CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Journalism

Master's Thesis

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CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Department of Journalism

Echoes of a War: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Egypt's *Al-Ahram*'s Five-Decade Coverage of the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli War

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Erasmus Mundus Journalism Programme

Supervisor: Mgr. Sandra Lábová, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

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- 2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
- 3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.
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In Prague on

Lobna Sabet Amin Awwad

18 July 2024

References

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Abstract

This study examines the intricate dynamics between media narratives and political power play through a multimodal discourse analysis of Egypt's highly circulated newspaper, Al-Ahram, and its portrayal of the 1973 October War over the last five decades. The media in Egypt is set against a backdrop of the political landscape of the country, marked by low scores in the global freedom index and significant political control over the media. This research investigates how the newspaper has reflected the state narrative amidst different political regimes. The study employs a mixed-qualitative-method approach, combining multimodal discourse analysis of fifteen front pages and insights from three semi-structured interviews with prominent journalists from Al-Ahram, exploring the narrative shifts of the war memory in alignment with political changes, suggesting potential bias. It aims to study the media's role in constructing public perception and the strategic use of war memory in state propaganda by specific political actors. The findings suggest a consistent glorification of military achievements, which shifts according to the prevailing political agenda. This reveals the newspaper's role in reinforcing the regime's legitimacy and enhances the understanding of the broader implications of media narratives in shaping political realities in authoritarian contexts.

Abstrakt

Tato studie zkoumá složitou dynamiku mezi mediálními narativy a politickou hrou o moc prostřednictvím multimodální analýzy diskurzu hojně čtených egyptských novin *Al-Ahram* a jejich vyobrazení říjnové války z roku 1973 v průběhu posledních pěti desetiletí. Média v Egyptě fungují na pozadí politické situace v zemi, která se odráží v

nízkých hodnotách v celosvětovém indexu svobody a značnou politickou kontrolou nad médii. Tato rešerše zkoumá, jak noviny odrážely státní narativ v průběhu různých politických režimů. Studie využívá přístupy smíšených kvalitativních metod. Kombinuje multimodální analýzu diskurzu patnácti titulních stran a poznatky ze tří polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s významnými novináři z deníku Al-Ahrám, přičemž zkoumá posuny narativu válečné paměti v souladu s politickými změnami, což naznačuje potenciální přítomnost zkreslení. Jejím cílem je studovat roli médií v utváření veřejného mínění a také strategické využití válečné paměti ve státní propagandě konkrétními politickými aktéry. Výsledky naznačují konzistentní glorifikaci vojenských úspěchů, která se mění v závislosti na převládající politické agendě. Toto zjištění odhaluje roli novin v legitimizaci režimu a zlepšuje naše chápání širších důsledků mediálních narativů při utváření politické reality v autoritářských kontextech.

Keywords

Al-Ahram; Egypt; Ideology; Media Construction of Reality; Multimodality; PowerDynamics; Sinai Peninsula; State Narrative; The 1973 War.

Klíčová slova

Al-Ahram; Egypt; Ideologie; Mediální Konstrukce Reality; Multimodalita; Dynamika Moci; Sinajský Poloostrov; Státní Narativ, Válka v Roce 1973.

Title

Echoes of a War: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Egypt's *Al-Ahram*'s Five-Decade Coverage of the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli War.

Název práce

Ozvěny Války: Multimodální Analýza Diskurzu Egyptského Deníku *Al-Ahram* v Pětiletém Období Egyptsko-Izraelské Války z Roku 1973.

Acknowledgement

Living in Denmark and Czechia has been an incredible journey, a true rollercoaster that broadened my worldview. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Erasmus Mundus Consortium for awarding me this opportunity. Pursuing a master's degree abroad has always been a dream of mine, and you brought it to life.

To Sabet Awwad and Eman Abu Reida, my amazing parents and mentors, thank you for always believing in me and never doubting my skills. Your love, guidance, and endless video calls kept me going. I am forever grateful for your loud cheers and unconditional faith in me.

To my elder brothers, Mohamed and Omar, who have been my role models since a young age, thank you for your unwavering support over these two years despite the distance and busy schedules.

Sarah, my best friend and sister. No matter how far apart we might be, you have always been my angel. Thank you for constantly checking in on me and making sure I stayed on track. You inspire me in many many ways.

Ana and Alisa, from surviving Aarhus's weather to handling Prague's landlords, it would have been impossible without you. Thank you for attending all the pro-Palestine protests with me. You have been my source of inspiration and unconditional support over the past two years, I am grateful for having you.

Finally, to my supervisor, Sandra Lábová. Thank you for always taking the time to provide valuable feedback and guidance. I appreciate the expertise you provided throughout this journey.

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY STUDENT:

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Your faculty e-mail: 55240303@fsv.cuni.cz	Čj: 469 Příloh:
Study program/form of study:	Přiděleno:

Thesis title in English:

Erasmus Mundus Journalism

Echoes of a War: Egypt's Al Ahram's Five-Decade Coverage of the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli War

Expected date of submission (semester, academic year)

(Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.)

Spring 2024 – Defense June 2024.

Main research question (max. 250 characters):

How has Al Ahram newspaper's discourse on the 1973 War evolved over the last five decades?

Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):

The 1973 Egyptian-Israeli war in Sinai has consistently been analyzed by academic discourse (Siniver, A. (Ed.), 2013); (Parker, R. B. A., 2001); (Whetten, L., & Johnson, M., 1974); (Boutros-Ghali, B., & Lang, J, 1999). Studies mostly focus on the strategies Egypt adopted during the war (Uri Bar-Joseph, 1995), the role of the war on Egyptian-Israeli political relations (Moshe Gat, 2016), the opposition to the peace agreement (Habeeb, W. M., 1991), and post-war security in the peninsula of Sinai (Kenneth W. Stein, 1997). However, there is a lack of research regarding the analysis of the media coverage of the war and how the media's role was vital in shaping and maintaining the narrative of the war in Egypt over the years.

According to Richardson (2007), Critical Discourse Analysis is a perspective on critical scholarship: a theory and a method of analyzing how individuals and institutions use language. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political, and historical contexts (Van Dijk, 1998).

This study seeks to identify themes by analyzing semi-official narratives from the most prominent local periodical *Al Ahram*, for 50 years. It should contribute to theoretical knowledge about the relationship between a historical event -the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli war and media discourse through the lens of the local periodical by analyzing texts and visuals focusing on the language, tonal shifts, and narrative focus.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):

This study's theoretical base will revolve around a Critical Discourse Analysis (Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J., 2002), drawing from the understanding that communication is more than just a language. The study aims to critically analyze texts and visuals of the articles on the 6th of October from the chosen years, focusing on the language, tonal shifts, and narrative focus. In the context of this study, this research aligns with the principles of CDA (Fairclough, N. 1995), as it aims to unfold the linguistic and semiotic strategies employed by the newspaper over 50 years. This analysis can reveal underlying ideologies, potential biases, or dominant narratives the newspaper has adopted over the decades. Through CDA, this research seeks to be the intersection of media, language, and power, which contributes to understanding the relationship between the media discourse and the societal structures from the context of the 1973 War.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):

This research is going to employ a qualitative approach and is going to be conducted in two phases:

- 1) Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) will consider texts and visuals from specific articles from Al Ahram newspaper. They will be critically analyzed, focusing on the language, tonal shifts, and narrative focus. According to Jones (2021), MDA is an approach to discourse that focuses on how meaning is made through the use of multiple modes of communication as opposed to just languages. Thus, visuals and texts from the chosen articles will be investigated, allowing the study to reveal how power dynamics are constructed and negotiated through multimodal discourse in the context of the war.
- 2) Adopting the oral history method or conducting semi-structured interviews to verify the authenticity and accuracy of media reporting. Besides, comparing the narratives obtained from oral histories with the Al Ahram coverage can identify gaps in the newspaper presentation of the war. "Oral history methodologies can help uncover the roles played by individuals in particular historical events or trace the history of objects" (Swaminathan, 2022). "Oral history methods are increasingly significant for qualitative researchers as they seek to delve deeper into human experiences in diverse contexts."

Thematic analysis will also be employed for several interview transcripts of prominent figures.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

1) Multimodal discourse analysis:

The first page of Al Ahram will be analyzed and interpreted while maintaining a representative sample. The sample is chosen based on major political events in Egypt, the years when Egypt was significantly involved in regional or international events, and the years of internal political and economic developments in Egypt.

The newspaper copy of 6th October from the years:

- 1973: how the newspaper portrayed the war while it was happening.
- 1974: the aftermath and the first anniversary of the war.
- 1978: Camp David Accords.
- 1981: Hosny Mubarak came into power.
- 1987: The first Intifada in Palestine.
- 1991: The Gulf War and its impact on the Middle East.
- 1993: Oslo Accords.
- 1999: Egyptian Parliamentary Elections.
- 2005: Egypt's first multi-candidate presidential elections.
- 2007: internal political developments and constitutional amendments.
- 2011: 25th of January Revolution and the Arab Spring.
- 2012: Mohamed Morsy and the Muslim Brotherhood came into power.
- 2013: military coup and the rise of Abdelfatah El Sisi.
- 2016: flotation of the Egyptian pound and new economic measures.
- 2019: constitutional amendment, extending Abdelfatah El Sisi's term in office.
- 2021: The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam negotiations.
- 2023: the 50th anniversary of the war and contributing with recent and updated insights to the academia.

Thus, the main article about the war on the 17 (seventeen) front pages will be analyzed using multimodal discourse analysis. The sample will include texts and visuals. The analysis will consider the language, tonal shifts, and narrative focus, drawing themes and patterns out of the articles highlighting the national celebration on the 6th of October of each year.

2) Oral history interviewees:

- Managing Editor Abdelgawad Tawfeek, Former Military Editor, Al-Ahram Newspaper.
- Editorial Advisor *Anwar Abdelateef*, Former Editorial Secretary of Al-Ahram Newspaper.
- Photography Consultant Salah Ibrahim, Former Head of Photography of Photojournalism at Al-Ahram Newspaper.

The interviews will be analyzed from the perspective of narrative evolution; how the discourse of the newspaper changed over the years.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):

- 1. Abstract.
- 2. Introduction:
 - 2.1) Motives, research question, objectives of the study, thesis structure.
- 3. Literature review:
 - 3.1) Background: The 1973 Egyptian-Israeli war; its historical significance and representation in local Egyptian media. Overview of the war: presenting the key events, the outcomes of the war within the context of Camp David Accords, and its implications.
 - 3.2) Related media analyses: Summarizing existing studies on war coverage.
- 4. Theoretical framework:
 - 4.1) Studies on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).
 - 4.2) Relevance of CDA to the newspaper narrative of the war.
- 5. Methodology:
 - 5.1) Research design: Introducing the qualitative approach.
 - 5.2) MDA: sampling, data collection, data analysis.

- 5.3) Interviews: sampling, interview structure, course of the interviews, data analysis.
- 6. Findings:
 - 6.1) Chronological analysis of the articles based on the era; the theme identification.
 - 6.2) Interviews' findings: the identification.
- 7. Discussion:
 - 7.1) Interpreting the findings of the research and its relation to the theoretical framework.
 - 7.2) Limitations and recommendations for future research.
- 8. Conclusion.
- 9. References.
- 10. Appendices.
 - 10.1) Samples of articles and interview transcript.

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

To be decided but planning to include:

- 1. David Machin (2013) What is multimodal critical discourse studies? Critical Discourse Studies, 10:4, 347-355, DOI: 10.1080/17405904.2013.813770
 This research revolves around how language, power, and ideology are negotiated in visual communication and media texts. This study provides information on how to carry on Multimodal Discourse Analysis.
- 2. Mustafa Menshawy (2016) Turning 'defeat' into 'victory': the power of discourse on the 1973 war in Egypt, Middle Eastern Studies, 52:6, 897-916, DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2016.1197831 The author examines the media discourse through the narrative of formal, semi-formal and informal Egyptian outlet during the regime of Presidents Sadat and Mubarak.
- 3. Analysing media discourses (2008), SOCIAL SEMIOTICS, 18:3, 273-276, DOI: 10.1080/10350330802217048

This book introduces an issue of "Social Semiotics" that explores various analytical approaches to studying media discourses. It employs diverse methods such as critical discourse analysis and ethnomethodology which can contribute in the process of understanding the semiotics and the cultural significance of this discourse.

 Gill Abousnnouga & David Machin (2011) The changing spaces of war commemoration: a multimodal analysis of the discourses of British monuments, Social Semiotics, 21:2, 175-196, DOI: 10.1080/10350330.2011.548640

This paper examines the way that war monuments infuse our public physical spaces, and therefore our internal mental spaces, with discourses that legitimize war, soldiery and militarism in different ways at different times creating different kinds of physical

environments. This can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between wars and discourses.

5. Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (Eds.) (2011). Critical discourse analysis. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446289068
This study explains how CDA offers a methodological approach and theoretical framework. It provides insights into how language influences societal structures and ideologies besides a better understanding of CDA as an analytical tool.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

- 1. Chapelle, C. A., & Jones, R. H. Multimodal Discourse Analysis. In Multimodal Discourse Analysis (1st ed., pp. 1-6). Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0813.pub2
- 2. Mulvihill, T. M., & Swaminathan, R. (Eds.). (2022). Oral history and qualitative methodologies: Educational research for social justice. Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003127192-2

Date / Signature of the student:

08/12/2023

D

I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise.

I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.

Surname and name of the supervisor

Date / Signature of the supervisor

Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, by November 15, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Sandra Lábová. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

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Introduction

For decades, the intersection between media and politics has developed into a field of critical significance, with media narratives shaping the political course and political events acting as catalysts for shifts in media discourse. According to the Freedom in the World Index (Freedom House, 2024), Egypt scores 18/100 in the global freedom status due to its long-standing authoritarian regime. Furthermore, it ranks 176th on the political indicator of the Reporters without Borders Index of 2023. The scale measures how much independence the media has in terms of support and respect when faced with political pressure from the government or other political actors. Egypt only came ahead of North Korea, China, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan. Menshawy (2016) labelled *Al-Ahram* newspaper as the mouthpiece of Sadat's state, given its long history of interference with its editorial decisions and directions. The media and politics nexus may explain the correlation between the state and *Al-Ahram*.

This study sheds light on the media narratives of one prominent Egyptian newspaper, with Egypt's largest circulation figures (Menshawy, 2016), *Al-Ahram*, by examining the memory of the 1973 October War. Historically, the war is referred to as the Ramadan War, the October War, the 1973 Arab–Israeli War, Yom Kippur, or the Fourth Arab–Israeli War after the 1948 War, the 1956 War, and the 1967 War.

The war and its subsequent peace negotiations serve as valuable background for examining how media narratives on a specific event evolved in response to major political events in Egypt and the Arab World. Scholars have been exploring the media environment in Egypt with a focus on various topics. These include the hegemony of Egypt's business and military elites through the private media they control (Hamoud, 2023), a comparative analysis of mass media under the rule of Nasser and Sadat (Nasser & Tankard, c1990), the

exploration of cassette culture in Modern Egypt (Simon, 2022), and the role of social media in setting off the Arab Spring in 2011 (Clarke & Kocak, 2020). Nevertheless, there remains a significant research gap in analysing the media coverage of war memory and understanding the pivotal role of media in shaping and perpetuating the narrative of the war in Egypt over the years.

Thus, the study seeks to answer the research questions: **How has** *Al-Ahram* newspaper's discourse on the 1973 War evolved over the last five decades, and what is the relationship between the power dynamics in Egypt and the *Al-Ahram* narrative on the 1973 War?

The main focus of this study is to analyse how war memory has been displayed and celebrated in the newspaper over the years. It examines the precise interplay between media and politics in Egypt over 50 years. In that context, the study starts with a literature review discussing the media landscape in Egypt regarding the memory of the 1973 October War. The chapter examines the fluctuating patterns the media and state represented before the war, which was characterised by freedom and editorial independence, and after the war, where there became a significant alignment between the state narrative and the media discourse. The chapter further examines the complex interplay between the state and the newspaper's editorial traditions under Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, where it reveals how the state utilised the media to reinforce the regime's legitimacy, leading to question the press independence and the construction of national narratives through the media.

Chapter Theoretical Framework discusses media construction of reality theory, also known as the social construction of reality, and its implications for examining the active role of media in constructing and shaping the public's historical perception of war memory. The chapter highlights how the media construction of reality is not limited to focusing on the role of media only but incorporates the different aspects that influence that

role, as it considers the broader societal, cultural, and political contexts in which media operates. Media construction of reality pays attention to the significance of images and other modes of communication as it allows for the incorporation of both textual and non-textual elements (such as visual imagery, layout, and other semiotics) seamlessly which the newspaper incorporates in its narrative, revealing underlying ideologies through the textual content and visuals. The chapter further highlights aspects of news framing effects, even though it is not the main focus of the study. However, it helps identify the dominant frames used across different periods and how these frames either perpetuate a consistent narrative or shift in response to political changes.

The study employs mixed-method research to answer the proposed research questions. The chapter Methodology describes the research design separated into two phases. In phase 1, a multimodal discourse analysis was conducted to analyse fifteen selected copies of *Al-Ahram*'s front pages. Additionally, in phase 2, three semi-structured interviews with prominent journalists from *Al-Ahram* were conducted to connect the findings of MDA, answer the research questions, and explain the interplay between the state and the newspaper.

Finally, the chapters Findings and Discussion should contribute to theoretical knowledge by analysing the relationship between a historical event -the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli war, and the media's role in constructing the public's perception through the lens of the newspaper to examine the rapport between the newspaper's narrative and political power structure in Egypt.

The study deviated from the theoretical framework outlined in the submitted proposal. The study implemented the media construction of reality theory instead of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the first further examines the active role of media and integrates the broader societal factors in the narrative construction. Secondly, the study

shifted from the submitted proposal regarding how the interviews with the journalists were conducted. Due to the limitations, semi-structured interviews were resorted to instead of oral history interviews. Lastly, the newspaper archive department does not have the 6 October copy from 2011 as the country was going through an unstable phase during the Arab Spring after the 25th of January Revolution in 2011.

1. Literature Review

The first part of this chapter examines the academic discourse on the war and its subsequent implications as the 1973 Egyptian-Israeli war in Sinai has consistently been analysed (Siniver, A. (Ed.), 2013); (Parker et al., 2001); (Whetten et al.; M., 1974); (Boutros-Ghali et al., J, 1999). Studies primarily focus on the strategies Egypt adopted during the war (Uri, 1995), the role of the war on Egyptian-Israeli political relations (Gat, 2016), and post-war security in the peninsula of Sinai (Stein, 1997).

However, there remains a significant research gap in analysing the media coverage of war memory and understanding the pivotal role of media in shaping and perpetuating the narrative of the war in Egypt over the years. The second part of this chapter will discuss the press climate in Egypt before and after the war since the war acted as a point of difference within the media landscape regarding press freedom. The final part examines the interplay between the state and *Al-Ahram*, providing insights into the dynamics of media and politics in Egypt.

1.1 The Implications of the 1973 War

The war started in the afternoon of the 6th of October - the 10th of Ramadan, when Egypt and Syria together launched a surprise attack to retrieve the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt

and the Golan Heights of Syria after Israel captured them during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. According to Tucker (2019): "The war started when Egypt launched a massive air strike against Israeli artillery and command positions. The Israelis meanwhile mobilised two armoured divisions and, on October 8, launched a quick counteroffensive to repel the Egyptians. These encountered larger, better-equipped Egyptian forces protected by handheld anti-tank missiles. The Egyptians crushed the Israeli counteroffensive" (p. 626).

Yigal Sheffy (2013) discusses the notable focus from scholarly and popular publications on Israel's early warning system that gained more attention by the 1973 Yom Kippur War, referred to as "the Israeli Pearl Harbor." He argues that the conflict underscored the critical role of intelligence assessments, which, during that time, failed to judge Arab intentions as non-aggressive and led to the surprise attack of Egypt and Syria on Israel. Additionally, Lippman (2016), in his book Hero of the Crossing, highlights the prevailing assumptions among Israelis and their American counterparts that the Arabs would not initiate a war despite several warnings and indicators. He discusses how the Israelis and their American allies were underpinned by the belief that the Arabs were bound to lose if they did.

The Egyptian military forces crossed the Bar Lev line on the Suez Canal that separates the Sinai Peninsula from the rest of Egypt in six hours with a depth of 15 kilometres. However, Anwar El Sadat, Egyptian President at the time, knew that although he had achieved his goals on a national level after the 1967 War and a six-year defeat, retrieving the Sinai Peninsula could only happen through peace negotiations mediated by the United States (Lippman, 2016).

After five years, the negotiations ended with the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in September 1978. Tucker (2019) stated, "The Yom Kippur War also allowed him [El Sadat - author's note] to negotiate as equal with Israel". He points out that

when every other Arab state refused to negotiate with Israel, Egypt and Israel made peace on September 17, 1978. In these Camp David Accords, Israel withdrew from the Sinai in exchange for Egypt recognising Israel. Meanwhile, most Arab leaders condemned the peace treaty (Tucker, 2019).

In that sense, the memory of the war has been celebrated religiously as a national holiday in Egypt every year through a military parade and a speech from the president honouring the martyrs and the military, with the Egyptian public and private media covering the celebrations.

1.2 Media Realm in Egypt Before and After the 1973 October War

The war is a point of differentiation between the media climate in Egypt before and after the war (Ayalon, 1995). The press climate in Egypt before the war was described by Ayalon (1995) as "the liveliest and perhaps happiest period in the history of the Egyptian press" (p. 75). On the same note, Kelidar (1993) explains the emergence of bold political press where journalists operated with noticeable freedom, even in the late 19th century. Some journalists began criticising the administration while representing diverse interests and ideologies, which further explains the rise of several Egyptian newspapers (p. 4).

Lavie and Yefet (2022) analysed the dynamics and relationship between the state and the media in Egypt; they outlined a cyclical pattern explained as "recurring waves of openness–adaptation–narrowing" (p. 139). When the media landscape in Egypt witnessed the rise of several new newspapers, the state initially welcomed it, followed by the adaptation phase, but eventually sought to maintain control. Lavie and Yefet (2022) further explain the dynamics between the state and the media; they observe that with each new wave of media, the regime initially embraces these platforms. However, as the potential of these media develops and starts to challenge the state authority, the government begins to

control its influence to safeguard regime stability, even at the expense of expression freedom. In the narrowing phase, the state tries to win the press in many ways. Touching upon the views of Gunitsky (2015), during the "narrowing phase", the regime aims to influence public discourse via new media instead of directly censoring or blocking content to avoid public opposition and backlash.

According to the Media Sustainability Index of 2005, article 47¹ of the Egyptian Constitution guarantees freedom of self-expression. Article 48² states that freedom of the press, printing, publication, and mass media shall be guaranteed. It also states that press censorship or suspension of newspapers through administrative means is only allowed during a state of emergency or in times of war. Thereupon, censorship can be applied to newspapers, publications, and other forms of mass media in the context of public safety or national security. While the article allegedly guarantees freedom of the press, it opens the door for the government to interfere in several policies within media organisations, whatever it [the government] believes is necessary to interfere.

Hussein (2008) argues that although the Egyptian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including press freedom, it leaves the responsibility of organising and regulating this freedom to national legislation" (p.26). Furthermore, as the introduction mentions, Egypt ranks 176th on the political indicator of the Reporters without Borders Index of 2023. The scale measures how much independence the media has in terms of

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¹ Art.47 of the Egyptian Consitution: "Freedom of opinion shall be guaranteed. Every individual shall have the right to express his opinion and to publicize it verbally, by writing, by photography, or by other means of expression within the limits of the law. Self-criticism and constructive criticism shall guarantee the safety of the national structure.

² Art.48 of the Egyptian Consitution: "Freedom of the press, printing, publication, and mass media shall be guaranteed. Censorship of newspapers shall be forbidden as well as notifying, suspending, or canceling them by administrative methods. In a state of emergency or in a time of war, limited censorship may be imposed on the newspaper, publications, and mass media in matters related to public safety or for the purpose of national security per the law.

support and respect when faced with political pressure from the government or other political actors. Egypt only came ahead of North Korea, China, Vietnam, and Turkmenistan.

Moreover, based on a report issued by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Egypt is second only to China as the world's worst jailer of journalists in 2015". Hussein (2008) further discusses the opinions and expressions of journalists that are considered threatening to Egypt's national security according to the penal code; these crimes include circulating news, press releases, or stimulating news that could harm military preparations, terrorise people, or destabilise the nation (p. 37). Article 80 of the penal code punishes journalists with a lifetime of hard labour even if the news was accurate and no consequences happened in reality. Therein, the Egyptian penal code criminalises a broad range of journalistic duties under the vague notion of national security protection, which might cause the misuse of specific laws to overshadow the opposition and control the narrative.

1.3 The Interplay between the State and Al-Ahram Newspaper

The complex interplay between *Al-Ahram* and the state started to take shape when Professor Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, the newspaper's editor-in-chief from 1957 to 1974, developed, according to Baroudi and Skulte-Ouaiss (2015), a personal and professional relationship with Gamal Abdel Nasser until Nasser died in 1970. Their relationship was based on mutual trust and respect following the 1952 Revolution (p. 95). Heikal, in one of his books, In Between Journalism and Politics, describes his journalistic journey while being close to the senior political circle, as a close friend to Abdel Nasser and the editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*.

Heikal explains the correlation between journalism and politics in Egypt: "When a single authority in Egypt was formed after the 1952 revolution, it was neither reasonable nor possible for the press to be far removed from politics and what the stages of social and economic development imposed on it" (Heikal, 1985, p. 237). Heikal was a tireless advocate of Arab nationalism (Baroudi & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2015) and Nasser's quasi-official spokesman (Achcar, 2012). Baroudi and Skulte-Ouaiss (2015) and Achcar (2012) examined the relationship between the authority and the journalist: How far should the journalist be from the state authority? Furthermore, how much independence should the state give a journalist? The journalism atmosphere in Egypt during that time was tense and blurred. The journalists seek news and journalism autonomy, while the state aims to reach people, not caring about the journalists' independence. Heikal argues: "The journalist's approach to authority and the authority's approach to the journalist is complex. When a journalist approaches the news-making process to a sufficient degree, he - whether he wants to or not - becomes not just a witness to its making but sometimes turns - according to the degree of his position - into a party in its making" (Heikal, 1985, p. 238).

However, Heikal (1985) describes his relationship with Sadat when the second came into power in 1970 after Nasser's death, Heikal wanted to carry on with the national plans that Abdel Nasser started, such as the national unity between Egypt and Libya. Heikal disagreed with El Sadat on many topics, such as the sectarian strife and policies for resolving it, the method of dialogue with youth during the student demonstrations in late 1971, the ways to get some Soviet agents out of Egypt, the new nature of his relations with some figures in Saudi Arabia, and conducting hidden communication with the US through Kissinger (p. 357), clarifying the influence of Heikal and the magnitude of his opinion on the political scene.

Baroudi and Skulte-Ouaiss (2015, p. 95) argue that Sadat and Heikal began to diverge as early as 1972 when Sadat suddenly expelled all Soviet advisors from Egypt without convincing rationale. Besides, Heikal's public disagreements with Sadat led to his removal from the general editorship of *Al-Ahram* in 1974, after he had held the position without interruption since 1957.

Achcar (2012) further describes the weight of Heikal's views as editor-in-chief and chief columnist of *Al-Ahram* on a national and regional scale, "his [Heikal's - author's note] comments on world and regional affairs, as well as on domestic politics, represented the regime's views and indeed contributed to producing those views on a wide range of issues" (p. 75). Furthermore, according to Britannica (2024), under Heikal's tenure, *Al-Ahram* became a newspaper of record for the Arab world. After his tenure at *Al-Ahram*, Baroudi, and Skulte-Ouaiss (2015) noted that Heikal maintained and expanded his reach to the Arab world through editorials in the Beirut-based pan-Arab press (p. 96).

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study, which is based on the Media Construction of Reality theory, which extends Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of the Social Construction of Reality, drawing from the understanding that the role of the mass media in the process of the social construction of reality holds a central place in communication research (Adoni & Mane, 1984) and that the social construction of reality is mainly a communicative process (Van den Bulck, 1999).

Scholars have consistently analysed the role of media in constructing reality as it is considered a key concept in media studies and communication theory (e.g., Scheufele, 1999; Bryant & Zillmann, 2002; Croteau & Hoynes, 2014; Babe, 1995). Studies primarily

focus on how mass media serve the interests of the elite groups in society, shaping news to fit economic, political, and social agendas (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), how frames in news coverage shape the perception of social realities, influencing both public discourse and individual cognition (Reese et al., 2001), and examining the decisions made in newsrooms, showing how journalists and editors' subjective choices impact the portrayal of reality (Gans, 1979).

Correspondingly, "news content is a socially created product, not a reflection of an objective reality" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p.251). Therefore, applying the theory of media construction of reality offers the potential to critically examine the role of newspapers in shaping historical perceptions of war memory by exploring the dominant frames adopted during war commemorations.

Yan (2019) explores news production from a constructionist perspective. The author examines how the media constructs social reality through two essential processes. Initially, she analyses how news media select content based on gatekeeping and news values theories. Subsequently, she delves into how media constructs and defines specific issues, events, and topics through the framing theory. Nevertheless, she points out that cognition has evolved from a direct deception of reality to an active process where individuals rely on their experiences to construct meaning. Thereby, it underlines that perception is less about objective reality and more about how individuals interpret the world around them according to their pre-existing knowledge. According to Hall (1977), "people learn and understand the world through mirroring and reflecting the meanings that already exist" (p. 24).

Similarly, Lindlof (2008) touched upon how social constructivism established that individuals do not passively perceive reality. Still, instead, they actively construct and interpret their environment through the lens of their personal interests, knowledge, and

available semiotic resources (Lindlof, 2008, p. 944). Yan (2019) noted that this theoretical framework challenges the traditional notion of cognition as an objective representation of reality. She suggests that cognition is a dynamic process involving the active construction of meaning, which underscores the subjectivity inherent in human cognition and highlights the role of personal and cultural contexts in the interpretation of information (p. 42). In the same context, Zald (1996) suggests that "the social events can be framed differently in different societies depending on the perception of legitimacy, the tendency to locate responsibility and so on" (p. 273).

Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue how reality is socially constructed through everyday interactions and shared beliefs. Later, scholars applied their definition of the socially constructive nature of reality to media studies, analysing how media as a social institution contributes to social construction (e.g., Altheide, 2004; Fishman, 1980; McRobbie, 1994). Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that media content serves as a symbolic portrayal of objective reality, influencing the individuals' perception of social reality and subsequently shaping their behaviours. Building upon this understanding of cognition as an active and subjective process, Heider (2008) discusses how journalists select specific issues or events to report involves various social considerations, including professional standards and non-professional influences, which collectively shape decision-making in media settings (p. 942).

Lecheler and de Vreese (2018) argue that "when journalists select and produce news, how they frame it is consequential for citizens' understanding of important issues" (p. 10) and that "the workings of journalism create a number of frames that can be dubbed journalistic news frames; that is, they are largely crafted by journalistic agency" (p. 13). Yan (2019) notes that by selecting certain aspects of events or issues to shed light on, media suggest specific patterns of interpretation, guiding audiences to understand these

events in a specific way. "Social construction of reality explains how media does not treat daily occurrences in a balanced way. News coverage is therefore often criticized for lack of balance or equality between competing viewpoints" (Yan, 2019, p. 43).

Within the context of Egypt, Hamdy (2015) discusses how, historically, Egypt's media has had close ties to the government. It was not until the mid-2000s that the government allowed the publication of independent newspapers, although they were under constant pressure to the red lines (Hamdy, 2015, p. 5). Moreover, Schlesinger (1992) notes that the processes governing news production are not impartial and are shaped by political, economic, and ideological pressures. Molotch and Lester (1974) also point out the influence of news organisations' political and ideological orientation over journalists' professional behaviour, which was later augmented by Siu (2009), who suggests that ideology may play a role in framing news coverage by examining the tobacco issue in the United States in The Wall Street Journal and New York Times. Hall (1982) referred to the assumption that news is the product of journalists' active work of selection and construction (Hall, 1982, p. 64). "Like good woodworkers, automobile designers and architects, journalists are constantly producing useful products that are unique. In that sense, they are artists - not fine artists, like poets and landscape painters - but artists nevertheless" (Bovee, 1999, p. 170).

Nevertheless, "holders of power," as referred to by Murdock (1973, p. 158), have control over the news reporting of events. Carragee and Roefs (2004) opine that studies often overestimate the role of journalists in the framing process and overlook the influence of external sources such as elites, interest groups, and social movements in shaping journalistic discourse. Herman and Chomsky (1988) propose a propaganda model of mass media, asserting that market dynamics drive news production and mirror the viewpoints of the dominant elite.

Tuchman (1978) believes that media practitioners prioritise elite opinions. The dominant elite tends to actively make use of mass media, seeking to "promote their interests" and "publicize their ideas" (Gans, 1979, p. 117). The Glasgow University Media Group (1980) supports the view that news discourse mirrors dominant ideologies, thereby reinforcing the status quo.

Other relevant theories have been gaining attention recently within this broad framework of media construction of reality. Framing theory, for instance, has received considerable attention among scholars. However, while framing theory forms part of the media construction of reality framework, it is not the primary focus of this study. Instead, it is mentioned to contextualise the broader academic interest and to underscore its relevance in understanding how media narratives can influence societal views and behaviours.

"Media do not confine journalists' active construction of social reality to the decision-making of what to cover. The selected events are open to interpretation, and journalists ultimately interpret them in one way rather than others. This involves media's framing functions" (Yan, 2019, p. 47). Yan (2019) argues that framing examines how media actively shapes public perception of reality, mainly through news production, as it explores internal processes, such as editorial decisions, and external factors, like political and economic influences, which construct news discourse, revealing the media's role in affecting societal norms and public opinion while emphasising the power it holds.

Media framing fundamentally consists of two components: the process of selection, which determines the scope of an event or issue by identifying relevant information and excluding what is considered irrelevant (Hertog & McLeod, 2001), and the process of emphasis, which aims to highlight specific ideas, making them more prominent and noticeable (Yan, 2019).

Lecheler and de Vreese (2018) suggest that by understanding news framing effects

as a process of applicability, it becomes arguable how minor shifts in news presentation can significantly influence public opinions, attitudes, and behaviours, emphasising the power of framing on the audience's perception and actions.

Therefore, basing the theoretical framework on the Media Construction of Reality theory supports the aim of this study due to its focus on how media narratives shape and are shaped by political landscapes. By adopting this framework, the study explores how *Al-Ahram* newspaper, a prominent newspaper influenced by the state, contributes to constructing the historical narrative of the 1973 War. The framework offers a nuanced analysis of how media narratives reflect reality and are shaped by a complex interplay of editorial decisions and political pressures. By analysing how the narrative has shifted during political transformation, the research will fill a significant gap in understanding the role of the media in constructing war memory in Egypt while highlighting the mechanism through which the state may have utilised media to reinforce its legitimacy and shape public perception. The abovementioned theoretical framework will examine how media in Egypt serves as a tool for political agendas, underscoring the significance of media studies in political transformation and shifts.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the applied methodological approach to examine the study's objectives. This study's main objective is to analyse Egypt's *Al-Ahram*'s portrayal of the October War over the past 50 years. It aims to examine the rapport between the newspaper narrative and the political power structure in Egypt. The research aims to answer the following research questions: **How has** *Al-Ahram* **newspaper's discourse on the 1973 War evolved over the last five decades, and what is the relationship between the**

power dynamics in Egypt and Al-Ahram's discourse on the 1973 War?

Thus, to answer the abovementioned research questions, in phase 1, the study applied multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to analyse the fifteen selected copies, and in phase 2, semi-structured interviews with three prominent journalists from *Al-Ahram* were conducted to gain insights into the newspaper's editorial strategy in commemorating the war anniversary.

3.1 Research Design

This study embarks on understanding the evolving discourse of *Al-Ahram* newspaper on its coverage of the 1973 War over 50 years. Given the complicated interplay between media narratives and political power structures, the research design employs a qualitative multi-modal methodological approach to examine how the dynamics between the newspaper and the state within the context of *Al-Ahram*'s portrayal of the war drawing from the views of O'Reilly et al. (2020), that strong qualitative research has an essential role within the broader production of knowledge in its own right (p. 67). They refer to some of the terms used in literature to conceptualise this approach, including "qualitative mixed methods design", "multiple method design" (Morse, 2009), "multi-methods" (Anguera et al., 2018), and "combined qualitative methodology" (Swanson-Kauffman, 1986). Morse (2010) argues that there is no general agreement on the qualitative mixed-method design or what it is; however, it still introduces several incompatibility problems of research designs that employ qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In that sense, the study combines a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and semi-structured interviews to seek a comprehensive view of the newspaper's editorial strategies for presenting the war memory in alignment with the potential underlying

political intentions of utilising the war memory to reinforce or destabilise regimes or political actors.

Nevertheless, touching upon Lambert and Loiselle (2008), to ensure that the selected methods align with their fundamental beliefs, it is necessary to assess the underlying epistemological assumptions of each methodology from the start while conducting a multi-modal methodology, which is crucial for the integration of data collection and analysis. They explain how discrepancies in these fundamental beliefs can result in methodological conflicts, affecting the final validity and reliability of the research findings.

In that regard, the study applies MDA for an in-depth examination of both textual content and visual elements for fifteen selected copies based on the years of major political events, while the semi-structured interviews with three prominent journalists still working at *Al-Ahram* provide a better understanding and insights into the editorial decisions and strategies of narrative shifts.

In the following sub-chapters, the study proceeds to delineate the sampling and data collection methods, explaining the outline of the selection criteria for the selected copies and the interviewed journalists. Subsequently, it explains the rationale for selecting MDA and semi-structured interviews, outlining their application and the framework used to interpret the findings. Lastly, it concludes with the ethical considerations taken into account while conducting the interviews.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

To ensure a thorough analysis of the outlet's portrayal of the war memory within the context of major political events, I followed a systematic approach to sampling and data collection. This sub-chapter explains the methods employed in selecting and

collecting the primary sources from the *Al-Ahram* newspaper. The sub-chapter outlines the rationale for selecting the *Al-Ahram* outlet as the primary source and the criteria behind selecting the copies of the newspaper. The fifteen selected copies were accessed through a previous arrangement with the newspaper and then collected from the archives department of the newspaper's premises in Downtown Cairo, Egypt, on 15th January 2024 and later scanned and included in the study appendices. The interviews were arranged during late November / early December 2023 through phone calls to be conducted in January upon my arrival in Egypt.

3.2.1 Rationale for the Selected Outlet (*Al-Ahram*)

The primary focus of this study is to examine *Al-Ahram*'s portrayal of the 1973 October War between Egypt and Israel while considering the relationship between the newspaper narrative and the political power structure in Egypt. According to (Menshawy, 2016), *Al-Ahram* newspaper, the mouthpiece of Sadat's state (with Egypt's largest circulation figures), has been readily available as a tool the state employs to propagate a certain discourse on the 1973 war. Reaching a broad demographic spectrum makes the newspaper's narratives and portrayals particularly insightful on the Egyptian public's perception of historical and current events.

Furthermore, *Al-Ahram* was established in 1875, making it one of Egypt's oldest newspapers. Its longstanding history and influence act as a source for understanding how media has interacted with major events and political shifts in Egypt. In addition to the evolution of the outlet's editorial policies under different political regimes, it serves as a lens to analyse shifts in media governance and the scope of its influence on news reporting.

Additionally, *Al-Ahram* is the only newspaper in Egypt that owns a digital archive, making access to historic issues possible while allowing for an extensive review of articles,

editorials, and other publications over the decades surrounding the 1973 October War and other historic political events, both in Egypt and the Arab world.

3.2.2 Rationale for the Selected Copies

The rationale behind selecting these particular years stems from two primary considerations: how the newspaper portrays major political events on the war anniversary and the evolution of the newspaper's discourse concerning the memory of the war over the years. Consequently, the study selected editions of the newspaper from 6 October across the years that aligned with major political events in Egypt, except for the issue on October 7, 1973, which was the first published following the onset of the war. Besides, the years significantly mark the transition in leadership, seeking to examine any potential shifts in the narrative regarding the war memory. Therefore, the front pages selected for the analysis include:

- 7 October 1973: This copy marked the morning after the war when the Egyptian forces crossed the Ber Liv line, achieving "victory" in six hours.
- 6 October 1974: The first anniversary of the war.
- 6 October 1978: The Camp David Accords between Egyptian President
 Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin after the United
 States mediation and the fifth anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 1981:** Mohamed Hosni Mubarak came into power and the eighth anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 1987:** The Egyptian Presidential Referendum and the 14th anniversary of the war.
- 6 October 1991: Amidst the Gulf War and the 18th anniversary of the war.

- **6 October 1993:** The Egyptian Presidential Referendum of 1993 and the 20th anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 1999:** The Egyptian parliamentary elections, the Egyptian Presidential Referendum of 1999 and the 27th anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 2005:** Egypt's first multi-candidate Presidential elections and the 32nd anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 2007:** National political developments, constitutional amendments, and the 34th anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 2012:** Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood came into power and the 39th anniversary of the war.
- **6 October 2013:** The military coup, Adly Mansour's assignment as a transitional President, and the 40th anniversary of the war.
- 6 October 2021: The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)³ negotiations and the 48th anniversary of the war.
- 6 October 2023: The most recent and the 50th anniversary of the war.

3.3 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Applying multimodality to the analysis of the newspaper helps uncover *Al-Ahram*'s strategies in shaping the war narrative. Identifying the roles played by images besides texts can reveal the reinforcement of particular viewpoints and ideologies. It can also help

³ The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD): In 2011, Ethiopia began building the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile River near the border with Sudan. The movement was faced by criticism and led to multiple discussions between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan regarding the impact the dam will cause on the downstream countries Egypt and Sudan. According to Melesse et al. (2021), these negotiations reached a significant milestone in 2015 when the leaders of the three countries signed the Declaration of Principles, which formalised their commitment to cooperate on implementing the findings of joint studies regarding the GERD. However, in 2021, the negotiations faced significant challenges as the three countries did not reach a definitive resolution. The situation has raised the tension, especially after Ethiopia proceeded with the filling of the dam without a trilateral agreement, raising concerns in Egypt and Sudan on water security and regional stability.

recognise shifts in the display of war memory, whether aligning or contradicting the state narrative and political changes. Potter and Wetherell (1987) believe that studying social texts can provide deeper insights into the mechanics of social life and interactions.

Furthermore, as mentioned in Analyzing Media Discourses, J.E. Richardson and J.D. Burridge (2008) introduce the "Social Semiotics" issue and explore various analytical approaches to studying media discourses. It employs diverse methods, such as critical discourse analysis and ethnomethodology, which can contribute to understanding this discourse's semiotics and cultural significance. They highlight that contributors use diverse analytical methodologies to examine media texts and discourse. These methods include critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and other approaches. This diversity provides a deeper insight into the interplay between the newspaper discourse and political narratives by analysing the context in which text, images, and layout work together to convey specific ideologies and attitudes.

Furthermore, Machin (2013) explains how, in multimodal communication, various modes are becoming more intertwined, considering the role the visual elements play in conveying complex messages. In the context of *Al-Ahram*'s selected front pages, texts and images interact to deliver meanings that may not be conveyed through text alone.

Analysing these modes together can reveal insights into the newspaper's editorial strategy. In that sense, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) discuss utilising various semiotic means to convey ideas and identities. They further argue how these resources can facilitate or limit different types of communication.

Additionally, Machin (2013) touches upon various communicative modes increasingly intertwined in multimodal practices, highlighting how visual elements influence the conveying of complex ideas and concepts. Moreover, communication extends

beyond verbal language. Language is not the only or even (at times) the primary mode of communication (Early et al., 2015). Other communicative modes in specific contexts can hold more significance, according to Coyle (2007), discourse analysis operates on the principle that language actively constructs our perceptions of reality, not just mirrors them.

Lotherington and Jenson (2011) discuss how multimodality involves integrating different communication modes that jointly enhance the understanding and interpretation of the given context. The argument aligns with Jewitt and Kress (2003), who discuss semiotics as an organised set of resources for meaning-making. Furthermore, Kress (2010) points out that various semiotic resources have different capabilities, allowing them to be used for various communicative goals. This analysis can reveal underlying ideologies, potential biases, or dominant narratives the newspaper has adopted over the decades.

Through MDA, this research aims to examine the intersection of media, language, and power, which contributes to understanding the relationship between the newspaper editorial direction and the political power structure of Egypt over the years. The following analytical framework aims to provide an approach to examine the narrative shifts of the newspaper and analyse the selected copies, accordingly, offering insights into the correlation between the newspaper discourse and the broader political landscape, as follows:

Components Analysis: The initial analysis focused on textual content such as
headlines, sub-headlines, and captions, alongside visuals such as images and
the front pages' layout. Drawing from Machin (2013), whose work
emphasises the analysis of different modes of communication and their
interaction, focusing on how textual and visual elements combine to create

- meaning. These components were evaluated at the preliminary phase to examine how they collectively construct narratives of war memory and its relationship to the political power play.
- Linguistic Analysis: Linguistic features such as repetitive words and vocabulary were analysed to reveal potential biases and shifts in tone. Then, the study examined how context contributes to meaning, including assumptions, implications, and how readers are expected to interpret statements. Also, in this phase, the research focused on the narrative style considering the structure of the text that guides the reader's interpretation of events.
- Visual Composition Analysis: Touching upon Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), visual elements can be systematically analysed, according to their composition, allowing for a better understanding of their role in communication. Besides, analysing the placement of the images with the headlines, articles, and text blocks, prioritises certain information and guides the readers' perception of the war memory.
- Interpretative Approach: Data from the front pages were then interpreted using MDA, which connected the different multimodal elements to the broader socio-political context of Egypt. O'Halloran (2004) discusses the socio-political implications of media texts through applying multimodal discourse analysis. Thus, the framework approach aimed to reveal how editorial choices and narrative shifts act during political transformations.

 Besides, the findings were contextualised with the timeline of major political events, providing insights into whether the newspaper's discourse aligned with or diverted from the prevailing state narrative.

3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with three prominent journalists from *Al-Ahram*, drawing from the understanding that elements from both structured and unstructured interviews characterise the semi-structured interview. A fixed set of sequential questions is used as an interview guide. Still, additional questions can be introduced to facilitate further exploration of issues brought up by the interviewee, thus almost taking the form of a managed conversation (Cachia & Millward, 2011, p. 268-269). Kvale (1983) characterizes qualitative research interviews as tools designed to collect detailed descriptions of the interviewee's experiences and perceptions, aiming to interpret the significance of the phenomena being described.

3.4.1 Interviews Design and Conduct

The three interviews were conducted at the premises of *Al-Ahram* in Downtown, Cairo on January 22, 2024. The interview with Abdelgawad Tawfik lasted 44 minutes, the interview with Anwar Abdellatif lasted 42 minutes, and the interview with Salah Ibrahim lasted 13 minutes. The interviews frequently referred to the political landscape, aiming to analyse the rapport between the newspaper's narrative and the political power structure in Egypt.

Journalist	Abdelgawad Tawfik	Anwar Abdelatif	Salah Ibrahim
Year of joining the newspaper	1995	1979	1994

Biography	Abdelgawad Tawfik was to graduate from the faculty of mass communications in 1994. Tawfik was an editorial secretary for several magazines and newspapers in Egypt and Kuwait. After university, he joined the armed forces as a reserve officer and worked in military media. He obtained an army media course from Nasser Higher Military Academy. Tawfik also cooperated with the investigative journalism department in <i>Al-Ahram</i> .	Anwar Abdelatif first worked in the technical secretarial department, responsible for designing the newspaper's layout. When the Ministry of Defense issued the Defense Magazine through <i>Al-Ahram</i> , he was its technical officer from 1982 to 1986. Then, he was assigned as the Editorial Director of <i>Al-Ahram</i> Sports Magazine from 1992 to 2015 while working as the head of the newspaper's production department from 2004 to 2015.	Salah Ibrahim is a foreign business graduate with a photography hobby. His first powerful mission covered the floods in a village called Dronka in Assiut, where gasoline mixed with the rain and submerged the entire town.
Current position at Al-Ahram	Managing Editor of Administrative Affairs, a Member of the Central Desk at <i>Al-Ahram</i> , and a Member of the Journalists Syndicate of Egypt.	Editorial Advisor at <i>Al-Ahram</i> , and a Ph.D. candidate in electronic publishing.	Photography Consultant and Former Head of the Photojournalism Department at <i>Al-Ahram</i> from 2018 to 2023.
The main focus of the interview	As a former military editor, Tawfik's interview described the complicated interplay between the state's directives and the newspaper's strategy in displaying war memories. Also, he explained the relationship between Heikal and Nasser and Sadat.	As a former journalist at the technical secretarial department, the focus of the interview with Abdelatif was on the editorial decisions of the front-page layout. Besides, he provided insights into the pan-Arab stance the newspaper has been adopting for decades.	As the former Head of the Photojournalism Department, the interview with Ibrahim sought to discuss and analyse the visuals displayed on the selected copies and the newspaper photography strategy in commemorating the war.

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

Building upon the understanding that during qualitative research interviews, the interviewer's responsibilities extend beyond merely gathering comprehensive data on the subject under investigation. They must also create a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewee, foster a sense of rapport, and effectively steer the conversation to maintain its focus and direction (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). Besides, Kvale (1983) characterizes the qualitative research interview as a method aimed at collecting detailed accounts of the interviewee's experiences to interpret the significance of the phenomena described.

In that sense, the ethical considerations considered before and during the interviews include:

- Participants were fully informed about the research's purpose and expected outcomes, how it would be conducted, and how the recordings would be used.
- Due to heavy censorship in Egypt, participants were given the option to refuse
 to answer any of the questions if they felt it affected their position in the
 newspaper or made them uncomfortable.
- Participants were informed about who would have access to the recordings.
- Participants agreed that their names, positions, and experiences would be published.
- Participants were given the option at the end of the interviews to exclude any
 of their answers.

4. Analysis

The chapter aims to analyse *Al-Ahram*'s discourse on the October 1973 Egyptian-Israeli War, published between 1973 and 2023, conveying the relationship between Egypt's political power structure and the newspaper editorial strategy.

The first part of this chapter presents the analysis of the 15 front pages from the selected years, as mentioned in the methodology section. The chapter explains the meanings and themes the front pages refer to. The preliminary analysis of the selected front pages focused on the noticeable rapport between all copies, taking into consideration the tone, the language, the visuals, the layout and the narrative with paid attention to the consistent emphasis on the heroism of the Egyptian Armed Forces and covering the President's attendance of the military parade to commemorate the war every year.

The second part connects MDA's findings with the findings of the semi-structured interviews conducted with Abdelgawad Tawfik, Salah Ibrahim, and Anwar Abdelatif—three prominent journalists at *Al-Ahram*. It also examines the relationship between the newspaper's former editor-in-chief, Professor Muhammad Hassanein Heikal (1957-1974), and the Egyptian presidents.

4.1 Al-Ahram on the war between 1973 and 2023

4.1.1 Al-Ahram front page: 7 October 1973

The newspaper copy from the morning of the war on 7 October 1973, as shown in Annex 1, p. 81, featured the headline "Our forces crossed the canal and stormed the Bar Lev Line." The five following subtitles employed words and sentences with specific meanings to emphasise the event's significance. For instance, "the success of the huge crossing operation," "fierce air battles," and "penetrating the Israeli border."

The first and the shortest column under the title "The Decision...and the Men" revolves around raising the morale of the public and highlighting the importance of defending Egyptian land and retrieving it back from the enemy. The first part points out El

Sadat's decision and the great responsibility he endured. Meanwhile, the second part focuses on the courage of the Egyptian soldiers. The emphasis on some words, like "national," "determination," "persistence," "danger," "valour," and "soldiers of truth", highlights a sense of patriotism and unity among Egyptians. The narrative aims to raise confidence in the military and government's actions and frame the conflict within a narrative of rightful recovery and national pride.

The second and third columns present the battle details on the Egyptian and Israeli sides. The pieces show the statement of Moshe Dayan, the former minister of defence of Israel, where he expressed that Israel has suffered heavy losses and the statement of the US State Department spokesperson. The presentation of the Israeli acknowledgement of heavy losses in these columns validates the performance of the Egyptian military forces.

Moreover, a statement from the US State Department Spokesperson introduces an international dimension to the coverage, suggesting that the conflict and Egypt's actions are recognised and discussed globally. Besides, the front page includes two pieces that cover the military communications issued by the Egyptian and Syrian leadership, highlighting the coordination between both sides and presenting a united Arab front against Israel.

The fourth and last column covered local updates like the endowment of schools, the locations of food outlets across Egypt, and articles on the Egyptian president's calls from various kings and presidents concerning the war. The column implies the government's competence to operate public services during the crisis.

The visuals on this front page show a 5x6cm picture of President Anwar Sadat chairing a meeting at the General Command of the Armed Forces. To his right sat Lieutenant General Ahmed Ismail, and to his left, Mr. Abdel Fattah Abdullah, Minister of

State, and Lieutenant General Saad El Shazly. Presenting high-ranking military officials and the President suggests a collaborative effort in the war strategy. It conveys that the government is in control and engaged in decision-making. Moreover, the second picture is a 3x9.5cm geographic map of the Suez Canal that separates Sinai and the rest of Egypt. It serves the geopolitical significance of the area. The image helps educate the public about the importance of the Suez Canal and Sinai and the weight of reclaiming it.

4.1.2 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1974

On the first anniversary of the war, the newspaper copy of 6 October 1974, as shown in Annex 2, p. 82, is published under the headline, "Today, the Commander of Victory displays his victorious forces - the largest military parade witnessed by Egypt, in which 800 tanks and the latest weapons that participated in the war participate." The war celebrations occupied almost 75% of the front page, with one medium picture of Sadat, the Egyptian President, and one small picture of high-profile military men during the military celebratory event in Cairo.

The two main articles cover the army display event in Cairo on 6 October and the details of the parliament session on honouring the armed forces on the day of their great victory. Both pieces reflect a collective acknowledgement of the armed forces and what is regarded as a great victory. The newspaper here used the first war anniversary to strengthen the bond between the military and the civilians, reinforcing a sense of unity.

A medium-sized article following these pieces under the title "Sadat: Egypt, with its weapons, is capable of teaching Israel a new lesson" highlights that Military readiness will grow in the sense of protecting Egypt's national sovereignty. The newspaper uses

words like "teaching" and "lesson" to send a strong message to Israel while portraying the nation as resilient and robust.

Three other pieces mention the felicitations of Josip Tito, the Former President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, King Faisal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Yasser Arafat, the Former President of Palestine, who was present at the event. This external validation serves to recognise Egypt's stance and celebration internationally as the article employs words that support that validation, especially between Egypt and the Soviet Union, like "solidarity," "cooperation," and "friendly ties", which solidifies Egypt's position on the international stage as a sovereign nation. The tone across all pieces is predominantly triumphant, proud, and unifying, aiming to reinforce the country's national unity and acknowledge the military strength and role while celebrating the victory.

The images on this front page include an 8.5x12 image of Sadat, the Egyptian President at the time, doing the military salute in his uniform. The gesture is universal for respect. The representation of such an image highlights his role not just as a president but also as a commander-in-chief of the armed forces, reinforcing the unity between the state and the military. The camera's angle is tilted upwards towards him, giving an elevated perspective. It visually places him above the viewer, enhancing his status and sense of authority and encouraging viewers to look up to him.

The second image is a 5x6cm of Dr Abdulaziz Hegazy, Prime Minister, Field Marshal Ahmed Ismail, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of War, and Lieutenant General Abdul-Ghani Al-Gamsi, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, recited a salute to the martyrs when they visited the day before "the Tomb of The Unknown Soldier," where wreaths were laid on the first anniversary of "the Victory." The composition of this image

places the military men on one side and the memorial on the other while placing both on equal parts; the balanced portrayal underscores the continuity between the leadership and those who sacrificed for the nation's sake during the war. Also, by honouring the martyrs, the newspaper recognises and legitimises the war's consequences and acknowledges the heroism of the soldiers.

4.1.3 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1978

The copy of 6 October 1978, Annex 3, p. 83, comes one month after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed the Camp David Accords. The copy covers the new government that came into power and took the constitutional oath. The front page is titled "The president determines the future tasks of the new ministry after taking the oath." The president's picture occupied almost a third of the front page. As shown in Annex 3, the page consists of four articles, nearly equivalent in size, seven fillers, and one column.

The leading article under the main picture covers the military parade celebrating the war anniversary: "Today in Ismailia, the President witnesses the military parade commemorating the October victory." The article emphasises the ongoing national pride and "victory" the Egyptian Armed Forces achieved, even after signing a peace agreement with Israel. The newspaper coverage of the parade less than one month after the Camp David Accords highlights the sacrifices made during the war. It implies the recognition of the "October victory" even while ensuring peace. However, compared to previous years, the newspaper reduced the emphasis on the war sacrifices and focused on the significance of the peace treaty amidst national and regional opposition. The newspaper used supportive language like "peace is coming with its wings" and "a new way to solve problems." The

newspaper's direction for this copy aims to solidify the president's decision and align the narrative with the state again.

One of the fillers quoted Moshe Dayan, the former minister of defence of Israel, before signing the Camp David Accords: "The discussions address the nature of peace and the details of withdrawal from the land." The quote highlights the diplomatic progress and the complexity of the peace negotiations. The filler supports the main pieces as it seeks to portray recognising Israel as the right decision. Also, the newspaper quoted a high-ranking Israeli official on land withdrawal, which legitimises Egypt's position and aligns with the nationalistic narrative adopted by the newspaper.

The image on this front page is a 17x13 close-up shot of the Egyptian president under the caption "President Anwar Sadat - the decision maker of the glorious October War and the peacemaker." The display of President Sadat looking far away while smoking his pipe leaves the viewers imagining his thoughts. The close-up shot also allows the viewers to feel close to the president, reinforcing the trust between him and the people and enhancing engagement. Moreover, portraying him, on the first war anniversary post the accords, in a dark tuxedo after portraying him in the military suit in the previous years shows him as a leader capable of fighting war and negotiating peace. Besides, the caption puts the war as a part of the Egyptian identity with words like "glorious" and "peacemaker."

4.1.4 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1981

The copy of 6 October 1981, Annex 4, p. 84, marks the eighth anniversary of the war. It is the day President Sadat was assassinated by Islamic extremists during the military parade celebrating the war anniversary, right before Hosny Mubarak came into power. The front page of this copy comes under the title "Today, Sadat is witnessing the

great military parade on the anniversary of October."

Annex 4 shows a picture of Sadat and Mubarak occupying a part of the upper half of the page, with one column commemorating the war. The leading article on this front page, under the title: "New weapons appear on display for land, navy, and air forces," covers the details of the military parade. The article lists the new weapons displayed during the event provided by the West after overcoming the problems of the Soviet embargo. The newspaper copies before the Camp David Accords in 1978, for instance, the war anniversary of 1974, highlighted the congrats of Josip Tito and presented pieces listing the weapons Egypt received from the Soviet Union. However, after the peace agreement mediated by the United States in 1978, the newspaper showed Egypt's strategic reorientation towards the West through the war memory; the subtitle of the copy says, "The proportion of Western weapons has increased to equal Eastern weapons for the first time." Besides, the emphasis on the new weapon system underscores Egypt's national security while shifting its geopolitical alliances.

The last column under the title: "October victory... a renewed giving," reminds the people of the immortality of the victory of the war and the willingness of the nation's people to sacrifice their lives for Egypt. The narrative represents an underlying nationalist ideology using words such as "pride," "belonging," "military achievements," "giving," "will," and "historical leadership" to convey the meaning and highlight national pride. By emphasising the concept of sacrifice, the newspaper reinforces the idea of a unified national identity while creating a shared narrative with words like "belonging". The narrative details the military achievements, portraying the armed forces as the nation's guardians through words like "historic leadership."

The 9.5x9.5 picture of President Anwar Sadat receiving Mr Hosni Mubarak, Vice President of the Republic at the time, after he visited the US aligns with the textual narrative as it underlines the strategic partnership Egypt pursues and the reorientation toward the West.

The image composition shows the two figures on the same level on equal parts of the image. The two appeared from the side of equal length, implying a sense of continuity in leadership. Additionally, displaying the President and the Vice President together reinforces a narrative of unity and stability within the Egyptian government and paved the way for the presidential transition within the military ranks.

4.1.5 *Al-Ahram* front page: 6 October 1987

The copy of 6 October 1987, as shown in Annex 5, p. 85, the 14th war anniversary, coincides with the Egyptian Presidential Referendum. The headline does not mention the war. Instead, it says, "An unprecedented public turnout for the referendum to renew Mubarak's presidency."

As shown in Annex 5, the front page of this year has three leading pictures from the presidential referendum, two articles covering the voting process and the participation rates in a presidential referendum, and five fillers on the different regional and international updates. Besides, the newspaper does not mention the war or its commemoration in its articles, columns, or fillers. This year's front page articles cover the presidential referendum's voting process using phrases that endorse the regime, like "unprecedented public turnout to renew Mubarak's term for six more years." One article highlights the participation rates. One column written by the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Editor-in-Chief (the same person) highlights Mubarak's achievements during his last term. It ensures the importance of his remaining in power for the next period.

The narrative shift from the war commemoration to the referendum coverage suggests a political prioritisation, emphasising Hosni Mubarak's legitimacy and reinforcing

his status quo. The narrative change shifts the public's attention from past military achievements, as in previous years, to the present political landscape. That helped redefine the source of national pride and align it more closely with Mubarak's leadership.

Besides, phrases like "unprecedented public turnout" endorse Mubarak's regime and display the newspaper as the state mouthpiece without any opposition or controversy. It also implies a sense of democracy and public support regardless of the reality.

The images on this front page include an 11x8.5 picture of the public and an 8x8.5 of the President carrying a child. Both under the caption: "Amid overwhelming patriotic feelings, citizens came out to express their support and allegiance to President Hosni Mubarak, who embraced a child with fatherly affection while casting his vote." The picture symbolises the bond between the President and the public. The image of Mubarak carrying a child is a potent metaphor for the role of the President in taking care of the nation's future; the image is captured in a medium shot, showing the bond and approachability between the child's parent and Mubarak, his positive image enhances public approval and supports the textual content. The second 6x6.5 picture is of Mubarak's wife casting her voice; the image implies the involvement of the first family in the political process. The newspaper conveys the message of the first family being relatable to the average citizen. She was also captured at a medium shot that aligns with the first image and compliments the bigger picture.

The last and third image is a 3x3.5 portrait of Sadat on the day of his assassination in the 1981 6 October celebration. The newspaper gave a relatively small space for his commemoration at the bottom of the page. The editorial consistent choice to include a portrait of Sadat every year pays homage to him. Besides, it serves a political aim by reminding people of the turbulent period while underscoring the stability Mubarak brought after the assassination.

4.1.6 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1991

On 6 October 1991 copy, Annex 6, p. 86, on the 18th anniversary of the war and during the Gulf War, the front page was published under the title "Mubarak witnesses the October victory anniversary celebrations and addresses the nation today." The upper part of the page consists of two leading pictures of the president during his visit to the memorial and from his meeting with members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, as shown in Annex 6.

The leading article covers the President's speech to the public. It also examines the President's meeting with members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to discuss developments in the international and regional situation, Egypt's role in the Gulf War, and its ongoing effort to resolve the Palestinian issue.

The newspaper shifts back to the memory of the war and links it to present regional efforts made by Egypt. The headline suggests that October's victory continues to guide Egypt on the regional political landscape. The newspaper seeks to present a narrative that legitimises the state's previous military achievements while reinforcing Mubarak's leadership. It draws a relation between the war and its outcomes, as well as Mubarak's historical role and current regional and international duties. The newspaper displayed the developments of the Gulf War in light of the war memory and Egypt's role in implementing the Kuwait liberation operation.

The page shifts the attention back to the war with another short column commemorating Sadat on his death anniversary while shedding light on his leadership in the war, calling him "The hero of war and peace." The newspaper's consistent portrayal of Sadat annually contributes to building a cult of personality around him. The newspaper

keeps portraying him as a heroic figure and historical leader who brought victory to Egypt with a complete disregard for his potential failures or shortcomings. By commemorating his contributions yearly, the newspaper links his legacy of regaining territory to the state's national identity. The newspaper frames the war and the subsequent peace agreement as an integral milestone of Egypt's modern history.

Besides, one filler directs the readers to page 7, an article by Mohamed Abdelghani Elgamasy, the Commander in Chief of The Armed Forces, under "The Difficult Challenges on the Day of October War." The narrative continues to remind the public of the adversaries the armed forces faced during the war. The content of the front page collectively reinforces a sense of pride and national identity while using words like "resilience," "leadership," and "nation."

The images include an 8x6 picture of President Hosni Mubarak during his visit to the memorial to "The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" at the beginning of Egypt's October Victory Day celebrations, to lay wreaths and recite Al-Fatihah as a sign of mercy to the martyrs. The image supports the page's textual content as it symbolises respect and remembrance of the war-fallen soldiers. Besides, it highlights a substantial gesture for national unity and respect for the military by displaying the engagement of the highest civilian authority in this commemoration.

The second image is an 8x6 picture of Mubarak during his meeting with members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and next to him is Lieutenant General Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Minister of Defense, and Lieutenant General Salah Halabi, Chief of Staff. The image suggests a strong bond between the civilian government and the military. It conveys a message to the public about the state's stability; it underscores the

visuals on the page at equal sizes communicates the linkage between the past and the present as the newspaper narrates the current events in light of the war memory through the two images.

The third and last image of the copy is yet another 2.5x2.5 portrait of Sadat on his death anniversary. The newspaper follows the same strategy as in previous years to remind the people of Sadat's role in shifting the Egyptian political landscape, his efforts towards peace, and his leadership during the war.

4.1.7 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1993

On the Egyptian Presidential Referendum⁴ of 1993 and the 20th anniversary of the war, the front page refrained from including any articles, columns, or editorial pieces.

Instead, as shown in Annex 7, p. 87, the page consists of titles and subtitles covering the results of the Egyptian Presidential Referendum with two quotes from Mubarak's speech in the People's Assembly after the referendum results. The headline says, "96.28% said yes to Mubarak." The following two subtitles discuss the presidential referendum and Mubarak's next term.

In contrast, the third subtitle commemorates the war: "The glorious October War opened wide and generous opportunities for peace to the peoples of the region." Another title quoted Mubarak on the 20th anniversary of the war: "I salute the people of Egypt, and

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⁴ The Egyptian Presidential Referendum: Egypt's presidents, per the constitution, need to compete every six years. Yet, several formal and informal conditions limit who can become president. The president must be a Muslim and likely must have the tacit backing of the military establishment, which holds true power. Others candidates compete in the Egyptian presidential elections, yet their presence is largely symbolic (Cavatorta & Resta, 2023). The Egyptian Presidential Referendum in Egypt took place in 1987 - 1993 - 1999 - 2005 showing overwhelming support for the incumbent, President Hosni Mubarak who received around 97 and 95 percent of votes, extending his rule for 30 years over five presidential terms.

I will try as much as I can to improve the income level of the citizens in this great country." Another title highlights the effort of Sadat to achieve perpetual peace, while another title covers the Oslo Accords between Palestine and Israel: "The Palestinian-Israeli agreement is a bold step that could not have happened without the profound effects of the October War."

The front page of this copy presents a linkage between the war memory and governance; the newspaper used a quote from Mubarak saluting the public on the 20th anniversary of the war while promising to improve the welfare of the citizens. The narrative also underscores the ongoing impact of the war on the region, especially while recognising the Oslo Accords between Palestine and Israel and framing Egypt as a critical player in the Middle East through its peace efforts.

Following the same editorial strategy of the previous years, the newspaper continues to link past military achievements with current major political events, reinforcing Egypt's national identity through phrases like "this Great Country, "Egyptian forces are steadfast," "The miraculous performance in the October War," and "Greetings to the loyal people of Egypt on one of the most memorable days of its history."

The front page includes two images: a 12.5x8 picture of President Hosni Mubarak receiving the referendum's official results from Major General Hassan Al-Alfi, Minister of the Interior. The image emphasises the event's significance while legitimising Mubarak's presidency for a third term. The second picture is a 12.5x8 picture of Mubarak during his presidency of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces the day before the 20th anniversary of the October victory. Like El Sadat, the image highlights his dual role as the

military commander-in-chief and the head of state. The newspaper presents this image on the war anniversary, framing Mubarak as a custodian of the army victory after 20 years.

4.1.8 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 1999

The 27th anniversary of the war coincides with the Egyptian parliamentary elections and the Egyptian Presidential Referendum of 1999. As shown in Annex 8, p. 88, the front page comes under "Mubarak takes the constitutional oath for a fourth presidential term amid a standing ovation from representatives of the People's Assembly." Again, the front page includes no articles, columns, or editorial pieces. Instead, fifteen headings/titles occupied the front page, highlighting the president's promises of national reforms after announcing the results of the referendum and the parliamentary elections.

A title in the middle of the page commemorated the war: "October Victory taught us that achieving great goals requires sincerity of faith and courageous acceptance of great sacrifices." Another title quoted Mubarak: "I feel more hopeful that with the anniversary of the glorious October victory, we will begin a term in which the national structure rises on solid foundations." The newspaper continues to remember the influence of the war on current events. On the other hand, the second war-related title communicates a sense of optimism and renewal while linking the referendum results with the war "victory" again.

The front page displays a sense of national pride while legitimising Mubarak's presidency for a fourth term. As with Sadat, the newspaper used the memory of the October victory to make promises for Mubarak's welfare, reform, and leadership. The editorial strategy gradually shifted from portraying Sadat as the idol to presenting Mubarak as a national hero, especially given his role in the war. The coverage builds a cult of personality around him by utilising the war memory that took place 26 years earlier and

aligning it with his political goals to legitimise his extended rule in the name of unity and victory.

The images of this copy consist of an 11x11 picture of President Mubarak greeting members of the People's Assembly as he entered the Assembly hall to take the constitutional oath. The image suggests the narrative of the claimed democratic process and Mubarak's acceptance among the political elites. The angle of the image shows Mubarak standing on a higher platform while looking down at members of the People's Assembly, implying his dominance and authority. It also suggests a hierarchical relationship, conveying a sense of superiority, power, and control.

Another 9.5x7.5 picture of President Mubarak receiving Dr. Atef Ebeid, who is in charge of forming the new government. It highlights Mubarak's role in forming the new government. The images of Mubarak actively engaging in such political activities suggest that the new term under Mubarak's leadership is a renewal period while bringing a human dimension to the political narrative, making it more relatable to the public, implying transparency, even if it does not reflect the reality.

4.1.9 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2005

The newspaper copy of 6 October 2005, Annex 9, p. 89, marking the 32nd anniversary of the war and Egypt's first multi-candidate presidential elections, comes under "The Council of Ministers will hold a meeting next Tuesday to develop plans for implementing President Mubarak's electoral program." The front page, as shown in Annex 9, mentions the war memory in one column, commemorating its anniversary. The Editorin-Chief wrote the column under "October - Ramadan 2005", celebrating the alignment of the two months for the first time after 32 years of its occurrence in 1973 during the actual

war. The narrative evokes a sense of Egypt's national identity using the month of Ramadan -symbolising solidarity and unity- to remember the war. The rest of the editorial page discusses the ministerial meeting, which addresses unemployment, health, education, and social security. The articles also focus on the upcoming People's Assembly elections in the forthcoming few days.

Notably, the focus on the war memory is less than in previous years. The front page communicated a multifaceted message highlighting governance through political events, national identity through the war memory, and the religious side by linking it to Ramadan. Nevertheless, the minimised focus on the war can be tied to the shift in the newspaper editorial board that prioritised the current events over the war memory and other historical milestones. Drawing comparisons between this front page and the ones with the old editorial board suggests that the newspaper's newly adopted strategy reinforces the ruling power through alternative ways, as shown in this copy, instead of glorifying the past events.

Furthermore, the political landscape in Egypt in 2005 witnessed changes as Egypt, under international pressure, allowed its first multi-candidate elections. The constitutional amendment was approved in May of the same year, five months before the war memory. In that context, the state might have considered reinforcing the incumbent president Mubarak and his ruling government to face the political threat. The state agenda subsequently influenced the newspaper narrative in promoting the national projects and achievements of Mubarak instead of the war memory.

The images on this front page are 12.5x4 pictures of the Prime Minister chairing the ministerial meeting on reforming the social security system. The visual shows him chairing

the meeting, implying a sense of authority and involvement in decision-making. Making the government look transparent and engaging with the public. The front page also included a 3x3 portrait of Sadat commemorating his death anniversary. Including his portrait has become an editorial tradition, considering the visuals of the previous copies. Together, the newspaper created a nuanced narrative linking the past through the war memory and the picture of Sadat to the first multi-candidate presidential elections happening at the time.

4.1.10 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2007

On the 34th anniversary of the war, the copy of 6 October 2007, Annex 10, p. 90, coincides with internal political developments and constitutional amendments. The headline of the newspaper's front page quotes the president: "Mubarak: The anniversary of victory and crossing will remain a milestone in our history - a tribute to the souls of the martyrs, the masters, and the men of the armed forces who restored Egypt's dignity," as shown in Annex 10. The following subtitle pays tribute to El Sadat and the martyrs of the armed forces.

The leading article covers Mubarak's speech saluting the soldiers who led the crossing and raised the Egyptian flag on the Bar Lev line. The article used words like "glorious," "determination," "the righteous martyrs," and "trust." The constant mention of the martyrs in the headline and the leading article serves the national narrative adopted by the newspaper while highlighting the sacrifice and heroism of the armed forces. Quoting Mubarak's statement throughout the article and using emotive language construct a moral narrative and frame the war as a milestone in Egyptian history. Besides, how the newspaper utilises Sadat's and the martyrs' memory after decades of the war has

contributed to legitimising the prevailing authoritarian regimes by aligning its leadership with figures' legacies and exploiting their iconic status to strengthen the state narrative and control. Two articles cover the Israeli raids on Syria paralysing its radars and the spread of three thousand Israeli soldiers around Al-Aqsa Mosque, preventing Palestinian worshippers from praying. The placement of these articles under the war commemoration draws a direct relationship between past conflicts and current regional tensions with Israel. It explains the modern-day geopolitical dynamics between neighbouring Arab countries and Israel.

Following the traditional editorial strategy, the newspaper presented front-page articles upholding national pride and identity through war memories. The newspaper once again seeks to legitimise the leadership and government by linking it to national achievements and historical figures.

The page includes a 7.5x7 image of Mubarak during his speech on the victory anniversary; the visual shows Mubarak in a suit, standing on a platform with the flag behind him. His placement in the centre of the composition, in front of the flag and close to the viewer, serves few symbolic meanings; the image emphasises his authority and leadership. The Egyptian flag in the background symbolises a sense of national pride and sovereignty. The shot is at eye level, maintaining his closeness to the public through a familiar viewpoint. Another 4x2.5 picture of Israeli forces preventing thousands of Palestinian worshipers from reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque serves the integrity of the textual content. Both images serve the relationship the newspaper draws between military achievements and contemporary regional issues by tying the nation's identity to Egypt's ongoing solidarity with Palestine.

4.1.11 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2012

Moving to the newspaper copy of 6 October 2012, Annex 11, p. 91, a year after the 25th of January Revolution and the removal of Mubarak and his regime. The year marks when Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood came into power and the 39th anniversary of the war.

Notably, neither the headline nor the articles mention the war memory. As shown in Annex 11, the headline says, "Sinai is preparing for the third crossing with comprehensive development." The front page only mentioned the October War in one filler of 34 words under the title "Morsi celebrates the October holidays with the public at the stadium today." The leading article shows Morsi visiting North Sinai to meet with Sinai tribal Sheikhs, four medium-sized pieces on local updates, and two medium-sized pieces cover international developments from the United States.

The editorial shift from presenting past military achievements to focusing on national development initiatives reflects the new priorities of the new editorial board and the Brotherhood. The minimal mention of the war memory suggests preserving the newspaper's national tradition of celebrating the October War. Nevertheless, it reshapes the political narrative to align with the ideologies of the Brotherhood, especially considering their lifelong rivalry with the military. The rivalry is evident; the mention of the war without the usual glorification of the armed forces conveys the underlying tension, given the indirect involvement of the Brotherhood in the assassination of Sadat after the Camp David Accords in 1978.

The page shows an 8x5 image of President Mohamed Morsi shaking hands with a Sinai Sheikh before meeting with them and a 5x4 image of a bus turned into rubble after an

accident on the highway. The photos contrast the newspaper's traditional practices of showing the president attending the annual military parade. The visual strategy aligns with the broader ideology of the Brotherhood, which puts civic engagement and the Brotherhood reinforcement before military activities.

4.1.12 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2013

The military regained power in June 2013 through a military coup and assigned Adly Mansour as a transitional president. On the newspaper copy of 6 October 2013, Annex 12, p. 92, the headline says, "Millions are in the squares today to celebrate the anniversary of the October victory." The subtitle quotes Hazem El Beblawi, the Prime Minister back then, saying, "We receive the spirit of October to restore the country's security and stability." Annex 12 shows the leading article on the front page with a top picture of President Mansour, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and General Sedki Sobhi in front of the war memorial. The main article covers the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces with President Adly Mansour and the military parade celebrating the October victory. One column by Abdelnasser Salma, the Editor-in-chief, titled "The Conspiracy and the Anniversary of the Victory", commemorates the war anniversary. The piece analyses what was announced by retired American General Shelton, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of US efforts in destabilising Egypt within the framework of a larger plan named "the New Middle East." Another box refers to a special supplement from p. 13 to p. 22 inside the newspaper about the heroics of the October War, which includes articles, dialogues, and analyses supported by pictures written by its heroes, specialists, and strategic experts. It comes under the title "October Memory: Secrets and Heroes."

The newspaper display of prominent military men implies the military's reasserted power in Egypt's political landscape. Quoting the President about restoring stability and security after the tension of the Brotherhood year frames the military as the guardian that unifies the country. The article by the Editor-In-Chief brings back the national narrative by linking the war memory to contemporary external threats. The narrative justifies and supports the military's intervention in the country's politics.

The image on this front page serves the national narrative adopted by the new editorial board as it published an 8x8 picture of President Adly Mansour, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and Lieutenant-General Sedki Sobhi in front of the memorial of "The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" while doing performing the military salute. The image recovers the tradition of displaying military high ranks in uniform after the military coup as a symbol of power reclaiming. As shown in Figure 12, the visual shows the tilted upward angle towards the subjects, emphasising the armed forces' authority and power while displaying their adherence to the hierarchy.

4.1.13 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2016

On the 43rd anniversary of the war, amidst the flotation of the Egyptian pound and new economic measures, the newspaper copy of 6 October 2016, Annex 13, p. 93, was published under the title "The October War is a great epic in the common Arab defence." As shown in Figure 13, this front page does not include any articles, pieces, or columns. The page consists of eleven subheadings and titles commemorating the war. The subtitle quotes President Abdelfatah El Sisi: "Countries live by the sacrifices of their people, and Egypt will not rise except through the efforts of its people." Besides, the two biggest titles

on the page salute the Egyptian military forces and praise the contributions of Arab countries in the October War.

The newspaper maintains emotive language, evoking a sense of pride and nationalism while mentioning the Arab efforts in achieving the war victory. The page reminds the public of these regional efforts to reinforce a sense of pan-Arab cooperation. Notably, there is a shift in the newspaper war commemoration strategy; the newly broad Arabic notion serves as a tool in reinforcing Egypt's regional position within the Arab world. Around 2016, the region witnessed several political developments; for instance, the continued civil war in Syria and international military interventions resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis and the rise in Syrian refugees in neighbouring Arab countries. Also, the Arab fight against ISIS after it captured territories in Iraq and Syria, imposing a regional threat. A year earlier, the civil war in Yemen started, leading to a severe humanitarian crisis in 2016 and affecting the geopolitical dynamics of the region. In that context, the narrative of the newspaper served as a call for unity and solidarity among Arab nations in response to the regional threats and turmoil of the Arab Spring. By promoting a pan-Arab narrative, the ruling government may have used it to legitimise its regional position by aligning its interests with the broader Arab interests. Furthermore, the editorial use of the war memory amidst economic turmoil serves as a strategic distraction; the newspaper might have used the war anniversary to unify the people around a shared national pride and to reinforce the state's position within the region and compare the said pride to the broader social-political context. Besides, dedicating the front page to the war memory through titles underscores the military's role and aligns it with stability and authority.

The page includes an 18x18 picture of President Abdelfatah El Sisi in a military car during the annual parade of the October War, a 9x4 news reportage shot of the President during his speech from the event commemorating the war, and a 6x11 picture of the newspaper front page copy the morning of the war (the first copy analysed). These images together create a narrative that aligns with the titles serving the textual content, reinforcing the power and authority of the military. The parade display and El Sisi's portrait tie the military traditions and past victories with contemporary leadership. Compared to previous years, there is a constant visual strategy, focusing on the president during his speech through the medium close-up shot and his attendance at the annual military parade.

4.1.14 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2021

Following the same approach on the 48th anniversary of the war amidst the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam negotiations. The newspaper copy of 6 October 2021 was titled "Al-Sisi congratulates the people on the October anniversary and chairs the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces meeting."

As shown in Annex 14, p. 94, the leading article covers the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces meeting as a part of Egypt's celebrations on the war anniversary. The article highlights the President's visit to lay wreaths on the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" and the tombs of the leaders Abdelnasser and Sadat. The page includes another piece reminding the public of the heroism of the armed forces and their sacrifices during the war.

Notably, there was a thematic continuity during El Sisi's ruling period, maintaining the military traditions by reinforcing national unity and the strength of the armed forces.

The newspaper uses war memories to remind the people of military heroism and sacrifice, contributing to legitimising their rule while portraying the military as the protector of the

state's national interests. The newspaper narrative promotes patriotism by using specific phrases like "the glorious victories," "the precious occasion," "valiant armed forces," and "the great people of Egypt." The state encourages people to unite around the national symbol, reinforcing its position during an unstable time. Besides drawing from the previous issue of the newspaper, the editorial strategy is keen not only to commemorate the war memory but also to relate it to current events and topics (economic reforms in 2016 and GERD negotiations in 2021). Remarkably, the newspaper editorial decision to glorify and celebrate the war memory over the developments of COVID-19 reveals the prioritisation of the war memory even during a pandemic.

The page features a 15x5 picture of President Abdelfatah El Sisi during the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces meeting, reinforcing his role alongside the military in managing national affairs as he appears in the image moderating the meeting, displaying a sense of power and authority. The wide-angle captured the entire meeting, representing a solid front and the comprehensive strategic planning of the military men. Also, including all meeting members suggests a level of transparency, even if it does not align with reality.

4.1.15 Al-Ahram front page: 6 October 2023

The most recent copy celebrating the anniversary of the war was in the previous year, on 6 October 2023. The copy marks 50 years of the war. Distinctly, as shown in Annex 15, p. 95, the headline did not mention the war; instead, the front page was titled "Presidential directives to extend the "100 Health Days" initiative - "Health Care" prepares for the second phase of the comprehensive insurance system."

The leading article focuses on a presidential initiative targeting the health sector and refrains from celebrating the war memory, unlike in previous years. A box on the top

of the page directs readers to page 5, written by Alaa Sabet, the Editor-In-Chief, under "The Spirit of October and the Battle for Development". The title merges the current national achievements of the government with the commemoration of the October War. Notably, the bottom half of the page is divided into two parts: one is paid for by a private company congratulating the president on the war anniversary, and the second one is from the Egyptian Tax Authority addressing the public.

The copy suggests a shift in the national priorities towards the government's recent development projects. The interest in health projects might be seen as an attempt to modernise the national identity. The newspaper's decision to mention the war memory only through a space paid for by a private company suggests the commercialisation of historical commemoration. The newspaper editorial board's display of that part conveys the significance of the war memory. However, it shifts the focus towards modern-day issues and national development projects like educational and healthcare initiatives, national insurance projects, and sports.

The images of this copy include a 6x4 portrait of President Abdelfatah El Sisi in front of the flag, reinforcing his leadership through the traditional eye-level medium close-up shot, implying a sense of trust and personal connection and bringing the audience closer to the president.

5. Key Findings of MDA and Findings of Semi-Structured Interviews

This chapter summarises key findings of MDA analysis of the fifteen selected copies from *Al-Ahram* newspaper and connects them with the results of semi-structured interviews. It further discusses editorial shifts across significant periods in Egypt's modern

history, from the newspaper's immediate coverage of the war aftermath across several major political events to the last year. It describes how the war memory was utilised in different ways and strategies to align with the state narrative or to legitimise the regime. The chapters are divided into five subchapters according to the changes in leadership; the first period is based on the immediate aftermath of the war, the second analyses the newspaper's coverage of the war memory during Mubarak's era, the third sub-chapter revolves around the radical change in the newspaper's narrative in 2012 during Morsi's rule, the fourth part examines the narrative after the military reclaimed power through the coup, and the last sub-chapter discusses the findings of the most recent years post-Covid. The abovementioned timeline division for analysing the selected copies aligns with the critical political periods in Egypt as each period is marked by significant changes in leadership and shifts in national policy that have likely affected the newspaper's strategy in commemorating the war. The division allows for a contextual analysis of political power shifts' influence on the newspaper's discourse. Analysis according to these critical political periods explains the evolution of the dynamics between the newspaper and the state under different presidents and further explains the strategic use of war memory in legitimising regimes or pushing away specific actors from the political scene in Egypt.

5.1 The Immediate Aftermath of the War

The coverage of the newspaper of the war in the first few years before the Camp David Accords in 1978 focused on building a position for the government, especially for President Sadat, whose identity and achievements were built around the war victory, as seen in the front-page analysis. Before his assassination in 1981, the newspaper tied Sadat's political persona to the triumph of the war. During these years, the newspaper highlighted his military role and efforts in retrieving the Sinai Peninsula by linking his

identity to the nation's victory; in that sense, the newspaper celebrations of the war memory until 1981 solidified Sadat's legitimacy and rule.

Initially, the newspaper has instrumentalised the war memory in constructing a nationalistic discourse while presenting President Sadar as a heroic figure, tying his national achievements to the war victory and Egypt's sovereignty, thereby reinforcing his legitimacy and setting the tone for the need for a military-backed leadership in the upcoming years. In the interview with Abdelgawad Tawfik, a current managing editor and former military editor at *Al-Ahram*, he justified the extensive nationalistic incentives during Sadat's era: "The October's victory is President Sadat's legitimacy. He owns the victory. He came after Gamal Abdel Nassr, a charismatic leader with several national achievements like the High Dam, African unity, liberation, and non-alignment national policy. In that sense, El Sadat was wrestling with the remnants of Abdel Nasser's regime. So, he held the October victory to say (I am here). He celebrates the war in a way that supports his position and confirms the value of what he has done."

The coverage aligned with the state narrative, framing Sadat as the nation's saviour who restored Egypt's sovereignty and national pride. The editorial strategy promoted a sense of patriotism and national unity by repeating Sadat's military contributions as a leader every year. It also sat the tone for maintaining the war memory for future anniversaries, ensuring the war legacy would remain tied with Sadat in a way that positioned his government. Besides, it paved the way for Mubarak to get into power by continuously highlighting Sadat's role and leadership. The newspaper narrative has established that a solid military-backed leadership is essential for Egypt's unity and stability. Mubarak, who was Vice President at the time of Sadat's assassination and the holder of the first air strike in the war, acted as a continuation of the military leadership

that Sadat established. This perception eased the power transition as the groundwork *Al-Ahram* had done in the prior years solidified his legitimacy and public support. Menshawy (2016) argues that the dynamic multiplicity of the historical 'reality' of this war the most significant in Egypt's modern history had been structured into a smooth and coherent officially sanctioned discursive whole under the rule of Sadat.

Furthermore, the newspaper's visual strategy immediately after the war aligned with the editorial direction, Salah Ibrahim, a current photography consultant at *Al-Ahram* and the former Head of the Photojournalism Department at *Al-Ahram* from 2018 to 2023, explained the message the newspaper aimed to deliver through images "The newspaper displayed a picture of the prisoners on eight columns from top to bottom of the front page. The entire page was a picture of the prisoners. When the newspapers deliver such an image on October 8, two days after the attack, it tells the people that there is no enemy, the enemy is captured."

5.2 The Coverage of the War Memory during Mubarak's Era

During the Sadat years, the initial narrative laid the groundwork for Mubarak's coming into power, underscoring the need for military lineage to ensure the country's security and stability. It may appear that the state used the war memory to blur the election fraud or reinforce Mubarak's role and achievements, who stayed in power for 30 years. Nevertheless, the two events coincided because El Sadat was assassinated on the celebrations of 6 October 1981 during the annual military parade; his assassination marks the date when Mubarak came into power.

The newspaper narrative shift after Mubarak came into power revolves around building a cult of personality around him. By that time, the narrative of a military-backed leadership was established, which helped establish a ground for Mubarak. As mentioned in the analysis, the newspaper during Mubarak's era utilised the war memory to legitimise his rule, portraying him as a total leader to reinforce his position. The narrative tied the war memories and its subsequent national pride to specific political events like the following presidential referendums that resulted in a lifelong mandate while making him look like he was democratically elected.

Nevertheless, hijacking the war memory was strategic to ensure his three-decade rule. Notably, celebrating the war memory during his era was not just for remembering the national victorious event, as the repetitive linkage between his leadership and the war's legacy contributed to tying his image as the nation's custodian, reinforcing his position and government. Anwar Abdelatif, an Editorial Advisor at *Al-Ahram*, justified the portrayal of the war memory during the era of Mubarak: "Delivering a speech on the war memory has remained a tradition for President Mubarak, and all newspapers cover it on one, two, three or four pages. It goes back to the fact that President Mubarak was one of the elements of the October War, and no one disputes it. It was a great national achievement, but especially for Mubarak as he was the commander of the Air Forces in the October War and the one who carried out the first air strike."

Additionally, the newspaper's emphasis on patriotism and national pride, specifically around the time of presidential referendums, made questioning his legitimacy regarded as demeaning to the war legacy. The alignment between the newspaper discourse and the state narrative ensured his rule was linked to Egypt's stability, ensuring his long authoritarian rule.

5.3 The Radical Change of the Narrative in 2012

The editorial shift of the newspaper witnessed after Mubarak's era during the year of the Muslim Brotherhood and the subsequent military reclamation of authority highlighted the newspaper's role in reflecting the state narrative and underlying political ideologies.

The war memory acted as a tool to legitimise or delegitimise certain political actors according to their stance towards or against the military. The newspaper's utilisation of war memory in managing state politics was evident in 2012 due to the lifelong rivalry between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, who are believed to be Sadat's assassins. The war commemoration was very limited in 2012 under Morsi's rule, whereas the newspaper reflected the political tension. The limited coverage of the war memory in the newspaper goes back to the editorial choice.

Nevertheless, it reflects a broader political narrative regarding controlling such a major national event. The downplayed commemoration underscored the Brotherhood's intentions to minimise the role and position of the military, disregarding the military achievements glorified every year before 2012. Furthermore, it is significant to highlight that Morsi was the only president Egypt had with no relation to the armed forces of Egypt. During the interview with Abdelatif, he further explained the tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military in 2012: "Morsi held a celebration in Cairo Stadium in 2012 to celebrate the anniversary, but he invited the killers of President Sadat. Among the attendees were Abboud Al-Zumar and Al-Islambouli, members of the organisation that carried out the assassination. They even considered the assassination one of their greatest achievements."

5.4 War Commemoration after the Military Reclaimed Power

After the military reclaimed authority, the newspaper aligned its editorial strategy on the war memory with the state narrative. The discourse of the newspaper mirrored the military rule need for consolidation after the political upheaval following the 2011 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood year, and the military coup of 2013. The discourse started to rebuild the notion of Egypt as a regional military superpower and guaranteeing stability in a destabilised region, portraying the country as the anchor of the Arab world by glorifying the war memories and the military role again to ensure a sense of national unity and power. The narrative contributed to legitimising the current governance on a national level while asserting Egypt's influence and leadership in the region.

The role of the newspaper in reflecting the internal policy and the broader regional dynamics was stated during the interview with Abdelatif: "Al-Ahram expresses and stems from Egypt's national security and sometimes Arab national security as well." He emphasised the newspaper's role in reinforcing the state narrative by promoting Egypt as a stabilising force in the Arab world. The narrative also suggests blocking any opposition or controversy related to the military coup and reclaiming power. Moreover, the constant mention of Sadat's death anniversary and using his memory as a symbol to reinforce the military rule suggested his depersonalisation, given the fact that he was assassinated.

5.5 The post-COVID Era

Notably, in recent years, the mention of the war memory drifted from the traditional editorial strategies, as the focus on the ongoing national projects carried out by Sisi is dominating even on the war anniversary, and the war commemoration is relatively limited compared to previous years. The limited commemoration of the wars suggests the

narrative shift is because Sisi himself did not participate in the war; however, the newspaper still refers to the military achievements and presents it as the custodian of the country. Nevertheless, the new government utilised ongoing national projects such as insurance, healthcare, and educational initiatives to legitimise its rule and position.

Moreover, there is a shift in the editorial direction through images, as the newspaper went from showcasing actual war footage using the newspaper archive and historical pictures to featuring presidential figures. It indicates a change in the newspaper's editorial direction over the year. Also, it suggests that the newspaper aligns its portrayal of the war with state narratives to achieve broader objectives. The newspaper's use of visuals to commemorate the war has consistently aligned with the textual content over the years; during the interview with Salah Ibrahim, he denied any direct presidential directives on the coverage of the war anniversary. There is no external censorship in the image selection process on the war anniversary, which suggests a degree of editorial independence within the newspaper.

Nevertheless, this "freedom" goes back to the fact that photojournalists are not allowed during the war celebrations and the military parade every year. Only presidential photographers and foreign press agencies are allowed during the war celebrations. "The Presidency's Media Office selects the best photos or those required to be displayed or published and directs them to all newspapers, without exception, whether governmental or private. Even during the parade, the media office is what directs them. It guides the photographer from A to Z. There is certainly security cooperation to protect the president and officials, and the photographer has a specific place to stand, as they cannot wander around," Ibrahim explained. The practice underscores the controlled approach to managing

images the readers receive. Besides, this strategy ensures that the display of presidents carefully maintains a narrative aligning with the state's objectives.

6. Discussion

This chapter examines the implications of the previous chapter's findings, contributing to the broader academic debate on the relationship between *Al-Ahram* newspaper discourse on the war and the state narrative. The chapter aims to reveal the influence of major political events on the portrayal of war memory over the years by analysing the fifteen selected front pages on war memory and including insights from journalists who have been working in the newspaper for years.

The study seeks to answer the research questions: How has Al-Ahram newspaper's discourse on the 1973 War evolved over the last five decades, and what is the relationship between the power dynamics in Egypt and the Al-Ahram narrative on the 1973 War? In that sense, the research contributes to the existing knowledge as it presents a framework for understanding the dynamics between the prominent media outlet and the state, especially in authoritarian contexts like Egypt; the editorial centralisation of the newspaper might have raised doubts regarding its independence from the political landscape. Moreover, the editorial emphasis on the state-centric discourse, especially in the political contexts, can be criticised for overshadowing other voices and actors.

Drawing from the understanding that media texts often include data that may not fully align. They tend to emphasise certain concepts through the frequent use of specific words and visuals, highlighting particular aspects of a news story while downplaying or omitting others. This selective focus can draw the audience's attention to specific viewpoints, making other parts less noticeable or entirely absent (Entman, 1991, p. 7); the

noticeable rapport between all the copies -putting into consideration the tone, the language, the visuals, the narrative, and the front page layout- is the consistent emphasis on the heroism of the Egyptian Armed Forces and covering the President's attendance at the military parade commemorating the war every year. Moreover, there is a constant emphasis on breaking up the theory that the Israeli army is unbeatable. For example, words like "belonging," "historical leadership," "determination," "pride," "glory," and "victory" are frequently used over the five decades.

Entman (1991) further explains how a frame can be identified through specific keywords, stereotypes, and visual images. Following this, within the context of Egypt, Strömberg (2015) explains how traditional media outlets are easier for a central government, such as the one in Egypt, to control and censor. Besides, Strömberg (2015) points out that it is crucial to watch out for governments that use complex strategies to achieve "welfare-reducing policy effects."

The findings further align with the views of Jacquemond (2008) and Kienle (1998) as they explained how Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak reapplied the "narrowing methods" and strict government control over the media to curb the opposition. The newspaper coverage of the war memory during Sadat's years until his assassination in 1981 and throughout Mubarak's era has tailored the textual content and accompanied visuals according to the country's political agenda and underlying ideologies.

The war memory acted as a political tool in the state's political communication over the years, utilising it to reinforce a regime by linking the war victory to the political system's legitimacy. On the other hand, both the state and the newspaper utilised the war memory in the political power dynamics to downplay specific political actors and push them away from the political landscape to limit their political involvement and influence. Evidently, the newspaper has adopted different strategies in presenting the war memory

according to which political event occurred then and who was in authority, proving potential biases.

Furthermore, aside from the visual coverage of the military parade, the images published on the front pages by the photography department of the newspaper served to narrate the same strategy, maintaining the editorial traditions of the newspaper over the decades. Thus, the study employs MDA as a method to analyse the textual content and the visuals presented, drawing from Machin (2013), who explains how, in multimodal communication, various modes are becoming more intertwined, considering the role the visual elements play in conveying complex messages. Including visuals has enhanced the notion of reinforcing the regime and legitimising the authoritarian rule, which goes along with the views of Lotherington and Jenson (2011), who discuss how multimodality involves integrating different communication modes that jointly enhance the understanding and interpretation of the given context. Through MDA, the findings revealed the underlying ideologies after examining the dominant narratives the newspaper has adopted over the decades. Employing MDA has contributed to understanding the intersection of media, language, and power as CDA also assumes that discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory (Menshawy, 2016).

Additionally, commemorating the war memory on the years of major political events contributed to recognising the state's prioritisation setting; examining the position of the war memory alongside other significant events can further elaborate how it acted as a tool in the country's political communication process—drawing from the understanding of how ideology is installed within discursive practices by shedding light on the ideological mechanisms (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Unsurprisingly, the newspaper and the state glorified the memory in the years of the presidential referendum during Mubarak's era, as it contributed to legitimising his government and decades-long rule while verifying the utilisation of the war memory to reinforce the regime, Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) examine the significance of the way language helps maintain unequal power relations through critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology that perceive ideology as a tool for identifying these relations. Moreover, the editorial strategy further explains the war memory portrayal later in recent years, where ongoing national projects dominate the front page with a significantly reduced mention of the military achievements of the war.

Thus, the dynamics between the newspaper discourse and the state narrative are described by a pattern of alignment and realignment with the prevailing state ideology, reflecting the political landscape of the time. Throughout the eras of Sadat and Mubarak, the newspaper boosted the state narrative by glorifying the war memory and the military achievements, tying national unity and pride to the regime's legitimacy. Nonetheless, the radical narrative shift in 2012 under Morsi reflected the political tension and attempted to limit the military's influence on the political landscape. The narrative was reversed right after the military reclaimed authority in 2013, as the newspaper realigned its discourse to reinforce the military's significant role in ensuring unity and regional leadership by pushing a pan-Arab narrative. In recent years, the commemoration of the war has witnessed a decline in glorification, reflecting a new editorial strategy that seeks to highlight the military's longstanding achievements and regional leadership but through a different lens, presenting it alongside the ongoing national projects carried out by the current President Sisi. The abovementioned editorial strategies reveal the ongoing utilisation of the war memory in reinforcing the legitimacy of regimes and the state's narrative authority.

Moreover, the role of *Al-Ahram* in constructing the public's perception of the war memory explains the influence of media in reinforcing the state's political agenda. The

theoretical framework argues that media content is a symbolic portrayal of reality, guiding the audience's interpretation of events (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Thus, by consistently framing the war memory in terms of national pride and military accomplishment, the newspaper builds a narrative that supports the regime's legitimacy and downplays alternative perspectives that might challenge the prevailing discourse. The argument aligns with Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, which suggests that media serves elite groups' interests by shaping news to fit economic, political, and social agendas.

Additionally, the interpretative approach applied in this study reveals how editorial strategies and narrative shifts in *Al-Ahram* reflect the broader socio-political contexts. Yan (2019) argues that media constructs social reality through selection, guiding the public's perception by highlighting certain viewpoints.

The alignment of the newspaper discourse with major political events and the state narrative underscores how the war memory functions as a tool for political communication, shaping public opinion to support the regime's objectives. This dynamic process highlights the active role of media in constructing social reality, as Lindlof (2008) described, where individuals interpret their environment through the lens of personal experiences and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, analysing the front pages through the lens of media construction of reality theory underscores the newspaper's role in maintaining the status quo. The consistent glorification of the war memory and the reinforcement of the state's narrative show how media can maintain existing power structures by directing public discourse, which is supported by the work of Shoemaker and Reese (1996), who argue that news content is a socially created product, influenced by the subjective choices of journalists and editors. The findings of this study explain how these choices are shaped by political pressures and the need to align with the dominant state ideology.

Nevertheless, the extensive analysis of *Al-Ahram* newspaper's discourse over five decades presents limitations with potential biases that may have affected the depth and scope of this research. The most significant challenge is the extensive time frame covered, which challenged interpreting the nuanced shifts in narrative and covering every editorial strategy the newspaper has adopted over the decades across different political regimes. The extensive time scope challenged considering all the socio-political aspects that may have affected the newspaper's discourse across various periods.

Moreover, the content translation process from Arabic to English acted as another challenge, considering the loss of potentially nuanced meanings due to different cultural contexts and the emotional weight of the Arabic language. The translation may have influenced the analysis of the newspaper's discourse, specifically while examining the editorial strategies, tone, and emotive language employed to convey the message.

Furthermore, being a native Arabic speaker might have directed the analysis towards a more familiar narrative framework and potentially overlooked alternatives within the discourse.

Additionally, not having lived through wartime presents the next layer of limitations as I have not personally experienced the immediate social, emotional, political, and cultural contexts that have laid the ground for the war commemoration tone in the upcoming years. Besides, the analysis may have been affected by the repetitive nationalistic narrative I have been exposed to for over 20 years, potentially affecting the interpretation of war memory evolution over the decades.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the multimodal discourse analysis, with insights from three semi-

structured interviews, revealed patterns in how *Al-Ahram* has evolved its portrayal of the war memory over the years. It identified key moments where the newspaper's editorial stance appeared to shift, suggesting a possible reaction to changes in political power dynamics and potential bias. The study has systematically examined the correlation between the newspaper and the political power play over five decades; initially set against a backdrop of restricted media freedom and a tightly controlled political environment, the analysis reveals how *Al-Ahram*, as a state-influenced entity, has navigated and mirrored the shifts in Egypt's political landscape.

The findings acknowledge that the newspaper's portrayal of the October War memory has not only reflected events but has also been a construct influenced by prevailing political actors. This is in alignment with the media construction of reality theory, which believes that the media actively constructs reality. Regimes in Egypt have changed over the decades, and so have *Al-Ahram's* editorial strategies and narrative style. This is particularly evident in the 2012 period of significant political transition when shifts in editorial direction coincided with broader state policy changes.

Implementing multimodal discourse analysis highlighted how textual and visual elements serve as tools to achieve the state agenda, demonstrating a marked alignment between media discourse and state narratives. Moreover, the interviews aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the internal dynamics within the newspaper, revealing a complex interplay between editorial independence and political pressure.

Furthermore, multimodal discourse analysis is characterised by contextuality, offering a critical perspective that can reveal hidden power relations and underlying ideologies within texts. In that sense, future comparative studies employing multimodal analysis that examine different prominent outlets in Egypt can be researched. Also, delving deeper into a specific period under one president is recommendable.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering an understanding of how a prominent semi-national newspaper can serve as a tool and play a pivotal role in constructing the public perception of historical events.

Summary

Multimodální analýza diskurzu spolu s poznatky ze tří polostrukturovaných rozhovorů odhalila vzorce, podle kterých se v průběhu let vyvíjelo zobrazování paměti války v deníku *Al-Ahram*. Identifikovala klíčové momenty, kdy se redakční postoj novin patrně měnil, což naznačuje možnou reakci na změny v politické mocenské dynamice a potenciální zaujatost. Studie systematicky zkoumala korelaci mezi novinami a politickou hrou o moc v průběhu pěti desetiletí; analýza odhalila, jak *Al-Ahram* jako státem ovlivňovaný subjekt, zpočátku na pozadí omezené svobody médií a přísně kontrolovaného politického prostředí, odrážel změny v egyptské politické krajině.

Zjištění potvrzují, že novinové líčení paměti říjnové války pouze neodráželo události, ale bylo také konstruktem ovlivněným převládajícími politickými aktéry, což je v souladu s teorií mediální konstrukce reality, podle níž média aktivně konstruují realitu. Režimy v Egyptě se v průběhu dekád měnily, a s nimi i redakční strategie a narativní styl listu Al-Ahrám. Toto je zvláště patrné v období významných politických změn v roce 2012, kdy byly změny v redakčním směřování shodné s širšími změnami státní politiky.

Využitím multimodální analýzy diskurzu bylo poukázáno na to, jak textové a vizuální prvky slouží jako nástroje k uskutečňování státní agendy, a prokázáno výrazné sladění mediálního diskurzu se státními narativy. Rozhovory se navíc zaměřily na hlubší pochopení vnitřní dynamiky novin a odhalily složitou souhru mezi redakční nezávislostí a

politickým tlakem.

Multimodální analýza diskurzu se vyznačuje kontextualitou, kdy nabízí kritickou perspektivu, jež může odhalit skryté mocenské vztahy a ideologii obsaženou v textu. V tomto ohledu mohou být v budoucnu uskutečňovány komparativní studie využívající multimodální analýzu, které zkoumají různé prominentní výstupy v Egyptě. Rovněž lze doporučit hlubší zkoumání konkrétního období pod vládou jednoho prezidenta.

Obecně tato studie přispívá k dosavadním poznatkům tím, že nabízí pochopení role prominentních celonárodních novin jako nástroje, který hraje klíčovou roli při utváření veřejného vnímání historických událostí.

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Appendix no. 1: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 7 October 1973. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 2: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1974. Source: Al-Ahram archive



Appendix no. 3: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1978. Source: Al-Ahram archive





اسس الإهرام سنة ١٨٧٥ : صليم وبشارة تقلا صيفحة ويئيس مجلس الأدارة ورئيس التعريز

س يحدد مهام المستقبل للوزارة الجديدة بعد أداء اليمين

للم وتعميق الديمقراطية وتحقيق الرخاء تنسيق كامل بين الحكومة والحزب ومجلس الشعب لحل مشاكل الجماهير

ادات يفوض بعض اختص لرئيس الوزراء في اجتماعهما امس

لِيقِسِما الوزراع في الجندس عهده امس من من الوزراع في الجندس عهده امس من الجندس التو السيادت الدسيات الدس الوزراء الدسيات الدس الوزراء الدسيات الدكتور مصلفي خليل رئيس مجلس الوزراء تحتيضا للركتور مصلفي خليل رئيس مجلس الوزراء تحتيضا بأيده من اللامركزية وتخول الحكومة الساطات التي تتمكنها من الانطلاق على الداء من الداء الدعين من الدعين المناسبة الله الدعين المناسبة الم

الفريق كمسال على يرأس

ئيس يشهد اليوم بالاسماعيلية الرثيس يسلى الجمعمة



رادو دابياستار

تعتبر ودوداياستار بتصميمهاالأن ساعة فريدة من نوعها تنا، الرجائب الذين يسبقون عص مركز خدمه رادو ١٨ شارع قصر النسيل - بالقاهرة

Appendix no. 4: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1981. Source: Al-Ahram archive

المجاس الاعلى للصحافة

كشيف مؤامرة لمرتبة غوامسة نووية امريكسية

department.



Appendix no. 5: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1987. Source: Al-Ahram archive



Appendix no. 6: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1991. Source: Al-Ahram archive

department.



Appendix no. 7: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 1991. Source: Al-Ahram archive



Appendix no. 8: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 1999. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 9: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 2005. Source: Al-Ahram archive department.



Appendix no. 10: Al-Ahram, front page, 6 October 2007. Source: Al-Ahram archive department.



Appendix no. 11: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 2012. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 12: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 2013. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 13: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 2016. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 14: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 2021. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 15: *Al-Ahram*, front page, 6 October 2023. Source: *Al-Ahram* archive department.



Appendix no. 16: Interview questions with Abdelgawad Tawfik:

- Would you introduce yourself and your journalistic journey?
- Explain the relationship between Heikal and the Egyptian state since the beginning.
- What was Heikal's relationship with Nasser like?
- How close was *Al-Ahram* newspaper to the 1973 war and political events?
- What was the leadership criticised for after the 1967 defeat?
- Can you tell me about the military figures who acted as journalists during and after the war?
- What were the main editorial decisions considered for the front page on 7 October 1973?
- Talk about the influence of Heikal's opinion on the process of developing the attack.
- All newspapers at the time covered the war extensively. How did *Al-Ahram* get its exclusives?
- What is the process for issuing the front page on the anniversary of the war each year?
- What is the approval process?
- Does the government have the final say in approving what is published on the front page on the anniversary of the war victory each year?
- What has the commemoration of the war looked like over the years under different regimes?
- Presidential referendums during Mubarak's era. Three or four referendums coincided with the anniversary of the war. What was the coincidence of publishing them on the front page?
- Why, in your opinion, the Western media in particular and the international media in general present the war differently from how it is presented in Egypt?
- What is the extent of *Al-Ahram*'s credibility in publishing the facts without exaggerating the achievements of the war?
- How did Heikal's presence during the war events give credibility to *Al-Ahram* later?

Appendix no. 17: Interview questions with Anwar Abdelatif:

- Would you introduce yourself and your journalistic journey?
- Can we consider *Al-Ahram* to be the channel through which officials speak to the people?
- The front page, what is the process of publishing it in *Al-Ahram* at the time of the war anniversary every year?
- Why is the number of pages of the newspaper supplement about the war different from previous years?
- But who has the final say in approving the front page and what is published on it?
- There is a difference I noticed in the way the victory celebrations are presented. In the beginning, the focus was only on publishing events or film footage, now the focus is on the president. How would you explain that?
- Would you say that the newspaper's interest in publishing the war every year goes back to the fact that presidents are part of the armed forces?
- Can you tell me about the war anniversary of 2012 (The year of the Muslim Brotherhood)?
- Does Mubarak's mention of war and victory reinforce his achievements? Whether it's industry or his efforts to create national projects and initiatives.
- Are there any presidential directives to feature the war anniversary every year in the newspaper?
- I also noticed that the presidential referendums during Mubarak's tenure to renew his rule coincided with the anniversary of the war victory. How would you explain it? What is the purpose of combining the two events?
- Several studies have stated that *Al-Ahram* is considered the spokesperson for the Egyptian government, but when looking at how the war is publicised in the Western media in particular and the Western media in general compared to how it is presented in Arab countries. is different. They don't mention that Egypt won, but they mention that Egypt crossed, which led to negotiations and a peace agreement. In Egypt and the Arab world, we call it a victory, so how credible is *Al-Ahram* in publishing the facts?
- How do you think presenting the October anniversary every year to remind readers of it affected how they remember the war?

- What does *Al-Ahram* make sure is on the front page when covering the war anniversary each year?

Appendix no. 18: Interview questions with Salah Ibrahim:

- Would you introduce yourself and your journalistic journey?
- Can you tell me about the different photography practices between the past and the present in the newspaper?
- How does *Al-Ahram* deal with war coverage in general?
- What is the spotlight on? The officials, the humanitarian aspect or the events themselves?
- The newspaper has been celebrating the anniversary of the October Victory for fifty years now. It is not less or lighter over the years, on the contrary, it maintains the size of the celebration of the war memory. What are the images that the newspaper is keen to show on the front page on the anniversary of the war?
- While reviewing the archive. I got the copies that I am analysing, and I noticed that there is a shift in the presentation of the actual events of the war, whether from films or what is available, and we are showing presidents, for example, I noticed that there are portraits of Mubarak or Sisi. These images take up the most space. What is the reason for this trend or shift? What is the reason behind it?
- are there any presidential directives on what images are published every year on 6 October?
- What kind of censorship is involved in the selection of images, whether it is self-censorship by the photojournalists or censorship by the newspaper?
- There's a lot of ethics around war photography or military photography. Especially now, we study the importance of ethics from the first year and the importance of the photojournalist's knowledge of it. What are the ethics around war and in general?
- In the photos selected to commemorate the anniversary of the war memory.

 What are the techniques used? Is the low-angle shot of the president highlighted so that he appears larger, for example?