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**Big Tech, Media Convergence, and U.S. Foreign
Policy Shaping Global Narratives in the Post-9/11
Era:
The Case of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria**

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Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in
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Declaration of Authorship

I, Hadji Mohammed EL-Amin, hereby solemnly declare that the work I'm going to present in this dissertation entitled:

Big Tech, Media Convergence, and U.S. Foreign Policy Shaping Global Narratives in the Post-9/11 Era: The Case of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria.

The case of Literature and Civilisation Master Dissertations at M'sila University is my work. It has not been submitted before to any other institution or university and all sources I have used and quoted from have been indicated by means of complete references.

Signature

DEDICATION

I dedicate this modest work to my beloved parents, whose unwavering support, love, and encouragement have been the foundation of my academic journey. Their sacrifices, wisdom, and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today, and I am eternally grateful.

I also extend this dedication to all the members of my family, whose belief in me has been a constant source of motivation. Their encouragement and kindness have given me strength during moments of doubt.

To my colleagues and classmates, I dedicate this work as well. The shared experiences, discussions and collaboration have enriched my academic path, making this journey not only a pursuit of knowledge and a valuable and unforgettable chapter of my life.

This work is a reflection of the collective support, inspiration, and determination that have carried me through, and I am honoured to share this achievement with all of you.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the convergence of Big Tech, traditional media, and U.S. foreign policy in shaping global narratives, with a focus on the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Syria (2010–2012). This study examines how these influential actors collaborate, both explicitly and implicitly, to construct and disseminate narratives that align with U.S. geopolitical interests. Through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, supported by Herman and Chomsky’s “Manufacturing Consent” model, this thesis deconstructs media texts and official U.S. statements to reveal linguistic strategies and structural filters that reinforce ideological assumptions. The analysis of four New York Times articles and the rhetoric of U.S. officials demonstrates stark differences in the narrative framing of Egypt and Syria, reflecting broader strategic agendas. This study argues that Big Tech’s algorithmic amplification and media editorial authority, when aligned with U.S. foreign policy, form a unified apparatus of soft power capable of influencing international perception. This dissertation advocates for new governance frameworks that address the ethical and political challenges posed by this convergence, emphasising the need to protect democratic discourse and media independence in an increasingly digital geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: Big Tech, Traditional Media, U.S. Foreign Policy, Arab Spring, Global Narratives.

Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term / Meaning
Big Tech	Large U.S.-based multinational technology companies (e.g., Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, Microsoft)
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
E-commerce	electronic commerce
eDiplomacy	electronic diplomacy
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
LSE	London School of Economics
MSNBC	Microsoft and the National Broadcasting Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
PRISM	NSA surveillance program revealed by Edward Snowden
Terro	terrorism
U.S.	United States
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America
Web	World Wide Web
WW1	World War I
WW2	World War II

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General Introduction

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“Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate. These ideas are by no means shared by the people who inhabit that empire, but that hasn’t prevented the U.S. propaganda and policy apparatus from imposing its imperial perspective on Americans, whose sources of information about Arabs and Islam are woefully inadequate.”

— Edward W. Said, "Blind Imperial Arrogance," *Los Angeles Times*.

Background of the Study

Definitely, the intersection between. Media, Big Tech and state power constitute one of the most influential and consequential forces that shape global discourse. More specifically, this intersection transcends beyond a mere information distribution. it fundamentally determines how societies understand political events, shaping a reality that legitimises existing powers or challenges them.

From Johannes Gutenberg's revolutionary invention of the movable type printing press in the 15th century to today’s algorithm-driven ecosystems have fundamentally changed how we get our information, how we analyse that information, and how we deal with said information. The traditional media institutions, which have historically been grounded in professional standards of journalism and institutional accountability, have long served as the democratic “fourth estate”, acknowledging their influence on the state and their role in shaping democracy. Yet this role has proven to be complex, in which journalistic independence is being contested by how journalism often intersects with or even yields to the state and governmental interests.

The emergence of large U.S based multinational technology companies, which are being referred to as “Big Tech”, such as Amazon, Microsoft, Meta, Apple and Google, has disrupted this established order, with these platforms democratising access and contribution to information dissemination and creation while at the same time introducing unprecedented forms

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of data surveillance, narrative control, and algorithmic manipulation which operated largely beyond what the traditional framework of regulations allowed.

Literature Review

The convergence of Big Tech, media discourse, and U.S. foreign policy in the post-9/11 era constitutes one of the most influential and consequential forces in constructing global narratives that actively shape international perceptions and political legitimacy discourse with this convergence being more visible during political upheavals and uncertainty, such as the Arab spring in Egypt and Syria which exist as a case study in this dissertation because of how Traditional Media and Big Tech (digital platforms) not working only as an outlets or tools that reports the events unfolding during that time, but also participating in defining what is acceptable and what is not by legitimating certain actors and delegitimising others thereby actively defining the events meaning and their acceptable boundaries.

Lisa Anderson, in “Demystifying the Arab Spring”, challenges the Western assumptions of their framing of the Arab Spring as a spontaneous democratic awakening, except Tunisia since their protests initiated the Arab world unrest (Anderson 4), with her work providing a critical context in understanding how oversimplified narratives obscure the complexity of these events.

Others such as Levitsky and Way offer a theoretical foundation with their concept of “competitive authoritarianism,” which describes regimes that adopt democratic formalities while executing authoritarian governance through subtle forms and mechanisms of control acting as what Levitsky and Way describe as “non-democratic regimes” (13). This model fits the study of both Egypt and Syria and explains why U.S. foreign policy maintains practical alliances even with non-democratic regimes, as this study adds by integrating analyses of New York articles concerning Egypt and Syria coupled with quantitative and qualitative data from Tables 01 and 02.

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Journalistic and scholarly sources reveal how U.S. media and Big Tech together shape global political narratives that align with American foreign policy, with writers such as David D. Kirkpatrick (*Into the Hands of the Soldiers*) offering in time and on the ground narrative that describes the Egyptian uprising highlighting the contradiction between U.S. pro-democracy rhetoric and its support for authoritarian regimes that serves as protection measures for its allies such as Israel (19) all in while critiquing Washington inability and failure to understand the complexities surrounding the region.

The role of Big Tech in amplifying and shaping protest narratives emerges as a central theme in several studies including Wolfsfeld, Segev, and Sheaffer's (2013) study challenges the generalising popular belief that social media by itself caused the Arab spring, arguing instead that political structures and grievances laid the foundation for protests showing that the higher the level of political grievances, the higher the level of protest (124). This conclusion offers a more nuanced understanding of digital mobilisation, especially in comparing Egypt's success in inspiring protest through online tools to Syria's limited digital influence under harsher repression. This complements the work of Aday Sean (*New Media and Conflict After the Arab Spring*), in which he argues that new media which used bit.ly linkages did not appear to have a significant role in the country's collective actions and that it's difficult to separate new media (Big Tech) from traditional media as they both reinforced each other (21). In which this study will continue on this line establishing the connection between media and big tech.

To speculate about the broader geopolitical implications of Big Tech (digital platforms) monopolies, Dal Yong Jin introduces the concept of "platform imperialism" in his book "Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture", arguing that U.S.-based tech firms project American ideological and economic interests globally through control over digital infrastructures reinforcing those dominant narrative following the interests of those in power (Jin 6). Similarly, Tanner Mirrlees's book "Hearts and Mines" critiques how U.S. media

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industries function as instruments of soft power that reinforce the ideological legitimacy of American foreign policy and the spread of its democratic and capitalist values (36). Both of these works support the central argument of this study, which is that Big Tech and traditional media do not operate independently but they converge and reinforce each other's agendas in ways that simultaneously align with the U.S. global strategic interests.

Together, these literary works and studies provide a general framework on how these individual parts operate, with extensive research on the individual components of this relationship, significant gaps emerge such as understanding the collective coordinated mechanisms between Big Tech, traditional media and the U.S. foreign policy apparatus with the most existing literature treating it as separate phenomena rather than systematic convergence. Additionally, most existing research has limited empirical analyses of sourcing patterns and overall embedded language across different news outlets.

This study addresses these gaps by providing quantitative analysis of sourcing bias in major media coverage and systematic documentation of revolving door (back door channels) relationships between government, media, and technology sectors coupled with the analysis of New York Times coverage of the Arab spring in both Egypt and Syria with extensive analyses on how they differ based on their framing. Additionally, through comprehensive mapping of personnel transitions from governmental positions to critical occupations in the private sector, this research demonstrates the measurable mechanisms through which narrative convergence and coordination operate, filling a critical void in understanding how contemporary propaganda systems function in the digital age.

Statement of the problem

Historically speaking, the U.S. foreign policy has been closely linked with Media and later on with Big Tech. Nonetheless, the enigmatic nature of this relationship left the experts and scholars perplexed over the state of convergence between both. In this regard, this dissertation examines these complex and evolving forms of relationship between traditional media, Big

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Tech, and the USA foreign policy apparatus through tracing their historical and theoretical development to better understand their collective and individual role in shaping global narratives in the post 9/11 Era.

In order to see this more clearly, This study focuses on the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Syria (2010–2012) as points of reference by analysing how these actors collaborated both explicitly and implicitly to construct USA narratives and expand its geopolitical objectives, with the Arab spring providing a critical case study to highlight the interplay between the media editorial authority, Big Tech algorithmic amplification and their large data centres, and USA foreign policy strategic communication to analyse their intersection as unified system of power that shapes international discourse in ways that serves a very specific geopolitical objectives.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives set thus far, this research tries to answer the following questions:

- How do U.S. Foreign Policy employ media and Big Tech in constructing and shaping the post-9/11 Era narratives with regard to the narratives of the Arab Spring narratives in Egypt and Syria? And how do these constructed narratives reflect power dynamics and propaganda mechanisms that serve U.S. geopolitical interests?

On the other hand, the study seeks to respond critically to the following sub-questions:

- How do the narrative constructions for Egypt and Syria differ discursively in their framing and impact?
- What do these differences reveal about the strategic alignment of media, technology, and U.S. foreign policy objectives?

Methodology Rationale

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Herman and Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent framework to examine how linguistic strategies, structural filters, and institutional mechanisms shape public perceptions. This theoretical approach reveals how seemingly objective reporting and neutral algorithmic curation embed specific power relations

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and ideological assumptions that serve US and elite interests while legitimising certain actors and delegitimising others with alternative perspectives.

Significance of the study

Throughout history, scholars and researchers have long been perplexed by the enigmatic and multifaceted relationship between U.S. Foreign Policy, traditional media and Big Tech, particularly in how this convergence manifests, what constitutes this relationships operational framework as well as the nature of power dynamics that govern it, creating a critical gap in which this dissertation addresses by systematically examining how these actors converge to construct narratives that serves the U.S. strategic geopolitical interest with the post 9/11 era as a focal point and the Arab spring uprising in Egypt and Syria (2010–2012) as a case study.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how traditional media and Big Tech collaborated historically with the U.S. Foreign Policy apparatus serving as soft power tools in order to shape international discourse that serves the U.S. strategic interests, especially in the post-9/11 Era with a focus on the Arab spring in Egypt and Syria adding theoretical analyses employing both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Herman and Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent framework uncovering the linguistic strategic, ideological functions both apparent and embedded, structural filters, and institutional mechanisms that embed ideological assumptions and power relations in seemingly neutral reporting with this analyses highlighting how these tools and mechanisms legitimise certain actors while delegitimising others with alternative perspectives that are deemed a threat to the U.S. international aspirations and objectives thereby reinforcing said objectives, with the case study of the Arab spring in both Egypt and Syria providing a critical lens to examine how their divergent narratives were constructed highlighting the strategic alignment of both Big Tech and media with U.S. foreign policy interests, furthermore, this study contributes to academic and policy discussions by highlighting

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the need for governance frameworks that ensure algorithmic transparency, source accountability, and media independence from state influence.

By demonstrating the impact of narrative control on democratic discourse and geopolitical stability, this research highlights the urgency of balancing corporate autonomy with democratic values and public safety and self-governance, with these findings being particularly relevant for policymakers, journalists and technologists seeking to address both the physical and ethical implication of media and Big Tech convergence with U.S. Foreign Policy apparatus in shaping global narratives and power dynamics.

The study's objectives

This dissertation seeks to address the need for governance frameworks that ensure algorithmic transparency, source accountability, and media independence from state influence, which requires a critical demonstration of the impact of narrative control on democratic discourse and geopolitical stability, while exploring the role of media and technology in society to find the required balance between democratic values, corporate autonomy, and public protection.

Dissertation structure

Chapter 01 establishes the historical and theoretical foundation necessary to understand this intersection, tracing the evolution of traditional media from the printing press to international media conglomerates and the rise of Big Tech as a transformative force in information governance, by examining their roles in shaping global narrative in alignment with the USA foreign policy objectives particularly in the post 9/11 with the Arab spring in Egypt and Syria as a case study for this intersection and convergence.

While Chapter Two adapts a qualitative discourse analysis methodology, applying both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and manufacturing consent to examine how narratives are constructed by analysing specific texts, which include four articles from The New York Times, two about Egypt and two about Syria. Incorporating the statements of U.S. officials, such as

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those from President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Senator John McCain, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, reveals how linguistic framing and institutional filters construct divergent narratives for both Egypt and Syria.

This analysis was supported by quantitative and qualitative data, including two key tables: Table 1, sourced from Mysore (2019), which quantifies sourcing biases in Syrian coverage. The table demonstrates a 3:1 reliance on official sources over non-official voices and an 8:1 emphasis on militaristic solutions over diplomatic alternatives, reinforcing the propaganda model of sourcing.

While Table 2, which was compiled by the author, reveals the “revolving door” mechanism by showing how former high government officials in the USA transition to getting roles in the private sector (Big Tech and classical media) such as Amazon, MSNBC, CNN, creates informal back door channels that ensures all forms of mass media communication aligns with the USA foreign policy objectives. The study’s small sample of 10 sources, 4 of which are from a single outlet (The New York Times), limits the study’s generalisability. Also, the quantitative data’s broad scope of applicability (Mysore) may lead to misrepresentation of information, as these statistics cannot be definitively applied to Egypt since they focus on Syria.

These tables provide empirical and structural evidence of how both Big Tech and media serve as soft power tools for the USA government and what are the ways that have allowed both of them to be so instrumental in shaping global discourse.

Chapter I:

Big Tech, Traditional (Classical) Media, and U.S. Foreign Policy Historical and Theoretical Backgrounds

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Introduction:

This chapter examines the intricate relationships between Big Tech, traditional media, and U.S. foreign policy, tracing their historical progression and the underlying theoretical principles that govern these interactions.

The rise of mass communications, from Gutenberg's invention of the movable printing press to the digital platforms that govern our way of life in the 21st century, has fundamentally changed how public discourses and geopolitical narratives are constructed. Traditional media, which has long been rooted in professional journalistic standards and institutional accountability, has abandoned its roots of serving as a tool for democratic oversight to construct narratives driven by elite interests and advance the USA's foreign policy objectives.

The emergence of Big Tech, characterised by its massive data centres and algorithmic governance, has introduced new mechanisms for narrative control that can be used to shape public narrative and construct favourable narratives. These mechanisms have enabled this unprecedented data-driven influence, which raises concerns about misinformation, echo chambers and narrative control.

This chapter, through historical analyses with a focus on the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria, examines how media and technological platforms, tracing back from Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the press to contemporary algorithmic systems, reshape information dissemination and reciprocally influence foreign policy from alignment and implementation to curation of said foreign policy. The theoretical framework for this analysis integrates Critical Discourse Analysis with Herman and Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent model, providing analytical tools to examine how CDA linguistic strategies and the model's structural filters operate within media ecosystems, constructing and shaping narratives that legitimise certain actors and deligitimise others in ways that serve the U.S. foreign policy interests.

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Through historical progression analysis and case studies (Egypt and Syria), this chapter sets the stage for understanding the evolving relationship between state power, media institutions throughout history, ending with the inclusion of digital platforms in the post-9/11 era.

Section 1: Traditional (Classical) Media, Big Tech, and U.S. Foreign Policy Historical and Theoretical Background:

1.1. Historical evolution of the media concept:

Defining Traditional (Classical) Media:

Traditional media can be defined in multiple ways concerning the historical progression of media, as Mathiyazhagan et al. state that traditional media are “those media which attempt to communicate a message to a particular group of target audiences in a given time in local dialect with entertainment” (159). Alternatively, Apuke describes it as “those media that communicate uniform messages in a one-way process to a large mass audience, which are assumed to be homogeneous (all possessing much the same characteristics and interest)” (85).

Throughout history, the media have been regarded as one of the most transformative tools for educating, disseminating, and shaping narratives throughout cities, regions, and countries. Its story started in the mid-15th century with Johannes Gutenberg’s revolutionary invention of the movable type printing press, an innovation that dramatically expanded the dissemination of knowledge and ideas across Europe (Eisenstein 521–22). This started the most significant intellectual and cultural transformative changes in Europe and, eventually, the world, marking the beginning of new mass communication forms.

This invention laid the groundwork for the Enlightenment period, which started in the late 17th century and thrived during the 18th century, transforming Europe and laying the groundwork for creating new mass media tools (Shulman 26).

As printing technology started to advance, the creation of new printed materials such as pamphlets, newspapers, and books had increased access to written knowledge, which was made

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possible by how the printing press machine made it easier and cheaper to produce these materials since books and other written materials before had to be written and copied through hand. Copying, which was labour-intensive and required a very long time and energy to copy and produce, led to rarity and expense, which most people in that era couldn't afford. The spread of these materials during the Renaissance and Enlightenment created an environment where literacy and debate thrived, leading to unprecedented prosperity and scientific breakthroughs (Shulman 1).

Renowned scholars such as Andrew Pettegree highlight the pivotal role of the printing press in shaping the public sphere, with this revolutionary technology facilitating a swift exchange of ideas and significantly contributing to the development of modern intellectual life as he was quoted saying "In this triumphant praise of the periodical press we see strong echoes of the salutations that accompanied the birth of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, and intermittently ever since. Print was widely celebrated by scholars and printers, themselves heavily involved in the new industry, for its trans-formative role in society." (363).

By the 18th and 19th centuries, newspapers and media had become central tools in democratic societies, creating a foundation for public discourse. This led to the emergence of the "fourth estate," a concept that recognised media as an unofficial check on government power and overreach, which allowed the media to be an information provider and an unofficial institution that held the government accountable ("Fourth Estate").

In the 20th century, media went through an "evolution phase" in which technological breakthroughs that resulted from both industrialisation and capitalism have resulted in forms of media that has never been achieved, which is *sensory media*¹ and *sensory communication*²,

¹ Sensory media: refers to platforms that engage multiple senses, such as sight, sound, and touch, to create immersive marketing experiences (Krishna 333).

² Sensory communication: involves transmitting messages through sensory stimuli, like visual or olfactory (smell) cues, to evoke an emotional response (Krishna 334).

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something that was realized by the creation of radio and television, these tools have As analysed by (Williams 88–89) and expanded upon by (Thompson 208), created an altered spatiotemporal relationship in communication and allowed for transcontinental communication between people that enabled more news dissemination between people at a breakneck pace with a very vast bandwidth of information that created almost similar experiences for many people around the world creating what Thompson consider “non-reciprocal intimacy”(208), these powerful capabilities has allowed for consequential and critical foreign policy and government narratives to be sent and received across the globe “in-real time.”

These media outlets and institutions have witnessed organizational structuring, which is characterized by hierarchical editorial control and centralized production, streamlining the process and improving efficiency, but these structures had facilitated what (Lippmann 248) identified as " the manufacture of consent "the capacity to construct coherent persuasive narratives, later termed "manufacturing consent" by (Herman and Chomsky 31) which is the capacity to build narratives from complex realities that shape the public understanding of foreign affairs, this function has amplified the USA geopolitical influence on the global scene especially in times of great tension worldwide(ww1,ww2, cold war...), thereby showing what these so-called Traditional (Classical) Media by modern standards had on geopolitical tensions and aspiration, wherein this institutions have become very crucial for projecting and shaping these political, ideological and geopolitical narratives globally.

By the end of the 20th century, these outlets had drastically transformed into transnational conglomerates with global reach and scope, predominantly operating under the jurisdiction of one state (the USA). This consolidation, as (Bagdikian 3) and (McChesney, Rich Media 86) noted, has brought about powerful corporations such as News Corporation, Time Warner, Disney, and Bertelsmann which in turn established international distribution networks and

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maintained institutional relationships with state power centers, especially in foreign policy, while also managing to evade domestic regulatory bodies.

The normative foundations of traditional media are based upon several concepts that are interconnected, that separate and distinguish it from emerging technological platforms, including: (01) Professional Journalistic standards concerning fact-accuracy checking, source verification, and editorial responsibility (Porlezza), (02) Institutional accountability in corrections, ombudspersons³, and professional review boards (Mutu et al. 3–4), and (03) recognised fourth estate functions providing democratic oversight over government (Carroll 533–34).

These normative underpinnings, while not always fully realised in reality, define specific criteria that set the traditional media apart from the subsequent technology platforms.

1.2. Circumstances of the emergence of Big Tech:

Defining Big Tech:

In and after WW2, there was a technological race between different countries, from the Allies and Axis to the US and USSR (Cold War), thereby leading to many technological breakthroughs, including the transistor, which was one of the most profound and consequential scientific breakthroughs in human society, this led to the creation of computers and subsequently the internet, creating the incubator for technological companies to appear by late 20th century. before this, the tech space was monopolised by two companies (IBM, Microsoft) (Evans), but after the dot-com bubble wiped out most of the Nasdaq Composite stock market index, the surviving tech companies and startups expanded their market share and influence, becoming more dominant in their spaces, thus Giving rise to terms like "*Tech Titans*", "*goldilocks*" (Petit 30) (after the 2008 financial crisis) until 2013 in which the term "Big Tech"

³ Ombudspersons: someone who works for a government or large organisation and deals with the complaints made against it

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started gaining traction mirroring common terms such as “Big pharma and Big oil” with its creation being caused by the lack of regulation and the concentration of large amounts of data, leading to these companies' concentrated market power. Still, the term “Big Tech” conceptual category requires meticulous academic articulation to enhance analytical clarity when exploring the interplay between traditional media, foreign policy, and Big Tech.

Big Tech refers to US-based multinational corporations like Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet/Google, and Facebook/Meta, competing as oligopolies across diverse market segments with global digital influence (Birch and Bronson 2; Petit 30). From communication to content creation to software applications and hardware gadgets, these entities have unique characteristics ranging from Business models centered around platforms that promote multilateral interactions instead of one-way content dissemination to unparalleled scale and market consolidation within their specific sectors to create governance of information distribution through algorithms capabilities for data extraction that allow for advanced user profiling and prediction of behaviors and a worldwide operational presence that surpasses conventional regulatory boundaries.

The emergence of these technological corporations has 03 historical developmental phases. The so-called initial infrastructure phase (approximately 1990-2000), which is categorised by establishing foundational technologies like web browsing, search engines, and internet protocols, enabling platform development. All of this allowed this era to witness the creation of early internet companies like Amazon, Yahoo, and Netscape, which established viable commercial models for digital platforms, subsequently pushing for more market consolidation (Srnicek 126–28).

The second phase, which is called the platform consolidation phase (approximately 2000-2010), witnessed the rise of dominant technological corporations that established hegemonic and monopolistic positions within specific domains with examples such as Google's search

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algorithm superiority which enabled its rapid expansion into adjacent markets, including digital advertising, email, and mapping services (Vise 90–102). Facebook, later rebranded as Meta, effectively utilised network effects to achieve unprecedented leadership in social media services following the acquisition of potential rivals like Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014. Others, such as Apple with their seamless integration of hardware and software ecosystems, cultivated exceptional user retention. As Steve Jobs explained, “Apple's the only company that has everything under one roof. There's no other company that could make a MacBook Air and the reason is that not only do we control the hardware, but we control the operating system. And it is the intimate interaction between the operating system and the hardware that allows us to do”. (qtd. In Lashinsky 57–58), while Amazon capitalised on its e-commerce supremacy to diversify into cloud computing, entertainment, and logistics services (Stone 6–7).

The third phase, the platform integration phase (post-2010), witnessed a vast intersection between previously separate technology sectors as big corporations stretched their reach across various service categories to establish integrated digital ecosystems (Srnicek 83–85). This era has also witnessed a significant international expansion, with technology platforms gaining a foothold globally, especially in developing areas marked by rapidly increasing internet access. Simultaneously, these companies have enhanced their data analytics capabilities, allowing for advanced user profiling, behavioural forecasting, and targeted content delivery throughout their growing range of services (Zuboff, *Age of Surveillance* 95). As Big Tech corporations grow more significant and prominent, their ability to govern and deal with information on a large scale, from opaque⁴ (closed-source) Algorithms to real-time data analytics (Srnicek 104–12), enables new forms of public debate.

These tools that enable users to personalise their experience consequently create echo chambers and amplify misinformation (Twitter), which affects public opinion by shaping ideas

⁴ Opaque: preventing light from travelling through, and therefore not transparent or translucent.

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and increases the risk of rampant misinformation. All of this led to a response from policymakers and scholars advocating for transparency. In contrast, other policymakers (decision-makers) used these tools to express, expand, and shape US foreign policy globally, especially after 9-11, with one of the best examples being the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria.

1.3. Foreign Policy from an American Perspective:

Defining U.S. Foreign Policy:

Foreign policy comprises "the general objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states... influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. ("Foreign Policy," Encyclopædia Britannica). US foreign policy pursuit of national interests through diplomatic practices and institutional mechanisms can be defined as "the goals that a state's officials seek to attain abroad, the values that give rise to those objectives, and the means or instruments used to pursue them" (Wittkopf et al, 17). Managing its relations with international government bodies and expanding its influence and prestige. Those definitions highlight some crucial key points, such as what constitutes a foreign policy of the US that can be recognised as national interests, what those national interests are, and what the best ways to realise those interests are. These definitions require more analysis, especially examining the relationship between media institutions and Big Tech platforms. Also, the difference between foreign and domestic policy should be noted, as domestic policy sets strategies to achieve the internal national interest. These practices can be different, but can also be intertwined. So, for example, when discussing educational strategy aimed at increasing the number of Hispanic Americans who attend and graduate from a college or university in the United States, one might refer to Latino politics as a domestic issue. (Camacho Liu) National Conference of State.

Nonetheless, as showcased in the initial debates preceding the 2016 election, issues surrounding Latino politics can swiftly transform into matters of foreign policy when discussing

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subjects like immigration and trade relations with nations in Central and South America (Barshefsky and Hill 8–9).

From a conceptual point of view, foreign policy represents how much authority the state will exert beyond its national borders. To achieve that, multiple mechanisms are employed, from coercion to diplomatic negotiations, economic sanctions and incentives to military deployment, intelligence gathering, and information dissemination.

Realist theoretical frameworks, as enunciated by Morgenthau (177) and developed by Waltz (170–73), place the pursuit of power and /or enhancement of security at the heart of the motivation for making foreign policy. From the liberal institutionalist perspective, an argument forwarded by Keohane and Nye (15), adequate cooperative arrangements, transnational non-state actors, and complex interdependence rank highly among the things that serve as critical intervening variables that affect policy formation. Constructivist theories, conceived by Wendt (24) and later revised by Finnemore and Sikkink (887–89), investigate how identities, norms, and shared meanings condition the direction and implementation of foreign policies.

The institutional architecture of U.S. foreign policy is defined by the formal governmental structures and informal influence networks under which U.S. foreign policy is formulated. These Informal structures as Parmar suggests embrace the think tanks, advocacy and business groups, expatriate communities, and mass media through which the policy decisions are made (215–18). Such a complex institutional matrix enables multifaceted roles for the traditional media and tech platforms to participate in the policy narrative implementation and appraisal processes (Entman 87–90).

The USA's foreign policy has undergone quite a transition, with four periods being identified from a historical point of view, concerning its relationship with media outlets.

Firstly, the early republic period was founded on principles, including unilateralism and hemispheric dominance, articulated in the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. Expansionism brought

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territorial acquisition and greater involvement on the international stage, culminating in the Spanish-American War of 1898, a period in which yellow journalism ⁵became a significant force in shaping public opinion (Campbell 2–3).

Secondly, the world power rising period (post-1898) had an increasing amount of global involvement with World War I, acting as a watershed moment when government propaganda agencies, like the Committee on Public Information which according to Vaughn was created on April 13, 1917 (6), have pioneered state-media collaboration promoting foreign policies (7). This interwar period of institutional experimentation paved the way for even more sophisticated systems during the Cold War.

Thirdly, the Cold War era, which lasted from 1947 to 1991, was essential for the relationship between media and foreign policy. During these years, new systems and practices were established that would have a lasting impact, like the National Security Act of 1947, which created essential bodies like the CIA and the National Security Council (NSC). These institutions developed advanced skills in handling information dissemination and working closely with the media, thereby creating what Rosati considers a “basis for the permanent expansion of foreign policy bureaucracy” (101). In 1948, the Smith-Mundt Act was introduced, allowing the government to broadcast internationally but not permitting those broadcasts within the United States. This showed the media's important role in foreign policy (Cull 40).

In 1953, the United States Information Agency was created to make spreading information a core part of its foreign policy. This agency collaborated closely with government bodies and private media companies to share American perspectives worldwide until its disbandment and integration into the U.S. Department of State in 1999 (“Records of the United States Information Agency (RG 306)”).

⁵ Yellow journalism: the use of lurid features and sensationalised news in newspaper publishing to attract readers and increase circulation.

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(Mandelbaum, 95) describes what can be called the "ideas industry," which falls under the reconfiguration of foreign policy priorities post-Cold War to emphasise democracy promotion, human rights advocacy, and economic liberalisation (Weber 100–1). This was an ideological framework alongside increasing media globalisation with the rise of satellite broadcasting technologies. One of these was CNN, an influential actor in international crisis coverage, which (Robinson) theorised the "CNN effect," suggesting that real-time global broadcasting may have the power to accelerate or completely reorder foreign-policy decision-making processes, particularly in matters related to humanitarian interventions. This was a period characterised by more refined strategies in public diplomacy, with these strategies increasingly diverging, over and beyond traditional media channels, to include emerging digital platforms through which foreign publics could be directly engaged without government intermediaries.

Fourthly, the post-9/11 era, the fundamental temporal backdrop of this study, saw radical changes in terms of foreign policy tilt, institutional arrangements, and its relationship with media and The Global War on Terror by adopting new security paradigms on preemption, intelligence, and information dominance (Steinberg et al.); thus, new requirements have been laid for mature strategies on media engagement. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq introduced embedded journalism programs that revised reporter-military relationships and produced new forms of dependencies in the coverage of conflict as Margotin argues that "the information embedded journalists had access to during the Iraq War was controlled and limited by the US military, and was particularly oriented toward the legitimization of the Conflict" (27). While at that time, new digital platforms were beginning to offer channels for information, some of which contested the official versions, others opened new avenues toward governmental communication and oppositional discourse (Kellner 134).

This period also saw according to Custer, an unprecedented institutional integration connecting intelligence agencies, military operations, and information dissemination functions

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("Reputational Security" 20), which, in this period, the USA's foreign policy institution increased, integrating communication strategies, combining elements like public diplomacy and information operations to manage narratives and gain strategic advantages (Custer et al., "Assessing U.S. Historical" 15–16).

These integrated approaches had to contend with legacy media institutions and emerging technology platforms, thus putting into play complicated collaborative (and sometimes contentious) relationships that this research explores more deeply.

The new foreign policy also lives with smart power (Nye) in which he says that "Smart power is neither hard nor soft. It is both" (xiii), it can then be understood that it is a combination of hard power (military and economics) and soft power (culture and information). These combine and mix to become hard (stiff) and soft attacks. Within this structural context, traditional media institutions and new technology platforms serve as crucial vectors of soft power projection, fostering complex interdependencies between state actors, corporate actors, and information distribution systems.

Complex theoretical schemas⁶ will be required to understand those inner workings, which this study will formulate in the following pages.

Section 2: Evolutionary Trajectories and Interconnections:

2.1. The Case of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria: A Historical Review of Media (Traditional) and Technology in U.S. Foreign Policy:

The Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt and Syria, can provide a compelling case study that encompasses the media's (traditional) role in shaping and disseminating narratives that align with the USA foreign policy narrative and how the relationship between the media institution and USA decision-making bodies has evolved throughout the history which has gone through

⁶ Schemas: a mental codification of experience that includes a particular organised way of perceiving cognitively and responding to a complex situation or set of stimuli.

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different particular phases from the early press till the media age ending with the digital age going through the Arab spring in which the media played a huge role in conveying and disseminating USA foreign policy to the targeted population effecting the outcome of certain events.

The early republic period (1776-1898) established the foundation for the state-media interrelation as the nation was in its beginnings and struggling to create and forge its identity. From how to develop state-federal government relations to the federal government authority and its characteristics, newspapers (traditional media) emerged as a tool and a platform to have these debates, which in effect pushed and, within the limit, created the type of government that will have that kind of foreign policy which was accomplished by informing the public and influencing opinion on pivotal issues like the ratification of the Constitution (Pasley 33–35).

As analysed by (Slotkin 40) and later elaborated by Stephanson, in which he says, "Jingoism⁷ and superficial engagement, predicated on the advent of mass literacy and mass newspapers, could then easily be whipped up to the point of overtaking events.... War in the popular mind became exciting kind of Sport" (73), which suggests that narratives of the frontier and expansionist ideologies disseminated through partisan newspapers played essential roles in justifying territorial acquisition and displacement of indigenous populations with Newspapers such as the New York Journal and New York World illustrating the power of media to shape public opinion in favour of military intervention during the Spanish-American War, employing sensationalist reporting that (Nasaw 78–82) characterises as "journalism that acts" which is exemplified by Hearst's New York Journal inciting the Spanish-American War, rather than simply providing news. These early instances established lasting patterns where media

⁷ Jingoism: extreme [chauvinism](#)(excessive or blind patriotism) or nationalism marked especially by a belligerent foreign Policy.

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organisations could operate as foreign policy instruments, independent critics, or enhancers of official narratives, contingent on particular contextual circumstances.

The Progressive Era (1890s–1920s) witnessed the significant professionalisation of the press, characterised by the increasing distinctiveness of occupational identities and associated ethical standards, thereby formalising the relationship between the press and the institutions of government (Schudson 143–47). For much of this continuity, though, news and information had to be cleared by and paid for by the military during World War I, with the work correspondents being the core of precedence, though the moulding hand was that of military censors that Equally often, established arms like the Committee on Public Information that developed methods capable of mobilizing support from the population by using the media in a coordinated series of campaigns (Vaughn 6–10). The technological factor, radio, and photo journalism extended the delivery of such communication to new audiences far beyond the literate public, which increased the deep emotional resonance of issues of policy for the public (Schudson 183; Kratochvil 27).

During the interwar period (1918–1941), the American press became an increasingly important force outside the country's borders. Major papers such as, for example, The Chicago Daily News and The New York Times opened many foreign bureaus. As journalist Andrew Ten Eyck observed, "Today all the enterprise, competition and vigor of American newspapermen in New York is duplicated in London or Paris. No American newspaper either in New York or Chicago with any care for its influence or importance is without special representation in any of the capitals of Europe" (qtd. in Fetner 313–14). These newspapers dispatched expert diplomatic correspondents who built close relationships with officials in the State Department. This internationalisation built up highly effective circuits of information exchange that enriched media coverage and played an influential role in formulating foreign policy. As explained in the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, "theories of international communication in these

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paradigms are essentially theories of how states interact with each other,” based on the assumption that “the nation-state is the primary actor” and that even transnational corporations are “assumed to be appendages of the states” with “the legitimacy to create the domestic and international laws” (*International Communication Theories* 537). Recognising that the New Press Council mechanisms and professionalisation initiatives are also placing journalism as an intermediary force between governments and the public on matters concerning the world.

The Second World War represented a critical turning point in the media diplomacy relationship with strongly coordinated censorship that was introduced with the establishment of the Office of Censorship, presided over by Byron Price (Price 4), through which sensitive and dangerous information was officially channelled (2,7). All the while, the Office of War Information exploited private media for war propaganda to sustain domestic backing within the Allied coalition (12). Thus, these wartime practices set the scene for the sophisticated media-government interactions that were to follow in the Cold War era.

During the Cold War onset (1947–1968), statutory law for instance, the National Security Act of 1948 and the Smith-Mundt Act made the media an institution within relations creating intelligence activities and international broadcasting projects like the Voice of America (Krugler 7–8), which fostered a relationship to the extent that larger media outlets generally operated within government elite’s consensus: an area or a dimension which was analysed by (Bennett 106–09) in his indexing hypothesis. Simultaneously, the covert operation Mockingbird underlined the formal capacity of intelligence agencies to influence media pipelines beyond censorship, adding another layer to the changes in the relationship.

According to Ronald Spector “The Vietnam conflict is often referred to as the “first television war” in which, During the Vietnam era (1965–1975), substantial changes occurred to these dynamics from the creation of TV, which transformed how foreign policy is being covered with live feedback, that allowed for real-time coverage that brought the war directly into

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American living rooms that subsequently scrutinised the government policies and marked the shift from state-press relation to a more adversarial and confrontational relations as media became more inquisitive about how the government is conducting its foreign policy especially during these military interventions (Spector).

In the late Cold War (1975–1991), the Reagan administration's “rhetorical presidency” began restoring some of the collaboration between the media and the government. However, access was limited during the military actions in Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989 (Hertsgaard 6). But new technologies helped break the governmental monopoly over information, entertainment, and communication, until satellite broadcasting like CNN demonstrated that real-time coverage of crises was born (Feist 711). In the post-Cold War era (1991–2001), U.S. foreign policy turned essentially to humanitarian intervention, democracy promotion, and economic liberalisation (Weber 100–1).

Events like those in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia were broadcast globally through television screens, demonstrating what Robinson termed “the CNN effect”, which helps understand what was influencing policy decisions at this crucial time. The fast expansion of media conglomerates added yet another layer of complexity to the balance between journalistic integrity and commercial interests.

In December 2010, the Arab Spring Revolts were a string of protests that sprang up in the Middle East and focused on the cruel and unfair regimes in those countries, and the people's refusal to continue with these regimes in which These revolts have directly led to the overthrow of several governments, including Syria, Egypt and other Middle Eastern and North African countries. Media news outlets such as FOX NEWS. MSNBC and CNN played a critical role in bringing the protests to the world stage and exasperating these protests; their real-time coverage not only informed the general public about the rapidly changing events in that region of the world but also gave power to international governmental bodies, NGOs, and most importantly,

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the USA decision-makers, which allowed for interventions in all different aspects (Alalawi 138).

The narrative that these people struggle for democracy, liberty, and freedom was not constructed in isolation. However, especially in the post-9/11 era, a more complex dynamic emerged, where Big Tech and traditional media often operated in tandem with U.S. foreign policy interests to construct these narratives which This phenomenon can be characterised as convergence (Mugurtay et al. 10; Sevignani et al. 807).

This convergence, which was subtle yet significant, has allowed for mass amplification and legitimisation of USA foreign policy narratives through the use of editorial policies, favouring only the opinions which aligned with USA foreign policy targets and objectives, the use of language as a weapon to legitimise certain groups or movements and delegitimise others. The emphasis of themes that are aligned with USA interests by framing these movements as only a movement for democracy and liberty (Mugurtay et al. 9–12), while neglecting other important factors that contributed to these events, which is required for balanced coverage.

By not only informing the public but also supporting policy decisions, the media have become a reporter and an agent of USA foreign policy decision-makers serving and reinforcing the USA policy and geopolitical agenda as stated by president Obama and secretary of state Hillary Clinton in 2011 state department speech which highlighted how U.S. foreign policy priorities underwent a significant transformation due to the Arab Spring. Although fundamental interests such as counterterrorism, safeguarding commerce, and backing Israel remained unchanged, President Obama acknowledged that an approach concentrating exclusively on these interests risked alienating the Arab world. He emphasised the necessity of a dedication to universal rights that include free speech, peaceful assembly, and democratic transitions, signalling a strategic shift with Secretary of State Clinton endorsing this viewpoint, stating that aligning with democratic reforms in the Middle East was essential for the United States' long-

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term interests. However, she also recognised the difficulties involved in reconciling the promotion of democracy with geopolitical concerns, such as energy security and counterterrorism (Obama; Clinton).”

These remarks look polished and very politicised, but they carry the meaning of the need for interference, especially using information warfare and targeting by deploying U.S media for their advantage and securing the USA's interests in the region and its future.

2.2. The Case of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria: The Digital Revolution and Rise of Big Tech: Creating Alternative Media:

The digital revolution begins a new era in information distribution and media consumption. With the rapid digitisation of media and content that was created from the beginning of the dot.com era, and the creation of the internet to be used for commercial purposes which helped The traditional barriers that hindered the democratisation and the proliferation of information to disappear, giving rise to an ecosystem in which alternative media dominates information consumption and content creation alongside traditional media outlets and legacy news organisations, fundamentally changing how information is produced, shared, and consumed, creating a unique relationship with how foreign policy is processed. This technological shift encompasses several interconnected developments and changes : (1) Decentralization and Democratization of Information (Curran and Hesmondhalgh 101), (2) decentralisation of production capabilities through accessible creation tools (Curran and Hesmondhalgh 101), (3) disintermediation of distribution channels through direct-to-consumer platforms bypassing the need for middlemen (Curran and Hesmondhalgh 101), (4) algorithmic curation instead of human editors (Laufer and Nissenbaum 4); and (5) global connections making instant information exchange possible across different areas and regions (“The Digital Media Revolution: Disrupting Traditional Media Paradigms • Journalism University”). in which These developments have collectively formed what Castells thinks as "network society" in which “the

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network society represents a qualitative change in the human experience.... can be understood as the changing pattern of relationships between nature and culture". (508) which helped to understand that it is marked by fundamentally different information flows than hierarchical broadcast models that dominated previous eras.

The evolutionary trajectory of digital media (alternative media) comprises different and distinct phases relevant to foreign policy creation and curation, and how it shaped global narratives in the post-9/11 era and the Arab Spring.

The early internet period (approximately 1990–2000) laid the foundation and the infrastructure needed to create these tools, including web protocols, browsers and search tools that helped in future platform developments. This period witnessed what Abbate describes as an "open architecture" (217) approach, highlighting distribution control as he concludes that such applications continue the trend of decentralised, user-driven development and collaborative development, which was necessary to create the foundation for these technological developments.

These characteristics enabled open-source software development, Wikipedia creation, and early blogging communities that established alternative information production models outside traditional institutional parameters and frameworks (Benkler, *Wealth* 101–6).

Historically, traditional media was the dominant tool for information sharing and dissemination, as large news media outlets and printing institutions monopolised information gathering and access, allowing them to exert power over Narratives, a power subsequently realised through their editorial policies and access. However, the digital revolution introduced a new paradigm shift as content creation and dissemination are no longer the exclusive domain of professional journalists and major media conglomerates. Instead, digital platforms empower various voices, including independent bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media influencers. This democratisation of information production has allowed for a more diverse and

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unique way of public discourse (Shirky 122–25; Benkler, *Wealth* 110–15). Even though this shift was not realised early on in this period, as Early digital platforms during this period maintained relatively distinct boundaries between professional and amateur content production unlike traditional media outlets established online presence that essentially had the same existing editorial policies and structures, while independent forums created new parallel forms of content and information sharing channels which had a very low audience reach. This allowed traditional media in this distinctive period to still be the dominant gatekeepers on foreign policy discourse in specific and political discourse in general. Early internet communication regarding international affairs primarily attracted specialised audiences with existing policy interests rather than the general public (Bro and Wallberg 448–49).

The Web ⁸2.0 period (approximately 2000–2010) witnessed the emergence of participatory platforms that fundamentally reshaped production-consumption relationships through user-generated content models. Software Services, including YouTube (established 2005), Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and Wikipedia (2001), allowed for more diverse and equal distribution of information (O'Reilly; Jenkins 3).

The Iraq War (2003–2011) marked a pivotal moment in digital media's relationship with foreign policy as War bloggers and early social media platforms allowed for real-time exchanges between military personnel and domestic audiences, which laid the foundation for the mass adaptation of citizen-journalism and its emergence as a significant force that was exemplified by platforms like Global Voices contributing to what Benkler calls the "networked fourth estate." In Which foreign policy institutions and establishments are recognised as both potential tools for strategic communication and possible threats to narrative control, which according to Benkler, it can empower non-governmental actors such as WikiLeaks, which can

⁸ Web 2.0: term devised to differentiate the post-dotcom bubble World Wide Web with its emphasis on social networking, content generated by users, and cloud computing from that which came before.

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hinder the efforts of the US Department of State in trying to realise its objectives around the world even with the government using all different methods to curb its advances (314–16).

The platform consolidation phase (approximately 2010-present), which saw Big Tech companies like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube deploying algorithmic systems that reshaped information visibility based on engagement and personalisation rather than hierarchies based on professional judgment and explicit news values, which is a unique aspect of traditional media (Papakyriakopoulos et al. 532; Galeazzi et al. 1; Diakopoulos 186–90; Bodó 1055).

The Arab Spring movements (2010-2012), with social media at the forefront of connecting internal audiences in both the USA and the countries affected by these movements and the international audience. These digital media outlets allowed for an unprecedented documentation of government suppression. Authoritarianism and corruption as well as government crackdown on protesters like what happened in the tahrir square in Egypt similarly in Syria which social media was both used as an organising and management tool for protests but also as a tool to share what is going on in real-time without editorial filtering In Egypt, for example, social media helped push counter-narratives into mainstream media through what Badr identifies as a hybrid media structure (Badr 522). as (Chadwick) notes, this period gave rise to a "hybrid media system" where traditional and digital channels interact interdependently

In the contemporary landscape (post-2015), the concept of "platform governance" has emerged, with Big Tech exercising quasi-state authority over global information flows affecting how international and national conflicts are framed and understood. This evolving ecosystem, represented by abundant information and horizontally distributed communication networks, has fundamentally altered how foreign policy is communicated and contested, as evidenced by platforms' control over content amplification in events like the 2016 election. (Tufekci 250–70).

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2.3. The connection between Big Tech and U.S. Foreign Policy (recognising the influence and the dangers):

The relationship between technology corporations (*Big Tech*) and the U.S foreign policy establishments and governmental apparatus represents one of the most consequential yet under-researched developments in contemporary international relations. This relationship encompasses multiple dimensions: (1) operational collaborations for intelligence gathering, security enhancement, and strategic communication (Rauchbauer and Ittelson), (2) regulatory negotiations on data governance, content moderation, and jurisdictional authority (Wennberg), (3) ideological alignment on internet freedom ideas, democratic discourse, and authoritarian counter-models (Jones), and (4) competitive tensions regarding market access, antitrust enforcement, and corporate autonomy (Ellis). These complex interactions create complicated dependencies and sometimes conflicting ones that, on a fundamental level, affect pursuing foreign policy objectives in digital contexts.

The historical evolution of this relationship reveals several distinctive phases. According to (Wu), the early commercial internet era (roughly 1990–2001) witnessed what scholars describe as a period of little regulation and corporate sector leadership, when technology sectors and foreign policy institutions shared commitments to borderless digital environments and self-regulating models. This alignment showed itself in Clinton administration projects such as the 1997 "Framework for Global Electronic Commerce", which opposed content restrictions and emphasised self-regulatory models. These policy directions helped American technology businesses quickly enter worldwide markets while supporting liberal democratic discourse ideals in digital settings.

The post-9/11 period saw a significant realignment of these relationships through extended security partnerships exposed by Edward Snowden's revelations about the PRISM program (Greenwald) and other related surveillance moves. These operational dynamics provided easier

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access to technology platforms, creating what (Schneier) calls a “public–private surveillance partnership”, which was supported by Greenwald’s reports on NSA collaboration with Big Tech (Schneier; Greenwald), that violated earlier assurances of preserving user privacy and corporate independence. These very relations led to enormous trust deficits for American technology firms within the global business community while also setting precedents for government access requirements that would later be called for by autocratic governments.

At the same time, diplomatic efforts, which include the "21st Century Statecraft" approach first introduced by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, began emphasising "internet freedom" as a significant priority of foreign policy, setting up discursive frameworks in which technology platforms were seen as instruments of democratic development. This effort also included funding for circumvention technologies, diplomatic efforts related to internet shutdowns, and rhetorical framing that placed digital connectivity as an inherently democratising force. these efforts implicitly turn tech firms into foreign policy actors in furthering democratic values through their platforms and connectivity expansion.

The Arab Spring period (2010-2012) was a great inflexion in the relationship between technology and foreign policy because social media platforms had become instrumental in revolutionary movements and diplomatic reactions. Executives at technology companies, such as Sheryl Sandberg from Facebook and Jared Cohen from Google, were in close contact with the State Department as these events unfolded in Egypt, Tunisia, and other such nations (Lang). Thus, informal channels were created that supplemented traditional forms of diplomacy. At the same time, under the Tech Camps program, for example, the initiative of the State Department, activists were educated in practices about digital security and circumvention through breaking 'business as usual' by forging operational ties between the tech sector and the government on such sensitive matters as political transformation ("Tech Camp").

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The Obama administration formalised them through various institutional mechanisms, including the State Department's eDiplomacy Office, the Alliance for Affordable Internet sponsored by USAID, and the Presidential Innovation Fellows program that would help facilitate personnel exchanges between the technology sectors and government agencies. These institutional preparations create what Slaughter conceptualised as networked foreign policy in *The Chessboard and the Web*, wherein traditional diplomatic channels operate side by side with private sector partnerships, civil society relationships, and technical community engagements (164–65). She further elaborates this concept in “America’s Edge” (Slaughter 94).

The post-2016 period saw a steady deterioration in such ties, with external propaganda attacks carried out via social networking sites in election seasons adding to extant worries thus tightening the screws on regulations. What were once congressional, justice department, and internal moves have evolved into more adversarial dynamics regarding content hosting and recommendations worldwide. These moves followed increased competition from Chinese technology firms such as Huawei, TikTok, and Alibaba, which positioned U.S. technology firms as strategic assets in the Major Powers Competition, rather than solely as commercial entities (LaForge).

The complex relationships can be understood better through multiple theoretical frameworks. The military-industrial complex model was first introduced by President Eisenhower in his farewell address (Eisenhower, “Military-Industrial Complex Speech”) and later adopted by Foster and McChesney (surveillance capitalism) to what can be termed “information-industrial complex” to show the structural relationships between security establishments, intelligence agencies, and technology corporations. These relationships created interlocking interests and dependencies in which Foster and McChesney note, “In the realm of the Internet, a state-corporate alliance has developed ... how, for much of the past decade, AT&T illegally and secretly monitored the communications of its customers on behalf of the

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National Security Agency,” and “The more recent stories of how Amazon and PayPal/eBay cooperated with the government in the WikiLeaks affair ... point to the demise of the separation of public and private interests” (Foster and McChesney, *Internet’s Unholy Marriage*).

The phenomenon of the "revolving door" was elaborated by McChesney (*Digital Disconnect*), which shows the strong cultural and strategic ties that are created due to the continuous exchange of personnel between the technology corporations, the foreign policy agencies, and the military establishments. Surveillance capitalism, as put forth by Zuboff in which she is quoted saying, “The titanic power struggles of the twentieth century were between industrial capital and labor, but the twenty-first century finds surveillance capital pitted against the entirety of our societies, right down to each individual member..... in a bloodless battle for power and profit as violent as any the world has seen.” (“*Surveillance Capitalism*”¹¹). shows how the corporate practices of commercial data extraction build abilities later exploited by security services in intelligence collection and social monitoring.

Modern forms of these relationships show some different deals and arrangements regarding foreign policy objectives, with Intel ties going on with PRISM and informal work on terror content, making what (Rozenshtein) calls " Surveillance Intermediaries ", where tech firms both allow and limit state access to user info. Cover deals with issues like terror recruitment, foreign ops, and election safety undertaking efforts like the Global Internet Forum to Fight Terror while staying in conflict on meanings, rules, and who has power.

Market access negotiations are another big deal with tech firms relying on the government for support regarding regulatory barriers and what they want to eliminate, such as censorship, plus the mandates on data localisation in the various markets. These pretty much bring some implicit alignment pressure concerning foreign policy priorities, with these organisations having to bear the brunt of the moderating criticism over the human rights concerns in those

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places where the relations with the government had acted as a facilitator in the commercial operations. All this has set up some contradictory dynamics that complicate said alignments.

Infrastructure development is another major intersection between technology firms and the goals of foreign policy. Programs such as Free Basics from Facebook, Project Loon from Google, and Airband from Microsoft create a base of operations in developing areas for advancing commercial interests and diplomatic goals related to American leadership in technology. These projects run hand in hand with those initiated by the government, such as the USAID Digital Strategy and State Department Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, which set up very complex corporate ventures that mixed both aspects of commercial growth and strategic placement within international influence competition (Sherman).

The models of digital sovereignty and multi-stakeholder governance, as described by Budnitsky and Jia (600–01), have transformed the global internet governance landscape from a war of words to one of active competition. Exactly at issue is the ideological nature of the governance of the internet, an issue that awards and, simultaneously, burdens technology corporations with the roles of both instruments and stakeholders in governmental and nongovernmental agencies' debates. While such US foreign policy institutions would prefer to support multi-stakeholder approaches that preserve corporate autonomy and keep the role of the state limited, the authoritarian governments, specifically including China and Russia, are advocating models based on sovereignty, which in turn stress the control of the state over the digital spheres. Such governance competition directly affects the operations, regulatory environment, and market access of technology corporations in all jurisdictions (Pohle and Thiel 9–10).

The case studies analysed here (Egypt and Syria) serve as empirical examples that reflect these complex relationships in specific geopolitical environments during the Arab Spring

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movements. Across these environments, technology companies maintained conditional arrangements with opposition movements, government authorities, and American diplomatic establishments, rather than consistent alignments. Such variations allow for a more nuanced theoretical model of the relationship between technology and foreign policy. On the other hand, they offer the necessary empirical foundation for the following policy recommendations concerning governance frameworks, regulatory approaches, and diplomatic engagement with technology platforms.

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Section 3: Discourse Analysis and Media Theories: Theoretical Framework (Critical Discourse Analysis and Manufacturing Consent):

Theoretical framework:

CDA, as developed by Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (2008), is a theory that tries to uncover the hidden and embedded meanings in texts and conversations. It stems from the critical theory of language, which treats language as a form of social practice that both reflects and reproduces power structures. As Fairclough explains, “Dis-course is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (64). This perspective emphasises that language is not neutral but actively shapes social realities and power relations.

Fairclough’s three-dimensional model provides a structured approach to analyse discourse with the first dimension being the textual analysis, which is the analysis of both (written and spoken) forms of language texts through the examination of linguistic features of these language text such as vocabulary, grammar, and the rhetorical strategies in order to analyse how language is used to create meaning and express particular perspectives. The second dimension which is the discursive practice involves the analysis of discourse practice that manifests in the forms of text production, distribution, and consumption. As Fairclough notes, “The 'discursive practice' dimension, like 'interaction' in the 'text-and-interaction' view of discourse, specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation” (4). This dimension examines the process involved in producing and interpreting the text. It considers how the text is created, disseminated and understood within specific social contexts. This dimension helps to reveal that social inequalities are maintained and reproduced through discourse. The third dimension is concerned with the “social practice” in which as Fairclough notes “The 'social practice' dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the

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discursive practice, and the constitutive/ constructive effects of discourse referred to above”

(4). This dimension focuses on explaining and analysing the relationship between social and cultural practices. This involves analysing how discourse practices are shaped by and contribute to social structures, power relations, and ideologies to expose how language contributes to maintaining or challenging power relations and ideologies in specific institutional settings. Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach represents a more developed approach to CDA in which he says that “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has also failed to develop more explicit theories of context as a foundation for its own critical enterprise. Obviously, power is not shown just in some of the aspects of “powerful speech,” and we need insight into the whole, complex context in order to know how power is related to text and talk, and more generally how discourse reproduces social structure”. (vii) Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach emphasises that context is not merely situational but is also mentally represented by discourse participants through shared knowledge and ideologies. This highlights how discourse shapes social cognition through selective framing and lexical choices, which often lead to the enforcement of dominant ideologies. By focusing on the cognitive processes behind discourse production and interpretation, van Dijk provides a deeper understanding of how power and inequality are subtly reproduced in everyday communication.

Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) propaganda model of communication, the propaganda model for manufacturing public consent, consists of 5 so-called filters: ownership which means the Corporate control that aligns media content with business/political interests over public interest, advertising that represents how the revenue dependence forces outlets to avoid content that might alienate corporate sponsors, sourcing which means the reliance of media outlets and other content sharing and creation platforms on official sources such as government officials and thereby creating a bias towards certain power structure, flak that represents the organised criticism that disciplines media outlets and corporations if they stray from the acceptable

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narrative, anti-communism, which was later replaced by “war on terror” in the post 9/11 context in which this filter represents the ideological framework that justify U.S. actions while demonising adversaries. Additional mechanisms include the revolving door, wherein ex-government officials transition to private sector roles embed elites and government narratives reinforcing Herman and Chomsky’s five filters, and Backdoor channels, wherein covert pathways like private meetings or consultancy deals allow these figures to shape media and policy narratives without public scrutiny. These filters function as structural constraints that shape media content in ways that favour elite interests, particularly those of political and corporate power. As Herman and Chomsky argue “The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print.” (2) These five filters work together with Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, as these frameworks allow for the examination of how the New York Times and U.S. official statements construct narratives during the Arab spring (Egypt and Syria) by legitimising certain actors and delegitimising others. in ways which align with the USA foreign policy and its narratives.

Conclusion:

The historical and theoretical exploration of Big Tech, traditional media, and U.S foreign policy reveals a complex and evolving relationship throughout history that has had a profound impact on shaping global narratives, especially during critical times in international relations, such as the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria.

Historically, traditional media with its roots dating back to the invention of the press have been working as both a channel and a check on state power with its role as the “fourth estate”, evolving throughout history due to technological advancements such as the radio and the television, which they became instrumental tools for projecting U.S. foreign policy narratives worldwide, amplifying America’s influence across borders.

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The rise of Big Tech has disrupted this paradigm, with the introduction of decentralised, algorithm-driven platforms that allowed for the democratisation of information, but introduced new challenges, such as what Zuboff calls surveillance capitalism and creating what Schneier calls a “public–private surveillance partnership”.

The Arab Spring exemplifies how traditional media, Big Tech, and U.S. foreign policy interacted with each other to amplify the democratic ideals of the USA while aligning with the USA’s geopolitical objectives, often through subtle collusion rather than an apparent one. reflecting the complex interplay between state and corporate power. This finding highlights the transformative role of media and Big Tech convergence with the US government in shaping global narratives and redefining global discourse.

This chapter underlines the urgency for a new framework of governance that protects democratic values, corporate autonomy, and ensures the protection of the public from the ethical and regulatory implications of this evolving ecosystem. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis and the Manufacturing Consent framework, this study reveals the mechanisms by which these actors shape public perceptions and sentiments to align with the USA’s global narratives and geopolitical objectives.

Chapter II:

**Big Tech, Media Convergence, and U.S. Foreign Policy:
Analysing Post-9/11 Global Narratives in Light of Critical
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Introduction:

The Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Syria (2011–2012) mark an important and crucial moment in global politics and international relations, challenging the status quo in their authoritarian regimes and creating international outrage and scrutiny. The narratives that were used to describe these events were not just a mere natural occurrence, but were a product of the Big Tech and Media Convergence with the U.S foreign policy apparatus and governmental institutions that gave birth to these discourses and to shape global narratives in the post 9-11 era (Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Syria).

This dissertation chapter employs two distinct theories. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 1992) and Manufacturing Consent (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) the two serves as a tool to address the following question: How do U.S. media, Big Tech, and foreign policy texts employ discursive strategies (e.g., framing, metaphors, intertextuality) to construct narratives of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria? And how do these constructed narratives reflect power Dynamics and propaganda mechanisms?

This discourse analysis reveals and describes how linguistic strategies and phrasing combined with structural filters shape global narratives, specifically in the case of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria, by shaping different perceptions of both Egypt as a democratic success and Syria as a rebellion in ways which serve U.S. geopolitical interests. This analysis examines four New York Times articles alongside statements from high government officials such as President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Senator John McCain, and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice with This study aims to investigate how language. Ideological assumptions and framing shape how protests are being represented, governments and international actors focusing on power relations and strategies of legitimisation that are

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being done by the aligned Big Tech and media through constructing narratives that serve the interests of the USA's foreign policy.

Since CDA gives a groundbreaking rule to analyse text and discourse, which helps to analyse and break the relationship between Big Tech and media that serves the USA's foreign policy objectives. This chapter utilises CDA textual and discourse analyses to analyse 01 Egyptian article with 01 Syrian and vice versa (pairs). Adding a brief historical background and integrating the USA officials' quotes for more grounded analyses, which highlights how language and the framing of language align with the USA's foreign policy objectives.

Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model identifies five filters that include: ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and the war on terror, that shape media narratives to align with elite interests. This chapter utilises these filters to analyse both Egypt and Syria, with the addition of another headline called "backdoor channels", which will be analysed with Table 2. As for Table 1 analysis, it will be for the sourcing filter.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):

1.1. First Analysis Pair: Egypt and Syria

Textual Analysis: Egypt

Article (01): "Egypt Erupts in Jubilation as Mubarak Steps Down" (February 11, 2011)

Historical context:

Hosni Mubarak's 30-year U.S.-backed regime, which was a keystone in achieving peace and acting as a stabilising force in the Middle East that fell and collapsed under the youth protests in February 2011 which was later termed as the "ARAB SPRING", marking the end of an era of a regime that ended creating a great victory for democracy and highlighting a true democratic shift in the middle east.

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Textual analyses:

this article constructs the Egyptian uprising as a triumphant, youth-driven, centred democratic victory by employing emotive and celebratory language in order to evoke a universal worldwide feeling of victory and aspiration for freedom and liberty.

The use of phrases like “Shouts of ‘God is great’ erupted from Tahrir Square at twilight” and “bouncing and dancing of joy” creates a celebratory type of atmosphere, which frames the protestors as people who have gone through a collective liberation from the shackles of the old dictatorial government with Quotes such as Gamal Heshmat’s saying, “We can breathe fresh air, we can feel our freedom,” show how the protesters amplify the liberation theme, with the underlying theme of this quote being to create the idea that the Egyptians were living inside a prison. a prison of dictatorship and autocracy, which the Egyptians have fled, breathing the air of freedom and liberty by defeating “the arsenal of the Egyptian autocracy”, which is a militarised metaphor that expresses state oppression which gives a dramatisation effect of civilians’ resistance against state authority, intensifying the emotional impacts of said act.

The continued lexical use of the word “revolt” over rebellion suggests a legitimate and organised resistance against an autocratic and oppressive government, which aligns with the USA’s foreign policy objectives of peaceful democratic transition of power.

The phrase “An 18-day-old revolt led by the young people of Egypt” creates a youth agency narrative in which the political situation in Egypt is largely being shaped by the youth, emphasising a generational change for a democratic process. This phrase was followed by another phrase that discusses Mubarak’s retreat to “his home by the Red Sea in Sharm el-Sheikh”, which portrays him as defeated and disconnected with the situation, delegitimising his authority and reinforcing the youth agency narrative.

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The phrase “a bulwark of American foreign policy in the region”, which is a fortress or a defensive wall metaphor for strategic partnership, shows how the USA admits to the strategic loss while celebrating the democratic victory. This was created due to multifaceted reasons, including the Muslim Brotherhood which was framed as a “supportive player “which was indicated in Mohamed Saad el-Katatni (spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood) quotes in which he articulated “We participated with everyone else and did not lead this or raise Islamic slogans so that it can be the revolution of everyone,” and “This is a revolution for all Egyptians; there is no room for a single group’s slogans, not the Brotherhood’s or anybody else.” This helped mitigate Western fears of the establishment of a theocracy rather than a secular and democratic nation, which has been made apparent in the phrase “a largely secular, nonviolent, youth-led democracy movement that brought Egypt’s liberal and Islamist opposition groups together for the first time under its banner” which describes the revolution in an idealised manner that perfectly aligns with the USA foreign policy objectives in the region.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s statement, “History has shown us that repression often sows the seeds for revolution down the road” (February 15, 2011), is indirectly reflected in how Mubarak’s ousting was framed in the article and that repression and authoritarianism, no matter how strong and hard its grip on the population will only be faced with lost and defeat and that this type of governance will lead only to revolution with the only way to prevent that from happening is through secular democracy as President Obama’s noted in his quote, “Egyptians have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day,” in which the word “ genuine democracy “ creates the idea that democracy has it’s qualification to be legitimate and that the USA is the arbiter and the judge on what constitutes an authentic democratic transition of power as also in another of his quotes in which he says “The people of

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Egypt have spoken. Their voices have been heard, and Egypt will never be the same” (February 11, 2011) amplifying the power of the Egyptian people who are demanding change for a more “genuine” democratic change, with this change happening in a disruptive manner that makes Egypt not the same anymore.

these narratives that are being propagated directly align with the USA’s foreign policy objectives in the region.

The repeated and prevalent reference to Tahrir Square as the symbolic epicentre of this revolution mirrors what occurred on one of the most democratic- led revolution places like Tiananmen Square, amplifying the legitimacy of the Egyptian revolution in the global discourse. This article emphasises the secular, nonviolent, youth-led democracy movement aspects of this revolution, which resonate with Obama’s praise of the “moral force of nonviolence.” Employing linguistic strategies and meticulously picked vocabulary that are categorised as positive lexical choices, such as (“jubilation,” “democracy movement,” “Egypt is back”), to describe the Egyptian revolution as a democratic success, which serves the USA’s foreign policy objectives in the region.

This article avoids a detailed discussion on what and how the post-Mubarak state of affairs will be, focusing only on the military promise of “free and fair presidential elections,” which directly aligns with the U.S. strategic interests in maintaining a pro-Western Egypt.

Discourse practice:

Authored by David D. Kirkpatrick, this article reflects how The New York Times’ role as a global media giant with editorial and agenda editing power transcending national borders and operating on a global scale, with huge influence on Western elites and policy makers and vice versa.

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The entire editorial and production process of creating news articles involves making editorial decisions that align with the USA foreign policy objectives, as was shown in this article by prioritising quotes from secular protesters (e.g., Heshamt) and U.S. officials (e.g., Obama), while sidelining and neglecting diverse perspectives, especially if they don't align with the USA foreign policy objectives such as the Muslim Brotherhood involvement which can further complicate the dissemination of the democratic narratives.

The focus on Tahrir Square reinforces its symbolic power, aligning with the USA's policy of military style transition. The distribution of these narratives through the New York Times and other digital platforms ensures the reach of this wide range of information to consumers ensuring these narratives are being disseminated on a global scale with the alignment with state narratives being evident through the emphasis on the military's stabilizing role, mirroring U.S. endorsement of an interim military government, reflecting institutional ties between media corporations and state apparatus during the Arab Spring.

In Contrast with Syria:

The Syrian article analysed below adopts a completely different tone, emphasising the brutal violence and severe repression that Syrians face under the "iron fist" rule of the Bashar al-Assad dynastic rule, which he inherited from his father Hafez al-Assad, fueling dissent and outrage. This establishes Syria as a chaotic, lawless and authoritarian state, which justifies the USA calling for the removal of this regime and change to a more "genuine democracy" that respects and follows international law.

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Textual Analysis: Syria

Article (02): “Security Forces Kill Dozens in Uprisings Around Syria” (April 22, 2011)

Historical Context:

The Assad regime was following a dynastic form of governing, as the presidency of Syria was passed down from Hafez to Bashar, maintained through the iron grip of the repressive regime of Syria, sparking a wide range of dissent and outrage in 2011.

Textual analyses:

This article employs vivid and violent imagery that depicts the unfolding events in Syria as vicious and ruthless, with phrases like “fusillades of live ammunition” which is a militaristic language that depicts the state’s oppressive violence against civilians with its purpose being to intensify the moral condemnation of the Syrian regime followed by “bloodiest day” which is a linguistic framing of the events that creates a temporal escalative narrative with its purpose is to create a mounting crisis that requires immediate intervention.

The term “uprising” frames the protesters as desperate and unyielding to the current regime’s actions, drawing a picture of this event as a spontaneous response to authoritarianism that is being inflicted on them, contrasting with Egypt’s “revolt”, which depicts it as an organised, more sustained response.

Lexical choices such as “carnage” and “bloodied corpse” evoke horror and fear in the mind of the reader, painting an image of inhumanity and savagery that is occurring there, positioning the Bashar al-Assad regime as a barbaric, sadistic and “illegitimate” with the article highlighting the vengeful spirit that is being targeted at the Assad regime with phrases like “Cries for vengeance” and protesters demands for “the government’s fall.” Which aligns with U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice’s statement: “Syria would be better off without Assad. He’s lost his legitimacy” (August 10, 2011) and Senator John McCain’s tweet, “Qaddafi on his way out,

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Bashar al Assad is next” (August 21, 2011), reinforcing the inevitability of regime change and fall, while framing the Assad fall within a regional context (Libya) and shift.

Protester quotes, such as Abu Mohamed’s “We want revenge, and we want blood, “show an unfiltered emotional response that humanises them as it shows the human need for vengeance and revenge, which coincides with lack of hope or the response of the oppressed who lived in fear for a long time after realising there is a chance for retribution, this contrast deeply with Egypt celebratory tone risking undermining their legitimacy under the watchful eye of the western hemisphere (USA) which was reinforced by the next phrase of “Blood for blood.” that carries the tone of the need to exert equal punishment on the authorities that caused all of this carnage.

phrases and terms like “authoritarian countries” are being used as a tool to push for a comparative framework that positions Syria within the axis of illegitimate regimes, to try to discredit this regime in the eyes of the international community, which the United States leads. This comparative framework was supported by other phrases throughout the article, like “grim crackdown”, which is a metaphor of oppression intended to reinforce the narrative of brutality and oppression that this regime exerts on its population in which Directly after this passage, the article mentions few quotes like “There are indications the regime is scared, and this is adding to the momentum, but this is still the beginning,” said Wissam Tarif, with other phrases like "bastions of support" which both have different CDA interpretation with the former delegitimising the regime while the latter serving as a military fortress metaphor, both of this quotes have the same ideological and linguistic function which can be interpreted as it’s a suggestion of the regime being under siege and weakening.

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This article also quotes President Obama with high contrast to the first Egyptian article analysed above, with both having the same ideological functions with a slight difference in their CDA interpretation, with his quote as follows: “outrageous use of violence to quell protests must come to an end now.” This establishes the president as a moral authority, which further upholds and validates the US as the international moral authority. This was directly followed by an allegation of Iranian help, which paints the Syrian regime as a regime that needs foreign interference, especially from a country like Iran, which is considered a staunch adversary of the USA foreign policy project in the Middle East, all to create an Iran-Syria axis threatening US regional interests.

the integration of references in the article, like “at least 20 cities and towns,” shows a lack of cohesion and that these protests are fragmented and unstable, furthering the USA’s agenda of intervention, which aligns with the USA’s agenda of removing Bashar al-Assad that can be understood in Obama’s quote.

The article’s linguistic strategies, including negative lexical choices (“bloodshed,” “massacre”), establish Syria as a failed, broken state that needs external (USA) intervention. The inclusion of Obama’s condemnation, Rice’s statement, and McCain’s tweet amplifies the narrative of the Assad regime’s illegitimacy, creating two narratives wherein one shows the inevitability of the regime’s fall and the other establishes the USA as the moral arbiter of what constitutes a legitimate government, with the synergy of both quotes creating an effect of urgency and the need for swift change in the current state of affairs in Syria. The focus on unverified activist accounts and social media reflects restricted access, as “foreign news media have not been permitted to travel outside Damascus,” highlighting reporting challenges under authoritarian constraints.

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Discourse Practice:

Authored by Anthony Shadid, this article leverages the New York Times' well-established reputation to influence the world's perception of Syria's turmoil, with Editorial decisions favouring activist voices and unverified social media accounts, due to the restricted access caused by the unfolding events in Syria. This reflects a hybrid media system where the old (magazines, articles...) and new (social media, blogs) forms of media intersect with each other (Chadwick). The production process includes selective framing by employing lexical choices and linguistic characterisation of events through emphasis on violence and fragmentation of protesters, which serves to justify the USA's foreign policy objectives as seen in the integration of Rice's and McCain's statements.

The production and distribution of this article through The New York Times magazine amplifies the narrative of the Syrian suffering as it is becoming widely consumed primarily by Western audiences and policymakers.

This article reinforces the USA's objective for regime change, but the violent framing risks alienating the support needed for protesters by portraying them as vengeful. This alignment is evident through the use of official sources, amplifying voices which serve the USA's interests, coupled with the constant vivid language being used on the governing authority of Syria, all to support the USA interventionist agenda in Syria specifically and the Middle East broadly.

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1.2. Second Analysis Pair: Syria and Egypt

Textual Analysis: Syria

Article (03): “Syrian Protests Are Said to Be Largest and Bloodiest to Date” (April 9, 2011)

Historical Context:

The inherited rule of Bashar al-Assad from Hafez al-Assad, with his “iron rule “type of governing, has sparked huge unrest throughout Syria, which transformed from protests to actual clashes with security forces (city of Dara’a), leading to a huge number of casualties, creating more tension and exacerbating the situation.

Textual Analysis:

This article starts by framing the Syrian protests as escalating and deadly, with phrases like “largest and bloodiest demonstrations” and “security forces opened fire”, emphasising the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding via the regime’s repressive response, which was followed by the idiom “iron fist” which is a metaphor that suggests oppressive autocratic government followed by emphasising the culprit behind this type of action whom is Syria President “Bashar al-Assad”.

The term “demonstrations” implies that this movement is less organised than the Egyptian “revolt “, portraying a chaotic and fragmented uprising. This was followed by “Syria’s fragmented opposition movement is reaching new levels of coherence and organisation”, as this has the same suggestion as the one mentioned above, but followed with a reassurance that this opposition, with its fragmented characteristics, is showing a sense of cohesion and organisation suggesting the emergence of a “genuine democratic” in opposition to tyranny.

statement from President Obama on what he calls “abhorrent violence” shows the strong moral condemnation by the USA, which positions it as a moral arbiter, justifying its intervention rhetoric in the region, this aligns with U.S. condemnation of Assad’s tactics, while Susan Rice’s

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statement, “Syria would be better off without Assad. He’s lost his legitimacy” (August 10, 2011), emphasizing that the regime has irreversibly lost its legitimacy.

Lexical choices such as “massacre” (referring to killings in Dara’a) and “deadliest clashes” vilify the Assad regime, undermining its authority. By using this type of Genocide-adjacent language, it can be understood that its function is to escalate the moral urgency within the readers, which echoes humanitarian interventionist discourse. the constant use of this type of Genocide-adjacent language, coupled with victimisation narratives such as the phrase "peaceful protesters", creates a moral binary between the innocent civilians that are being “massacred” and the “iron fist” rule of this dictatorial regime.

The article claims that these protests are spread across “dozens of communities”, which highlights the decentralised nature of these protests, in contrast with Egypt’s unified Tahrir Square narrative. the Syrian government’s unverified claim, which was reported via state media, that “19 police officers” were killed, introduces ambiguity, coupled with the government’s restriction on foreign media to operate within its borders, prevents understanding and clarifying the intention of those protesters. In contrast, the Egyptian article focuses on nonviolent resistance. this stark difference between the articles and the mention of this unverified claim in the new York times shows the Syrian regime attempts to paint the protesters as violent and threatening, a used tactic with less visibility by the Mubarak regime due to drop in media influence, the narrative impact of this dilutes the clear moral driven protesters seen in Egypt, the inclusion of said claim in the new York times article can be understood through power dynamics lenses as it’s intended use to amplify the ambiguity surrounding the events unfolding in Syria aligning with the U.S policy of framing Syria as a failed state that needs external intervention unlike Egypt frame as a democratic story.

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Amr al-Azm, who is a Syrian historian, noted in this article that the protests are formed primarily by semi-rural poor and young individuals, while the upper middle class is still in a state of limbo, trying to figure out where it stands which indicates that the disagreement between the Syrian government actions and the Syrian people is not bounded by social hierarchy and that government actions have transcended social hierarchies formed in this country which is shown in Amr al-Azm quote “that group (upper middle class) was unhappy with the government but also concerned about stability”. Within his quotes, he used the term “*critical mass*”, which is a scientific term that is described as “*the size that something needs to reach before a particular change, event, or development can happen*”(“Critical Mass”). This scientific term is being used as a metaphor for social change that implies that revolution is natural, and like anything, if something receives enough energy or matter (government action), a development might happen (revolution).

The use of the term “stability” in Amr al-Azm’s quote mentioned above and the term “change” mentioned in the same quote shows a classic US foreign policy binarism, which views US-backed change as positive despite instability in the region.

The linguistic strategies that were employed in this article show stark, negative terms (“slaughter,” “bloodiest”) being used to construct Syria as a humanitarian crisis zone, which requires international attention. The integration of Obama’s statements amplifies the call for regime change in Syria, with Ausama Monajed’s quote being used as an emotional hook for Western readers. Unlike Egypt’s focus on democratic aspirations for change, the Syrian narrative implied in this article centres on survival and resistance, which directly aligns with the USA Interventionist aspiration, but can risk delegitimising the protesters’ plight due to the chaotic framing that is prevalent throughout this article.

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Discourse Practice:

Authored by Liam Stack and Katherine Zoepf, this article relies heavily on activist statements and unverified social media accounts (explicitly mentioned in article 02 and implied in article 03) due to the restrictive situation facing traditional media, reflecting a hybrid media system in which digital platforms supplement traditional reporting.

Editorial choices prioritising painting a violent imagery and the inclusion of USA's officials' statement (e.g., Obama), article 03 and Rice statement with both having the same narrative about Syria by framing the protests as a humanitarian crisis that justifies the need for immediate intervention with the New York Times using its credibility to give more weight to activist voices such as Monajed's despite all the verification challenges that media faces in Syria.

The distribution and dissemination of these articles through print and digital platforms targets Westerners, especially policymakers, amplifying the removal of the Assad regime.

This article's creation and consumption reinforce the interventionist narrative that is being propagated by the USA, but the focus on violence and the fragmentation of the protests may lead to reducing sympathy for the Syrians among Western readers, unlike Egypt's cohesive and cemented narrative. The alignment of the New York Times with U.S. policy is evident through the emphasis on Assad's illegitimacy, the referencing of U.S officials (e.g. Obama) and how the distributed narrative framework of this article mirrors Rice's and McCain's statements, reflecting the New York Times' role in shaping global perceptions.

In Contrast with Egypt:

The Egyptian article below shifts to a narrative of growing social progress momentum and labour-driven protests, sharply contrasting with Syria's fragmented, brutal, and violent portrayal of the events unfolding there. This narrative (Articles 04 and 01) aligns with the USA-

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backed democratic objectives in the region, emphasising constructive and cohesive resistance over fragmented, violent, and chaotic resistance.

Textual Analysis: Egypt

Article (04): “Labor Actions in Egypt Boost Protests” (February 9, 2011)

Historical Context:

The Egyptian uprising toppled the Mubarak US-backed regime, which is considered a strategic ally in the Middle East and plays a key role in maintaining stability in that region, was framed as a democratic success. In contrast, the Syrian uprising challenged the “iron grip” of the Assad dynastic dictatorial regime, which was framed as a “struggle” against the authoritarian regime ruling the Syrians.

Textual Analysis:

This article frames the Egyptian uprising as a movement that is gaining huge momentum through labour strikes and societal protests, with phrases like “labor strikes and worker protests flared across Egypt” and “burst of momentum” indicating a broadening, inclusive movement in which the first quote suggests that just like fire, uncontrolled behaviour like this “strikes” are uncontrolled eruption than an organised political action which frames the protesters “workers” organizing as a natural occurrence rather than a class struggle indicating a different reason for the flaring of this workers protests in contrast, the second quote can be understood as a physical force metaphor that implies the emergence of a sudden powerful release of energy that propels the movement which position the work of this protesters as a fuel for democratic revaluation rather than demands of a political agenda through “the proper intermediate”.

all of this framing aligns with the USA foreign policy objectives of avoiding framing this as a worker revolution or social class change to contain the socialist implication that may occur in this region by channeling the labour energy into acceptable liberal democratic framework that

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prevents the “radical” change to a more socialist system with this being to maintain focus on the regime rather than economic change.

The term “protesters” can be understood as the creation of a generic political category that creates a unified subject position which conceals class, ideological or sectarian differences within a group. This depolitization through generalisation suggests that these subjects are working within the acceptable political framework that aligns with the Western” USA” democratic norms, unlike lexical choices such as “rebels “or “revolutionaries”, which have the opposite effect, indicating a systemic change rather than political change.

The detailed description of the strikes occurring at prominent institutions, such as the Al Ahram newspaper, the Suez Canal Authority, and textile factories, shows a lack of trust and the total rejection of said institutions. The term "propaganda tools" embedded within this description exposes state media manipulation which position the alternative media “Western” as the truthful alternative to such institutions, the quotation of Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit dismissing calls to scrap “emergency laws”, indicates a legal framework for oppression that delegitimises Egyptian legal system while championing western legal norms. This operated as a supportive function, legitimising U.S. oversight of Egypt’s political transition. The phrase “We have 17,000 prisoners loose in the streets” indicates the construction of security threat narratives that simultaneously justify authoritarian measures and frame them as a subject of critique.

The following quotes in the article about high political figures in the USA, such as Mr. Biden suggesting that “the United States still expects some immediate changes to be made” and White House press secretary, Robert Gibbs, saying, “What you see happening on the streets of Cairo is not all that surprising when you see the *lack of steps* that their government has taken

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to meet their concerns.” Shows a paternalistic evaluation that puts the USA as a judge of the Egyptian government’s actions.

The phrase “*swift steps* toward political transition” can be interpreted as a temporal pressure for change in which the USA dictates the pace and the Egyptian politics. This phrasing can be understood through the context of the phrase as not just descriptive but also performative. actively trying to shape the political atmosphere in Egypt by setting expectations, asserting influence, and highlighting the power asymmetry between the US and Egypt throughout this critical period in Egyptian history.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s statement, “History has shown us that repression often sows the seeds for revolution down the road” (February 15, 2011), is reflected in the article’s framing of the protests as a consequence of the government’s neglect of economic hardship and political repression faced by workers under Mubarak’s rule. The article acknowledges some instances of violence, such as “5 people died” in clashes in El Kharga, but emphasises nonviolent actions like strikes and protests, as it makes apparent in the Muslim Brotherhood spokesman’s quote. “The revolt in Egypt was *nonviolent* and included 'all sects, trends and religions”, highlighting the moral legitimacy of the movement. Such framing aligns closely with U.S. preferences for peaceful regime change and stands in stark contrast to the “massacre” narrative constructed in the coverage of Syria. The protests from “Tahrir Square” and beyond show a cohesive, centralised, and organised structure of protesting and maturing to a more nationwide movement, unlike Syria’s fragmented, decentralised and chaotic protests.

All of these embedded linguistic functions that align with the USA foreign policy objectives were followed by the phrase “government’s legacy”, referring to Mubarak’s legacy.

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This total condemnation erases any aspects of the Mubarak era, leaving only what aligns with the USA's objectives.

The Muslim Brotherhood spokesperson's quote that is discussed above was a response to al-Qaida's call on the Egyptians to "wage violent jihad to topple the regime in Egypt" This can be analysed as a construction of Islamist threat which creates a moral binary to choose from: either U.S backed secular changes or very extremist alternatives.

Rahma Refaat's quote: "Most of those on strike say that we have discovered that the resources of our country have been stolen by the regime" shows that "resources" have been stolen by the government, in which this theft is a metaphor for the government justifying regime change through invoking economic nationalism. This narrative throughout the article is being constructed in a way that allows for some leeway, but it's been constrained within pre-defined parameters that don't allow it to go in unintended directions, such as "socialism".

The linguistic tactics employed throughout this article are of a positive and dynamic nature. Terms such as "Momentum," "flared," and "burst" are used to construct a constructive and productive force of change that these protests embodied. The focus on labour grievances by employing words such as "better wages" and "independence from the government" (Al Ahram), "stolen by the regime" (Refaat), which can be paraphrased to a term such as "Corrupt management" with the first giving an economic dimension in the Egyptian protests that is absent in the violence driven framing of the protests in the Syrian article.

This article takes note of the considerable effort made by independent unions such as the Centre for Trade Union and Worker Services in mobilising workers, framing this labour strike and workers' movement as a crucial destabilising force against Mubarak's regime. All of this aligns with the U.S foreign policy objective of a broad-based democratic change, as the labour

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movement implies stability and social inclusion that is needed for a healthy democratic transition. Unlike the “Jubilation” article’s focus on youth and symbolism, this article grounds the uprising within the framework of financial struggle, increasing its appeal and legitimacy in the eyes of the Western reader and the international community.

Discourse Practice:

Authored by Kareem Fahim and David D. Kirkpatrick, this article benefits directly from the broad access to the New York Times’ extensive and diverse sources, as it includes labour leaders, workers, and us officials, this contrasts with the Syrian article, which relies heavily on unverified accounts and includes highly biased sources, such as the Syrian government. The inclusion of labour leaders such as Rahma Refaat emphasises the importance of economic and social demands, framing the protests as constructive and inclusive, spanning all kinds of the social pyramid. The production process involves choosing sources that highlight societal unity between the Egyptian population, aligning with U.S. policy objectives voiced by Clinton’s quote on repression and Obama’s push for reform.

The distribution of this article through the New York Times in both digital and print forms ensures a wide reach among Westerners and Western elites, supporting the perception of Egypt as a democratic model, with this article’s consumption by these audiences supporting the USA foreign policy objectives of stable and pro-Western transition, contrasting with Syria vivid and access constrained reporting.

This polished narrative, which is enabled by open access, unlike Syria, constrained access, reflects The New York Times’ power as a gatekeeper and a shaper of global narratives, shaping perception of Egypt as a model for democratic progress and transition.

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New York articles synthesis:

The New York Times used opposing linguistic tactics to define the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria, which exactly matched U.S. foreign policy goals, as this critical discourse analysis demonstrates. While Syria was framed with violent, chaotic visuals that depict horrific repression and humanitarian crises, Egypt was framed through democratic, joyous language that emphasised a successful transition and a youth-led, nonviolent revolution. To defend outside involvement, these conflicting narratives delegitimised Assad's government and validated Egypt's democratic journey toward the West. The analysis shows how major media outlets serve as soft power tools, influencing global perceptions to further strategic geopolitical aims through story framing and selective linguistic choices.

Overall CDA Synthesis

1. Recurring Ideological Functions:

1.1. Apparent Ideological Functions (Explicitly Stated/Obvious):

1.1.1. Moral Binary Construction:

The clear good vs evil framing (protesters vs dictatorial regimes) serves as a tool to legitimise democratic movements and illegitimize dictatorial regimes.

1.1.2. US Moral Authority:

direct positioning of the USA as a moral arbiter of what constitutes legitimate governance and democratic transition around the world, with the use of U.S officials' quotes and strong condemnations.

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1.1.3. Humanitarian Intervention Logic:

The explicit building of a moral case to justify the potential involvement of the USA through highlighting the humanitarian crisis that has befallen civilians from violence and repression.

1.1.4. Temporal Urgency:

which is creating a sense of urgency that requires immediate intervention by the USA through the use of terms and phrases such as "swift steps" and "immediate changes", which helps prevent deep thinking regarding this problem and creates no alternative solution in the reader's mind in regards to this issue.

1.2. Embedded Ideological Functions (Implicit/Hidden):

1.2.1. Secular Preference:

covertly validating secular opposition movements that fall under the umbrella of USA foreign policy objectives, unlike (e.g., Communism, socialism...), while marginalising threatening alternative views such as Islamic alternatives without explicitly stating anti-Islamic bias.

1.2.2. Threat of Socialism Containment:

by funnelling labour strikes and worker movement within the liberal democratic framework rather than allowing for the discourse of social class, evident in framing these protests as 'natural occurrences' rather than organised, thoughtful resistance.

1.2.3. Economic Determinism:

which means assuming that only a certain type of people within the social hierarchy of a society are key to real democratic change, implicitly suggesting that the capitalist / merchant,

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owners' class is the key legitimate part for political change by ignoring class conflict, validating existing power and naturalizing capitalism, alienating all alternative economic models.

1.2.4. Regional Realignment:

reshaping the Middle East in ways that better serve American interests in the region, while pretending it's about helping people achieve democracy, which is achieved by sounding noble geopolitical chess and selective application (not pushing for regime change in Saudi Arabia, a US ally), despite being authoritarian.

1.2.5. Depoliticisation Through Generalisation:

by using generic terms such as "protesters" to conceal class, sectarian or ideological differences between the targeted group.

1.2.6. Paternalistic Oversight:

by treating other countries as "children" who need America, the "benevolent parent", to guide their politics, which is achieved by subtly positioning the USA as a judge for the political actions of said government through the use of evaluative language and benchmark settings (USA as the benchmark for democracy).

1.2.7. Critical Embedded Function: Problem-Saviour Framing:

The problem-saviour framing can be considered one of the most sophisticated and essential embedded functions, as it operates as the structural foundation upon which all the discourse functions rely, As this pattern of embedded function follows a strategic way of positioning, as it is always systematically represented by the pair of vivid crisis language use with the positioning of the USA as a benevolent saviour that possess the solution, creating an embedded narrative that presents American interventionism as something benign and necessary to solve the humanitarian crisis that is occurring on the grounds (manufacturing urgency). This function

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can be deduced from analysing data in Table 1 (67), and how this function came to fruition can be understood through Table 2 (71).

1.2.7.1. Problem-Saviour Framing synthesis: The Essential Embedded Function:

This pattern is embedded because it operates through narrative architecture rather than explicit statements, as the readers experience a crisis-to-solution flow of reporting as logical and comprehensive rather than manipulative. This strategy exploits psychological conditioning where emotional stress creates receptivity to authoritative guidance while refusing calls for actions, which helps maintain plausible deniability, most importantly, it manufactures necessity in which USA involvement is necessary and not a choice, transforming the imperial intention to a moral imperative needed to solve the humanitarian crisis that USA benevolently wants to solve.

3. CDA synthesis:

This Critical Discourse Analysis reveals how The New York Times employed several contrasting linguistic strategies to frame the Arab Spring in ways that directly align with the USA's objectives in the region.

Egypt is being constructed in a celebratory, enchanting tone that describes it as a democratic success, ensuring targeted narratives emphasising the peaceful transition of power. in contrast with Syria, depicting a narrative of violence and chaos from all participants in the unfolding events painting a chaotic image that justifies immediate intervention by the U.S government, this analysis identifies essential functions mainly embedded functions such as the problem saviour framing function which systematically presents crisis mainly humanitarian crisis

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alongside U.S positioning as the necessary solution transforming imperial intentions to moral imperatives.

This systematic alignment between media and Big Tech framing of geopolitical events and U.S. policy objectives demonstrates Chomsky and Herman's "propaganda model" in action, showing how the institutional filters manufacture consent through strategic narrative construction, ensuring the dissemination of global narratives aligned with USA objectives.

4. Manufacturing Consent:

4.1. Filter analyses:

4.1.1. Ownership:

The New York Times, which is an American Daily newspaper based in New York, covers domestic, regional, national and international news. It's an American company owned by The New York Times Company, which is a publicly traded company, with this financial structure, enabling its susceptibility to market and governmental pressure that pushes it to align its editorial decisions with governmental and Western elites.

Egyptian Coverage:

Articles like "Jubilation" and "Labor Actions" emphasise democratic transition and stability, reflecting the USA's foreign policy objectives in keeping regional order and stability. With the focus on military leaders and secular voices, while alienating religious and ideologically different voices that can pose a risk to the American foreign policy preferences of maintaining regional stability and achieving a stable and smooth democratic transition in Egypt.

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Syrian Coverage:

Articles such as "Security Forces" and "Largest and Bloodiest" constantly frame the Assad regime as an illegitimate, dictatorial, and brutal regime, aligning with the USA foreign policy objectives in removing the Assad regime. This form of framing marginalises alternative perspectives that might complicate the intervention narrative.

The ownership filter operates by creating structural incentives for editorial alignment with state narratives, in which it systematically alienates and occasionally censors voices that challenge the USA's foreign policy objectives, with examples such as the Muslim Brotherhood's role in Egypt's democratic change and concern over Kurdish autonomy in Syria.

4.1.2. Advertising:

Advertising revenue incentivises The New York Times magazines to cater to rich Western and corporate interests with ties to the USA government, and by default, its foreign policy objectives, which are realised by choosing to commit to editorial decisions that favour narratives in line with USA foreign policy strategic and business interests.

Egyptian Coverage:

With the New York Times' positive framing of military-led transitions and labour-driven protests, which appeals to the western corporate audience that has vested interests in ensuring regional stability to protect their business interests through editorial decisions that favour the dissemination of stable, orderly democratic transitions, ensuring the safety of the existing bilateral economic relationships.

Syrian Coverage:

The emphasis on violence and humanitarian crisis justifies the USA's favourable interests of potential intervention, aligning with the military-industrial complex and defense contractors'

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economic interest, which benefits directly from militarised interventions and regional instability.

This filter ensures coverage support for the USA’s broader geopolitical interests in the region by framing Egypt as a story of democratic success of a strategic partner and an example of stable democratic transition, and Syria as a threat that requires immediate intervention that is needed to stop the humanitarian crisis unfolding there.

4.1.3. Sourcing:

Variable	Mean	Mean Diff.	N
Official Sources Non-official Sources	8.01 2.75	5.27*** (9.43)	150
Terrorism and/or human rights violations US strategic interests	6.14 0.13	6.01*** (18.79)	150
Militaristic Solution Counterarguments	7.4 0.93	6.47*** (16.05)	150

Table 1

Source: Mysore (2019)

Table 1 analyses:

Mysore’s (2019) statistical analyses of Syrian coverage show a systematic source imbalance that is demonstrative of the propaganda model’s third filter.

The data shows that official sources averaged 8.01 citations per article compared to just 2.75 citations for non-official sources—a significant statistical difference of 5.27 citations per article.

This means a typical coverage of nearly three times more government voices than civilian, activist, or independent perspectives.

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4.1.3.1. Content Framing Patterns:

The study also reveals how sourcing shapes narrative focus. Articles averaged 6.14 mentions of "terrorism and/or human rights violations" compared to only 0.13 mentions of "U.S. strategic interests"—a difference of 6.01 (statistically significant at the 1% level). This considerable difference in the balance of coverage creates a moral reasoning that acts as a justification for the USA's interventionist interest, overshadowing its geopolitical aspiration.

4.1.3.2. Solution Bias:

the 7.4 to 0.93 ratio between mentions of "militaristic solutions" versus "counterarguments" to military action shows an 8:1 imbalance, demonstrative of how the heavy reliance on official sourcing naturally drives interventionist narratives, which by default minimise the consideration of alternative solutions such as diplomatic or political solutions.

Egyptian Articles:

Similar patterns are made apparent with Obama's "The people of Egypt have spoken" and Clinton's statements on repression shaping democratic narratives. Alternative voices, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and rural protesters, receive minimal to no coverage as they are deemed an obstacle to progress and a hindrance to democratic success.

This sourcing filter operates not on the apparent censorship but through dependence on official information and quotation of high-level officials, which naturally aligns with the USA foreign policy interests, which is manifested in the support for stability in Egypt while building a case for intervention in Syria.

Syrian Articles:

This quantitative bias is manifested in crucial placement of Obama's statements ("The outrageous use of violence," "abhorrent violence") and Rice's statement that "Syria would be better off without Assad." These official framings overshadow activist voices like Abu

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Mohamed's or Ausama Monajed's, which appear in the article but are perceived as emotional testimonials rather than analytical and interpretive perspectives.

4.1.4. Flak:

The Criticism from powerful actors disciplines the media outlets to maintain alignment with elite narratives through both direct and indirect pressure mechanisms.

Egyptian Coverage:

Minimal flak has emerged due to narrative alignment with U.S.-backed objectives of stability in the region, with the Emphasis on military roles and labour contributions that mirrored official endorsements from Obama and Clinton, creating protective consensus from all different groups.

Syrian Coverage:

The Syrian article's violent framing of events depicting state brutality (e.g., 'massacre' in Dara'a) likely provoked flak from pro-Assad groups, such as Syrian state media claiming protester violence (e.g., '19 police officers' killed), which challenged the anti-Assad narrative that has been propagated by the state. This was countered by U.S official figures such as Senator John McCain, whose August 2011 tweet, "Qaddafi on his way out, Bashar al Assad is next", was a great reinforcement for the media regime collapse narrative, aligning with the USA interventionist goals, with social media becoming a battleground that amplifies flak shaping the discourse supporting the USA foreign policy objectives.

This disciplinary mechanism ensures that media narratives are within the acceptable bounds of the elite's interests by supporting the USA's strategic objectives while marginalising dissenting views.

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4.1.5. War on Terror:

The post-9/11 era arab spring replaced the anti-communism filter with the war on terror filter. Filtering the Arab Spring events through the lenses of counterterrorism and regional security concerns

Egyptian Coverage:

The methodical downplaying of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the Egyptian articles shows the USA's fears of established Islamic governance. El-Katatni's (Muslim Brotherhood spokesman) quote, which emphasises "universal revolution" and the focus on secular labour demands, aligns with the USA's preferences for establishing secular democracies.

Syrian Coverage:

The emphasis on the bilateral strategic relationship between Syria and Iran has been a focal point in articles such as "Security Forces Kill Dozens in Uprisings Around Syria", focused on the Assad-Iranian connection, highlighted in the Obama statement about repression and the outrageous use of violence in Syria, in which it connects it to the broader objectives of the USA in countering-terrorism and solving the regional competition with Iran.

This filter prioritises USA strategic security interests in the region by framing Egypt as a strategic ally threatened by Islamist elements and Syria as a part of the "axis of evil", which encompasses many "adversarial" countries to the USA's interests, in which Syria and Iran are major parts in this political classification.

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4.1.6. revolving door (Backdoor Channel Influence):

Name	Former Government Role	Position in Big Tech / Media	Company	Relevance to Foreign Policy Narratives
Jen Psaki	White House Press Secretary (Biden admin); State Dept. Spox	Host and contributor	MSNBC	Direct transition from the Biden administration to the media continues to shape public discourse in line with U.S. policy
Jay Carney	White House Press Secretary (Obama admin)	SVP, Global Corporate Affairs	Amazon	Leads policy messaging at a major tech giant with global interests
Nick Clegg	UK Deputy PM; advisory ties to U.S. officials	President, Global Affairs	Meta (Facebook)	Handles global content moderation and policy; key figure in narrative control on global conflicts
James Clapper	Director of National Intelligence (DNI)	CNN National Security Analyst	CNN	Influenced 2020 election narrative (e.g. Hunter Biden laptop = "Russian disinfo")
Michael Hayden	Former CIA & NSA Director	CNN Contributor	CNN	Regular media presence shaping national security narratives
Brett McGurk	National Security Council; Special Envoy for Global Coalition	advisor	Venture capital firms like Lux Capital	Involved in narrative development related to Middle East policy
Chris Krebs	Director of CISA (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency)	Director for Cybersecurity Policy for Microsoft. / Consultant	Microsoft, NBC	Post-Gov voice on cybersecurity narratives with national security implications
Richard Stengel	Former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy	Contributor/ political analyst	MSNBC	Key propagator of "information warfare" framing post-government

Table 2

Source: (Table compiled by the author based on information from multiple sources; see Works Cited)

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Analysis of Table 2:

Table 2 illustrates how the “revolving door” strategy employed by high-level former government officials to transition from government to getting jobs in Big Tech and media companies is being used as a channel to facilitate operational networking between government, Big Tech and media to shape the global narratives that align with US interests.

With this table mentioning figures such as “Jen Psaki”, who transitioned from white house press secretary under the Biden administration, to working as an MSNBC host shaping narratives and public discourse by directly transmitting messaging that align with the USA foreign policy; also Jay Carney, who transitioned from Obama’s Press Secretary to Amazon’s Senior Vice President of Global Corporate Affairs leading tech policy messaging at a major tech giant with global interests, Other examples include Nick Clegg (Meta’s President of Global Affairs), James Clapper (CNN analyst), and Michael Hayden (CNN contributor), with both James Clapper and Michael Hayden having TS/SCI clearances and possessing extensive national security and intelligence backgrounds leveraging their government ties and experiences to shape narratives on global scales. In the context of the Arab Spring, specifically in Egypt and Syria, these backdoor channels create informal influences on media, ensuring news coverage alignment with the USA’s foreign policy objectives.

Psaki’s role as an MSNBC contributor before formally joining the company, have likely amplified Obama and Clinton's democratic rhetoric in regards to Egypt, while Carney position at Amazon have facilitated the amplification of the Anti-Assad regime narratives through Amazon owned platforms such as the Washington Post (indirect acquisition by Amazon through its CEO) and Amazon web services which both directly and indirectly helped shape global narratives through social media algorithmic tuning and web hosting.

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Table 2's data highlights how these transitions created informal channels of influence, ensuring media alignment with the USA narratives, which were made clear through the four articles on Egypt and Syria, framing Egypt as a story of democratic triumph, while framing Syria as a failed state that requires immediate intervention. This filter ensures that this structural integration between the government, Big Tech, and traditional media reinforces elite-driven narratives, creating a closed loop cycle of information that feeds the targeted readers the designed framework events, ensuring the dissemination of this discourse is aligned with established power interests.

5. Manufacturing Consent synthesis:

The propaganda model's five filters that consists of ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and war on terror work methodically together to align Big Tech and media narratives with elite and governmental interests, quantitative analyses show stark sourcing biases with official sources outnumbering non-official voices 3:1, while militaristic solutions receive 8 times more coverage than diplomatic solutions.

The additional “revolving door” filter shows how former high government employees transitioning to jobs in Big Tech and media corporations, can create informal channels of influence that exert insider pressure on this corporation, leading them to cooperate with government agendas, ensuring narratives aligns through the systematical integration between state apparatus and private owned media and technology corporations. These filters collectively transform The New York Times into an instrument of soft power, manufacturing consent for U.S. foreign policy through systematic narrative control rather than overt censorship.

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Conclusion:

This Critical Discourse Analysis of The New York Times' coverage of the Arab spring reveals how major media and Big Tech corporations act as soft power instruments, systematically aligning narratives with U.S foreign policy interests using highly sophisticated linguistic strategies rather than pure propaganda.

The comparative analysis exposes the deliberate dichotomy in how media framing of events, such as Egypt, where it was portrayed through celebratory, democratic language, emphasising peaceful transition and secular progress, while Syria was depicted through violent, chaotic imagery, highlighting the humanitarian crises and state brutality being exerted there, justifying interventionist rhetoric by USA government.

Beyond apparent ideological functions, this analysis uncovers how critical embedded mechanisms operate below conscious awareness (unconsciously). the "Problem-Saviour Framing" emerges as the most sophisticated tool that is being implemented throughout these articles by systematically presenting humanitarian crises unfolding in both Egypt and Syria alongside American positioning as the necessary solution, transforming the imperial intentions of the USA into moral imperatives that require swift application.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, amplified with the "revolving door" filter, shows how institutional apparatus systematically shape narratives, with quantitative analysis revealing stark biases in which official sources outnumber non-official voices 3:1, while militaristic offensive solutions receive eight times more coverage than diplomatic solutions.

This study proves the propaganda model's continued relevance when it comes to contemporary texts and context, with the prevalent bias towards official sources and militaristic solutions, it raises serious questions when it comes to the role of media and Big Tech within democratic societies in which journalism risks becoming a tool of government and elites to

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manufacture consent rather than a tools of informing the general public and fostering good faith informed debates, with this pattern being both proved and recognized within the Arab spring coverage of news, making understanding of these mechanisms crucial in understanding how media fragmentation can both creates alternate narratives and risk of narrative manipulation through algorithmic amplification and embedded functions.

Ultimately, this analysis proves how Big Tech and media state power relationship is operating through a complex structure of both formal and informal mechanisms, which shapes the global narratives within the acceptable framework of both the USA government and Western elites. The New York Times functions within structural constraints that directly align with elites interests through a highly sophisticated filtering and editorial process that makes a biased narrative look objective and sincere, creating an effect in the mind reader that the solutions presented are the natural outcome of said events, with the 21st-century challenge for media readers to understand that journalism can work as a tool for manufacturing consent through selective framing, biased sourcing and linguistic choices.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the complex and evolving relationship between Big Tech, traditional media, and U.S foreign policy, revealing their huge impact on shaping global narratives, especially during the uprising in Egypt and Syria (2010-2012). Through a historical lens in chapter 01, this study traced the evolution of traditional media from its origin with Gutenberg’s printing press to its evolution into international corporations taking the role of the “fourth estate”, to Big Tech’s emergence as algorithmic data-driven platforms. These evolutions enabled content and discourse democratisation, but they created new challenges such as surveillance capitalism and public-private surveillance partnerships.

Chapter 02 employs both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Herman and Chomsky’s Manufacturing Consent to analyse how linguistic strategies and institutional filters in New York Times articles and U.S. official statements construct different narratives, with Egypt being framed as a democratic success and Syria as a humanitarian crisis that needs immediate intervention. This comparative analysis, supported by Table 1 quantitative data, shows a systematic source imbalance that is demonstrative of the propaganda model’s third filter, and Table 2 that illustrates how the “revolving door” strategy is employed by high-level former government officials to transition from government to getting jobs in Big Tech and media companies, underlining the traditional media and Big Tech alignment with USA geopolitical interests.

The findings reveal several key insights. First, the Arab Spring exemplifies a sophisticated convergence that is occurring between Big Tech, traditional media and the US foreign policy apparatus, in which narratives are not constructed overtly but through a subtle lexical and linguistic framing, selective sourcing and algorithmic amplification. With Egypt being portrayed as a nonviolent, youth-led revolution, aligning with USA interests in maintaining Egypt as a western ally, while Syria is depicted as a violent, chaotic conflict that justifies American interventionist rhetoric.

General Conclusion

Secondly, the CDA synthesis identifies recurring ideological functions, both apparent (e.g., moral binary construction, U.S. moral authority) and embedded (e.g., problem-saviour framing, secular preference), which operate to both legitimise the USA and delegitimise its adversaries, with the problem-saviour framing emerging as a critical mechanism that embeds USA interventionism as a moral imperative using vivid language while positioning USA as the benevolent saviour that possesses the solution, exploiting the psychologic receptivity of the reader to imperialist narratives masquerading as authoritative directives.

Thirdly, the Manufacturing Consent synthesis demonstrates how structural filters such as ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, war on terror, and the revolving door are systematically aligned with USA geopolitical interests, with Table 1 and Table 2 revealing the institutional mechanisms that drive narrative control.

This dissertation concludes that traditional media and Big Tech have fused into a hybrid ecosystem that amplifies state power and weakens journalistic independence, turning newspaper outlets like The New York Times into soft power instruments that manufacture consent through "problem-saviour" framing that positions U.S. intervention as a morally necessary solution. Big Tech's non-transparent (closed-source) algorithms enable the creation of echo chambers and narrative manipulation for geopolitical agendas, while the "revolving door" between government and corporations creates structural integration that bypasses public accountability, which deeply roots foreign policy narratives. However, this study acknowledges several methodological limitations that may affect the generalizability of these findings in which The study consists of small sample of 10 sources, 4 of which are from a single outlet (The New York Times). Additionally, while the quantitative data provides valuable insights, the quantitative data's broad scope of applicability (Mysore) may lead to misrepresentation of information, as these statistics cannot be definitively applied to Egypt since they focus on Syria despite both being part of the Arab Spring phenomenon.

General Conclusion

The study highlights the urgent need for governance frameworks that ensure algorithmic transparency, sourcing accountability, and media independence from state influence, alongside promoting critical media literacy to counter manipulative framing. Using the Arab Spring as a case study, the research demonstrates how narrative control impacts democratic discourse and geopolitical stability, calling for examination of what constitutes media and technology's role in society while balancing democratic values, corporate autonomy, and public protection.



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الملخص

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة مسألة التقارب بين الشركات التكنولوجية الكبرى (Big Tech) ، ووسائل الإعلام التقليدية، والسياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة، في تشكيل السرديات العالمية، مع تركيز خاص على انتفاضات الربيع العربي في مصر وسوريا (2010-2012). تبحث الدراسة في كيفية تعاون هذه الجهات الفاعلة والمؤثرة، سواء بشكل صريح أو ضمني، في صياغة ونشر سرديات تتماشى مع المصالح الجيوسياسية الأمريكية. ومن خلال تحليل نقدي للخطاب، مدعوم بنموذج "صناعة القبول" لهيرمان وتشومسكي، تفكك هذه الأطروحة الخطابات الإعلامية والتصريحات الرسمية الأمريكية، بهدف الكشف عن الاستراتيجيات اللغوية والمرشحات البنيوية التي تعزز الافتراضات الأيديولوجية. ويُظهر تحليل أربع مقالات من صحيفة نيويورك تايمز، إلى جانب الخطاب الرسمي للمسؤولين الأمريكيين، وجود اختلافات بارزة في التأيير السردية بين حالتي مصر وسوريا، تعكس أجندات استراتيجية أوسع. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن التضخيم الخوارزمي الذي تمارسه الشركات التكنولوجية الكبرى، بالتوازي مع السلطة التحريرية لوسائل الإعلام التقليدية، حين يتوافقان مع التوجهات السياسية الخارجية للولايات المتحدة، يشكلان معًا جهازًا موحدًا للقوة الناعمة قادرًا على التأثير في الرأي العام الدولي. وتدعو الأطروحة إلى تطوير أطر جديدة للحوكمة لمواجهة التحديات الأخلاقية والسياسية التي يفرضها هذا التقارب، مؤكدةً على أهمية حماية الخطاب الديمقراطي واستقلالية وسائل الإعلام في سياق جيوسياسي يتسم برقمنة متزايدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشركات التكنولوجية الكبرى، الإعلام التقليدي، السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية، الربيع العربي، السرديات العالمية.