

# Working Methods Note v0.9 (Pilot Draft): Analysing Visibility in Egypt's English-Language Press

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*Pilot design for discussion; scope and categories will be refined with supervisory input.*

## Abstract

This note sketches an early version of my research design for studying how Egypt's English-language press handles the visibility of non-normative expression. It grows out of my doctoral project, but I am sharing it here on its own as a provisional methods draft, open to feedback and adjustment. The focus is practical: how to build the corpus, what categories to test in the codebook, and how to check reliability while keeping ethical safeguards in view. At the centre is my working concept of *authorized cosmopolitanism*: a style of English reporting that presents modernity and openness to the outside world, but still quietly limits what dissent can be said. To explore this, I propose coding articles for stance, framing, word choice, source order, visuals, and who is shown as the agent of constraint. A first sample will draw from *Al-Ahram Weekly*, *Cairo Times*, *Egypt Independent*, and *Mada Masr*, focusing on flashpoints such as 1997, 2001, 2011, and 2017. The note also explains how pilot coding and co-coding with an Arabic-speaking collaborator will be used to refine categories. All of this is Version 0.9; draft and flexible, to be revised with supervisory input.

## Keywords

Egypt; English-language press; visibility; framing; content analysis; authorized cosmopolitanism; open science; media discourse

## 1. Purpose of this Note

This working paper outlines a pilot research design for examining how “voices at the margins” are represented and regulated in Egypt's English-language press. It serves as a methods-focused preprint (Version 0.9) in support of a doctoral project on non-normative expression in elite-facing Egyptian media. The goal is to transparently present the proposed corpus, coding scheme, reliability checks, and ethical safeguards before full data collection, in line with open science best practices. By sharing this methods note on the Open Science Framework (OSF) with a DOI, the author invites feedback and demonstrates a commitment to rigorous and replicable research.

Media discourse analysis provides the theoretical backbone for this study. Prior scholarship shows that news language is never neutral: the press wields significant power to shape perceptions through selective framing and

word choice. Critical discourse analysts have long observed that media narratives often reproduce dominant ideologies, portraying “deviant” or marginal groups through the lens of prevailing social norms. In other words, what is made visible or kept invisible in the news is deeply political. *Framing* theory underlines this dynamic: as Entman (1993) noted, examining frames “*illuminates the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted*” by a text. Building on these insights, the present project introduces a signature concept – *authorized cosmopolitanism* – to interrogate the English-language press in an authoritarian context. *Authorized cosmopolitanism* refers to a state-aligned English register that outwardly projects openness and modernity, yet subtly *polices dissent’s legibility* through euphemistic language, source bias, and visual restraint. This concept, developed in the PhD proposal, suggests that English-language outlets in Egypt perform a cosmopolitan, liberal tone for global audiences while tacitly maintaining red lines on what can be said. The methods detailed in this note are designed to operationalise and pilot-test that concept by coding how non-normative subjects (e.g. queer identities, subcultural movements, dissident voices) are framed, whose voices are prioritized or silenced, and what visual strategies are used to either spotlight or sideline contentious content.

In sum, the purpose of this note is to document a pilot methodology – including corpus construction, a draft codebook, and validation procedures – for analyzing “visibility” in anglophone Egyptian media. This pilot is *exploratory* and will be refined with supervisory input; however, it provides a scaffold for a full study that is both critical in approach and transparent in execution. By articulating the research design at this early stage, the author aims to ensure the study’s credibility and reproducibility from the outset, consistent with the broader movement toward openness in the social sciences. The following sections describe the planned corpus, the coding framework (with illustrative categories), strategies for reliability and reflexivity, and commitments to open science and ethical practice. A final disclaimer reiterates the provisional nature of this design and its anticipated evolution under guidance.

## 2. Corpus

The study will examine a *bounded corpus* of English-language news outlets produced in Egypt, focusing on how they have covered non-normative or marginalized expression from the 1990s to the present. In particular, the corpus centres on four flagship anglophone publications that address both domestic elites and international audiences: *Cairo Times*, *Al-Abram Weekly*, *Egypt Independent*, and *Mada Masr*. These outlets span state-affiliated media (e.g. the state-owned *Al-Abram Weekly*) as well as independent or private platforms, providing a range of editorial stances. The temporal scope is delimited by several key *flashpoint events* for cultural dissent, which serve as analytical windows. Three emblematic episodes anchor the sample selection: the 1997 “heavy metal” moral panic, the 2001 Queen Boat crackdown on LGBTQ+ individuals, and the 2017 state campaign against LGBTQ+ visibility. Around each flashpoint, relevant news articles, features, or editorials from the English-language press will be gathered to see how these contentious issues were framed in real time. Additional periods of interest (e.g. the 2011 revolutionary moment, or recent developments up to 2024) will be included to round out the corpus, but the emphasis is on these flashpoints that crystallize the push-and-pull between expression and repression.

**Corpus construction:** The retrieval of articles will draw on digital archives, library collections, and web captures. Where available, full-text digital archives of the four target outlets will be used (for instance, *Mada Masr*'s online archive or *Al-Abram Weekly*'s digital edition). Physical or PDF archives (e.g. via the American University in Cairo collections or the CEDEJ/Bibliotheca Alexandrina press archive) will supplement gaps. The corpus is constrained to content produced in English by Egyptian outlets, but for each flashpoint, comparative material in Arabic will be gathered from sister publications or state statements. These English–Arabic pairs enable a contrastive analysis (discussed below) to detect any reframing that occurs between languages. Overall, the corpus is expected to comprise on the order of a few hundred articles, stratified by period and outlet. A brief *sampling log* will record inclusion criteria, ensuring that both news reports and opinion pieces are represented, and noting any geographic diversity (e.g. coverage of events outside Cairo). As this is a pilot, an initial subset of ~12–15 articles will be coded first to refine the scheme, before expanding to the full corpus. The corpus scope will remain *focused yet flexible* – comprehensive enough to capture dominant patterns, but bounded to maintain feasibility for a single-researcher qualitative analysis.

### 3. Draft Codebook

At the heart of this pilot design is a draft codebook that translates analytic concepts into a set of observable content categories. The coding framework blends qualitative critical discourse analysis with a systematic content-analytic approach. In essence, each news item will be examined along multiple dimensions that together illuminate how visibility is constructed or curtailed. Table 1 (Appendix) presents the scaffold of Codebook v0.9, listing the main categories and their operational definitions. These categories have been developed from the project's theoretical concerns (e.g. stance, framing, and “authorized cosmopolitan” cues) and informed by prior media studies. Fowler's classic insight that seemingly banal linguistic choices can encode ideology is reflected in several of the codes (e.g. lexical euphemism vs. explicitness), while Entman's notion of “frames” as central organizing ideas underpins the dominant frame category. The draft codebook is summarized as follows:

- **Stance:** The overall *attitude or evaluative position* of the article toward the non-normative subject at hand. This is coded on a spectrum from *supportive* or sympathetic, through *neutral/balanced*, to *cautionary* or implicitly sceptical, up to *hostile*. Stance captures tonal polarity – for example, whether an article about a youth subculture presents it as positive cultural expression, a benign curiosity, a cause for concern, or a moral/social threat. This category draws on appraisal in discourse: media scholars note that subtle tone shifts (e.g. scare quotes or value-laden adjectives) can signal endorsement or condemnation without explicit editorializing. By coding stance, the study gauges the baseline visibility afforded to marginal voices (affirming vs. delegitimizing).
- **Dominant Frame:** The primary *interpretive frame* used to contextualize the issue. Frames are the narratives or schemas that journalists invoke – for instance, presenting an event as a human rights issue, a morality/tradition debate, a security/order problem, a matter of cultural everyday life, an image of modernisation/reputation, or one of public health/protection. Each article will be coded for its

dominant frame (the angle that pervades the piece). This draws on framing theory (Entman, 1993) in identifying which aspects of reality are highlighted or omitted. For example, coverage of a controversial art show might be framed primarily as an issue of *freedom of expression* (rights frame) or instead as an offense to *cultural values* (morality frame). Identifying the dominant frame helps reveal how the English-language press mediates dissent – whether by aligning with state narratives of threat and immorality or by reframing issues in cosmopolitan terms like rights and diversity.

- **Lexicon:** This category records notable *lexical choices* and language register, focusing on words that signal either openness or censorship. In particular, coders note instances of euphemism (deliberate vagueness or toned-down terms for taboo topics) versus explicit naming of sensitive identities or acts. It also captures pejoratives or slurs if present, and significant metaphors or metonyms. Lexical analysis is crucial for detecting the *authorized cosmopolitanism* dynamic: for example, does an article avoid saying “gay” or “queer” and resort to phrases like “certain groups” or “deviant behaviors”? Does it use the term “security threat” versus “peaceful gathering”? Prior research emphasizes that such word choices are key to media bias and can either mask or magnify the visibility of the subject. Coding lexicon will involve compiling a small glossary of terms and noting whether language tends toward the clinical, the coded, or the openly descriptive.
- **Voice & Ordering:** This dimension examines whose voices are heard first and last in the article, and how sources are attributed. Specifically, the first quoted speaker and the last quoted speaker are noted, categorized by type: e.g. *government official*, *expert/professional*, *NGO or activist*, *community participant*, *religious authority*, or *anonymous/general public*. The premise is that source selection and ordering reflect a hierarchy of credibility and importance. In an authorized-cosmopolitan style, one might expect *official or expert voices to dominate early in the piece*, setting the narrative, with dissident or unconventional voices (if included at all) pushed to later paragraphs. Conversely, truly open coverage might lead with marginalized voices. By coding voice-order, the study can quantify patterns such as the frequency of officials being the first voice (signaling deference to authority) or whether articles end with an opposition quote (perhaps to allow a critical point but only after the official line is given). This measure resonates with existing analyses of news sourcing as an index of bias and the “indexing” hypothesis (that media index range of debate to elite discourse). It directly operationalises one mechanism of authorized cosmopolitanism: *voice-ordering as gatekeeping*. Patterns here will feed into the Reframing Index described below.
- **Visual Treatment:** Many of these news articles are accompanied by photographs, illustrations, or layout decisions, and this category accounts for the *visual dimension* of visibility. We code what type of image (if any) is used and its nature: symbolic or distant imagery vs. identifiable, close-up depictions; use of neutral stock images vs. actual documentary photos of the people/events in question. For instance, an article on a controversial concert might be illustrated with a vague crowd shot (distanced, de-personalised) or with a clear photo of the musicians (specific and humanising). Visual framing can

either reinforce or undermine the text. A pattern of using only symbols or generic photos for sensitive topics might indicate an editorial choice to *de-personalise* dissent (maintaining deniability or reducing emotional impact), which aligns with the hypothesis of visual restraint under authorized cosmopolitanism. This coding will note the presence/absence of images and basic descriptions (subject matter, cropping or obfuscation if evident). While more interpretive, the visual analysis is integrated with textual coding to see, for example, if strong critical stances correlate with lack of face-identifiable images (suggesting caution).

- **Omissions/Silences:** This is a qualitative note (yes/no and comment) rather than a strict category, capturing if something *conspicuous by absence* is noted. Coders will flag if an article pointedly omits the name of a key figure, avoids specifying the “agent of constraint” (e.g. failing to name the security service that carried out a raid), or ignores a known counter-narrative. These omissions can be just as revealing as what is said, often indicating the boundaries of permissible discourse. While hard to quantify, tracking silences across articles (through coder memos) will support the analysis of how legibility of dissent is curtailed.
- **Agent of Constraint:** When an article describes repression or criticism, this category records *who is depicted as enforcing the constraint* on expression. Possible codes include state security/police, judiciary or regulators, para-state actors (vigilantes, media censors not officially government), community/familial pressure, religious authorities, employers/professional bodies, or platform moderation (for digital content), as well as *unknown* if the text stays vague. Identifying the agent of constraint matters for understanding narrative blame and risk. For example, if a piece discussing an underground art event says it was “shut down due to public morality concerns” – does it specify it was police action (state) or just “neighbours complained” (community)? This reflects whether the English media openly attributes censorship to the state or deflects it. Consistent with the study’s focus, this code shines light on *how openly the English press calls out the censor* – a barometer of how far authorized cosmopolitanism will go in acknowledging authoritarian control.
- **Locale and Audience Cues:** Finally, ancillary codes log the *geographical locus* of the story (e.g. Cairo/urban vs. other regions or diaspora) and any *audience-directed cues* signaling an international or elite readership. For instance, an article may include background explanations of local terms (catering to foreigners) or use English idioms that signal a cosmopolitan tone. These aspects help situate the discourse: the English-language press often acts as a mediator to outsiders, and noting these cues can contextualize the framing choices. While not the core analytic categories, they provide texture on whether the outlet is writing *for* a transnational audience (which might encourage more liberal presentation) or firmly within local parameters.

Each of these categories is defined in the codebook with coding rules and examples to ensure consistency. **Table 1 (Appendix)** compiles the categories and their code values in a compact form for reference. During the pilot, the researcher will code a subset of articles and refine category definitions as needed (e.g. if distinctions between “supportive” vs “neutral” stance are unclear, or if new frame types emerge inductively). The codebook’s design is *scaffolded* to test the project’s core claims: namely, that Egypt’s English media employ specific linguistic and visual techniques (stance moderation, framing shifts, euphemism, source filtering, and imagery choices) to negotiate the visibility of dissent. It also facilitates a simple quantitative composite: for the three historical flashpoints where English coverage can be directly compared to Arabic coverage, a **Reframing Index (RI)** will be calculated. The RI assigns one point for each dimension where the English report diverges from its Arabic counterpart in a more liberal or open direction (differing stance, different dominant frame, significantly different lexicon tone, or different first quoted source). An RI score from 0 to 4 thus gauges the degree of “reframing” between languages. Although coarse, this metric provides a bird’s-eye indication of how much the English-language press sanitises or repackages stories relative to the vernacular press – a quantitative proxy for the authorized cosmopolitanism effect. The detailed coding and the RI results will be presented in the full study, but this pilot aims to ensure the codebook can reliably capture the needed information. Any revisions to categories (for example, adding a new frame category or adjusting how voice-order is noted) will be logged and justified in an updated codebook (v1.0) before moving to the main study.

## 4. Reliability & Reflexivity

Because this project combines systematic coding with critical interpretation, it is vital to implement checks for reliability as well as researcher reflexivity. The codebook will undergo a pilot reliability test using the initial sample of texts. The author will first train themselves (and any collaborator assisting with coding) on the definitions by coding 2–3 practice articles and discussing any ambiguities. After refining the instructions, a formal pilot coding of approximately 12 to 15 articles will be conducted. The results of this pilot will be used to calculate intercoder (or intracoder) agreement on key categorical variables like *stance* and *frame*. Given that the author is the primary coder, an intra-coder reliability check is planned: the same articles will be recoded by the author after a gap of about 8 weeks, to measure consistency over time. Statistical agreement will be assessed using Cohen’s  $\kappa$  or Krippendorff’s  $\alpha$  as appropriate for each nominal variable. Following conventional guidelines, a *kappa* of around 0.80 or above is desirable, and 0.70 is an acceptable threshold for exploratory work. [Lombard et al. \(2002\)](#) note that  $\kappa \approx 0.70$  may suffice in early-stage research, provided the coding scheme is still being refined. If any category shows lower agreement, its definition will be revisited, or it may be collapsed with another category to improve reliability. Additionally, an independent *double-coding* will be pursued on a subset of articles if feasible: for example, a native Arabic-speaking collaborator might co-code ~10% of the English items (and all of the Arabic comparison items) to provide an external reliability check. All reliability results and any codebook modifications will be transparently reported in the final methods section.

Beyond numeric reliability, the design incorporates reflexive practices to account for researcher bias and positioning. The author will maintain a *coding journal* throughout pilot and full coding, noting their reactions,

assumptions, and uncertainties while coding each piece. This reflexive log helps to “turn the lens” onto the researcher’s own influence. For instance, as a non-Egyptian but Arabic-reading researcher, the author must be conscious of any outsider biases in interpreting local cultural references. Berger (2015) describes reflexivity as acknowledging one’s positionality and its potential impact on data interpretation – in practical terms, the author will routinely ask themselves how their background (e.g. Western academic training, activist sympathies) might colour the coding of, say, an article’s tone, and will consult with regional experts or their supervisor if needed to validate interpretations. Co-coding with a native Arabic speaker on the bilingual samples is another built-in reflexive step: discrepancies in how each person codes a segment can reveal cultural nuances that one coder might miss. Regular debriefings will be held to discuss such cases, thereby sharpening the codebook and mitigating subjective blind spots. Reflexivity also extends to being aware of power dynamics in source material – for example, critically reflecting on whether sympathy for marginalised voices might lead to over-identifying supportive tone. By explicitly engaging with these issues, the study strives for what qualitative methodologists call *confirmability* and *dependability* in addition to intercoder reliability. In summary, this section underscores that the methodology is not only systematic but also self-critical: it employs standard reliability metrics to ensure coding consistency and embraces reflexive scrutiny to ensure the researcher’s perspective does not go unchecked. This dual approach strengthens the credibility of the findings and aligns with best practices in discourse-analytic research, where complete objectivity is elusive but must be approached through transparency and self-awareness.

## 5. Open Science & Ethics Safeguards

This pilot design is conceived with a strong commitment to open science principles and to ethical research conduct, recognizing the sensitivity of the topic (media narratives under authoritarianism) and the need for transparency. Several concrete measures are in place to uphold these values:

**Pre-registration:** Prior to executing the full analysis, the author will pre-register the study’s design and hypotheses on OSF. This means that the key research questions, the codebook (after piloting), the planned comparisons (including the Reframing Index), and the intended sample will be publicly recorded in advance. *Preregistration of studies facilitates discovery and guards against selective reporting by timestamping the analytic plan in a public registry.* By doing so, the researcher aligns with emerging norms in the social sciences that emphasize reproducibility and credibility. Any deviations from the pre-registered plan (for example, if new categories are added during analysis) will be documented in updates, ensuring transparency about the research process.

**Data Archiving and Sharing:** All corpus materials and coding outcomes will be systematically archived. Every news article (webpage or PDF) used in the corpus will be saved with a permanent identifier – for instance, by generating PDF snapshots and obtaining persistent web archive links (such as Wayback Machine URLs). Filenames and checksums (SHA-256 hashes) will be stored to verify data integrity. Upon study completion, a de-identified dataset will be prepared: a CSV file listing each article’s metadata (source, date, etc.) and the coded values for each category, without any sensitive personal data. This dataset, along with the final codebook and an

explanatory Methods Appendix (including the sampling log and any English–Arabic comparator tables), will be uploaded to a public repository (e.g. Zenodo or an institutional archive) and assigned a DOI. The intention is that other researchers could reuse these materials – an approach in line with the project’s replication-minded ethos. Where full text cannot be openly shared due to copyright, the author will provide detailed bibliographic references and encourage interested readers to access the content via libraries or the archive links. Thus, the study’s evidence base is preserved and accessible, enhancing its reliability and allowing for potential future re-analysis.

**Ethical Safeguards:** Working with media content about marginalized identities and dissent in a repressive context raises specific ethical considerations. Firstly, although the primary data are *publicly published texts and images* (newspaper articles, published photos), the researcher will exercise care in how these are used and presented. In line with visual research ethics guidelines, issues of consent, privacy, and harm minimization will be weighed when including any imagery. For example, if an article’s photo inadvertently identifies a private individual (say, an attendee at a protest), the author may refrain from reproducing that image in presentations or will obscure faces, even if the newspaper did not – out of an abundance of caution to “do no harm.” The International Visual Sociology Association’s code and similar frameworks emphasize respecting dignity and privacy even when dealing with publicly available images. This project will adhere to those principles by favouring “crowd-distant” or non-identifying visuals whenever possible (e.g. using long-shots or symbolic images in any research outputs). All personal names of private individuals mentioned in articles (if any) will be anonymised in the analysis, unless they are already famous public figures.

Secondly, the study addresses potentially sensitive topics (e.g. LGBTQ+ issues, underground art) in an authoritarian setting. While the data is textual and historical, the researcher remains vigilant about security and legal safety. All research communications with collaborators (such as the Cairo-based co-coder) will use secure, encrypted channels, and data will be stored in encrypted form to prevent any unauthorized access. Although no live human subjects are involved, the researcher has an ethical duty to avoid inadvertently causing trouble for people on the ground. This means that if in the course of research some materials seem too sensitive to archive openly, they might be archived in a mediated-access way (available on request rather than fully public). The project has been designed to rely on *public domain sources*, thus minimizing direct ethical risks; nonetheless, the researcher will seek IRB/exemption as required and follow all institutional ethics guidelines. If any interviews or personal communications were to be added later (outside the current scope), those would of course require informed consent and careful risk assessment – but at this stage the focus is on media texts.

Finally, an important aspect of open science is open discussion of challenges. The author will document any obstacles or decisions (for instance, if certain archive material couldn’t be obtained and how that might bias the sample) in the Methods Appendix. By foregrounding both the strengths and limitations of the design, the study aims to uphold an *open research culture* where transparency and honesty in methodology are paramount. Overall, this pilot methods note itself is an embodiment of that philosophy – sharing the design publicly to invite scrutiny and suggestions. In tandem with the technical safeguards (pre-registration, archiving) and ethical



guardrails (visual privacy, secure handling), it ensures the research will be conducted with integrity and respect for the communities it touches.

## 6. Final Disclaimer

**Disclaimer:** This pilot methods design is provisional and will be adapted in consultation with academic supervisors. It represents a *working scaffold* for discussion purposes. The scope, codebook categories, and procedures described above may be refined as the project evolves to incorporate expert feedback and practical considerations. The author welcomes collegial input on this Version 0.9 plan and underscores that flexibility remains to adjust the approach for optimal rigour and relevance. This document should thus be read as a draft blueprint, subject to future modifications before it is finalized in a pre-registration and subsequent dissertation work.

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## Appendix: Draft Codebook (v0.9): Key Categories and Codes

Category	Coding Values / Description
<b>Stance</b>	<i>Supportive, Neutral, Cautionary, Hostile</i> – Overall tone or attitude of the piece towards the subject (e.g. approving vs. condemning).
<b>Dominant Frame</b>	<i>Rights, Morality/Tradition, Security/Order, Culture/Everyday, Modernization/Image, Health/Protection</i> – Primary narrative frame used to contextualize the issue.
<b>Lexicon</b>	Notable language: use of <i>Explicit</i> terms vs. <i>Euphemism</i> (coded if sensitive topics are directly named or alluded to); presence of <i>Pejorative</i> labels; key <i>Metaphors</i> shaping portrayal.
<b>Voice &amp; Ordering</b>	Identity of <i>First Quoted</i> source and <i>Last Quoted</i> source: e.g. Government, Expert, NGO/Activist, Participant, Religious figure, Anonymous public. Indicates whose voice leads and concludes the piece (source hierarchy).
<b>Visual Treatment</b>	Type of imagery (if any): <i>Symbolic/Distant</i> vs. <i>Identifiable/Personalised</i> portrayal; <i>Stock image</i> vs. <i>Documentary photo</i> from the event. Captures the visual framing and degree of direct representation.
<b>Omissions/Silences</b>	Binary/qualitative note: Flags if expected information is <i>omitted</i> (e.g. key names, attributions, or dissenting viewpoints not mentioned). Provides context on potential self-censorship.
<b>Agent of Constraint</b>	Entity portrayed as restricting or policing the expression: <i>State Security/Police, Judiciary/Regulator, Para-state actors, Community/Familial, Religious Authority, Employer/Profession, Platform moderation</i> , or <i>Not stated</i> .
<b>Locale</b>	Geographical focus of the story: <i>Cairo/Urban, Alexandria, Other governorates (Delta/Upper Egypt/Sinai), National (unspecified)</i> , or <i>Diaspora</i> .
<b>Audience Address</b>	Presence of cues to an international or elite audience (e.g. explanatory parentheses for local terms, English idioms, assumptions of non-local reader knowledge).