratization, both at home and abroad.

5- **<u>Economic reform and neoliberalism.</u>**

Economic reform in Egypt has a profound impact on its foreign policy, leading to significant shifts in priorities, alliances, and diplomatic engagements. These reforms, aimed at improving economic stability, attracting foreign investment, and enhancing competitiveness. Firstly, economic reforms often lead to increased economic integration and trade liberalization. opening the economy can result in the establishment of new trade agreements and partnerships with other countries, ultimately influencing Egypt's foreign policy priorities. For instance, Egypt's economic reforms have encouraged its engagement in regional economic integration initiatives such as" the Arab free trade zone" and "the African continental free trade area", this enhanced regional engagement has bolstered Egypt's foreign policy priorities including economic diplomacy and the promotion of regional stability. Secondly, attracting foreign investment becomes a key objective for countries implementing economic reforms. In terms of investment diplomacy and fostering bilateral relations and economic partnerships, as discussed by Abdallah (2019), Egypt tried to build trust in its economy. "Investment needs stability in everything to grow and stay in a host country […] The political and economic instability after 2011 has reflected negatively on the credit rating of Egypt, and on the investment indicators, which started to improve since 2014" (Abdallah 2019, p. 21).

Egypt's economic reforms have played a crucial role in attracting foreign investment and fostering bilateral economic relations with other countries. The pursuit of investment diplomacy has been a key aspect of Egypt's foreign policy, as it seeks to diversify its sources of economic support, enhance trade relationships, and forge strategic partnerships. The implementation of reforms, such as the liberalization of investment regulations and the creation of special economic zones, has facilitated increased foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Egypt. This has not only provided Egypt with economic benefits but has also strengthened its diplomatic ties with countries that have invested in its economy. Investment diplomacy is shaping Egypt's foreign policy and its impact on bilateral relations (Springborg, 2017). According to Abdallah (2019), attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) requires creating a favourable business environment and engaging in economic diplomacy to assure potential investors. Consequently, Egypt's foreign policy may emphasize stability, security, and favourable conditions for foreign investors, which can influence its diplomatic engagements and relationships with other countries. Thirdly, economic reforms can result in shifts in geopolitical alliances. As Egypt pursues economic growth and attracts investment, it may seek new strategic partnerships that offer economic benefits. Research conducted by Bergh (2012) focused on "how national and international neoliberal discourses are translated and adapted at the local level." The close link between investment diplomacy and diversification of alliances is shaping foreign policy objectives, priorities, and engagements on regional and international platforms. Lastly, the impact of economic reforms on domestic stability is crucial to consider. Economic reforms dictated by global monitory funding bodies are not always welcome by all strata of the population and sometimes creates a tense political and social environment. In this case, foreign policy agenda must be calibrated to domestic stability. If reforms are perceived negatively or result in short-term hardships, the government may prioritize domestic stability in its foreign policy. According to Abdallah (2019), it is important to maintain relationships with countries that provide support during economic transitions to ensure domestic stability.

Since 2018, Egypt has undertaken a series of local economic reform features aimed at stabilizing its economy, attracting investment, and promoting sustainable growth. These reforms have had a significant impact on Egypt's economic landscape and have been instrumental in shaping its foreign policy decisions. Egypt's fiscal reforms have focused on improving public finance management and reducing budget deficits. The government has implemented measures

such as subsidy reforms, tax reforms, and increased revenue collection efforts. These reforms have aimed to address longstanding fiscal imbalances and improve the overall economic environment. According to Abdallah (2019), fiscal reforms have been essential in attracting foreign investors and stabilizing Egypt's macroeconomic conditions, thus influencing its foreign policy choices.

To attract domestic and foreign investment, Egypt has implemented reforms to improve its business environment. This includes streamlining bureaucracy, reducing red tape, and simplifying procedures for starting and operating businesses. The introduction of the Investment Law in 2017 and subsequent amendments have played a crucial role in creating a more favourable investment climate. According to the World Bank Report 2020,[12] these reforms have sought to increase investor confidence, boost private sector participation, and foster economic growth.

Egypt has undertaken significant reforms in its energy sector to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable development. These reforms include the liberalization of the energy market, promoting private sector participation, and attracting investment in renewable energy projects. The aim is to diversify the energy mix, reduce dependency on fossil fuels, and ensure long-term energy security. Abdallah, (2019) emphasized the significance of energy sector reforms in Egypt's sustainable development agenda and their influence on foreign policy decisions, particularly in the context of energy diplomacy.

Infrastructure development has been a key focus of Egypt's economic reform agenda. The country has invested in large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of the Suez Canal, the development of new ports, and the construction of highways and transportation networks. These infrastructure projects aim to enhance connectivity, facilitate trade, and attract foreign investment. They have also positioned Egypt as a regional hub for trade and logistics, influencing its foreign policy in terms of regional economic integration and engagement as mentioned in *El-Ahram* (A.moneim, 2021). New liberalism characterized by market-oriented economic policies and a reduced role of the state, has gained prominence in various countries around the world. The implementation of new liberal economic policies in Egypt has aimed to promote economic growth, attract foreign investment, and enhance competitiveness. These reforms have included measures such as subsidy reductions, fiscal consolidation, and privatization of state-owned enterprises. Advocates argue that these policies can stimulate economic development and create employment

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[12] World Bank report (2020). *Doing Business 2020: Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies.*

opportunities (Farzanegan eh al., 2019). However, critics express concerns over potential social inequalities and the impact of such reforms on vulnerable populations (Ianchovichina et al., 2015). A careful balance between growth-oriented policies and social justice considerations is crucial to ensure inclusive and sustainable development in Egypt. New liberalism in Egypt has witnessed a dual impact on social dynamics. On the one hand, it has contributed to the emergence of a burgeoning middle class and an entrepreneurial spirit, fostering economic empowerment and innovation. On the other hand, the implementation of market-oriented reforms has also led to increased income inequality and socioeconomic disparities, posing challenges to social cohesion and inclusive development. "The scope for independent policy action that reflects citizens' choices is impeded by disciplinary neoliberalism, which continues to alter the contours of domestic policies" (Joya 2016, p. 354). The extent to which new liberalism can effectively address social welfare concerns and bridge the gap between different socioeconomic groups remains a subject of debate and policy scrutiny.

The emphasis on market-oriented reforms and economic liberalization has positioned Egypt as an attractive destination for foreign investment and a potential partner in economic cooperation. This has facilitated economic diplomacy and strengthened ties with regional and international actors. "In the case of MENA economies, the GCC countries have enabled them to remain on the neoliberal path, occasionally softening the blow of the reforms through aid and grants" (Joya 2016, p. 354). Egypt's pursuit of economic integration, such as its involvement in regional economic initiatives and trade agreements, reflects the influence of new liberalism on its foreign policy decisions (Hinnebusch, 2018). However, the extent to which economic liberalization translates into geopolitical influence and sustainable economic development requires further examination.

6- **El-Sisi Effect and the perception of change in Egypt's IR and PD.**

The concept of change has played a significant role in Egypt's domestic affairs and its subsequent foreign policy decisions. Throughout its history, Egypt has experienced periods of political transformation and societal aspirations for change. The balance between stability and reform has been a recurring theme in Egyptian politics. The government's response to these domestic demands for change has influenced its foreign policy choices, as it seeks to address internal challenges while

maintaining stability and safeguarding national interests. As argued by El-Adawy (2013), the domestic pressures for change shape Egypt's foreign policy objectives and strategies.

The "Arab Spring" uprisings, for example, led to significant changes in the political landscape of the MENA region. Egypt's response to these regional transformations has been shaped by its own experiences and the perceived impact on its national security and stability. Selim (2022) argued that Egypt had different foreign policy responses to global shifts since President El-Sisi took office in 2014, and further crystallized following the second presidential term since 2018, which is the timeframe for this study. The most prominent changes can be noted in the designation of national security and stability as strategic priorities. Halawa, (2021) argued in her policy brief titled "Egypt is back" that this is the message Egyptian foreign policy officials wanted to promote across the globe.

The presidency of El-Sisi has had a significant impact on the country's political, economic, and social landscape. The researcher has attempted to analyse his influence on Egypt, examining key aspects such as governance, security, economic reforms, and foreign policy. By analysing the implications of his leadership, we can better understand the dynamics and challenges associated with his tenure. The new administration era constitutes the new features of Egyptian foreign policy, which had key effecting factors in the new strategies and will be examined in how the Western press portrays the new leadership (2018-2021). President Sisi's influence on Egypt is most evident in the consolidation of power within the executive branch. Since assuming office in 2014, he has enacted constitutional changes, expanded presidential authority, and exerted control over key institutions (Rutherford, 2018). Supporters argue that these measures have brought stability, tackled terrorism, and provided strong leadership (Miehe & Roll, 2019). Despite El-Sissi's detractors and an abysmal human rights record, Egypt under El-Sissi has regained some of its lost influence. While the scorecard on Libya and Ethiopia has been mixed, Egypt is back as a key regional player and has leveraged its strategic location, its regional connections, and its experienced diplomatic corps to advance its interests regionally and globally (Abdelghafar, 2022). However, critics raise concerns about the erosion of democratic institutions, restrictions on civil liberties, and limited political pluralism (Dunne & Hamzawy, 2019). President Sisi's influences in shaping the governance structure of Egypt has therefore been a subject of both praise and criticism. It is worth noting that international media only focused on amplifying the position of negative critics of the "regime" drawing a dark image of the new era and ignoring what has been achieved.

President Sisi has placed a strong emphasis on national security and combating terrorism during his presidency. His administration has pursued aggressive counterterrorism measures, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, aiming to restore stability and protect Egyptian citizens according to the State Information Service website (SIS Report, 2017). Proponents argue that these efforts have yielded positive results, reduced terrorist attacks and improved security conditions. According to Egyptian media reports, not a single terror attack took place in Egypt in the first quarter of 2023. The pronouncement followed more than 10 years of counterterrorism operations in the Sinai combating a local ISIS affiliate and other extremists (Counter Extremism Project, 2023). However, critics express concerns about human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

President Sisi has implemented economic reforms aimed at revitalizing Egypt's economy and attracting foreign investment. His government has pursued measures such as subsidy reductions, fiscal reforms, and infrastructure development (Abdallah, 2019). Supporters argue that these reforms have contributed to macroeconomic stability and improved business climate (World Bank, 2020). However, critics contend that these policies have disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities (Joya, 2016). In summary, President Sisi's foreign policy approach has been characterized by efforts to restore Egypt's regional standing and enhance its role in mediating regional conflicts. He has pursued a pragmatic approach, engaging with multiple regional and international actors, including the Gulf states, Russia, and the United States (Selim, 2022). His administration has played a significant role in mediating conflicts, such as those in Libya and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; his foreign policy decisions reflect his ambition to safeguard Egypt's national interests, promote regional stability, and increase Egypt's diplomatic leverage. Accordingly, Egypt's foreign policy is characterised as "personality-led" which manages decision-makers to define its strategies and is crystalized by one figurehead in power.

The presidency of El-Sisi has sparked debates and polarized opinions regarding his leadership style and its implications for the country. examining the contrasting views that portray him as both a dictator and a saviour by evaluating his actions, policies, and their consequences, we can better understand the complexities surrounding his image in domestic and Western media. Critics argue that El-Sisi's presidency has witnessed a significant erosion of democratic principles and the consolidation of authoritarian rule. They highlight the restrictions on freedom of speech,

the shrinking space for political opposition, and the crackdown on civil society (Dunne & Hamzawy 2019). These critics contend that El-Sisi's government has curtailed civil liberties to maintain control and suppress opposition. Supporters of El-Sisi view him as a "saviour" who has brought stability and tackled the threat of terrorism in Egypt (El-Adawy, 2014); his counterterrorism efforts have prevented Egypt from descending into chaos and protected its citizens from violence and instability. Another aspect to the image of El-Sisi as "saviour" is his focus on economic reforms and development (Abdallah, 2019). Proponents argue that these reforms have contributed to stabilizing the economy, creating job opportunities, and improving infrastructure (World Bank Report, 2020). On the other side, critics contend that El-Sisi's presidency has been marked by a concentration of power in the executive branch. They argue that his control over key institutions, including the judiciary and media, undermines the separation of powers and fosters an environment conducive to authoritarianism (Dunne & Hamzawy, 2019).

The Egyptian president era witnessed changes in the international relations map. The distinction between international relations (IR) and public diplomacy (PD) is that the latter uses strategic communication to promote a positive perception of foreign policy. Global diplomacy urged Egypt to find a path through public diplomacy to rebrand itself after the revolution of 2013 which the West called it "coup". Public diplomacy became an important tool of Egyptian foreign policy to achieve interests internationally and regionally. Hill (2003) suggested that public diplomacy is not merely an extension of traditional diplomacy but a fundamental component of a state's foreign policy strategy, crucial for building and sustaining international relationships. It involves communicating directly with foreign publics to inform and influence, thereby shaping the international environment in a manner conducive to a state's interests. Egypt attempted to employ its Ministry of Foreign Affairs to improve the image of Egypt in the international community to increase the tourism outcome and investment opportunities, and to achieve its interest-driven foreign policy. However, it is overly naive to believe that their work exists in isolation, unaffected by the actions of governments and the conflicting narratives of global politics – particularly when they target funding objectives (Hill & Beadle, 2014 p.48).

7- **Soft power effect as a tool of the (PD).**

Soft power, a concept popularized by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of a country to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. According to Nye, the main components of soft

power include a nation's culture, political values, and foreign policies, particularly in how these elements are perceived globally in terms of attractiveness, adherence to principles, legitimacy, and moral authority,

> The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye 2008 p.96).

Egypt's rich historical and cultural heritage is undeniably one of its most potent soft power assets. From the allure of its ancient civilizations to its modern cultural exports like literature, cinema, and art, Egypt has a unique cultural identity that resonates globally. The ancient Egyptian civilization, with its iconic monuments such as the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, continues to captivate the world's imagination. Egyptian cultural contributions in areas such as literature, music, film, and cuisine have also helped shape its global reputation (Scroope, 2017). The government has leveraged this by promoting Egyptian culture through various international festivals, exhibitions, and cultural exchange programs. Such initiatives not only enhance cultural diplomacy but also reinforce Egypt's image as a cradle of civilization and a hub of cultural richness. However, the potential for this strategy is not fully realized. Greater integration of contemporary Egyptian culture with its rich ancient heritage could further boost its appeal on the global stage.

Political values, particularly those relating to governance and human rights, play a critical role in shaping a country's international image. Egypt has often declared its commitment to stability, peace, and development, both regionally and domestically. These values are intended to resonate with global norms of good governance and human rights. Egypt's active role in maintaining regional security and stability contributes to its soft power influence. As a major player in the Arab world, Egypt has participated in peacekeeping missions, counterterrorism efforts, and regional initiatives aimed at promoting stability (Hinnebusch, 2018). By contributing to peace and security, Egypt enhances its reputation as a reliable and responsible partner, increasing its soft power influence. The application of these political values within Egypt has been met with mixed reviews internationally. Issues such as political repression, limited press freedom, and the handling of civil rights have been criticized by international observers and can undermine Egypt's efforts to project its political values as a foundation of its soft power (Maniou, 2022). This discrepancy between professed values and domestic practices can hinder Egypt's ability to fully leverage its political values in enhancing its soft power.

Egypt's foreign policy, particularly concerning its role as a mediator in regional conflicts, its peacekeeping initiatives, and its contributions to international peace and security, is intended to project its image as a responsible and influential regional power (Halawa, 2021). Egypt's strategic positioning in the Arab world, coupled with its active participation in organizations like the Arab League and the United Nations, enhances its profile as a leader with moral authority. Egypt's foreign policy is seen as legitimate and authoritative when it successfully brokers peace or when it leads humanitarian efforts. Its foreign policy is sometimes viewed through a critical lens, especially when perceived as aligning too closely with authoritarian regimes or when its actions in regional politics seem self-serving. This can affect the perception of its moral authority in foreign policy, impacting the efficacy of its soft power. However, Egypt uses its soft power in its interest-driven foreign policy.

Egypt's soft power is used to improve the economic situation. According to a report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2019), the country's strategic location, vast market, and economic reforms have attracted foreign direct investment, boosting its standing as a regional economic hub. One example of soft power in Egypt's foreign policy is the promotion of its rich cultural heritage, to attract tourists and foster international partnerships (Zorich, 2015). Recent initiatives include the "Egyptian Museum Goes Global" project, which showcased artifacts from the Egyptian Museum in different countries (Murtoff, 2023). Furthermore, Egypt has utilized media and public diplomacy to project its soft power. The Al-Ahram Foundation, an Egyptian media conglomerate, operates news outlets and publications that disseminate Egyptian perspectives and promote the country's interests abroad (Rizk *eh al.*, 2016). Al-Ahram has played a significant role in shaping narratives, fostering relationships, and influencing public opinion on Egypt's foreign policy. Another example is Egypt's engagement in sports diplomacy. The country has hosted various international sporting events, such as the African Cup of Nations in football and World Squash Championships (Nestler & Yang, 2022). These events not only enhance Egypt's international image but also provide platforms for cultural exchange and people-to-people interactions. Notably, the country attempted to rely on its public figures such as Mohamed Salah, Liverpool club player, to support its international image. However, Egypt's soft power efforts have faced criticism for inconsistencies between its professed values and actions (Siniver & Tsourapas, 2023). The United States is an excellent example of soft power and the use of the complex entertainment industry to promote the "American way of life" even while conducting aggressive

wars abroad. This shows that projecting an image of soft power and one of assertive foreign policy are not mutually exclusive. In the case of Egypt, the impact and effectiveness of its soft power initiatives are subjects of debate. While they may enhance the country's image and cultural influence, it is challenging to measure their direct impact on achieving specific foreign policy goals or shaping global perceptions (Abd El Rehim, 2017). Accordingly, Egyptian soft power is a key priority in the Egyptian (PD) which is used as a communication strategy globally to influence the perception of its foreign policy.

While Egypt's public diplomacy initiatives highlight its efforts to refine its foreign policy and improve its international image, several challenges persist. The effectiveness of these initiatives in achieving desired foreign policy outcomes can be limited by internal political dynamics, regional instability, and global perceptions of human rights practices. Furthermore, the rapidly changing landscape of global media and public opinion can dilute the impact of state-led public diplomacy efforts. Hill's framework suggests that successful public diplomacy requires adaptability and a deep understanding of both the domestic and international context (Hill, 2003), areas where Egypt may need to focus more intently. Egypt's use of public diplomacy, as seen through the theoretical lens of Christopher Hill, reveals a strategic effort to improve its foreign policy and navigate the complexities of international relations. Following Hill's insights, Egypt's future success in public diplomacy will depend on its ability to engage authentically with global audiences, address internal and external critiques, and adapt to "high levels of intercultural tension and conflict" (Hocking, 2005 p.28). According to Hocking, there is a need to re-examine the "soft power" effect as a public diplomacy tool in which cultural differences have become more entwined. Hocking (2005, p.29) identified two models of public diplomacy: the traditional one is the 'state-centred' approach, and the other is the 'network' model of diplomacy. While Egypt relies on the traditional diplomatic approach which is dealing with the international community through the official governmental channels, Egypt needs an approach of open diplomacy that involves building networks within foreign societies to persuade and influence. This is what Egypt lacks at present, even if it is trying to use soft powers to influence externally. We can analyse Egypt's situation through the three pillars that (Olins, 2005 p.172) identified in his vision for new public diplomacy, he suggested that every nation should "project its national brand… in the three areas of brand export; foreign direct investment; and tourism" (Olins, 2005 p.172). Egypt undoubtedly possesses a wealth of resources and opportunities for economic development, including products

for export, direct foreign investment potential, and a thriving tourism industry. Egypt is well known for exporting its culture through arts, history, and sports as well as trade products natural gas, copper, orange, and cotton. The state has the richest number of historical monuments and the perfect weather to be one of the most attractive destination for tourists. However, the effective utilization of these assets in public diplomacy efforts remains a challenge. Despite their inherent appeal and potential to enhance Egypt's soft power and international image, several factors contribute to their underutilization in public diplomacy:

1. **Fragmented Messaging**: Egypt's public diplomacy efforts often lack a cohesive and consistent narrative that effectively communicates the country's economic strengths to the global audience. There may be disparate efforts by different government agencies or entities "traditional approach", leading to a fragmented message that fails to resonate with international stakeholders (Melissen, 2005 p.11) and this suggests that Egypt needs to apply the "network" approach of public diplomacy.

2. **Perception Management**: Negative perceptions or misconceptions about Egypt's political stability, security situation, or business environment can overshadow its economic potential. Public diplomacy strategies may not adequately address these concerns or effectively counter negative narratives propagated by the media or other actors (Gilboa, 2008).

3. **Policy Inconsistencies**: Inconsistencies or uncertainties in economic policies can deter foreign investors and undermine public diplomacy efforts aimed at promoting Egypt as an investment destination. Issues such as regulatory barriers, bureaucratic red tape, or changes in government policies may erode investor confidence and detract from the country's economic attractiveness (Kerr *et al.*, 2016).

4. **Infrastructure Challenges**: Despite its tourism potential and natural attractions, Egypt is trying to solve the challenges related to infrastructure development, including transportation, accommodation, and tourism services. Inadequate infrastructure can impact visitor experiences and limit the country's ability to capitalize on its tourism assets as part of its public diplomacy efforts.

5. **Competitive Environment**: Egypt competes with other countries for foreign investment, export markets, and tourist dollars. In a globalized economy, effective public diplomacy

requires differentiation and a compelling value proposition that sets Egypt apart from its competitors. Failure to effectively articulate its unique selling points may result in missed opportunities for economic diplomacy (Dinnie, 2015).

Egypt's foreign policy is not effectively supported by robust public diplomacy. That might illustrate the Western media framing of the the Egyptian foreign policy and why the new shifts might be not reflected in the Western narratives. Those challenges need to be looked at in Egypt's (PD) by merging the traditional and new public diplomacy, especially with the enrichment that it has regarding Olins's pillars of branding her national name.

<u>Climate change.</u>

One of the challenges which Egypt shows its ability in its public diplomacy is its ability to organize and establish global events utilizing its soft power factors such as its location, history, and civilization exchange. Climate change has emerged as a pressing global challenge that requires concerted efforts and international cooperation. Focusing on the role of climate change in shaping Egyptian foreign policy we can examine Egypt's vulnerability to climate impacts, its policy responses, and international engagements, to understand the significance of climate change in its recent foreign policy agenda.

Egypt is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, water scarcity, and extreme weather events. These environmental challenges pose significant risks to Egypt's national security, particularly about water resources and food security (Abdel Aty, 2022). To address these challenges, Egypt has incorporated climate change considerations into its national security strategies, highlighting the need for adaptation measures and international cooperation. Water scarcity is a critical issue for Egypt due to its dependence on the Nile River for freshwater resources. Climate change exacerbates this challenge, as changing precipitation patterns and increased evaporation rates impact the Nile's flow. As a result, Egypt has prioritized regional water diplomacy, engaging in negotiations and cooperation with upstream countries, such as Sudan and Ethiopia, to secure its water interests (Abdel Aty, 2022). These diplomatic efforts highlight the recognition of climate change as a key factor in water resource management and the need for collaborative solutions. Egypt has recognized the potential of renewable energy to mitigate climate change and promote sustainable development. The country has made significant investments in renewable energy projects, such as wind and solar power, to diversify its energy

mix and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (El-Katiri & Fattouh, 2012). These efforts not only contribute to Egypt's commitment to the Paris Agreement but also position the country as a regional leader in renewable energy production to attract international investments. Egypt has developed adaptation strategies, including sustainable agriculture practices, coastal protection measures, and tourism diversification (UNDP, 2017). Additionally, Egypt actively participates in international climate negotiations and diplomatic initiatives. The country has engaged in global platforms, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conferences, to advocate for the interests of developing nations and highlight the specific vulnerabilities faced by countries in the MENA region. Egypt's involvement in international climate diplomacy underscores its recognition of climate change as a global issue that requires collaborative action. The most important feature was the COP27 summit which was held in" Sharm El sheikh" city in November 2022. The closing announcement for the conference was to reduce emissions, "stressing the urgent need for immediate, deep, rapid and sustainable reductions in global emissions of greenhouse gases" responsible for climate warming. It was decided also to conclude new financing agreements to help developing countries cope with losses and damage, by providing new and additional resources and helping to mobilize them. The argument here is that there is a gap between headlines and positions articulated by domestic and foreign newspapers. This reflects the research's main argument that the Western press does not reflect the elements of Egyptian foreign policy as it is on the ground. For instance, Egyptian newspapers such as "*Elmasry Elyom", "Elyoum Elsabea", "Alahram" and "Alwatan* "wrote about the event that Egypt is on track to implement comprehensive reform, including the national strategy for human rights, national dialogue, and presidential amnesty decisions, in addition to projects and initiatives related to the environment. Conversely, *The Guardian* newspaper, for example, insisted on allocating full coverage to disruptive events surrounding the conference while completely ignoring the conference's programme of activities, and closing recommendations, calling the conference the "greenwashing of a police state" (Klein, 2022).

Conclusion:

The discussion of various aspects of Egyptian foreign policy highlights the multifaceted nature of the country's engagements on the international stage. Egypt's foreign policy is shaped by a range of factors, including geopolitical changes, international events, regional conflicts, economic

reforms, the influence of President Sisi, the role of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood, and the significance of soft power and climate change considerations. Throughout this review, it becomes evident that Egypt's foreign policy is not static but rather responsive to the evolving regional and global dynamics. The country has adapted its approach to navigate the complexities of the Middle East, balance regional interests, and prioritize national security. It has engaged in diplomatic efforts, alliances, and partnerships to safeguard its interests and enhance its regional influence. Moreover, Egypt has recognized the importance of economic reform, integrated renewable energy, and leveraged its cultural heritage to enhance its soft power and attract international cooperation. However, criticisms of human rights concern and inconsistencies in upholding democratic values have raised questions about the effectiveness of Egypt's soft power initiatives. The influence of President El-Sisi on Egyptian foreign policy has been significant, with his leadership characterized by a combination of strong domestic control and efforts to position Egypt as a stabilizing force in the region. This influence has both supporters who view him as a necessary leader for stability and critics who perceive him as a consolidator of power and suppressor of dissent. Additionally, the impact of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood on Egyptian foreign policy has been complex, with the group's role in shaping Egypt's trajectory and its subsequent suppression under President Sisi. The connection between the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorism in Sinai and their potential ties to international terrorism further highlights the challenges faced by Egypt in addressing security threats while balancing its international relationships. Finally, the consideration of climate change in Egyptian foreign policy showcases the recognition of environmental challenges and the country's efforts to adapt to its immediate and long-term impacts. Egypt's engagement in international climate negotiations and its regional water diplomacy underscore the importance of addressing climate change as a national security and development priority. In summary, Egyptian foreign policy is influenced by a combination of geopolitical, economic, ideological, and environmental factors. The country's engagements on the international stage reflect a nuanced and evolving approach aimed at safeguarding its national interests, enhancing regional stability, and projecting influence. Based on the obvious shifts in Egypt's foreign policy parameters, as detailed in the preceding discussion, it became imperative to explain the nature of these shifts. This context will aid in the rigorous investigation of the amount and quality of Western media coverage of Egypt's foreign policy stories.

Chapter 3:

Egypt's diplomacy: Key shifts in agenda and strategy

Introduction:

The previous chapter explored the complex dynamics of Egyptian foreign policy during the new administration era, focusing on key themes such as geopolitical shifts, President El-Sisi's influence, political Islam, economic reforms, security challenges, soft power strategies, and public diplomacy strategy. The study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond the limited narratives presented in Western media, to understand why some themes are primed while others are ignored. Western media frames applied to the treatment of Egypt foreign policy, this research suggests, is interlinked with its broader approach to the coverage of the MENA region. The research highlights the need for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Egyptian foreign policy in academic and media discourses and seeks to investigate how and why the Western media has constructed the current image of Egypt's foreign policy as if nothing had changed and without acknowledging constant shifts in power dynamics among regional actors. Accordingly, this chapter provides insights into the development of Egypt's international relations and diplomatic ties with other countries, focusing on the primary catalysts of foreign diplomacy strategy in the region which have influenced the transformation of the Egyptian diplomacy approach towards building global alliances and its emphasis on "national security" and "public interest" at a domestic level. Highlighting the different aspects of Egyptian foreign policy strategies which will be examined if the Western press covered or overlooked.

1-Actor-specific theory and the dilemmas of Egypt's foreign policy:

International relations (IR) occupy a middle ground between two vague terms: "international "which at least hints at actors other than the state; and "relations "which opens the possibility of other areas which are not strictly political, such as economic interests and social welfare (Albert & Buzan 2017, p.4). Foreign policy is part of international relations; it consists of a set of decisions

and actions taken by a particular country towards the outside world, aimed at achieving the country's interests and enhancing its security. It includes a set of strategies and goals that direct diplomatic, trade, and security policy (Bindra, 2019). International relations include all interactions and links between countries in the international community, and it studies the impact of individual countries' international decisions on other countries, be they allies or "political enemies," whether they are designated as partners for cooperation or hostile governments engaged in a relation of tension or conflict. Actor-specific theory of foreign policy "takes as its premise that the ground of IR is human decision-makers acting singly or in groups. Foreign policy analysis is situated at the intersection of all social science and policy fields as they relate to international affairs" (Hudson 2005 p. 21).

General international relations determine the foreign policy of individual states. In the MENA region, most of Western scholarship focuses on the Shi'a-Sunni alleged conflict, and political Islam, thus influencing and reflecting media framing of political conflict in the region as internal religious conflict (Gelvin, 2021; Rane et al, 2014; Taspinar, 2024). The said internal struggle within Islamic factions is compounded by international politics and in particular longstanding interference by powerful outsiders to impose their version of order on the region (O'Brien 2013 p.17). Egyptian diplomacy has recently shifted away from these frames, seeking to maintain strong bilateral and multilateral relationships, which is another essential goal of Egypt's general policy. Strengthening traditional friendly relations as well as building new relationships enables Egypt to exercise influence and pursue its national interest all over the globe (El-Kamel, 2010).

The comparison of Egyptian foreign policy during the Mubarak and Sisi eras reveals significant shifts in priorities, alliances, and strategic focus, reflecting the changing internal and external landscapes Egypt has faced. Under Mubarak, Egypt played a vital role in facilitating peace talks in the Arab Israeli conflict and received substantial financial aid from the United States, which underpinned its foreign policy and regional standing (Al-Weshah, 2016). Mubarak's era was characterized by a heavy reliance on the United States, positioning Egypt as a pivotal moderate Arab state in the Middle East peace process. By contrast, the Sisi era has been marked by a more multidimensional foreign policy approach, diversifying Egypt's international relationships beyond its traditional alliance with the United States. El-Sisi has sought to strengthen ties with France,

Russia, China, and the European Union, while also receiving financial assistance from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchies. This shift reflects a strategic pivot towards enhancing Egypt's geopolitical autonomy and addressing contemporary challenges, such as water scarcity and the need for economic diversification (Bovsunivskyi & Ignatiev 2018). Moreover, El-Sisi's tenure has seen an active effort to improve relations with African states, particularly Nile basin countries, although these efforts have been critiqued as inadequate in addressing the underlying issues of water management and regional cooperation. Piazza's work focuses on the evolution of Egyptian foreign policy post-2011, highlighting the strengthening of ties between Egypt and Saudi Arabia from 2014 to 2016 as a notable aspect of El-Sisi's foreign policy (Piazza, 2019) This reflects a broader trend of seeking closer relations with regional powers in the Middle East under El-Sisi, partly in response to the challenges posed by political instability and economic pressures. The contrast between Mubarak's traditional, US-centric foreign policy and El-Sisi's more diversified and regionally focused approach signifies a strategic reorientation of Egyptian foreign policy. Under El-Sisi, Egypt has exhibited a willingness to engage with a broader array of global powers and regional actors, pursuing a foreign policy that seeks to balance traditional alliances with new partnerships to navigate the complexities of contemporary geopolitical challenges. This reorientation is indicative of Egypt's efforts to carve out a more autonomous and influential role on the international stage, adapting to the evolving dynamics of global and regional politics. All this raises at least three important questions, which sum up the dilemmas of Egypt's foreign policy. Firstly, is making the orientation of Egypt's foreign policy contingent upon economic aid a sign of its autonomy and sovereignty, or does it undermine the actor-oriented strategy it aimed to follow? Secondly, can we still talk about the diversification of alliances outside the traditional U-S-centric role of Egypt's foreign policy when Egypt deals with countries within the NATO alliance? Are relations with the latter dictate limited options when it comes to Egypt's decision-making process if these decisions do not serve the interests of NATO countries, including many EU countries? Thirdly, in the context of rising new powers such as China, and emerging regional actors such as Iran and Turkey, does this leave Egypt with the option to truly diversity its foreign relations without losing the main source of economic aid on which it continues to depend for its domestic stability?

Recent Egyptian foreign policy approaches seek to balance both interests and values. According to O'Brien (2013, p.16), interests can be defined by 'security', prosperity, and well-

being of the country and values can come from history, traditions, and religion. It could be confusing when it comes to applying the values. On the other hand, values should be balanced out with national security as well which is still a key priority considering the continued influence of conflict in the MENA region on Egyptian foreign policy. However, whenever two or more values clash, the relative importance of both must be carefully analysed, even if there is no agreement on the identity of the supreme value. This ranking of values is not easy because intensity fluctuates from case to case and is often determined by unforeseen circumstances especially when a situation of conflict is volatile. Values reach their full political significance only in action (Bindra, 2019). Thus, notably seeking balance with the frame of compromising between interests and values interpret Egypt's alliance with the NATO countries, securing the military cooperation with Russia and keeping the economic aids flow from Gulf countries.

2- <u>US-Egyptian relations revisited:</u>

Historically, the United States-Egyptian relations have gone through significant shifts. The late 1950s to the early 1960s marked a period of deterioration, highlighted by clashes between Egypt's Nasser and U.S. Secretary John Foster Dulles. This shift from initially hopeful relations to a more confrontational approach by Nasser towards the U.S. underscored the volatile nature of these relations over time (Sayed-Ahmed, 1987). The relationship took a strategic turn following the Camp David Accords, with the U.S. securing Egypt's strategic location and protecting it from hostile powers, establishing a strategic partnership that has influenced regional dynamics and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East (Elkady, 2020). Normalisation with Israel was from the start a key condition in securing a stable foreign policy built on cooperation between the U.S and Egypt. This relationship has been complex and multifaceted, evolving through various phases of cooperation and tension over the decades. At the heart of U.S.-Egyptian relations are shared concerns over "terrorist" attacks, with both nations agreeing on the importance of the Egypt-Israeli peace treaty, the need for Arab-Israel peace talks, and regional stability. However, there has been disagreement over Egypt's interpretation of human rights practices for Islamic "terrorists", showcasing the nuanced balance between strategic partnerships and ideological differences (Elkady, 2020).

The relations have seen periods of deterioration, particularly in the past two decades, prompting calls for a comprehensive reconsideration and re-establishment of the relationship. It has been suggested that a shift towards emphasizing economic cooperation over military and aid-related cooperation could rejuvenate this bilateral relationship. Additionally, the United States provides Egypt with annual aid without restrictions, primarily used for military technologies and procurement of weaponry, indicating a focus on strategic and security interests over human rights and democratic values (Sharp, 2021). Recent years have seen a focus on the crackdown on civil society in Egypt, raising questions about whether the United States will act against the Egyptian military's actions or maintain their relationship without consequence. This ongoing concern highlights the challenges of balancing strategic interests with the promotion of human rights and democratic principles (Carothers & Press 2021). Although this crackdown on civil liberties may seem to go against the U.S. "values" of "democracy," it is worth noting that the U.S. itself maintains large military bases across the MENA region, and never ceased to impose its own crack down on political Islam, abducting and holding detainees without trial. All this has been carefully documented in academic literature since September 11 and the so-called "war on terror." When Egypt for example finds itself criticised for not respecting the "human rights" of Islamist militants, the U.S. record is not exemplary either (Esposito, 2010; Gros, 2010; Cesari, 2009, Bayoumi, 2015).

US-Egypt relations during the presidencies of Trump and Biden in relation to President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's leadership in Egypt reveal nuanced shifts and continuities in foreign policy approaches. However, an examination of broader geopolitical shifts and policy orientations can offer insights into the evolving nature of US-Egypt relations during these periods. Under President Trump, US-Egypt relations were characterized by a strong emphasis on security cooperation and counterterrorism efforts, with President Trump often praising El-Sisi's leadership and taking steps to reinforce the strategic partnership between the two countries. This period saw continued military aid and support for Egypt's role in maintaining regional stability despite concerns over human rights issues in Egypt. The transition to President Biden's administration marked a potential shift in priorities, with Biden's campaign signalling a more critical stance on human rights and governance issues in Egypt. Despite this, the strategic importance of Egypt in regional security, counterterrorism, and as a mediator in Middle Eastern conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian situation, suggests that pragmatic considerations may temper any significant shifts in bilateral relations. There is a diversification in Egypt's foreign policy, with intensified contacts between

Egypt and Russia, indicating a strategic move by Egypt to strengthen cooperation with other global powers and reduce its dependency on the US (Al-Anany, 2021). This could reflect a broader strategy by Egypt under El-Sisi to navigate its geopolitical position amidst changing US priorities and global dynamics. El-Sisi era introduced new complexities, but the US has employed strategies to maintain its hegemony in Egypt despite these challenges (Taghdar & *et Al*, 2021)

3- <u>Diplomacy map with EU countries and the UK.</u>

Over the past two decades, Egyptian relations with the EU have been marked by both cooperation and challenges. The "Arab Spring" of 2011 was a pivotal moment that significantly impacted the regional order in the Southern Mediterranean, which underscores the necessity of reassessing the role undertaken by European nations. Key to this role is the complete disengagement from the colonial paradigm, evident in the overt interference in Middle Eastern affairs and the employment of narratives around the absence of human rights standards, and the widespread underdevelopment and poverty in Arab countries. This is particularly pertinent when considering the issues of poverty and setbacks following Brexit, and the proliferation of racism within the societal fabric and among its political leaders. Following these "uprisings," the scaling down of US presence encouraged regional and supra-regional actors to pursue assertive policies, thus generating strategic competition and further risks. This situation underscored the urgency for the EU to assume advancing its interests in the region by distancing itself from intervening in the affairs of Middle Eastern countries and focusing solely on economic cooperation. There are two aspects in which the stability in the Middle East is critical to the European countries, firstly the economic interests of the EU consist of dependence on oil, other raw materials, and agricultural products. The Middle East is a vital region for the global energy market, possessing a sizeable portion of the world's oil and gas reserves. The EU's interest in ensuring a stable and secure supply of energy from the Middle East is paramount, given its dependence on external energy sources. Studies such as those by Luft, G., & Korin, A. (2009) in "Energy Security Challenges for the 21st Century" provide insights into how the EU's energy security strategy is influenced by the region's energy dynamic. The discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean has also created economic interests in securing the trade between Mediterranean and European countries, further complicating the geopolitical landscape with issues of territorial and economic water disputes (Soltan, 2021 p.139). Secondly, the fear of illegal migration, given its geographical proximity and direct links to Mediterranean security concerns (Zafar, 2011) explains why the EU is keen to protect the continent

from illegal immigration which comes from the Middle East particularly. Thus, Economic stability in the Middle East is of strategic interest to the EU, as it directly impacts migration flows, security concerns, and economic opportunities in the region. Egypt has been at the centre of many Mediterranean security risks, its strategic position, and recent discoveries of natural gas in its economic zone have made it a key player in regional security dynamics. grappling with political turmoil, economic challenges, and "terrorism," particularly in the Sinai region. Despite facing significant socio-economic and political challenges, Egypt has managed to achieve a degree of stability and economic growth over the study's timeframe, thanks in part to ambitious economic reforms initiated in 2015 (Abdel Ghafar, 2018). As Abdel Ghafar (2018) emphasized in his analysis, these reforms, while boosting the economy, have also placed increased economic hardship on most of Egypt's population, highlighting the delicate balance between achieving economic growth and ensuring political and social stability. Recently the migration crisis has become a pivotal area of cooperation, with Egypt playing a crucial role in curbing illegal migration to Europe. The EU has engaged Egypt in dialogue and support to strengthen border control and combat human trafficking, recognizing Egypt's strategic position as both a transit and origin country for migrants. Furthermore, the geopolitical rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly concerning energy resources, has brought Egypt and EU member states closer in terms of exploring and securing natural gas supplies. This cooperation is exemplified by the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, which includes EU countries like Greece and Cyprus alongside Egypt and others, aiming to develop the region's gas market and ensure energy security. The challenge is European (especially France and Germany) critiques of Egypt regarding human rights and the treatment of political opposition. Besides the great tensions with Italy because of the murder of Rigini, the PhD student who was in Cairo and was tortured and killed in mysterious circumstances. The EU's efforts to promote "democracy" in Egypt "post-Arab Spring" were seen as limited, particularly in the political domain, indicating a cautious and sometimes hesitant EU approach (Zahran, 2019). Egyptian relations with the EU over the past two decades have navigated through a maze of political changes, strategic considerations, and mutual interests. While there have been efforts to deepen ties, challenges related to different policy approaches to values (human rights and democracy) clashed with socio-economic interests, thus assessing the resilience and adaptability of this relationship. The nature of Egypt's foreign policy with European countries is based on mutual interest. Human rights organisations and the media condemn the

ruling regime in Egypt, but at the government level, there is a simultaneous collaboration focused on economic interests and curbing illegal immigration to Europe.

Egypt was a British protectorate from 1882 until it gained nominal independence in 1922. The United Kingdom continued to have a significant presence and influence in Egypt, especially with the Suez Canal (Mohsen, 1993). Egypt's struggle for full sovereignty continued until the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, which led to the establishment of the Republic of Egypt. This marked a significant shift in the bilateral relationship, as Egypt sought to assert its independence. The Suez Crisis of 1956 was a pivotal moment in Egypt-UK relations. Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal led to military intervention by the UK, along with France and Israel. However, international pressure, including from Russia and the United States, forced a withdrawal of foreign forces (as published on the IWM website)[13]. Egypt and the UK have had periods of strained relations, particularly during times of regional conflicts, such as the Arab-Israeli conflicts. The UK's policy stance, often aligned with the United States, has occasionally clashed with Egyptian positions on these issues (Ottaway *et Al*, 2008). Despite challenges, Egypt and the UK have maintained diplomatic relations and cooperation on various fronts, including trade, cultural exchange, and counter-terrorism efforts. The UK has provided development assistance to Egypt in areas like education and healthcare. Over the years, the two countries have signed agreements covering various sectors, including economic partnerships, cultural exchanges, and security cooperation (UK- Egypt Joint Statement on economic cooperation, (2020)[14]. However, these ties clash with two contrary approaches. Firstly: the harsh British accusation of Egypt for human rights breach and lack of democracy. Webber (2023) discusses the authoritarian responses by the UK government, under leaders including Johnson and Sunak, to various domestic and international challenges. Such governance styles, focusing on stringent policies towards migrants, protestors, and others, might influence Cairo-London relations, especially in discussions around human rights and international law. Recently The Illegal Immigration Bill has been pointed out for significantly eroding human rights and refugee protections, particularly by denying asylum to anyone arriving "irregularly" and creating sweeping new detention powers (UN report, 2023). The Public Order

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[13] This information has been published on the IWM website, It is a website of "Imperial war museums" that deals with historical information.

[14] A statement declaring the cooperation between Egypt and the UK has been published on the UK government website by the Department of International Development.

Bill has drawn criticism for being deeply troubling and incompatible with the UK's international human rights obligations. Another concerning bill aims to curb strike activities, potentially breaching UK workers' human rights (UK Parliament report, (2023). [15] Thus, the excuse of accusing countries of the MENA region of human rights breaches turned out to be fragile and just a form of foreign interference. On the democratic scale, the political turbulence in the UK, marked by the transition from Johnson to Truss and then to Sunak, has been a spectacle of leadership change and has had far-reaching implications on the UK's domestic and foreign policy and its image in the world as a democracy in turmoil. These recent events have been covered in the global news media and on social media, highlighting the potential instability these changes will cause in the UK's international relations, including with Cairo (Petley, 2023). England has expressed criticism regarding the absence of democracy and the inability to uphold its principles in the Middle East, particularly regarding freedom of speech and freedom for political opponents and for public protest. The Ministry of the Interior in the UK has engaged in severe acts of racism while attempting to suppress demonstrators who were protesting Israel and advocating for the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, the decision to launch British air strikes on Yemen without Parliament's approval (Eaton, 2024) is questionable as far as upholding the principles of democracy is concerned. Egypt has accused the UK of becoming a breeding ground and haven for the Muslim Brotherhood and for giving them bases to spread their views. The Egyptian government has sought to internationalize its fight against the Brotherhood, urging other countries to recognize the group as a terrorist organization and to act against its members and supporters abroad. Egypt's criticism of the UK for allegedly providing a haven for Brotherhood members reflects this broader diplomatic strategy aimed at isolating the Brotherhood and curtailing its activities globally (Vidino, 2015). Understanding the recent evolution of the dynamics of Cairo-London relations is deserving of an independent and more in-depth study, which would contribute valuable insights into how bilateral ties have evolved in response to changing political leadership in the UK and the complex geopolitical landscape of the MENA region.

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[15] Research briefing on the UK parliament website "Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill 2022-23."

4- __Egypt & recent conflicts in the MENA region.__

Egypt always emphasized that it certainly experienced a succession crisis that is likely to call into question anew the relationship between the security establishment and civilian authorities (Ottaway *et Al*, 2008, p. 4) in an attempt to keep its borders secure. Egypt seeks a balanced foreign policy with the MENA region countries which reflects a pragmatic approach towards regional conflicts and crises, balancing its interests and security concerns amidst complex geopolitical dynamics. Contrary to what Western schools expected that the "Arab spring" was an opening on the path towards democratic transformation, it turned the region into more chaos, conflicts, and economic disintegration.

> The upheavals that have shaken the Arab world since December 2010, often subsumed under the rubric 'Arab Spring', have precipitated dynamics of change and conflict ranging from gradual or piecemeal reform to authoritarian retrenchment, deepened internal conflict and all-out civil war (Assiburg & Wimmen, 2015)

Egypt's diplomacy towards Libya is driven by national security concerns, particularly regarding border stability and the containment of jihadist militants. The volatile situation in Libya, with its internal conflict and divided governance between the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) in the East, has prompted Egypt to support the LNA led by General Khalifa Haftar at the beginning. Egypt's support for the LNA is part of its broader strategy to combat terrorism and prevent the spillover of instability across its western border (Polat, 2020). This stance has also been influenced by Egypt's desire to counter Turkish involvement in Libya, which Cairo views as a direct threat to its interests and regional influence. Libyan economy is severely dysfunctional due to the imminent collapse of the state. Two quasi-governments, one in Tripoli and the other in Tobruk, have emerged, each claiming authority over the fragmented Libya. Additionally, the presence of armed militias hinders any potential political resolution. However, as evidence of the worsening economic difficulties in Egypt, Egyptians persist in migrating to Libya in pursuit of a more promising future. Tsourapas (2019) see that Egypt and Tubruk (the east side) of Libya used the Islamic threat in Libya for political gains.

> On the one hand, Egypt launched several airstrikes upon Libyan territory that do little or nothing to safeguard Egyptian citizens and do more to demonstrate anti-terrorist bona fides to patrons in the Gulf and the West. The Libyan deputies in Tobruk, on the other hand, have begun viewing Egypt's military involvement as an opportunity to deal a blow to their political rivals in Tripoli: they employ anti-Islamic State rhetoric and

Egyptian military involvement to bolster international support and delegitimize their domestic political opponents, who are now conflated as terrorists (Tsourapas 2019, p. 14).

Eventually, the disputed sides arrived at the "Cairo Declaration" 2020. Egypt and Libya have highlighted a multifaceted approach to peace and stability in the region. A notable instance of this diplomacy was a meeting in Cairo, which included high-level discussions between Libyan, Egyptian, and US officials to further the political process in Libya and bolster peace efforts. This meeting underscored Egypt's role in bringing Libyan sides closer and supporting the peace process, showcasing an initiative to bridge gaps and support a stable electoral process in Libya. The Egyptian position emphasized Libyan unity and proposed a comprehensive roadmap to resolve the crisis. The Cairo Declaration, launched in June 2020 by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Libyan National Army Commander Khalifa Haftar, and Speaker of the Libyan House of Representatives Aguila Saleh, laid the groundwork for the unification of Libyan institutions and aimed at improving stability in the country. This initiative has been seen as a pivotal moment in Egypt's diplomatic engagements, emphasizing its significant role in fostering peace and stability within the region (State Information System, 2020).[16]

Changing dynamics between Egypt and Turkey have created new opportunities for resolving the political deadlock in Libya. These dynamics, influenced by Turkey's tragic earthquake and Egypt's economic crisis, may lead both nations to soften their stances on Libya. Recently Ankara and Cairo cooperated more closely regarding Libya, where they back opposing sides, the Turkish Foreign Minister said, marking another step in the rapprochement between the two regional powers (Reuters, 2023)[17]. The reconciliation made the two countries work to mend ties after being at odds for a decade, having cut diplomatic links following the overthrow of Egypt's then-president and Ankara ally Mursi. Among the disputes between the two countries was the

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[16] State Information Service is the official Egyptian international contribution guide. It deals with foreign policy strategies and problematic files providing detailed international agreements, diplomatic news, and official visits. It is operated by the Ministry of Information and the republic's presidency. Aiming to enhance international Public Relations and Diplomacy: including staffing and managing 32 press offices around the globe which monitor and maintain a dialogue with the global press. SIS facilitates the work of international journalists operating in Egypt through its Foreign Press Center and its recently established Cairo Foreign Press Club.

[17] The information has been published on the Reuters website, which is cited in the websites at the end of the thesis.

conflict in Libya. The Turkish side states that they will cooperate more closely regarding Libya from now on.

After the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, an internal process of political transformation began that also entailed a re-composition of Egypt's regional strategic alliances (Piazza & Larramendi, 2018). The analysis of these transformations makes it possible to evaluate the scope of the changes —or the continuity— in the country's foreign policy and the evolution of the adaptation policies implemented by Egyptian diplomacy in the regional arena. Egypt's stance on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is clear, which insists on the two-state solution and the Palestinian right in their lands against the forced displacement. Egypt has traditionally played a mediating role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leveraging its historical peace treaty with Israel and its relations with Palestinian factions. Cairo's efforts have primarily focused on facilitating ceasefires in Gaza and supporting reconciliation between Palestinian factions, Fatah, and Hamas. Egypt's policy aims to maintain regional stability, prevent escalation, and uphold its role as a key mediator in the Middle East peace process (Abouzayaad & *et Al*, 2011). However, Although Egypt's El-Sisi government once perpetuated propaganda against Hamas at home, today its foreign and domestic standing is contingent on a strong relationship with the Gaza-based group (Mandour, 2021). The Egyptian approach to Hamas is shaped by several and occasionally contradictory objectives and can only be comprehended by examining the overlap of internal and foreign policy perspectives. Hamas and the Sisi administration have become more intertwined, as both groups have a common purpose in preserving a facade of a positive relationship. The regime relies on Hamas as a resistance which defends the Palestinian rights in their land against Israel, which will refuse the forced displacement to Sinai. Also, Egypt maintains a tight relationship with them to uphold its regional clout as a mediator and to diminish the influence of its regional competitors, Turkey and Qatar, in Gaza. Meanwhile, Hamas needs a minimum level of Egyptian goodwill to allow for the inflow of much-needed supplies across the border, either legally through the crossing or illegally through the tunnels, and for the regime to function as a mediator on behalf of the group. Hence, the two parties remain locked in an embrace, dictated by forces beyond their control (Mandour, 2021).

Egypt's stance on Syria has been characterized by a cautious approach, aiming to maintain a balance between opposing international forces involved in the conflict. While Egypt has not

actively supported the Assad regime, it has also refrained from backing opposition groups, focusing instead on preserving Syrian state institutions and advocating for a political solution to the conflict. Egypt's primary concern in Syria is to prevent further destabilization that could exacerbate regional security threats, including "terrorism" and refugee flows (Allison, 2013).

In Yemen, Egypt's involvement has been limited compared to its engagement in other regional conflicts which affect its national security. Cairo has expressed support for the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi rebels, aligning with its Gulf allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Butter, 2020). However, Egypt's direct military involvement has been cautious, reflecting its prioritization of security concerns closer to home, such as in Libya and the Sinai Peninsula, over deeper engagement in Yemen's conflict. Egyptians had reservations about the war in Yemen, and the public anxiety created a dilemma for Egypt's President El-Sisi, who must balance the concerns of a public worried about domestic security and social problems, and the pull of Saudi Arabia, a close ally that has donated billions to Egypt's government (Malsin, 2015). The Egyptian decision not to participate in the war on Yemen reflects the sacrificing of the huge fund flow from the gulf when it comes to national security.

The shift in the balance of power within the Arab world from Egypt to the Gulf since the 1973 war has been reflected in the chronic dependence of Egypt on financial support from its oil-rich neighbours. Egypt may have the largest population among Arab states and the most potent armed forces, but its ability to project power and influence has been undermined by economic weakness. Many of the issues that formed the basis of the alliance that has developed between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE since 2013 remain relevant today, but in several crucial aspects, the political and economic context has changed. As Butter (2020) argued, Sisi, Mohamed bin Salman and Mohammed bin Zayed were heavily invested in the Trump presidency. For Sisi, Trump afforded useful protection against critics in the US Congress of Egypt's human rights record; the US president has also been receptive to Sisi's arguments on the importance of combating political Islam. For the Saudi and UAE leaders, Trump's hard line on Iran was welcome, and they even saw some merit in the so-called 'deal of the century' on Palestine that was being drawn up by the president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. From this perspective, it was expected to strengthen the determination of these three influential Arab nations to collaborate in addressing regional matters. The cooperative strategy has proven successful in Sudan, with financial

contributions from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, along with political backing from Egypt. This collaboration has facilitated peace negotiations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as the management of the political transition in Khartoum after the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir. These initiatives have served a strategic purpose in checking the spread of Turkish and Iranian interests in that region (Butter, 2020, p. 24). The alliances between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have historically been characterized by a shared interest in preventing democratic transformations, countering political Islam, and limiting the influence of regional rivals such as Iran and Turkey in the Middle East. However, recent developments suggest that divergences of interest are emerging, potentially leading to future conflicts. These divergences are rooted in economic and regional political issues, which could challenge the cohesion of these alliances (Ragab, 2017). The funds from Saudi Arabia became restricted amid claims that Saudi Arabia seeks more investments in the public sector which is owned by the state instead of the restriction in the private sector. The political interests crossed paths, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which did not take sufficient support from UAE. In addition to Cairo's hidden anger because of Emirati alliance with Ethiopia. Egypt could be driven into insolvency if the Gulf monarchies were to suspend their financial aid, and the resulting socio-economic upheavals in the most populous Arab country (around 110 million inhabitants) could impact the stability of the political system or at least put massive pressure on the current leadership under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (Roll, 2023). Meanwhile, the gulf will lose a fundamental player in countering terrorism. Accordingly, the future of Egyptian diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and the UAE appears to be at a crossroads. While the countries share common goals, the divergences of interest, particularly in economic and regional political spheres, pose challenges to their alliances.

5- <u>**New strategies in Africa.**</u>

Egypt is not only part of the MENA region. Geographically, and economically, it is also integral to international relations and policies in the region of Africa. One of the Egyptian foreign policy's new pillars is turning to more cooperation with the global south. This is reflected in its increased focus on the African continent. Egypt's African policy is undergoing transformational dynamics after several decades of distancing itself from the continent. According to (Farouq 2018, p. 4) there were driving forces for Egyptian foreign policy shift towards Africa: firstly, the geopolitics

of the Nile. The Nile issue allowed Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and The UAE to control the case by their investment in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the cooperation between Israel and Ethiopia already worries Cairo. Second, the geostrategic stakes in Africa. Although Egypt has the largest military power in the continent, the threat comes from the four mentioned countries' interference either economically or regarding the military bases. Thirdly the consequences of internal political instability pushed Egypt to avoid more isolation from its continent and to mobilise alliances regarding the GRED dilemma. Fourthly, the main target of El-Sisi's government is to fight terrorism. Central and west Africa with the Sahel and Sahara currently hold a prominent position in Cairo's anti-terrorism activities. After those challenges and on the diplomatic level, during its presidency of the AU in 2019, Egypt prioritized economic and regional integration, social development, institutional reforms, and peace and security. It also took significant steps to advance the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aiming to enhance Africa's negotiating position on the international stage. Egypt's diplomatic efforts are seen as a move to reaffirm its position as an African nation and a leading voice for the continent at major international forums. Cairo's success in securing the chair of a new network of think tanks to support the AU peace and security commissioner exemplifies Egypt's influence in shaping peace and security policies within the AU. This achievement reflects Egypt's strategic engagement in African affairs beyond water rights issues, underlining its active role in military, hydroelectric, and economic cooperation projects across the continent. Egypt also plays a mediator role in Sudan, offering refuge to Sudanese fleeing conflict and engaging in mediation efforts. As Sudan's military strongmen fight each other for power, the conflict has spilt over its borders and Egypt has many concerns about its border security, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and economic health (Cafiero, 2023). Non-state actors could potentially exploit Sudan's crisis in ways that would directly threaten Egypt. Until the fighting does end, Cairo is determined to at least have it take place as far away from Egypt's territory as possible. Egypt and Ethiopia have arrived at a dead-end in the negotiation about the GERD. The countries blamed each other, and the Egyptian side said the talks were unsuccessful due to Ethiopia's "persistent refusal" to accept any compromise. The Ethiopian side accused Egypt of putting up "roadblocks" in the discussions that prevented any consensus (AP, 2023).[18] The conflict is still on-going and different outcomes are possible in

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[18] The information has been published on the Associated Press Agency news website, which is cited at the end of the thesis in the" websites" section.

favour of one side or the other. Amid suffocating circumstances for the Egyptian side, which is surrounded by a fence of dilemmas, any decision can be paralyzed. The restrictions vary between the economic crisis, the ongoing conflicts on the borders from west, east and south, counterterrorism, the external support to Ethiopia, US support receding and water poverty. It's worth noting that the study's timeframe highlights several "unresolved" issues and links this volatility with observations on challenges to Egypt's foreign policy as outlined in its 2022-27 strategic plan.

6- Building new alliances with Russia and China:

Cairo condemned the war of Russia on Ukraine under the philosophy of reusing any kind of aggression on any land which aligns with its stance from the Palestinian case. Meanwhile, it condemned applying random sanctions on Russia. Apart from the war on Ukraine, Egypt had to turn towards Russia after the disappointments from the United States. the diplomatic relations between Egypt and Russia have undergone significant evolution, reflecting broader geopolitical shifts and mutual interests in political, economic, and military domains. There has been a notable resurgence in Egypt-Russia relations, driven by mutual interests in restoring and strengthening their strategic partnership (Khalaf, 2017). One of the pillars of the Egypt-Russia relationship in recent years has been military cooperation. Egypt has sought to diversify its sources of military hardware and has turned to Russia for the procurement of advanced weaponry, including fighter jets and missile systems. These deals do not only underscore the military dimension of their relationship but also reflect a mutual desire to enhance security cooperation amidst regional uncertainties. In addition to military cooperation, economic ties between Egypt and Russia have witnessed growth, with both countries exploring opportunities to increase trade, investment, and collaboration in sectors such as energy, tourism, and infrastructure. The establishment of a Russian industrial zone in Egypt and discussions on a free trade agreement between Egypt and the Eurasian Economic Union are indicative of the economic dimension of their partnership in addition to the "Dabaa" peaceful nuclear power plant which is an Egyptian dream with Russian support contributing to the future development of the country.

Furthermore, Sisi and Putin share similar worldviews whether about dealing with domestic opposition or regional issues in Syria and Libya as well as political Islam. Al-Anany (2021)

highlighted that both leaders disdain basic democratic and human rights principles and prefer using coercion against political opponents no matter the consequences. They also vehemently reject and rebuff any external criticism or pressure to respect human rights; in fact, they consider such critique a national insult that necessitates strong condemnation. These personal traits make Sisi and Putin a perfect match in an era of erosion of democracy and the growing "strongman model" around the world. Considering this situation, Egypt's burgeoning ties with Russia, a significant adversary of the United States, have put it in an uncomfortable position during the Biden Administration. Sisi is strategically leveraging his interactions with the United States and seeking to exploit his connections with Moscow to attract the attention of Washington. Russia appears to know Sisi's approach and is, in turn, exploiting it for its own objectives. Nevertheless, this is a precarious game that carries the potential for negative consequences, posing a threat to Egypt's relations with one of its crucial allies. Indeed, in 2019, Cairo faced the imminent threat of US penalties due to its decision to acquire Russian-manufactured aircraft. That occurred during the Trump Administration, when, paradoxically, Sisi was regarded as President Trump's "favourite dictator." The extent to which Egypt may develop its connection with Russia is contingent upon the level of acceptance and tolerance that Washington can demonstrate towards this conduct (Al-Anany, 2021). Egypt's attempt to mitigate American pressure through hedging strategies may have inherent risks and prove to be damaging. However, at present, Cairo appears content to adhere to that course of action, with the expectation that it would benefit its own interests.

Evolving diplomatic relations between Egypt and China have been significantly bolstered through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and cooperation in various sectors, including trade, and investment. Egypt's strategic location as a gateway between Africa, Asia, and Europe positions it as a pivotal partner in (BRI). The project seeks to enhance trade routes, infrastructure development, and economic integration across continents, with Egypt playing a leading role in connecting the initiative's maritime and land routes. The Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZone) has been identified as a critical node in the BRI, attracting Chinese investments aimed at developing industrial and logistical hubs (Soliman & Zhao, 2019). The theory that" authoritarian" governments, including China and Egypt, allow anti-foreign protests to gain diplomatic bargaining leverage reflects the complex nature of their relations. This strategy demonstrates resolve in international negotiations and highlights the nuanced approaches both countries employ

in their foreign policies and diplomatic engagements. This relation has implications for regional dynamics, including the resolution of issues such as Somaliland's independence. An analysis by Oxford Analytica, in 2021, argued that the partnership between Egypt and China could lead to reprisals from regional actors like Ethiopia and Somalia, illustrating the broader geopolitical implications of Cairo-Beijing ties. China and Egypt's cooperation approach could be seen as being like Russia and Egypt's collaboration approach in terms of mobilizing allies to reduce the dependency on the United States. the Biden administration has been attempting to build a global alliance of democracies that could counterbalance the rising global axis of autocracies led by China and Russia. Egypt's partnership with China could be seen as a challenge to this effort and will impact Washington's relations with Cairo (Al-Anany, 2023). Egypt's burgeoning alliance with China has both economic and strategic prospects, while simultaneously presenting problems to its longstanding relationships with traditional allies, such as the United States. Hence, Egypt must uphold a favourable equilibrium in its diplomatic ties with both the United States and China, as it directly impacts Egypt's interests and prospects.

Conclusion:

Recent Egyptian foreign policy approaches seek to balance both interests and values in its strategies with the international community. The new features of the foreign policy do not focus on the traditional mediator role in the region as much as finding stability and protecting the borders amid a turbulent region. The challenges of the surrounding conflicts threatening national Egyptian security compelled Egypt's foreign policy to focus on domestic interests first. The fact that Egypt's collaboration with the EU and the USA is not solid and changeable pushed the policy to seek new alliances such as Russia and China.

Priorities

Egypt's foreign policy has traditionally been driven by several core priorities: securing its borders, maintaining stability and security, economic development, and water security, particularly concerning the Nile River due to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) issue. Increasingly, there is also an emphasis on diversifying its international partnerships and investments to bolster economic stability.

Challenges and dilemmas

The country faces several dilemmas in its foreign policy execution:

- **Water security vs. regional cooperation**: The GERD dispute with Ethiopia is a prime example of the delicate balance Egypt must maintain between securing its critical water resources and fostering regional cooperation in Africa.

- **Balancing military power with economic stability**: Egypt's focus on military power and security, including its military involvement in Libya and the Sinai Peninsula, raises questions about the allocation of resources that could otherwise support economic growth and development.

- **Navigating regional rivalries**: The complex relationships with regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran present both opportunities and challenges for Egypt, requiring astute diplomacy to navigate these dynamics without escalating tensions.

- **Regional actor role**: Describing Egypt as a regional actor remains appropriate given its considerable influence in the Arab world, Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of this role depend on how well Egypt can manage its internal challenges while leveraging its strategic position to foster regional stability and cooperation.

- **Military power and domestic prosperity**: While military strength is crucial for maintaining national security, an overemphasis on military power at the expense of economic development and social welfare could undermine long-term domestic prosperity and stability. Balancing defence needs with investment in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities is essential for sustainable growth.

- **Navigating competing interests**: Egypt's ability to navigate competing interests in the region, especially with countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran, requires diplomatic finesse and a strategic approach to foreign relations that prioritize Egypt's national interests while avoiding entanglement in regional conflicts.

- **Building alliances with competing superpowers**: Egypt has historically maintained a delicate balance between aligning with various superpowers, including the US, China, and Russia. This balancing act allows Egypt to maximize its strategic interests, attract investments, and acquire military and technological capabilities. However, this approach

also necessitates careful management to avoid becoming overly dependent on or alienating any single power.

- **Cooperation with Africa and the EU**: Cooperation with Africa hinges on addressing key issues like water security and border disputes. Without resolving these, deeper cooperation might be challenging. Similarly, collaboration with the European Union (EU) is crucial for economic development, trade, and addressing migration issues. While this relationship is substantial, it requires continuous effort to address mutual concerns and adapt to changing global dynamics.

The current study examines the Western press coverage nature of those shifts in the elements of Egyptian foreign policy. Based on the research hypothesis **the coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the** approaches to framing Egyptian foreign policy in Western media.

Chapter 4:

Theoretical framework

Introduction:

The previous chapters showed how the literature presented the various pillars of Egyptian foreign policy and the map of its international relations during the new leadership era. The growing focus on national security has been paralleled by the decline in focus on the country's traditional role as mediator regarding conflicts in the MENA region. From a geopolitical and historical perspectives, it can be said that Egypt had found itself in the role of regional actor by default. But already by the start of Sis's second term in office, the slogan of putting "Egypt first" and the cultivation of the spirit of the "new Egyptian" meant that interests were being prioritised over values. However, the discourse of security and sovereignty as founding blocks of economic prosperity went hand in hand with a growing dependence on foreign debt and populist aspirations to rival a Tukey-style model of interventionism in regional conflicts. During the timeframe of the present study, Egypt's foreign policy behaviour began to show elements characteristic of "middle powers" (Cooper and Flames 2013). The middle-power model is a complex formation in the contemporary international system whereby domestic and foreign policies are tangled with economic governance and the pursuit of multilateral alliances. Although the aspiration to occupy the position of a "middle power" in the case of Egypt will take a turn for the worse after 2023, conversely, within the timeframe of the study, this aspiration took concrete forms as explained in the previous two chapters.[19] For that reason, the working hypotheses of the study, which seek to determine whether shifts in Egypt's foreign policy are reflected in Western media frames in terms of volume and quality of coverage, remain valid. The research's main hypothesis that "the coverage of Egypt's foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation," suggests that Western media representation of major shifts in Egypt's foreign policy during the timeframe of the study is inadequate, keeping the coverage in a stereotyping and double

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[19] As explained in the concluding chapter, the promises shown by Egypt's foreign policy during the timeframe of the study (2018-2021) were confronted with serious challenges in 2022-23 as the country's economic crisis intensified against the background of fierce regional conflicts, including the wars in Ukraine, Sudan, and then Gaza.

standards format as it is almost customary in portrayals of any other Middle Eastern country. The aim of this chapter is to present theoretical insights key to the grounding of this hypothesis, namely the concept of middle-power foreign policy behaviour, framing and priming in the agenda-setting approach to the analysis of media texts, and the theory of media events to understand the prominence of disruptive frames over the ceremonial ones in the Western coverage of the MENA region. These theoretical insights aim to limit the scope of the collected data to enable the researcher to focus on specific quantitative variables in terms of volume of coverage of specific news items, and qualitative patterns in terms of prominent themes and discursive strands characteristic of western media narratives about the MENA region. Western media ignored the multidimensional diplomacy of Egypt by discarding specific subjects and focusing on other ones, while priming all types of news with issues surrounding human rights, repression, or lack of democracy even if this terminology is not explicitly related to the news items covered, for example, when providing factual information on a sports event, or a global forum on the environment, or when reporting on the weather or a new archaeological discovery. While the analysis chapters will monitor and interpret this framing, the present chapter highlights the theories and approaches underpinning news coverage of Egypt in Western media in parallel with the theoretical framing of the idea of "middle power" in contemporary foreign policy studies. Reading these theories together enables the researcher to distinguish between how Egypt's foreign policy sees itself and how it is seen by Western media.

1- <u>Ceremonial and disruptive frames approach.</u>

In the aftermath of the so-called "Arab Spring," there was an important body of works produced by academics based in Anglo-American and European universities that celebrated the popular uprisings in parts of North Africa. The literature on the subject was marked by optimism and enthusiasm mixed with some scepticism of the democratic transition. A notable example of this scholarly discourse is Hamid Dabashi's *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* (2012). More recently, the scholarship has changed in tone, and initial optimism turned into excessive pessimism. An example of this type of discourse would be the recent book by Noah Feldman, *The Arab Winter: A Tragedy* (2020). While all countries have witnessed radical transformation on every level after the so-called "Arab Spring" (social, cultural, political, economic, and so on), these radical transformations are often overlooked, and we still do not have the adequate tools to measure

them or even recognize them. After the initial enthusiasm and global spectacle of Arab uprisings, the Western media reverted to the "orientalist frame" and the idea that Arab countries were unable to rise to the ideal of liberal democracy. The view that the revolutionary events marked a break with the past is lost in the more powerful idea that there is a general lapse back into undemocratic political cultures. As far as Egypt is concerned, after President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's rise to power, the Western media's disillusionment with the state of democracy in Egypt became a prominent theme. Expectations for the establishment of Western model of democracy in the MENA region were dashed by the leadership of El-Sisi. The actual events fell short of the Western anticipation, causing the narrative to overlook any new aspects of the changing role of Egypt in contemporary international politics.

Media events theory, originally conceptualized by Dayan and Katz (1992), delineates how broadcast media can transform ordinary events into spectacles that can unite viewers and create a sense of shared experience. This theory recognises the power of live broadcast of carefully pre-planned ceremonial events of contest, conquest, and coronation and its impact on shaping historical memory in our times. Even with the transition from a broadcast-centred model to post-television audiences in the social media era, the theory of media events still matters, because major events of the genre enumerated by Dayan and Katz are specific to live television and now to live streaming. These events include televised presidential debates, major sports events, funerals, or coronations of globally known faces of influence or power, and televised court-room trials. Dayan and Katz, however, became aware of the gradual transition to a post-television era and considered the importance of distinguishing between "ceremonial" and "disruptive" frames that media outlets employ to shape public perception and discourse around such events.

Regarding the positive frames, Dayan and Katz have a specific description for the ceremonial event, which reflects most of the content that Egyptian foreign policy communicators are using to frame foreign policy affairs and their reception at home and abroad, especially in the depiction of army parades, national days, and diplomatic events. Media events engage the public on an emotional level, as Dayan and Katz said, "The public allow themselves great emotions to cheer, to weep to feel pride … these occasions link past and present" (Dayan& Katz 1992 p. 129). Thus, this approach focuses on how ceremonial events foster a sense of belonging, and how they have that "integrative function" that brings people together around shared values. Positive news

content is seen as essential to foster national identities and global peace. The Sisi government focuses on the value of ceremonial events and many mega spectacles have been staged to mark the launch of mega projects, such as the widely celebrated launch of the administrative capital and the repatriation of archaeological treasures. These events were both framed as narratives of conquest, to demonstrate the resilience of the country and its ability to reclaim its past and future.

On the other hand, Katz and Liebes (2007, p. 160) referred to the "disruptive frame" as news media genre whereby "unscripted traumas have moved from 'bulletin' [or contained] mode to marathon mode." It is utilized for unexpected, often negative events such as disasters, terrorist attacks, protests, and other crises. This framing focuses on the disruption of normalcy, the challenges to social order, and the responses to such disruptions (Ajetunmobi, 2023). Unlike ceremonial events, which are carefully planned, scripted, and co-organised thanks to media and power consensus and collaboration; the scripts of disruptive events cannot be controlled. They appear either in the form of "breaking news" or as live broadcast of traumatic news, which was described as "disaster marathon," to capture the news media 24/7 continuous coverage of disaster events or terrorist attacks. In general, disruptive events are not framed with critical analysis and their live coverage is not limited in time like ceremonial events. Audiences are not prepared for the unsettling interruptions of disruptive events, which often highlight conflict, controversy, and the breakdown of societal norms. In the news content, which is being analysed in this research, there is a significant focus on what are called disruptive events, or what others call "disaster marathons." Egyptian Foreign policy news coverage in Western media focuses on the disruptive frames and almost discards any ceremonial frames.

Media outlets choose between these frames based on various factors, including their audience, ideological leanings, and the political atmosphere. For instance, the analysis of media coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics Beijing 2022 shows how foreign media's attitudes and framing can shift, focusing more on disruptive elements like human rights abuses rather than ceremonial aspects such as the celebration of cultural heritage (Li & Xu, 2023). That is exactly what's happening with the Egyptian foreign policy in Western media. The main events such as the opening of the 'Kebash' Road ceremony, "Youth International Forum", "COP27 conference", "Infrastructure rebuilding", "successful diplomatic and economic

agreements", "Dabaa nuclear station", and any development projects have been foregrounded with human rights concerns and repeated references to an authoritarian "regime."

The distinction between ceremonial and disruptive frames is not merely academic; it has real-world implications for how events are understood and remembered by the public. The commemorative ceremonies or the news of the conflict, as discussed by (Kobielska, 2021), serve as "affective media of memory," employing both ceremonial and disruptive frames to shape collective memory and identity. This kind of framing of Egyptian foreign policy establishes a collective memory about Egypt's identity and creates a stereotyping which will be followed generation after generation and will not allow monitoring of any shifts in the Middle Eastern countries' image.

One of the possible extensions of Dayan and Katz's theory can be to develop the concept of "transformative media events." This approach has been argued by Nim's criticism of the previous approaches, he suggested a need for broader understanding that includes transformative media events which frame the renewal of social order or institutions. Interestingly, this approach fits the changed nature of Egyptian foreign policy as the occurring events created changes in the political and social order. Thus, we can say that the transformative frame is the most suitable approach to Egyptian foreign policy instead of adopting the disruptive frame and discarding other aspects. "Special attention is paid to methodological difficulties involved in identifying the criteria of transformative media events. For instance, the matter of whether events which have not led to significant social changes (such as failed protest actions) can be considered transformative" (Nim, 2019).

2- "News framing" theory.

News framing theory, a central concept in media studies, explores how news media shape perceptions by selecting certain aspects of a complex reality and making them more salient in a communicating text. This theory underscores the power of media in shaping not just public discourse but also influencing public opinion and policymaking. The implementation of news framing by media outlets is diverse, reflecting ideological biases, editorial policies, and the target audience's preferences. Frame-building refers to factors that influence the structure and factors

internal to the journalism, which determine how journalists and news organizations frame issues. Frame-setting also refers to the interaction between media frames and an individual's prior knowledge and predispositions. Frames may affect the interpretation and evaluation of issues and events (Vreese 2005, p. 52). Moreover, framing plays a role in current discussions about "selective exposure." Much attention is devoted to selective exposure, in terms of news, particularly "political selective exposure." As summarised by (Lecheler & Vreese 2019, p. 99), news frames can contribute both "positively and negatively" to these roles: they can offer information, depth, and overview, and lead to empathy, mobilization, and education; they can also dampen information, focus on process over substance, and reduce mobilization, empathy, and education.

> News framing effects are important, they contribute to how citizens think about political, economic, and social issues; they influence and suggest which elements of a topic are important; and they can drive evaluations, move policy support, and affect (electoral) behaviour. These matters are not inconsequential or trivial in a democracy. At the same time, these effects are not universal, absolute, and all-powerful. Frames have a selective function; they suggest certain issue attributes, judgments, and decisions (Lecheler & Vreese 2019, p.101).

Accordingly, this "selective function" manages the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press. This selection process can be controlled by several parameters such as the cultural background of the communicator, the political principles in Western society, historical background, editorial policy, or the media outlet agenda. The framing function of "judgment" has dominated the representation of Egyptian foreign policy which contained predictions, exaggeration, and stereotyping. The first notable thing is the process of inclusion and exclusion: what stories are getting more attention and what stories are left out? How do those frames use reference points that support stereotypes of Egyptian political culture? Most covered issues are framed with cross-references to conflict, dictators, economic difficulties, human rights breaches, and the tourism industry. In a similar context, the disparity in framing between different media outlets can be stark. Azlena *et al* (2023) illustrated this perspective by the comparison between *The New York Times* and *The New York Post* in their coverage of the America-Iran feud. *The New York Times* presented a balance of perspectives, whereas *The New York Post* exhibited a biased ideology towards Iran, showcasing how framing can reflect and reinforce ideological leanings. Regarding Egypt for instance, *Reuters* and *Daily Mail* reported about the details, the arrangements, and the outcomes of the COP27 Conference, while the *Guardian* and *DW* reported differently; they focused only on human rights protests.

While what has been mentioned interprets the frames of Egyptian foreign policy in Western media in terms of the communicator's judgement and the selective process which could stem from the journalist's cultural background or the political atmosphere, any media outlet has an editorial line and agenda-setting. For instance, it is very explicit that the used frame in Western media related to the war in Ukraine is totally different from the ones used in the war on Gaza. Framing is related to agenda-setting theory but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic. The basis of framing theory is that media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning.

The application of agenda-setting theory allows us to see what policies and regimes western media outlets amplify and support and the ones they do not frame in a positive or at least "objective" way. Coverage of news content about the MENA region is underpinned by Western media bias in favour of Israel. There is no real criticism or harsh language regarding the Israeli policies and actions, in *The Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Reuters, Associated Press* news agency and many other outlets. Despite the peace treaty (1979) between Egypt and Israel, there was a hidden radical historical rivalry between the two states over Sinai and in the culture and ideology (Elgindy, 2012). Prioritising the disruptive frame of the Egyptian foreign policy is always in favour of Israel as it weakens the structure of the Egyptian state order (that is not limited to Egypt only, the negative frames also are applied in the American media to Chinese and Russian news). The same outlets set its agenda on defending the Muslim Brotherhood under the flag of democracy without taking into consideration the national interests of Egypt or its security concerns (Selim, 2015) as they have been framed in Western media, they promoted the line that a "Yes" vote would mean a vote for Islam. Besides, they are not the leading forces behind the January 2011 revolution as Selim argued,

> Muslim Brotherhood did not take part in the revolution when it began on January 25. The more extremist Salafis even condemned the revolution as being against Islam. The Brotherhood only appeared in Tahrir Square at the end of January 28 when the revolution gained momentum and the national police force collapsed, after which it decided to join the movement, hold its own demonstrations and events, and slowly integrate itself into the uprising. This provided a long-awaited opportunity for the Brotherhood to consolidate its power and become the spokesman of a revolution that it did not plan (Selim 2015, p. 179).

Selim (2015) claimed that "the "SCAF" and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) were the main culprits of the US-led counter-revolution in Egypt. MB attempted to distance itself from the SCAF and to

polish its image as an alternative, yet reliable US ally in Egypt, a move that was welcomed in Washington in the context of a pragmatic policy to achieve vital American interests and to avoid a backlash in US-Egyptian relations in the event of the Brotherhood ascending to power." Accordingly, we can say that the MB are a functional tool for the US and might be able to weaken the Egyptian state.

Entman (1991) defined three tools of framing. The size of the coverage was not sufficient for the size of the events in Egyptian foreign policy, notably many events were discarded especially regarding the diplomatic agreements and development projects. The second tool is the clarity extent of the coverage which mostly loses the core meaning under the insistent mentioning of human rights breaches and the autocratic regime description. The third tool is generalization which means linking a specific event with another one to restore the targeted media message and establish the stereotype, for instance publishing an article about economic prosperity but in the frame of a "repressive regime". Furthermore, Entman illustrated the five mainframes: "conflict, human interest, responsibility, consequence and morality." In the Western media coverage of Egyptian foreign policy, the frames of "conflict" and "morality" are prominent, mainly focusing on negative news regarding conflicts, war, protests, and crimes and indicating the immorality in the police state with repression, human rights abuse, and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Throughout the research analysis, **the priming approach** has emerged as an indicator of the Western press agenda setting. Priming occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments. Priming is a temporal extension of agenda setting. By making some issues more salient in people's minds (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people consider when making judgments about political candidates or issues (Scheufele& Tewksbury, 2007 p.11). Priming theory assumes that ideas are related and connected in a mental network and that stimulating one of these ideas leads to stimulating other related ideas from memory within the context in which these ideas take place (Zamith, 2023). The public's impressions of foreign countries may be built through historical frameworks, domestic events, and previous relations with the international community. Therefore, foreign policy, in presenting international relations within cognitive frameworks that have been presented before, contributes to shaping the public's attitudes towards Egypt's image. It may be sufficient only to refer to a

previous negative position if the desired effect is negative, or to refer to a positive position which might cause "stereotyping" regarding the country's image. Framing assumes that how an issue is characterized in news reports can influence how it is understood by audiences. The mixture in the theoretical frame between these functions of "priming" and "framing" can explain the interpretation of how Egyptian foreign policy is presented in the Western press.

3- <u>Multidimensional diplomacy and the concept of "middle-powerhood"</u>

Multidimensional diplomacy offers a nuanced framework for understanding the complex, interconnected nature of international relations in the contemporary world. This theory diverges from traditional diplomatic approaches by acknowledging that international interactions are not limited to bilateral or multilateral negotiations between states but also include a vast array of non-state actors, issues, and methods of engagement. Egyptian foreign policy analysis showed this approach as a feature of change.

The foundational aspect of multidimensional diplomacy is the recognition that states negotiate over multiple issues simultaneously, which necessitates a more flexible and nuanced approach to international crisis bargaining. Trager (2011) presents a model of multidimensional international crisis bargaining that illustrates how states can send costless signals about their resolve, affecting other states' beliefs and actions. This approach underscores the importance of understanding the multifaceted nature of diplomacy in today's interconnected world. Shen and his colleagues' exploration of "Multidimensional Diplomacy of Contemporary China" delves into how China's multidimensional diplomacy includes relationships in neighbouring regions and beyond, examining the geopolitical significance of China's involvement in the Gulf and its economic and oil interests in Africa. This highlights the broad scope of multidimensional diplomacy, encompassing economic, political, and security dimensions (Shen *et al*, 2010)

The theory also aligns closely with the concept of network diplomacy, which involves increased engagement between non-state and state actors to arrive at more comprehensive solutions and effective decisions. Network diplomacy emphasizes the importance of cooperation and collaboration across different sectors and actors, showcasing a key aspect of multidimensional diplomacy in practice (Morozov, 2019). Digitalization has further complicated the landscape of multidimensional diplomacy, Bjola & Manor's (2018) study introduces the concept of "domestic

digital diplomacy," highlighting how social media and digital platforms have transformed the interaction between national and international levels of diplomacy. This evolution reflects the expanding dimensions of diplomacy in the information era. Digital diplomacy for Egypt has spread and achieved huge success to support cultural exchange, show "the real" Egypt, and establish a deep connection with other nations.

Egypt's recent foreign policy demonstrates a strategic application of multidimensional diplomacy, which incorporates a broad spectrum of diplomatic engagements across various fronts including political, economic, and cultural domains. Multidimensional diplomacy involves engaging with a wide range of actors, utilizing multiple channels of diplomacy, and addressing a diverse set of issues simultaneously. This approach is evident in Egypt's foreign policy, particularly in its relations with regional and global powers, as well as in its active participation in international and regional organizations. One aspect of Egypt's multidimensional diplomacy can be seen in its evolving relationship with Saudi Arabia post-2011. Piazza (2019) discusses how economic dependencies and shared security concerns have shaped Egypt's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, balancing between economic vulnerability and regional security. However, the diplomacy between the two states witnessed ups and downs. This relationship exemplifies Egypt's pragmatic approach to foreign policy, leveraging its strategic position and diplomatic relations to navigate complex regional dynamics.

Egypt's response to the "Arab Spring" and its aftermath also reflects its multidimensional diplomacy. Zohny (2017) examines President Obama's foreign policy towards the Arab Spring, including Egypt, highlighting the complexities of U.S. bilateral relations and strategic goals in the Middle East. Egypt's diplomatic manoeuvres during this period, balancing between domestic upheavals and international pressures, demonstrate its use of multidimensional diplomacy to navigate the challenges of democratization and regional stability. After reducing the military aid by the US, Egyptian foreign policy enhanced the multidimensional approach with new agreements with Russia and China. Moreover, Egypt's foreign policy has increasingly incorporated elements of soft power and public diplomacy. Alqashouti's (2021) analysis of Qatar's mediation efforts as a form of soft diplomacy can be paralleled with Egypt's own initiatives in mediation and conflict resolution, particularly in its efforts to broker peace in neighbouring conflict zones. Egypt's

engagement in such diplomatic efforts underscores its commitment to leveraging diplomatic channels for regional stability.

During the study's timeframe, Egypt's foreign policy behaviour displayed features characteristic of "middle-powerhood" in the context of international politics. While this concept has often been restricted to Western powers such as the UK or Australia for example, it has not been extensively used to study regional actors in the Middle East. The region, according to Saouli (2020, p. 2) "reveals interesting puzzles" which challenge established assumptions about the concept of middle-powerhood. Mentioning the examples of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria, Saouli notes that although the criteria of size, wealth and military capabilities are present to speak of potentially "middle-power", each country represents a separate case. While Saudi Arabia is not showing signs of assuming the role of middle-power and Algeria does not even claim to be one, Egypt has shown "interest in playing an influential role [even though], its regional political role has been in decline." What Saouli calls a puzzle, Shama (2020) appropriately describes as "aspiration".[20] During the study's timeframe, Egypt's foreign policy behaviour is reflective of this ambition and determination to be recognised as middle-power. The assessment of whether that ambition was realised or not falls outside the study's timeframe, which also means that in the gathered data which frames Egypt's foreign policy in Western media, the researcher is attentive to whether the studied frames highlight the aspirations and ambitions of Sisi's second term in office as far as the country's foreign policy affairs are concerned. While in the geopolitical context which directly involves Egypt, the notion of middle-power was mostly evoked in recent studies on Turkey (Nick 2016; Fawcett 2017; Grzywacz & Gawrycki 2021; Paul 2016; Stuenkel 2016), Egypt's foreign policy behaviour has been animated by the aspiration to rival the influence of Turkey and some other Gulf States in the region without assuming its traditional role of leader of the Arab world or champion of post-colonial struggles. The role of middle-power is driven by interest rather than by values, and there are reasons to validate the omnipresence of this aspiration in the foreign policy shifts which began to stabilize during Sisi's second term in office. The pursuit of multilateral alliances is one prominent feature of middle-power in international politics. As Kutlay and Onis argued (2021, p. 3052), there is a set "template" for emerging middle-powers. The template

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[20] Saouli's entire edited volume on the application of the concept of "middle-powerhood" to the study of foreign policy behaviour in countries of the Middle East extends the "aspirational" frame to all the case studies discussed in the book. This is reflected in the title: *Unfulfilled Aspirations: Middle Power Politics in the Middle East* (2020).

suggests a combination of sometimes mutually exclusive choices, namely sovereignty and autonomy, ability to exert influence through soft power, acting in accordance with economic capabilities, the pursuit of multilateral diplomacy, and a tendency to "act as good international citizens." However, challenges arise when the domestic front presents serious problems at the level of internal economic stability and national security. Commenting on the case of Turkey, Kutlay and Onis contend that "democratic backsliding at home is likely to be coupled with and pave the way for an assertive foreign policy style with unanticipated long-term strategic costs, creating a vicious cycle with the interaction of external and domestic dynamics." Although there is scarce literature on Egypt as middle power during Sisi's administration, Shama (2020, p. 110) made pertinent comments on how the country's foreign policy behaviour is informed by "middle power aspirations" and identified concrete indicators in the pursuit of "an active diplomacy" and the intensive "upgrade" of the country's military capacity.[21] For Shama, middle-power politics in Egypt under el-Sisi cannot be identified and evaluated exclusively by focusing on quantifiable elements related to "possession of material capability" or on foreign policy behaviour, but a third approach, which is known as "the identity approach" analyses how decision and policy makers project an image of their foreign policy brand, how they see their foreign policy and how they want that policy to be seen. Soft power has been recognised as a key component of middle-power strategies to increase influence through non-coercive means. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will consider whether soft power is acknowledged as indicator of Egypt's middle-power politics or whether it is framed as miscellaneous news content or media stories disconnected from coverage of the country's foreign policy behaviour.

Conclusion:

The theoretical approaches appropriate to the nature of the research were identified, which contributed to setting criteria for selecting the study sample and forming a framework for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Identifying the critical approaches contributed to laying the foundations of the study, crystallizing the pillars, and setting frameworks for the final findings.

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[21] "According to the ranking developed by Global Fire Power in 2017, Egypt is ranked as the tenth most powerful army worldwide." Cited in Shama 2020, p. 104.

The researcher highlighted the theoretical insights key to the grounding of the hypothesis that the Western press does not reflect the changes in Egyptian foreign policy on reality.

4- The ceremonial and disruptive approach: examining how the Western press frame the Egyptian foreign policy strategies whether they are using the ceremonial approach by identifying the positive news or using the disruptive approach by referring to the negative sides continuously and through all topics. Instead of focusing on the disruptive frames, the "transformative frame" is more appropriate to the changed nature of Egyptian foreign policy as the occurring events created changes in the political and social order. The transformative approach by "Nim" aims to broaden understanding including transformative media events which frame the renewal of social order or institutions. These approaches are branched from media events theory.

5- The "Framing news" approach has been employed to discover the frames used in Egyptian foreign policy narratives in Western media. The theory monitors and analyses editorial data from the perspective of utilising specific words and framing to convey a targeted message. This approach is also combined with the priming theory throughout the research to define how Western media selectively emphasize certain themes while disregarding others. Both approaches are part of the agenda-setting theory which interprets the motives of the phenomena in media studies.

6- The concept of "middle-power" aspiration which Egypt seeks to apply in its foregin policy in approaching the local or regional dilemmas, revealed the question of the qualitative content analysis of the selected texts. Mainly questioning if the western coverage takes into account this ambition in framing Egyptian foreign policy affairs. The concept contributed to defining the shifts in Egyptian foreign policy during the new administration. Besides helping to understand if the studied frames recognized changes in Egypt's strategies according to its ambition to play a middle-power role. The foreign policy according to this aspiration is characterized by interest, balance, national security and building new allies. Thus, the foreign policy here seeks to present itself through the "identity approach" which refers to the characterisation of its fabric.

To understand the phenomena of framing Egyptian policy in Western media, the theories explored in this chapter define the scope of the data which will be gathered in the relevant chapters. The following chapter will illustrate the used methodology in analysing Egyptian foreign policy in Western media.

Content analysis (CA), qualitative content analysis (QCA) and experts' interviews

Introduction:

The efficacy of a particular methodology utilized in a research endeavour may not always be sufficient to fully investigate the subject matter that the study aims to reveal. Furthermore, it should be noted that a research approach that is suitable for one question may not be suitable for another (Garg, 2016). Triangulation is employed to enhance the reliability of findings by utilizing multiple methodologies that mutually reinforce each other. Valencia states that the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods is a broad approach to getting multiple viewpoints on a certain issue. The technique aims to confirm and authenticate findings, considering both the reliability and validity elements (Valencia, 2022).

This study investigates the representation of Egyptian foreign policy in Western media by addressing further research questions in each chapter. The research questions can be found through the analysis processes in chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9. All additional research questions aim to contribute to addressing the primary research question: **What is the size and nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy? How Western press frame Egyptian foreign policy components? and why?** and they are based on a range of different themes. Thus, as a component of its triangulation, this study employs three distinct methodologies: Quantitative content analysis, qualitative content analysis, and in-depth & semi-structured interviews. The next three sub-sections elucidate the rationale for the research design, the literature review regarding mixing quantitative and qualitative content analysis, and the process of conducting interviews with the experts. Subsequently, chapters 6,7 and 8 will present the analysis and the findings.

1- The Rationale of the Triangulation Method

Throughout media research, the media survey approach is mostly applied to the phenomena by the two sides: the descriptive approach (quantitative research), and the interpretive approach

(qualitative research). "Metric empiricists base their arguments on the logic of mathematics, and interpretive empiricists base theirs on the logic of the narratives. Metric empiricists quantify their observations; interpretive empiricists narrativize them" (Anderson, 2005 p.20). The Triangulation constructs theoretical or methodological perspectives, several views or several readings, and diverse points of view to address the same research problem. Given that this study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, it is important to elucidate the extent to which these two methods rely on each other and how experts' interviews were crucial to interpreting those findings and at the same time creating data within the research framework of this study.

This study utilizes quantitative content analysis to identify and emphasize overarching elements of the studied material. The latter consists of (800) news articles which presented Egyptian foreign policy in the study period (2018-2021). The analysis aims to present a comprehensive overview, focusing solely on the main topics, and the findings may not fully capture the fundamental nature of the subject being examined, which is mainly about the most prominent issues stressed in Western media, the frames they use, the perspectives they articulate, and why those are portrayed in specific journalistic templates. "The quantitative method is not sufficient for investigating profound inquiries regarding textual and discursive structures" (Baxter, 2010). Therefore, if the research technique had solely relied on quantitative features of the news items regarding Egyptian foreign policy, there might have been a lack of findings in this study. Hence, the research necessitates a qualitative textual analysis that can assist in surpassing the typical constraints of conventional quantitative content analysis, such as being limited to explicit material and quantifiable categories without interpreting the rationale of including news and excluding others.

Through the utilization of qualitative methods in this study, the researcher will acquire a comprehensive understanding of the complex aspects of phenomena and identify underlying meanings, implicit patterns, assumptions, and the overlooked topics within a text towards specific issues which became clear after carrying out comprehensive observation through (CA). During this process, the results obtained from the quantitative content analysis can enhance the qualitative work. The quantitative findings in Chapter 6 can be regarded as a clear and evident analysis, as explained by (Riffe et al., 2008), which aids in better understanding the qualitative content analysis. After collecting the general data by content analysis method extracting the main themes

regarding Egyptian foreign policy in Western media and qualitatively analysing them to monitor the frames, the interpretation embodied in the third part of the triangulation which is the qualitative research through 10 in-depth interviews with the experts in Egyptian diplomacy and media. The interviews' function is not limited only to the interpretation of the founded frames in the Western press, it shows significant data presenting competing narratives as a review of the experts' perspective regarding how Egypt sees itself as a middle-power state and how this aspiration constituted a foreign policy depending on the identity approach. Thus, monitoring if the Western press noticed those new strategies or kept framing the Egyptian foreign policy in the same formats.

McNair (2009) referred in his book *News and Journalism in the UK* to the flexibility approach. He argued that the integrative social function of the news media is threatened if journalists are not sufficiently autonomous from economic, political, ideological, religious and class grouping. Without this flexibility, public opinion becomes artificial and biased. "This approach focused on how well or how badly the varied media reflects the existing balance of political forces and the political agenda" (McNair, 2009). The conducted interviews are based on why there is a gap between perceived changes in Egypt's foreign policy and what is presented in the Western press from the Egyptian perspective. When read in parallel with the data gathered from qualitative and quantitative content analysis of Western media frames, data gleaned from expert interviews will highlight the need for further examination of issues arising from foreign policy communication. The 10 interviews analysis will review their perspectives according to their experiences as well as interpret the used frames in the Western press coverage. Examining whether the disruptive or ceremonial frames are applied and if the coverage reflects objectively the shifts in Egyptian foreign policy.

> "...There is a possibility of objective journalism, but it is not being realized, and it is the role of the scholarly critic to point this out. Many journalists assert that there can be no objectivity; that the concept is nothing more than a mystification, a legitimizing ritual with no real validity" (McNiar 2009, p. 40).

The news items chosen for the study are the starting point of both quantitative and qualitative news content analysis and the interviews conducted with the experts who witnessed the shifts in

Egyptian foreign policy. Some of the interviewees are decision-makers in powerful positions and the others are writers and media men. Overall, it is evident that an ideal media research study should encompass all facets of the process, starting from the inception of the message and considering the ideology, culture, and surroundings of the correspondents and editors. It should also examine the content of the message and its comprehension by the audience. The following figure illustrates the distribution of the selected research material in the triangulation method. The data is constituted of the findings of quantitative content analysis, qualitative content analysis and interpretive and competing narratives of experts' interviews:

Figure 1: Illustration of the data distribution among three different methods.
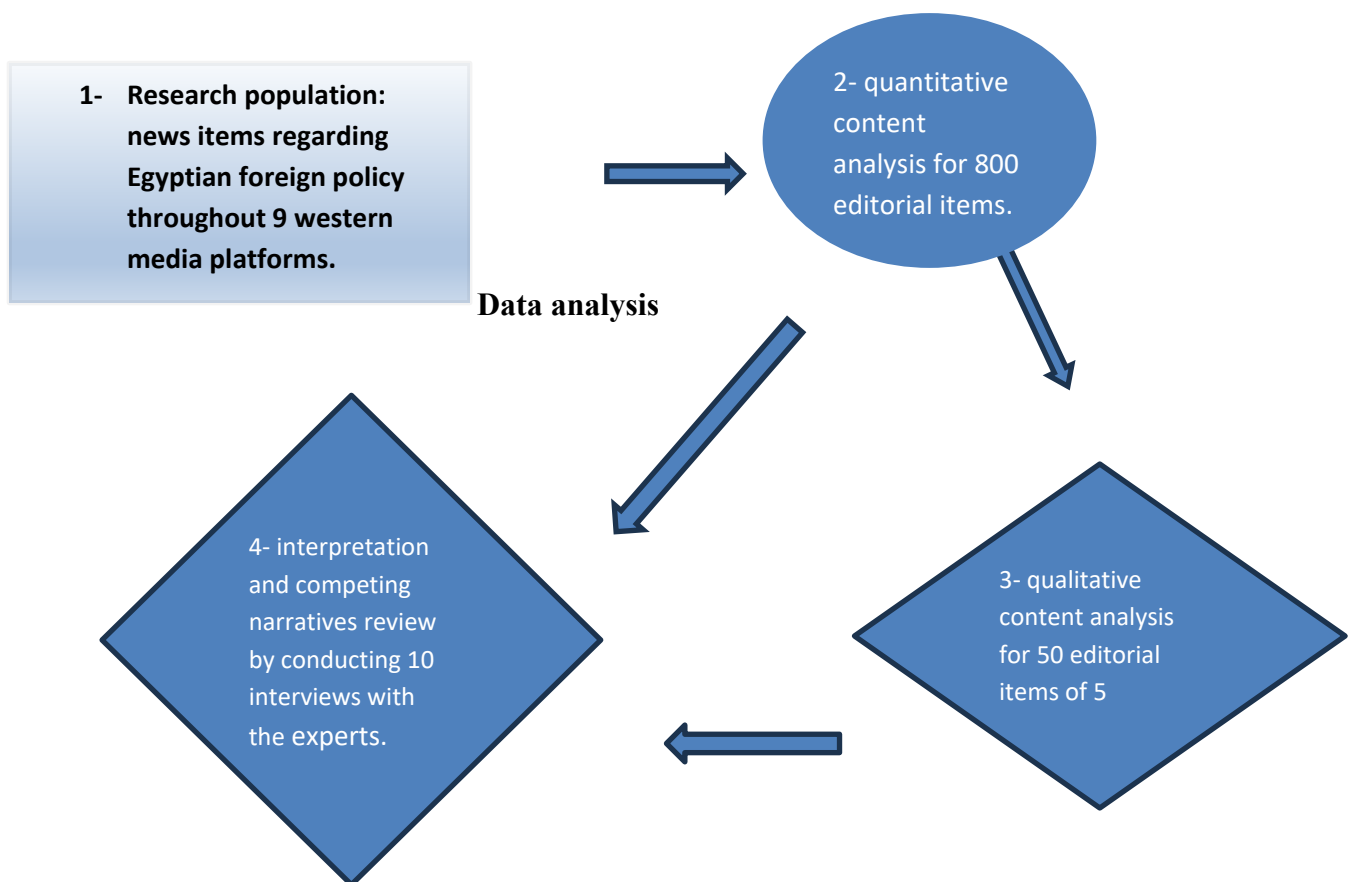
The diagram above illustrates the procedure for analysing data obtained from a purposeful sample that aligns with the research focus on editorial materials about Egypt's foreign policy affairs. These materials encompass both news and opinion pieces and are identified using specific search terms such as "Egypt," "Egyptian foreign policy," and "President Sisi." The research design of the

content analysis and the method application will be discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7 as the criteria for selecting the primary sources are linked to the categories which contain the details of the material, its frequencies, and its significance to the findings.

Regarding the sampling, purposeful sampling could be applied in the quantitative analysis instead of the probability sampling if it serves the objective of the research.

> Quantitative data can be generated from a purposeful sampling strategy and qualitative data can be generated from a probability sampling strategy. Each set of data is suited to a specific objective, and each must adhere to a specific set of assumptions and requirements (Palinkas et *al*, 2015).

Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas *et al*, 2015). The objective of the research is to select specific editorial items which do not address Egypt in general but focus specifically on foreign policy issues (listed and outlined in chapter 2 and 3). The research design process was briefly outlined, focusing on the chosen period of the study (2018-2021). This period was selected based on Sisi's second term in office which was the beginning of stabilising the foreign policy and its features became more apparent through concrete actions and in concrete situations. This time frame witnessed middle-power politics, and its key characteristics make the intersection of how Egypt sees its foreign policy with how it is seen in Western media, this "identification approach" to the analysis of middle-power politics is the rationale for triangulating data gathered from news samples with data gathered from expert interviews (as shown in chapter 4). The content gathered in that timeframe is featured in online versions of nine prominent media outlets, namely ***The Daily Mail, New York Times, The Independent, Foreign Affairs, The Economist, Financial Times, 24 France, DW, and Reuters***. The rationale for selecting those media outlets relies primarily on the "relativity extent" to the research subject; this entails rejecting editorial content that addresses Egypt's domestic matters and instead selecting extensively published pieces that specifically pertain to Egypt's foreign affairs. After examining the validation of the study sample, the study's timeframe was extended until 2021 to incorporate the effects of the economic slowdown caused by the Coronavirus problem, as well as the influence of Egypt's reconciliation with Turkey and Qatar on its foreign policy and new contacts with China.

The initial use of quantitative content analysis was to determine the extent and characteristics of Egyptian foreign policy coverage in Western publications. Subsequently, a qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine the key issues, after decreasing the dataset. And the final analysis stage is conducting interviews with the experts to interpret the findings of the content analysis answering the second part of the research question which is why there is a gap between what has been framed in the Western press and the actual political situation on the ground in Egypt. Why is it framed as an autocratic regime instead of a regime which got rid of the theocracy?. Besides presenting a view regarding their experience on how they see the features of Egyptian foreign policy. The following section provides a comprehensive examination of studies that employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis. It also discusses the process of selecting the study sample from diverse journalistic sources. This topic will be further explored in detail during the subsequent analysis presentation.

2-The rationale underpinning qualitative content analysis.

This section explores the rationale underpinning the methodology, which is mixing qualitative and quantitative analysis as mentioned above. According to Schreir (2012, p. 3), qualitative content analysis (QCA) is "systematic… flexible, and… reduces data". Although Schreir describes QCA as a method with a "rich history," especially in different fields of social science in Germany, she also underscores the fact that it is still "unheard of" in other established research practices, namely in the Anglo-American context. The purpose of this brief overview is to present and evaluate QCA, looking closely at how it justifies using qualitative content analysis beside its quantitative version. This literature contributed to shaping the method applied in this research. To that end, it is important to clarify the meaning and applications of QCA and explain the distinction between QCA, the quantitative approach, and other qualitative methods. The section concludes with examples of the method's applications in a wide range of fields, drawing on a set of interdisciplinary studies that relied on it: especially media and communication studies, health communication, nursing, tourism communication material, digital engineering, and political science, which were helpful examples to apply the method in this research.

3-QCA: A historical overview and current fields of application.

QCA developed out of the quantitative version of the method, as there is a fundamental need in this research to reduce the data and extract the most prominent issues which are intensively treated by the Western media, thus discovering the general frames which are mostly used in the media representation. For Brelson (1958), the definition of content analysis as quantitative is limited to the description of manifest communication content. Kracaur (1952) contested this narrow definition, contending that meaning is often complex, holistic, and context-dependent and that it is not necessarily apparent at first sight. Kracauer advocated this type of content analysis, which does not limit itself to manifest content and frequency counts. "Therefore, we can consider Kracaur as the first proponent of qualitative content analysis, his suggestions were later taken up by (George 1959) who argued in favour of non-frequency content analysis, and by Holsti 1969 who advocated a similar non-quantitative type of content analysis" (Flick 2014, p.171). In these early days QCA was used by Shanon (1954) in an analysis of the newspaper cartoon *Little Orphan Annie*, which attracted an adult audience; she examined some determined values in-depth. Shannon and another coder answered their research questions while examining 104 weekly appearances of the comic strip over two years, then she created subcategories from the answers. Her results are reported mostly in narrative format, supplemented by coding frequencies from the cartoon strip.

The method continued to be developed, especially in Germany. Marying developed several distinct versions of the method, notably "summarizing and structural qualitative content analysis" (Marying 2015, p.3). In English-speaking countries, especially the UK and the United States, the method was increasingly applied to less manifest types of meaning although the focus on presenting results in terms of coding frequencies was maintained. Many researchers such as Krippendorf (2004) considered the distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis is just a matter of degree. Bloor and Wood (2006) presented QCA as being primarily a quantitative technique using a positivistic approach.

> The purpose of content analysis is to describe the characteristics of the document's content by examining who says what, to whom and with what effect, the method is performed by counting occurrences, words or phrases within one or more documents, the approach is objective, systematic and concerned with the surface meaning of the document rather than hidden agendas, the interpretative approach is to explore the meaning within the content (Bloor & Wood 2006, p. 58).

Some researchers use the term qualitative content analysis "to refer to the full range of qualitative methods for data analysis, equating it with other qualitative methods such as discourse analysis" (Krippendorf 2018, p.12), while others call the method by different names such as "thematic coding" (Boyatzis 1998) or "qualitative media analysis" (Altheide 1996), the term qualitative content analysis as method in its own right started to appear in American literature recently (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

In the study of media and communications, qualitative content analysis is "suitable for a wide range of materials, visual or verbal, self-generated (by conducting interviews or focus groups etc.) or samples from available sources (websites, newspapers, magazines, blogs, etc.)" (Kuckartz 2014, p.5). Due to its important feature of flexibility, qualitative content analysis has been applied across many other disciplines branching out from its early usage in communication studies, these include education research (Kapustka 2009), sociology (Finn 2011), political science (Hiel 2011), psychology (McDonald 2009), Health-related fields such as nursing and patient attitudes (Diederich and Schrier 2009), and even in tourism and literature studies. In a recent British study, Losifidis and Nicoli (2019) provided a descriptive account of Facebook's public announcements regarding how it tackles disinformation and fake news based on a qualitative content analysis covering the period of 2016-2019. The following words are examined separately in four different searches across the time: *disinformation, misinformation, false news, and fake news.* Throughout the current study, the researcher benefits from the flexibility of revisiting the data and rebuilding the categories when any important notion comes up. qualitative content analysis is used as a systematic coding and categorization approach for exploring and interpreting copious amounts of textual data.

Miller *et al* (2014) applied QCA guided by framing theory to analyse coverage of problem gambling in Australian newspapers in the period 2011 to 2012. They searched the eight highest circulation newspapers in Australia, choosing a framing analysis to explore how different arguments about problem gambling and gambling reform clustered around different perspectives. They drew upon the methods used in other media analyses, which involved coding and then quantifying the key characteristics of the sample. Once these initial characteristics of each article were coded, they conducted QCA to provide more detail about the discourses used within each frame. QCA involved open-ended reading and re-reading of the relevant sections of the articles.

This method guided the researcher in the current study to use quantitative analysis as a foundational basis to discover the prominent topics to create the main categories of qualitative content analysis. Using the framing theory in identifying the used frames.

In Belgium, Bourgonjon *et al* (2015) studied the players' perspectives on the positive impact of video games. They applied qualitative content analysis to gather data from online forums. All messages were screened using directed QCA, focusing on expressions of how video games positively changed the life of the players. A coding scheme was developed based on the theoretical work. Thus, the current study employed the identified framework (disruptive and ceremonial approach- framing news – priming – middle- power approach and identification concept) as mentioned in Chapter 4, to build the coding scheme of each category.

In Germany, Ernst *et al* (2017) examined "Hate beneath the Counter Speech" using a qualitative content analysis of randomly selected 155 samples (out of 5798) of user comments on YouTube. That example was relevant to the current research which selected 800 editorial items initially by the quantitative version of analysis then applying QCA on 45 extracted items which are significantly relevant to the research questions. The researchers in that study explored the users' perception and understanding of Islam, focusing on eight videos. The sampling procedure is based on Reinder's profile-sampling method developed for qualitative research designs, which allows to examination of a huge corpus of data material qualitatively and at the same time considers its diversity and complexity. The basic idea of this method is to reduce the material by organizing the data in specific formal clusters. Accordingly, the researcher will be able to deepen in the phenomena analysis.

Using QCA of online news media coverage of weight loss surgery and related reader comments, Glenn *et al* (2012) have explored media re/presentations of WLS. The purpose of this study was to examine national online news coverage (and reader comments) of WLS by applying the QCA on articles and comments from the CBC news websites, the study applied the inductive and the deductive categories, although primarily informed by qualitative content analysis technique the researchers also drew on procedures practised in quantitative content analysis including theme counts as it was a scientific need to a systematic technique for analysing the texts similar to the current study.

4- CA and QCA: overlaps and differences

Content analysis (CA) is one of the most used methods by media researchers. It targets people's actual attitudes. According to Krippendorff (2018, pp. 76-77), CA works well when it "focuses on… linguistically constituted facts [that] can be broken down into four classes." These four classes are: (1) attributions or non-observable 'verbal attributes of behaviour,' (2) social relationships, (3) public behaviours, and (3) institutional realities. In contrast to opinion polls, which measure what people say they did (or will do) but do not show us what they have done (Berger 2020, p.301), CA is dealing with actual behaviour and attributes, This is linked to the study of foreign policy attitudes and behaviours which once again links with the theoretical framing of the data's scope with the analysis of middle-power politics in terms of the "identification approach" mentioned in (chapter 4). Thus, allowing the researcher to monitor if these behaviours are presented clearly in the Western press or not. Researchers using and applying CA are often cautioned that the method 'tells us what the material is being studied, not how it affects people exposed to this material' (Treadwell 2011, p. 178, cited in Berger 2014, p. 233). For the present research, CA would be insufficient to address the second component of the research question, which deals with the expert's interpretation of framing Egyptian foreign policy in Western media.

> CA evolved in communications research and uses coding to reduce masses of unstructured information (classically text) to a case-by-variable matrix that can be subjected to statistical analysis of some kind. While the method began with a focus on the manifest content (for example how often a particular term was used in a given source or set of sources) and a strictly numerical approach to presenting results, since at least the 1950s there has been an alternative approach concerned with latent content or meaning and with the context of meaning (Marshal 2014, p. 52).

CA would only generate data related to Treadwell's classic four 'amplifications': quantitative occurrences, all systematic aspects in a sample, objective units for analysis, and manifest, tangible, or observable notions (Berger 2014, p. 232-33). While notions like "patriotism" cannot be quantified, systematized, objectified, or rendered observable and tangible in CA, the researcher is allowed to count the "frequency" of signifiers or acts or symbols associated with the notion of patriotism such as 'waving a flag' or playing 'patriotic music.' QCA enables the researcher to pay attention to quantifiable notions without overlooking intangible notions such as cultural codes and

meanings. On the other hand, regarding the news texts, QCA is also needed to cover gaps in CA insofar as it can reflect how the news texts influence and shape audience attitudes and accordingly present a logical interpretation for the used frames. Riffe and his colleagues in *Analysing Media Messages Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*, define QA as:

> The systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption. (Riffe et al 2014, p.25)

The same defining elements are echoed in Wright (1968, p. 125) where CA is described as 'a technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories. It may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis or both.' By applying CA to the present research, the method tells us what is in the materials of Egyptian foreign policy in the sample of the newspapers not how it affects people exposed to this material, it does not focus on the meanings and the interpretations, this is a dilemma of quantitative content analysis method. We need to draw conclusions about the text's actual or hidden messages and to do so requires making assumptions and jumping to conclusions that can't be supported by the text, and that clearly renders the analysis non-objective.

The present research uses content analysis to (1) measure the size and the nature by the material frequency of Egyptian foreign policy in the selected sample of international newspapers in the period of (2018-2021). (2) monitor whether this volume covers the shifts in Egyptian foreign policy and discover the points of interest in Western media regarding Egyptian foreign policy. (3) determine the most prominent issues regarding Egyptian foreign policy in the Western media which build the themes and categories. When Researchers use quantitative content analysis, they state a problem that they need to deeply investigate to give their research more focus and figure out the hidden meaning of the studied texts. This shortage in the meaningful interpretation of the data has led to the use of QCA, which has been extracted from its quantitative counterpart with significant variations on the same procedures such as determining the research question, using a

historical approach, and using the comparative approach, coding, and categories system. This need for extracting meaning from the quantified content is often addressed in CA through the introduction of so-called 'operational definitions or 'indicators to define concepts. 'The operational definition tells how [we] will measure something and forces [us] to explain how [we] understand or interpret a concept' (Berger 2018, p.307). The work of interpretation in this 'operational' sense, takes place in CA before and not during or after the analysis of the data. Conversely, QCA embeds this operational or interpretative approach in every stage of the application of the method. For Schreir for (2012, p. 4) 'With QCA, [the] research question specifies the angle from which the data is examined'. The method allows the researcher to 'change the coding frame' *during* rather than *before* the analysis of data as in CA for example. QCA includes counting in the process of reporting results. "In many approaches to qualitative data, reporting of any numbers is out of fashion. This means that readers may have no real idea of what is meant by terms like 'many,' 'most' or 'only a minority" (Kuckartz 2014: 4). In QCA qualitative data can be 'chunked' into units of meaning rather than into sentences or lines. As a last step in dealing with the data, all the reduced data are then coded. After that, reporting can commence. Margrit Schrier (2012, p. 6) had summarised this process in eight steps: *(1) deciding on the research question, (2) selecting material, (3) building the coding frame, (4) dividing the material into units of coding, (5) testing, (6) modifying the coding frame, (7) doing the analysis, and (8) interpreting and presenting findings*.

5- QCA's concept-driven and data-driven coding frame

QCA is a qualitative method which analyses and interprets the meanings of data. 'It is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material by classifying material as instances of categories of a coding frame' (Schrier 2012: 2). The present research seeks some degree of interpretation to arrive at the meaning of the data. QCA can be applied to a wide range of materials: interviews, focus groups, textbooks company brochures, contracts, websites, television programs, newspaper articles magazine advertisements and many more. The application in the present research will be on editorial items and interviews data. The well-known feature of QCA is its flexibility. By comparison with the quantitative version, it combines varying portions of concept-driven and data-driven categories within any coding frame (Kripendorff 2018, p. 24).

At the same time, a part of categories should be always data driven. To make sure that the coding frame provides a valid description of the material, this is done by assigning successive parts of the material to categories of a coding frame, this frame is the heart of the method, and it contains all those aspects that feature in the description and interpretation of the material.

According to Flick (2014, p. 170), "*three features characterize the method: first, reduction of the volume of data. Second, the method enables a systematic approach to the interpretation of meaning. Third, the method allows a great degree of flexibility in the research chain from questions to method and from method to questions*". 'It requires focus on selected aspects of meaning, namely those aspects that relate to the overall research question. It is systematic, and it requires a certain sequence of steps' (Flick 2014, p. 170). As is often the case in qualitative research, this may be an interactive process, going through some of these steps repeatedly, and modifying the coding frame in the process but the steps and their sequence remain the same.

> QCA also require double coding to evaluate the quality of the category definitions, which should be clear and unambiguous. The second coding yields results that are like those of the first coding. Subcategories for the analysis are chosen in a data-driven (inductively) manner whereby categories emerge from the analysed content (Schreier 2012, p. 60).

In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, the analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. "A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context" (Shannon & Hsieh 2005, p.127). There is no decisive dividing line between quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The present research mixes both methods together according to the need to answer the main research question. Both versions of the method are concerned with the systematic description of data through coding, this involves making use of a coding frame, generating category definitions, and segmenting the material into coding units. Quality criteria are used in QCA while in quantitative content analysis presenting the finding can involve frequency counts, however, 'qualitative content analysis is applied to latent and context-dependent meaning more than the manifest meaning' (Kuckartz 2014, p. 4). Because latent meaning is harder to describe consensually, consistency as a quality standard is handled less strictly in the qualitative version of the method and the focus in it is more on providing a detailed description of the material under analysis. In QCA, the process of coding is only the starting point for a subsequent statistical

analysis of data. "In the quantitative research tradition, content analysis is usually considered a method for *data collection*. In the qualitative tradition, however, content analysis counts as a method of *data analysis*" (Schreier 2012, p.45, *emphasis added*). The process of assigning units of meaning to the categories of the coding frame is termed coding; as coding frame is at the heart of the method, qualitative content analysis is confused with inductive coding (Gibbs 2007, p.38), which allows assigning any number of codes to a piece of text. QCA is more restrictive, as the coding frame can no longer be changed during the main analysis phase. So, the qualitative version requires segmentation, pilot coding, and a subsequent evaluation of the coding frame in terms of reliability and validity (Barbour 2013). On the other hand, the researcher should apply another qualitative content analysis if she seeks to do more than a descriptive or interpretive analysis, such as discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1997), accordingly, we are using here qualitative content analysis which involves identifying words, phrases, themes and frames regarding representing Egyptian foregin policy strategies.

Qualitative content analysis also reduces data by forcing the researcher to assign each coding unit to one subcategory. This allows the researcher to exclude the semiotics method too because we are not concerned with exploring the multiplicity of meanings and how different meanings relate to each other. Qualitative content analysis is used, in this study too, as a systematic coding and categorization approach for exploring and interpreting large amounts of textual data to determine 'in an unobtrusive manner, patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships and their structures of communication' (Vaismoradi *et al* 2013, p. 400). According to Margret Schrier's approach regarding the application of QCA, there is no need for special data preparation because the method is concerned with describing meaning in context. Relevant context should always be made available in or with the material and transcripts should be complete. Although the method is characterized by its flexibility, it works best when applied to textual material because it is much more difficult to segment visual material. Today, 'Qualitative data analysis increasingly makes use of software' (lewins and Silver 2007, p.5), however, most programs currently on the market do not fit the requirements of qualitative content analysis and the other programmes are limited in justifying the quantitative content analysis method not for the qualitative version. However, the software that supports all steps of the method is still under development.

6-The link between research questions and QCA as a method of analysis

There is a close link between the questions and the hypotheses of the study, and the research methodology used to answer those questions and/ or validate those hypotheses. Whether seeking to explore causal or correlational relationships of variables, a research question is often constrained by the selected research method. Conversely, in QCA it is the methodology itself that is constrained and continuously reshaped by the research question. But while in the case of QCA, the question determines the method, it also allows the researcher to revisit questions and hypotheses considering the data gathered at various stages of the research. QCA is used in combination with the quantitative version (CA) in the research to explore a generous size of articles on Egyptian foreign policy affairs and to interpret the framing techniques those articles deploy.

The importance of Applying QCA stems from the need to use its descriptive and analytic features to analyse the meanings of the researched main headlines, backgrounds of selected published issues, their sources and surrounding factors affecting them such as political cultures, social construction, and the system of international relations in a changing world. Foreign policy is not self-explanatory. It requires knowledge and understanding of several factors. Hence, the research needs the flexibility that characterizes qualitative content analysis. According to Schneir (2012, p. 4), 'with QCA, [the] research question specifies the angle from which the data is examined'. The method allows the researcher to 'change the coding frame' during the analysis of data. The present study is conducted using inductive and deductive approaches to content analysis. Although primarily informed by qualitative content analysis techniques, the research also draws on procedures practiced in quantitative content analysis including theme counts. An important procedure of content analysis is to make inferences about some characteristic of a message, its source and/or its audience from its content. Accordingly, content analysis with both quantitative and qualitative versions will be applied to a purposely selected sample of British and American newspapers and foreign policy journals. It covers the print and online editions of *The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Daily Mail, The Economist, The Independent, Foreign Affairs, 24 France, DW and Reuter's websites* over four years (2018-2021). This concluding section explains the rationale for choosing the selected media outlets, and the timescale covered in the study, and presents several caveats regarding the methodology.

7-Rationale of selecting media outlets and the time frame.

The selected media organisations have been chosen for several reasons. First, they all have global audiences, albeit of varied sizes. It is assumed that there is a high volume of exposure to these publications. Second, the diversity in nationality and ownership of the newspapers will reflect more credibility to how the international press from different countries frames Egyptian foreign policy issues. Third, the analysis could not be for the print newspapers only considering the rapid transition from print to online press. Websites have the space to run a wide range of stories across a broad agenda whereas print newspapers have a fixed space and time, which limit the number and nature of the stories.

Regarding the timeframe under consideration, the four years selected for the purposes of this study are 2018-2021. These years were chosen for several reasons. First, they did not involve a major Egypt news event, which might have influenced the results and directed them towards the one big event, such as the fall of the regime, which had happened twice in the past ten years. The stability of the state management could give a more accurate image of foreign policy and a clearer analysis of Egyptian international relations. Second, there have not been any significant conflicts domestically over the selected period. During the two revolutions of 2011 and 2013, foreign policy was not the priority of the government. In the international press, the revolutions and the protests attracted the most attention. On the domestic front, both government and citizens had little investment in foreign policy news or matters. The two successive "revolutions" were not a suitable environment to analyse Egyptian foreign policy and Egypt's existence on the international arena. Third, we preferred to start the selected period in 2018 as this year marked the beginning of the second presidential term. Government officials and civil servants turned their attention to foreign policy and participated in political international community events such as the 20 Summit, African Union leadership, and the Berlin Conference on Libya. During the first presidential term, the government was focused on domestic issues to rebuild the country's infrastructure more than on developing its international relations.

There are several ways of choosing the parameters for a content analysis. Some scholars base their selection on the overall tone and content of an article, or a keyword in the text or headline such as Egypt or Egyptian. For the purposes of this research, the selected material will be limited to the coupling of Egypt and Egyptian with the name of the other country that is considered a

priority on the Egyptian foreign policy agenda such as the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, France, and Ethiopia. News items are selected regardless of sources, meaning that the stories were not screened according to whether they have been covered by foreign correspondents reporting from Egypt such as from Reuters' website or by journalists in newsrooms outside Egypt in the United Kingdom or The United States. Further data sampling led to the creation of six categories regarding Egyptian foreign policy for the purposes of this research – *American and British relations, European-Egyptian relations, Asian Egyptian relations, Egypt's relations with Africa, Egypt's relations with Arab countries* And *Egypt's connections with international organizations*. These fields are supposed to cover different distinctions, which mark the orientation of Egyptian foreign policy in recent years.

The next section addresses the final method in the triangulation, the researcher presents here the details of conducting the interviews. Afterwards, in chapter 9, the researcher illustrates the final interpretation which is based on themes and codes extracted from 10 interviews with experts.

8- In-depth Experts' Interviews

The aim of this section is to present the rationale for conducting in-depth interviews with the experts in media, diplomacy and Egyptian foreign policy, the process of interviewing, and the criteria for selecting the interviewees. The section also reflects on how the selected method fits into the research process, and on its strengths and limitations. The aim of the interviews was to deepen the researcher's focus on the framing of Egyptian foreign policy affairs in Western media from the perspective of Egyptian high-ranking civil servants and policymakers, and from the standpoint of Egyptian journalists as well as international foreign correspondents. Although each interviewee's views are to a certain extent specific to them, the researcher aims to find out whether these individual views are indicative of an established consensus among Egyptian civil service and policymakers, and among journalists dealing with Egyptian foreign policy both within and outside Egypt. The section provides the documenting context of the data collected from the interviews and how the latter will be organized thematically and brought to bear on the broader context of the

study to understand the factors shaping Egypt's foreign policy since 2018 when the country's diplomatic orientation became more settled after President El-Sisi's re-election.

The main hypotheses of the present study constitute the lead questions framing each interview; those hypotheses are the following:

RH 1: the coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect shifts in the country's diplomatic orientation.

RH2: There is a specific framing of certain foreign policy elements which prime topics and exclude others.

After extracting the results of the analytical study on a sample of 800 news articles drawn from the listed media platforms (above), five prominent issues were identified that are constantly circulated in the Western press, based on the study sample of news platforms, regarding Egyptian foreign policy (which will be shown in chapter 7)

- Economic reform.
- The role in Middle East conflicts.
- The issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.
- The issue of terrorism and the Muslim Brotherhood
- autocracy and human rights.

These results lead us to the following sub-hypothesises of the research:

RH: There is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy matters on the ground and the Western press coverage for it.

RH: Stereotype frames are prominent in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy.

Considering those hypotheses, it was necessary to conduct a qualitative analysis of the most prominent news materials in the study sample to identify the experts' interviews' questions. Furthermore, there was an urgent necessity to conduct in-depth interviews with experts in the field of Egyptian foreign policy, including feature writers, diplomats, media figures, and journalists who have a long experience in this field to obtain a deep interpretation and insights of multiple points

of view about Western media's framing of Egypt's foreign strategies in the Sisi's second term in office era. The research framework required supplementing the quantitative content analysis with a qualitative analysis to go beyond the obvious findings gleaned from the latter (Richardson, 2007). This should facilitate analyzing while considering the 'context' of the news items in the research sample. As a result, using the qualitative method of in-depth interviewing will improve the lack of context in the quantitatively analysed results of this study.

According to Oakley (1998), the qualitative interview is a type of framework in which the practices and standards are not only recorded but also achieved, challenged and as well as reinforced. In the present research, qualitative content analysis will be applied to the news items dealing with the five themes deduced from the content analysis findings and hypotheses then will be reflected in the interviews. Regarding the latter, there are four main stages of the interviewing process. The first stage is deductive as it is about designing the questions which were previously foregrounded in the quantitative analysis of the news (see the interviews questions in Appendix E). The second stage is inductive as it is expected to discover the latest ideas through the process of coding. The answers gathered in the first stage initially were intended to be coded using the qualitative analysis software NVivo to make connections between different coded materials as efficiently as possible. However, during this third stage, following the analysis of the subscripted data, the researcher made the deliberate choice to manually generate themes and codes insofar as obtaining the study categories from the interviews will yield greater efficiency and accuracy compared to using the software. To fulfil the research objective of comprehensively analysing the explanations provided by the interviewees regarding the frameworks used to address Egypt's foreign affairs in Western newspapers, manual coding proved to be more efficient. This approach allowed the researcher to thoroughly examine the interviews and extract overarching concepts, leading to novel interpretations. The thorough analysis led to the systematic and thorough organisation of the themes. Each theme comprises codes that may be duplicated over multiple themes. The machine's automated coding using the software failed to comprehend, infer, and generate profound and precise intellectual themes. After extracting themes, the researcher must still determine the meaning and significance of these themes (Flick 2014: 147). After extracting the themes and determining the categories which are linked to answering the research questions, the interviews analysis process resulted in four main themes which are *(The concept of change – stereotyping – Domestic influence – Democracy vs culture)*. This analysis will be presented in

detail in (chapter 8). This stage will interpret the material in line with the theoretical framework of the study, focusing on the middle-power hood concept, news framing and priming approaches, and disruptive and ceremonial approaches. The interpretation process constitutes new data of understanding the expert's perspectives.

> The process of interpretation can generate quite distinct types of knowledge, ranging from (apparently) straightforward 'translations' of a surface meaning into a deeper, 'true' meaning, to an elaboration of meanings which adds texture to the original account without replacing it with something 'truer' (Flick, 2014, p. 137).

The research aims to go beyond the descriptive frame to better understand why Egypt's foreign policy is framed in the sampled news content in a certain way and not in others. However, to initiate a thematic content analysis, it is essential to eliminate any biases. Instead of using a preconceived framework, the data will be analysed by identifying recurring patterns within the dataset.

- **Experts' interviews: purposive sampling**

The interviewees were chosen based on their experience in Egyptian foreign policy affairs and its evolution in the Sisi era and under a new foreign diplomacy management, as well as their relevance to media work and international coverage of issues in the MENA region. The researcher managed to conduct the interviews with important public personalities. Here is a concise overview of the interviewees' profiles and they are listed by codes in (Appendix C1):

Diplomats\ officials:

1- **R.S:** A current ambassador and former advisor to the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs. He is the head of the National Office for Implementing the Partnership Agreement between Egypt and the European Union, Assistant to the President of Foreign Affairs, and Advisor to the Ministry of Environment for international climate agreements. He was Egypt's Ambassador to Brussels and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Economic Relations. Mr Saad is considered one of the most

experienced ambassadors in the field of Egyptian-European, Russian, and African relations, as he is considered the first to sign the partnership agreement with the European Union. He worked in the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations in New York and in the Egyptian Embassy. He was an envoy in Africa and a United Nations representative for preparing the regional strategy of the Alliance of Civilizations in the Mediterranean, and he was also the Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee in Parliament. His experience will add profound explanations to the diplomatic and media dimensions of dealing with Egypt's foreign issues in the Western media.

2- **H.A**: General Secretary of the Supreme Council of Culture in Egypt. He is a professor of international cultural relations at Cairo University and has authored books on Egyptian cultural diplomacy and its impact on communication with international communities.

Journalists\ journalists in Western media outlets

3- **N.G:** owner of CNC, a media services company for foreign correspondents. His extensive experience in the field of international media, dealing for more than 30 years with foreign correspondents, contributes greatly to the interpretation of many of the contexts in which Egypt's foreign policy was addressed, in addition to his knowledge of all the details dealing with foreign correspondents inside Egypt.

4- **A.E**: Editor-in-Chief of *Rosa Al-Youssef* publication and Head of the "United" News Channels. Mr Eltahry is considered one of the most important media figures on the Egyptian scene now, as he works as head of the most important news channels in the United Company, which owns most of the media platforms in Egypt, as it is the largest Egyptian entity for producing media materials. Ahmed, in addition to managing the channels, presents the "Talks in Politics" program on the "Extra News" channel and is also the editor-in-chief of one of the oldest Egyptian journalistic institutions known for its struggle and liberation, which is *Rosa Al-Youssef*. Mr Eltahry has been working as a journalist in the Foreign Affairs and Diplomatic Affairs Department at *Rosa Al-*

Youssef for 20 years and is considered the most competent person to talk about Egypt's foreign policy and its diplomatic map.

5- **A.El**: Editor-in-Chief of the independent daily newspaper *Al-Watan* which is one of the most circulated and influential private newspapers in Egypt. It also enjoys wide credibility among Egyptian citizens. The journalist also has experience in news of political Islam in Egypt for more than 20 years and is familiar with the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood on Egyptian society and Egypt's foreign policy.

6- **M.S**: Broadcaster on BBC Arabic and presenter of talk shows and news bulletins for 15 years. He is well-versed in Middle East issues, specifically Egypt, and its international activities. He has a comprehensive, multi-dimensional vision to explain the causes of the image through which Egypt is circulated in the Western media, where he presented hundreds of episodes on his program "This Evening" and he hosted many guests who on several occasions addressed this topic through monitoring and analysis.

7- **N.E**: Head of the Arabic version of France 24 and a former broadcaster on Egyptian television. Mr Elshobashy has been the head of the French station for about 15 years. Therefore, he is classified as one of the most versed experts in the European media's handling of Middle East issues. He knows well the details of media treatments and has experience within the media corridors, which contributes to adding a deep dimension of reality to the results of the study.

8- **A.A**: Journalist and editor in *The Independent* then a researcher and Non-Resident Fellow in the Atlantic Council- Middle East Initiatives. He has wide experience in Middle East affairs and wrote for the *Independent* for 5 years. He is aware of the journalistic frames deployed by Western media.

Researchers/Academics

9- **A.Elm**: President of the Cairo Centre for Strategic Studies and a well-known political writer who has authored books on Egyptian politics. He was also an advisor to the former President of the Republic and now presents his famous program "First Edition" on Al-Hayat Channel. Mr Elmeslmany is considered one of the most prominent writers in the field of Egyptian foreign policy and in Egypt's political history. He has many contacts with ambassadors and diplomats by virtue of his graduation from the Faculty of Politics and Economics, at Cairo University, and his work as a political journalist in

the *Al-Ahram* newspaper at the Centre for Political and Strategic Studies. He also has experience in politics as an advisor to the President of the Transitional Period in Egypt, Adly Mansour, after the outbreak of the January 2011 revolution. Therefore, Mr Elmeslenaby understands the most important political changes after President Sisi assumed leadership, which is the period of the current research.

10- **G.S**: Professor of political science at the British University in Cairo. Professor Selim is considered one of the few Egyptian university professors who was interested in Egypt's foreign policy. He participated in the scientific heritage with research on multilateral diplomacy and Egypt's foreign policy in the wake of the 2013 revolution.

The selection of the interviewees was based on purposive sampling, and the method of determining the degree of expertise of the interviewees is based on matching the length of their experience, their seniority, and their position of influence both in the field of political communication and Egyptian foreign diplomacy and in the media field of transnational news content and the reputation of their media organisations for impartiality. All interviewees have expert knowledge based on practice and local knowledge and can provide a historical perspective on Egyptian foreign policy before and after the current government in power.

Interviewing expert media and diplomacy figures in Cairo and London helps to explain how and why Egyptian foreign policy issues are covered in a particular way. The interviews' three main goals are: firstly, to identify how the experts personally view the change in Egyptian foreign policy in the Sisi era; secondly, to investigate the production process of, and control over news items regarding Egyptian foreign policy; and thirdly, to interpret and monitor the reasons for framing Egyptian foreign policy with words and phrases aimed at triggering negative responses, such as 'police state', 'dictator', 'cop' and 'greenwashing', which have been identified in the results of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of news content samples. The interview questionnaire was created in response to the literature review discussions and the study's content analysis findings.

Interviews are expected to enable the researcher to engage the hypotheses and its experimental-quantitative findings from subjective viewpoints. However, the interviewees are invited to express viewpoints representative of dominant discourses in their respective professional

field of practice. According to Bogner & Menz (2002, p. 46, cited in Flick, 2009, p. 166), 'the experts' knowledge structures the practical conditions of other actors in their professional field.' For example, an interviewee with long experience in Egyptian foreign policy is expected to articulate viewpoints and attitudes that capture the dominant or even official discourse in their field. Similarly, a foreign correspondent specializing in reporting on the MENA region would frame the issue with viewpoints and attitudes representative of their field of practice. The views expressed are thus expected to reflect the perspectives of the institution or the organisation with which the interviewees are affiliated. The research's awareness of the subjective and the professional viewpoints, individual experience, and dominant discourses in a field of practice, should allow the present research to maximize its chances of objectivity. But objectivity in this context is not necessarily limited to the idea of objectivity in journalistic practices, as the research would expect to find the same level of partisanship in Western news media as in the official discourse of Egyptian civil servants, diplomats, or foreign affairs journalists and correspondents.

The interviews were conducted in the interviewees' first language which is also the first language of the researcher. Nuances in the interviewees' body language, tone, and word choice could only be picked up by shared cultural and linguistic background between interviewees and researcher, and this constituted an advantage but also a potential disadvantage of subjectivity and bias when applying the "problem-centred approach" to expert interviewing.[22] Objectivity from a scholarly perspective seeks to compare the descriptive findings in the quantitative section of the research with the descriptive findings in its qualitative counterpart. The researcher aims to move beyond the one-way 'Western model of journalism culture,' to frame the research hypotheses with 'transnational comparative conceptions of globalized news networks, as negotiating journalistic spaces' (Volkmer & Firdaus, 2013, p. 102). The rise of social media, participatory digital cultures, and citizen journalism has widened the scope of news media environments. While social media users can now provide 'authentic' content grounded in local or place-based contexts, from a journalistic perspective, mainstream national news organisations as well as transnational or global news outlets do not necessarily evolve within a 'collaborative space,' insofar as a 'hierarchy of credibility' (Volkmer & Firdaus, 2013) still has control over news narratives. But how does this

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[22] This approach explains how personal experiences underpin the interviews and the interpretations. This will be discussed in chapter 8.

hierarchy of credibility now take shape, and more importantly for the present study, does Western credibility take precedence over non-Western credibility or authenticity?

Bogner et *al* (2009) list different purposes behind expert interviews. The present research does not approach expert interviews in an exploratory way to take the research in a new direction or to validate the findings deduced from the main data collection. As a complementary method rather than a stand-alone method, the quantitative content gleaned from the expert interviews provides the alternative frame to approach RH1; it demonstrates that the treatment of issues in Egyptian foreign policy in the sampled news content does not draw on the national place-based narrative. Recent studies have demonstrated that 'local influence is 'nuanced' by the fact that foreign correspondents tend to gravitate towards what Murrell (2015, p. 150) calls 'fixers' or 'people like us (PLU),' by which she means contacts that foreign correspondents develop in the local context to facilitate access to information and represent local sentiment or perception about specific news events. For Murrell, those fixes are cosmopolitan or Westernized in their outlook, and rather than reporting on how things are, they tend to express views about how things should be. Collecting contextualized data on the evolution of Egyptian foreign policy is reflected in the literature review but it does not feature in the quantitatively analysed data. Instead of limiting the present study to highlighting the stereotypes or knowledge gaps in the sampled material on the coverage and framing of Egyptian foreign policy in Western news media, the expert interview has a different purpose. What would be interesting to determine through the interviews is whether a collaborative space can accommodate both national and transnational competing news narratives. The foreign correspondent traditionally occupies an important place in this collaborative space. But considering the reduced reliance on foreign correspondents and other factors, questions can be raised about their present and future influence in the Western news agenda, and whether they facilitate the access of local news narratives to the transnational or global collaborative space of news production.

- **Interviews Design.**

This section focuses on the methodological background of the in-depth interviews conducted for this study after explaining the quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods for investigating news content. Following the analysis, the researcher discovered numerous gaps that needed to be addressed by specialists who were invited to provide their unmediated reading of the

treatment of issues in Egypt's foreign policy in the Western press. Many observations were made because of the analytical study, including the exaggerated interest in internal affairs, the constant focus on conflict, human rights issues, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Besides, concentrating on specific frames such as 'aggression', 'disputing', 'dictatorship', 'tourism', and 'police' are mentioned in the quantitative analysis chapter but they needed to be interpreted and clarified in terms of motivations, outcomes, and the possibility of overcoming stereotypical frameworks which tend to persist in abstraction of local and place-based news narratives, and in disregard of new political variables that have emerged since the so-called 'Arab Spring'.

The present research uses the findings deduced from the quantitative analysis of sampled news coverage of issues in Egyptian foreign policy in Western news media to formulate the questions and topics that the interviewees have been invited to comment on. The interviewing process monitors how the interviewee's reaction to this coverage may or may not change in the process of conducting the interview (Flick 2009, p. 151) and presents a competing narrative from the expert's perspectives.

Initially, all experts were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, and they signed the consent letters (see Appendix C4) and were supposed to be asked 8 main questions in total. The questions are divided into five categories (see Appendix C):

- Precedents of Egyptian foreign policy and its recent evolution
- Changes in the diplomacy map during the study's timeframe
- Their vision of coverage of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press
- Their views about the frames used in Egyptian political PR.
- Their interpretation of the four prominent issues in Egyptian foreign policy today

The interviews are semi-structured to allow the researcher to engage with the interviewees regarding new points raised in their answers, which makes it necessary to add new questions that add additional depth to the final interpretation and analysis. Most qualitative interviews are adaptable and changeable, allowing interviewees to bring up unexpected points during the conversation (Mason, 2005). Adding new questions, when necessary, improves the quality of interviews, and it is worth emphasising certain questions when the context demands a change of

emphasis from one issue to another. Conducted in a semi-structured format, the conversation flowed naturally and branched out into different areas, providing extra data that could be useful in the research. According to Bogner et al (2009), one of the challenges of gathering research data through the expert interview is when the interviewee takes the lead and does not engage in an equal and constructive conversation based on their assumption that the interviewer-researcher lacks their expertise, or their insider's knowledge. Another challenge is when the expert deals with the questions as a private person rather than as a representative of discourses that define their field of practice. Finally, the expert also tends to use jargon specific to their field, and instead of engaging directly with the questions, they spend more time explaining the technicalities of events or theories that are familiar in their field. The researcher was aware of these challenges and tried to prioritize the questions which were shared in advance with the interviewee. Additionally, the researcher avoided interruptions by asking the expert to clarify some technical words and had to deal with these at the translation stage, relying on further research. The semi-structured interview method enables 'the interviewed subjects' viewpoints… to be expressed in a more openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or a questionnaire' (Flick 2009, p. 150). The questions are directly linked to both the literature review chapter of the research and to the findings of the quantitative analysis, focusing on the volume and the nature of Western media coverage of Egyptian foreign policy affairs. 'Theory-driven, hypotheses-directed questions… are oriented to the scientific literature about the topic [and] based on the researcher's theoretical presuppositions' (Flick 2009, p. 153). But at the stage the interviews were conducted, the quantitative analysis enabled the researcher to monitor the used frames, points of view, correspondent's coverage, the size of stories, and their focus on a set of issues. The research hypotheses have been validated by the quantitatively analysed content of the research sample.

1- <u>Conducting the interviews</u>

The areas of focus of each interview have been reviewed by the interviewees before starting the interview. All questions were asked explicitly so that the interviewee would not be surprised by a topic they did not understand or could not freely discuss. It is worth noting that no interviewee refused to answer a specific question in any of the meetings. When the interviewee did not give a relevant answer, the question was rephrased differently, or some examples related to the question

were given to encourage the interviewee to respond. The questions were usually asked in the same order, except for questions tailored to each interviewee's profession. However, the informative answers were only expected from the general questions which were used to open the conversation, but the interpretive deep answers came gradually when digging deep in the research area.

The opening of interviews is critical, first, because it sets the tone and direction of the interview. It indicates whether the interview will be formal or informal, relaxed or tense, professional or nonprofessional, friendly or hostile. It sets the scope for what will be covered at the start as that has direct impact on whether an interview will continue or end abruptly. The interview process evolves from unstructured to structured questions, thus increasing structuring as the interview progressed 'to prevent the interviewer's frame of reference being imposed on the interviewee's viewpoints' (Flick 2009, p. 151). Additionally, the opening questions often determine whether both parties are willing to communicate beyond superficial interactions. Small talk, humour, and compliments can all help to establish or strengthen a relationship, but they should all be used sparingly (Charles, 2009). The researcher was eager to have the interviewees introduce themselves and provide a brief presentation of their experience in foreign policy or media at the start of each interview. The researcher's approach to the design of the interview questions does not rely on the 'biographical method' to focus the discussion on 'problem-cantered interests' (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). A semi-formal discussion method was also adopted in a serious manner, but it was punctuated by some side comments. The opening question was always a general question about Egypt's new foreign policy, followed by a gradual selection of determined questions.

The researcher first provides a form for the interviewee to sign outlining their and the researcher's rights "Consent form" (see Appendix C4). The form was not objected to by any of the experts. The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, depending on each expert's desire to delve deeper into a specific point. Notably, the elder experts were the most talkative and those whose interviews lasted 50 to 60 minutes were more excited to provide more details, and reasons and connect interpretations to the historical dimensions. That is obvious in the interviews with the ambassador, TV presenter and cultural council head. When the data gathered in the interviews began to feel similar, and it was clear that no new perspectives were emerging, it was assumed that the sample had been saturated and that conducting interviews could be finalised. The researcher

has gathered 10 interviewees all of which their specialisations are connected to the research objectives.

The interviewees were first contacted by phone or messages on social media pages because most of them are well-known personalities in Egyptian news media and foreign diplomacy. All interviews were conducted in Arabic in person and recorded in an audio format. The places of interviews varied between Cairo and London, in public places or in the interviewees' official workplaces. No one had concerns about answering any questions or publishing their opinion.

2- **Interviews observations.**

Notably all the interviewees were men. This is an important issue that will be revisited in the conclusion to the present research. Female experts in Egyptian foreign policy affairs are extremely rare not only in Egypt but across the so-called MENA region. Even in the developed Western world, and perhaps apart from very few exceptions, namely in Nordic countries, 'feminist foreign policy' still has a very long way to go. Diplomacy as a field of political practice, as well as research in international relations, both continue to be seen and understood in gendered terms, which value 'the traits of strength, power, autonomy, independence, and rationality, all traditionally associated with masculinity' (Cassidy & Althari 2017, p. 3). English-speaking experts in middle east affairs were too difficult to reach and tend not to respond via email. The researcher communicated with correspondent in *The Financial Times* and journalists and writers in *The Guardian*, *The Daily mail* by email but received no response. It became clear that gaining access to a network of UK-based media experts on the MENA region was extremely difficult for the researcher unless she had contacts and connections in that professional milieu.

The researcher is aware that sharing the same cultural and linguistic background with the interviewees may determine the latter's construction of the interview process in the binary of insider- outsider, or Western versus non-Western viewpoints. The researcher avoided confrontational questions and did not challenge the viewpoints of the interviewees. Because all the interviews happened in one meeting only, the researcher did not seek to arrange a second meeting and invite the interviewees to comment or reflect on their transcribed statements. One of the restrictions imposed by the 'expert interview' is the limited availability of figures of authority or experts with major responsibilities in their field of practice. In any case, a second interview that

confronts the interviewee with their subjective assumptions would have been relevant if the present research was entirely organised around interviews or if its purpose was to focus on subjective attitudes. However, this is not the aim of the researcher and the viewpoints gathered in each meeting with each interviewee will focus on the discourse's representative of the professional fields of practice of each interviewee. The interview sample draws on the semi-structured expert interview (Bogner et al, 2009). In this case 'the interviewees are of less interest as a (whole) person than their capacities as experts for [their] field of activity. They are integrated into the study not as a single case but as representing a group' (Flick 2009, p. 165). However, a diagonal reading of all the interviews will be reflected in the interpretation of findings and in the researcher's approach to the thematic and qualitative coding of the gathered data.

3- **Transcription, Translating and coding.**

The presentation and study of the interviews followed four steps:

- transcription and translation (see samples in Appendix C3)
- coding (see Appendix C2)
- post-coding
- interpretation.

The researcher first transcribed all the digitally recorded audio data (9 interviews into Arabic and 1 interview into English). Even though this was a time-consuming task, transcribing the data provided the researcher with a better understanding of the types of data collected (Gray, 2009). As a result, the analysis can be said to have begun while transcribing, as that process had an initial impact on the development of the categories. The second step was translation, which is also time-consuming as there are many professional terms used by the experts which need to be translated appropriately. The third step was coding which, in this study, intersects topic coding and analytical coding, which focuses on interpretation of, and reflection on meaning. Furthermore, analytical coding generates categories and extracts new ideas from the source data. The goal of qualitative research is to learn something from the data and then apply what has been learned throughout the research. To learn from the data, the researcher must return to the material until it is completely understood (Richards, 2005). Finally, the last step was the comprehensive analysis depending on

the extracted themes, categories and codes which provides the required interpretation to answer the research questions.

9- <u>Methodological limitations.</u>

Quantitative content analysis: The method may ignore the context within which the content was created or consumed, potentially leading to misinterpretation of the data it simplifies complex content into quantifiable units, which might overlook subtleties and nuances. Furthermore, requires rigorous and consistent coding rules without flexibility; otherwise, inter-coder reliability issues can arise, affecting the validity of the results. It often focuses on static content, failing to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of communication and media content. These limitations were a motive to seek the qualitative content analysis for further flexibility and understanding.

Qualitative content analysis: The method is mostly subjective and highly reliant on the researcher's interpretation, which can introduce bias and affect the reliability and validity of the findings. Findings from qualitative content analysis are often specific to the context studied and may not be generalizable to other contexts. Besides, the process of coding and analysing qualitative data is labour-intensive and time-consuming. Due to the subjective nature of the analysis, replicating the study and achieving the same results can be challenging. Thus, the interpretive nature of the method may present the researcher's perspectives.

Expers' semi-structured interviews: The interviewer's questions, demeanour, and interpretations can influence the responses, leading to potential bias. Differences in how questions are phrased and how interviews are conducted can lead to variability in the data, making it harder to compare across interviews. Insights gained are often specific to the experts interviewed and may not be representative of the broader population. The quality of the data depends heavily on the expertise of the interviewees, which might limit the scope of a diverse range of experts not included.

<u>Conclusion:</u>

According to the research objectives of discovering the Western media frames and expert's narratives regarding Egyptian foreign policy strategies. The presented methodology has been selected to enable the researcher to gather and analyse the required data to answer the research

questions. The data is divided into two formats; firstly, the data gathered from the quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods which monitor the size, and the nature and prominent topics of the Western coverage in terms of dealing with the new shifts in Egyptian foreign policy as a middle-power country strategy. Secondly, the data is gathered from semi-structured interviews with Egyptian experts in foreign policy and media fields. The interviews aim to discover the reasons for applying specific frames in the Western press, priming topics and discarding others and to analyse the new features of Egyptian foreign policy providing a competing narrative to the Western narratives.

Chapter 6:
"Content Analysis" of Western Press Coverage

Introduction:

This chapter provides a quantitative content analysis of a research sample of 800 news items. The results presented in the chapter serve as a foundation for (Chapter 7), which delves into the underlying significance of the news items from a qualitative perspective. An important procedure of qualitative content analysis is to make inferences about the applied frames in the Western media and the rationale for using those frames as well as using specific words and ignoring other subjects. During the entire process, the researcher will try to adhere to a qualitative perspective to achieve the rigour and credibility that make the results as trustworthy as possible (Bengtsson, 2016). According to Rose et *al* (2015), content analysis is a flexible research approach that can be applied to a wide variety of text sources, which can cope with large amounts of data.

Utilising quantitative content analysis aids in the initial monitoring of the quantity of journalistic materials dealing with Egypt's foreign policy, the specific topics being addressed, and the overall trends associated with these topics, whether they are positive, negative, or neutral. It also enables the monitoring of the chosen journalistic templates, such as opinion pieces or news articles. To establish a fundamental understanding of how Western news sources address Egyptian foreign policy affairs, extensive quantitative content analysis will constitute a knowledge base for the analysis of theme-centred counts,

Quantitative content analysis is applied to the texts first in this chapter to define the volume and nature of Egyptian foreign policy affairs in the sampled Western news sources. This is followed by a qualitative content analysis of the prominent issues after reducing data. Accordingly, content analysis with both quantitative and qualitative versions will be applied to a purposely selected sample of the Western press (British, American, German, and French platforms, news websites and foreign policy journals), covering the online editions of 9 media platforms: ***The Daily Mail, New York Times, The Independent, Foreign Affairs, The Economist, Financial Times, 24 France, DW*** and ***Reuter's websites* over four years (2018-2021)**. Throughout this chapter,

quantitative analysis is applied to a group of selected editorial materials according to the extent of their relevance to Egyptian foreign policy, to answer the main research question:

RQ1: What is the size and nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?

And in addition to answering a set of sub-questions as shown in Chapter 1:

1- Process of "categorizing".

this research has been conducted using a mixed content analysis method to analyse the targeted issues in the articles. Firstly, for determining the volume, quantity and complexion of Egyptian foreign policy-related press materials, monitoring frequencies of topics and analysing press texts with clear and explicit connotations, quantitative content analysis has been used as "a technique of systematically and objectively identifying the qualities of textual messages and making inferences" (Berg, 2001). Further data testing, scanning, and sampling led to the creation of **nine categories** according to the term "foreign policy":

- Economy,
- Middle East issues,
- US policies,
- President El- Sisi,
- Political Islam,
- Human rights and democracy,
- Soft power news,
- Nile crisis,
- Diplomacy and international relations,

The analysis process starts by selecting the news samples and the timeframe of the study. The following section explains the rationale for choosing the selected media outlets specifically with the inclusion and exclusion justifications, the timescale covered in the study, the preliminary observations on collected sources, and the criteria for selection of sources.

2- __Identifying primary sources, sampling, and selection of units of analysis.__

The primary sources for the study are obtained using the internet search engine, "Google". The focus is on finding sources that pertain to the main concept of Egyptian foreign policy affairs, with an emphasis on the availability and relevance of the source material and its analytical content to the core topic of analysis. Various methods have been utilised to identify the most reliable sources of analysis, including conducting a pilot study and a comprehensive survey. This has led to the compilation of a list of Western news sources, specifically British, European, and American newspapers, which represent the Western perspectives. These sources are monitored to assess their level of interest in Middle East affairs, with a particular focus on Egypt's foreign policy. The size of relevant news articles is used as an indicator of the Western press agendas and priorities regarding Egyptian foreign policy and Egypt as a country from the Middle East. Moreover, to uphold the research's impartiality, the utilisation of a variety of sources was evaluated based on multiple criteria, as outlined below:

- **The periodical publication of newspapers**: daily, weekly, and bimonthly publications are taken into consideration when calculating the *frequency and volume* of coverage in quantitative CA and when exploring the *depth of coverage* in qualitative and theme-led qualitative CA. Daily newspapers, in print or electronic form, tend to approach the news in a tabloid style, which lacks in-depth analysis.

- **News format**: print versus electronic copies, specialized magazines, news websites and news agencies approach news content differently. Changes to the media landscape have impacted news coverage related to the MENA region in Western media. Content is no longer exclusively aimed at "elite state actors" (Harb, 2017). Online versions are aimed to be shared and commented on, while print versions follow a broadcast model from sender to receiving audience. News agencies gather and frame news stories as products to be sold and distributed to news providers. By diversifying news sources in the research, relevant news items dealing with Egypt foreign policy can be monitored at different stages: from the "packaging" and "distribution" stages, (performed by news agencies), to the print version (in broadsheet and tabloids), to the online or electronic version (on newspaper and magazine websites). This approach to monitoring news items on Egypt's foreign policy is

reflective of the complex media environment in which news content is produced, distributed, and consumed today.

- **Editorial policy**: whether it endorses the position of elite state actors, whether it reflects the right, left, or centre of the political spectrum; the editorial policy has a great impact on the nature of framing the coverage.

- **Diversity of ownership**: private owners, news companies, and government organizations.

3- **Selection of editorial materials (units of analysis).**

Going into more detail in the search for the appropriate primary sources and selecting the units of analysis for the study, after determining the media platforms, which have a significant interest in Egyptian foreign policy issues; a more specialised search with the following keywords was applied separately within the search engines of each newspaper *(Egypt – Egyptian foreign policy – President El- Sisi)*, the word *Egypt* returned the largest number of results. Subsequently, the researcher omitted the articles which are not relevant to Egypt foreign policy, using the following criteria:

- Matching press materials in terms of freshness or in terms of strength of relevance to search keywords. Press materials falling within the research time frame were selected and then measuring their suitability with *the nine categories* of Egypt's foreign policy. Sometimes the material does not fall into any of the ten categories, but at other times, more than one category is covered within the same news item. For example, an article which discusses "economy" and "El-Sisi" leadership. In other cases, even when a news item discusses Egyptian affairs, it is not exactly related to foreign policy issues and focuses exclusively on coverage of domestic news such as "local accidents, poverty, local establishments problems, undeveloped spheres". This material was excluded. However, As explained in the literature review, on major changes and shifts in Egypt's foreign policy, the latter became closely interlinked with social prosperity and national security as two elements to achieve domestic stability, and therefore, attract foreign investment, build new alliances, and strengthen standing as a regional actor. The priorities of the new foreign policy agenda in Egypt depend on putting the domestic front in order. Thus, the domestic issues which affect Egyptian foreign policy such as political Islam, civil liberties, and human rights cannot be ignored as they contribute to shaping relations with the international community.

- All selected media platforms contain news and opinion materials that varied between news materials for foundation-affiliated journalists (Egyptians and None), news materials from news agencies, and opinion materials from original writers in or specialised writers from outside the newspaper. Each newspaper also divides news and articles under various names, such as (the world, Al-Sharq al-Awsat (*Middle East*), News, Opinion) the selection also includes materials stored in the newspaper's electronic archive.

- Some selected media platforms are TV channel websites such as DW website and 24 France, which achieve the variety of criteria and non-English speaking sources factor to the sample. The analysis here will depend on the address and the brief of the visual materials.

- As far as duplicate editorial materials are concerned, duplicate news in more than one media platform was excluded if it was in the same or similar format. Mostly, this is found in news obtained from news agencies, Therefore, for example, the researcher excluded news materials from *Reuters* in the study newspapers on the basis that *Reuters* was chosen as an independent source for analysing the news published therein. On the contrary, the news texts which include information from other news agencies such as AFP or AP have been included as those agencies are not selected in the sample.

- The subjects were selected based on the degree of relevance of their content to the features of Egyptian foreign policy such as water policy, Egyptian economy, and Middle East conflicts regardless of length of the editorial material. Those general categories have been established in the preliminary stage of the research. by surveying the literature review regarding the news shifts in Egyptian foreign policy and the new diplomacy, the researcher managed to create more specific categories by reading the data of CA and highlighting the related editorial items. The nine categories validate the Egyptian foreign policy components as the categories are titled.

- In the long editorial materials, however, huge obstacles arose, as they contained more than one concept, direction, and multiple terms and often with conflicting connotations. For instance: phrases support and deny at the same time Egyptian rights to the international river. Consequently, it was strenuous for the researcher to position these materials into a certain category without the other, as it was difficult to consider the unit of analysis as one component, given that the unit of analysis frequently contained more than one indication.

For example: an article regarding the president which criticizes the ruling system and how it is repressive regarding freedom of expression. It was difficult to decide in which category this article should belong, the criterion here is the general tone of the text. This means that the delivered message to the reader after reading the article is defining where to categorize it. To test this validity the researcher went through the data three times to conclude the best judgments. the selection of units of analysis depends on the whole context of the article which does not relate solely to the items' titles or specific words, some paragraphs could be contradictory in one story and belong to more than one category. Accordingly, the unit of analysis will be the general tone of the text, not the word or paragraph.

4- <u>Rationale of the Sources Selection.</u>

The selected media platforms have been chosen generally for the following reasons.

1- First, they all have global audiences, albeit of different sizes. There is a high volume of exposure to these publications according to distribution numbers.

2- Second, the diversity in nationality, ownership system and type of newspapers will reflect more credibility to how the international press from different countries frame Egyptian foreign policy issues.

3- Third, the analysis is not for the print newspapers only considering the rapid transition from print to online press. Websites have the space to run a wide range of stories across a broad agenda whereas print newspapers have a fixed space and time, which limit the number and nature of the stories. Besides, Covid 19 lockdowns contributed further to reducing print copies in favour of online publications.

4- Fourth, availability and accessibility to scan the material freely, However, it was necessary to subscribe to some newspapers and specialized magazines such as *The Economist, New York Times, and Financial Times* to achieve objectivity in choosing materials as much as possible.

5- Finally, the main criteria in selecting the sources are the relativity and the variety. The sources varied between newspaper websites, economy-specialized magazines, foreign policy-specialized magazines, and non-English speaking news websites such as the French 24 France website and the German DW website.

Regarding the rationale for the selection of British newspapers, the focus was, at first, on newspapers with the highest circulation and users in the UK, regardless of whether they were tabloid or broadsheet in style. The selection needed to be narrowed down further to newspapers covering Egypt's foreign policy activities and attitudes. The researcher excluded *The Times, The Sun, le monde, and The Guardian* for the following reasons:

- *The Times* has been excluded because of its intense emphasis on Britain's domestic affairs and its lack of interest in international affairs, especially in the MENA region. The news published about Egypt did not exceed 30 news items, neither of which covered political, economic, or foreign policy developments.

- *The sun newspaper* items focused on vacationing in Egypt, or archaeological information. *The Sun* newspaper website did not contain during the study timeframe political news about Egypt's foreign policy. The content is restricted to archaeology history and discoveries.

- Although *The Guardian* is a leading broadsheet paper, the researcher did not recognize sufficient relevant news to the current study, it was difficult to build a category regarding the paper according to the weak representative coverage. Mostly emphasised Egypt's domestic problems like accidents, individual crimes and poverty while disregarding any international events. The paper is also proven to show a conflict of interest as it receives large donations from sources which support political Islam. Consequently, there is a dearth of editorial materials addressing Egyptian foreign policy matters, which renders the chosen sample mostly unrelated to the study's subject.

- *Le Monde* was excluded after a comparison with *France24*, the former does not have adequate international news, additionally the indigenous broadcast only in the French language, with the option of translation into English, which leads to the inaccuracy of the used words and thus the analysis, as opposed to *France 24* website which was characterized by the original broadcast in the English language as well.

The rationale for the news sources included in the research is outlined below.

- *The Financial Times* has been included due to its dealing with many Egyptian affairs related to foreign policy, whether economic or political; it is an international daily newspaper which stands in the middle of left and right politics; addressed to elite political

and economic actors, it is printed in broadsheet and published digitally. Consequently, the availability of diversity in journalistic forms has been secured, which enriches the research sample in addition to its widespread among readers, politicians, and businessmen and women.

- *The Daily Mail* was selected for similar reasons. Despite the difficulty of accessing the website of the newspaper due to excessive use of advertising, it has dealt with several editorial materials related to the research subject. The newspaper circulation numbers are the highest in the UK, its delivery figures have reached "1,134,184" copies in 2020 (Mayhew, 2020). Besides supporting the right-wing politically, achieving diversity in primary sources requires providing right and left wings on the political spectrum.

- Although *The Independent* belongs to the same political alignment (liberal-Democrats) and has been seen as leaning to the left wing of the political spectrum, it pursues an editorial policy that often criticises Egyptian affairs. It was included in the research sample, as it contained various news and opinion materials regarding Egypt's foreign policy.

- *The Washington Post* is regarded as one of the leading daily American newspapers along with *The New York Times*; they are both distinguished through their political reporting on the workings of the White House, Congress, and other aspects of the U.S. government. Both are well known for their scathing criticism of Trump policies as well. However, after an in-depth observation and accurate scanning of the two newspapers, the *New York Times* came first in terms of the diversity of topics, their forms, and their sources, and the most dealt with Egyptian international affairs, as well as "the highest in the rate of readability" (Agility, 2022).

- To analyse the editorial materials written within the specialized magazines, with a prominent focus on data journalism and analysis over original reporting, *The Economist* was chosen to represent the economic affairs as the significant factor in any state's foreign policy as well as *Foreign Affairs* as a magazine specialized in the foreign policy itself; an American international magazine published by the Council on Foreign Relations, were distinguished from *Foreign Policy* with the depth and format in the details throughout the texts providing the research greater depth in the interpretation of foreign policy issues unlike *Foreign Policy* magazine texts are short and requires subscription affecting the availability for readers. *Foreign affairs* is also more widely distributed.

- *Deutsche Welle (DW)* and *France 24* platforms have been chosen as representatives of the European press, the two platforms have originally paid great attention to international news and were distinguished by great momentum regarding Egyptian foreign policy affairs in addition to the great number of users.

- Density of the amount of news reported on newspaper websites has news agencies as a source, thus becoming a reason to select a news agency website. Obviously, the news belonging to this agency in other newspapers is omitted to prevent repetitions. The comparison was between the three significant agencies associated press AP, Reuters, Agency France Presse AFP; the latter has been excluded as there is no accessibility except to members and partners, AP and Reuters are similar regarding Egyptian foreign policy news. However, Reuters has further news and availability to interview its Middle East correspondents.

5- <u>Sample and categories.</u>

The sample of the stories was chosen with the non-random sampling method of convenience sampling (as illustrated in Chapter 5). This approach was chosen because the selection must be in purpose regarding relevance to Egyptian foreign policy, that process resulted in a data set of 800 stories (news-opinions) across all nine media organizations, which is reasonably robust given the timeframe. At the beginning the articles number was 1020, 220. After revision, the editorial materials distributions are shown in (table 1) & (figure 2). To test the analysis categories' validity and reliability, the researcher applied the re-analysis approach: analysing the living material studied and leaving that material for enough time (two weeks or more) and then returning to analysing the material for a second time. The proposed agreement between the two analyses is extracted. The agreement between the two analyses reached 80%. However, before going through the content analysis and findings, there are some observations worth mentioning which may contribute to the data interpretation.

6- <u>Initial observations while collecting data from primary sources.</u>

Notably, important indications have been observed while classifying the categories as follows:

- Media platforms focused on subjects relating to the economy, tourism, and the Middle East. Local issues have been omitted from these matters as the study focuses on topics of an international nature that reflect Egyptian external policies.

- Lack of coverage of Egypt's participation in international events such as official visits, UN Security Council membership, signing of international treaties, memorandums of understanding, cooperation agreements, and so on, which are vital components of foreign policy communication for any country.

- Focus on Egypt in the context of conflict in the MENA region, as well as domestic unrest, such as organized protests.

- Reliance on and citation of official sources in the news are rare. Even the correspondents articulate their point of view without citing official sources such and official press releases or statements. This lack of engagement with official sources betrays the preconception that they are untrustworthy and act as the mouthpiece of the "regime". But then again, every country, "democratic" or otherwise, puts out its policy communication material to articulate its position as a state actor. Most news outlets would, for instance, avoid official sources and cite only the point of view of an opposition party, or that of the correspondents based on their individual observations. The latter sometimes act like ethnographers and participants observant rather than journalists with experience in the politics and culture of the region of interest where they are based.

- COVID-19 pandemic crisis of 2020 had a global impact on the economy, and on societies and political life in general, and occupied most of the news content during the last two years of the research timeframe. Foreign policy news and activities were also limited and re-organized according to Covid lockdowns and restrictions on international travel. These include relations with major powers, as well as several actions of humanitarian aid, development and peacekeeping, and the fight against disinformation and cyber-attacks. The disease affected international relations and caused diplomatic tensions and resulted in a United Nations Security Council resolution demanding a global ceasefire. Diplomatic relations have been affected due to tensions around trade and the transport of medicines, diagnostic tests, and hospital equipment (Valenza, 2020). Leaders of some countries have accused other countries of not

containing the disease effectively resulting in the uncontrolled spread of the virus. Interestingly, a video produced by the Egyptian President's office showed crates of coronavirus medical supplies stamped in English and Arabic with the words "from the Egyptian people to the American people" being loaded onto a military cargo plane. Egypt has used soft power globally by sending medical aid to countries that have included China, Italy, Sudan, and the United Kingdom. These gestures of goodwill have been covered slightly through Western newspapers, maybe because "health diplomacy provided the opportunity to create narratives of friends and enemies in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of foreign audiences."

- "Soft power news" as a separate category of Egypt's foreign policy depends on its cultural diplomacy according to its history, arts, and cultural international events. Western media outlets have published international arts, cultural, media and sports news about Egypt. Soft power is one of the most significant factors contributing to Egypt's international image and a state policy PR and a communication tool in public diplomacy. The researcher has included "tourism and archaeology" under "soft power" as Pharaonic history and discoveries of ancient monuments have a significant role in the exercise of soft power.

- "Human rights and democracy" have been integrated into one category as throughout the coverage they relate to each other in terms of the breaches or lack of freedom of expression.

One article could belong to more than one category, this overlap could make the categorising process relatively inaccurate; accordingly, classifying here has been depended on the most inclined towards a specific category that would be deduced from the general attitude after reading the whole text. Consequently, a "Neutral" code will be applied to the articles which could have contradictory paragraphs or use positive and negative words in the same story.

Sub-categories stemmed from every category after scanning the selected articles and classifying the topics, referring to the key objectives of the study, which revolve around revealing the nature of attitudes in journalistic texts towards Egyptian foreign policy affairs, monitoring the news sources that are relied upon, and highlighting the press templates used. The following criteria were used in coding:

- context attitude (positive – negative – neutral)

- news sources (opinion material- news agency, correspondent - local journalist)
- journalistic types (News stories – opinion material).

Defining the categories led to identifying prominent topics in the Western press which related to Egyptian foreign policy. *Firstly*, the "Economy" theme occupied a prominent place in the volume and frequency of coverage. *Second* in prominence, are "Middle East" stories especially regarding the Libya crisis, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the reconciliation with Qatar and Turkey. *The third* prominent area of coverage is the "Nile crisis "and the conflict with Ethiopia on the "Residence Dam" and the water war. *Fourthly*, political Islam is an important subject, however, sometimes it is linked to democracy and human rights stories and at other times connected to terrorism. *Fifth*, the researcher created a separate category for "human rights" as notably, the Western media frame many stories with this issue. The five topics have been selected to be analysed qualitatively after reducing data to 45 stories across the five themes.

Qualitative analysis has been used as the secondary method, it is applied as "a tool coupled with framing and topical analysis which provides important insights about thematic coverage of an issue" (Strekalova 2015, p. 169). As mentioned before, qualitative content analysis is distinguished by reducing data, deep meanings, and flexibility. Accordingly, standard coding techniques used in media content analysis with standard codes identified in literature review and research objectives may result in omitting some potential frames. To overcome this problem, a flexible coding scheme was constructed with frames obtained from the literature. Flexibility means that new frames may be added to the scheme as they emerge from the text during the analyses.

After determining the timeframe of 3 years (2018-2020) and reviewing the main sources of the newspapers, the time frame has been expanded to include some editorial materials during the year (2021) as well. This is due to many new factors emerging on the map of Egyptian foreign policy, which are important indicators of change in agenda and strategy. Egypt ended 2021 with new alliances and priorities, the most notable of which are the rapprochement with Turkey and Qatar, as well as the strained relations with the new US administration. Yet, the extension of the timeframe did not modify the five main areas around which developments in Egyptian foreign policy have crystallized, namely, economic challenges, Middle East challenges, the Renaissance Dam file, political Islam, and democracy and human rights.

7- __Analysis process (Tables and explanations).__

The following table explains the distribution of the media platform news and articles according to the editorial materials which bear direct relevance to Egypt's foreign policy (See a sample of the material in Appendix A1). The selected news sample is mainly focused on the related subject to answer the questions (Appendix A), the other news about Egypt in general has been excluded for non-relevance factor.

__(Table 1): Distribution of the editorial materials (news – articles) throughout media platforms.__

Media platform	Editorial materials	%
The Financial Times	154	19.25 %
Reuters website	141	17.6 %
DW website	90	11.25 %
The New York Times	87	10.87 %
France24 website	86	10.75 %
The Daily Mail	85	10.6 %
The Independent	58	7.25 %
Foreign Affairs magazine	54	6.75 %
The Economist	45	5.6 %
Total	800	100%
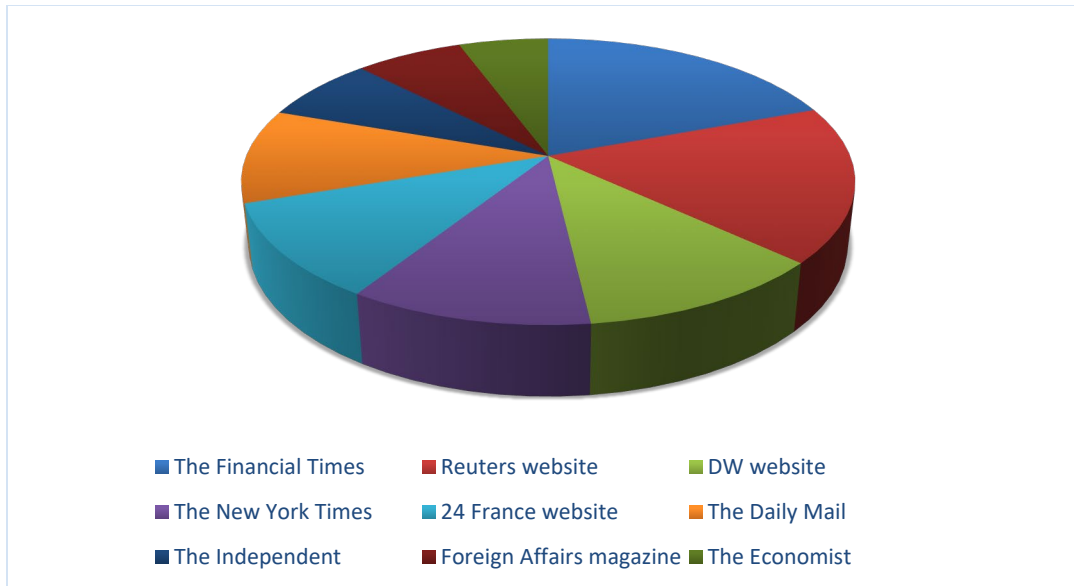
Figure 2: Media platforms' coverage.

Regarding the response to the primary research question, **what is the size of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?** It's worth noting that addressing the research query does not necessitate an exhaustive catalogue of the portrayals and discussions surrounding Egyptian foreign policy in a broad or ongoing manner. Instead, the endeavour to address this question necessitates engaging with a carefully selected editorial corpus and a delimited timeframe for analysis, as is customary in the realm of media studies adopting descriptive survey methodologies and interpretive frameworks, which are called (metric empiricism, interpretive or hermeneutic empiricism) (Anderson, 2012 p.12). In this chapter the researcher applies the first method, the metric method to describe material reality. That reality is tangible, durable, stable, and reliable. The accurate descriptions produced will have similar characteristics. They will reach across time and place. The foundational shift that occurs when one crosses the boundary from metric empiricism to interpretive empiricism has to do with the change from metric empiricism into the objective characteristics of the world to an effort to represent the multiple meanings held for these characteristics (Anderson, 2012 p.16). The objective here transcends the mere comparison of the Western media's coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs with their coverage of the foreign affairs of other countries. Rather, the quantitative analysis aims to systematically track the representation of issues pertinent to Egyptian foreign policy within Western media outlets, to uncover themes that are intertwined with and exert influence on the media discourse regarding foreign policy, and to

discern the editorial priorities that guide the selection of content for publication. This approach seeks to illuminate the intricacies of media representation and the dynamics at play in the portrayal of Egyptian foreign policy, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of its presence and treatment in the Western press.

Upon analysing the editorial materials released by various media outlets throughout the study's designated timeframe, it is evident from (Table 1) that the outlets primarily involved in Egypt's foreign affairs were the *"Financial Times"*, accounting for 19.25% of the coverage, followed by Reuters website in second place with 17.6 %. Last place was occupied by The *Economist,* with a ranking of 5%. Notably, the most "Positive coverage" in the *Financial Times* was about economic content, for instance, from the corpus there was an article titled "As FDI tracks up from the trough recorded following the revolution, Egypt is seeking a fine balance. If it can entice Gulf money into diverse industries, an investment that is less dependent on oil prices" (Khalaf, 2018).[23] Yet the "negative coverage" throughout the newspaper mostly regarding the regime such as "Mr Sisi, who overthrew his Islamist predecessor in a popularly backed coup in 2013, is aware of the issue and has expressed concerns about widespread poverty in the country" (Saleh, 2018).[24] The definitions and codes of positive – neutral- negative throughout the study are as follows:

- Positive coverage in newspapers refers to the portrayal of subjects, entities, or events in a favourable light, emphasizing achievements, strengths, or other affirmative attributes. This type of coverage often includes language that conveys approval, support, or admiration. Positive coverage can contribute to building a positive public image and influence public opinion in a favourable direction (Entman, 1993). Use of laudatory adjectives, focus on success stories, constructive outcomes, or endorsements by reputable figures. The codes throughout the sample centred around "support- improve- prosperity- succeed – achieve- increase- diverse- investment- develop- progress- overcome".

- Neutral coverage is characterized by an impartial or unbiased presentation of information, without overtly favouring one side or another. It typically involves the reporting of facts or

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[23] This article is a sample of the selected corpus "Egypt can entice Gulf money into diverse industries, an investment that is less dependent on oil prices" was published in the Financial Times" in July 2018 (it is cited in the website's section).

[24] This article is a sample of the corpus "Economic worries preoccupy Egyptian voters; Price rises dominate lives of ordinary people as Sisi heads for re-election" was published in the Financial Times in March 2018. (It is cited in the website's section).

statements in a straightforward manner, devoid of emotive language or subjective commentary. Neutral coverage aims to provide readers with information allowing them to form their own opinions or conclusions (McQuil, 2010). Presentation of facts without evaluative language, balanced viewpoints without advocacy for any side, direct quotations without editorializing.

- Negative coverage highlights the shortcomings, failures, or negative aspects of the subjects it addresses. It often employs language that criticizes, disapproves of, or otherwise portrays its subjects in an unfavourable light. Negative coverage can influence public perception by casting doubt, scepticism, or disfavour, thereby impacting the subject's reputation adversely. Use of critical language, emphasis on problems or controversies, highlighting of failures or criticism by significant entities. The codes centred around "Dictatorship – repression- lose- arrest- repressive- massacre- fail- poor- diminish- reject".

To approach the answer to the research question "What is the nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?" the following table shows in detail the most prominent subjects regarding Egyptian foreign policy during the study timeframe with illustrations of the areas of interest for every publication from the research sample and the frequencies and percentages of the distributed data which will be an indicator of the nature of Egyptian foreign policy in western media and provides codes to themes identified for qualitative content analysis

(Table 2): Size of subject's interest in each media platform (N= 800)

Analysis Unit / Issues	The New York Times		The Financial Times		Reuters website		The Daily Mail		The Independent		The Economist		Foreign affairs magazine		France 24 website		DW website		Sum	
	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%
Economy	20	23%	40	26%	31	22%	4	4.7%	3	5.2%	7	15.5%	3	5.5%	4	4.7%	8	8.9%	120	15%
Middle East	25	28.7%	20	13%	25	17%	10	11.8%	25	43%	13	28.9%	12	22.2%	6	7%	4	4.4%	140	17.5%
Political Islam	4	4.6%	20	13%	5	3.5%	20	23.5%	2	3.4%	5	11%	3	5.5%	6	7%	4	4.4%	69	8.6%
Nile crisis	8	9.2%	15	9.7%	18	12.8%	2	2.4%	2	3.4%	2	4.4%	3	5.5%	17	19.8%	24	26.7%	91	11.4%
Human rights & democracy	4	4.6%	19	12.3%	3	2.1%	15	17.6%	8	13.8%	4	8.9%	17	31.5%	20	23.3%	32	35.5%	122	15.3%
El-Sisi	4	4.6%	16	10.4%	10	7.1%	12	14.1%	6	10.3%	4	8.9%	7	13%	15	17.4%	8	8.9%	82	10.3%
Soft power	16	18.4%	10	6.5%	20	14.2%	14	16.5%	4	6.9%	2	4.4%	3	5.5%	14	16.3%	5	5.5%	88	11%
Diplomacy and international relations	4	4.6%	10	6.5%	21	14.9%	2	2.4%	4	6.9%	2	4.4%	2	3.7%	3	3.5%	4	4.4%	52	6.5%
US polices	2	2.3%	4	2.6%	8	5.7%	6	7.1%	4	6.9%	6	13.3%	4	7.4%	1	1.2%	1	1.1%	36	4.5%
Total Sum	87		154		141		85		58		45		54		86		90		800	%

Figure 3: Distribution of the editorial material subjects throughout the total sum of the sample
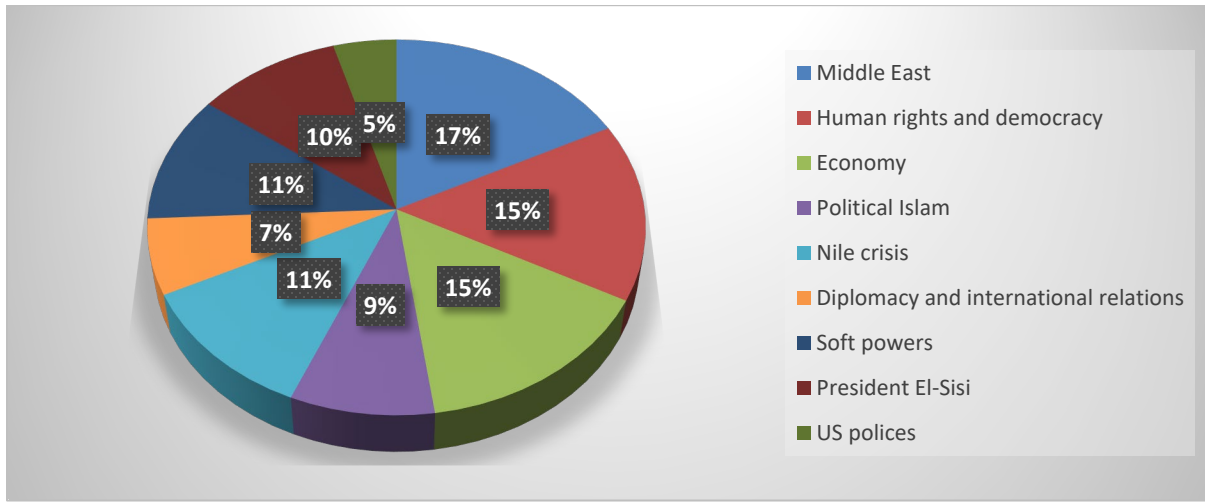
This section focuses on the primary topics addressed in the news outlets. Answering the sub-questions: what are the addressed subjects in the Western press regarding Egyptian foreign policy? and what are the ignored subjects? The researcher identified the categories shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, during the data collection phase. The categories constitution was based on the subjects that appeared most frequently in the publications. Certain topics have been omitted because they are not relevant, such as local problems, or because they are not represented in the coverage, there are almost no stories about the cooperation with Russia and China in the Western press. Despite being a crucial cornerstone of Egypt's foreign policy, Western media mostly disregarded it and did not publish any news about Egyptian diplomacy with those two international powers. Hence, a comprehensive classification has been created called "Diplomacy and International Relations," encompassing Egyptian diplomatic connections with the United Kingdom, Europe, and Asia.

Table 2 shows multiple indicators, almost half of the sample content of the Western media (47%) is about three main subjects "Middle East issues, Economy, Human rights and democracy". The subject that garnered the highest level of focus from the newspapers in the study sample was "Middle East issues," accounting for 17.5% of the coverage. The topics "Human Rights Issues" and "Economy" both received a 15.3% and 15% rating, placing them in second and third position, respectively. One of the research questions "What are the most prominent topics in the Western media?" is addressed by these results, which Western newspapers prioritize in their coverage of Egypt's foreign policy. As shown in Figure 3, the following topics that captured the attention of

the study sample of Western newspapers are the "Nile crisis" and "soft powers" in an equal proportion which is 11%, followed by the topic of "El-Sisi" at 10%, then the topic of "political Islam" at 9%.

However, the reason for the large number of "soft power news" subject is the Western media's strong interest in Egyptian tourism, history, and archaeology, which contribute a cultural aspect to Egyptian foreign policy. Yet, the news sources do not recognise it as such; they treat news on tourism and archaeology in separation from economic issues or cultural issues as if Egypt is still considered a Western colony or world heritage site. Moreover, the framing of president "El-Sisi" is primarily associated with matters concerning human rights and democracy. Accordingly, in the subsequent chapter of qualitative content analysis, the topic of "El-Sisi" has been incorporated into the "human rights and democracy" category. The interest in "Diplomacy" and "US issues" came in the last position at 6.5% and 4.5% which refers to the non-interest in covering the diplomatic events and the new relationships of Egypt with the international community besides overlooking the new shifts in the US relations and the new allying with Russia and China during the study timeframe.

Figure 4: the most prominent topics in every media platform
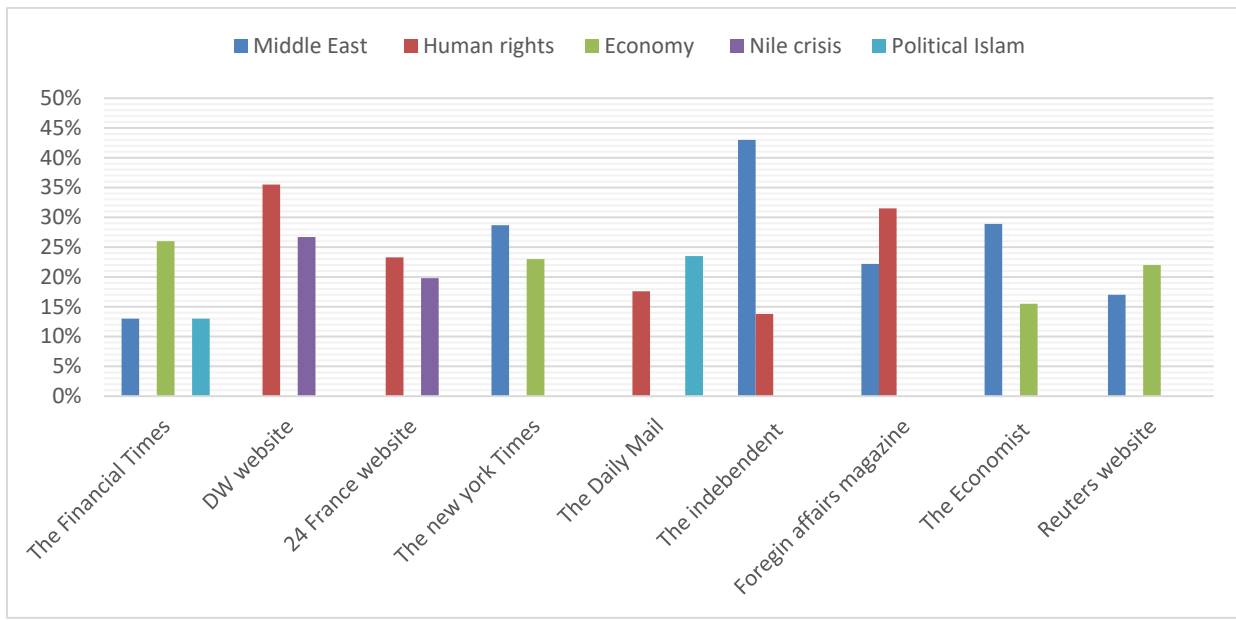
Regarding the areas of interest for every platform and answering the sub-question of **What are the most prominent topics in each media outlet**? Figure 4 shows that *The Financial Times* focused primarily on the topic of "Economy", at a rate of 26%, then the topics of "Middle East"

and "Political Islam", at a rate of 13% both. Unsurprisingly, Egyptian economy recorded the highest number in *the Financial Times* as the British newspaper nature is mostly centred on economic liberalism. This finding aligns with what has been mentioned in the literature review "Chapter 2" which emphasizes the economic reforms as a new feature of Egyptian foreign policy aiming at economic integration and trade liberalization. the government continued to apply the neoliberal economic restructuring (Kousa, 2023). These new directions in the Egyptian economy attract the Western press interest which is the new direction in Egyptian foreign policy.

DW website is interested in "human rights and democracy" category at 35.5% and the "Nile crisis" at 26.7%. *DW* is Germany's international state-owned broadcaster and one of the most spread international media outlets usually favouring left-leaning views with a rate of high credibility, they often publish factual information that utilizes loaded words (wording that attempts to influence an audience by using appeal to emotions or stereotypes) to favour liberal causes (Media bias fact check, 2023). Notably the same subjects dominated the interest of *the 24 France* outlet., 23.3% of its coverage for human rights and democracy and 19.8% for the Nile crisis. Those percentages reflect the general attitude of Europe towards Egyptian foreign policy. Human rights and democratic principles were always the priorities especially when framing a Middle Eastern country's internal issue. It is worth mentioning that Germany has the most international river in the world "the Danube" and as an upstream country might not be supportive of a victory of a downstream country in the United Nations Security Council." Decisions within the UNSC are influenced by a range of factors, including but not limited to geopolitical interests, international law, bilateral relations, and specific issues at hand. Moreover, the UNSC's permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have more significant influence on its decisions than non-permanent members due to their veto power.

The New York Times focused predominantly on Middle East affairs, accounting for 28.7% of its overall coverage of Egyptian foreign policy. The economy ranked second in terms of the newspaper's attention, comprising 23% of its coverage. The interest areas align with those of *The Economist*, with 28.9% dedicated to Middle East issues and 15.5% focused on the economy. *The Economist*'s editorial position is aligned with radical centrism, advocating for policies and governments that uphold centrist politics. In addition, the *Reuters* news agency prioritised the economy, which accounted for 22% of their coverage, while the subject of Middle East issues achieved a 17% share.

The Daily Mail focused primarily on the news of political Islam with a rate of 23.5%, this category includes the news regarding the Muslim Brotherhood and the explosion accidents in Cairo and Sinai after President Mursi's ousting from office. The subject of human rights ranked second with a percentage of 17.6%. The British publication expressed interest in Egypt's "soft power" features, particularly in the field of tourism, with a rate of 16.5%.

The independent and *foreign affairs magazine* exhibited identical subjects' interests. The independent ranked the highest interest percentage of the overall publication and subject. The sample analysis showed 43% for the Middle East issues, then 13.8% for the human rights and democracy items. On the same interest track *foreign affairs magazine* with their analytical approach focused on human rights and democracy with a rate of 31.5% then the Middle East issues with 22.2%. the American magazine which relies on analysis and opinion-based materials also showed a focus on President El-Sisi's subject at 13% and the subject of US policies with a rate of 7.4%

(Table 3): Editorial material type in each analysis unit

Analysis unit / Type	News – coverage reports Q %	Opinion - Analysis Q %	Sum
The New York Times	45 51.7%	42 49.3%	87
The Financial Times	110 71.4%	44 29.6%	154
Reuters website	130 92.2%	11 8.8%	141
The Daily Mail	64 75.3%	21 24.7%	85
The Independent	33 56.9%	25 43.1%	58
The Economist	12 26.7%	33 73.3%	45
Foreign affairs magazine	13 24.1%	41 75.9%	54
24 France website	62 72.1%	24 27.9%	86
DW website	30 33.3%	60 66.7%	90
SUM	499 62.4%	301 37.6%	800
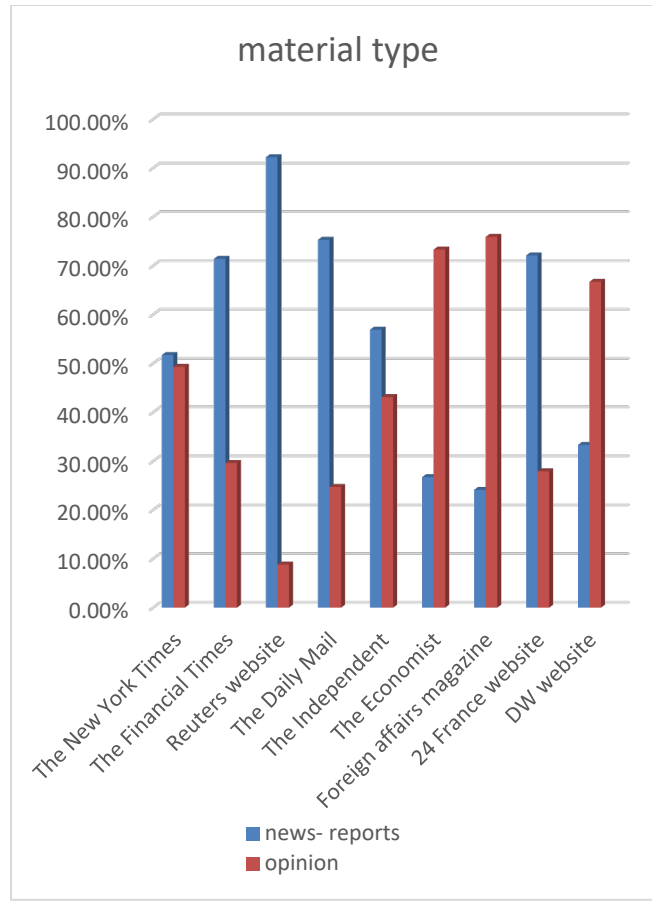
Figure 4: The editorial items types

The type of editorial material, depending on whether it is news or opinion, has a significant influence on the framing of the material and the general attitude it projects. That answers the sub-question of What are the prevailing journalistic format types in addressing Egyptian foreign policy? With the advent of digital media, social media platforms, and online news sources, the line between news and opinion formats is blurred in some cases. Accordingly, framing the subjects in the editorial items may be influenced by the writers' perspectives and backgrounds. The analysis of the selected media platforms reveals that 62.4% of the sample is in news format, while 37.6% is in opinion format. However, in editorial items, as an observation, the choice of words tends to reflect personal opinions rather than adhering to journalistic standards. For example, phrases like "turbulent history," "pull down his people," "massacres," and "oppression" support the interpretation that Egyptian foreign policy is framed with deep stereotyping in Western media, as hypothesized in the research. *Reuters* achieves a remarkable score of 92.2% in effectively employing the news format in its coverage. *Foreign Affairs magazine* records the highest score of

75.9% for utilizing the opinion format, primarily due to its analytical approach in its article. Journalistic sources play a significant role in shaping the news attitude. The choice of sources, their credibility, and the diversity of perspectives included can heavily influence the tone and bias of a news article. When journalists rely on reputable and balanced sources, it helps ensure that the news reflects a broader range of opinions and viewpoints. These sources can include experts in the relevant field, government officials, representatives from organizations, or individuals directly involved in the events being reported. In their book *The Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007, p. 12) argued that journalism is a "discipline of verification" which supports the claim that verified sources are a must for news coverage.

To address the research sub-question **"What are the journalistic sources utilized in the production of Egyptian foreign policy narratives in Western media outlets?"** Table 4 depicts the degree of dependence on journalistic sources for each media platform. *The Independent* achieved the highest rating of 82.7% in its accounting by relying on its journalists and authors to produce stories about Egypt's foreign policy. These stories reflect the perspectives, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds of the journalists and authors, resulting in a reinforcement of the Western viewpoint when it comes to addressing events in the Middle East. This perspective is typically based on established norms related to human rights, autocracy, and dictatorship. *The Daily Mail* heavily relied on news about "Egypt" from agencies, which significantly influenced its coverage, accounting for 77.6% of its content.

Reuters is the media platform that relies the most on correspondents, with a rate of 71.6%. This can be attributed to the abundance of Reuters offices worldwide, including Cairo. To elaborate on this category, the researcher examined the comprehensive coverage of statements or conferences in the complete style of news articles. However, in certain news articles, statements may be edited to align with the overall context of presenting contrasting perspectives. Yet the category definition is to find out the news which completely transfers the official statements.

Looking at Figure 5, it becomes evident that the Western media sample mostly relies on journalists as their sources, accounting for 45.1% of the total. Correspondents follow closely behind with a rate of 35.1%, while news agencies contribute to the sources with a percentage of 17.4%. Examining the degree to which a journalist's ideas, culture, and environment might influence the bias of editorial content, as well as whether correspondents can blend their perspectives with the actual events occurring in Egypt. The writer of the editorial content plays a

crucial role in shaping Egyptian foreign policy stories in the Western media, in conjunction with their organization's prioritization process. In addition, that finding interprets the stereotyping of framing Egyptian foreign policy in Western media which is represented in using similar frames in various types of editorial material and reflects the Western background and perspective regarding a Middle Eastern country on the news coverage.

(Table 4) Sources of the editorial materials.

Analysis units / Sources	Author-journalist Q %	News agency Q %	Correspondents Q %	Official sources Q %	Sum
The New York Times	25 28.7%	15 17.2%	45 51.7%	2 2.3%	87
The Financial Times	95 61.9%	5 3.3%	51 33.1%	3 1.9%	154
Reuters website	35 24.8%	2 1.4%	101 71.6%	3 2.1%	141
The Daily Mail	15 17.6%	66 77.6%	3 3.5%	1 1.2%	85
The Independent	48 82.7%	5 8.6%	4 6.9%	1 1.7%	58
The Economist	13 28.9%	2 4.4%	30 66.6%	-	45
Foreign affairs magazine	40 74.1%	4 7.4%	7 13%	3 5.5%	54
24 France website	37 43%	20 23.3%	28 32.5%	1 1.2%	86
DW website	53 58.9%	20 22.2%	12 13.3%	5 5.5%	90
SUM	361 45.1%	139 17.4%	281 35.1%	19 2.8%	800
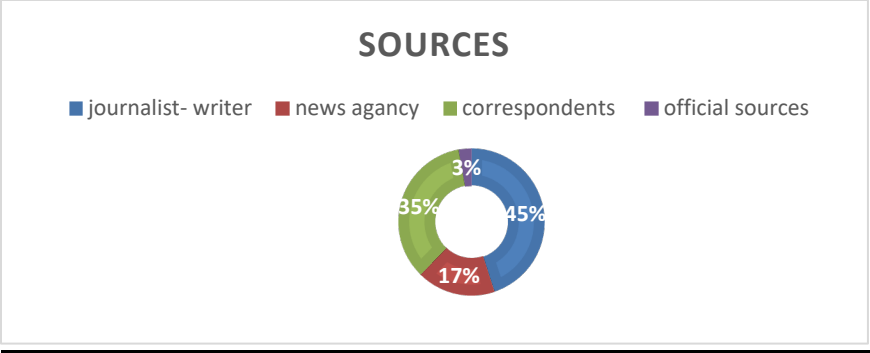
Figure 5: sources of the material.

(Table 5): Economy framing.

The text	Economy politics		Markets/Investments/Trade		Oil /Energy		SUM
	Positive negative		Positive negative		Positive negative		
attitude	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	
The New York Times	3	7	3	1	5	1	20
The Financial Times	15	9	7	2	6	1	40
Reuters website	8	1	10	1	9	2	31
The Daily Mail	-	-	2	-	2	-	4
The Independent	1	-	2	-	-	-	3
The Economist	1	4	1	1	-	-	7
Foreign affairs magazine	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
24 France website	2	-	2	-	-	-	4
DW website	3	-	4	1	-	-	8
Sum	33	22	32	6	21	4	120 N=33 P=87
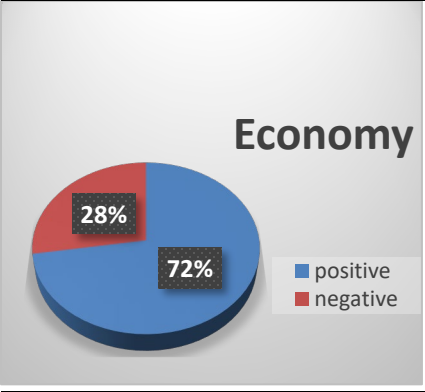
Figure 6: Economy coverage

The theme of the economy is highly prominent in the newspaper sample. Finding out how the theme of "Economy" has been presented? In Table 6. Egypt's economic reform, liberalization of the economy, removal of subsidies, free trade, revenue from the Suez Canal, investment indicators, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) news, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been extensively discussed in Western media. To determine the nature of Western media coverage of the main pillars of Egyptian foreign policy, particularly in terms of the economy, the coverage can be categorized as positive at a rate of 72% and negative at a rate of 28%. This was observed throughout all sectors of the economy, including economic policies, markets, investments, commerce, and oil and energy news. The criterion for defining positivity in this context relies on the use of specific words that elicit a positive impact when read, such as "jump high" promising" "prosperity" "green shoots" reform" "efforts" "thrill investors" while negativity is about using words which leave a negative effect such as "economy crisis" "decline" "debts" "faltering" struggling". Egypt has witnessed a series of reforms to improve the business environment and attract investments (mentioned in Chapter 2) Western media showed interest in this subject because of its significant effect on international business and trade.

(Table 6): Middle East issues

Text / Attitude	Libya conflict Positive Q	negative Q	Palestinian Israeli conflict Positive Q	negative Q	Turkey- Qatar situation Positive Q	negative Q	Arab countries relations Positive Q	negative Q	SUM
The New York Times	6	1	6	1	5	1	3	2	25
The Financial Times	7	2	5	-	3	1	2	-	20
Reuters website	6	-	9	2	2	1	4	1	25
The Daily Mail	4	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	10
The Independent	11	1	8	1	2		2	-	25
The Economist	2	1	2	4	-	2	-	2	13
Foreign affairs magazine	3	1	2	1	-	-	4	1	12
24 France website	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	6
DW website	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	4
SUM	43 / 30.7%	10	37 / 26.4%	11 / 7.9%	12	6	15	6	140 / P=107 / N=33

Figure 7: Middle East conflicts coverage

Table 6 shows Egypt's relationship with the conflicts in the Middle East is multifaceted. Its historical involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its regional diplomatic efforts, and its security concerns have all shaped its engagement in the region's conflicts. Egypt continues to navigate these complex dynamics to safeguard its national interests and promote stability in the Middle East as mentioned in (chapter 2). Egypt has been focused on maintaining stability and security within its borders (Tuttle 2008, p 59). It has played a role in mediating reconciliation efforts between Palestinian political factions and has also been involved in ceasefire negotiations during periods of escalation between Israel and Palestine. Egypt has also been affected by the conflicts in neighbouring countries, such as the civil war in Syria and the ongoing conflict in Libya. As mentioned before the sample has shown a greater interest of the Western media regarding Egypt Middle East foreign policy with a rate of 17.5% from the overall subjects.

In terms of how does Western media present Egyptian foreign policy towards the Middle East? (Table 6) divides the Middle East subjects into the "Libya conflict"," Palestinian-Israeli conflict", and "Turkey- Qatar" as the time frame of the study witnessed the reconciliation between Egypt and both Qatar and Turkey then the relationship with the Gulf and other Arab countries.

The positive framing came in the first position through the coverage of Western media of the Egyptian situation towards the Libya conflict with a rate of 30.7% using wording such as "borders protection- mediation – regional security- power". The second position on the positive framing was about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict accounting for 26.4% using words like "stability-reconciliation – peace- ceasefire". The highest negativity came on the latter subject as well at a rate of 7.9% from the sample calling the negotiations with Hamas "Egypt's surprising friendship with Hamas." They frame the news regarding this cooperation critically unless this cooperation in Israel's favour.

The Western media's primary stance promotes the notion of collaboration between Egypt and the Gulf countries to weaken the Hamas organisation, citing its alleged ties with jihadists in Afghanistan. Egypt was unequivocal in its commitment to combatting terrorism, upholding regional stability, and preventing terrorists from crossing the "Rafah border". The editorial news sample addressed the relations of Egypt with the Gulf countries in the frame of "fund sources" and with Lebanon in the frame of "seeking stability". The Qatar- turkey reconciliation has been framed as "the rivalry which reshaped foreign policy."

Figure 8: Egyptian
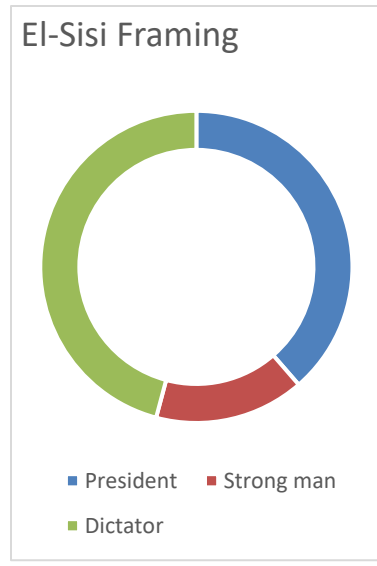
(Table 7): President El-Sisi Framing

El-Sisi Framing

- President ■ Strong man
- Dictator

Text / Frames	Egyptian president		Strong man/ Leader		Dictator		Sum
	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	
The New York Times	2		1		1		4
The Financial Times	5		1		10		16
Reuters website	8		1		1		10
The Daily Mail	3		2		7		12
The Independent	2		1		3		6
The Economist	1		-		3		4
Foreign affairs magazine	3		3		1		7
24 France website	5		4		6		15
DW website	3		-		5		8
SUM	32 39%		13 15.8%		38 46.3%		82

The study sample of Western media coverage of President El-Sisi has included both positive and negative portrayals. Some media outlets have praised his efforts in stabilizing Egypt, implementing economic reforms, and combating terrorism. They highlight his focus on infrastructure development and his role in promoting regional security and stability. On the other hand, the continuous criticisms and concerns are always linked to human rights issues in Egypt under El-Sisi's presidency. Some media outlets have reported on concerns related to freedom of expression, press freedom, restrictions on civil society organizations, and the treatment of political opponents. These criticisms often stem from reports of political repression, mass arrests, and allegations of human rights abuses in the country. As shown in Table 7 and Figure 8, 39% of the media outlets sample framed "El-Sisi" in his official position as the "Egyptian president" and 15.8 % called him a "strong man or the leader" for maintaining stability and beating terrorism, while the greatest percentage went to the "dictator" frame with a rate of 46.3%. the frame's tone mostly connects El-Sisi with human rights breaches using words like "army oppressive regime" "autocratic grip" "police state" and" he carried out the worst massacre" "brutal reign". Arab countries all have a limited number of Westernised liberals who advocate for the principles of human rights, freedom

of opinion and expression, and democratic transformation. However, achieving democratic reform involves more than the ideological dedication of a small number of individuals (Ottaway & Carothers 2004, p. 27), which explains how the Western vision of democracy might not be obvious in the El-Sisi administration. This argument will be interpreted in detail throughout the "experts' interviews" chapter.

Table 8 shows the negative framing of Egyptian foreign policy in a linked context. It's not surprising to see that 59% of this category sample has reported on allegations of human rights abuses, including crackdowns on political opposition, restrictions on freedom of expression, and limitations on civil society activities. The covered issues focus on mass arrests, detentions, and trials of political dissidents, journalists, and activists, all these issues are integrated under the human rights category.

(Table 8): The most criticizing frames are in the themes of "Human rights and Democracy".

Texts / Coverage	Human rights		Democracy		Sum
	Q	%	Q	%	
The New York Times	1		3		4
The Financial Times	14		5		19
Reuters website	1		2		3
The Daily Mail	10		5		15
The Independent	3		5		8
The Economist	2		2		4
Foreign affairs magazine	4		13		17
24 France website	17		3		20
DW website	20		12		32
Sum	72	59%	50	41%	122
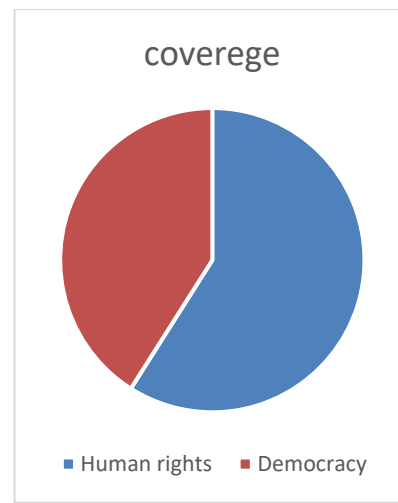
Figure 9: Coverage of human rights and Democracy.

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The idea of "autocracy" dominates the coverage and often emphasizes the limitations on political pluralism and the consolidation of power in the hands of the government. Concerns are raised about the lack of a vibrant and inclusive political environment, with accusations of suppressing opposition voices. 41% of the category sample focuses on the lack of democracy after the 2013 revolution and President Morsi's ousting. DW website recorded the highest editorial materials regarding "human rights" with a percentage of 16.4 % while the foreign policy magazine recorded the highest interest in the democracy concept with a percentage of 10.7%. The researcher monitored the most used frames examples which are "Egypt is hopelessness – crackdown continues- targeting journalists – arresting activists- massacre- oppression- Media law shuts down speech in Egypt." The researcher did not deduct these observations from the material, yet those words or similar ones are repeated throughout the sample. Notably, the concept of "public sphere effect" in the 2013 uprising in an authoritarian setting has been ignored in the Western media. "The media narrative eventually changes as state-controlled news media are overpowered by user-generated content on social media, as bloggers become sources and citizen journalists, and as traditional journalism is forced to pay attention and provide more balanced content" (Abdullah, 2023).

(Table 9): Nile crisis \ Ethiopia Dam coverage.

Texts ⟋ Attitudes	With Egyptian rights in water	Against Egyptian rights in water	Neutral views	SUM
	Q	Q	Q	
The New York Times	3	1	4	8
The Financial Times	3	2	10	15
Reuters website	4	2	12	18
The Daily Mail	-	-	2	2
The Independent	-	-	2	2
The Economist	-	1	1	2
Foreign affairs magazine	-	1	2	3
24 France website	4	3	10	17
DW website	3	5	16	24
SUM	17 18.7%	15 16.5%	59 64.8%	91

Figure 10: Coverage attitudes towards Nile crisis.
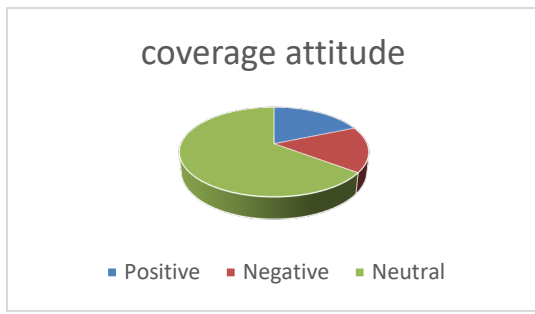
The Nile remains a" vital issue" for Egypt. President El-Sisi and Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shokri emphasized this concept in the UNSC and through various local and international media outlets (Walsh& Sengupeta, 2020) and urged Ethiopia to remain committed to the historical treaties. Egypt relies heavily on the Nile River for its water supply, agriculture, and overall economic activities. The Nile provides about 90% of Egypt's freshwater. Any alteration in the flow of the Nile could have significant consequences for Egypt's water availability. The dam has been a source of diplomatic tension between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. Disputes over the filling and operation of the dam have led to negotiations and disagreements about how to manage the shared water resources of the Nile. Table 9 illustrates that 64.8% of the "Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam" coverage in Western media reflects a "neutral attitude" which does not utilize biased wording by just mentioning the information and framing the crisis in "discussions- talks- negotiations". Figure 10 reveals that more than half of the sample regarding "The Nile" followed the words which do not show bias. 18.7% of the news support the Egyptian historical rights in the interference in the filling stages mentioning how critical the situation while highlighting that the potential reduction in water supply and the resulting impact on agriculture could have broader economic consequences for Egypt. This includes potential food shortages, increased food prices, and a negative impact on the overall economy. 16.5% of the editorial items reflect the Ethiopian rights in the development, especially with a lack of a comprehensive, binding agreement between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan on the filling and operation of the dam, by using wording favourable to the Ethiopian side.

(Table 10): Political Islam narratives.

Texts / representation	Muslim Brotherhood and Power		Bombing operations		International Terrorism		SUM
	Q	%	Q	%	Q	%	
The New York Times	2		1		1		4
The Financial Times	3		6		11		20
Reuters website	2		3		-		5
The Daily Mail	7		7		6		20
The Independent	2		-		-		2
The Economist	3		2		-		5
Foreign affairs magazine	3		-		-		3
24 France website	2		3		1		6
DW website	2		2		-		4
SUM	26 37.7%		24 34.8%		19 27.5%		69
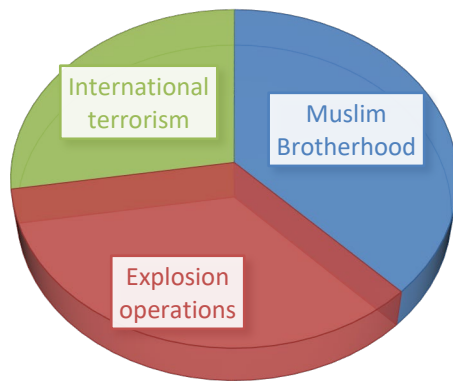
Figure 11: Political Islam narratives.

Counterterrorism policies have been a significant focus, affecting not only the Muslim Brotherhood but also other Islamist groups, especially the government link between MB and the "bombing operations" which spread in Sinai and all over the country. The content analysis has found as illustrated in Table 10 that 37.7% of the coverage talked about the MB and power, followed by 34.8% of the coverage about the "bombing operations" and the terrorists inside the country without referring to their relationship with the (MB) while 27.5 % mentioned the relation between the terrorists in Egypt and international terrorism (ISIS or the jihadists). There is no solid evidence, definition, or international consensus on calling MB a terrorist group, but the Egyptian government intensified its campaign against the MB and officially declared it a "terrorist group" after accusing it of carrying out a suicide attack that led to 16 deaths and about 140 injuries on the "Dakahlia Security Directorate", north of Cairo (Reuters, 2013). Thus, the Egyptians insist on the strong ties between MB and international terrorism.

(Table 11): **Soft news materials.**

Texts ⟍ Coverage	Tourism		Arts &Media& sports		SUM
	Q	%	Q	%	
The New York Times	11		5		16
The Financial Times	7		3		10
Reuters website	14		6		20
The Daily Mail	11		3		14
The Independent	3		1		4
The Economist	2		-		2
Foreign affairs magazine	-		3		3
24 France website	8		6		14
DW website	2		3		5
SUM	58 65.9%		30 34.1%		88

Soft news content is a part of "soft powers" which are essential tools in public diplomacy and important components of Egyptian foreign policy, and they are prominent in news analysis. The researcher has found that more than half with a rate of 65.9% of the soft power category effectively promote Egyptian tourism and archaeology as a significant aspect of Egyptian international news. Including the discoveries of the monuments and the Egyptian campaign of restoring looted antiquities during the colonial era worldwide. The promotion of this cultural heritage, such as through museums, archaeological sites, and cultural events, can enhance Egypt's soft power and attract international interest. 34.1 % focused on cultural events, arts, and sports, especially news related to Premier League football player Mohamed Salah. Egypt has a significant presence in the Arab media and entertainment industry. Egyptian films, television programs, and music have a wide audience in the Arab world. These cultural relations can shape perceptions and build relations with other countries. Engaging in cultural diplomacy, such as hosting international cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions, allows Egypt to showcase its contemporary cultural achievements and foster a sense of openness and dialogue with the global community (Schneider 2006, p. 195). Western media focus on this heritage and the cultural communications remains far from what it is on the ground. There is a gap and lack of coverage for the huge cultural and ceremonial events in Egypt. For example, Egypt hosts several international film festivals, such as the Cairo International Film Festival, which is one of the oldest and most prestigious festivals in the Arab world. These events often showcase films that discuss pressing social issues, yet their international visibility might be limited. The Cairo International Book Fair is the largest and oldest book fair in the Arab world, attracting millions of visitors and featuring thousands of publishers from around the world. Despite its significance in the literary world, it may not be widely reported outside the region. Egypt has seen a surge in tech startups and innovation hubs aiming to tackle various socio-economic challenges. Events and forums celebrating these advancements, such as the RiseUp Summit, bring together entrepreneurs and investors but may not capture the attention of Western media. Egypt regularly announces significant archaeological discoveries that shed light on ancient civilizations. While some of these discoveries gain international media coverage, many others, especially those involving less "spectacular" but equally important artefacts and sites, remain underreported. While football often dominates sports news internationally, Egypt has made notable achievements in other sports. For example, Egypt has a strong presence in squash with several world champions, but these accomplishments and related events rarely make headlines in Western

media. Egypt has embarked on various projects aimed at preserving its natural heritage and combating climate change, such as expanding protected areas and promoting sustainable tourism practices. These environmental endeavours are crucial but might not be prominently featured in Western news outlets. Various cultural exchange programs, art exhibitions, and collaborative projects between Egyptian and international artists and institutions occur regularly. These initiatives foster cross-cultural understanding and showcase Egypt's vibrant contemporary art scene but may not be extensively covered by Western media. Egypt hosts numerous academic conferences and forums that gather scholars from around the globe to discuss a wide range of topics. These events contribute to global knowledge but not be highlighted in international media coverage. The lack of attention to these events in Western media might be attributed to various factors, including the media's focus on more sensational or conflict-driven stories.

(Table 12) Diplomacy and international relations

Texts / discourse	Britain	Europe	Asia	SUM
	Q %	Q %	Q %	
The New York Times	1	3	-	4
The Financial Times	3	6	1	10
Reuters website	5	13	3	21
The Daily Mail	2	-	-	2
The Independent	2	1	1	4
The Economist	2	-	-	2
Foreign affairs magazine	-	2	-	2
24 France website	-	3	-	3
DW website	1	3	-	4
SUM	16 30.8%	31 59.6%	5 9.6%	52

Table 12 answers the sub-question of how often does Western media present Egyptian international relations? It shows the lack of news about the "international relations" and diplomacy news with Egypt. Western media have discarded official visits and agreements other than economic agreements. Table 12 shows that the coverage of Egyptian relations news with Europe came in the first position with a percentage of 59.6%. the focus throughout the editorial material was mainly on France, Germany, Italy, and Greece. The latter was regarding the Mediterranean Sea agreements and natural gas discoveries. Italy and Egypt news stories were mainly about the "Regine" case, the researcher who has been killed in Egypt. France and Germany's diplomacy with Egypt was concentrated on maintaining human rights and reducing illegal immigration to Europe. British relations with Egypt constituted 30.8% of the subject of diplomacy editorial items mainly highlighting economic cooperation and Boris Jonson's meeting with the Egyptian president. Notably the most coverage includes discussions about tourism between Egypt and the UK, including travel destinations, cultural tourism, and efforts to promote tourism. However, the size of diplomatic visits and economic cooperation or the negotiation processes remain under-covered in Western media compared with articles showing concern for human rights and democracy. According to the gathered data above throughout the nine categories, disruptive news dominates the coverage, and the percentage of ceremonial news is very low.

Answering the research question of which topics are ignored in Western coverage. The sample analysis monitored that there is a significant lack of reporting on the relations between Russia China and Asia in general with Egypt, there is plenty of cooperation between Egypt and Russia and China for example in the military equipment agreements; Egypt and Russia have strengthened their military ties, with Egypt purchasing advanced weaponry and military equipment from Russia. Joint military exercises and training programs have been conducted, contributing to increased defence collaboration. Economic collaboration and Belt and Road Initiative participation is a major pillar of diplomatic relations. Economic ties between Egypt and China have grown significantly. China has invested in the construction of the new administrative capital and the development of the Suez. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has played a key role in facilitating infrastructure development in Egypt. Projects related to transportation, energy, and telecommunications have received Chinese investment. While Egypt maintains a balanced foreign policy, it has aligned diplomatically with China on certain global issues. Both countries have

expressed support for each other in international forums (Halawa, 2021). All over the sample, only 9.6% discussed the diplomatic progress with Russia and China, and only 5 articles have been found mentioning Russia in the context of the conflict in Libya and mentioning China in an official visit. The percentage shows no interest in the Western media when it comes to the development agreements with those countries.

(Table 13): US policies items.

Text / Attitude	Trump Q %	Diplomacy/agreements Q %	SUM
The New York Times	-	2	2
The Financial Times	3	1	4
Reuters website	3	5	8
The Daily Mail	4	2	6
The Independent	3	1	4
The Economist	5	1	6
Foreign affairs magazine	3	1	4
24 France website	1	-	1
DW website	1	-	1
SUM	23 63.9%	13 36.1%	36

In Table 13 the category has been divided into the editorial items which addressed the president's Trump relationship with Egypt which recorded 63.9% and editorial items regarding diplomacy and the American-Egyptian relationship came on a rate of 36.1%. The United States has been a longstanding provider of military aid to Egypt. During the Trump administration, military aid continued, reflecting the strategic importance of Egypt in the region. The coverage in Western media mainly focused on calls to cut American aid on grounds of human rights breaches and after President El-Sisi came to office in 2013 and the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood from power. The criticism also has been directed at Trump as he called President El-Sisi "my favourite

dictator." The time frame of the study witnesses a good relationship between the two administrations, and diplomatic engagements between the two leaders during the Trump administration have been upgraded. President El-Sisi met with President Trump on multiple occasions, indicating efforts to strengthen bilateral relations. Egypt sought U.S. involvement in mediating the dispute between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan over the dam's impact on water.

Conclusion:

The chapter quantitatively examined 800 news and article items which were directly related to different aspects of Egypt foreign policy components. In this way, supplementary research questions and sub-questions were answered in the chapter.

- **RQ: What is the size of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?**

The study analysed the extent of Western media interest in Egypt's foreign issues and affairs. *The Financial Times* showed the larger interest and provided the greatest number of editorial materials at 19.25%, followed by Reuters with 17.6%. *The Economist* ranked 5% and was the lowest number of journalistic materials, showing minimal interest in Egyptian foreign policy, focusing on data journalism and interpretive analysis. The positive coverage was about economic content, while the negative coverage was about the current government. *Reuters* coverage was viewed as "informative" due to its focus on factual reporting rather than opinion-based content. On the contrary, the other outlets have used evaluative and critical wording to frame the news and articles.

RQ: "What is the nature of Egyptian foreign policy coverage in Western media? What are the most prominent subjects?

The study reveals that 47% of Western media content about Egyptian foreign policy focuses on Middle East issues, the economy, human rights, and democracy. Middle East issues account for 17.5% of coverage. Human rights issues with a rate of 15.3% then the economy follows with 15%. The "Nile crisis" came with a rate of 11.4% and "soft power" 11%. The following prominent topics are "President El-Sisi" accounting for 10.3% of the coverage of "political Islam" 8.6%. The majority of "soft news" reflects Western media's interest in Egyptian tourism, history, and archaeology, which contributes to the image of Egypt and affects its international relations. The portrayal of President El-Sisi is primarily related to human rights and democracy. Interest in diplomacy and US issues is marginalized, despite progress with the US during Trump's presidency with a rate of 4.5% of the coverage. Despite significant advancements in Russian and Chinese

Egyptian diplomacy, Western media often disregarded it, leading to the creation of a limited perception of diplomacy and international relations which included "Britain- Europe- Asia" and did not get the Western media attention with a rate of 6.5% of the overall coverage.

- **RQ: What are the most prominent topics in each media outlet?**

According to the quantitative results, *The Financial Times* newspaper showed a great interest in the "economy" in first position followed by "Middle East issues" and "political Islam". The latter subject constituted the priority for *The Daily Mail* newspaper followed by the subject of "human rights and democracy". *The New York Times, The Economist* and *Reuters* website had a common interest, the similarity here in prioritising the subjects of "Middle East issues" and "economy". *Foreign Policy Affairs* and *The Independent* agreed to set similar favourite subjects which are "Middle East issues" and "human rights and democracy". While the *24 France website* and *DW website* shared the same topics of interest which are "human rights and democracy" and "The Nile crisis".

- **RQ: What are the prevailing journalistic format types in addressing Egyptian foreign policy?**

The analysis findings show that the news format is more prevalent in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western media with more than half of the sample, the opinion format also was clear, however, less than the news format because the sample has a large amount of the news from news agencies and TV channels website. However, the wording which has been used in the news format mostly indicates opinions or personal views. *DW website, the Economist* and *Foreign Affairs* used the opinion format mostly, in those outlets the article material exceeded the news material. That can be because of its stance on criticism and its analytical approach. The interest in the opinion items and the news items has been noticed to be nearly equal in *The New York Times* editorial materials. Throughout the rest of the outlets, the news format dominated the material sample, particularly on the *Reuters website*.

- **RQ: "What are the primary journalistic sources utilized in the production of Egyptian foreign policy narratives in Western media outlets?"**

The findings show that the Western media primarily depends on the "journalists" as a main source, accounting for 45.1% of the total. Correspondents follow closely with 35.1%, and news agencies contribute 17.4%. while showing a weak interest in obtaining the news from the official sources

accounting for 2.8%. *The Independent* depends mostly on its journalists in writing its editorial material, *Reuters* recorded the greatest reliance on the correspondents while *The Daily Mail* fundamentally relied on news agencies according to the sample analysis results.

- **RQ: What is the prevailing tone of coverage of the "economy" theme in Western media?**

The economy is a prominent theme in Western media regarding Egyptian foreign policy, with 72% of coverage being positive and 28% negative. This coverage is observed across all sectors of the economy, including economic policies, markets, investments, commerce, and oil and energy news. The Western media's interest in Egypt's economy became obvious after applying economic liberalization. Western media has shown interest in this subject due to its impact on international business and trade.

- **RQ: What are the prominent topics in the "Middle East issues" theme in the Western media?**

The analysis shows the greatest interest of the sample with two subjects which are "Libya conflict" and "The Palestinian-Israeli conflict", the editorial materials addressed Egyptian foreign policy towards both subjects mostly in a positive tone. The interest in "Arab countries' relations" with Egypt came in the third position while the "Turkey- Qatar situation" was in the last place in the Western media interest. The coverage framing of the news of the "Libya conflict" presented the effective Egyptian mediation and the strong stand in protecting the borders to preserve stability at the same time. The coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has shown the hesitating situation between defending Palestinian rights and preserving peace with Israel alongside criticising the friendship between Egypt and Hamas.

- **RQ: What are the used frames in portraying President El-Sisi?**

The analysis findings show that almost half of the media outlets sample present President El-Sis in the "dictator" frame, then 395 of the editorial items refer to him by his official title "the Egyptian president". 15.8% of the sample called him a "strong man or leader". *The Financial Times* newspaper showed the most frequency of calling" El-Sisi" "Dictator". The existing sample of the Western media barely mentioned the role of social media and the public sphere when it came to electing the El-Sisi. On the other side, the conspicuous omission of Egypt's developmental and infrastructure projects in Western media narratives not only perpetuates a skewed global understanding of progress in non-Western contexts but also inadvertently contributes to the

marginalization of significant achievements in these regions. This oversight evidences a profound lack of nuanced engagement with the complexities of development and infrastructure in countries outside the traditional Western sphere of influence. Furthermore, it underscores a systemic bias in international media coverage, which tends to prioritize narratives aligned with Western interests and perspectives. Such a critical gap in coverage fails to recognize the intricate dynamics of development in Egypt, potentially undermining the prospects for informed global dialogue and cooperation. It also raises pertinent questions regarding the criteria for newsworthiness and the mechanisms through which media outlets in the West construct and disseminate narratives about development in the Global South. Addressing this oversight necessitates a recalibration of media practices to ensure a more inclusive and equitable representation of global developmental efforts.

- **RQ: what are the most common topics which apply disruptive frames in the Western media?**

The subject of "human rights and democracy "was the most criticised in the Western media regarding Egypt's foreign policy. It is worth mentioning that most of the international meetings and presidents' official visits between Egypt and the Western countries discuss the importance of improving Egypt's human rights situation. The coverage of Egypt's political landscape is predominantly autocratic, highlighting limitations on political pluralism and government power consolidation. Critics accuse the government of suppressing opposition voices. The lack of democracy after the 2013 revolution is a significant concern. *DW website* showed the greatest interest in human rights while *Foreign Affairs* showed the highest interest in criticising the values of democracy in Egypt.

- **RQ: How did Western media present the "Nile crisis" with Ethiopia?**

The researcher divided the editorial items regarding Ethiopian Grand renaissance dam (EGRD) to news with Egyptian rights in the Nile, news against Egyptian rights in the water and Neutral views. The dam has caused diplomatic tension between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. Disputes over the dam's filling and operation have led to negotiations and disagreements. While 64.8% of Western media coverage is neutral without obvious bias, 18.7% of news supports Egyptian historical rights, while 16.5% reflects Ethiopian rights in development.

-   **RQ: How does Western media present political Islam in Egypt?**

 The analysis has shown that "political Islam" is a controversial issue between Egypt and Western media. Egypt has declared the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group some countries admitted the Egyptian situation, yet others consider them as an opposition party in Egypt. According to the analysis, 37.7% mentioned (MB) as a political party which has the right to compete for power. 34.8% reported about the explosion operations in Egypt after the ousting of the (MB) president without a clear link between the latter and the explosions.27.5% of this category discussed the existence of international terrorism (jihadists- ISIS) in Egypt without attributing it to the Muslim brotherhood removal.

-   **RQ: What is the extent of interest in Egyptian soft news in Western media?**

The analysis shows that 11% of the sample presents soft news subjects about Egypt. The most dominating theme in the sample is "tourism and archaeology" with a rate of 65.9%. Egypt as a touristic destination with its history affects the framing of Egyptian foreign policy positively. 34.1 % of the sample presented arts, media and mostly sports. The sample showed a weak coverage of the cultural events and cultural diplomacy was almost not exhibited throughout the coverage.

-   **RQ: How often does Western media present Egyptian international relations?**

The analysis displays an extreme rarity of interest in Egyptian international relations, especially with Asia. The relations with Russia and China are out of interest for the Western media. The sample shows that the greatest interest in European-Egyptian relations with a percentage of 59.6% focuses on the human rights file and the reduction of illegal immigration. the relation with Britain occupied the second position with 30.8% with a focus on economic cooperation.

-   **RQ: What is the dominant theme in coverage of American-Egyptian relations in western press?**

The findings illustrate that 63.9% of the coverage is regarding the Trump-Egyptian relationship, with 36.1% focusing on diplomacy and the American-Egyptian relationship. The US has provided military aid to Egypt, reflecting its strategic importance. Western media has criticized Trump for calling El-Sisi "my favourite dictator" and the editorial items attitude was about reducing aid to Egypt because of human rights breaches. Although the relationship between the two administrations has improved during this timeframe and El-Sisi met Trump multiple times the Western media did not cover this positively. The diplomacy coverage was about US mediation on

the Nile crisis and supporting Egyptian efforts to maintain stability in the region during the Libya conflict.

The general overview of the tables presented in this chapter showed some strong interest in topics and on the other side reflected the weak interest in other topics. The literature review showed new shifts in Egyptian foreign policy as a country seeking to be a middle-power state while keeping some factors which maintain its identity, the analysis shows that Western media does not represent the news topics as constitutive items of the wider picture. The topics are not connected to each other or under the big umbrella of the Egyptian foreign policy objectives and features. Egypt's foreign policy is evolving and changing, those changes are overlooked, or the topics are dealt with separately. That might be because 1) their understanding of a changing international system is perhaps in denial of changing times, which is mostly obvious in the selective coverage of Egypt's relations with Russia or China. That might be radical mutations that may give rise to an entirely new world order. 2) the stereotyping of the Middle Eastern countries from the Western colonial viewpoint despite Egypt no longer being a colony but Western powers/media continue to operate on that basis. Or for Political reasons which advise to include or overlook specific topics, and Western media parrot Western governments policies.

This argument can contribute to knowledge about the priorities of the Western media in the Middle East countries and Egypt particularly, and how the Western mainstreams perspective in dealing with Middle Eastern countries can widen the gap between the West and the East. The following chapter will analyse the news texts of the most prominent topics qualitatively to deepen the analysis regarding Egyptian foreign policy in Western media.

Chapter 7:

"Qualitative Content Analysis" to the prominent topics in Western press

Introduction:

In Chapter 6, quantitative content analysis aims to identify the frequency of the data's occurrence in a text, and can, therefore, only address a portion of the research inquiries in this study. According to Mayring (2022, p. 48) in qualitative content analysis (QCA),

> The analysis units (coding unit, context unit, evaluation unit) must be defined first. After that, the specific technique must be determined (summary, explication, structuring, or mixed procedure), and then the corresponding content-analytical rules defined. Only after those steps have been completed can a comparative coding be carried out.

This stage of QCA aims to relate the material to a particular context (i.e., origin and effects) of communication and to a specific part of the communication process, because "textual material is always embedded in its communication context" (Mayring 2022, p. 60). It is crucial to connect the findings with the qualitative aspects of the subject matter (Eyisi, 2016 p. 93).

literature review chapters defined key shifts in Egypt's foreign policy during the timeframe of the study. The theoretical chapter identified three concepts: ceremonial v. disruptive, framing and priming, and middle-power politics which guides the researcher through the data-gathering process and limit the scope of the corpus. Chapter 6 determined the covered Egyptian policy affairs items, but the coverage is inadequate. As mentioned before, because 1) the foreign policy's key components are not linked, and the framing is based on selective representation which includes some aspects and excludes others, so it does not provide a comprehensive picture that captures the complexities of middle-power politics. 2) the volume of coverage is not even objective, it primes some issues such as personality-led politics, populism, and human rights and ignores diplomatic events or development news. The previous chapter played a significant role in establishing the scale and characteristics of Egyptian foreign policy as portrayed in Western media outlets. Facilitating the process of closely monitoring the disparity between actual events and the way they are portrayed. In this chapter, the aim is to conduct a qualitative approach to a reduced sample of

the data. Finding out the used frames in the Western press coverage adds to the knowledge of how the Egyptian foreign policy components are seen and framed in the Western press.

Consequently, this will contribute to enhancing our understanding of political and media phenomena by providing additional insights into the causes and outcomes of these phenomena. In this chapter, the analysis moves from CA to QCA by monitoring the most prominent themes which are five categories as will be illustrated later in this chapter. Those five categories show the sacristy of interest in the diplomatic and international aspects in comparison with the domestic components of Egyptian policies. The researcher selected one item regarding each category throughout the 9 media outlets which made a sample of 45 items (each item is referenced with a number throughout the chapter and listed in Appendix B2). The purpose is to explore the latent content in the "vocabulary" and the "phrases" as key units of analysis, which have been conceptualised according to the "disruptive and ceremonial frames", "framing and priming" in some materials, "values and interest foreign policy", and "prioritising and ignoring" information. In addition, finding out if the used frames are related to the main topics.

The research questions outlined below elucidate the necessity of doing a qualitative content analysis in conjunction with a quantitative examination of news items in this study. The questions focus on discovering the frames throughout the wording and contexts, the nature of the coverage, the news attitude, and the perspectives of the communicators. Examining the journalistic values, credibility, and stereotyping, the analysis attempts to explore the answers on the main research question:

RQ2: How Western press frames Egyptian foreign policy components? and why?

With sub-questions:

- **RQ: What are the prioritized frames of representing Egyptian foreign policy in Western press?**
- **RQ: How does Western press create a "positioning" of Egyptian foreign policy?**

The previous chapter illustrated the most prominent subjects in the Western media interest agenda. The findings led to the discovery of 5 main themes which are (Economy - Middle East issues - Nile crisis – Human rights and democracy – Political Islam). The researcher selected one editorial item from each theme of the 9 media outlets depending on the item's relevance to the research. The

qualitative content analysis was conducted on 45 news and article items after extracting the codes from every item. In qualitative content analysis, data are categorized using predetermined categories that are generated from a source other than the data. For example, the categories of "Army economy- international trade – economy liberalization" represented the theme of "economy reform". The narrative analysis can answer the research question of how Western media utilise some disruptive frames and prioritise specific subjects while discarding others. "Rather than focusing on the informational content of the data, narrative analysis uses a hermeneutical perspective that emphasizes interpretation and context and focuses on the telling [of stories] themselves and the devices individuals use to make meaning in stories" (Sandelowski, 1991 p. 162)

To manage the data the researcher applied a useful approach which depends on three phases "immersion, reduction, and interpretation" (Jacopy& Siminof 2008 p. 46). During immersion, the researcher engaged with the data and obtained a sense of the whole context of framing Egypt's foreign policy before rearranging it into discrete units for analysis. The goals of the reduction phase are to reduce the amount of raw data and select the editorial items which are relevant to answering the research questions, then break the data into more manageable themes for instance "human rights and democracy" and thematic segments and reorganize the data into categories such as "autocracy" and sub-codes from the used words such as "oppression". The coding here will be inductive which comes from the data itself. Analytical insights that emerge during immersion in the data and during what is called ''preliminary coding'' and the sub-coding will be deductive.

> Although there are studies that use codes developed either deductively or inductively, content analysts most often employ a combination of both approaches. This means using a priori deductive codes to ''get into'' the data and an inductive approach to identify new codes and to refine or even eliminate a priori codes (Jacopy& Siminof 2008 p. 48).

According to (Schrier, 2017 p.219) The themes' content is conceptualised based on the coding frames (look at the QCA appendix C). "The coding frames themselves are the most important findings, this is the case whenever we want to explore or describe the material in certain respects and are using data-driven categories to do so." The analysis below will begin by summarising the core of the themes providing examples of the narratives which will be organised in tables to show "how each category was expressed in the sample material" (Schrier, 2017 p.220). It is difficult in qualitative analysis to test the validity and reliability because the researcher′s self-reflection, which

is an essential part of qualitative research whatever chosen qualitative method (Burnard, 1995). The researcher must consider the "pre-understanding", in the planning process and during the analyzing process, to minimize any bias influence. In a qualitative study, validity means that the results truthfully reflect the phenomena studied, and reliability requires that the same results would be obtained if the study were replicated (Bengtsson, 2016). It is not possible to test the validity and reliability of qualitative data. However, the researcher ensures that the findings are valid and reliable through the processes of collecting, analysing and presenting findings while fulfilling the research objectives and questions. It is called trustworthiness and rigour (Krefting, 1991).

Economy Reform:

After extracting the coding frame throughout the materials illustrated in the table below, the analysis categories have resulted frames based on the vocabulary as an analysis unit and the priming of specific information. The frames in this theme are "military economy"- "Sisi's regime"- "prosperity" - "autocracy". Qualitative data analysis is inductive by letting key categories and concepts emerge from the data (Schrier, 2017 p.25). To assess the validity of the coding frame and the analysis, the research went through the data more than once to validate the codes and categories to answer the main research questions about framing Egyptian foreign policy in Western media. The news and articles in this section during the timeframe of 2018-2021 talked about how the military in Egypt controls as much as 20% of total public spending and dominates most of the sectors under President Sisi's regime. The information appears alongside mentions of prosperity and recovery of the economy and narratives about international trade and cooperation. Also, the articles discussed the new capital project and Egypt's debts.

Table (QCA1) shows the analysed data list from the editorials sample of the "economy" theme.

Source	Editor	Editorial title	Date	Reference
DW website	News agencies	France agrees sale of war planes to Egypt	May,2021	DW1
Reuters	News agency	Greece, Egypt sign deal for first subsea power link between Europe and Africa	Oct,2021	R1
Foreign Affairs	Waterbury, J.	An anatomy of Egypt's military economy	Feb,2020	FA1
The Economist	Editing board	Green shoots Egypt's economy shows signs of life	Mar,2018	TE1
Daily mail	Tanno, S.	Egypt seizes megaship which blocked the Suez Canal ...	Apr,2021	DM1
The Independent	Bennett, O.	Why Egypt is building a brand-new mega capital city	Sep,2018	TI1
Financial Times	News agencies	Economic pitfalls risk cooling Egypt's hot money inflows	Jul,2020	FT1
New York Times	Walsh, D.	If ever a city needed a good detox, it was Cairo	Jul,2020	NYT1
France 24 website	El-Faizy, M.	Five years after Morsi, Egyptian economy strengthen amid oppression	Jul,2018	F1

- **Army economy**

One of the most important challenging changes that occurred in Egypt's economic policy after the 2013 revolution is adopting the "development" objective within the main strategy of "Egypt first", which means focusing on national interests, economic self-sufficiency, or policies prioritizing domestic industries and job creation through a development plan called vision "2030." Egypt Vision 2030 is a unified long-term political, economic, and social vision (Eai 50, 2022). It was developed in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This vision targets creating a resilient economy to withstand shocks and adapt to changing conditions, reducing subsidies, and increasing investment opportunities. According to Western media frames, the analysis data *(FA1, F1)* shows the focus on using the frame of "military economy" by highlighting the dominance of the army in Egypt in the economic sectors. The priming approach has been noticed here with prioritising the information of "military economy" in the opening paragraph over discussing the goals, and circumstances or mentioning the recent information for

the developmental projects as an example. The basic journalistic rules in writing any news article are to provide the newest information first, then mention the background later in the article in addition to fulfilling the journalistic 5W 1H questions which explain the main events in the article by answering the questions of who, when, where why and how (Autila, 2024 p.69). When the news sentence begins with the sentence "Sisi's regime" in an economic news story, this implicitly puts the article in the frame of "militarization of the economy" *(TE1, NYT1)* mentioning one side of the information and discarding the details of the national projects might be non-objectivity in the narrative's information. Thus, the purpose here is not the economic information as much as showing the extent of the president's control over all the state's capabilities and is an indication of the lack of a democratic system in the country.

On the other hand, a news story related to Egyptian French cooperation *(DW1)* says "Sisi's regime" then "the French government" but not "Macron's regime". The frame of "autocracy" is inserted into journalistic treatments of news alongside the frame of "concern" about "human rights". The context in which economic and military cooperation between the two countries was placed refers to contrasting frames of "Egyptian dictatorship" and "French democracy." However, the content of the article is a criticism of this cooperation and the French government's overlooking of Egypt's human rights violations for the sake of economic interest. Egypt's positioning was further reinforced by the inclusion of disruptive terms like "Poor" "stress" "concern" and "repression" *(TI1, NYT1)* which were inserted in economic news. News meaning was significantly explicit when they mentioned that Macron angered human rights advocates by rolling out the red carpet for El-Sisi rather than raising the issue of an estimated 60.000 political prisoners in the country *(DW1).* Referring to the prominence of the military industry in Egypt's economy is a key theme in the coverage of economic news from Egypt while suggesting that the army's hold over the economy would not benefit Egypt's potential growth. News coverage does not mention the army's social welfare programmes, developmental projects, and infrastructure reform.

- **Economic prosperity**

Another used frame throughout the sample material is the "prosperity frame" according to the "disruptive and ceremonial" theoretical frameworks as mentioned in Chapter 4, the "disruptive" frame prioritises the negative side of economic news throughout the analysis. The vocabulary of the "prosperity frame" of the economy has been obvious in many narratives *(TE1)* addressing the

vital factor of the Suez Canal as a "money-maker" and great income source to Egypt. The Western media is representing the Canal news by using wording like "worth billions". The "blockage" accident 2021 was a news headline which highlighted the Egyptian right to compensation for the damage from the vessel's Japanese owner *(DM1)*. That's another aspect of framing the Egyptian economy during the study timeframe.

The "ceremonial" frame which highlights the positive sides of the article *(TE1, R1)* such as development and agreements, has been noted also in framing the news of cooperation with Greece when they signed a memorandum of understanding for undersea cable that will transmit power produced by renewables from North Africa to Europe. The news praised the project which will improve the security of energy supply in the region. However, there was a context *(R1)* of prioritising serving "Israel's interests" by mentioning that the deal aligned with Cyprus Greece and Israel's plan of building a Euro-Asia Interconnector. The context shows that the positive frames regarding Egypt are applied when it comes to Israel interests. The general context of producing renewables and sustainable projects by 2030 has been represented with positive wording such as "aims – recovery" yet under the frame of "financing from Emirati loans and IMF*" (FT1, R1)* which delivers the positioning of "a country drowning in debts".

Another aspect of analysing the framing of economic "prosperity" indicates the appetite for investing in Egypt and delivering a sense of growing confidence in Egypt's economy *(TE1)*. However, the income of the investment has been labelled as "hot money" and the frame of the investment was described as a "short period" as it does not translate into real jobs in the real economy. Although Egypt has been struggling to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Accordingly, the investment prosperity might disappear if the currency slips. A sample article *(TE1)* begins with a phrase that the authoritarian president is facing a faltering economy asking people to save money and not buy unless the fundamental needs after the currency lost 50% of its value. Then the end of the article *(TE1)* highlights that Egyptians do not blame the government as there are social protection programmes for the poor and they are sure that things will get better albeit slowly. According to the priming approach, the article's structure prioritises the meaning of strengthening the economy amid oppression and then hints at the Egyptian people's opinion at the end of the article which gives the frame of "autocracy" further prominence.

According to the coding frames, the new administrative capital has been shown in the sample *(TI1)*. The framing of this project was at the beginning of the news questioning the purpose of the futuristic megalopolis. Using wording such as "new brand "let the desert bloom" and "ambitious". Then the news attitude turned to emphasizing the importance to move from the old city to the new one. The context also adheres to offering a chance to rebrand Egypt as a stable and internationally inviting place that is considering the future as well as being a guardian of the past. Articulating a new mentality for the country following the turbulence since the 2011 revolution. The negative frame appeared when the city was called "Sisi's city" in Western media. As it does not belong to the president it is an Egyptian project that will exist as well when the state ruling power changes. However, this repeated frame suggests a strong stereotyping in writing news stories in almost all components regarding Egyptian policies. The narrative constantly ties the subject with President "El-Sisi". Questioning if the project will be a new Dubai or a case of "look on my works, mighty and despair" *(TI1)* with prioritising the unoptimistic analyst's opinion in the article. Thus, the preferred frame here is "autocracy" which might destroy the developmental projects by discarding the positive effect of foreign direct investment and providing further job opportunities for local workers.

Human rights and Democracy:

The prevailing discourse in Western media regarding Egypt and its foreign policy is characterised by a focus on human rights breaches and the failure to uphold democratic values. The findings from the study conducted in the preceding chapter, along with the examination of a sample of Western media content, have substantiated the prevalence of this tone across many news genres. This topic ranked second, accounting for 15% of the overall media outlets sample (Chapter 6) which refers to prioritising this theme from the Western press. According to (The Human Rights Watch World Report, 2022), Egyptian authorities escalated the use of the abusive Emergency State Security Courts to prosecute peaceful activists and critics who joined thousands of dissidents already in Egypt's crowded prisons. Egypt's prolonged human rights crisis under President Sisi's government was subject to international criticism at the United Nations Human Rights Council. The framing and priming approaches have been applied in the sample data from the table below according to the coding frame, the analysis unit is the "vocabulary" which delivers specific frames

about the story. The analysis highlights the frames of "autocracy", "repression" and "human rights" as being the most dominant. To summarise the data content, the editorials view the Western perspectives on Egypt's foreign policy by criticising the ruling system and focusing on the chaos, arrests, and lack of democracy.

Table (QCA2) shows the analysed data list from the editorials sample of the "Human Rights" theme.

Source	Editor	Editorial title	Date	Reference
DW website	Layl, F	Egypt is synonymous with hopelessness	Jan, 2021	DW2
Reuters	Editorial board	Egypt has more issues concern human rights	Nov, 2021	R2
Foreign affairs	Rutherford, B	To stop Sisi, strengthen Egypt's judiciary	Oct, 2018	FA2
The Economist	Editorial board	A pharaonic farce Egypt's choice: president Sisi, or a man who adores him	Mar, 2018	TE2
Daily mail	Associated press news agency	Egypt releases prominent activist blogger	Dec, 2018	DM2
The Independent	Daragahi, B	Western leaders, take protests in Egypt as a warning. Sisi was never a force for stability…	Sep, 2019	TI2
Financial times	Editorial board	West cannot turn a blind eye to brutality in Egypt	Jul, 2020	FT2
New York Times	Associated press	Egypt's new laws entrench El-Sisi's rule	Jul, 2020	NYT2
France 24 website	Lee, Y	Egypt's jails leading revolution activist for five years	Dec, 2021	F2

- **"Repressive regime" frame.**

Notably, there is a repeated frame throughout the data focusing on "autocratic repressive regime" *(FT2)*. The data shows a significant use of the words such as "brutality" and "autocratic" (*FT2, DW2*). The structure of the news ignored the most recent information in the news and prioritised mentioning how the ruling system applies dictatorship, calling the leadership in power "regime" not "government "or "in power ". For example, a sample editorial (*FT2*) about "doctors' challenges during coronavirus crisis" started the news with "Coronavirus has accelerated Sisi's regime crackdown on dissent." The priming approach is shown here in the deliberate message for the reader that the ruling administration oppresses the opposition while details about the doctors come later in the news story. "The West cannot turn a blind eye on brutality in Egypt" *(FT2, DW2)* was a phrase describing the government treatment of doctors during the coronavirus crisis. Adding that "how dare the doctors question the oppressive measures of the government response to the coronavirus crisis?" *(FT2, TE2)* The original meaning of the news regarding the "doctors" has been completely obscured due to the inclusion of unrelated terms such as "coup," "Rabaa massacre," and "lost democracy" in the story, which is extraneous to the primary subject matter. The "outrage discourse" describes the political system as "criminal" not as a "government".

> Outrage discourse involves efforts to provoke a visceral response from the audience, usually in the form of anger, fear, or moral righteousness using overgeneralizations, sensationalism, misleading or patently inaccurate information, ad hominem attacks, and partial truths about opponents (Sobieraj & Berry, 2011).

According to the media events theory (ceremonial and disruptive frames), the frames throughout the data are disruptive. The frames are mostly negative and cut the topic apart from the Egyptian foreign policy strategies which rely on the concept of "national security" in the first level. The general context delivered in most news narratives is that after cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood in the country, and if Cairo's allies want a more prosperous, stable Egypt, they must "stop turning a blind eye to the Sisi regime's" abuses *(NYT2, DW2, FT2)*. Western press frames the "elections" as a "farce" *(TE2)*. The news story used the word "claim" not "say" when they reported that "Mr Sisi's big claim is that he has restored order" which framed his statement as lacking in credibility. However, the most obvious achievement in Egypt's strategy during the new administration era is preventing "terrorist" operations. The "Repression discourse" with vocabulary like "brutality, autocratic, crackdown, suffering, funding authoritarianism" which

consistently has been used throughout editorial samples *(FA2, TE2)* shows the double standards in framing the Egyptian ruling system and Middle Eastern countries in general.

The samples delivered the message that "Egypt became a synonym for hopelessness and democracy became a memory" *(DW2)*. Using the frame of "Sisi's Egypt" describes how President "Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's Egypt" *(NYT2, TE2)* is a dangerous place for dissidents which emphasises the positioning of "dictatorship". Egyptian foreign policy here appears to the reader as a result of a "repressive "ruling system. The misunderstanding has been repeated in the coverage which prioritises the perspective that under Sisi's command, the military and security forces used extraordinary violence to consolidate power. According to Western press *(TI2, TE2)* framing they advised "that perpetual dictators bring stagnation and repression, not peace. Consider Mr Mubarak's 30-year reign and the way it ended. Egypt needs a system that allows the transfer of power from one leader to the next without violence." The communicator wrote at the end of the article that Egyptians chose another aspect of the "autocratic" government that has approved new legal amendments *(NYT2, FA2)* to further exclude any serious competitors from elections and give the military greater control over civilian affairs. This information has been highlighted to establish a "dictatorship frame" in representing Egyptian foreign policies, thus in the diplomatic or economic official agreements, we find Western media prioritise the autocracy frame while not priming the disadvantages of other countries. The information about the Egyptian people's choice is mentioned at the end of the article, claiming that "they prefer the predictable rule of a strongman to the messiness of democracy" *(TE2)*. The benefits and achievements of the current government have been mentioned at the end of the narrative after priming how the leadership is anti-democratic, they said: "The Egyptian military supervises massive infrastructural projects and has built a vast economic empire that includes food, mineral water and land reclamation companies" *(NYT2)*. Words in news media and political discourse have considerable power in shaping people's beliefs and opinions. As a result, their truthfulness is often compromised to maximise impact (Rashkin et *al.*, 2017 p 2931). The argument here is using "outrage discourse, exaggerated and inciting discourse" in the beginning of the articles, then if they mentioned any positive sides, they write it at the end of the editorials to deliver the dramatic image of the Egyptian "regime" and its impact on people's perspectives not only politically but also in terms of economy and tourism.

- **"Human Rights breaches" frame.**

The frame of a "police state" arresting journalists and human rights activists is prominent in the news stories. The human rights file is always the most focused and exciting subject to be added to any other subject regarding Egyptian foreign policy throughout the study sample. The journalistic narratives *(R2, FT2, NYT2)* insist that Egypt has more work to do on human rights and ask the USA to take a tougher stance on Cairo's crackdown on political opponents during meetings with Egyptian officials.

From the media writing rules which mention the two parties' perspectives of the story the response of the officials which is that human rights must be balanced with the state's security concerns is not mentioned in the story. Notably, it was significantly rare to publish the Egyptian side's response *(F2, FA2)* regarding human rights breaches in Egypt in the structure of the story. Western narratives are about "how Egyptian police, leave no legal trail". The frame of "human rights" breaches included the arrests and the lack of freedom of expression (FA2, F2) "The parliament passed laws in 2017 and 2018 that empowered the government to closely monitor civil society organizations and media outlets." The human rights situation deteriorated even further in subsequent years. Western stories even justified their concentration on this file as "the largest Arab state, Egypt matters" *(TE2)*. That is why the West has lavished alms and arms on it and overlooked its leaders' abuses, delivering the message to the reader that donors' billions have not bought stability.

The coverage utilises the disruptive frame such as that Islamic State continues to attack churches and mosques and behead civilians in Sinai while a third of young Egyptians have no jobs, and drawing the darkest image by mentioning that the police and security services routinely torture the innocent *(DW2, FA2, FT2, NYT2)*. The samples use the "inciting discourse" for another revolution by saying "this is a recipe for more upheaval one day in the future" regardless of the economy and stability goals. The coverage had a special interest in the "Alaa Abd Elfattah" case connecting this with President Al-Sisi in power as an oppressive experience, describing the judiciary as corrupt *(FA2, TE2, F2)*. The case constitutes a public opinion in the Western community "interfering" and objecting to the court ruling. Cairo court has sentenced Egypt's revolution "activist Alaa Abdel Fattah" to 5 years behind bars for spreading "fake news" framing

the information based on the phrase "Egypt's suffering reached its limits as the judiciary is corrupt" *(DM2, F2)*. This accusation for the judiciary system can be seen as an individual Western vision which seeks to deliver the stereotyping disruptive frame of Egypt in any situation. According to the used language in the Western media, the president should be accused by the International Criminal Court yet there is no valid evidence. No one ignored the fact of human rights breaches in the country, however by following the framing and the priming approach, it is proved that there is stereotyping, exaggeration, and lack of objectivity in the included and discarded information in the coverage. There was no demonstration like the 2011 or 2013 revolutions during the year 2019, it was only small groups of people protesting in the streets their number did not exceed dozens of citizens responding to the fugitive "Mohamed Ali" call to protest. The Western media mentioned that a fresh wave of demonstrations has broken out in Egypt *(TI2)*. The El-Sisi government is alarmed for a new revolution but has learned from the past *(NYT2, DM2, F2)*. The articles stated that "the demonstrations as a result of deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions that never before in Egypt's history have there been so many political prisoners; the country's detention system is bursting at the seams and new jails are even having to be built". However, this framing is overstated and turned out to be "false news" and misleading to the Western public. False information about protests has appeared on social media, including videos of protests from years past presented as if they were happening live (Reuters, 2019). The Photos analysis showed old photos to be inserted in the story and photography which have been taken from specific angles to make the numbers appear bigger.

The disruptive frame has been represented in the Western media *(DW2)* using phrases like "Egypt will be a failed state" as an anticipatory conclusion about the future of Egyptian foreign policy, the western media mentioned that the 60,000 political prisoners had been branded as "terrorists" by El-Sisi's administration which emphasises oppression. The resources of the middle class have been eroded to such a degree that people can hardly support each other. The grand plans of the El-Sisi system have failed to benefit the poor; in fact, they have sunk into even deeper poverty. The country also lacks any opposition worthy of the name. Egyptian media, once the pride of the Arab-speaking world, have become utterly irrelevant since degenerating into a loyal megaphone for the strongman. The development projects have been labelled as an "excuse" in the Western media outlets' stories that add pressure on citizens. One big contributor to the pressure is also the fact that the country's middle class no longer possesses the means to survive financially.

Throughout some context *(FT2, TE2)*, the narratives mentioned "that some Western politicians continue to fete the Egyptian president since Egypt keeps African refugees from Europe's shores." The long-term price for this false sense of short-term security is the very real threat that Egypt may well become a failed state; for Egypt's military leadership is not doing what is necessary to keep the country from being crushed by the massive challenges it currently faces. This was the Western perspective mostly in framing the editorials regardless of the nature of Egypt's foreign policy which is mixed between values and interests. In addition to Middle East conflicts challenges surround Egypt from four directions.

Middle East issues:

Regarding Egyptian foreign policy towards the Middle East's challenging events, the analysis shows the most prominent interest from the Western media during (2018-2021) in Egypt's stance on the Libya conflict and the Egyptian policies towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Based on the framing approach and analysing the vocabulary, the used frames are "threat and war", and "mediating" represented in the data in the table below.

Table (QCA3) shows the data from the editorial items of the "Middle East issues" theme.

Source	Editor	Editorial item title	Date	Reference
DW website	News agencies	Egypt greenlights troop deployment in Libya	Jul,2020	DW3
Reuters	Editorial board	Egypt opens Rafah crossing early for Palestinian travellers	May,2021	R3
Foreign affairs	Miller, A	Israel and Hamas need each other	Mar,2019	FA3
The Economist	Editorial board	Aglimmer in Gaza Egypt's surprising friendship with Hamas	Aug,2018	TE3
Daily mail	Robinson, J	Egypt opens Gaza border crossing for Ramadan	May,2018	DM3
The Independent	Daragahi, B	A declaration of war, Egypt's threat to enter Libya conflict risks	Jun,2020	TI3
Financial times	Saleh, H	Egypt threatens military action in Libya if Turkish-backed forces.	Jun,2020	FT3
New York Times	Walsh, D	Libyan rivals call for peace talks	Aug, 2020	NYT3
France 24 website	News wires	Egypt announces new plan to end war in Libya as Haftar offensive loses ground	Jun,2020	F3

- **Libya conflict**

Egypt's foreign policy behaviour, which materialised in interventionism and activism in neighbouring conflicts during the timeframe of the study is an indicator of its middle-power politics and aspirations, as explained in chapter 4. The sampled corpus for the purpose of the qualitative analysis shows focus on Egypt's role in the Libya conflict by priming the idea of a "military intervention warning" to protect Egypt's border with Libya *(DW3, FT3, F3, NYT3)*. Western media used the frame of "rivals proxy war" to describe the conflict between Egypt and Turkey, who might be involved in direct confrontation *(TI3)*. The wording "warns" and "threaten" reflect the announced Egyptian stance towards any troubles on its western borders with Libya under the principle of "national security protection" against "criminal militias" and "foreign terrorist groups". The news included that El-Sisi threatened military intervention against Turkish-backed forces in Libya yet with the referral that Egypt's House of Representatives is filled with El-Sisi supporters. The general context of the media outlets discourse is "Egyptian intervention", which aligns with the Egyptian foreign policy to secure its borders. The editorials mentioned "that the strategic coastal city of Sirte was a "red line," prompting Cairo to intervene" *(DW3)* to prevent further deterioration of security in Libya as it is declared by Egyptian officials.

According to (Nijehnuis, 2014) media tends to present data in the format of "war journalism", focusing on violence, and highlighting the differences between the rivals *(DW3, TI3)*, presenting the conflict as a zero-sum game, and ignoring the broad range of causes and outcomes. The focus in the sample of news was on the rivalry between Egypt and Turkey showing how Libya was torn between rival armed factions, ignoring that the border protection strategy differs from having interests in an oil-rich country. The editorials' framing focused on Cairo's stance in assuring that Cairo intends to announce a "war declaration" and how Egypt's threat to enter the Libya conflict risks a Regional Clash with Turkey *(TI3, FT3)*. The framing of the Islamist groups was "GNA militias "who were allying with the Turks in western Libya. On the other side, the articles put the GNA statements in the headlines which called Sisi's threat a "declaration of war," and refused to halt its offensive. "We reject this, condemn it, and consider it an act of aggression, a blatant intervention *(F3)*. Using vocabulary which represents Egypt as if it calls for war in the headlines might refer to the media outlet's vision to prioritise the "aggressor" framing instead of the" middle-power politics" frame. However, the sampled material failed to note Egypt's desire to de-escalate the conflict. Although El-Sisi is firmly in Haftar's camp, he has appeared to hedge his

bets since the collapse of the Tripoli offensive by openly boosting Mr. Saleh, who heads Libya's eastern-based Parliament. Contrary to what had been published in the Western media, there was no "Egyptian war" on Libya, and later Egypt and Libya's unity government signed a series of cooperation agreements and several infrastructure contracts. The framing of those agreements assumed "Cairo benefits" from reconstruction opportunities in its oil-rich neighbour (NYT3, TI3, FT3). There is a similarity in using the frames in the coverage of Western media regarding Egypt's policy towards Libya. Framing "Libya" as "oil-rich" continuously in the Western media reflects their concept about the countries, obviously, the priority is "trade" and "money".

The frame of "dependency" also has been presented when the news mentioned that Sisi has appeared disappointed in Mr Haftar's failures *(F3)* yet is also under pressure from financial backers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, who are hostile to the GNA's inclusion of populist Islamist factions and see Turkey as a strategic threat. The structure of the article includes at the end that Egypt also views events in Libya with grave concern, insofar as troubles could spill over into its borders, adding that Egypt does not want a single Turk to cross the line into eastern Libya. Accordingly, any Egyptian action in Libya would "have international legitimacy" because it would be self-defence against "threats from terrorist militias and mercenaries". Moreover, narratives discussed the new plan for Egypt to end the war in Libya justifying the last peaceful steps from Egypt as Haftar lost ground *(NYT3, F3)*. Egypt's initiative includes a cease-fire paving the way for elections in "oil-rich Libya" as Western media insist on reminding their readers. Conversely, seeking a political or diplomatic resolution to the conflict instead of a military one is reflected in El-Sisi belief that "The initiative could be a new start in Libya." It is said in the news sample that this declaration came after the chaos in the "oil-rich country" has worsened in recent months.

- **Palestinian-Israeli conflict**

Egypt's approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is generally centred around the pursuit of a two-state solution, with an independent and viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel (according to the officials' statements). Egypt has supported efforts to reach a comprehensive and just solution to the conflict, often through diplomatic channels and multilateral forums. During periods of heightened tension or conflict, Egypt has worked to de-escalate tensions and promote dialogue between the parties involved. This includes facilitating ceasefires and engaging in diplomatic efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution. However, it's important to note that the

dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can change rapidly, and events on the ground significantly influence diplomatic actions.

The news analysis during the study timeframe shows that Western media frame Egypt as a "main mediator" *(TE3, FA3)* in the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, showing the significant Egyptian role in the humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through opening the "Rafah crossing" *(R3, DM3)*. News stories reported that Egypt planned to allow the passage from Gaza of students, people needing medical treatment, and other humanitarian cases. Egypt sent ambulances to pick up casualties, most of whom had suffered serious injuries that required immediate surgical procedures *(R3)*. In addition, the Western media reported that "Egypt opened the Gaza border crossing for Ramadan as the UN human rights chief blasts Israel's killing of Palestinians and says they are kept 'caged in a toxic slum' "(*DM3)*.

The news framed Egypt's endeavours as "pivotal" in brokering an end to the conflict between Gaza and Israel *(DW3, TE3, FA3)*. However, this description in Western news is covered by the approach of Egyptian cooperation with Israel on the background of the visit of the Israeli minister to Egypt after over a decade. The context supports the idea of Israel's dominance regarding accepting the ceasefire in Gaza. It is worth noting that in the Western news discourse, the Gaza Strip has been framed as "Gaza-based Hamas" and Hamas has been framed as a "Palestinian militant group". Israel has never been framed as an "occupation" which clearly refers to prioritising labelling Palestine as a "terrorist" and Israel as a "victim" *(TE3)*.

The coverage in the samples focuses on "Building Gaza" *(R3, TE3)* in Egyptian statements and the news repeated that the Egyptian president stresses this goal in international events and during his conversations with Israel. Using the word "mediation" in the narratives *(DM3, TE3, R3)* has been highlighted in the stories regarding helping the Palestinians and the Israelis missing or captured in Gaza. However, another used phrase regarding the mediation frame is that Egypt became "Hamas's friend", the journalistic articles mentioned the phrase "Egypt's surprising friendship with Hamas" saying that "Egypt riding to Gaza's rescue" *(TE3)* while highlighting Egypt's attempt to deliver aid to ease the suffering in Gaza. Commonly in the news texts, Egyptian foreign policy insists on the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. The focus in the news regarding this point argues how Egypt's foreign policy mixes values and interests. The most notable in the Western coverage is that they use the ceremonial approach of mentioning the

positive sides of Israel's interests *(TE3, DM3)*. The wording of the news and articles stress that Israel, for its part, is happy for Egypt to work with Hamas in Gaza, if the enclave poses no threat.

Throughout the sample illustrated in the table above, the narratives have described Egypt regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as one of two Arab states that has official relations with Israel. But while Egypt was busy with other crises, from COVID-19 to the war in Libya, Jordan has been louder. King Abdullah worries annexation will trigger unrest among his large Palestinian population and revive talk of "the Jordan option", which imagines his country as the future Palestinian state. But he has little leverage over Israel; few expect he would go so far as to rip up their peace treaty. Egypt's stance was clear about the two-state solution and rejection of displacement and oppression. However, with perusing its fundamental strategy of "Egypt first" and "national security" protection, what's absent from Western culture and Western journalistic perspectives is the fact that support for Palestine and antagonism toward Israel are deeply ingrained in Egyptian political culture and national consciousness. An issue that transcends partisan politics and commands broad national consensus across all ideological and demographic lines, the Palestinian cause is as much a matter of identity as it is a question of public policy (Elgindy, 2012).

- **Water diplomacy (Nile crisis):**

The rivalry between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) encapsulates a complex blend of hydro-political tensions, development aspirations, and regional water security concerns. The analysed corpus of the editorial items showed the prevalence of two frames: "the war" and "security vs development". The framing of the content reflects these two competing perspectives without suggesting a viable resolution that works for all parties involved. The coverage is mostly reflective of a "wait and see" attitude on the part of Western foreign policies.

Table (QCA4) shows the data from the editorial items of the "Nile crisis" theme.

Source	Editor	Editorial item title	Date	Reference
DW website	Editorial board	Ethiopia accuses Trump of inciting war	Oct, 2020	DW4
Reuters	Editorial board	Egypt notified that Ethiopia has resumed filling of giant dam	Jul, 2018	R4
Foreign affairs	Benaim, D & Hanna, M	Water wars on the Nile	Aug, 2018	FA4
The Economist	Editorial board	The bitter dispute over Africa's largest dam	Jul, 2020	TE4
Daily mail	Pleasance, Ch	The dam that could start a war between Egypt and Ethiopia	Jul,2020	DM4
The Independent	Aboudouh, A	Blood on the Nile is what's coming if Egypt and Ethiopia continue their war of words over water	Mar, 2020	TI4
Financial times	Pilling, D	How to avert a war over the Nile between Egypt and Ethiopia	Jan, 2020	FT4
New York Times	Walsh, D	As seasonal rains fall, dispute over Nile dam	Nov, 2020	NYT4
France 24 website	Xenos, A& Picard, F	Tension on the Nile: could Egypt and Ethiopia really go to war over water?	Jun, 2020	F4

- **"War" frame:**

The situation has raised concerns about potential escalation and the possibility of a conflict arising from disagreements over the dam. Thus far, efforts have been made to resolve the issue through diplomatic means. However, recently until the moment of writing this thesis, Cairo announced the ending GERD negotiation track due to Ethiopia's refusal of all solutions (*Egypt Today*, 2023). The qualitative analysis of the sample news during the study timeframe shows the tendency of the Western press to downplay the significance of the issue to Egypt, which considers the filling of the dam procedures a huge threat to its water security. By contrast, the conflict is framed in the

Western media as national victory for Ethiopia *(TE4)*. The analysis monitored words such as "blow up *"(DW4)* which conveys the idea of a hot pocket of potential outbreak of conflict in the region. The frame of "aggression" is prominent in references to Egypt's foreign policy towards the dam issue *(DM4, FA4)*. It is one of the red lines to Egypt's national security as described by the Egyptian official leaders *(F4)*. The analysis showed the Western media's interest when "Trump talked about it" saying: "They'll end up blowing up the dam… I said it and I say it loud and clear; they'll blow up that dam. And they must do something" *(DW4)*. Ethiopia has been pushing the dam project to expand its power exports. However, the infrastructure project is being built on one of the two major tributaries of the Nile River, which Egypt depends on for about 97% of its drinking water and irrigation. The representation of the case in Western media discussed the dispute from both sides, yet according to the priming approach, Ethiopian statements have been noticed to be at the beginning of the story structure in most sample editorial items *(FA4, DM4)*. The "aggression" frame mostly has been delivered from the writer or the other political perspectives, even though Egypt's stance is adopting the peaceful diplomatic roads until now *(TI4)*. Sentences like "Egypt notified that Ethiopia has resumed filling of the giant dam", illustrate the restraint on the Egyptian side to avoid the undesired option of escalating the dispute *(R4)*. However, the concentration of the news sample was mostly on using the "war" frame. The news used wording like "threat" "warn" "anger" "concern" "tensions" "potential war" which delivered a message that Egypt intended to launch the war, which has been denied by Egyptian officials on several occasions.

- **National security vs the development.**

The positioning of Egypt's foreign policy in the Western media regarding the Ethiopia dam reflects the approach of mixing value-driven foreign policy and interest-driven foreign policy. The news mentioned both ideas, Egypt's patience with preferring the diplomatic solutions and at the same time warning about exceeding the limits in the filling process. Sudan, another downstream country, has expressed concern about the safety of the dam and the impact on its own dams and water stations. The news structure mentions the Ethiopian rights in the development at the beginning: "Ethiopia, Africa's largest-ever dam and hydroelectric power plant" is inching closer to completion. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River has the potential to transform Ethiopia's economy and revolutionize the agricultural sector of its north-western neighbour Sudan *(FA4, FT4)*. Then the writer mentions the influence on Egypt at the end of the

article. As Ethiopia prepares to operationalize the dam and divert Nile waters to fill its massive reservoir, the international dispute over the Nile is about to begin *(F4, FA4, NYT4)*. The journalistic structure of the news refers to prioritising the Ethiopian side over the Egyptian side by priming the Ethiopian rights and writing in detail about the legacy of the developmental projects in Ethiopia then briefly mentioning that it threatens Egyptian water security *(FA4, DM4)*. The vocabulary which has been used to frame the case such as "Egypt bitterly opposes the project, which it calls an 'existential threat'" (*F4, NYT4*) gives the message implicitly that only Egypt evaluate the dam as a dangerous threat then mentioning that "it has hinted it could go to war over it" is an inciting discourse. The discourse became more aggressively when "blood" was mentioned in headlines "blood on the Nile" *(TI4)*. The Ethiopian side shows similar resolve to the Egyptian side: "No force can stop Ethiopia from building a dam" *(R4)*. This rivalry, thus, encapsulates a broader narrative of regional development versus environmental sustainability and national security, posing significant challenges to achieving a mutually beneficial resolution.

- **Political Islam argument:**

Muslim brotherhood is a controversial issue between Egypt and some Western countries. The discourse surrounding the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt oscillates between its designation as a terrorist organization by the Egyptian government and international sympathy towards it as a legitimate political opposition. This dichotomy reflects broader tensions in how Islamist movements are perceived globally, between threats to national security and proponents of political Islam engaging in democratic processes. Some scholars highlighted the Brotherhood's influence on modern terrorist organizations (Shermokhmmedov 2023 p. 37), while others suggest that declaring MB a terrorist organisation is President El-Sisi's internal political strategy to consolidate his grip on power by eliminating political rivals and framing them as a security threat to justify harsh measures against them (Kadirova, 2021). The following analysed data revealed that the most prevailing frame in the Western media regarding (MB) is the (victim) frame.

Table (QCA5) shows the data from the editorial items "political Islam" theme.

Source	Editor	Editorial item title	Date	Reference
DW website	Schaer, C	End of neo-Islamism in the Middle East?	Sep, 2021	DW5
Reuters	Editorial board	Kuwait hands Muslim Brotherhood-linked militants to Egypt	Jul, 2019	R5
Foreign Affairs	Hamid, Sh	Muslim Brotherhood the rivalry that shaped modern Egypt	Aug, 2018	FA5
The Economist	Editorial board	The Muslim Brotherhood is tearing itself apart.	Dec, 2021	TE5
Daily Mail	Allen, V	British tourists in Egypt are warned they could be soft targets for terrorists	Jan, 2020	DM5
The Independent	Aboudouh, A	Trump's threat to the Muslim Brotherhood may be a gift for Egypt's president	May, 2019	TI5
Financial Times	Saleh, H	Egyptian opposition leader detained ahead of elections	Feb, 2018	FT5
New York Times	Walsh, D	After 7 years on the run, a Muslim Brotherhood is caught	Aug,2020	NYT5
France 24 website	Editorial board	UN calls for independent probe into death of Egypt's Morsi	Jun, 2019	F5

- **Terrorism or opposition.**

The Western media discourse explicitly framed stories about the MB with what sounds like a conspiracy theory designed by the ruling class. They wrote that in Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the country's first post-Arab Spring elections in 2012. "However a coup by the Egyptian military in 2013 overthrew Morsi's government, and the incoming authoritarian leadership arrested and killed many members of the movement"*(DW5)*. The wording of "coup" instead of revolution and "killed" instead of "counterterrorism" illustrate the gap between the Western media and the Egyptian government and most Egyptian people who participated in the 2013 revolution.

MB was framed as a "democratic ruling system" *(FT5, FA5)*. They mentioned that electrifying protests brought down the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, and the political atmosphere in Egypt has turned sombre. The narratives insisted on delivering the idea that in 2013, General El-Sisi overthrew President Morsi, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who had narrowly won "Egypt's first free presidential election the prior year." Since seizing power, "Sisi has emptied the country of any real politics." "His crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood has been particularly brutal: he has jailed tens of thousands of MB and designated the group a terrorist organization*"(FA5, DW5, R5)*. The discourse constitutes a message that authoritarianism is oppressing the opposition movements, thus eliminating the democratic process in Egypt.

The representation of MB also primes their friendship with Turkey and the fact that thousands of exiled members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood took shelter in Turkey, which significantly impacted diplomatic relations between Egypt and Turkey*(DW5)*. [25] Egyptians called them "fleeing criminals" and the Western media called them "opposition". The journalistic news regarding MB presented an argument about how that rivalry shaped modern Egypt *(FA5, DW5)*, the influence of getting rid of MB was a turning point in Egyptian foreign policy questioning if it could be the end of neo-Islamism in the Middle East.

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[25] Starting from the year (2021), that began to change. Turkish authorities is taking actions such as preventing Egyptian (MB) satellite stations in the country from broadcasting attacking content to the Egyptian government. In (2022) The Turkish authorities asked a (MB) member to leave its territory after he violated their instructions in criticising Egypt.

- **Victim frame**

The sample narratives illustrated in (QCA5), it discussed how after the Arab Spring of 2011 the Brotherhood won Egypt's first free elections; by early 2012 it ruled the country. But the army, led by El-Sisi and backed by mass protests, soon booted it from power and El-Sisi became president after he crushed the movement in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square *(FT5, F5)*. Another editorial from the corpus talked about how MB fuelled up instability and violence and that its members have carried out attacks *(NYT5, TE5)*. Hassan al-Banna, who founded the movement in 1928, called for gradual reform, but he accommodated militant members. Today's Egypt MB is split between those who embrace confrontational tactics, including some who countenance violence, and those who favour a more conciliatory approach *(TE5, TI5)*. Although the West does not agree on religious discrimination, the Western press does not show criticism for MB's attempt to inject religion into public life in the Middle East. The argument here is not rejecting applying "democracy" as much as the Western press does not link the Egyptian perspective with its strategy as a middle-power state which seeks -either rightly or wrongly- a foreign policy based on the national security concept.

While the Egyptian government is struggling with counterterrorism, its strategies represent a complex interplay of military force, ideological contestation, and socio-political engagement. The sample narratives published a perspective that MB are oppressed, and the ruling system is dealing with them in the wrong way. The prevailing frame in the coverage is the (victim) *(FA5, FT5, F5)*. The Egyptian side declared the group as a terrorist organization *(DM5)* which is responsible for the violence and the attacks on tourists while the Western media presented them as a symbol of democracy. However, the narrative of the sample discussed the definition of democracy in the "turkey case", the worry is that even non-violent Islamists "treat elections as a tactic: one man, one vote, one time" *(TE5, TI5)*. Erdogan, Turkey's president, was once a model Islamist, easy on religiosity and big on liberal reforms. These days, as he purges real and imagined foes, "he is almost as awful as the Arab dictators he once denounced, he keeps winning elections, though" *(TE5)* as the writer mentioned in the narrative. In Egypt, the short-lived Islamist president, Morsi, seemed to govern for MB alone. Notably, The Economist has published similar content in a related context (Leaders, 2017) that "he installed Brothers throughout the bureaucracy and declared himself to be the president. He alienated other parties, provoking mass protests". Critics

assume that Mr Erdogan and Mr Morsi are flawed because they are Islamist. According to the narratives discussions *(TE5, TI5, NYT5),* there is another explanation: that they have mimicked the power-grabbing tactics of Turkish and Egyptian strongmen to pre-empt efforts by the "security state" to seize back power for Mr Morsi, unsuccessfully. The critics in the editorial materials *(TE5)* claimed that after the overthrow of Morsi, it is hard to claim that he would have been worse than El-Sisi, the general who ousted him "as described in the news" El-Sisi carried out the worst massacre in modern Egyptian history". "Yet a jihadist insurgency rages in Sinai. And El-Sisi has little idea of how to create jobs for Egypt's surging population of youngsters". Notably in the framing of MB, there is no argument that they might have carried out terrorist activities in Egypt. The frames are only restricted to "massacre" and "repression" which have been carried out against them referring to the government "exaggeration" and "obsession" regarding announcing the (MB) a terrorist organisation. The unified frame is the "victim frame".

Trump designated MB as a "terrorist group", trying to change political Islam's historical order in the region. He believes that they export their toxic ideologies beyond Egypt's borders. MB works hard to serve the goal of integrating conservative Islamic thinking deep into society. The narratives published Trump's statement that "They have links to terrorism" *(TI5, FT5).* The UK has stopped short of labelling MB a terrorist group. Still, former prime minister David Cameron has described parts of MB as having "a highly ambiguous relationship with violent extremism" *(TI5, R5*). Their strategy is simple: encourage some form of chaos in troubled countries and seek power in the mess that follows. In the Arab world, the MB has created what they call the "virtuous society", which is strictly conservative and supports any Islamic "resistance" to the status quo, even if it comes from al-Qaeda-like groups such as Ansar al-Sharia in Libya and Jaish al-Islam and other factions in Syria *(R5, TI5, NYT5).* Equally, the MB can be so pragmatic that it builds alliances with this same status quo, whether it is gulf monarchies or dictatorships in military-ruled countries, like Egypt. They sweep swiftly and smoothly between the far right and far left to get what they want, a place for hard-line Islamic philosophy in the heart of politics. This MB ideology of arriving to power as the greatest gaol has not been covered enough in Western media.

The concentration during the study timeframe on Morsi's death is notable. Western media published headlines that The UN human rights office has called for an "independent inquiry" into the death of former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, The general context explicitly accuses

the ruling system of participating in the MB president killing, claiming that "Any sudden death in custody must be followed by a prompt, impartial, thorough and transparent investigation carried out by an independent body to clarify the cause of death" *(F5, DW5)*. Morsi's Brotherhood accused the government of "assassinating" him through years of poor prison conditions. The group demanded an international investigation into Morsi's death and called on Egyptians to protest outside Egyptian embassies across the world. These stories have been published widely in the Western media as they link to human rights files. On the other hand, the repeated explosions around the country after the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood had not been framed with the same concept of blaming the rival side. *(R5)* published that "Egyptian (MB) had admitted to carrying out terrorist operations in their home country", except for this narrative it was very rare in the news sample to find a paragraph which links the terrorist attacks to MB's removal from power.

Conclusion:

Qualitative researchers might be biased to their background and the events they have witnessed while analysing the data. Those who are carrying out qualitative research are an integral part of the process and final product, and separation from this is neither possible nor desirable. The concern instead should be whether the researcher has been transparent and reflexive (Galdas, 2017 p. 2). To answer the main research question: RQ: What is the size and nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy? And based on the hypostasis that (RH): Stereotype frames are prominent in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy; the researcher attempted to conduct a critical analysis and reduce the bias in terms of answering the qualitative research sub-questions resulting in some findings which are:

- **RQ: What are the prioritized frames when representing Egypt's foreign policy in Western media?**

Notably, the themes of the "Economy", "The Nile crisis" and "Middle East issues" are direct components of Egyptian foreign policy. However, the interest of the Western press in "human rights" and "political Islam" themes has been clearly shown in the sample analysis. Those domestic parameters have a major strategic effect on Egyptian foreign policy. Thus, they cannot be ignored

in the analysis. The sub-questions of the previous main questions are the frames of the most prominent subjects:

- **What are the applied frames in the "Economy" theme?**

Regarding the "economy" theme, the frame of "military economy" was very dominant instead of mentioning the goal of rebuilding the economy or recent development projects. The use of terms like "autocracy" and "concern" about human rights in economic news reinforces Egypt's positioning as the "military's state" to highlight its control over most of Egypt. This framing could affect the investment opportunities in Egypt, especially when downplaying the army's social protection programs, developmental projects, and infrastructure reform. Economic news is usually framed in terms of its "future prosperity" which shows using the positive approach and ceremonial frames. Western media uses wording like "worth billions" to highlight the economic potential of the country, yet this is framed as serving Israel's interests. The analysis showed that the country is struggling to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and the investment income is labelled as "hot money" and short-lived. The analysis also referred to the faltering economy of the authoritarian president and the inadequacy of social protection programs for the poor. The framing of building the new administration capital was "sceptical" and questioned the purpose of the futuristic megalopolis. The negative frame of the project is often associated with the regime and President El-Sisi, prioritizing the unoptimistic analyst's opinion. The general context is that Egypt might witness economic prosperity, however the authoritarian regime might damage it in the future.

- **What are the used frames and the positioning of Egypt regarding human rights and democracy?**

The Western narrative of Egypt's foreign policy often portrays the regime as an "autocratic repressive" one, using terms like "brutality" and "autocratic" to highlight the regime's oppressive measures. The news structure often discards the shifts and development projects and prioritizes the regime's dictatorial nature. The use of harsh language and disruptive frames, such as "brutality" and "massacre" is more appropriate for significant war crimes not for describing government strategic choices or mistakes. The general context of news narratives is that after cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's allies must stop turning a blind eye to the Sisi regime's abuses. The use of "claim" instead of "say" or "declare" and "inciting discourse" against the ruling system highlights double standards in Middle East conflicts as those words are not used when it comes to

the rival side or Western countries officials. Disruptive frames towards politicians often overlap with freedom of expression. However, the agenda is explicit to deliver this positioning of "human rights breech". The frame of "Sisi's Egypt" emphasizes the priming of the "dictatorship" concept with exaggerated sentences which prioritize the perspective that under Sisi's command, the military and security forces used extraordinary violence to consolidate power. The autocratic regime in Egypt is characterized by the military's control over civilian affairs and massive infrastructural projects. The misunderstanding of Western media which reflects the gap between the coverage and Egyptian foreign policy on the ground and the Egyptian officials' statements can affect people's perspectives not only politically but also in terms of economy and tourism. The argument here is how to judge the human rights situation discarding the nature of the society that originally "chose" this leadership in power. The research analysis showed that Western discourse was inciting, stereotyping, and tends to use double standards. Moreover, there grounds to conclude that the coverage is misleading especially in cases where it repeats unverified and fake news.

-   **How did Western media discuss the Egyptian foreign policy regarding the Middle East conflicts?**

Libya's conflict narrative focuses on the concept of military intervention to protect Egypt's border with Libya. Western media uses the frame of "rivals proxy war" to describe the conflict between Egypt and Turkey. The wording "warns" and "threaten" reflect the bold and resilient Egyptian situation towards any troubles on its western borders with Libya under the principle of "national security protection" against "criminal militias" and "foreign terrorist groups." The media tends to utilise "war journalism", focusing on violence and highlighting the differences between rivals. The headlines focus on Cairo's stand as a "war declaration" and how Egypt's threat to enter the Libya conflict risks a regional clash with Turkey. The frame of "dependent Egypt" is presented when Sisi appears disappointed in Haftar's failures and is under pressure from financial backers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, who do not support the Islamists and see Turkey as a strategic threat. Egypt's approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is centred around a two-state solution, with an independent Palestinian state living alongside Israel. Egypt has supported efforts to reach a comprehensive and just solution through diplomatic channels and multilateral forums. During periods of heightened tension, Egypt has worked to de-escalate tensions and promote dialogue between the parties involved. However, the dynamics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can change rapidly, and events on the ground significantly influence diplomatic actions. Western media frame

Egypt as a "main mediator" in the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, showing its significant role in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through the opening of the Rafah crossing. The news frames Egypt's endeavours as "pivotal" in brokering an end to the conflict between Gaza and Israel, but this description is double framed positively as "Egyptian cooperation with Israel". The frame of "being silent" has been described in some narratives regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On the other side, the frame of "Hamas's friend" has been presented which concludes that Egyptian foreign policy stands with the Palestinian case under the umbrella of Egyptian national security and that aligns with the nature of Egyptian foreign policy which mixes interest and values. Support for Palestine and antagonism toward Israel are deeply ingrained in Egyptian political culture and national consciousness, and the Palestinian cause is as much a matter of identity as it is a question of public policy.

- **How is the Nile crisis represented in the Western media?**

The dispute over a dam in Ethiopia has raised concerns about potential escalation and conflict. Despite diplomatic efforts, Egypt has ended the negotiation track due to Ethiopia's rejection of all diplomatic solutions. Western media coverage has ignored this information, highlighting the importance of the development for Ethiopia more than Egypt's water security. The use of "blow up" and "aggression" frames in Western media conveys fears of outbreak of military conflict without taking into consideration Egypt's national security risks. The "war" frame is predominant in the coverage which illustrates prioritising the disruptive approach, with wording like "threat" and "warning" conveying a general sense of potential war. The water diplomacy here is swinging between national security and development policies in the Western media. Egypt views the dam as a grave threat to its Nile water supplies. The news structure prioritizes Ethiopian rights over Egypt's, with phrases like "bitterly oppose the project" and "it has hinted it could go to war over it" escalating the possibility of violence. There was little mention of the historical rights of Egypt and treaties over sharing the Nile.

- **How is political Islam presented in Western media?**

Western media portrays the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as an "opposition" not a terrorist organization, focusing on the 2013 coup that overthrew the group and the military arresting and killing of many members. The media also uses the "autocratic regime" narrative, highlighting the political atmosphere in Egypt after the 2013 revolution. The "Turkey friendship frame" is used to

portray the fleeing members of the MB, who were previously supported by the Turkish government. However, recent actions by Turkish authorities have cooled diplomatic relations between Egypt and Turkey, leading to a shift in Egyptian foreign policy and questioning the end of neo-Islamism in the Middle East. Western media often portrays the MB in the victim frame trying to change political Islam's historical order in the region. Vannetzel (2017) and *(TI5, R5)* argue that the MB has links to terrorism and has created a "virtuous society" in the Arab world, supporting any Islamic resistance to the status quo, even if it comes from al-Qaeda-like groups. The narratives *(F5)* also accused the ruling system of "assassinating" MB President "Morsi" through years of poor prison conditions and demanded an international investigation into Morsi's death. However, repeated explosions around the country after the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood had not been framed with the same concept of blaming the rival side. The news sample referring to the Egyptian government's strategies represents a complex interplay of military force, ideological contestation, and socio-political engagement. The concept that non-violent Islamists treat elections as a tactic and the MB's ideology of arriving to power as the greatest gaol to publish Islamic dominance has been mentioned in one narrative *(TI5)*. However, notably not most of the Western media understand this strategy. To understand the causes and the results of framing Egyptian foreign policy as found in the previous analysis, the researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with experts in media and Egyptian foreign policy, seeking to interpret these findings and analyse the selected frames and the positioning for Egypt's foreign policy in Western media.

Chapter 8:

Experts' interviews qualitative analysis

Introduction:

Aiming to explore the interpretations of Western media narratives from the alternative perspective of experts in media and Egyptian diplomacy, this chapter will analyse and interpret the semi-structured interviews which have been conducted by the researcher with experts who are closely connected to media and foreign policy circles in Egypt and abroad. Unveiling Social Constructs through QCA enabled the researcher to engage a systematic examination of textual narratives of the interviews by identifying patterns, themes, and codes embedded within these interviews. By focusing on media experts, writers, academics, and diplomats who often hold influential points of view in society, the researcher gains insights into the interpretation of new diplomacy, power dynamics, and the features of Western media views which are portrayed and reinforced through media discourse. The insights derived from qualitative content analysis provide a solid foundation for future research and generate discussions on topics such as media representations, political agendas, and the construction of cultural identities (Krippendorff, 2018).

The quantitative and qualitative analysis findings in Chapters (6&7) have yielded findings about the characteristics of media coverage of Egyptian foreign policy affairs and components. These findings include a tendency to prioritise certain issues while overlooking others, as well as the utilisation of specific frames such as "war"," "victim," "dictatorship," and "human rights." Western press coverage has shown the presence of stereotypes, double standards, and a superior, imperialist perspective when it comes to matters concerning the Middle East. Based on the interpretive approach in media studies, this chapter will experts' interviews analysis with an interpretation of these phenomena. It will also explore the areas of consensus and divergence between these interpretation narratives and Western press frames. Most importantly presenting the distinguishment between the competing narratives of the experts and the Western press frames. It is important to emphasise that the analysis of interviews with the experts does not convey an authoritative voice, but rather presents their subjective viewpoints and personal experiences based on their understanding of the political situation in Egypt. The justification for this claim lies in the fact that although the experts agree that the Western press does not reflect the Egyptian foreign policy strategies on the ground, they evaluate and convey their opinions based on their individual

areas of expertise. Journalistic experts often interpret the phenomena from a perspective of the internal impact on the state, which arises from their continuous engagement with news, and acquisition of knowledge about events. Conversely, experts in the Western media tend to attribute phenomena to the nature of Western culture. On the other hand, diplomats interpret the Western media of Egyptian foreign policy through the lens of diplomatic relations and the international community. Researchers and academics Researchers and academics explain phenomena by linking them to the historical approach and analyzing the events. Thus, the presented argument highlights the competing narratives of the experts which expose what is going on in Egyptian foreign policy on the ground to validate that these strategies are not reflected in the Western press coverage or the used frames are not adequate and not connected to the Egyptian foreign policy objectives.

Accordingly, the following analysis attempts to answer the second part of the second main question which is "How **Western press frame Egyptian foreign policy components? And why?** According to local experts' perspectives, it reflects the gap between the Western and Eastern views. The aim is to investigate the implicit dimensions of expert knowledge and integrate their professional and personal experiences into the research findings. The problem-centred interview (PCI) approach enables interviewees to foreground their insights with practical experiences and events that they lived closely with, and this was evident in their emotions and interpretations. (PCI) is a qualitative face-to-face interview method that draws upon central principles of qualitative research such as openness, flexibility, and process orientation (Flick, 2009). The interviewees have extensive expertise, spanning over a period of 30 years. The analysis is grounded in five fundamental themes which are "the concept of change – external strategies – domestic challenges – stereotyping- democracy vs culture) that were developed from a comprehensive examination of the interviews. Codes are extracted inductively as the researcher goes through the dataset (see Appendix C2). besides the interviewees have been divided to three categories (see appendix C1) 1) Diplomat\ officials (J) 2) Researcher\Academic (R) 3) Journalist (J) and journalist in a Western outlet (JW), (see appendix C3 for interviews samples).

To enhance the validity of the research findings, the researcher carefully designed coding schemes, developed reliability measures, and employed systematic approaches to data analysis, to monitor some concepts frequencies in various themes and show how they are linked to each other.

These methodological safeguards ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Based on the hypotheses of the study that:

RH1: the coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation.

RH2: There is a specific framing of certain foreign policy elements which prime topics and exclude others.

During the in-depth examination of interviews with the experts; for instance, most of the interviewees agreed that the cultural difference between the Western press and the nature of the social fabric of the Middle Eastern nations led primarily to a lack of understanding for both sides. The "cultural divide" has resulted in a lack of convergence between what is happening in Egyptian foreign policy and how it is covered in the Western press, which was for example obvious in the contradiction of the concept of "democracy" and what so-called "loyalty duty", there is a lack of recognition regarding the state of historical respect and reverence for the institution of the army and the great popular trust that the Egyptian people give to the army throughout Egyptian history. Another important point that may contribute to the enrichment of scientific research is to delve deeper into gender studies and link them to politics and the media. Looking at the interviewees' sample, there is no female expert. The researcher has found that it is very difficult to find a female expert in Egypt who talks about foreign policy and Western media.

• <u>The concept of change</u>

1- The features

There is tacit agreement among the interviewees that Egypt's foreign policy evolution is a testament to its audacious engagement with shifting global realities. Through a careful recalibration of its interests, inclusiveness, multilateral engagements, and principled stances. The strategic recalibration of Egypt's foreign policy represents a robust response to emerging global dynamics. Egyptian foreign policy under President Sissi could be titled as a marriage between the regime's interests and public interests. A renewed emphasis on safeguarding these interests resonates with a broader, encompassing strategic vision. This expansion, marked by proactive

engagements, belies an astute understanding of global interdependencies (J4) said from his experience in Egyptian foreign policy news:

> *Foreign policy is either active or inactive. The foreign policy of any country is determined by its political geography and political geography does not change, it only defines the "vital area" in which the country is supposed to be active, its "interests" and "national security circles." Foreign policy takes shape when it is active, and countries retreat when their foreign policy is inactive. After President El-Sisi took office, Egypt witnessed a state of activity in its foreign policy (J4)*

Consequently, Egypt's foreign policy landscape showcases a strategic broadening that aligns with its core national objectives. And it's not deniable that moving depending on the national interest is a legal right in the international relations community. The findings from the journalistic corpus showed the unlinking between the used frames in the editorial items and the new features of Egyptian foreign policy according to the principle of national interest. Notably, in the dolomitic lens D1 referred to the new features of "inclusiveness and effectiveness" from experience dealing with the international community. Egypt's foreign policy transformation embodies inclusiveness, where the nation's engagement transcends traditional norms.

> *The fundamental change in Egyptian diplomacy in the new era is that it expanded the circle of interests instead of remaining confined between two main centres only, namely "Moscow" and "Washington." Relations were expanding towards China, India and the European Union.* (D1)

Collaborative partnerships with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Far East agreements such as the Belt and Road initiative (See Chapter 2), reflect a commitment to enhancing diplomatic efficacy. By embracing this inclusive approach, Egypt has not only augmented its diplomatic footprint but has also contributed to the overall stability of its regional milieu. Egypt's also boosted multilateral diplomacy and mediation. Assuming the mantle of a mediator in regional conflicts, Egypt leverages its historical and cultural connections to navigate diplomatic impasses. The emphasis on principled sovereignty is central to Egypt's foreign policy evolution and its prioritisation of resolving conflict through diplomatic channels as in its dealing with the Ethiopia crisis. Another new character has been added to the Egyptian foreign policy nature, which is boldness mixed with dynamism and strength. Robust responses to security challenges and audacious initiatives in diverse spheres underscore a newfound strength. This dynamism not only

epitomizes Egypt's foreign policy approach but is indicative of the nation's attempt to change its actions globally based on the national interest. (JW6) noticed from his long experience in BBC that:

> *"Dynamism" now characterizes Egypt's foreign policy, and it is taking more initiative to be proactive, and the voice of the Egyptian state has become clearer. This is the most important feature that distinguishes the new policy. There is more boldness even in the Egyptian diplomatic discourse, especially as far as the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood is concerned and the open critique of the support they are receiving from Western countries. There is also boldness to rebut Western media narratives about Egypt.* (JW6)

This "boldness" and "assertiveness" (JW6) is manifested in the rejection of Western intervention and mobilization of support from diverse partners. This rejection emanates from a strategic calculation, positioning Egypt as a self-determined architect of its fate, impervious to external imposition (R9). Accordingly, the phrase "national sovereignty" is repeatedly used by all interviewees. Egypt has been a strong advocate of national sovereignty in its foreign policy. This has led it to oppose foreign intervention in the affairs of other countries and to support the right of all countries to determine their destiny. Meanwhile, its aspiration to playing the role of a prominent middle-power requires interventionism and sometimes leads to apparent contradictions in the country's foreign policy discourse and behaviour. Egypt has also been critical of international organizations that it believes infringe on the sovereignty of member states.

Egypt's leadership aspirations within the region are confronted with intricate challenges. Balancing diverse stakeholder interests and managing the dynamics of a volatile region testifies to its enduring commitment to charting its leadership course amidst a challenging landscape. Abd-Elghaffar (2022) contended that Egypt's foreign policy shift is mainly a reflection of the country's domestic political changes. As Egypt forges ahead with its transformed foreign policy, an acknowledgement of potential challenges is essential. The aftermath of bold initiatives may demand patience to achieve the recovery, entailing recalibration and adaptation, as Egypt steers its diplomatic ship through uncharted waters as (D1, D2) said. That explains Egypt's trials to achieve the concept of "balance" externally to arrive at internal relief which will ultimately benefit all citizens.

Egypt has sought to maintain a balance between its traditional allies in the West and its growing economic and political ties with the East. This has been evident in its approach to the

Syrian Civil War (Chapter 2), where Egypt has supported the opposition against the Assad regime while also maintaining relations with Russia, which is a key ally of the Assad government. On the other side, Russia has enduring strategic interests in the region that have been served through a range of foreign policies (Mezran & Varvelli, 2019). The balance in the relations here boosts the concept of national sovereignty and the freedom to select allies regarding its national interests. In addition to mediating conflicts and supporting counter-terrorism efforts, Egypt has placed a high priority on economic development in its foreign policy. Hawthorne & Miller (2020) explained how Egypt's foreign policy shift is a result of the country's economic challenges. This has led it to seek closer economic ties with countries around the world, including China, India, and the Gulf States. According to this goal, Egypt has tried to play a leading role in regional development initiatives, such as the Nile Basin Initiative and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area. Due to several factors, including the threat of terrorism, instability in the region, and the country's economic challenges, Egypt's foreign policy had to be largely defensive. The main goal is to strengthen its military capabilities and to build alliances with countries that share its interests. Regardless of the critiques of the military regime, Egypt has made combating terrorism a top priority in its foreign policy. This has led it to cooperate with countries around the world to share intelligence and to disrupt terrorist networks. Egypt has also taken several steps to strengthen its security, including cracking down on extremism and improving border security. (R10) analysed the defensive feature of the Egyptian foreign policy and said:

> *It is a defensive foreign policy because of the accusations levelled at Egypt continuously, especially regarding the terrorist MB. Egypt is prioritising fight against "extremism and terrorism" more than before. That intensified under the current leadership due to the increased danger.* (R10)

2- Key effecting factors in the change.

Working in parallel on the external issues as well as the internal issues, Egypt embraced globalization in its foreign policy. This has led it to sign free trade agreements with countries around the world and to participate in international organizations. Egypt has also sought to attract foreign investment and to promote tourism. The traditional Egyptian foreign policy approach was based on the principle of non-alignment. This approach sought to avoid entanglement in great power rivalries and to maximize Egypt's independence (Mezran & Varvelli, 2019). Egypt's foreign policy was largely reactive, responding to events in the region rather than shaping them. The more

recent Egyptian foreign policy approach is more active and assertive as most of the interviewees agreed. Egypt has sought to play a more prominent role in regional and international affairs. This includes military strength, economic development, scientific and technological advancement, and soft power, which are all key components of middle-power politics. Notably, this is embodied in the creation of "new circles", which emerged after the discovery of gas in the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt's success in launching the "Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum," which has contributed to the establishment of close ties with the entire European community, whether in three-way or bilateral contexts. Egypt has also sought to strengthen its ties with key allies, such as the United States, Russia, and the European Union to enrich the "Strategic Quantum" as (JW8) illustrated in his interview.

The Arab Spring has led to several new and unstable political regimes in the region. The rise of political Islam has also posed a challenge to traditional power structures, creating a new security issue. Some observers have praised Egypt's newfound confidence and willingness to take on a leadership role in the region. Others have criticized Egypt's human rights record and its close ties to authoritarian regimes. However, Egypt always raised the slogan of "National Security". Foreign policy is ultimately driven by the goal of national security and seeks to ensure its territorial integrity, protect its citizens from harm, and promote its economic interests. The shift in Egyptian foreign policy is considered a necessary response to the Middle East's shifting security situation. Aly (2014) agreed with the same idea that Egypt's foreign policy change is a necessary adjustment to the changing security environment in the Middle East.

By going through the interviews, we find that proponents of Egypt's new foreign policy argue that it has been necessary to adapt to the changing realities of the Middle East. They point to the rise of China and India as major economic powers, the increasing instability in the region, and the threat of terrorism as factors that have made it necessary for Egypt to diversify its foreign relations. They also argue that Egypt's new focus on economic development and national security is essential for the country's long-term prosperity. Critics argue that it has been too accommodating to the new allies and has neglected Egypt's traditional allies, namely the United States. This has led to criticism from some Egyptians who believe that Egypt is too subservient to Russia. Egypt's focus on economic development has come at the expense of human rights and democracy and led to some restrictions on civil liberties. Critics argue that the government is using the threat of

terrorism as an excuse to crack down on dissent. The change in Egyptian foreign policy is a complex phenomenon. It is too early to say definitively whether Egypt's new foreign policy will be successful. However, the country is facing several challenges, and its foreign policy will need to be flexible to adapt to the changing circumstances.

• <u>**External strategies.**</u>

1- **Multidimensional diplomacy and middle-power policy:**

Most of the interviewees agree that Egypt's foreign policy in recent years has been characterized by a multidimensional diplomacy that has sought to balance its relationships with various powers and actors in the global and regional arena. Emphasizing standing at one distance from the various parties without discriminating between countries based on their political or economic systems. This approach is applied regardless of the differences in beliefs and values. That is apparent in maintaining good relations with Israel and the Palestinians, despite the ongoing conflict between the two sides, to achieve comprehensive peace in the region.

> *Egyptian foreign policy has authentic rules that stem from the principle of "non-alignment." First, Egypt does not interfere in the internal affairs of any other country. This is the most important rule in Egypt's foreign policy, and there should not be any relations with groups within a specific country, for example, as its relationship with countries is based on its communication with official authorities only.* (J5)

That interprets the clear approach of Egyptian foreign policy of non-interference in the internal issues of the countries and non-accepting foreign interference. Egypt does not consider the mediation in Libya Sudan and Gaza as interference in the internal issues, it is securing the borders and seeking security in the region (J5). It was clear from the BBC broadcaster's (JW6) statements that he personally experienced the bitterness of foreign interference in Egyptian affairs and the extent of Egypt's concern for its privacy. That manifests how much the problem-centred approach in the interviews proved itself to offer a fruitful approach for investigating the implicit dimensions of expert knowledge and integrating the experts' professional as well as personal experiences in the search for explanations as discussed by (Döringer, 2021). Carrying on multidimensional diplomacy, heading east is one of the targeted dimensions. Egypt sought to strengthen its ties with countries in the east, such as Russia, China, India, and Japan. These countries offer Egypt economic opportunities and potential partners in its efforts to balance its relationships with the

United States and Europe. To preserve the traditional partnerships, Egypt has close ties especially economically with the United States, The UK, and the European Union. These partnerships have been forged based on shared interests and common values. Notably, the most concentration for Egyptian policy is achieving the African depth, Egypt's focus on Africa is partly due to its historical ties to the continent. The new interest in Africa formed a prominent dimension in the foreign policy picture. Egypt has been a vocal supporter of the African Union to achieve sustainable development and has played a leading role in mediation efforts in Sudan and South Sudan. However, Egypt under Sissi has strategic objectives and it would probably be hard to achieve if it stood at one distance for all. Theoretically, Egypt claims this approach but practically it must prioritise one alley over the other according to its national interest. Egypt tries to preserve stability by maintaining solid relations with Israel and the USA, keeping cash flowing by satisfying the Gulf countries and diversifying the weapon sources by seeking good relations with China and Russia. According to those objectives it is in fact not applicable to stay completely at on equal distance from all, and this issue is manifest in more than one example: the hidden confrontation between Turkey and Qatar over the Muslim brotherhood crisis, and he weak connections with Iran. The multidimensional diplomacy approach can be seen in another perspective of diversifying the relations with the great powers such as voting against Russia's war in Ukraine with a rejection of the illegal penalties emphasizing respecting international law. Also bearing in mind that it is wise to not be involved in a conflict which could exhaust the Egyptian resources such as refusing to cooperate with Saudi Arabia in the war in Yemen.

Does balance mean pragmatic?

Egypt's foreign policy has been careful to maintain a balance between its relationships with various powers and actors. This balance is essential to Egypt's national security and its ability to pursue its economic and political interests. For example, Egypt has been able to maintain good relations with both the United States and Russia, despite their rivalry in the Middle East. To preserve the "balance strategy" Egypt is committed to acting responsibly and maturely in its foreign policy. Egypt does not want to be seen as a country that is easily swayed by outside powers or that is prone to making impulsive decisions. For example, Egypt has been careful to avoid taking sides in the ongoing rivalry between the United States and China. Egypt is also committed to neutralizing the powers that could potentially threaten its national security. This includes countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Egypt has sought to build strong relationships with countries that can help to balance

the power of these countries. For example, Egypt has strengthened its military cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in response to the growing threat posed by Iran. However, multidimensional diplomacy is caged by the most important factor in the new Egyptian foreign policy which is the "national interest", when it comes to this factor, either the balance or non-interference principle is applied.

> *Sisi's strategy has been fruitful thanks to the threat by the Egyptian regime to use Egyptian armed forces to stop the expansion of Turkey and the Militia in Libya.* (JW8)

National interest is the main driver of Egypt's foreign policy, this makes it move from the stage of applying balance only to applying pragmatism. The regime will not satisfy all parties. The authority attempts to apply the "balance" approach to extract the greatest benefits for the Egyptian regime and the Egyptian people, but this strategy is not successful all the time. Sometimes it came up against major challenges. It had to change this strategy, and the evidence of this was the interference of Saudi Arabia over Syria in Yemen in 2016. Saudi Arabia asked Egypt to participate with its armed forces, but Egyptians refused to take part in the war and preferred peaceful settlements. So even with the insistence on keeping the funding flow from Saudi Arabia, Egypt could not satisfy it all the time when it comes to the national interest trajectory. There are three schools in Sisi's foreign policy, but which school is central? The first school that President Sisi's foreign policy only serves his rule, the second school says that those policies serve the citizens' interest, and the third one is that it's a combination of both (Hadad, 2018). The interview analysis revealed that President al-Sisi considers both rule and national interests within his foreign policy decision-making. Egypt's foreign policy has traditionally been based on the principle of non-alignment, but in recent years it has become more pragmatic to achieve the targeted combination of interests including national security.

Egypt's multidimensional diplomacy has been praised by some for its pragmatism and its ability to balance its relationships with various powers and actors as it has been largely successful in achieving its goals, but applying the pragmatism made Egypt too accommodating to powerful countries such as the United States and Israel. Potential over-reliance on certain partners, leading to vulnerability in case of shifts in their policies. This approach may expose Egypt to geopolitical entanglements and dilute its traditional role as a mediator. In addition, its engagement in Africa

might be driven by economic self-interest rather than genuine partnership. The utilization of African countries as mere markets could risk perpetuating neo-colonial dynamics.

> *Multilateral diplomacy in international relations is never easy. What is easier is adopting allies and building blocks and relationships with clear definitions and axes, but Egypt has the method of "not putting eggs in one basket." Egypt tried to build balanced international relations despite these countries' varying goals and interests.* (JW6)

There are fundamental changes in Egyptian foreign policy, which has become primarily based on the public interest and security, even if this comes at the expense of its role as a primary mediator in the Middle East or a saviour in some sensitive issues that may threaten its peace. These strategic objectives made it adopt a policy of multilateral diplomacy so that its foreign policy became more pragmatic, despite the threat of losing most international relations if it stood at the same distance from everyone. However, Egypt's central location, its history, the diversity of its foreign interests, and the pursuit of maturity in dealing with challenges may allow it freedom in the field of international relations.

> *Egypt is exposed to damaging relations with all countries in the end, but Egypt has elements that allow it to avoid this outcome, such as its regional and geographical situation and its importance in sensitive political intersections".* (JW6)

Straddling the middle ground could result in Egypt being sidelined in shaping outcomes. Egypt's multidimensional diplomacy reflects a complex approach with both strengths and vulnerabilities. While its strategic flexibility and historical insights offer advantages, potential pitfalls lie in the risk of being perceived as inconsistent or overly cautious. An ongoing discourse around these facets will be crucial for Egypt to fine-tune its approach and effectively navigate a rapidly evolving global landscape.

2- Diplomatic resolutions of geopolitical conflicts.

The Middle East as a "troubled region idea" is prominent in the framing of Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press regardless of the new circumstances. The interviewees analysed and interpreted the frames in the Western press in the two prominent causes during the study time frame which are "Gaza" and "Libya". geopolitical matters were considered as strategic priorities

for the interviewees, their tone was to insist on national security regardless of the intervention accuses in the Western narratives. The data gathered from journalistic samples showed that all external powers are competing to intervene in the Libya conflict while the interviewees see that it is the Egyptian right to protect the borders and prevent the other powers from dividing "the Libyan cake" as their expression.

- **National security**

Egyptian foreign policy is influenced by various factors, as previously discussed in chapter 2. National security and interest-driven foreign policy were identified as key priorities. One of the salient concerns about the political geography of Egypt, as observed in the analysis of Western newspapers, is the Libyan crisis. Two significant concerns have lately arisen in relation to the Egyptian borders, including the matter of Sudan and the Israeli incursion into Gaza. However, the analysis of the study sample was conducted within the time frame of 2018-2021 while the interpretive approach utilised in this analysis involved expert interviews conducted prior to the occurrence of recent events.

- **Libyan conflict**

The consensus among the interviewees was clear, as they collectively acknowledged the Libya matter as a national security concern for Egypt. It was widely recognised that Egypt possesses the complete entitlement to safeguard its borders and engage with the neighbouring nation in a manner that effectively serves the public interest of the state. Egypt has consistently emphasised the significance of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations on multiple occasions. According to the interviewees, although this concept is not observed in the current situation, involvement is deemed unavoidable. "Egypt's declared foreign policy goal in Libya is to build up a politically stable neighbour, with a centralised army structure, capable of engaging a potent jihadist enemy and ensuring territorial sovereignty" (Mühlberger, 2016).

During the study's timeframe Egypt's approach to the Libyan crisis was marked by two key moments: initially, military support to one side, and when this strategy failed, Egypt supported a diplomatic solution (2020 Cairo declaration) which is based on respect for all international

resolutions regarding the unity of Libya.[26] The journalistic frames in this subject used the wording of "war" and "intervention". The Interviewees noted that the Egyptian dealing with this file embodies the "national security" and "interests" approach through these points:

- The adaptability of Egypt's foreign policy to changing circumstances and favouring of diplomatic solutions over military intervention.
- The awareness of Turkey as a competing middle-power and desire to distance Egypt's foreign policy from a Turkey-style kind of foreign policy behaviour.

Turkey's intervention in Libya has influenced Egypt's reassessment of its policy in the region, as Turkey and Egypt are regional adversaries. The eastern Mediterranean gas dispute between Turkey and Greece has become a primary source of tension. However, (JW8) emphasized that the Libya case was the best model showing that Egyptians succeeded in achieving its strategic objectives through diplomatic means.

> *Egypt backed one side over the other, which was a mistake in the beginning, but then slightly shifted throughout the years to more neutrality and started to build some credibility with the Libyan West. The second characteristic was the competition between Egypt and Turkey. And this was not only a geo-strategic competition. But also, it's a competition over the stability of the regime in Egypt and how Egyptian strategists thought about stopping this threat from reaching the borders.* (JW8)

- **Water diplomacy**

The analysis of the news sample in Chapter Six reveals that the Western media failed to emphasise Egypt's historical entitlements to the Nile River. Additionally, there were suggestions that Egypt was obstructing Ethiopia's rights to the advancement of its economy. According to the interviewees Egypt has raised the slogan of "life before development", and this issue is a matter of life or death for the country and its citizens. The diplomat interviewee (D1) spoke from the international perspective and noted that Western press does not look to the river issue from the perspective of international rivers law and there is framing to the river conflict news without linking it to the existence of two factors of the Egyptian side "the historical agreements" and "water poverty".

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[26] The announcement is made on State information Service, an electronic platform belonging to the Egyptian foreign affairs ministry, that provide all news and reports regarding the country's foreign policy activities.

The Ethiopians want to cancel all treaties and agreements, but there are historical rights to the international river, and we wanted to sign a detailed agreement governing the management of filling and operating this dam, they refuse that because they are not convinced that this river is international. They seek to generate electricity and export it. So far, we are committed to finding a political solution. (D1)

Using "the human security paradigm" (Pemunta et *al.*, 2021) explained how water access as a human right depicts an eminent clash and uneasiness between Egypt's national security interests and Ethiopia's socioeconomic development. The interviewees agreed on the Egyptian strategy of the political solution, contrary to what is indicated in the western press by using "war frame"in the coverage.

- **Political Solution:** The Nile River is sacred to both Egypt and Ethiopia. It is the source of life for both countries, and it has played a central role in their cultures for centuries. There is a danger that the dispute over the GERD could lead to conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia. This would be a disaster for both countries and for the entire Nile Basin region. Both Egypt and Ethiopia need to show wisdom and rationality in resolving the dispute over the GERD. War would be a disaster for both countries and for the entire Nile Basin region (D1, R10, JW6). The best way to resolve the dispute is through a political solution. Egypt and Ethiopia need to reach an agreement on the filling and operation of the dam that considers the needs of all Nile Basin countries. This conflict is a classic example of an upstream-downstream conflict. Upstream countries like Ethiopia want to develop their water resources, while downstream countries like Egypt fear that this development will threaten their water security.

    In the water file specifically, there are certain countries that do not want there to be a precedent in the Security Council of fairness to a "downstream" country over an "upstream" country so that this scenario will not be repeated in the future and the upstream countries remain in control. There is also the use of this matter to put pressure on Egypt in other files. (J4)

Using this card as a pressure tool was also discussed by Pemunta and his colleagues they said:

    The Western donor community (especially the USA) is allegedly offering biased mediation in favour of Egypt, to the extent that foreign aid to Ethiopia has been halted to expedite talks over the GERD. the whole conversation risks ceasing to be about the disagreements between Ethiopia and Egypt but about competition for power between China and the USA, whose battleground is the GERD (Pemunta et al., 2021).

Then That argument supports the interviewee's interpretation that the USA uses Egypt to achieve its goals against China. The alteration of the region's water politics and dynamics has the potential to initiate a new epoch of water collaboration in the basin. The water regime of the Nile basin continues to be a crucial aspect of the strategic and security policies of the states in the region. Furthermore, having access to the Nile water is a reliable assurance of economic affluence for households, towns, and large-scale companies in the region. Simultaneously, every form of meddling has the potential to incite political, economic, and military reprisals from neighbouring countries. As (J4) illustrated the Nile paper card in geopolitical conflict concerns. However, Egypt's aspiration to play the role of middle-power in the focus of its foreign policy behaviour on regions close to its borders, but when we talk about the Nile issue, it is great power politics that is at stake as it is a fatal issue as the interviewees and the officials confirmed The question you should ask is whether this dynamic is not reflected in western journalistic coverage, the frames deal with the topics as a competing sides on waters and in some narratives (see chapter 7) the western press portray Egypt as if it seek preventing Ethiopia from the development.

- **Media treatments:** The interviewees interpret the Western media's coverage of the GERD problem in Egypt as cursory due to their lack of information regarding the subject's significance to Egyptian national security. Foreign correspondents, who are not residents of Egypt, and many leading journalists in the Western world lack knowledge of Egypt's historical facts and the significance of the Nile River (JW6). According to the interviewees, especially the journalists working in Western media outlets, an incorrect evaluation of the Western journalists' mindset explains why Egyptian decision-makers lost interest in Western media. A journalist who has been working on foreign policy in Egypt for more than 20 years (J4) suggested that the Western frames regarding this topic pertain to "journalistic ignorance", "journalistic manipulation" or "Western double standards".

    Every state knows the principle of "life before development" and the picture is clear. The manipulation here from the Western media or its non-awareness of this issue is the West's issue, not our problem. If the danger was in their country, their reaction would have been different and here we see double standards. (J4)

Furthermore, in Chapter 7 the analysis illustrates that the coverage was not complete or sufficient regarding this issue. (JW6) (R10) interpreted ignoring or not covering fully and reducing the amount of international media interest in the issue by monitoring that the coverage was insufficient compared to the magnitude of the issue. There exists a form of unawareness regarding the significance and gravity of this matter, despite the attention and overemphasis on other matters, as previously noted. It is conceivable that Ethiopia is more effective in expressing its perspective, and it is also plausible that Western sources have clarified that there is no fundamental danger to Egypt's existence. The fundamental interpretation of the rationale behind disregarding and failing to provide comprehensive findings on the matter remains mysterious. These are possible scenarios, but in general, media coverage was not at the expected level, appropriate to the importance of the issue for the Egyptian people. Conversely, the Egyptian side consistently emphasised that the Ethiopian side lacks regard for international treaties and established international regulations on international rivers (R10). The Western media disregarded Ethiopian violations and instead focused solely on its entitlement to development. This argument elucidates the concept of agenda theory (Chapter 4) and guides selectively utilising information while disregarding other facts, depending on the objectives of the agenda. The researcher interviewee referred to "the wise" in government dealing and the "double standards" of the Western media.

> *The Egyptian position in this regard is one of caution, not weakness because the alternative is war. The current Ethiopian government is arbitrary and extremist, and the West itself accused it of "genocide" in some areas. War is a difficult adventure that will have a high cost for both parties. Egypt is keen not to shed blood. Ethiopia is one of the worst governments in the world in terms of commitment. In cases where international treaties are not respected, we find no option other than war, but it is a dangerous and costly decision for each party. We still find double standards in Western media as those facts about Ethiopia rarely have been mentioned* (R10).

• **Domestic challenges.**

The third theme which stems from going through the transcription of the interviews is the domestic and regional "surrounding challenges" and their influence on the Egyptian foreign policy itself. By further exploring the statements made by the interviewees, the researcher was able to identify and analyse three key dimensions within this framework which are as follows:

1- The Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

Due to a multitude of intricate and occasionally conflicting factors, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was unable to effectively persuade both local audiences and regional stakeholders of its capacity to facilitate a feasible democratic transition for Egypt or enhance a middle-power role for the country (Monier& Ranko, 2013). The challenges arising from the political circumstances rendered this task arduous. Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has traditionally relied on transnational nonstate networks as a foundation for its organisational structure, aiming to disseminate its message rather than directly exerting control over national or regional policies. However, the country has chosen to adopt a more ambitious approach towards its foreign policy, and tried to garner support from the public, who tend to favour a more robust and autonomous Egypt. It is possible that MB did not recognise the appeal of sovereignty to the Egyptian public in the aftermath of the "Arab spring". The level of domestic support had a significant increase following Egypt's effective mediation of the Gaza conflict in 2012. "It is not so much the MB's political vision that has been rejected but its inability to incorporate the new post-Arab Spring ideas into it or to demonstrate real progress in securing Egypt's interests (Monier& Ranko, 2013).

The interviewees provided their interpretation as to whether MB was suitable to govern based on their personal experiences with the MB file. In the previous two chapters, MB is portrayed in the "victim" frame and has been described as political opponents, The expert interviews show a different portrait describing them as a "lobby in the west", " historical violence group", functional tools" and looking for the power.

- According to the journalists from the interviewees (J5), with 25 years of experience reporting on MB news and events, was regarded as the most knowledgeable journalist in Egypt on this subject. Elkhateeb described the MB as "functional tools" that can be employed by external states or organisations to carry out missions in various locations. (JW7) said that the (MB) has excellent network in western communities which constituted a strong "lobby"

- The researchers from the interviewees referred to (MB) as a historical continuous conflict on power, they see the group as a source of criminal activities, anti-democratic and counter-revolutionaries, in the sense that they advocate ideas that go against the demands of the people who took part in the "Arab Spring" (R9). (R10) referred to the historical relationship between the (MB) and the UK in terms of sheltering them under the so-called "political freedom protection", he noted that the British adoption of (MB) is not only for human rights but they are used as a

pressure card for obtaining gains. He sees that religious extremism is being used in the foreign policy strategies towards Egypt.

- The diplomats from the interviewees (D1) (D2) noted that MB assumed power eight decades later, establishing a dormant presence within Egyptian society, with aspirations of indefinite rule, a long-held ambition. However, following the rejection by the Egyptian people in 2013, their focus shifted towards devising strategies to perpetuate the dissemination of deceptive information and exploiting the prevalent discourse surrounding "human rights" in Europe. Due to their instrumental nature and the backing, which they receive from multiple nations, media platforms have become repositories of MB ideology. England stands out as their main ally due to the substantial assets MB held in English banks. Consequently, the convergence of political dissent and capital within the press leads to questionable news content production. It is evident that Western journalism schools have no grounds to defend groups that espouse sinister ideologies. It is important to acknowledge that there exists a conceptual disagreement about the categorization of MB, particularly in relation to the opposition party inside the nation. This discrepancy leads to the disregard of reprehensible offences to uphold the notion of opposition and engage in the dynamics of oppression. The functional role of MB can be readily manipulated by the provision of material assistance to facilitate the execution of specific agendas by foreign countries or organisations. Egypt views the MB as a burden and source of unrest due to their involvement in various acts of terrorism, such as organised attacks in Sinai and bombings in Cairo following the removal of President Morsi. Additionally, the Muslim Brotherhood has been implicated in the assassination of former President Sadat in 1981.

The journalists, diplomats and researchers interviewees (D2, JW7, R9) agreed that the MB nature is not well understood by the West communicators, and this leads to fake news, bias, and mispresenting which pose a direct danger to journalistic integrity and objectivity in reporting. According to the interviewees, MB is seen as a tool in the hands of foreign powers. They are Powerful elites with access to Western media and collaborators with foreign powers.

Political pluralism or terrorism?

What is the legality of incorporating a politically violent faction, which has a documented record of engaging in terrorist activities, into the realm of politics to attain democratic governance and

foster political diversity? In the minds of the interviewees, there is definitive evidence that establishes a connection between MB and terrorist organisations. The Egyptian Government has officially designated MB as a terrorist organisation, a classification that some countries have also adopted. However, it is important to note that there is a lack of substantial and conclusive evidence establishing direct links between the (MB) and militant terrorist groups. Instead, the linkage is often inferred through circumstantial evidence, such as the increase in terrorist activities and bombings in Egypt following the ousting of President Morsi. Additionally, the MB 's ideological stance on implementing Islamic law and employing violence as a means of punishment, particularly through jihadist acts, has contributed to its reputation as a breeding ground for individuals involved in criminal activities such as murder and assassinations within Egypt.

> *They know the slogans that flatter Western satisfaction, such as "democracy" and "human rights." These slogans, when played with, contribute to shaping the attitudes of Western journalists because this is the language that suits them. However, if Western writers were able to scrutinize the speeches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Arabic, they will find it takfiri[27] and anti-humanitarian. The West does not see this because when terrorists go to them, they repeat the slogan "human rights."* (J5)

The influence exerted by the (MB) is seen as a threat to Egyptian identity and a threat to the established civil society. This erosion of values was undermining the country's longstanding commitment to a moderate interpretation of religion, one that rejects extremism and violence. During their short period in power, the MB exhibited a tendency to curtail individual liberties and diminish the societal role of women by advocating for their exclusion from the workforce and imposition of the veil (JW7). Furthermore, they strategically employed religious rhetoric, exemplified by their slogan "If you love God, you must vote for the Brotherhood," which served as an electoral strategy, particularly targeting less educated and culturally diverse communities (D2). On the other hand, MB are embedded in Western society and have vast networks and connections whether in the press or political establishments. It was not clear to Western correspondents and journalists that the issue in Egypt regarding MB was not about democracy or dictatorship. This lack of clarity contrasts with the aggressive sentiment of prioritizing Egypt's interests during the 2011 revolt. Mubarak was removed due to the perception that he prioritized

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[27] The ideology of "jihad" and "Takfir" means violence against liberal Muslims or Christians. Takfir is to brand someone as "non-Muslim" and therefore as a political enemy to whom different laws apply.

his own private interests, while Morsi faced opposition for prioritizing the Islamic mission ((Monier& Ranko, 2013). The revolution's objectives were primarily focused on Egypt, opposing authoritarianism, and advocating for independence (R9). Morsi became a representative of autocratic rule and weak regional governance (J4). Yet the Western press insists on framing that as a democratic battle and protection of the opposition as mentioned in (Chapter 7).

2- Dominance of the economic factor:

The economic factor was so obvious in the shifts of the Egyptian policy, that the concept of change prioritised the economic interest. The new foreign policy is becoming more tied to generating economic value, it is not determined by ideologies or traditional alliances that much. The alliances' map is based on economic interest. Notably, the interviews gave the impression that Egyptian foreign policy is using the soft powers as public diplomacy to manage the country's image and link it with business interests. Bishara (2013) argues that "Egypt's foreign policy under Sisi has been focused on economic development and diversification, and it has sought to attract foreign investment and trade from a range of countries (See Chapter 2). All interviewees agreed that the approach of "cancellation of painkillers" metaphorically meant that Egypt has cancelled several subsidies and other government programs to reduce the country's budget deficit and improve its credit rating despite the people suffering from high living costs.

- The Researchers emphasized that at the level of foreign policy, Egypt suffers from economic dependency. It depends on several countries, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This dependence has made the country vulnerable to external shocks, such as the decline in oil prices, also it embarrasses the state if it wants to make a dependent political decision.

    The economic factor is very important in directing Egypt's foreign policy, this is based on Egypt's economic suffering, and it is very common in the field of foreign policy. "Economic dependency" creates a kind of dependence on funding sources on which foreign relations are built. (R9)

- According to the journalists, the dominance of the economic factor in Egypt's foreign policy could be criticized for being too focused on short-term gains and depending on a

loan from the IMF. That neglects the country's long-term development needs. briefed on the economic situation in Egypt. (J4) explained:

The borrowing rate before 2011 was 35% of the national product. The size of the debt was 35 billion and the national product was 110 billion dollars. Today, the debt ratio is 37% of Egypt's national product, which has become more than 420 billion dollars. Egypt achieved a growth rate of more than 9% during the Corona period, thus surpassing China. (J4)

- The diplomat (D1) said the economic strategy is trying to approach sustainability through the development of renewable energy sources and the promotion of green growth, and diversifying sources by strengthening ties with China, Russia, and India, while privatising state-owned enterprises to reduce subsidies. However, while some may blame the country's economic downturn on the government's privatisation policy or other temporary causes, such a focus is nothing more than a diversion. According to Abuhelal (2023) "privatisation is evident in the higher rate of creativity, whether in inventions, lowering production costs, opening markets or other advantages that central authority does not possess". But the case of Egypt's privatisation policy represents some peculiar elements, namely in the army's blatant control over and purchase of many companies, including the largest media production company in Egypt, and the establishment of army sales outlets on the Egyptian street that offer products at reasonable prices to citizens. In the foreign policy realm, the armed forces leadership remained highly influential in pursuing its interests by applying this dominance.
- The journalists in Western outlets referred to the government interests. (E10) said that the army's huge interference in the economy is part of the army establishment's interests, while the rest of the interviewees ignored that fact or justified the economic takeover by the army as a trial of reducing loads on the citizens. People are outraged by these actions, believing that it equates to a surrender of sovereignty. They also jeopardise the interests of Egypt's armed forces, which are the regime's main supporters. When evaluated objectively, the sale of some important firms to the Gulf does not necessarily contradict the broader public's interests. In this point, (D1) said, On the contrary, it resolves a very old problem, while the new private-sector leadership boosts the possibilities of Egyptian goods competing on the worldwide market. Another significant benefit is that the government will no longer worry

about giving Egyptian army corporations exemptions and preferential treatment. This will result in tens of billions of dollars in revenue from those businesses and help reduce the government's budget deficit.

3- local circumstances and national interests.

The significance of local conditions arises from their direct influence on the national obligation to safeguard the public interest, hence determining the indicators of positions at the international level and the characteristics of foreign policy, as exemplified in the case of Egypt. The prevailing inclination of the interviewees affirms the existence of numerous primary objectives in the country's foreign policy, the majority of which stem from domestic contexts. The main challenge is achieving social and economic stability (DeRouen & Goldfinsh, 2012). Yet, seeking stability according to the interviewees requires development, building the country's infrastructure, and combatting the extremists. On the ground, a genuine predicament hinders the pursuit of stability, as the country is economically depleted because of enduring consecutive catastrophic events, particularly the 2011 and 2013 revolutions, as well as the Corona epidemic. The fatigued economy posed a significant barrier to the attainment of the state's strategic objectives, and the emphasis on the economy resulted in the disregard of Egypt's worldwide reputation, either deliberately owing to a lack of trust in the global community or inadvertently due to domestic priorities. The real comprehensive reform that Egypt aims for depends primarily on radical solutions, for example, getting rid of slums and eliminating subsidies on food and petroleum products. The interviewees generally emphasized that these radical reforms would not be built until security threats were eliminated and that the people approved the growth of the state's military capacity and gave it a mandate for internal reform after the 2013 revolution. This public approval and the citizens' desire for reform and construction clashed with the concept of democracy of Western media outlets and contributed to the expansion of the intellectual gap between the historical role of Egyptian military culture and Western views.

Regarding the media aspect, there is a major negligence from the Egyptian side for international media. The interviewees rationalised this by expressing a loss of faith in altering the prevailing stereotype of Egypt in the Western media. However, there is a general agreement that the Egyptian government lacks interest in communicating with foreign media or shaping external public perception.

The diplomats referred to the absence of media capabilities is due to the lack of experts proficient in addressing the Western audience using its specific vocabulary and concepts (D2). Consequently, there is a lack of persuasive prowess, and the media discourse in Egypt is deficient since it fails to substantiate its statements with irrefutable proof. That aligns with the notion that shifts in Egypt's foreign policy have not been supported by a robust strategy in public diplomacy The latter is concerned with the perception and communication of policies to a broader audience outside decision-makers and diplomatic elites and as mentioned in (Chapter 2) the employment of new public diplomacy could change the western press narratives. There is a failure to provide clear explanations of the facts and to rely on compelling arguments that shape the foreign correspondent's conviction. In addition, there was a lack of effort in activating media bureaus overseas to effectively communicate the state's perspective to international media organisations.

- Another fundamental argument from journalist who is working in news production is that the Egyptians deal negatively with the international media. Besides ignoring the clarifications or providing sufficient information, they deliberately mistreat international correspondents whether by the huge restrictions or the autocratic state rules regarding journalistic freedom.

  The international media must be placed on the list of priorities and the restrictions represented in statements and security restrictions must be eased. The idea of the "treacherous West" and "conspiracy theory" must also be challenged. A comprehensive study must also be written to restore communication with the West and not prevent or avoid them. (J3)

- The researchers said that undoubtedly, the media sector in Egypt requires significant improvement. One of Egypt's most significant internal issues is the government's control over the media landscape, which severely limits freedom of expression. Furthermore, prioritising state-building over the promotion of liberties due to concerns about security threats does not provide a valid justification for disregarding perceptions of the country's foreign policy in international media.

- ## **The stereotyping.**

The narrative above has explained several aspects of change in Egyptian foreign policy and answered the question on "the new foreign policy shifts during the study's timeframe." The content analysis in (chapter 6) showed that there is a gap between those shifts and the representation of the news in the Western media. To acknowledge the reasons for that gap, the analysis of the interviews monitored the stereotyping in the representation of Egyptian foreign policy that has been obvious in most responses of the interviewees. During reading the expert interviews, prominent codes have been discovered that would enrich the study. I organised them into three categories which are deducted from the interviews analysis data, the features, the justifications, and the correspondents.

1-The Features:

No media in any part of the world can be said to be entirely neutral (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), however, the shifts in the new Egyptian foreign policy are supposed to be addressed in the media according to the objectivity criteria. The Western press has a long history of stereotyping Egyptian foreign policy. This stereotyping is often rooted in Orientalist tropes and assumptions about the Middle East as a region of conflict, instability, and authoritarianism. According to the interviewees, one common stereotype is the "dictatorship frame". This frame portrays Egypt as a country ruled by a repressive dictator who is hostile to democracy and human rights. This frame is often used to justify Western intervention in Egyptian events such as the 2013 coup that toppled the democratically elected government of Mohamed Morsi. That frame ignored that the revolution of 2013 has been constituted of the public will. (R9) justified this in his interview that there is an overlap between dictatorship and the principle of "national sovereignty" in the Western mentality.

> *The principle of national sovereignty, unfortunately, has undergone many transformations, especially after the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, which were represented by the idea of interfering in the affairs of states and changing regimes by force, the "failed state" and the collapse of states. (R9)*

Another common stereotype is the "police state" frame. This frame portrays Egypt as a country where the police and security forces have unchecked power and engage in widespread human rights abuses. This frame is often used to highlight the Egyptian government's crackdown on dissent and its use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Most of the coverage uses this term and inserts it into the editorial material regarding Egyptian foreign policy. A "Coup" frame has

been used the most in the study period as illustrated in the articles content analysis (Chapter 6). The Western media platforms do not agree that what happened in Egypt in 2013 was a revolution just like the 2011 revolution. There are many interpretations from the interviewees regarding this point. Some referred to non-objectivity, Stereotyping, ignoring the truth, conspiracy theories, focusing on the negativity (disruptive approach Ch.4), MB lobby or political-culture differences.

> *There is stereotyping of what is happening in Egypt and this is based on the prevailing political visions in the West and the nature of the West's concept of political systems. This is because of the West's view that what happened in Egypt is inconsistent with their political principles. For example, the term "coup" was prevalent in most British media.*(JW6)

The "torture and repression" frame is closely related to the police state frame and is often used to build a case for international sanctions against Egypt.

> *Sometimes that is an excuse, which the West use as a political manoeuvre to gain an interest. (J4)*

The conflict frame is used to portray Egypt as a country that is constantly at war or on the brink of war. This frame is often used to cover Egypt's relations with its neighbours, such as Israel, Sudan, and Libya. The conflict frame can also be used to cover Egypt's internal political conflicts, such as the insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula. The human rights frame is used to highlight the Egyptian government's human rights record. This frame is often used to criticize the Egyptian government's crackdown on dissent, its use of torture, its detention of political prisoners, and the plight of marginalized groups in Egypt, such as Coptic Christians. One of the obvious features of the Western media which Elkhateb referred to is the media restriction state frame which is used to highlight the Egyptian government's tight control over the media. This frame is often used to criticize the Egyptian government's censorship of independent media and its imprisonment of journalists.[28] The President's image is used to create a negative image of the Egyptian president, by emphasizing his authoritarian tendencies and his human rights record. The negative President's image also created a sense of distance between the Egyptian people and their government. "Criticism" approach is one of the obvious stereotypes that are used to frame Egyptian foreign policy in the Western press. Unjustified attack is used to describe allegations against Egypt that

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[28] "Mohamed Ali" called for a revolution from his accommodation in Spain and more than 3000 protests gathered in " Tahrir Square" by publishing old photos. We did not witness this gathering number in the square and no media platform reported this as less than 25 people were protesting in the square during that day.

are not supported by evidence. This can be manifested in allegations of human rights abuses, corruption, and interference in other countries' internal affairs. The repetition of those stereotypes and negative language created "rooted ideas" about Egyptian foreign policy regardless of the fundamental shifts which have been mentioned above. Stereotypes can be difficult to challenge because they are often seen as common sense.

> *We do not deny that Egypt has practical problems related to human rights, but they are certainly not as "Huge" as they are portrayed. The problems that we have in the human file have "functional reasons." Our policemen are accustomed to working in confronting "terrorists" for most of their working lives. (J3)*

Ignoring the positives is the practice of ignoring or downplaying positive news about Egypt. This can include news about economic growth, social development, infrastructure development, enhancing the citizen's security, living the freedom of social beliefs and cultural achievements. The presentation of news and information in a way that is biased or subjective can involve using emotive language, selecting facts to support a particular point of view, or omitting important information. Deliberate distortion as well the intentional misrepresentation of facts and information can be done to create a negative image of Egypt or to justify Western intervention.

> *The reliance of Western media on unilateral readings to the exclusion of official Egyptian sources is an issue. Even if these official sources are cited, Western media use only the ones that agree with their point of view and do not present the full picture nor do they present all dimensions, even in some areas that are "open to discussion" are not dealt with logically. (E4)*

Those features of stereotyping have been discussed by the interviewees and have been shown through the content analysis of the study sample of news articles leading to "the reasons" from their point of view.

2- The reasons:

Stereotyping Egyptian foreign policy in Western media platforms is complex and we cannot emphasize the rationale of that but can refer to a combination of reasons stemming from the interviewees' views. Western media often has a set **agenda** when it comes to covering Egypt. This agenda is often shaped by the interests of powerful actors, such as governments, corporations, and think tanks.

- According to the diplomats (D1) said Western media may be more likely to cover stories that fit with the US government's agenda in Egypt, even if they are not representative of the reality of Egypt's foreign policy. Many Western journalists and editors lack a deep understanding of Egypt and its foreign policy. This can lead to **misunderstandings** and misinterpretations of Egyptian actions. The Western mentality may not understand Egyptian society's nature and indicates some coverage based on their beliefs more than Egyptian beliefs. Western media often misunderstands the nuances of Egyptian culture and politics. This can lead to simplistic and inaccurate portrayals of Egypt's foreign policy For example, the Western media may portray Egypt as a monolithic entity, when in fact it is a diverse country with a wide range of political views (D2).

- The researchers referred to another interpretation, they said that the **Muslim Brotherhood controls** the Western media. MB is a controversial Islamist group that was in power in Egypt from 2012 to 2013. Some Western media outlets have close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and are sympathetic to its agenda. This can lead to biased coverage of Egyptian foreign policy. For example, these media outlets may portray the Muslim Brotherhood as a democratic and moderate group, when in fact it has a history of violence and extremism (Alsultany, 2013). The researchers said they are very strong in the think tanks and most of them are persuasive and well English-spoken and covered by solid funds.

Western media relies mainly on narratives from sources with certain political tendencies. 99% of Western media coverage about Egypt and Egyptian foreign policy is a "negative, stereotypical" image taken from sources and "Think Tank" information centres, and it adopts ideas hostile to the state. The Egyptian, Arab, and Islamic communities in European countries are controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Western media arena is left to one political movement that is hostile to the state, so it is natural for the image to be negative, and I also see this in the international conferences that I attend, a stereotype that does not change. (R9)

- The journalist mentioned several factors which causes steotyping. (J5) worked on MB file for more than 20 years in the Egyptian press he described MB as functional tools that can be used or hired to achieve specific goals for organisations or countries. **The accumulation** factor also has a great effect. The Western media often focuses on negative news stories about Egypt which leads to a cumulative effect, creating the impression that Egypt is a

country in constant turmoil. For example, the Western media may focus on stories about terrorist attacks, political repression, and economic problems in Egypt, while ignoring positive news stories. That is rooted in the **different cultures,** Western media and Egyptian culture are very different. This can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Egyptian actions. Western media may view Egyptian foreign policy through a Western lens, when in fact Egypt has its own unique set of values and interests. relying on unreliable sources of information about Egypt can lead to the spread of misinformation about Egyptian foreign policy. Depending on opposition groups or human rights organizations for information about Egypt, these groups may have a vested interest in misrepresenting the Egyptian government. **One-sided readings** of Egyptian foreign policy can lead to inaccurate and incomplete portrayals of Egypt's actions. Western press may focus on the views of opposition groups or human rights organizations while ignoring the views of the Egyptian government and the public (J4). In general, media often focuses on sensational, conflict, dispute, and negative news stories. News media are not neutral channels reflecting the events; they are shaped by organisational, political, economic, and cultural forces that influence the practices of newsgathering and the content of news (Andrews, Caren 2010). This is because sensational news sells. They focus on stories about violence, corruption and scandals in Egypt while ignoring the achievements and developments which are more mundane stories.

Professionally, in my estimation, political news is the most attractive, hottest, and most watched news for them. I also see that the West is unable to see Egypt differently. The stereotype is entrenched in their minds. Any successes or even political changes are not seen. It has been the same tone for a long time. Even the "Climate" conference 2022, which is a purely environmental conference, was also negatively politicized. (J5)

- The three categories of the interviewees agreed that there is often **miscommunication** between the Western media and Egyptian officials. Egyptian officials may be reluctant to speak to the Western media, or they may be unable to communicate their message clearly (D2). This could result in making inaccurate assumptions about Egypt's intentions (JW7). For example, the Egyptian government may not respond to requests for comment from the Western media, or it may provide vague and evasive answers. Egyptians say that it does not matter anymore how the West views them as they will write negatively about them

regardless of what they say (J3). (J4) suggested during his interview that the government tends to ignore how Western media cover its foreign policy insofar as it believes that what matters is its dealings with Western governments and not Western media. However, (R9) argued that Egypt does not have a public diplomacy capabilities and techniques to speak with the West. (J3) also indicated that international correspondents in Egypt are faced with some difficulties to cover the country accurately. Journalists may be harassed or intimidated by the Egyptian government, or they may be unable to access reliable sources of information and that created a lack of trust on both sides. Moreover, interviewees stressed the key role of **public diplomacy** and **political PR**. But on the other hand (J4) warned about PR firms' trade which depends on presenting "disruptive news" about countries to earn from responding back for defending themselves, he said:

Sometimes this is done to promote PR firms that rely on slanderous articles in the press to attract customers who will use them in mediation to defend themselves and reverse these damaging perceptions. There are billions of dollars spent in the "PR market." These businesses already focus on defamatory articles published in newspapers. Newspapers discussed both positively and negatively, that the "PR trade" would end. (J4)

These confluences of factors could explain how Egyptian foreign policy is presented in a disruptive manner. Neglect of foreign media by the Egyptian side, divergent political ideologies, western predilection for opposition, and ideological divisions all played a role in the disparate picture. Cairo also believes it will constantly face criticism if the MB are removed from power.

3-The correspondents:

Another key theme which the interviewees evoked concern Western correspondents and their negative attitudes towards Egypt and the political system, which could result in biased coverage. Sometimes they frame Egypt as a dangerous and unstable country, or they may portray Egyptians as being backward and superstitious. correspondents may fabricate stories about Egypt to sell more newspapers or generate more clicks. They tend to focus on the Egyptian government's use of torture, or they may fabricate stories about the rise of Islamic extremism in Egypt. Focusing on stories about terrorist attacks, protests, and political instability in Egypt creates an exciting element which sells more (Ghanem, 2016). Moreover, they may give more coverage to opposition groups in Egypt than to the government, which creates a one-sided view of Egyptian politics, such as

focusing on stories about the Egyptian government's crackdown on dissent, while ignoring stories about the government's efforts to improve the lives of its citizens. Relying on unreliable sources of information such as opposition groups or human rights organizations can lead to inaccurate reporting (J3) (J5). These groups may have a vested interest in exaggerating or fabricating stories. On the other hand, the Egyptian government does not supply sufficient information. Whether through ignorance, restrictions or obfuscation, the government is negligent in communicating political data as it lacks trust in the Western media.

> *It became a vicious circle that we are unable to break because of our ignorance of the notion of the foreign media, which was restricted to the concept of "hostility" because they attacked us and portrayed Egypt negatively. We treat them poorly because they assault us. Then they attack because you didn't handle them correctly, and so on. Eventually, the principle became clear. They don't understand what is occurring in Egypt, and as a result, they are likely to be discredited.* (J3)

The correspondents are not treated properly in Egypt in terms of the restrictions of "permits", the high "fees for reporting" or security tightening. They may feel uncomfortable in Egypt, due to its different culture, environment, and restrictions. This can lead to them focusing on the negative aspects of the country such as poverty, crime, dictatorship, and pollution. Also, they may be worried about getting arrested and when they are about to write their stories, they will convey assumptions and exaggerations about the political events. The cultural council president "Azmy" replied to this point by referring to the idea that foreign correspondents should respect the visited country he said:

> *There is a group of foreign correspondents aware of all state laws. Every country has unique situations, and every country has different facilities. Each location has its own level of privacy. Why are we expected to handle the same Western ideas without considering our nature? (D2)*

In addition, they may face obstacles in Egypt, such as government restrictions or threats of violence besides the high fees and complete processes for the formal permissions of media coverage whether from the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Tourism. Sometimes the permissions require the approval of Egyptian Intelligence. This can make it difficult for correspondents to cover the country accurately. Western correspondents may be denied visas to enter Egypt, or they may be harassed or intimidated by the Egyptian government. The poor treatment of foreign correspondents causes involuntary conceptual confusion in the correspondent, as a negative stereotype forms in their head, and this is mirrored in the way they deliver the journalistic image

of Egypt's foreign policy. Notably, correspondents may feel the need to prove their boldness by covering dangerous or controversial stories from Egypt, then compromising their objectivity. That happens when the correspondent travels to dangerous areas of Egypt without suitable security, or they may interview opposition leaders who are critical of the Egyptian government.

> *The journalist who criticised the "Rafale deal between Egypt and France" on one of the French media platforms wrote, "How do you sell the Rafale to the leader of Egypt who might use it against his people?" It is truly humorous. Does that seem possible? So why does Egypt want to refute these Myths? Cause in the Western journalistic tradition… they don't discriminate between opponents and criminals unless it happens on their land. (JW7)*

The head of 24 France Arabic channel said, "Full democracy cannot be achieved in a hungry society!" (JW7). The state of economic dependency fosters a sense of loyalty from individuals towards those who possess wealth. The predominant demographic of those engaging in communication within the Middle Eastern segments of the global media, encompassing Arabic, French, and English editions, consists primarily of individuals of Arab heritage. The objective is to showcase to individuals from Western cultures, their fearlessness and lack of adherence to any societal restrictions in their countries of origin by embracing "Western journalistic values" (JW7). These values advocate that the primary responsibility of the military is to safeguard the nation and not engage in any further official obligations. While General Charles de Gaulle made significant contributions to France, it is important to note that Egypt did not undergo similar circumstances. The lack of accomplishments and differing perspectives about the situation in Egypt contribute to lack of recognition of achievements. This approach is taken by the journalist to avoid accusations of bias, absence of freedom, and support for the dictatorship. Consequently, this perpetuates a vicious cycle within Western media. Most individuals working in the international media covering Middle East news are of Arab descent. These individuals strive to challenge the perception held by Westerners, particularly those from France or England, that they lack boldness and are constrained by cultural taboos. They aim to demonstrate their adherence to Western journalistic principles, such as the belief that the military's role should be limited to national defence and should not involve assuming control of the country. It is worth noting that despite being a general, the French president successfully accomplished significant achievements for France. Regarding the origins of Western correspondents, their beliefs are implanted culturally in their mindset as the vision here comes from many other factors like how they want to see the issue which is

"uncontrollable" depending on how they have been raised, how they are educated, and so on. The real "dictatorship" is when the Western press applies the approach of "If you are not like us then you are "dictators" and that is how communist China is treated in the Western Press (JW7).

The presence of fair journalistic values has been hindered by the prevalence of stereotyping, double standards, narrow perspectives, biased agendas, and assumptions regarding the lack of transparency in the communication of Egypt's foreign policy. This phenomenon is not unique to Egypt, as it is observed in many Middle Eastern nations. Furthermore, there is a deliberate effort to depict Egypt as a region of conflict, a dictatorship, and a violator of human rights, disregarding the nuanced developments occurring in the actual world. the "human rights frame" is tangled with a reductionist conception of the power struggle in Egypt (military vs MB), while it overlooks the agency of the Egyptian people, (JW8) illustrated:

> *The Western coverage has been accurate about the human rights situation but news from Egypt is not only about "human rights", so the coverage does not reflect the reality on the ground. Egypt is always perceived from this narrow angle in the Western press, and it is a massive problem because it reduces Egypt to a struggle between two powers: "the military" and the Muslim Brotherhood, and totally ignores the Egyptian people who prove that they can get rid of both if they wanted to do so. Besides, it is expected that the western press will only advance western interests. (JW8)*

It is imperative to acknowledge that not all Western correspondents engage in the stereotyping of Egypt within their coverage. Nevertheless, the issue of stereotyping remains prevalent throughout the Western mainstream media. It is of utmost significance to possess an awareness of this matter to engage in a critical evaluation of the portrayal of Egypt in Western media platforms.

• **Democracy vs Culture**

The researcher observed a consistent repetition among the interviewees regarding the distinction between Egyptian culture and the Western perspective. Most explanations can be attributed to the disparity in the cultural and historical aspects of Egypt, which the reporter comprehends based on their intellectual and cultural background, as well as their upbringing in a different cultural context. These factors significantly influence their approach to press coverage. The interviewees emphasized that differences in cultural and political concepts underpin the used frames when covering stories about Egypt.

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There is stereotyping of what is happening in Egypt, and this is based on the prevailing political visions in the West, the nature of the West's concept of political systems and the journalist's culture and education. This is because of the West's view that what happened in Egypt is inconsistent with their political principles (JW6).

1- "Human rights" tone

The interviewees reached a consensus that the Western media has diluted the essence of the notion of human rights and now employs it as repetitive rhetoric to denounce nations that resist conforming to its decisions or reject its policies. The argument pertains to the West's endeavour to enforce trends and implementations of democracy and human rights onto a society that possesses the autonomy to make judgements based on its circumstances and culture. The initial interpretation categorises the utilisation of a human rights rhetoric as a strategy to promote the credibility of the MB and incite the West against the current government, asserting that the confinement of its leaders in prisons constitutes a breach of human rights to garner worldwide empathy. According to the interviewees, the Western media's portrayal of the situation in Egypt is greatly exaggerated and focuses solely on the political dimension. The human rights issue in Egypt is being openly politicised, and this can be interpreted in two ways. Either the Western world is isolated and lacks comprehension of the many social structures, resulting in the current misinterpretation, or this issue is a political manoeuvre and a means of exerting pressure to weaken Egypt in other matters. Thereby, the concept of human rights serves as a rationale for interfering in the internal affairs of states and as a means of enforcing American and European ideologies in the Middle East.

All countries have crimes, internal conflicts, and political prisoners. The Western press is limited in its interests to "political detention" and "human rights" issues. It is limited to the negative aspects only so that you do not see Egypt's struggles to improve the field of human rights. Even if the accusation is true and the political activists are not "saboteurs", are human rights limited to the political right only? (J5)

There is a kind of consensus from the interviewees that there is a kind of lack of credibility and double standards in dealing with the human rights file in Egypt. The countries opposed to Egypt's policy use this tone, according to the interviewees, for the sake of political pressure or to achieve their benefits. The interviewees also added that the American, English, and French police sometimes deal with a kind of repression against demonstrators who express their opinions. Yet, there is no classification of these countries as violating human rights. Blatant interference in the

affairs of countries or judicial rulings is considered a suppression of freedoms and calls for a lack of respect for the judiciary. Aside from the conspiracy theory, blatant interference in the country's affairs, and the issuance of judgments, the explanation for the inclusion of the human rights issue in most Western press coverage of Egypt lies in two main axes. Firstly, a lack of understanding of the nature of Egyptian society, which throughout history has often revolved around the army, the judiciary, and its primary desire for stability. The second interpretation is Egypt's unwillingness to please the West and to expand their unilateral vision that does not see the state's efforts to reform the human rights file.

2- Cultural Democracy.

Throughout the analysis of the interviews, most arguments arrived at the point of the cultural differences in terms of the false or insufficient coverage of Egyptian foreign policy. The interviewees emphasized that the Western media lack awareness of the Egyptian local identity. This mentality disregarded the cultural nature of Egyptian nationalism and its commitment to the army establishment since President Abd Elnasser's era.

> *There is a Lack of awareness of the nature of Egyptian society. When we were children, we always heard that the army is the only national institution that we trust. We have this culture, and the West does not realize this and does not know this emotional connection. Tor them, the army is just soldiers. The patriotic and Egyptian identity fused within the army, they do not yet know how influenced we are by the films and series of the army, which promote the values of belonging and pride. This is the difference in culture and belief.* (JW9)

The interviewees noted that the Egyptians' trust in the army establishment have not been respected by the international community as they called it "coup" although more than 22 million citizens participated in the 2013 revolution to get rid of MB regime. Democracy in the Western concept does not apply to an economically weak society where the electoral votes can be bought.

> *Western-style democracy cannot be achieved in societies where the level of education was, until recently, not adequate. There is a large segment of society that suffers from a lack of income, and therefore it is easy to buy them with electoral bribes, as happened with the Brotherhood, as there were places in Egypt where meals were distributed in exchange for the electoral vote*. (J5)

Democracy can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. Interviewees suggest that Western democracy must be achieved without the presence of economic dependency in society. In addition, it requires an advanced level of education. They also stressed that democracy in its Western guise will contribute to erasing national identity. The spirit of the concept of democracy, represented by freedom and justice, can be achieved by the state considering the choices of the Egyptian people according to their culture. When the dictatorial regime in Egypt is established by the people's choice and free will, this can be described as a type of democracy, while if a type of democracy is imposed with standards that suit the West and are contrary to the culture of the country, then this is a dictatorship, as Abo Eldoh (E10) expressed. Besides, MB was not popular with most Egyptian society since President Sadat's assassination in 1981.

3- Double standards.

One of the main arguments of the qualitative analysis of the interviews is the omnipresence of "double standards" in the Western coverage of Egyptian foreign policy. Double standards are policies that usually unfairly favour one group over another. Although this has been going on for centuries, it seems as if some people still don't notice it or choose not to. The interviewees mainly referred to it when the Western media called the 2013 revolution a coup not a public revolution exactly as the 2011 revolution.

> *Millions of citizens in the street cannot be a military coup. You and I witnessed that with the citizens, who were hoping for the army to protect our revolution, and so far, I have no explanation for calling it a coup and not a revolution like in 2011. Both are a popular revolution, and Western media had shown "double standards" on behalf the MB.* (JW7)

The interviewees stressed that the Western media's approach to any topic concerning the Middle East is marked by bias. For instance, Western countries have shown a significant level of interest in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. They have allocated a considerable amount of media coverage to this issue and have used positive empathic frames to shape the narrative. This level of attention and analysis has not been observed in conflicts involving Middle Eastern countries. Other wars, such as the one in Yemen, have been covered largely with a veil of silence.

> *Reporters who talk about imaginary human rights issues in Egypt do not see the shameful violations by the Israeli side in Palestine. Have murder, displacement, bloodshed, and torture become legitimate crimes because they are from Israel? These reporters did not see the Israelis attacking the funeral of journalist Sherine Abu Okla. What humanity are they talking about? It is a chain of double standards.* (D2)

The interviewees interpreted these double standards either for a general attitude toward the government's mainstream media or toward the Western cultures of the writers and journalists themselves.

> *It is in the interest if French diplomacy to condemn the Russian invasion. Therefore, the television programs here are all supportive of Ukraine, to the point that I felt that I turned on Ukrainian television. However, you will not ever find similar coverage for a Middle Eastern country. That's a blatant double standard.* (JW7)

The Western eye described Riots and vandalism on all occasions as a legitimate demonstration and a legitimate right for the opposition. (JW6) mentioned the torching of the Egyptian Academy of Science in 2011.

> *We were not able to highlight the fact that Alaa Abdel Fattah is an "Anarchist" character, even though these anarchist figures are known in Western societies, and there are, for example, "extremist environmentalists" who were blocking roads and disrupting interests, and some of them are in prison until now… Burning the Egyptian Academy of Science is a much serious crime than the ones committed by Western anarchists.* (JW6)

In general, Instances of double standards were identified in multiple contexts during the conducted interviews. This validates the idea that the media frameworks employed by Western media are incongruent with the actual events taking place on the ground.

4- Smart power.

The interviewees unanimously acknowledged the paramount significance of Egypt's cultural approach in transforming the prevailing stereotyped perception of the country in its foreign policy through the deployment of soft and smart power (Wilson, 2008). While some argue that the West's stereotypical image and Middle Eastern politics are evidence of hidden agendas and goals, others criticise Egypt for disregarding the Western media and for its lack of a strategic public diplomacy, and for not being proactive in changing its image in the Western media. However, some believe that there is no advantage in trying to influence the Western media through smart power strategies, as they either rely on their personal beliefs and ideas, or their "interest agenda" in media reporting. Yet, most of the interviewees emphasised the importance of employing diplomatic and cultural endeavours to disseminate authentic political news. In addition, they advocated for the activation of strategic persuasive techniques to alter perceptions, which would contribute to the enhancement of Egypt's political and economic landscape. One of the initial approaches is conducting a

"marriage", as (D1) said, between soft powers and foreign interests. The result of this marriage is the birth of "Smart Power." This smart power consists of literature, art, celebrations, and social presence, which transcends dry political interests. The second approach is activating cultural diplomacy. There is a lack of agreement over the definition of cultural diplomacy. Undoubtedly, this discussion has persisted for a considerable duration, parallel to a related debate on the merits of including cultural diplomacy as a permanent component in the policy arsenal of governments (Goff, 2020). The interviewees advised that cultural diplomacy requires a heightened focus as it serves as a significant medium of communication between nations. The interchange of diplomatic envoys plays a crucial role in enhancing mutual understanding and shaping the public perception of nations, but contemporary public diplomacy goes beyond the limited sphere of influence exerted by diplomatic elites such as government officials and diplomats. Public diplomacy is now active on platforms that facilitate global access. (D2) is heading the cultural council in Egypt.

> We need a media platform that addresses the world using its language, vocabulary, and concepts, led by distinguished experts, and providing substantial content in a professional manner. Content is very important, but who delivers it and how they deliver it is extremely important. Persuasion is the most important thing and this must be done using the language of the West. The truth is that Western people are not talking about policies or the agendas of media institutions. We are talking about people who are willing to be persuaded if you provide them with evidence and clues. (D2)

The third direction focuses on the utilisation of social media, which has consistently exerted the most significant influence on Egypt. These platforms serve as a potent tool in elucidating Egypt's foreign policy through sports diplomacy, Egyptian Pharaonic history, Egyptian art, cultural events, and fostering intercultural communication.

> There is enormous potential for Egyptian soft powers to be influential internationally, and this was evident in two important events such as "the transfer of mummies" to the Museum of Civilization and "the opening of El-Kebash Road." This civilizational influence was very important in the Western media. This cultural influence is more effective than any political influence because Egypt was in the headlines in most coverage. This highlights to us the importance of paying attention to our history and civilization and making it speak to the world, as we have a lot, but it needs to be utilised in a more effective way. (JW6)

Undoubtedly, the portrayal of Egypt's foreign policy in Western newspapers is detrimental to all parties involved. The previous chapter illustrated the lack of ceremonial frames in the converge yet the use of smart power as an effective tool helps to promote transparency, which is a fundamental principle of press coverage.

Conclusion:

The hypothesis that the frameworks employed in Western newspapers to depict Egypt's foreign policy do not accurately represent the current facts and reality has been examined in light of responses of Egyptian experts in the fields of media, culture, and diplomacy (See Appendix C 2& 3 and Chapter 5).

- The interviewees noted that there are new features of Egypt's foreign policy that have evolved significantly under President Sissi's rule, focusing on national interests and public interests. This shift has led to a strategic broadening that aligns with Egypt's core national objectives under the umbrella of "Balance". The concept of change is represented in adopting new strategies of "inclusiveness and effectiveness", "stability", "boldness" "assertiveness"," national sovereignty" and "diversifying the allies" in terms of serving the main objective of the Egyptian foreign policy which is national interest.

- The interviewees monitored the external strategies of the Egyptian foreign policy regarding national security, the Libyan conflict and water diplomacy. Their narrative argues that Egypt's stance is committed to diplomatic resolutions in geopolitical conflicts and adopts Multidimensional diplomacy according to the middle-power policy. They noted that the political solution is the preferred approach in Egyptian foreign policy while the Western press does not reflect that and ignores the bigger objectives either for lack of awareness, political agendas or because of the political values differences.

- Regarding the domestic challenges, the interviewees noted in the first position the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as a key affecting factor in the Egyptian foreign policy. Their narrative is distinguished from the victim frame which is used in the Western press. The diplomats noted that (MB) has a strong lobby in the international community. The journalists highlighted the violent nature, criminal activities and their threat to the internal fabric and then interpreted their influence on the Western media that they have access to the Western outlets. The researchers monitored the historical conflict and analysed that the West tend to claim to protect the minority and opponents' rights according to the Western values.

- There is a similarity in the interviewees' narrative regarding the stereotyping of Egyptian foreign policy in Western media. They argue that it isinfluenced by factors such as set

agendas, lack of understanding of Egyptian culture and politics, and the Muslim Brotherhood's control. The media may focus on negative news stories, such as terrorist attacks and political repression while ignoring positive ones. Miscommunication between Western media and Egyptian officials, lack of clarity in foreign policy positions, and unsuitable reception of international correspondents contribute to the negative portrayal of Egyptian foreign policy.

- The journalists and diplomats said that Western correspondents often frame Egyptian news negatively, leading to biased coverage. They may portray Egypt as dangerous, unstable, or backward, focusing on terrorist attacks and protests. They may also give more coverage to opposition groups, creating a one-sided view of Egyptian politics. This lack of transparency and assumptions can lead to a crisis of trust in Western media from the Egyptian side.

- The qualitative analysis of interviews reveals "double standards" in Western coverage of Egyptian foreign policy, often unfairly favouring one group over another. This bias is evident in the media's approach to Middle Eastern topics. This suggests that Western media frameworks do not align with the reality of Egypt's foreign policy and present topics separately without connecting them with each other, foreign policy objectives and the surrounding circumstances. They counted the new features and the factors, then their narratives turned out to be competing and different.

- All interviewees agreed that "Human rights" are essential for addressing obligations and responsibilities, but the Western media has used them to denounce nations that resist Western policies. The human rights issue in Egypt is politicized, with the Western world either isolating or weakening Egypt. The inclusion of the human rights issue in Western press coverage is due to a lack of understanding of Egyptian society and Egypt's unwillingness to please the West.

- The diplomats noted that Cultural democracy emphasizes spiritual values and personal growth in the East, while Western democracies focus on political and legal aspects. The Egyptian army's culture of loyalty and security are significant issues. Western democracy can erase national identity and impose standards contrary to the country's culture. They advised applying the smart power in communicating with the international community to increase the "ceremonial" frames in the Western press, this approach aligns with Olins

(2005) model in (Chapter 2) about applying the new PD and projecting a brand name for Egypt.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

<u>Introduction:</u>

This chapter aims to show the main findings of the thesis and their correlation with the analytical framework of the research which consists of the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative content analysis with experts' interviews. Each supplementary research question was answered in the concluding sections of the relevant chapters. The general findings will be summarised and linked to the main research questions and hypnotises.

> **RQ1: What is the size and nature of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?**
>
> **RQ2: How Western press frame Egyptian foreign policy components? and why?**

The chapter will present an answer to those questions by connecting the literature review insights with the content analysis and the interviewees' interpretation chapters conceptualising the Western media representation of Egyptian foreign policy in news coverage and discussing the framing approach and the reasons for this representation which highlight a Middle Eastern country's foreign policy communication in the western media perspective.

The literature in this study showed there are key effecting factors in the shifts which have occurred in Egyptian foreign policy between 2018-2021, the shifts are still occurring as several new factors are appearing and the surrounding events are changing significantly. Throughout the timeframe of this thesis, Egypt's foreign policy has been affected and shaped by global diplomacy, international events, geopolitical changes in the MENA region, the economic situation, the ruling system effect, the challenge of political Islam, and finally the growing importance of soft power in Egypt's foreign policy. These shifts affected Egypt's traditional role and its relations with the regional and international community. That includes seeking new alliances, namely with Russia and China after the tensions in the relations with the USA, while focusing on economic cooperation

with Europe, the UK and Africa. In addition to the attempt to maintain its stability and national security amid the conflicts in the Middle East by keeping the balance between interests and values.

According to Spykman (2013) it is necessary to consider the location of political entities in relation to two systems of reference: the geographic and the historical. The full meaning of regional location becomes apparent only after considering both the geography and the historical and political significance of a state's immediate surroundings. The Middle East has been characterised by several conflicts and geopolitical tensions. These conflicts surround Egypt from four neighbouring directions, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, instability in south Lebanon from the east, Libya conflict from the west, Sudanese, and Somali turmoil in the south and controlling the refugees flow to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea in the north; in addition to regional rivalries involving Iran and Saudi Arabia, the conflict in Yemen, and the risk of water scarcity because of the Ethiopian dam. An aspiring middle-power in the region, Egypt has been influenced by these conflicts, which have had an impact on its foreign policy in various ways. These conflicts pose an unparalleled threat to Egypt's stability and security, as well as its longstanding and influential role in the region. "Regional location determines whether neighbours will be many or few, strong or weak, and the topography of the region conditions the direction and nature of contact with those neighbours" (Spykman, 2013).

Summary of findings:

Based on what has been mentioned above, by taking into account all the headlines and body of a purposive sample (800) editorial items (articles & news) from selected media outlets which are *(the DW website, The New York Times, The Financial Times, Reuters website, The Daily Mail, The Independent, The Economist, Foreign Affairs Magazine, France 24 website)* in addition to the full interviews of the experts, this section seeks to illustrate the overall picture regarding the Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy (the size, nature and interpretation). To analyse the pattern of inclusion and exclusion in the items sample, the triangulation method showed the validity of the first hypothesis that there is a gap between the media framing and coverage of Egyptian foreign policy and its practical applications. In addition, most editorial items in the

sample had focused on domestic factors which affect Egyptian foreign policy more than the shifts in that policy according to changing circumstances. The general finding can be as follows:

Firstly, findings gleaned from the quantitative content analysis regarding the first research question about the size and the nature of the coverage:

1- The editorial items of the sample present the subjects of the Egyptian stance on regional conflicts (Middle East issues) with a rate of 17.5 %, "human rights" and lack of "democracy" with a rate of 15.3 %, the Egyptian economy 15%, "political Islam" narratives recorded 9%, the Nile crisis is 11%, President El-Sisi narratives recorded 10% and soft power news including tourism and archaeology rated 11%. On the other hand, there is a clear neglect of the news regarding diplomatic relations, international cooperation, and developmental projects, "Diplomacy and international relations 7%, and US policies 5%. These results contribute to validating the hypothesis that "the **coverage of Egyptian foreign affairs in the Western press does not reflect the changes in the country's diplomatic orientation".**

2- The analysis of the sample showed that there are more editorial items in the disruptive approach which represent the information in a negative way. This was represented in the items regarding human rights, President El-Sisi, cracking down on the opposition, and lack of democracy in the country. The ceremonial approach which provided a positive positioning about Egyptian foreign policy was represented in two themes which are the economy with a clear bias in favour of Israel's interests, and tourism and archaeological discoveries. The coverage of the Nile crisis and the Egyptian stance towards the Middle East conflicts varied between being neutral in some coverages and negative in other coverages (See tables in Chapter 6).

3- The sources of the materials recorded a higher dependence on the journalists with a rate of 45.1% and on the correspondents with 35.1 %. On the other hand, the analysis recorded less dependence on "news agencies" with a rate of 17.4 % and the lowest dependence on "official sources "with a rate of 2.8 %. These percentages interpret the gap between the Western press and the government's statements regarding its foreign policy. Subsequently, validating the hypothesis that "There **is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy matters on the ground and the Western press coverage of it.**

Secondly, to answer the second research question about how the coverage frames Egyptian foreign policy, which is represented in the QCA (chapter 7), the following results have been noted:

4- The economy coverage varied between highlighting the army's dominance in the economic sector and the future economic prosperity according to foreign direct investment opportunities. Human rights and democracy news coverage have been placed within "repression" and "violation" frames focusing on the responsibility of the ruling government. Two prominent conflicts have been shown up in the Middle East issues, the conflict in Libya and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The editorials analysis contextualised Egyptian foreign policy in the first one with an "aggression" frame in protecting national security and used the "mediation "frame to cover the second conflict. Western media used the frame of "war" in coverage of the Nile crisis with Ethiopia, overlooking national security against while stressing Ethiopia's aspirations to economic development. The "victim" frame is consistently used in the coverage of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, once again disregarding the country's security concerns while framing the MB as a legitimate opposition party.

The frames listed in points 1 to 4 are repeated and fixed throughout the sample, sometimes the frames are used in subjects which are not relevant to those frames (as shown in Ch 7). According to the analysis, the used frames also refer to the domestic issues separately without linking them with each other or linking them with the shifts in Egyptian foreign policy. Some instances of that are using the frame of "war" in the "Nile crisis" narratives without referring to the new Egyptian strategy of "restoring the relations with Africa" (as mentioned in Ch.3) or framing the Muslim brotherhood as a "victim" and using repression frame in "human rights" narratives while discarding the "national security" concept in Egyptian foreign policy, or referring to the "army economic dominance" without mentioning the state strategy in "the internal building process". Consequently, we can argue that there is a deep stereotyping in the framing which creates a gap in the coverage, thus, validating the research hypotheses that:

RH: There is a specific framing of certain foreign policy elements which prime topics and exclude others.

RH: There is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy matters on the ground and the Western press coverage of it.

RH: Stereotype frames are prominent in the coverage of Egyptian foreign policy.

RH: when the volume of Egypt's foreign policy news coverage in the Western press is significantly smaller than that of the country's domestic news, it may not be clear whether the connection between the former and the latter is explicit.

Thirdly, regarding the part of "why" in the second research question, the analysis showed an interpretation view from the local experts throughout in-depth interviews. Each interviewee was attributed a code as illustrated in (Appendix C1). The Findings can be summed up as follows.

5- The qualitative analysis of the experts' interviews concluded that there are major changes in Egyptian foreign policy which have been neglected by the Western media. The Egyptian foreign policy has been characterised by interests and broadness focusing on the concept of "national security" and a pragmatic, interest-led approach to foreign diplomacy. These shifts have been ignored in Western media. According to the interviewees' narratives, the new shifts insist on the concepts of state sovereignty, balance, national security and interests and diversifying the alliances. These changes are connected to the theoretical frame that Egyptian foreign policy strategy aspires to be a middle-power state with the approach of safeguarding the "identity".

6- It was found throughout the analysis of the experts' interviews that there is a consensus on the "stereotyping" coverage from the Western media of Egyptian foreign policy, limiting the positioning mostly to two main frames: "autocracy" and "human rights violation". The experts described the coverage as one-sided and interpreted the phenomenon of stereotyping from several perspectives. Firstly, there is a rooted assumption about the Middle East as an area of conflict and authoritarianism while discarding the fact that those are a result of Western colonialism. for example, experts noted emphasis on disruptive news, while they were apologetic about Egypt's current government. They had a different interpretation of what Western media call "dictatorship". They noted that the Middle East news will be more attractive if it is always about destruction and conflicts. In addition to the overlap between the dictatorship and the principle of national sovereignty in Western

views which led to the misunderstanding. The third interpretation concerns non-objectivity in coverage by ignoring the positive sides and focusing on the negatives according to the political agenda of the journalistic source. The fourth view is that there is a difference between Western culture and identity, which drives correspondents to address what is happening in Egyptian foreign policy through their own background and perspective. However, the interviewees emphasized that Egypt has real issues related to human rights yet not as enormous as they are portrayed in the Western press, there is a kind of exaggeration regarding this topic. Fifthly, they interpreted the phenomenon that there is miscommunication between the Western media and Cairo, there is no trust between the two parties, and Cairo knows that they will be portrayed negatively anyway. On the other hand, Western media do not use the officials' statements in its coverage. According to the interviewees, this false portrayal is in favour of the PR business, how those firms will work if they did not feed on this kind of coverage. The sixth interpretation which all interviews suggested is that the MB lobby is very strong in Western societies with consistent use of the wording and concepts which the West prefer. MB managed to infiltrate Western thinktanks and Western media organisation with their intelligent tools in convincing and playing the victim, in addition to the generous financial support from Qatar which financed most MB organizations in Europe and the UK. This situation drove a wedge between practical applications of Egyptian foreign policy strategies and its coverage in Western media. The findings of the content analysis and the analysis of the interviews show that domestic influence has shaped Egyptian foreign policy in Western media. The first factor is the MB. Thus, narratives about Egypt's foreign policy are still trapped in the concept of MB illegitimate removal from Egypt's political culture. Most interviewees suggested that MB are a "functional tool" for the Western industry to carry out their own agenda in the Middle East, to weaken the state. The second factor is "human rights breaches", most informants described that factor as a "repeated tune" in all criticism directed at the state.

7- Geopolitics is an important pillar in shaping Egyptian foreign policy strategies while the Western media framed the Egyptian stance in the Libya conflict as "Aggression" and "interfering". The interviewees' interpretation was that Western media does not focus on Egypt's strategy for Egyptian national security and protecting the borders as much as they

focus on the criticism of the ruling system. The resolution of the Libya issue is seen by the experts as an example of an efficient and flexible Egyptian foreign policy.

8- Water diplomacy is one of the most concerning issues in Egyptian foreign policy. Western media framed the case as a "war declaration" while Egypt always insisted on a political solution. The interviewees considered that kind of incitement discourse and ignorance of the Egyptian historical rights in the international river besides the Western media favour the Israeli direct support for the Ethiopian side to weaken the Egyptian state. There is significant ignorance of the importance of the Nile crisis for Egypt.

9- The informants concluded that the argument is about democracy against culture. The cultural and political differences are significantly reflected in the Western media of Egyptian foreign policy. The West should consider cultural democracy while respecting the local identities. Western media is not aware of the historical Egyptian culture of appreciating the military establishment. Thus, the gap between Egyptian foreign policy and its framing in Western media emerges from misunderstanding the fabric of Egyptian society and its concept of authority and legitimacy.

10- Interviewees highlighted the role of cultural diplomacy and smart power while re-evaluating the Egyptian treatment of foreign correspondents. The using of soft power is crucial to change the image of Egypt in Western media and shorten the distance between the Western perspectives and Egypt as it identifies itself.

The framing of Egyptian foreign policy components focuses on individual issues separately without connecting them or with Egypt's strategies as a middle-power state. The research argues that this approach creates a gap between what is addressed and what is happening on the ground. Whether the reason for this gap is stereotyping or advancing Western governments' agenda, the outcome of the continuous negative narratives will not only affect Egypt, but it has implications for Western governments as well, which are integral to the system of international politics and diplomacy. For the Middle East, stereotyping will not help in improving human rights or promote democracy in the region. States are likely to adopt a defensive attitude which deepens their isolation from the international community. For Western countries, inadequate coverage of the Middle Eastern will widen the gap between the West and the East which might increase the immigration numbers and transfer the cultural conflicts to its lands.

All in all, the findings of the three analyses argue that the Western press does not represent Egyptian foreign policy strategies adequately. The shifts which have been identified in Egyptian foreign policy according to applying the middle-power state aspiration are not reflected in the Western narratives. There are particular negative frames, priming topics and neglecting others, unlinked topics, stereotypes and double standards. That could be caused by different reasons such as cultural and political differences, non-awareness of Egypt's objectives, the colonial and superior perspective of the West to the Middle East, western government agendas or it is the West denial of changing the international system in the changing times. On the other hand, the new public diplomacy is not activated in Egypt, this requires organised strategies to project a brand name of Egypt.

Contribution, limitations, and recommendations

First, regarding the contribution, the literature review presented in the thesis demonstrates the need to approach shifts in Egypt's foreign policy holistically, not as individual items. The policy is detected in the connection between its different components and not when looking at its individual components separately, as it was the case in the Western coverage analyse through the selected corpus for the purpose of this study. Thus, there was a clear gap identified thanks to the literature review in linking foreign policy with its representation in the media.

Secondly, the study sought to open the quantitative and qualitative analysis of media texts on the expert interview approach to highlight the importance of foreign policy communication and public diplomacy in the multidisciplinary analysis of contemporary political events. The present study also sought to present a nuanced understanding of Egypt's foreign policy during a timeframe which was commonly viewed as a continuation of the same policies by the same person in the highest office in the country. 2018- 2021 was a period rich with international events such as the global economic recession, the pandemic, the Russian war on Ukraine, imbalance of international power in addition to the domestic events which make the Egyptian foreign policy further active, dynamic, and changeable.

Thirdly, the data were analysed by using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative content analysis with expert interviews. This was a new approach in studies on a similar subject.

The researcher conducted the problem-centred interviews approach with the Egyptian experts to transfer the other perspectives to the Western media coverage. Furthermore, analysing the interviews adds the local interpretation to the nature and the motives of the Western media coverage regarding Egyptian foreign policy, which enriches the knowledge of different cultures and interpretative perspectives.

Fourthly there is a need to discuss the Western media framing of the Middle Eastern countries' foreign policy; how they deal with them and how they see and represent them. It is important to interrogate whether Western media covers Middle East news objectively in the same way they claim to report Western political news. Furthermore, it is essential to ascertain the underlying causes behind this image and explore solutions.

Regarding the limitations, during the study, the sampling method of the news and articles was the main restriction. The search process for selecting the material in the study sample was very difficult as some platforms needed access to its archive, others needed a subscription. The possibility of validating the data was hard as at the beginning because the researcher needed to include and exclude materials according to relevance. However, some data was hard to find again on the website because either it was removed or archived. Thus, revisiting items identified in the early stage of the research was a problem before the final validation of the data and gathering them in category files. The second restriction was conducting the interviews. The interviewees have prestigious high positions in the field of foreign policy and media, and they are most times busy. Contacting them and awaiting their response and their approval was significantly hard and needed huge effort. It's worth noting that I received no response several times from *"FT"* and *"NYT"* writers and correspondents in Cairo. Another restriction was about using the software in the analysis. The coding process manually turned out to be more accurate. Using the software in the qualitative analysis was limiting for the interpretation process. Furthermore, the inductive feature of the analysis caused difficulty insofar as the researcher would have had to revisit the software every time and change the data which is an exhausting process in addition to finishing the analysis before getting the required training. The fourth challenge concerns the timeframe. The new political events internationally and regionally made it challenging to stick to the original time frame 2018-2021. In particular, the Israeli war on Gaza has had a great influence on Egyptian foreign policy which needs further comprehensive research.

Several suggestions for further studies have emerged after monitoring the findings of this study. Firstly, the priming theory approach can be used to expand the research to examine the influence of framing Egyptian foreign policy on the readers as the current study does not look at the receivers and how they understand the coverage. The future study can argue how the audience receives the delivered messages in the Western media by conducting a questionnaire or focused group. Secondly, Framing the Egyptian role in the Israeli war on Gaza is a crucial study; it would be an extension of the current study to monitor the continuity of stereotyping, double standards, Western agenda interests, and false news. Furthermore, the findings suggest research is needed to articulate different perceptions of democracy and legitimate authority in the West and the East by highlighting the role of the local culture and the fabric of Middle Eastern societies. Fourthly, the researcher highly recommends a comprehensive discourse analysis of the Western media coverage of the Israeli war on Gaza (2023-2024) besides a comparative study between the coverage of the war on Gaza and reporting on the Russian-Ukrainian war.

A reception study should also have been connected to these news items for consistency within the research. Moreover, the research's timeframe covers the period between 2018- 2021. Several significant events took place between 2021 and 2024 that might greatly affect Egypt's foreign policy. These include a severe economic slump, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the Israeli attack on Gaza. The researcher suggests the importance of doing a comprehensive analysis of Egypt's portrayal in the global media as an engaged participant in the matter and a neighbouring country that impacts the course of the crisis. This analysis aims to assess whether the prevailing negative stereotypes persist or evolve.

Concluding discussion:

Having demonstrated the conceptualisation of how Egyptian foreign policy is portrayed in Western media, the research findings can give underpinning discussion regarding the future of Egyptian foreign policy amid the recent international and regional political tremors particularly the international community after the 7th of October 2023. The present study has determined that there is a gap between Egyptian foreign policy and Western media coverage, based on the analysis of narratives and interviews. The thesis identified the presence of stereotyping in the treatment of

Egypt's foreign policy as a Middle Eastern nation. It revealed that a double-standards approach is adopted, with reporting being influenced by the strategic interests of the West in the region. Whether the explanation for this phenomenon is the conspiracy theory that suggests the deliberate weakening of the Middle East to facilitate long-term colonial plans in support of Israeli expansion in the region, or it is the cultural misunderstanding of the concepts of democracy, human rights, and legitimacy, this case can strongly be seen as a direct projection on the current Palestinian case.

Regarding the Egyptian aspect of the issue, in the aftermath of the Israeli military offensive in Gaza in October 2023; Egypt displayed cooperation with Hamas by hosting its officials for negotiations, aiding the release of hostages, and managing the distribution of humanitarian aid. However, they strongly object to the displacement of the Palestinians. This strategy posits that Egypt strongly condemns the repressive occupation while still giving top priority to Egyptian national security. Egypt strongly opposed the Israeli massacres in Gaza and demanded that the flow of humanitarian aid through the Rafah crossing be facilitated, despite continuous obstructions from the Israeli side. The Western media aired headlines falsely accusing Egypt of failing to facilitate humanitarian relief and closing the border crossing. There were hundreds of trucks sitting on the Egyptian side of the border, awaiting approval from the Israeli side to enter. The Western media, as is customary, portrayed Egyptian foreign policy in a negative light, making charges and offering criticism. It is expected that these established frameworks are being utilised to advance the Western agenda and conceal the Israeli acts of violence. The accusers cast blame on Egypt and employ language such as "why Egypt does not open the crossing for the Palestinians," which supports the Zionist agenda of displacing Palestinians from their territories and eventually reoccupying Sinai.

Concerning the Palestinian side, the Western media consistently portrayed "Hamas" as terrorists and portrayed Israel as a "victim". Even though the live broadcasting and photographs of the ongoing slaughter in Gaza are well known, these crimes are being shared on social media while Western governments remain silent. Furthermore, these governments continue to supply arms and weapons to Israel, even without the approval of their respective Parliaments and Congress. Disregarding the war crimes committed in the strip, resulted in the deaths of over 30,000 civilians, the majority of whom were women and children. It's proven how the media can be used to serve political agendas on both a regional and international level (Harb, 2017). Nevertheless, the evident

distortion of the roles in the Palestinian situation highlights the fact that the Western media has become a shield for oppressive and unlawful governments. The argument is that the Western media selectively overlooks instances of human rights violations by Israel, as well as the corruption and absence of democracy in Western governments. Meanwhile, they employ language that portrays the authority in power in Middle Eastern countries in a negative light, thereby reflecting Western beliefs of their own superiority and racism.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Chapter 6 Quantitative content analysis questions:

- What is the size of Western press coverage of Egyptian foreign policy?
- What is the nature of Egyptian foreign policy coverage in Western media? What are the most prominent subjects?
- What are the most prominent topics in each media outlet?
- What are the prevailing journalistic format types in addressing Egyptian foreign policy?
- "What are the primary journalistic sources utilized in the production of Egyptian foreign policy narratives in Western media outlets?"
- What is the prevailing tone of coverage of the "economy" theme in Western media?
- What are the prominent topics in the "Middle East issues" theme in the Western media?
- What are the used frames in portraying President El-Sisi?
- what are the most common topics which apply disruptive frames in the Western media?
- How did Western media present the "Nile crisis" with Ethiopia?
- How does Western media present political Islam in Egypt?
- What is the extent of interest in Egyptian soft news in Western media?
- How often does Western media present Egyptian international relations?
- What is the coverage of American-Egyptian relations in the Western press?

Appendix A1: data samples of content analysis through the 9 press outlets:

- https://www.ft.com/content/d64d1609-75b5-46f1-93f0-bd5049501665
- https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/egypt-protests-abdel-fattah-sisi-mohamed-ali-corruption-a9115356.html
- https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/01/11/turkey-is-set-to-send-troops-to-libya
- https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/world/middleeast/egypt-muslim-brotherhood-ezzat.html?searchResultPosition=1

- https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6366629/EGYPT-considers-banning-burqa-crackdown-against-Islamic-extremists.html

- https://corporate.dw.com/en/egypt-authorities-arrest-journalist-who-was-covering-police-brutality/a-55156316

- https://www.france24.com/en/20180702-five-years-after-morsi-egyptian-economy-strengthens-amid-oppression
- https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-sees-positive-delopments-saudi-egypt-ties-2021-08-25/
- https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/sound-and-fury-post-911-middle-east

Appendix B: Chapter 7 Qualitative content analysis questions:

- What are the prioritised frames when representing Egypt's foreign policy in Western media?
- What are the applied frames in the "Economy" theme?

- What are the used frames and the positioning of Egypt regarding human rights and democracy?

- How did Western media discuss the Egyptian foreign policy regarding the Middle East conflicts?

- How is the Nile crisis represented in the Western media?
- How is political Islam presented in Western media?

Appendix B1: QCA coding scheme

"Economy" theme codes

Category	Codes
Army Economy	Development Egypt first Reducing subsidies Military dominance Autocracy Holding over The growth
Economic prosperity	Suez Canal Money making Cooperation and agreements Renewables Energy security

	Mediterranean Sea benefits
	Sustainable projects
	Recovery
	Hot money
	Foreign direct Investment
	New brand
	Ambition
	Social protection programmes

"Human rights" theme codes

Category	Codes
Autocratic regime	Brutality
	The coup
	Crackdown
	Arrests
	Massacre
	Abuses
	dictator
Human rights breach	Torture
	Repression
	Political prisoners
	Failed state
	Poverty
	Expression freedom
	Jails
	poverty

"Middle East issues" theme codes

Category	Codes
Libya conflict	Red line
	Threaten
	Warn
	Intervention
	National security
	War journalism
	Bold situation
Palestinian-Israeli conflict	Mediator
	Rafah crossing
	Hamas's friend
	Israeli satisfaction
	Israeli dominance

	Egyptian rescue
	Silence
	Militia
	Gaza reconstruction

"The Nile crisis" theme codes

Category	Codes
War frame	Threat
	Warning
	Aggression
	Blood
	War
	Escalating
	Tensions
	force
National security vs development	Hydro-political
	Development
	Redline
	National security
	Thirst
	Water sacristy
	dispute

"Political Islam" theme codes

Category	Codes
Terrorism or opposition	Conspiracy theoy
	Terrorism countering
	Crackdown
	Authoritarian
	Neo-Islamism
	Bombs
	Threat
	National security
	Extremism
"Victim" frame	Crushed
	Crackdown
	Instability
	Obsession
	Violence
	Tactics
	Oppressed
	Overthrow
	Massacre
	Assassinating

Appendix B2: **List of the analyzed materials in each media outlet (QCA) chapter 7**

Media outlet	Author	Address	Date	code
DW website	News agencies	France agrees sale of war planes to Egypt.	May,2021	DW1
	Layl, F	Egypt is synonymous with hopelessness.	Jan,2021	DW2
	News agencies	Egypt greenlights troop deployment in Libya.	Jul,2020	DW3
	Editorial board	Ethiopia accuses Trump of inciting war.	Oct,2020	DW4
	Schaer, C	End of neo-Islamism in the Middle East?	Sep,2021	DW5
Reuters	News agency	Greece, Egypt sign deal for first subsea power link between Europe and Africa.	Oct,2021	R1
	Editorial board	Egypt has more issues concern human rights.	Nov,2021	R2
	Editorial board	Egypt opens Rafah crossing early for Palestinian travellers	May,2021	R3
	Editorial board	Egypt notified that Ethiopia has resumed filling of giant dam.	Jul, 2018	R4
	Editorial board	Kuwait hands Muslim Brotherhood-linked militants to Egypt	Jul,2019	R5
Foreign affairs	Waterbury, J.	An anatomy of Egypt's military economy.	Feb,2020	FA1
	Rutherford, B	To stop Sisi strengthen Egypt's judiciary.	Oct,2018	FA2
	Millwe,A	Israel and Hamas need each other.	Mar,2019	FA3
	Benaim, D & Hanna, M	Water wars on the Nile	Aug,2018	FA4
	Hamid, Sh	Muslim Brotherhood the rivalry that shaped modern Egypt.	Aug,2018	FA5
The Economist	Editing board	Green shoots Egypt's economy shows signs of life.	Mar,2018	TE1
	Editorial board	A pharaonic farce Egypt's choice: president Sisi, or a man who adores him	Oct, 2018	TE2
	Editorial board	A glimmer in Gaza Egypt's surprising friendship with Hamas.	Aug,2018	TE3
	Editorial board	The bitter dispute over Africa's largest dam	Jul,2020	TE4
	Editorial board	The Muslim Brotherhood is tearing itself apart.	Dec,2021	TE5
Daily mail	Tanno, S.	Egypt seizes megaship which blocked the Suez Canal ...	Apr,2021	DM1
	Associated press news agency	Egypt releases prominent activist blogger.	Dec,2018	DM2
	Robinson, J		May,2018	DM3

	Pleasance, Ch	Egypt opens Gaza border crossing for Ramadan.	Jul,2020	DM4
	Allen, V	The dam that could start a war between Egypt and Ethiopia	Jan,2020	DM5
		British tourists in Egypt are warned they could be soft targets for terrorists		
The Independent	Bennett, O.	Why Egypt is building a brand new mega capital city	Sep,2018	TI1
	Daragahi, B	Western leaders, take protests in Egypt as a warning.	Sep, 2019	TI2
	Daragahi, B	A declaration of war, Egypt's threat to enter Libya.	Jun,2020	TI3
	Aboudouh, A	Blood on the Nile is what's coming if Egypt and Ethiopia continue their war of words over water.	Mar,2020	TI4
	Aboudouh, A	Trump's threat to the Muslim Brotherhood may be a gift for Egypt's president	May,2019	TI5
Financial times	News agencies	Economic pitfalls risk cooling Egypt's hot money inflows	Jul,2020	FT1
	Editorial board	West cannot turn a blind eye to brutality in Egypt.	Jul, 2020	FT2
	Saleh, H	Egypt threatens military action in Libya if Turkish-backed forces…	Jun,2020	FT3
	Pilling, D	How to avert a war over the Nile	Jan,2020	FT3
		between Egypt and Ethiopia.		FT4
	Saleh, H	Egyptian opposition leader detained ahead of elections	Feb,2018	FT5
New York Times	Walsh, D.	If ever a city needed a good detox, it was Cairo.	Jul,2020	NYT1
	Associated press.	Egypt's new law entrench El-Sisi rule.	Jul,2020	NYT2
	Walsh, D	Libyan rivals call for peace talks.	Aug,2020	NYT3
	Walsh, D	As seasonal rains fall, dispute over Nile dam.	Nov,2020	NYT4
	Walsh, D	After 7 years on the run, a Muslim Brotherhood is caught.	Aug,2020	NYT5
France 24 website	El-Faizy, M	Five years after Morsi, Egyptian economy strengthen amid oppression.	Jul,2018	F1
	Lee, Y	Egypt's jails leading revolution activist for five years.	Dec,2021	F2
	News wires	Egypt announces new plan to end war in Libya as Haftar offensive loses ground.	Jun,2020	F3
	Xenos, A& Picard, F	Tension on the Nile: could Egypt and	Jun,2020	F4

	Editorial board	Ethiopia really go to war over water? UN calls for independent probe into death of Egypt's Morsi.	Jun,2019	F5

Appendix C: Chapter 8: list of the main interviews' questions.

- What are the main features of Egypt's foreign policy in the second term of the president in office?
- How do you read the current Egyptian foreign policy within the new administration?
- What are the new shifts in Egypt's foreign strategies on the diplomatic orientation?
- How do you evaluate the international economic relations?
- In your opinion, why are the changes in Egyptian foreign policy not reflected in the Western media? How do you interpret focusing only on internal issues?
- Why does Western media focus on "democracy issues" and "human rights issues"?
- How do you see the Western press frames of "President Sisi" and "Muslim Brotherhood"
- How do you see the Western media frames of the "Egyptian economy", and "Nile crisis"?
- How do you see the Western media frames regarding Egypt's role in "the Middle East conflicts"
- How do you evaluate the "soft power" in the Egyptian public diplomacy?

Appendix C1: List of the interviewees:

Name	Place and date		code
Ambassador R. S	Cairo	30- Oct - 2022	D1
Prof H. A	London	09- Dec - 2022	D2
N. G	Cairo	03- Nov- 2022	J3
A. E	Cairo	27- Oct - 2022	J4
A. EL	Cairo	22- Oct - 2022	J5
M.S	London	15- Feb- 2023	JW6
N.E	Paris- online	31- Mar- 2023	JW7
A. A	London	13- Mar - 2023	JW8
Prof G. S	Cairo	01- Nov- 2022	R9
A.Elm	Cairo	02- Nov- 2022	R10

Appendix C2: Interviews data Coding scheme:

<div align="center">

1-<u>The concept of change</u>

A-The features

</div>

Codes	Codes
The interests	The balance
The broadness	Development
The inclusiveness	National sovereignty
The effectiveness	Defensive
The multilateral diplomacy	Combating terrorism
The ethics	Solving problems
The mediation	Globalization after contraction Minimum
The independency	regional role
Dynamism	Environmental approach
Strength	Active
Boldness Illustrative	Success
Rejection of Western Intervention	Elements of Comprehensive Power
Mobilization of support	Strategic Quantum
Leadership	International Respect
Challenges	National security
Recovery phase	Official Bodies

<div align="center">

B- Multidimensional diplomacy

</div>

Codes	Codes
African depth	One distance
Partnerships	The normality with the USA
Heading east	Avoiding political adolescence
The balance	Powers neutralizing
Rules of international law	Historical reasons
Mutual interests	The vital sphere
Strategic ally	Geopolitics
Diversifying	New circles

Maturity Economic cooperation with Britain Consensus of visions	Neutrality Peace and development

C- Dominance of the economic factor

Codes	Codes
Opening economic markets Economic resilience Investment opportunities Economic exhaustion Severity of economic reform cancellation of painkillers	Restrictions Economic dependence Developmental experience Secure borrowing ratio Sustainability Mutual interests

2- The stereotyping

A-The features

Codes	Codes
Dictatorship frame Police state frame Torture and repression frame Conflict frame Human rights frame Media restriction state frame Forced disappearance news Defense position. False image President's image Criticism	Unjustified attack Repetition Rooted ideas Ignoring the positives Non-objectivity Deliberate distortion Conspiracy theory Focus on the negativity. Limiting positives in energy and tourism news

B- The reasons

Codes	Codes
Agenda Lack of awareness Misunderstanding Muslim Brotherhood control The accumulation Differed cultures	One-sided readings PR business Lack of trust Negligence of international media Differed political values Preference of opposition.

Spicy news Wrong information Miscommunication Egyptian non-clarification Egyptian negative environment	Ideological disagreement Media violence Cairo despair Either the Brotherhood or criticism

c- The correspondents

Codes	Codes
Attitudes Discomfort Regional competition Obstacles Fabrication Excitement Information sources Attractiveness of conflict Proving boldness Transparency Opposition Assumptions One side-vision	Editorial policy Fear of the arrests Egyptian complexities Western ideas Egyptian inability Left-Wing control Bias Breaking journalistic values lack of understanding the Guardian's Blatant bias Disruptive news Different cultures and environments

3- Internal and external challenges.

A-Muslim Brotherhood (MB)

Codes	Codes
Functional tool Misinformation Human rights tone Marketing tool Targeted ideas Systemic operations Embracing counter-ideology Political pluralism or terrorism Electoral bribery Dissident or criminal Invasive thoughts Elimination of identity No incriminating evidences	Political powers Deals non-recognition of arming the group Left-wing and MB State collapse New Afghanistan Britain as stronghold of MB Groups for rent Takfiri speeches The disobedient son

B- Geopolitics

Codes	Codes
Conflict in Libya	Troubled region
Libyan unity	States fail
Libyan cake	Regime changes by force
Borders protection	State sovereignty
National security	Region security
Guaranteed right	State's resources & external interference
Public interest	Neighboring countries
Loyalty	The balance
Islamists and military	Not to ruminate on conflicts

c- Water diplomacy

Codes	Codes
Ethiopian perseverance	Dangerousness
life before development	Incorrect evaluation Ignorance
Water poverty	water security
Political solution	Negotiations or war
The historic right	Upstream and downstream countries conflict
Wisdom and rationality	pressure tool
The importance	
Sanctity of the Nile	

D- domestic circumstances and national interests

Codes	Codes
Stability	Activating international media
Citizen's interest	Dissolving the security grip
Exhausted economy	Clarification
Internal construction Strengthening the interior Combating extremism	Egyptian dealings negatives Development
	External offices
Secure state	Media qualification
geographical components Economic crisis	Using evidences
Non-state actors	Civil society
Radical solutions	Persuasion
Security threat	Successive international shocks
Growing military capacity	Real reform
National efforts	

4- Democracy Vs Culture

A- Human Rights tone

Codes	Codes
Repeated tone	Pressure card
Marketing tool	MB support
Established principles	West bubble
individual events	Cultural difference
Hotness	Democrats
Egyptian unprofessionalism	Excuse for intervention
Exaggeration	Limited vision
Conspiracy theory	Politicization
Misunderstanding	Pleasing the west
Internal affairs	HR file reform

B- Democracy

Codes	Codes
Democracy principles	Food for voice
Political movement	Economic dependence
Cultural radicalism	Coup
Lack of awareness	Governments or civil societies
Local identity	"Darkness culture" rejection Cultural
Emotional nation	diplomacy
Egyptian nationalism Belonging	Decision maker
Mask of democracy	Turbulent region
Elections	

C- Double standers

Codes	Codes
Denunciation	Revolution or Coup
Ignorance	Anarchy or Opposition Correspondent
Violation of International Law	Facilities
Western Intervention	The Rights File
Russian-Ukrainian War	Western Crises
Palestinian-Israeli Conflict	Internal Positives

D- Smart power

Codes	Codes
Soft power	Capital control
International interests	Improper usage
Artistic and cultural boom	Cultural diplomacy
Improving the image	Diplomats visits
Long-term policy	Touristic events
Powerful weapon	Sports diplomacy
Regional leadership	Effectiveness
Social media power	

Appendix: C3 samples from the semi-structured interviews.

1- Interview sample with Diplomat: Ambassador R.S (D1)

- **Name:** R. S
- **Profession**: Head of the National Office for the Implementation of the Partnership Agreement between Egypt and the European Union, Assistant Foreign Minister, and Advisor to the Ministry of Environment for International Climate Agreements. He was Egypt's Ambassador to Brussels and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Economic Relations.
- **Location:** Ministry of Environment Headquarters in Cairo
- **Date:** 30/10/2022
- **Time:** 11 AM

Reason of the visit: He is considered one of the most experienced ambassadors in the field of Egyptian-European, Russian, and African relations. He was the first to sign the partnership agreement with the European Union and worked in Egypt's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, as well as in the Egyptian Embassy. He was an envoy in Africa and the United Nations representative for preparing the regional strategy for the Alliance of Civilizations in the Mediterranean. He was also the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in Parliament, adding deep interpretations of the diplomatic and media dimensions for addressing Egypt's foreign issues in the Western media.

- **What are the main features of Egypt's foreign policy under the new leadership?**
- There is a general rule governing foreign policy, which is that any foreign policy is a straight line with a "margin" representing "concessions or balances." This margin expands or contracts depending on the breadth of the interests base. The fundamental change in Egyptian diplomacy under the new leadership is the expansion of the circle of interests.

Instead of being centered between just two main hubs, "Moscow" and "Washington," relations have expanded to include China, India, and the European Union. There are notable markers such as the "visit to Singapore," from which new technology related to water desalination, a critical matter for Egypt's strategic water security, was acquired. Strengthening relations with Islamic countries like Indonesia and the most prominent developed relations in this era are African relations, marked by the presidency of the African Union in 2019. This represents a "re-entry into Africa," relying on Africa as a significant strategic component in Egypt's foreign policy, where relations are now managed based on mutual interests. Relations with Africa have gone beyond bilateral relationships to trilateral relationships with the European Union as well, characterized by trust and belonging. Currently, due to the Ukrainian war, an energy crisis has emerged in Europe, necessitating a return to fossil fuels. The primary source of this energy is Africa, which has enormous reserves. The Egyptian model also expanded with the natural gas import agreement, so the most distinguishing feature of the foreign policy is "expansion and comprehensiveness."

- **How do you describe the impact of the "COVID" and "Russian-Ukrainian war" crises on this policy?**
- Egypt is in a phase of construction both internally and externally. These two crises have proven that the Egyptian economy has gained "resilience," despite disruptions and shortages in foreign currency resources. This led to an increase in exports by opening new markets and attracting investors from foreign countries, with "Africa" being an important market as well. The "Global approach of the Egyptian foreign policy is gathering a variety of opportunities and destroying the bureaucracy." Yes, the crises have created increased investment opportunities for the international Egyptian economy and eliminated the legacy of administrative corruption and bureaucracy to activate investment opportunities.
- **How do you explain Egypt maintaining an equal distance from alliances or conflicting interests?**
- Since the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser, there has not been a single document containing the word "alliance." The crisis in Ukraine is politically complex; the Russian invasion is a violation of international law. Within the international system, we condemn the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Russian war on Ukraine. However, at the same time, we agreed that economic sanctions should not be used against countries without legal rules. This "balance" in the Egyptian position primarily maintains the principle of "non-violation of international laws." Here, I would like to point out that foreign policy is the responsibility of the head of state, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides advice, information, reports, and suggests reports, but the main decision in foreign policy is the president's. The "balance" does not come only from political decisions but also stems from mutual interests.
- **Why does Western media not reflect what is happening in Egypt's foreign policy in the way you describe it?**
- Egypt was on the verge of being declared a failed state after 2011, meaning a state unable to repay its debts with no investments or development activities. However, what happened in the process of building the state without "painkillers" and temporary solutions saved development processes. But Western media does not want to see this truth because, in my opinion, there is a clear agenda, without exaggeration, to target Egypt and cause disruption. This agenda is managed by the Muslim Brotherhood from abroad. The Brotherhood took

power after 80 years of being dormant cells in Egyptian society and planned to stay forever as it was a long-awaited dream. However, when the Egyptian people rejected them in 2013, their agenda shifted to how to continue spreading false and misleading information, playing on the "human rights" tune, which is very popular and concerned about in Europe. Since terrorism and illegal immigration issues in Mediterranean countries will certainly affect the European Union, these groups are employed to get their voices heard in the European Parliament, for example, to fuel opposition and exploit the fact that 60% of Egypt's population is below the poverty line, making them easily influenced. For example, when we received reports during my work at the European Union about some forced disappearances, it turned out after investigation that they traveled abroad and were reported as missing. "These are systematic operations," and the more the country progresses, the more these operations become fierce, especially after the reconciliations with Turkey and Qatar. The Brotherhood's lobby in Western newspapers enjoys massive funding since 1928 from the Americans as they are just a tool and received support from several countries. The most supportive country for the Brotherhood is England due to their vast funds in British banks, "billions of pounds sterling." Therefore, media platforms contain many Brotherhood capital, and when opposing ideology and capital combine, these are the results of journalistic treatments. Although this reason is not apparent, there is no justification for Western journalistic schools to defend groups that adopt dark ideas.

- **But there is no strong Egyptian response to these treatments and the infiltration of the Brotherhood into the international community?**
- This does not absolve us of having problems. A delegation from the French Parliament came to me and asked why Egypt appears this way. I told them there are indeed human rights violations in Egypt, but these violations do not represent state policy because the state's policy is governed by the constitution, and respecting human rights is a fundamental base in it. But what happens in Egypt are individual incidents that can happen in all countries. We strive to improve this, such as cooperating in protocols to improve police performance and European support for activating accountability and verification. This Western attack is bigger than our current capabilities; embassies cannot keep up with everything published and respond to it. The response is to strengthen the domestic front, which will reflect on external interests and international relations.
- **How do you assess the impact of "soft power" as an arm of Egyptian public diplomacy?**
- There must be a marriage between soft power and external interests. The result of this marriage is a "Smart Power." This smart power consists of literature, art, celebrations, and social presence, surpassing dry political interests. Smart power ensures the strengthening of interests and reflects on citizens. At the same time, the artistic, literary, cultural, and civilizational Egyptian side is seen, attracting the European citizen and public opinion there, making them less susceptible to believe what is promoted by the Brotherhood. These are long-term policies, and their resonance will be heard later.
- **How do you evaluate international economic relations?**
- Economic relations are a major determinant in foreign policy. Egypt has enormous resources in the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Nile River, and "gold," visible from the surface without digging. The Pharaonic Egyptian civilization was built on gold. It is now included in the mineral wealth. The "black sands project" produces 12 mineral elements. "White sand" is the element China uses to pressure Taiwan because it is used in making

"semiconductors." This is what is focused on in Egypt, along with natural gas. A proposal was made to establish a "regional center for industry and trade" in the Middle East like the Rotterdam center, and we are currently working on it under the name "Economic Zone of the Suez Canal." This will significantly support international economic relations and the Egyptian economy by 20%, changing the trade and navigation map, and consequently, Egypt's economic map. In Egypt, we have a "management crisis" and "private sector" problems. Most Egyptians do not invest due to imposed restrictions or state interventions, and these are issues that need solving. We are now trying to raise individual income, following the Singaporean experience. Therefore, we have problems and restrictions that need elimination.

- **What is Egypt's view on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis?**

- This issue is old and should have been resolved at the outset. Unfortunately, Egypt was not successful in addressing it initially because we did not anticipate Ethiopia's commitment to the project, which has led to its escalation. Initially, the dam was to hold 17 billion cubic meters, but now it has reached a capacity of 75 billion cubic meters. Egypt's delay in responding happened before the era of President Sisi. Now, the Ethiopian side wants to annul all treaties and agreements. However, there are historical rights to the international river. We wanted to sign a detailed agreement governing the filling and operation of this dam, but they refuse because they do not acknowledge that this river is international and a shared right. Their issue is not the water itself; they want to generate and export electricity. We remain committed to finding a political solution. After President Morsi's press conference, where he spoke recklessly, there was an impression of ill-intentions from the Egyptian side to launch attacks on Ethiopia, thus destabilizing trust between the two sides. We are explaining our stance to the international community, emphasizing that we do not intend any military action. We continue negotiations, aim to rationalize water consumption, and desalinate seawater. Given the ongoing work on the dam, Egypt will reassess its position in the future.

- **How do you view Egypt's presence in the Libyan conflict?**

- It is not an intervention since there are no Egyptian forces on Libyan soil; rather, it is protection. Egypt is one of the most border-vulnerable countries, with 1200 km to the east, 1200 km to the west, and 1000 km to the south. The danger from Libya is not potential but certain, given the enormous quantity of weapons that have entered Egypt from the Libyan side since 2011, which we have not yet fully controlled. Therefore, the issue is about protecting national security. The presence in eastern Libya is a "red line," and intervention will be inevitable if it is breached. However, interventions by other countries with no direct concern, like Turkey, France, Russia, and the militias and terrorists, are unwarranted.
- **What is your opinion on The Guardian's claim that the "Climate Summit" is "greenwashing"?**

- The attack is unjustified. This is a conference concerned with environmental issues organized by the United Nations. We will not be swayed by what a newspaper writes, as it will continue this approach towards any Egyptian event. Egypt has the organizational capacity, and Sharm El Sheikh will be a green city. The crucial point is Egypt's negotiating role in achieving beneficial outcomes for the environment and the green transition, turning the summit from a "treaty conference" to an "implementation conference."

- **How do you see the future of foreign policy, especially after reconciliation with Qatar and Turkey?**

- Interests guide foreign policy and international relations. This confirms Egypt's approach to multilateral diplomacy, facilitated by internal political and economic stability. We cannot rely on a strong foreign policy if the internal situation is weak. The primary goal of foreign policy is to defend the state's interests, which reflect internally. Social cohesion and economic progress within the country support the external interests achieved by foreign policy, forming a closed circle where each influences the other.
- **What is your assessment of Western press coverage of Egypt's foreign policy?**

- Egypt's efforts will speak for themselves. The European Union today relies on Egypt for natural gas exports during a critical period, proving that Egypt's foreign policy is expansive and that journalistic criticism does not affect mutual interests. Notably, Egypt's foreign policy is based on ethical grounds, as demonstrated in our border delineation with Cyprus. Before that, we contacted Cyprus to review their interests, and we discovered the Zohr field. Efforts also include social protection programs in health and education. Challenges are numerous, and we do not have time to solely defend our image; national efforts encompassing domestic development and economic reform will speak for themselves.

2- **Interview sample with Journalist: N.E (JW7)**

- **Name:** N.E
- **Profession:** Head of the Arabic version of "France 24" and former presenter on Egyptian television.
- **Location:** Online from Paris.
- **Date:** March 31, 2023
- **Time:** 12:00 PM.

Reason for the Interview: He has been the head of the French station "France 24" for approximately 15 years, making him one of the foremost experts in how European media covers Middle Eastern issues. His extensive experience and in-depth knowledge of media handling provide valuable insights for the current study. His expertise offers a profound and realistic perspective on the study's results, enriched by his firsthand experience within media field.

- **How do you read the shifts in Egyptian foreign policy within the new administration?**

- Egypt's current foreign policy, particularly with regional countries, emphasizes its role as a "mediator," exemplified by its involvement in Gaza and Libya. However, a major shift now is the renewed focus on African relations after years of neglect since the Mubarak era. Historically, Egypt supported many African countries in their struggle for independence, but relations deteriorated following the assassination attempt on Mubarak in Addis Ababa. This led to a significant disconnect, with many African nations no longer considering Egypt as part of Africa. Currently, Egypt's foreign policy aims to strengthen these ties once more.

Another notable aspect is Egypt's move away from American dependency, previously characterized by the belief that "99% of the cards" were in the hands of the United States.

- **Do you believe Egypt insists on playing the role of "mediator" despite its internal challenges?**
- as maintained the role of mediator since the peace treaty with Israel, despite internal challenges. This role has waned due to the "chaos and exhaustion" Egypt has faced, but the mediator role remains a historical and integral part of its foreign policy. Egypt insists on the peace treaty in the Arab-Israeli conflict, focusing on government-level peace, which benefits both governments and people. Additionally, this peace helps secure Egypt's eastern borders.
- Regarding the African file, how do you assess the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis and its coverage in Western media?
- While I am not a strategic expert, my readings, work at the channel, and exposure to various viewpoints suggest that Egypt has acted wisely regarding the GERD crisis. Egypt will not remain silent if its water rights are infringed. International media portrayals vary, with both negative and positive views. The importance of the Nile as a "lifeline" is universally acknowledged. The primary accusation against Egypt is its resistance to change, with claims that international treaties on the Nile are outdated and need revision, while Egypt upholds its historical rights. Egypt will fiercely defend its rights but will avoid military solutions unless absolutely necessary. Western media covers the dispute but often fails to grasp the Nile's sacred significance to Egypt. Consequently, many Western outlets claim Egypt is hindering Ethiopia's development projects, prompting Egypt to champion "life before development." Western media has not wholly supported the African side, especially following condemnations of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.
- **What is your perspective on Egypt's intervention in Libya?**
- Multiple parties are involved in Libya, but Egypt has pursued official channels rather than clandestine ones. Libya's significance to Egypt in international politics is clear as a "neighboring state" under threat. Western media often does not understand regional dynamics, mistakenly applying European norms where neighboring states like France and England might not intervene. Ignoring the nature of the region, where weak states perpetually face terrorism threats, is a mistake. Egypt faces clear threats from drug smugglers, terrorists, and arms traffickers on the Libyan border, legitimizing its right to defend its national security.
- **Do you not see a contradiction with the principle of non-interference in the affairs of others?**
- Egyptian diplomacy ultimately aims to serve the "public interest." Non-interference does not mean abandoning the protection of national security. Non-interference applies to issues not threatening national security or public interest. For instance, French diplomacy justifies supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression, as seen in French television programs overwhelmingly supporting Ukraine, reflecting French interests. Similarly, Egypt cannot ignore threats in neighbouring states.
- **How do you explain Egypt's stance on the Russian-Ukrainian war?**
- Egypt's stance relies on multilateral diplomacy principles. Egypt unequivocally condemns any country's aggression, thus denouncing the Russian invasion. However, it also opposes unlawful economic sanctions on Russia. This approach highlights multilateral diplomacy, especially after

strained relations with the United States and strengthened ties with Russia, a strategic ally historically supportive of Egypt, particularly during the Suez Crisis. The public interest principle is paramount; for example, despite some citizens opposing peace with Israel, the peace treaty serves the public interest. The same principle applies to Egypt's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war.

- **On what basis do you decide which topics to cover or exclude in your management of the French channel?**

- This is a very complex issue. Most of the Middle East correspondents in international media, whether in the Arabic, French, or English versions, are of Arab origin. They aim to demonstrate to Western audiences, whether French or English, that they are bold and not constrained by any "taboo." They also want to show that they adopt the same "Western journalistic values," which emphasize, for example, that the military's role is solely to defend the country and not to govern it. Even though De Gaulle was a general, he made significant achievements for France. They do not perceive the situation in Egypt the same way because no achievements are communicated to them. Correspondents avoid highlighting achievements to prevent accusations of bias, lack of freedom, or support for dictatorship. Thus, Western media continue in a vicious circle. Generally, news tends to highlight negative stories because they attract and sell more to viewers. The stereotype ingrained in the journalist's mind is that Egypt, being ruled by the military, is automatically a "dictatorship." Consequently, media portrayals are framed this way. In France, they talk about Egypt only in the context of "human rights violations," and there is no effort from Egyptians to clarify the picture.

- **Why do you think there is no Egyptian effort in this regard?**

- They are currently not interested in making external efforts; all energies are directed toward domestic development. Western media did not document the Egyptian will on June 30th as it should have been. Millions of citizens in the streets cannot be considered a military coup. You experienced it yourself: we, the people, pleaded with the army to protect our revolution. Even now, I cannot understand why it is labeled a coup and not a revolution like in 2011—both were popular uprisings. This double standard has diminished the Egyptian side's desire to explain, especially since the same thing happened with the Ukrainian president. There is always a double standard and a preconceived judgment for criticism.

- What **is the reason for this preconceived judgment, in your view?**

- The primary reason is the lack of awareness about the nature of Egyptian society. As children, we always heard that the military is the only national institution we trust. This culture persists, and the military has this reputation among us. They do not understand or know about this emotional connection. In their view, the military is just soldiers without any support for national pride or Egyptian identity. They do not know the influence of military films and series that evoke a sense of belonging and pride in us. This is the cultural and doctrinal difference. On the other hand, I do not favor the "European agenda" scenario, but there might be an "American agenda" that discourages stability and strength in the region for fear of losing American dominance and influence. One cannot overlook instances like the "French submarine deal" fiasco, where America

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intervened and sold to Australia instead, which was a significant blow to the French. European-American dependency might stem from the historical belief that America saved them from Nazi Germany in World War II, although the first defeat of the Germans was actually in Russia. Generally, this dependency makes them unintentionally adopt the same international policies.

- **Is there a mechanism to change how Western newspapers handle Egypt's foreign affairs?**

- There should indeed be a mechanism, but it is a gradual process. Our priority now is Africa. Everyone knows that Africa has a future, even if it is currently underdeveloped. Here at the French channel, we are greatly influenced by French policy in Africa. Countries like Mali and Chad, for instance, no longer tolerate the French, leading to Russian and Chinese investments. Our focus is Africa. Progress in internal and African work will gradually improve our image in Western media. These countries have what is termed "democracy," which is not fully implemented there; it can be said they wear the "mask of democracy." Anyone not wearing this mask is criticized.

- **Is there a difference in the definition of "democracy" between cultures?**

- Yes, the West simplifies democracy to just elections, but what is the nature of these elections? As a French citizen, I go to polling stations to vote, which expresses my opinion. However, when groups go house-to-house with food and supplies to secure votes, this is not genuine expression but loyalty to the food source. This cannot be called democracy, and this is what happened with the Muslim Brotherhood. The West does not grasp this detail. This was also a major flaw of Mubarak's regime, which made Egyptians vote based on their food source. Therefore, the Brotherhood's rule was not established democratically because Egyptians, known for their aversion to the Brotherhood, could not achieve full democracy in a hungry society. Economic dependence makes citizens loyal to resource providers.

- **In your view, why is the Muslim Brotherhood's voice more prominent here?**

- Simply because, in Western schools of thought, all support goes to the opposition without distinguishing between opponents and criminals, unless it happens on their soil. In the 1970s, Khomeini was portrayed in Paris as Iran's savior from the Shah just because he was an opponent. Once he took power, he imposed darkness on the country. The West also does not understand the pervasive ideology of the Brotherhood, aiming to infiltrate every state institution. We could not wait for the next elections while they infiltrated the interior ministry, judiciary, media, education, and government institutions. We witnessed early signs of this when administrators in institutions and schools discriminated against non-veiled women. We would have experienced new dark ages and a new occupation erasing Egyptian identity. Additionally, the Brotherhood's skill in using Western-preferred terms like "oppressive military" and "stolen democracy" helped them. The inaccurate portrayal of June 2013 ignored the 30 million demonstrators aiming to end Brotherhood rule, with the army merely responding to their demands. This was a major media error, overlooking the millions fighting against regressive ideas for freedom just because this freedom's form did not fit Western democratic standards.

- **What do you think explains the Egyptian side's passivity in responding?**

- There was a state of exhaustion and weakness, with efforts limited to verbally denying the "coup" label. Where are the images? Where are the videos of the revolution? All this evidence should be published and used to improve the image if there is an intent to do so. Meanwhile, the Egyptian side was exhausted from human rights accusations and exhibited a certain "stupidity" or "negligence." For example, the case of Alaa Abd El-Fattah was trivial and could have been handled more smartly, as no Egyptian would listen to him after his release. His release would have caused less noise than his imprisonment, which provides ammunition for human rights advocates to speculate about his mistreatment. However, it was a judicial ruling, and we lack flexibility in understanding such matters.

- **Has international media lost its significance for Egypt?**

- Not exactly, but perhaps the lack of objectivity has diminished the desire to respond, especially since international political and economic relations are separate from civil society relations. Bilateral relations between Egypt and France are excellent. It was amusing when a journalist on a French media platform criticized the "Rafale deal between Egypt and France," asking how one could sell Rafale jets to Egypt's leader, who might use them against his own people. Why should Egypt bother responding to such absurdities?

- **Are there other motives behind the negative portrayal in Western media?**

- Certainly, there are institutions funded by opposition groups and countries aiming to always frame Egypt as a "repressive" state. However, their influence is still minimal and does not impact the international mutual interests between countries. I am speaking about France because I live here. Sometimes, interests align, but the human rights file is also used as a pressure card to keep the country in a perpetual state of defence.

- **How do you evaluate the impact of Egyptian soft power on its foreign policy?**

- Once, a journalist on my channel suggested a topic about how Mohamed Salah's popularity in England bothers the Egyptian regime. This reflects the media's stereotypical thinking, linking everything to attacking the regime. I asked him, where did you get this information? What is the source? Here we deal with assumptions based on a single mold. Mohamed Salah is a beloved Egyptian ambassador who has significantly changed Egypt's image, showing the power of soft power in shaping national images. Media should focus on Egyptian history and tourism. I believe that soft power is the strongest weapon Egypt has for its international image. Our history speaks for us, not terrorist groups. Our Pharaonic civilization is exclusively ours and remains a cornerstone in our foreign policy, highlighting the positive side of Egypt away from forces of darkness. This beautiful aspect of Egypt will also be evident in the New Administrative Capital, which critics have called "a new capital of tyranny." With Cairo's population exceeding that of Belgium or Switzerland, we need expansion and investment, similar to what Brazil did with Rio de Janeiro. Why is there opposition to developmental projects? Therefore, progress in various fields is the most significant influencer on Egypt's international image.

3- **Interview sample with Researcher: Prof: G.S (R9).**
- **Name: G.S**
- **Profession:** Professor of Political Science at the British University in Cairo

- **Location:** British University in Cairo
- **Date:** November 1, 2022
- **Time:** 11 AM

Reason for the Interview: He is one of the few Egyptian university professors who have focused on Egypt's foreign policy in their research. He has contributed to the scientific heritage with research on multilateral diplomacy and Egypt's foreign policy in the aftermath of the 2013 revolution.

- **What are the key features of Egypt's foreign policy under the new leadership?**
- There are three main determinants that have shaped these key features. Firstly, Egypt's relations with major countries have seen changes, transitioning from a "dependency" relationship to a relationship characterized by "restored balance" in Egypt's foreign relations. This is evident in Egypt's reorientation "eastward," strengthening relations with major Asian centers like China and Russia while maintaining strategic relations with the West, including the United States and the European Union. Secondly, Egypt has regained an active regional role, which had been absent for a long period during Mubarak's rule. This is evident in Egypt reorganizing its regional alliances and taking on a strong role in the Arab region, the African continent, the Islamic world, and non-Arab actors in the region. Thirdly, Egypt emphasizes the principle of state sovereignty, a fundamental principle in international relations for the past four centuries since the Treaty of Westphalia. However, this principle has undergone significant transformations, especially after the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, which involved interventions in states' affairs and regime changes by force. Egypt has made state sovereignty a cornerstone of its foreign policy, focusing on restoring the state's primary role as the key to regional stability and peace.
- **You mentioned that Egypt's foreign policy is characterized by "multilateral diplomacy." How can this be applied amid often conflicting interests between major powers?**
- A state's ability to diversify its foreign alliances depends on several factors, the most important of which is the shape of international balances at that time. When there are multiple international poles, it provides a broader margin for maneuvering for smaller states, allowing them greater freedom and independence in international relations. When the international system is dominated by a single power, it usually restricts the space available to smaller states. Egypt has benefited from the current international system, which does not resemble the international system after the end of the Cold War, where the United States was the dominant power. Today, there are deep transformations in the structure of the international system in terms of power distribution. For example, China has emerged strongly on the international stage with its Belt and Road Initiative, and Russia is reviving its Soviet-era influence under Putin. The current international system is not unipolar but rather multipolar, which provides smaller states with greater freedom and opportunities. Egypt has built relationships with new poles, allowing it to

operate in a different international environment than it did a decade ago when the focus was only on the dominance of a single pole.

- **Can we say that the "new global diplamcy" is one of the main determinants of Egypt's new foreign policy?**
- It is indeed a very important external factor that has contributed to shaping the new and evolving features of Egypt's foreign policy, especially given the noticeable deterioration in Egypt's relations with the West after the 2013 revolution. This was one of the motivations for Egypt's leadership to "activate the eastward orientation" and diversify its strategic allies since the primary strategic ally, the United States, experienced strained relations with Egypt post-2013, exemplified by the temporary aid cuts. Although relations have resumed, they are not as "warm" as before. The Egyptian-American relations are important but not intimate, with some coldness and disagreement on several issues. This is evident in the few official visits between President Sisi and American presidents. For instance, Sisi did not meet Obama in any official visits, met Trump only twice, and has not met Biden at all, unlike his meetings with the Chinese and Russian presidents. Thus, there is hidden tension in Egyptian-American relations, but it is not a complete rupture.
- **What other external factors have contributed to shaping the new foreign policy?**
- The Arab revolutions are certainly an important factor. They have resulted in a highly dangerous and complex regional situation for Egyptian interests. The most significant outcome of these revolutions is the collapse of the national state in most Arab countries and the emergence of "non-state actors" represented by terrorist and armed groups, which today enjoy greater freedom of movement, logistical support, military backing, and financial aid. These developments have created a highly dangerous security environment for Egyptian interests, significantly directing Egypt's foreign policy towards restoring a strong regional role to reassert the importance of the state as the primary actor in maintaining security. This is evident in Egypt's approach to the Libyan, Syrian, and Palestinian issues, as Egypt has faced serious risks due to the security chaos resulting from the diminished role of the state and the failure to maintain its structures. The situation in Libya, for example, has posed significant security threats to Egypt due to the absence of a central authority to control borders and the movement of armed groups.
- **Egypt adopts a non-interference policy in other countries' affairs, but the Western media has criticized this as interference. How do you assess this?**
- This is primarily about border protection. Secondly, the Western media relies heavily on narratives from sources with specific political agendas. 99% of Western media coverage about Egypt and its foreign policy is a "negative stereotype" derived from sources and think tanks with anti-Egyptian state biases. Arab and Islamic communities in European countries are dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, and this is also the case in Canada and the United States. The Western media landscape is left to a single political current hostile to the state, so it is natural that the image is negative. I also observe this in

international conferences I attend; the stereotype does not change, unfortunately. The "state" cannot counter this media attack with a counter-media of its own; we lack the capacities or facilities for a media platform that can effectively address the Western public. We communicate domestically in Arabic through local media, but we do not have a "media platform" in English to communicate professionally with the world through trained correspondents.

- **How do you see Egypt's pivotal regional role internationally?**
- Yes, it is evident and would have been more apparent if it weren't for consecutive external shocks at the wrong time. This has been Egypt's constant bad luck in modern times. All promising development efforts have unfortunately been interrupted by external interventions beyond the Egyptian state's control, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war. Without these two international circumstances, Egypt's economic position would have been more prosperous than it is now, and the developmental experiment would have been more successful.
- **Why do Chinese academics take a particular interest in analyzing Egypt's foreign policy?**
- There is no specific research interest from one country, but Chinese academics view Egypt's foreign policy more positively than others. The Egyptian-Chinese relations take a very strategic turn due to "converging views" between Beijing and Cairo on most regional issues, and there is an emerging strategic partnership between Egypt and China. The two leaders have met about eight times, and China's positive outlook towards the Egyptian state reflects the extent of agreement and cooperation, unlike the constantly critical Western countries with their stereotypical and politicized view of the Egyptian reality. The stereotype is "recycling the military regime of Nasser's era," leading to labels like military coup, police state, dominant military economy, subservient foreign policy, and dependency on other countries.
- **How do you see Egypt's position on the "Renaissance Dam"?**
- It is based on "prudence and wisdom," "gradualism," and "avoiding reckless adventures." As long as water interests are preserved, diplomacy remains open. The leadership believes that water security has not yet been compromised and that the crisis can be resolved diplomatically, which would be better than military repercussions. The decision-maker has faith in restoring the state's role, avoiding past mistakes of engaging in external military adventures beyond its capacity, exhausting the state internally, or shrinking internationally below its central position. Looking at Nasser's period, Egypt played an active regional role beyond its internal capabilities, leading to an imbalance between a strong foreign role and limited internal resources, resulting in the 1967 setback due to interventions in Yemen and supporting anti-colonial revolutions in Africa. Later, the opposite happened, and Egypt shrank internally, abandoning any strong regional role. The current vision attempts to balance a strong regional role with the state's internal

resources, avoiding reckless military adventures when the state is still strained and in a phase of reconstruction and economic development. For instance, when Saudi Arabia requested military support in Yemen, Egypt refused military intervention but declared political support to avoid depleting state resources. Egypt is making efforts like internationalizing the issue at the Security Council, strengthening relations with African countries around Ethiopia, or involving major countries in negotiations. I support this approach, which avoids forfeiting rights while also avoiding empty slogans and excessive enthusiasm and impulsiveness.

- **How do you explain Egypt's high level of international borrowing?**
- The issue of external debt is very complex. We do not calculate external debt as a number but as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). As long as the ratio is safe, there is no problem. Borrowing here is for productive projects and financing a well-studied development plan, so this is not a flaw. According to Central Bank data, the ratio is still safe.
- **"Political Islam" - terrorism or political plurality?**
- It is certainly not political plurality, as this group does not engage within a political framework nor does it accept the rules of political dialogue. It is a terrorist organization that refused to re-enter the political process and integrate after the removal of "Morsi." Instead, it resorted to non-peaceful means that have no relation to political plurality, which is built on dialogue, peace, differing opinions, re-elections, and early elections. All these options were rejected, and they resorted to violence and killing. If any political faction in Western countries took up arms against the state, would the official representative of the state deal with them based on political plurality or based on the concept of crime? Therefore, they cannot be classified as a political faction. One of the definitions of the state is its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, and this is not permissible for other factions and militias.
- **The biggest criticism of Egypt in the Western media is the "human rights" file. How do you explain that?**
- We lack the capacity, knowledge, and necessary tools to communicate with them in their language and their terms. We take steps here expecting them to understand, but this is unprofessional because we are surrounded by media and intellectual circles hostile to the Egyptian state. There is no real opportunity for accurate information to reach Western public opinion. Understanding the terminology of Western media and learning to address them in a language they understand, in an objective manner based on facts and evidence, rather than media based on mobilization and propaganda campaigns, is crucial. I wish we had an Egyptian "CNN" with knowledge investments, honest professional standards, and specialized correspondents. This is not difficult for us to achieve, and afterward, I believe Western public opinion will change a bit.
- **How do you observe Egypt's foreign policy in light of the Russia-Ukraine war and the redrawing of international power balances?**
- The impact of the war is mainly on the internal Egyptian economic situation rather than politically. Even politically, the stance is a strategically balanced distance with major

countries. Egypt has neither adopted the Russian position nor the Western position, maintaining a balanced stance, which was evident in the voting at the Security Council.

Appendix C4: interviewees consent letters.

Kingston University London

Kingston School of Art

Informed consent to participate in a research study
Department of Journalism, Publishing and Media
Kingston University, London

Study title & contact details of doctoral student:
'Framing Egyptian Foreign Policy in Western Print Media (2018-2021)'
CONTACT: Dina Gadallah
k1945966@kingston.ac.uk
Kingston University,
Penrhyn Road, KT1 2EE,
Kingston-upon-Thames, London, UK
https://www.kingston.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/research-degree-students/profile/dina-gadallah-333/

Please

	YES	NO
1- Taking part in the study		
I have read and understood the study information dated [----------------------], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	✓	
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	✓	
I understand that taking part in the study involves audio recorded interview which will be transcribed as text	✓	
2- Future Use of the information in the study		
I understand that information I provide will be used for [supplying data as a part of PhD to be analysed qualitatively].	✓	
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team consisting of the researcher (PhD candidate, principal supervisor, and internal/ external examiners)	✓	
3- Future use and reuse of the information by others		
I give permission for the transcribed recorded interview that I provide to be deposited to Kingston University's research repository so it can be used for future research and learning.	✓	

1. Signatures

AHMED ELKHATEEB   22/10/2022
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my a
that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

DINA KHALIL   Dina Khalil   22/10/2022
Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

2. Study contact details for further information

---

1. Signatures

Raof Saad
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date 30/10/2022

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my a
that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

Dina Khalil   Dina Khalil   30/10/2

2. Study contact details for further information

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

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SIGNATURES

Name of participant ..... *Ahmed Aboudooh* ....

Signature **Ahmed aboudouh**   Date 13/3/2023

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher .... *Dinakhalil* ....

Signature   Date

Dinakhalil   13/ March/ 23

repository] so it can be used for future research and learning.

1. **Signatures**

AHMED ELTAHRY   *Ahmed.eltahry*   27/6/2022
Name of participant [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my a
that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

DINA KHALIL   *Dina Khalil*   27/10/2022
Name of researcher [IN CAPITALS]   Signature   Date

2. **Study contact details for further information**

FORM TEMPLATE

SIGNATURES

Name of participant ....*Mohamed Sief*..

Signature *Mohamedsief* .... Date 22/2/2023

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher ......*Dina Khalil*..

Signature .... Date   22/2/23

Dina Khalil

SIGNATURES

Name of participant ..*Nader Gohar*...

Signature *Nader* .... Date 03-11-2022

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher ....*Dinakhalil*..

Signature .... Date   3 - 11 - 22

Dina Khalil

SIGNATURES

Name of participant   Dr. Gamal Selim

Signature   Gaml. M. Slty   Date   1/11/2020

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher   Dina Ahmed Khalil

Signature   Date   1/11/2020

Dina Khalil

SIGNATURES

Name of participant   Prof. Hesham Azmi

Signature   Date   9/12/2022

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher   Dina Khalil

Signature   Date

Dina Khalil   9/12/22

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SIGNATURES

Name of participant ....Nabil El Shoubashy..........

Signature *Nabil El Ghoubashy* Date 31 (March 23

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher ....Dina Khalil..

Signature   Date   31 / 3 / 2023

Dina Khalil

SIGNATURES

Name of participant ....Ahmed Elmeslemany...................

Signature   *Ahmed Elmeslemany* Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Name of researcher ....Dina Ahmed Khalil

Dina Khalil

Signature   Date   2/11 / 2022