

# Media Reporting on Egypt's Economy and Bailout Narratives: The role of Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian Media Narratives in Solving Egypt's Economic Crisis

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*A Media Ecology & Strategic Analysis (MESA) Group*

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## Executive Summary

This study examined Egyptian, Russian, and Chinese media perspectives of the Egyptian economy to determine to what extent a future economic crisis in Egypt is probable, and identification of which great powers would most likely lead bailout efforts should an economic crisis unfold. To answer these questions, researchers employed a mixed-method approach analyzing over 500 news articles from the past five years from 18 different Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian native language news sites.

### Key Findings

#### Reports on Likely Bailout Partners

- Convergence in reporting on bailout agents: Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media similarly report the likely bailout agents being the IMF and World Bank in addition to Middle Eastern partners, such as Saudi Arabia.
- Divergence in reporting of bailout agents: China views itself as a bailout partner, but Egypt does not see China as such. Egypt views Russia as a bailout partner, but Russia does not view itself as such.

#### Stability of the Egyptian Economy

- Egyptian Government's Capacity: Egyptian media reports greater governmental capacity in managing its economic crisis, although some indicators suggest the increase reflects the need to garner greater buy-in and support from Egyptian populace.
- Probability of Continued Economic Crisis: Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media largely indicate that the Egyptian government is capable of successfully managing its economic situation, although references of continued economic crisis factors remain largely consistent over time. Further concerns include the risk of terrorist attacks and political instability which could launch Egypt back into recession.

#### Russian and Chinese Interests in Egypt

- Chinese Interests: Chinese interests in Egypt take a long-term, strategic view linking its actions in Egypt to its Belt and Road initiative. Chinese media emphasizes more broadly the benefits of Chinese actions supporting Egyptian economy and people.
- Russian Interests: Russian interests in Egypt take a short-term, tactical view highlighting Russian actors as the key agents of change. Key industries of interest in Russian media reports include: energy cooperation, weapon sales, tourism, and development of the Suez Canal.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, Egypt's economy has suffered multiple economic shocks; including the 2008 global financial crisis, turmoil stemming from the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and an acute foreign exchange crisis in mid-2016. The most recent crisis occurred due to declining revenue from Egypt's tourism sector and the Suez Canal in combination with overvalued exchange rates giving rise to a parallel black-market exchange rate. These factors severely undermined private sector investment leading to large fiscal deficits and high levels of public debt. As a result, the IMF and Egypt signed a \$12 billion loan agreement in November 2016 (Momani, 2018). While Egypt has undertaken significant structural reforms during this time to facilitate growth, significant challenges remain. Domestically, Egypt still experiences high levels of poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, and corruption. As such, Western news outlets and policy experts continue to express concern regarding Egypt's ability to meet the needs of those mired in poverty and the high unemployment rate among Egyptian youth and women (Economist, 2019; Hamed, 2019).

Despite its economic challenges, Egypt nonetheless maintains a strategic position straddling access points to the Middle East, Africa and has control of the Suez Canal; a key shipping lane connecting Asia to the Mediterranean. Thus, Egypt's geostrategic location represents a ripe target for great power competition, including Russian and Chinese regional ambitions (Kouskouvelis, 2017; Mezran & Varvelli, 2019).

Within this context, China and Russian are increasingly investing in Egypt's economy. China has recently invested some \$16-20 billion in the Egyptian economy in the form of loans, investments, and development projects focused primarily on infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, and development of the Suez Canal. In return, Egypt has become a strategic supporter of China's Belt and Road initiative, marking Egypt as the fourth largest recipient of Chinese investment in Africa (TIMEP, 2019).

Likewise, Russian interests are peaking in Egypt, with Presidents Sisi and Putin agreeing to a \$25 billion loan to establish a nuclear power plant in northwestern Egypt; the largest non-raw material export deal in Russian history. Other signs of warming, long-term relations are evident by Russia and Egypt's signing of a comprehensive strategic agreement. This plan demonstrates Russian intent to develop a multifaceted relationship with Egypt premised on military, political, and economic cooperation; including annual joint military exercises, ongoing negotiations regarding Egypt's admittance to the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as negotiations over a \$7 billion Russian industrial area in the Suez Canal Zone (Maher, 2018).

Given Russian and Chinese interests in developing strategic partnerships with Egypt, and Egypt's continued economic plight, this study examines Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media reporting on the Egyptian economy to determine to what extent continued economic turbulence is likely and which great powers might come to Egypt's economic rescue should further crisis ensue.

## Theoretical Approach

This report analyzes Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media as a proxy for gauging national interests through publicly reported plans for investment and cooperation. Broadly speaking, analysis of national media sheds light on how foreign nations make sense of the most pressing problems facing the nation. In this sense, media function as a site whereby citizens ritualistically construct a society's values, identities, and future aspirations (Carey, 2008). Domestically, media play an important role in conveying elites' preferences for policy action (Entman, 2004) with media coverage more broadly influencing audience perceptions on what issues are most important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Furthermore, in the case of economic crises, media narratives play an important role in conveying confidence to the public that the host government is successfully managing the crisis with plans for future growth and reform (Cooley & Stokes, 2018).

The importance of media coverage extends beyond national borders, stretching into the international arena. International media coverage, and the narratives embedded in that coverage, can serve as a soft power resource (Roselle, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2014) with media coverage of international issues reflecting a battle ground or contestation of competing perspectives (Nye, 2004; Roselle et al., 2014). Like in the case of domestic media, analysis of foreign media reporting on international affairs reveals how a nation understands its role and interests in global affairs (Hinck, Cooley, & Kluver, 2019). This is especially the case as nations attempt to persuade foreign audiences of the source nation's goodwill and the attractiveness of its international policies.

Because of these factors, analysis of Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media can shed light on what all three nations attempt to make of affairs related to Egypt's economy. The analysis also provides insight into which great powers are likely to intervene in the case of future economic crisis. Additionally, media analysis provides us with a vantage point to both determine levels of public support and awareness regarding Egypt's economic recovery and whether there is any convergence on which states, or great powers, would be most instrumental in aiding Egypt.

## Method

To determine which great powers are most likely to lead bailout efforts and the extent to which Egypt's economy may continue to struggle, this study employed a mixed-methods approach. This section describes what media sources were selected for analysis, the time frame of coverage captured, how articles were selected, and how the data was analyzed.

### Data Collection

To answer the Tab2A question, researchers examined five years of news coverage from Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian news media, spanning from December 2014 to December 2019. In total, 18 news sources were selected for analysis based on their circulation, prestige, and variety of viewpoints, and availability within the Factiva database. Table 1. lists the 18 sources from each country.

<i>Egyptian</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Russian</i>
Al-Ahrām	Xinhua	Rossiyskaya Gazeta
Al-Akhhbār	Renmin Ribao (people's daily)	Izvestia
Al-Ahrār	Global Times	Kommersant
Al-Wafd	China Business News	Vedomosti Daily Newspaper
Al-Maydān		Argumenty i Fakty
Al-Usbū		RIA
Arab Finance		TASS

Articles selected for analysis included those referencing “economic crisis” and occurring within “Egypt” as a region. In total, 522 articles were sampled at a 95% confidence interval for analysis. Table 2. lists the total number of hits and articles sampled from each country.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total Hits</i>	<i># Sample (95% CI)</i>
Egypt	620	240
China	220	145
Russia	212	137

### Data Analysis

Researchers employed a mixed-methods approach to the data analyses. First, researchers created a quantitative content coding schema adapted from previous research on economic resiliency narratives (Cooley & Stokes, 2018) with the addition of five broad categories of indicators tailored to this study, including: mentions of the causes of the crisis, indicators of crisis being likely, indicators of crisis being unlikely, potential bailout leaders, and interest in investment. The quantitative data was broken down into two phases to determine shifts in

reporting. Phase 1 included articles reported from December 2015 to June 2016, and Phase 2 included articles from July 2016 to December 2019.

In addition to the quantitative content analysis, researchers also conducted a qualitative narrative analysis. Narratives were operationalized using Burke's (1969a; 1969b) definition of narratives including acts, agents, scene, instrument, and purpose. This narrative methodology is particularly relevant during economic crisis situations because media translate random events into news stories with these stories establishing narrative relationships or dependencies between agents, acts, scenes, instruments, and purposes. Although there are numerous ways in which the different relationships between narrative elements or ratios enable and/or constrain events and actions (Kneupper, 1979), analysis of narrative relationships, or ratios, can determine what elements drive a crisis situation and how to solve it (Millar & Heath, 2004), including which narrative element dominates others thereby determining what drives or motivates an event. Through these ratios researchers can not only reveal the strategic nature of media narratives, but also expose where narratives diverge or converge. To compare shifts in the narrative ratios, data from each country was broken down evenly into five phases.

## Findings

This section details the findings from our analysis organized by four research questions. Below is the summary of key findings:

### **RQ1. How does Egyptian media narratives report upon Egypt's economic crisis?**

- Evidence indicating greater governmental capacity to address economic crises: Reports of Egyptian government actively implementing reform measures and policies influencing its economic environment.
- Mixed indicators of public support for government policies: Egyptian government officials increasingly explaining the reasoning behind its policies, but it is unclear whether this action is effective or more reactionary to avoid potential decreases in public support.

### **RQ2. How does Egyptian, Russian, and Chinese news report upon the likelihood of continued economic crisis in Egypt?**

- Indicators of crisis being unlikely: All three nations report greater Egyptian ability to manage its economic crisis from Phase 1 to Phase 2 through positive reporting of Egyptian reform policies and increased reporting of resiliency narratives.
- Indicators of crisis being likely: Russian media reports of crisis indicators increases from Phase 1 to 2 while Egyptian and Chinese media indicators of crisis remain consistent; suggesting the Egyptian economy continues to struggle despite policies being enacted to resolve its economic problems.
- Divergences in media perspectives: Russian media reports on causes less often than both Chinese and Egyptian media while also showing a decline in international causes attributable to Egypt's economic downturns. Chinese media initially reported more on both domestic and international causes, although this declines in both categories as time went on. Finally, Egyptian media more frequently reports upon domestic causes than international, although both categories remain consistent across time periods.

### **RQ3. What bailout partners are reported in Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media?**

- Convergence in media reporting: Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media similarly report the likelihood of bailout agents being the IMF and World Bank in addition to Middle Eastern partners, such as Saudi Arabia.
- Divergence in media reporting: China views itself as a bailout partner, but Egypt does not see China as such. Egypt views Russia as a bailout partner, but Russia does not view itself as such.
- Comparison of indirect bailout interests: Chinese indirect interests in bailing out the Egyptian economy tend to be more strategic and long term, supportive of its Belt and Road initiative. Contrastingly, Russian interests are more tactical and industry specific.



Both Russian and Chinese media express concerns regarding political instability and terrorism within Egypt.

**RQ4. What media narratives are present in Chinese and Russian media explaining their respective interests in Egypt surrounding the Egyptian economic crisis?**

- Chinese narratives were consistent across time and emphasized China’s broader positive impact on the Egyptian economy. Emphasis was placed on China’s long-term, strategic interests in Egypt’s economy in support of its Belt and Road initiative by stressing actions taken by both the Chinese and Egyptians to strengthen the Egyptian economy and provide opportunities for the Egyptian people.
- Russian media narratives fluctuated across time and in ratios and topics. Emphasis was placed more on short-term, tactical areas where Russia and Egypt could build relations. Russian narratives placed focus on Russian agents as the dominant actors influencing Russian-Egyptian relations, suggesting a more inwardly focused view of its self rather than an equal partnership with Egypt.

RQ1. Egyptian Media Narratives Reporting on Egypt’s Economic Crisis

To determine the likelihood of continued economic crisis in Egypt, researchers qualitatively analyzed the narrative ratios present in Egyptian media over time. Findings suggest two key conclusions:

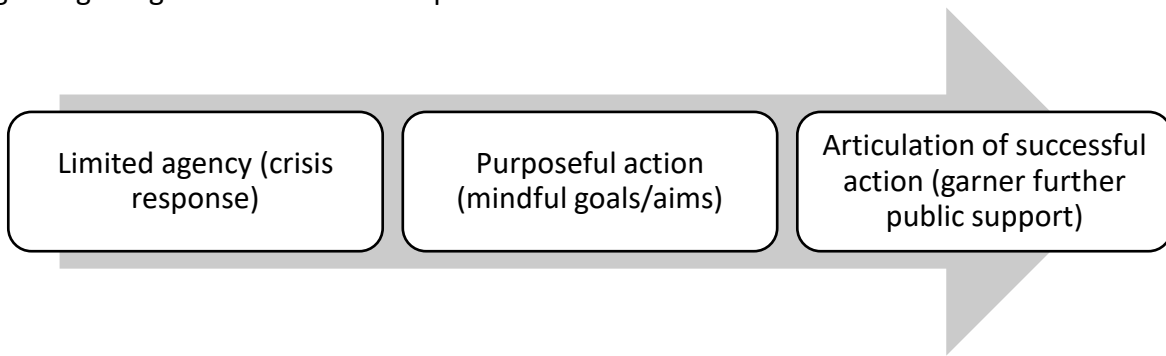
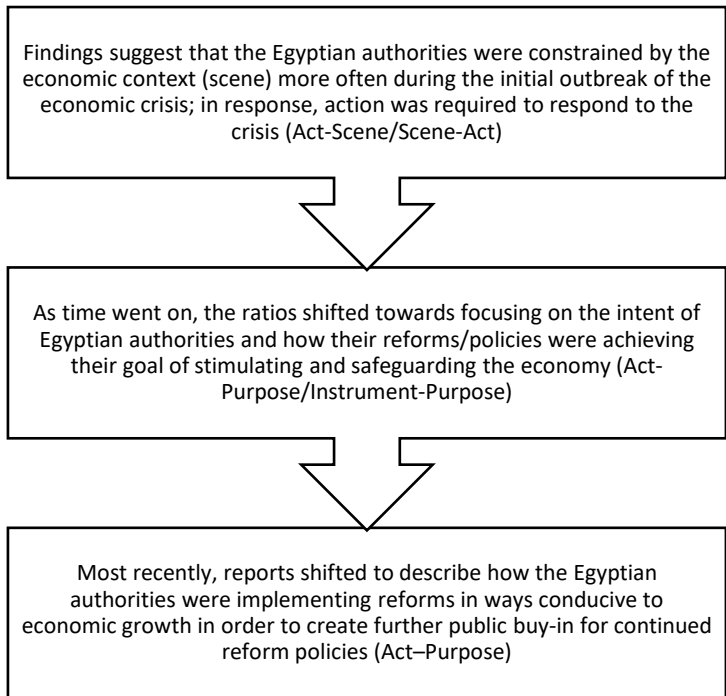
- Evidence indicating greater governmental capacity to address economic crises: Reports of Egyptian government actively implementing reform measures and policies influencing its economic environment.
- Mixed indicators of public support for government policies: Egyptian government officials increasingly explain the reasoning behind its policies, but it is unclear whether this action is effective or simply reactionary to prevent potential decreases in public support.

Egyptian media reports emphasized the government’s ability to manage the crisis, suggesting increased government capacity as time went on. As Table 3 summarizes, Egyptian authorities were originally placed in a crisis-response mode during the earlier phases of the crisis, as evidenced by the frequency of the scene-act ratio during initial reporting of the ensuing crisis. In other words, the initial severity of the crisis (scene) dictated response options from the state (actions).

<i>Ratio</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Average across time</i>
<b>Act-purpose</b>	39	3.15
<b>Act-scene</b>	51	2.75
<b>Scene-act</b>	49	2.02

However, during the middle phase of the crisis, Egyptian media narratives flipped from reporting scene-act ratios to act-scene ratios; thereby moving from stressing the scene as constraining state actions toward stressing how the government’s response (actions) was now able to shape its environment (scene).

Finally, as more time went on, Egyptian media narratives began focusing on explaining the purpose behind state policies. This last shift suggests more importance given to explaining how or why the state was pursuing its reform policies. This provides some evidence of greater governmental agency whereby its environment was no longer viewed as important, or dictating actions; however, the need for explaining government policies may suggest that the government experienced a greater need for ensuring buy-in from the public in support of continued reforms, which would suggest doubts regarding the government’s reform plans.



Qualitative excerpts from Egyptian media reporting of these shifts can be found in appendix A.

## RQ2. Egyptian Economic Crisis Likelihood: Comparison of Egyptian, Russian, and Chinese News Coverage

To provide further analysis regarding the likelihood of continued economic crisis in Egypt, researchers compared Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media reporting on Egypt’s economy. Below are the key findings:

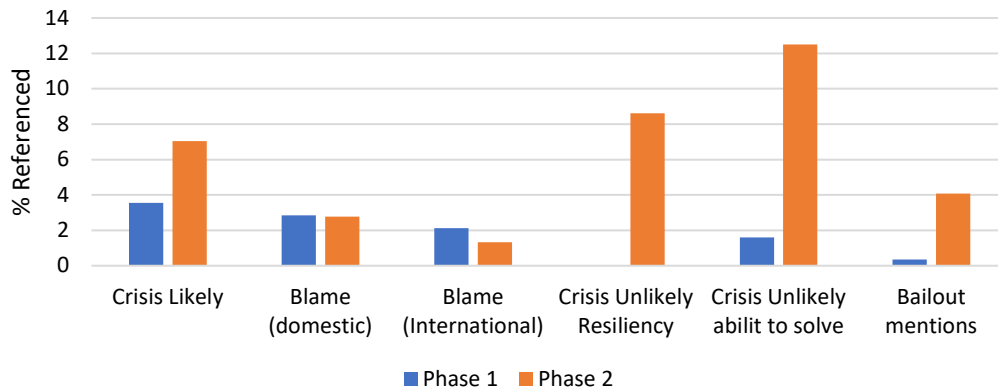
- Indicators of crisis being unlikely: All three nations report greater Egyptian ability to manage its economic crisis from Phase 1 to Phase 2 both through positive reporting of

Egyptian reform policies successfully resolving economic problems and through increased reporting of resiliency narratives. Russian media most drastically increases its positive reporting from Phases 1 to 2, whereas Egyptian and Chinese media reports demonstrate smaller increases in both categories.

- **Indicators of crisis being likely:** Russian media reports of crisis indicators increases from Phase 1 to 2 while Egyptian and Chinese media indicators of crisis remain consistent. This suggests the Egyptian economy continues to struggle, despite policies being enacted to resolve Egypt’s economic problems.
- **Divergences in media perspectives:** Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media differ in their frequency of reporting regarding causes of Egypt’s economic crisis. Russian media reports on causes less often than both Chinese and Egyptian media, while also showing a decline in international attribution. Chinese media initially reported more upon both domestic and international causes, although declines in both categories as time went on. Finally, Egyptian media more frequently reports upon domestic causes than international ones, although both categories remain consistent across time periods.

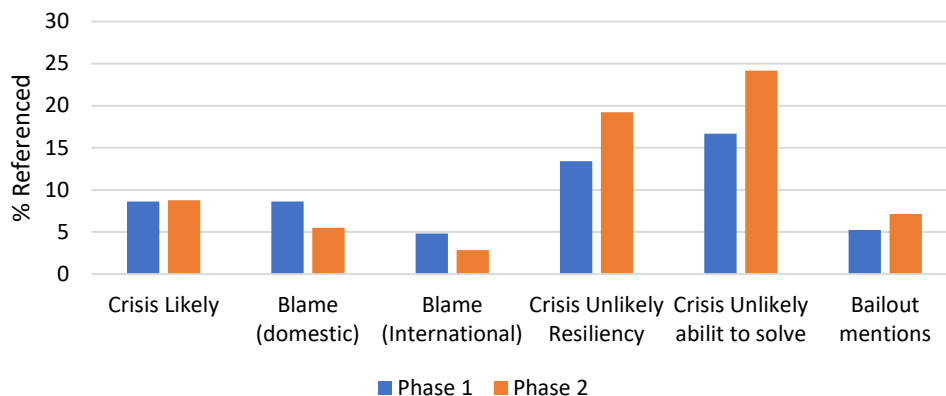
Analysis of Russian media reports largely support the Egyptian government’s ability to manage its economic crisis, with some indicators suggesting continued areas for future concern. As Figure 1 demonstrates, despite Russian reporting on Egypt’s economic crisis (including a larger number of references to ongoing crises from Phase 1 to 2), Russian media substantially increased its positive portrayals of the Egyptian government’s ability to handle the crises through reports of resiliency narratives. In addition, Russian media had mentions of specific reform policies shown as capable of addressing Egypt’s economic problems.

Figure 1. Russian Media Portrayals of Egypt's Economic Crisis



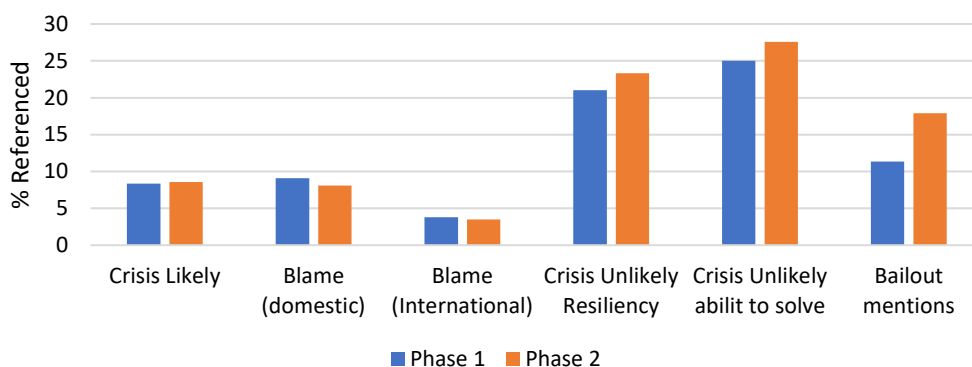
As Figure 2 shows, Chinese media more consistently reports upon Egypt’s economic crisis from Phases 1 and 2. Indicators of continued crises are balanced during Phases 1 and 2, while citing of domestic and international causes for economic problems decrease. Similar to Russian media reporting, although less drastic, Chinese media increases its referencing of Egyptian authorities’ ability to implement policies successfully addressing Egypt’s economic woes.

Figure 2. Chinese Media Portrayals of Egypt's Economic Crisis



As Figure 3 shows, Egyptian media reporting on its economic crisis closely mirror's Chinese reports through consistent mentioning of discussions of the causes of crisis, including domestic and international causes in similar fashions across both phases. However, indicators of crises being unlikely, both through resiliency narratives and specific mentions of positive reform efforts, significantly outweigh negative reporting.

Figure 3. Egyptian Media Portrayals of Egypt's Economic Crisis



Taken together, comparisons of Russian, Chinese, and Egyptian media largely converge in their more positive depiction of the Egyptian government taking active steps to manage the economy. However, small divergences in media reporting are evident in Russian media reporting a clearer trajectory of success through sharper increases in indicators of further crisis being unlikely from Phase 1 and 2; compared to Egyptian and Chinese media reporting of a more consistent picture of how the Egyptian government has taken steps to address its economic crises.

### RQ3. Comparison of Reported Bailout Partners in Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian Media

Data was quantitatively coded for both explicit references of potential bailout partners within Egyptian, Chinese and Russian media, in addition to indirect measures of bailout interests within Chinese and Russian media. Below are the key findings:

- Convergence in media reporting: Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media similarly report the likelihood of bailout agents being the IMF and World Bank; in addition to Middle Eastern partners such as Saudi Arabia.
- Divergence in media reporting: China views itself as a bailout partner, but Egypt does not see China as such. Egypt views Russia as a bailout partner, but Russia does not view itself as such.
- Comparison of indirect bailout interests: Chinese indirect interests in bailing out the Egyptian economy tend to be more strategic and long term, supportive of its Belt and Road initiative. Contrastingly Russian interests are more tactical and industry specific. Both Russian and Chinese media express concerns regarding political instability and terrorism within Egypt.

### Comparison of Direct References to Bailout Agents within Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian Media

Comparison of Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian direct references to potential bailout leaders demonstrates a clear preference for international institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, to lead bailout efforts. However, there is also convergence in Middle Eastern countries, most notably Saudi Arabia, as likewise playing an active role in supporting the Egyptian economy. Interestingly, there is some divergence when it comes to preferences regarding Russia or China's role as a potential bailout partner. Whereas Egyptian media places a slight preference for Russia as a bailout leader, Russian media does not report any indication of a willingness to do so. Furthermore, whereas China expresses a strong desire to lead potential bailout efforts, Egyptian media does not report China as a likely bailout leader. Figure 4 reports the frequencies of direct references to bailout agents reported in Egyptian, Chinese, and Russian media and Figure 5 shows the convergences and divergences of reported bailout agents.

Figure 4. Comparison of Egyptian, Russian, and Chinese Media References to Desired Bailout Agents

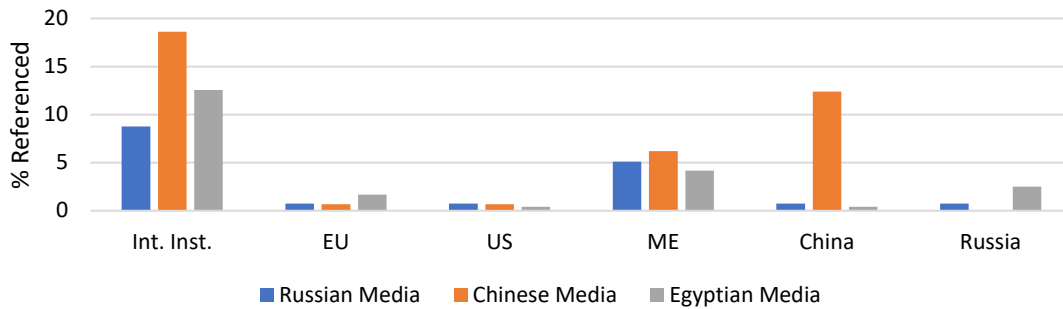
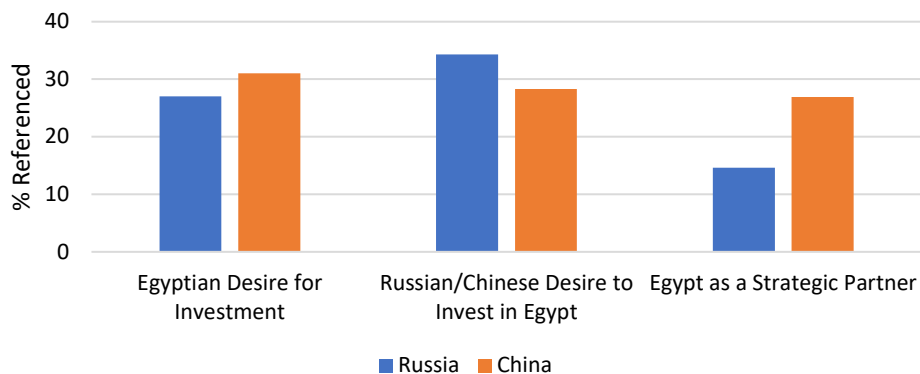


Figure 5. Bailout Leader Comparisons				
	China	Russia	ME	IMF/WB
Egyptian Media		x	x	x
Chinese Media	x		x	x
Russian Media			x	x

Comparison of Indirect Bailout Interests in Chinese and Russian Media

Figure 6 provides indirect measures of potential bailout interests by Russian and Chinese media. Here, both Chinese and Russian media report considerable interest in increasing investment both from and into Egypt. However, these indicators could point to perceived benefits from closer economic ties between Russia or China and Egypt, rather than going so far as to lead bailout efforts. Nonetheless, there is some indication that China might be more willing to invest in Egypt than Russia, given Chinese media reporting a stronger view of Egypt as a strategic partner than Russia.

Figure 6. Indicators of Bailout Interest: Russian and Chinese Media Perceptions



Qualitative analysis of Russian and Chinese news reporting provides further support that China would be a more interested bailout partner than Russia. Chinese media reports on investments into Egypt tend to take a more strategic, long-term view than Russian media.

Chinese media is more likely to focus on broad areas of economic cooperation, including reports on multiple events staged in Egypt to garner greater Egyptian-Chinese collaborations and exchanges. These efforts are overwhelmingly tied to China's larger Belt and Road initiative, including building greater access into the Middle East and Africa.

Russian media reporting, on the other hand, tends to focus on more tactical areas of investment, including more specific sectors such as weapon sales, tourism, and energy cooperation. Furthermore, in discussions of tourism, Russian media takes a more introspective approach, highlighting other potential tourist destinations outside of Egypt. In this case, the downing of a Russian airplane and conflict over wheat imports marked a wedge separating Russian-Egyptian cooperation.

Finally, both Russian and Chinese media focused more extensively on the perils of political instability in Egypt, including voicing significant concerns over possible terrorist attacks than was seen in Egyptian news reporting. In this sense, Chinese and Russian media narratives may highlight an unexamined area of concern regarding Egypt's political and security stability.

#### RQ4. Qualitative Narrative Ratios in Chinese and Russian Media

Chinese and Russian media narratives were qualitatively identified by comparing the dominant narrative ratios embedded in their reporting of the Egyptian economic crisis. Shifts in narrative ratios were determined by dividing the data into five equal phases based on number of articles collected allowing for comparison of narrative shifts across time. Below are the key findings:

- Chinese narratives were consistent across time and emphasized China's broader positive impact on the Egyptian economy. Emphasis was placed on China's long-term, strategic interests in Egypt's economy in support of its Belt and Road initiative by stressing actions taken by both the Chinese and Egyptians to strengthen the Egyptian economy and provide opportunities for the Egyptian people.
- Russian media narratives fluctuated across time and in ratios and topics. Emphasis was placed more on short-term, tactical areas where Russia and Egypt could build relations. Russian narratives placed focus on Russian agents as the dominant actors influencing Russian-Egyptian relations, suggesting a more inwardly focused view of its self rather than an equal partnership with Egypt.

#### Chinese Media Narratives

Chinese media narratives remained fairly balanced throughout their reporting on the Egyptian economic crisis. The top three most occurring ratios include the Act-purpose, Act-scene, and Scene-act ratios. As Table 4. demonstrates, not only were Chinese narrative ratios consistently mentioned throughout the period of coverage, but the top three occurring ratios are also evenly mentioned.

<i>Ratio</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Average across time</i>
Scene-act	28	3.04
Act-scene	34	3.24
Act-purpose	28	3.04

Act-purpose narratives focused overwhelmingly on covering specific events or meetings (actions) that were then used to report upon China’s growing influence and close ties with Egypt (purpose). The purposes reported generally included boosting trade and investment, but in doing so were most frequently tied to China’s Belt and Road initiative; reflective of China’s primary goal of Egyptian-Chinese relations being its support for China’s overarching strategic vision of the Belt and Road initiative.

Act-scene narratives varied widely, including various mentions of actions taken by the Egyptian government to reform and address its economic crises, its relations with Saudi Arabia, events bolstering its tourism industry and promoting trade relations with China. In these cases, Chinese media emphasized the specific steps Egypt was taking in a variety of settings designed to take control and shape its environment. The scenes in which these actions were occurring again varied, although overall less so than the Acts by stressing the wider economic situation Egypt faced, challenges to its tourism industry, actions taken to address concerns of terrorist activities, and placing Egyptian-Chinese cooperative acts within a wider lens of past Chinese-Egyptian cooperation.

Scene-act narratives provided focus on the situation Egypt found itself in, primarily focused on an equally balanced mix of economic success and challenges, broader Egyptian relations with China and Saudi Arabia, and, to a lesser extent, concerns over instability and terrorism in the Middle East more broadly. While the scenes were more consistent in their topics of coverage, the specific acts taken by the Egyptian government in response to these situations varied widely, from specific reform policies, to updates on new economic crisis events, actions taken by the IMF, Egyptian handing over control of disputed islands to Saudi Arabia, and various actions supporting its tourism industry and bolstering Chinese-Egyptian trade ties.

Table 5. breaks down the frequencies of topics reported by Chinese media in discussing Egypt’s economic crisis.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
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Egyptian-Chinese trade and scientific expositions and symposiums	10
Egyptian-Chinese bilateral visits and official meetings (including G20 meeting hosted in China)	11
Positive general relations between China and Egypt (Belt Road, cultural diplomacy)	18
Chinese opportunities for investment into Egypt	11
Suez Canal	7
Tourism industry	16
IMF/World Bank/Credit ratings	15
Positive developments/reforms of economy	22
Economic weakness (crisis, lack of investment, currency)	9
Internal Egyptian politics	8
Egyptian-Saudi relations	4
Dam politics (Sudan, Ethiopia)	4
Other	10

### Russian Media Narratives

Russian media narratives fluctuated across time regarding both reported topics and ratios. As table 6 reports, the top three recurring narrative ratios were Instrument-purpose, Agent-act, and Scene-act. Whereas during the early period of news coverage Russian narratives highlighted Russia’s past history of strong African-Russian relations and economic cooperation between Russia and Egypt, during the more recent and middle periods Russian narratives shifted towards Scene-act, and, overwhelmingly, Agent-act narratives.

<i>Ratio</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Average across time</i>
Instrument-purpose	14	4.57
Agent-act	67	2.51
Scene-act	19	2.89

Scene-act narratives depicted Russian investment in African and Egyptian industry as the result of a history of Russian support for African countries. In opposition to China’s balanced reporting about Egypt’s economic crisis, Russia’s scene-act narratives do not appear to build toward a larger strategy regarding Egypt’s economic crisis. Russia’s history of cooperation and investment in African countries drives the action in these early narratives, but this ratio does not emerge as the overarching dominant narrative. While the scene includes descriptions of Russia’s history of investments in foreign nations, military collaboration with Egypt, and the Russian-Arab Forum of Cooperation, the acts generally coalesce in speaking towards Russia’s role as modernizer and defender of African interests. Specific acts include Russia’s efforts to provide economic and military opportunity for African countries, to train Africa’s new and developing workforce, and to protect Africa from Western exploitation.

Agent-act narratives emerged as the dominant disposition toward Egypt’s economic crisis, and were mentioned nearly three times as frequently compared to the other narrative ratios. The agent-act ratio includes a wide variety of actors, including, Russian nuclear energy companies—especially Rosatom, Russian tour operators, Russian aviation experts, Russian and Egyptian military, Vladimir Putin, Rex Tillerson and Donald Trump, Egypt’s tourism and aviation industry, Egypt’s economy, and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Within these ratios, Russian media highlighted Rosatom, Russian and Egyptian military, and Russian tour operators as the engines of cooperation and modernization in Egypt. Acts for those ratios included intergovernmental agreements on military, economic, and nuclear investments, as well as discussions about the restoration of tourism from Russia. Despite an array of agents, Russian-related agents drove the action in those narratives. Thus, the agent-act narrative depicts Russia and Russian industries as independent and adaptive actors regarding Russia’s tourism in Egypt and wheat exports to Egypt. While the A321 incident and Egypt’s ban on wheat imports with ergot content (i.e., parasitic mushroom) are mentioned, the decision by Russia’s tourism and agricultural industries to turn to domestic and foreign markets demonstrate the adaptability of Russian actors who control the situation, rather than letting the scene control their actions. This further invite audience dispositions toward Russia and Russian industries as relevant economic players for Egypt and rhetorically insulates them from allowing other agents or scenes drive their actions. Finally, in contrast to the importance of purpose in China’s narrative ratios (e.g., Belt Road Initiative), Russian narratives lack a clear overarching idea that defines Russia’s actions regarding Egypt.

Instrument-purpose narratives emerged toward the end of Russia’s news coverage, although similar in average time period to agent-act narratives. Instruments included a variety of short-term and long-term agreements, projects, and initiatives that aim at entering and modernizing the African market and infrastructure. Specifically, Russia’s instrument-purpose narratives consider the creation of a Russian industrial zone in Egypt as an important means to expand Russian enterprises of heavy automotive industry, petrochemicals, energy, medicine, building materials, and high-tech industrial products into markets in the Middle East and Africa. Other instrument-purpose narratives focus on nuclear energy and natural gas projects and agreements with a variety of other nations (e.g., China, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Turkey, Belarus). Here, Russia’s nuclear technology and intergovernmental agreements function as the motivation to further gain influence in the global energy market. Within those narrative, bringing Russian technology and know-how to foreign countries appear as an important first step toward Russia’s goal of managing global energy markets, especially natural gas and nuclear power (i.e., Rosatom, Rosneft).

Table 7. breaks down the frequencies of topics reported by Russian media in discussing Egypt’s economic crisis.

<b>Table 7. Russian Media Topic Frequencies</b>	
<i>Topic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
History of good African -Russian relations	16

Russia as modernizer and defender of African countries against Western influence	11
Russian nuclear companies as “engines of nuclear modernization” in foreign countries	18
Restoring Russian-Egyptian tourism industry after A321 incident	22
Russia reorients to other countries for wheat exports; not dependent on Egyptian markets	9
Russia does not dependent on foreign tourist destinations; high demand for domestic tourism	12
Investment in Egyptian markets and industries	15
Egypt’s economy depends on Russian tourism	8
Russian-Egyptian military and economic cooperation	11
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## Appendix

<b>Appendix A. Qualitative Examples of Egyptian Media Ratios</b>
<b>Scene-act</b>
<p>MP Basant Fahmi called for a speedy plan to save the Egyptian economy over the next six months, citing warnings from two international reports on Egypt that pointed to the possibility of a disaster due to the economic crisis. Fahmi said during the meeting of the Economic Affairs Committee that she will send the reports to the Chairman of the Committee to be followed by workshops to make recommendations and develop a plan to protect the Egyptian economy or else 'we will face a big problem, we must catch up the issue or it would be a disaster' (199)</p>
<p>The state must stand its utmost to dismiss troubled factories from its crisis. We must hear the cries of the tourists, the latest of which came from the tourism investors in Sinai who are facing difficult circumstances, as are all the other participants in this important industry, which, if well dealt with, could break our crisis with foreign exchange - and be the bond in balancing the Our budget, and save us from the economic crisis, which is intensifying day by day, in the complex circumstances facing us, and the deliberate blockade in order that Egypt is no longer a major player in the affairs of the region...This "lobby", which has accumulated its wealth of corruption, realizes that foreign investment will not come to a country where local investment escapes participation, and its symbols sit reassured that its money abroad, and strives to be the loudest voice through the dominance of private media, and through the transfer Fragile party entities, to be the corruption party aides in parliament, and its presence in political life...I watched three television programs, one tone is that the Egyptian "investors" who stopped their investments, they did so because they want to "reassure"...What the state did to pamper them (and not only to reassure them !!) more than to count. Taxes on the profits of the stock exchange were abolished...And progressive taxes have become talk of an act of the</p>

devil ...The real question to be asked is: Who needs the "reassurance messages"?...Those who looted what they do not deserve, or the citizen who is really seeking to build his country, and bear all the burdens for it. There is no difference here between a serious Egyptian investor who should humiliate him before all odds, and a citizen who seeks an honest job opportunity that will not be provided to him except relying first on national and public investment ?! We tell the honest investors reassured ... Reassure us. (193)

#### **Act-scene**

Foreign exchange reserve balances witnessed eight consecutive gains in 2017 with an estimated total of 11.8 billion dollars, confirming that the plan to build reserve balances succeeded in Supporting its balances covering more than 7 months of commodity imports to Egypt. The source, in remarks, that the balances of foreign reserves of Egypt was recorded 24.3 billion dollars at the end of December 2016 and rose by the end of August 2017, to 36.1 billion dollars, stressing that the increase reflects the improvement of Egypt's dollar resources in addition to confidence in measures to reform the Egyptian economy, which Increased foreign investment in government debt instruments of Egypt. (105)

He pointed out that the indicators of the performance of the Egyptian economy continue to perform strongly as the economic growth rate continued to rise to reach the first half of the current fiscal year 5.5%, the highest growth rate achieved by the state since 2008 and the highest growth rate achieved by one of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, especially as it comes. After the government succeeded in raising the growth rate to 5.3% in 2017/2018 against an average growth of 2.3% in the period from 2011 to 2014, supported by a strong performance and a positive contribution from investments and exports, which is reflected in the decline in unemployment rates to less than 10% June 2018, the lowest rate since 2010. He added that the strength of the Egyptian economy is also confirmed by the increase in international reserves significantly to reach about 42.6 billion dollars at the end of last December, which coincided with the decline in annual and monthly inflation rates recently. (39)

#### **Act-Purpose**

Tourism Minister Rania Al-Mashat said on Saturday that the tourism sector represents 10% of the world GDP equivalent to 8.3 trillion dollars and provides 300 million jobs worldwide. It also represents 30% of service exports and 7% of exports. World equivalent to \$ 1.4 trillion...She added that the Egyptian tourism has been able to overcome many obstacles and challenges that made it more solid. The Ministry is working on the implementation of the structural reform program for the development of the tourism sector, which was launched on 26 November last from the House of Representatives to implement the vision of the ministry in achieving sustainable tourism development During the formulation and implementation of structural reforms aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the sector and in line with global trends, which contributes to turn the challenges into opportunities that can be used to develop the sector and make it more resilient to shocks. (52)

AUC's Alternative Policy Solutions Project organized a panel discussion entitled "Tax Reform between Growth and Justice" on the occasion of the first two policy papers on tax reform in Egypt. The session was hosted by Abdel Fattah El Gebaly, an economist, and Dr. Mostafa Abdel Kader, International Tax Advisor at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and former head of the Tax Authority. The discussion focused on opportunities to use the tax system as a tool for growth and as a means of mitigating the effects of the current economic crisis , and to review the challenges faced by the state in achieving a more efficient tax system. In this context, the speakers discussed the fairness of the existing tax system, and the need to consider the tax policy in a comprehensive manner that puts the tax system within the framework of the fiscal policy of the State and the objectives and directions of economic development. (91)