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# Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies



(ATINER)

## Volume 6, Issue 2, April 2020

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ATINER is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent and non-profit **Association** with a **Mission** to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, **as well as engage with professionals from other fields**. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to *Plato's Academy* and *Aristotle's Lyceum*. Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, ***Athens "...is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing"***. ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*). It is ATINER's **mission** to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. *Education* and *(Re)searching* for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why *Education* and *Research* are the two core words in ATINER's name.

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# Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

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The current issue is the second of the sixth volume of the *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* (AJMS), published by the [Athens Institute for Education and Research](#).

Gregory T. Papanikos  
President

ATINER





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- Submission of Paper: **18 May 2020**

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## Othering Muslims? A Content Analysis of the Spanish Press Coverage<sup>1</sup>

By Rafael Durán\*

*By conducting a media frame analysis, the aim of this paper is to know whether and to what extent the Spanish large-circulation quality newspapers 'Abc,' 'El País' and 'La Vanguardia' portray Muslims and Islam as a strange, monolithic and problematic 'other'. Variations according to ideology and the nature of the events reported are observed. This is an empirical and longitudinal content analysis examining the full coverage (432 texts, once news related to terrorism were excluded) throughout an entire year (2017). Insofar as the media shape public opinion, to analyse media symbolic construction of Muslims and Islam as included/excluded, diverse/monolithic, and friendly/threatening may be helpful in trying to explain perceptions and attitudes toward them. Findings demonstrate (i) that the Spanish media coverage is more homogenising than exclusive, although it presents both Islamophobic traits, and (ii) that it is more balanced in its framing of Muslims and Islam as a problem, and in fact it tends to portray the Islamic as non-problematic. The democratic principle of pluralism of information is translated, in any case, into a plurality of frames. It is tentatively concluded that the media have the potential to foster tolerance by providing balanced coverage. The paper is expected to further contribute to comparative investigations.*

**Keywords:** Spain, Islam, Muslims, Frame theory, Islamophobia.

### Introduction

According to the Union of Muslim Communities in Spain (UCIDE, as in Spanish), the “Muslim population” residing in this South European country almost reached 1.95 million people (4.2% of total population) in 2017 (UCIDE 2018), thus amounting to close four hundred thousand more people than six years before (UCIDE 2012). On the other hand, mostly Muslim Moroccans have become the largest immigrant community living in Spain.<sup>2</sup> Like so many democracies, Spain has also experienced a rise in attitudes of rejection and hate incidents against Muslims along the last years.<sup>3</sup> Europe as De Bellaigue (2018) points out “has

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<sup>1</sup>Research for this paper was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness, research project num. DER2017-84178-P. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics (Athens Institute for Education and Research). The author acknowledge helpful feedback and comments from conference participants and invaluable suggestions from two anonymous reviewers.

\* Associate Professor, University of Málaga, Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Official data are provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (<https://www.ine.es>).

<sup>3</sup>See the reports on Islamophobia in Europe by the Foundation SETA on <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com>. As to the Spanish case, the annual reports by the Citizen Platform against Islamophobia are available at <http://plataformaciudadanacontralaislamofobia.org>.

become more anti-Muslim as it has become more Muslim”. In his view, “as long as the Muslim population continues to increase so quickly, Islam will continue to cause apprehension among very large numbers of Europeans.”<sup>4</sup>

It is a widespread assumption, on the one hand, that liberal values and individuals of Islamic faith and/or culture (Muslims hereinafter) are incompatible. On the other, it is a common place to talk about ‘the’ Western opinion and attitude (as if unique) towards Muslims and Islam (M&I hereinafter).<sup>5</sup> By questioning both premises (Bowe and Makki 2016, Brown 2006, Greenberg and Miazhevich 2012), the aim of this study is to analyse the image(s) of M&I that mass media are portraying to the public in Spain the extent to which the Spanish press is contributing to either inclusion or exclusion of Muslims as part of ‘us’, and thus to either the acceptance or rejection of ‘them’. In other words, to what extent is the press imposing a dichotomous vision confronting ‘us,’ the Westerners, with ‘them,’ the Oriental ‘other’ (Said 1978), the strange ‘other’ (Bauman 2016), the Muslim ‘other’ (see also Said 1981)? There are empirical studies focused on other countries, but there is almost a research void regarding the Spanish case.<sup>6</sup> As long as the media are relevant in the process of public opinion building, it is worth turning attention to the collective imaginary of M&I they contribute to shape.

It is not unusual to find critical opinions by Muslims themselves over the distorted image that ‘the’ media portray of Islam, either in in-depth interviews (Butler-Sloss and Kessler 2015, Desrues and Pérez-Yruela 2008), in group discussions (Mijares and Lems 2018) or in surveys (Ameli and Merali 2015). Authors call for attention to the fact that this results in Muslims distancing themselves from the society which they are part of (Kunst et al. 2012). It is a critical comment usually made in generic terms, without empirical evidence to support it, and not merely on the part of Muslims. It is the case of Alba (a non-Muslim author) in stating that “the media have always portrayed Islam as a homogeneous and absorbent force (...) systematically described as threatening and negative” (Alba 2015: 69). Cebolla and González-Ferrer (2008: 251-252), on their own, contend that “the discriminatory tendency towards the Muslims at large throughout the European Union [is] a reflection of the deep-rooted stereotypes that are often echoed by the mass media” (see also Revenga and El Mouden 2010: 7).

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<sup>4</sup>In the same vein, even though with regard to immigration, Kaufmann and Goodwin have observed that opposition to immigration is higher the faster the rise of ethnic minority groups in relative terms (2018).

<sup>5</sup>It is widely assumed ‘the West’ to be the part of the World where liberal values are at the core of its identity. Scholars have gone deep into the complex and historical explanation of such an identity (Nemo 2005), while others challenge its very existence. Following Nemo, Western countries are most European countries, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, various European dependencies overseas, and maybe Israel. This paper does not intend either to uncritically assume such list of countries or that Latin American countries, for instance, are not part of the West. In using the terms ‘the West’ or ‘Western’ this paper is referring to non-majority-Muslim democracies that have experienced a double process during the last two decades: their Muslim population has increased as a result of international migrations and they have been attacked by terrorist Islamists as part of a war of civilizations.

<sup>6</sup>Martín et al. (1997) and Zurbano et al. (2017) address the issue.

The purpose of this study is to calibrate through quantitative content analysis such assumed bias. In trying to answer the empirical questions stated above, we will also ask the extent to which the media hold a unique or hegemonic narrative, and whether possible differences among them are to be explained in ideological and/or territorial terms. We will analyse the coverage of three of the most-read Spanish newspapers: *Abc*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia*. The next section provides the theoretical framework of the paper. A section on methodology follows before we discuss our results. The last section concludes with the central findings of this research.

### Islamophobia: A Research Issue

M&I have reached a Western media presence in the XXI century unacknowledged previously. It has been a quantitative but also a qualitative change. Even though the paradigm shift is previously observed (Brown 2006), it is since the terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001, that the framing of M&I as linked to fanaticism and a threat to the West becomes hegemonic (Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt 2007).<sup>7</sup> It happens to the detriment of the previously hegemonic image of the Islamic as exotic and sensual. As Berbers et al. (2016) have put it, it is a tendency of the news sector in covering M&I that goes hand in hand with the growing Islamophobia. For Corm (2004), a false dichotomy or “fracture imaginaire” has been imposed between the West, ‘us,’ and the East, ‘them’ (see also Ibrahim, 2010, Saeed 2007). With the incidents of 9/11 acting as a catalyst, media discourse is evoking Said’s Orientalist approach (1978), that is, they are covering Muslim people as an ‘other’ to be rejected and fearful of (Ahmed and Matthes 2016, Creutz-Kämpfi 2008). Even though recognising the contribution of Said, authors such as Corral (2014: 8) understand that using the term ‘Islamophobia’ is more appropriate than talking about Orientalism.

Islamophobia is a form of racism. It implies the rejection of Muslims, not because of their phenotypic traits, but because of their religious and/or cultural identity. Anti-Islamic racism is a narrative, an attitude, and/or a behaviour that should not be confused with criticism of Islamic issues (Imhoff and Recker 2012). It implies a rejection of Muslims as such in their entirety. In the extreme, such a form of hatred implies a desire for Muslims to go badly or that, in being so different from the ‘us’ who rejects them (either by fear or hatred), do not enjoy ‘our’ goods. It is usually understood that Islamophobia is given with suspicion and rejection, thus without the need for the desire for evil to be present.

The first Runnymede report (Richardson 1997) has become a landmark of studies on Islamophobia (see i.e., Anderson 2015, Bowey and Makki, 2016). It defines “unfounded hostility towards Islam, and therefore fear or dislike of all or most Muslims” as a constellation of eight aspects of “closed” vs. “open” views of Islam: (1) whether Islam is seen as monolithic and static, or as diverse and

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<sup>7</sup> As to the USA, the Dutch and the British cases, see respectively Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2007), Roggeband and Vliegthart (2007), and Baker et al. (2013a).

dynamic; (2) as other and separate, or as similar and interdependent; (3) as inferior, or as different but equal; (4) as an aggressive enemy or as a cooperative partner; (5) as manipulative or as sincere, as well as (6) whether Muslim criticisms of 'the West' are rejected or debated; (7) whether discriminatory behaviour against Muslims is defended or opposed, and (8) whether anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural or as problematic.

Alba (2015) has synthesised those eight aspects of Islamophobia into three "mechanisms" by means of which it is built "an 'other' which is manipulable and eventually exterminable": the reduction of the Muslim 'other' to a negative (a threatening actor) and "unassimilable" ("incurable") unit (a homogeneous agent). Regarding refugees, Chouliaraki and Zaborowski's (2017) three "narrative strategies" of "symbolic bordering" of the 'other' are analytically interesting: "silencing" (the omission of voice in the media discourse), "collectivization" (the reduction of the individual to undifferentiated member of a presumed community), and "decontextualization", or absence of contextualization of the phenomenon when framing it. By focusing on the populist dimension of Islamophobia, Hafez (2017, 2010) has introduced the concept of Islamophobic populism. He refers to the populism that sees the people threatened, not by a perverse elite, but by Islam. Like many others, this author understands that Islamophobes perceive Islam as a homogeneous, static and monolithic body, on the one hand, and, on the other, as reactionary, hostile, etc.

Most empirical studies on media coverage of M&I attend to the positive or negative image that is portrayed of them. In their review of the literature, Ahmed and Matthes (2016) have concluded that both the negative representations and the national topic of the integration of the Muslims – addressed as a problem as well – are common to the countries under research. As Kaya (2017) has summed up, for more than a decade most immigrants of Muslim background and their descendants in European societies are often associated with illegality, crime, violence, drugs, radicalism, fundamentalism, conflicts and many other aspects because of which they are represented in a negative way. In their longitudinal case study of the Dutch press, Roggeband and Vliegthart (2007) observed that the Islamic aspect appears in a prominent way as a threat to national norms and values.

It is so because of issues such as the separation of church and state, homosexuality, gender equality and freedom of expression. Thus, the "threat to cultural security" on the part of the Muslims (Berbers et al. 2016, Kaya 2017: 60) is added to the threat to physical and economic security, so present in the media discourse about immigration. Islamic clothing use to be portrayed as a challenge to the prevailing dress codes of secular or non-Muslim society. The discourse opposes Islam to the values of the Enlightenment and even to the values of Christianity (Creutz-Kämpfi 2008),<sup>8</sup> and it has nourished criticism of multiculturalist policies in favour of assimilationist ones (Keskinen, 2014). As a result, public opinion would not be exposed to the knowledge of the differences of an equal fellow citizen, but to the othering of him/her/them. The Muslim 'other'

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<sup>8</sup>Ash (2017) observes that xenophobic right-wing nationalists do not think of liberal values when they fear Muslim threat to their culture. According to him, they define their identity in ethno-cultural terms. That is why, in talking about Germany, he counterposes *Kultur* to *Zivilisation*.

turns out to be a “menacing stranger” (Creutz-Kämppi 2008: 298, see also Bauman 2016).

### *News Media Framing of Muslims and Islam*

Journalism “is about doing things with words, not simply about using words to report facts” (Chouliaraki 2013: 268). It acts on people’s perceptions of reality, so it is a “performative practice” (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017: 616). Mass media use three fundamental mechanisms when informing and shaping public opinion: they select the issues to be considered as news (thus contributing to set the agenda of topics of public interest), hierarchise them, and adopt a point of view, namely, the media help to understand and confer a meaning on the reported issues and their implications. The quantitative analysis of these aspects of journalistic work (content analysis) and their impact on power relations is carried out through the respective agenda-setting theory, priming theory and framing theory. In Entman’s (2007: 163) words, they three are “critical tools in the exercise of political power”. As to M&I, the academic production is mostly based on the framing theory. It is a field of study still to be explored regarding the Spanish case. This paper attempts to fill that void.

Authors who study media coverage by focusing on frames do analyse the extent to which the media, in addition to setting the public agenda of topics, induce in the public a way of understanding such issues (De Vreese et al. 2011, Scheufele and Iyengar 2011, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). The media do not only represent or mirror reality; they mostly frame it. Given that any news can be covered in different ways, and since the way in which it is covered by the media conditions the cognitive and attitudinal processing, frames are what leads to interpreting the same issue differently based on the one adopted. According to the classic definition by Entman (1993), framing entails defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting remedies. The definition of the problem or issue implies the identification of the group or individual (the subject). It is an aspect that in turn has made it advisable to attend to sources and voices which news texts are elaborated with, especially in order to see the extent to which the subjects themselves are present in the stories, namely, whether or not they are “subjects of voice” (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017).<sup>9</sup> It is through all such a mechanism that the media certainly do not determine (Bowe et al. 2015), but induce opinions, attitudes and ultimately behaviours.

Media effects on those who are exposed to them is also observed regarding M&I. Ahmed and Matthes (2016) confirm in their review of the literature that the 2004-2008 increase in Islamophobia in the USA can be explained in relation to the different media treatment of M&I, being more prejudiced than in Europe. Saleem et al. (2015) have experimentally proven that citizens are more likely to support policies that harm Muslims the more they are exposed to coverage that represents

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<sup>9</sup>Felicetti and Gattinara (2018) have observed in their analysis of *The Guardian*'s coverage of the Charlie Hebdo January 2015 terrorist attacks that women and religious groups, Muslims in particular, had limited visibility, such as the actors who questioned the dominant security narrative.



them as terrorists.<sup>10</sup> The authors add that, whereas affecting perceptions and attitudes in the medium term regardless of the ideology, media coverage mainly affects conservatives in the short term. McElwee and McDaniel (2015) have documented that, while Republicans in the USA have a higher perception of Muslim as violent people than Democrats, the gap between them is reduced and the negative perception by both groups increases when they regularly watches Fox News TV channel.<sup>11</sup> With respect to public policies, Uitermark and Giele (2010) have concluded, in a case study, that national authorities do not act against radicalism in mosques because it is the problem of a neighbourhood, but because of being impelled to by media coverage.

Roggeband and Vliegthart (2007) have identified five frames in their comparative study of Dutch media and political discourses about immigration and the integration of immigrants. Whereas only one of them is positive – the “multicultural” frame – making the other four frames a problem out of immigration, the one that has gained the most presence since 9/11 is the “Islam-as-threat” frame. Such a frame focuses on values and culture (see also Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017). In another paper on the Netherlands, D’Haenens and Bink (2007) have found that media frames negatively problematise both the economic consequences and issues of morality when addressing M&I. With regard to framing in the USA, Greenberg and Miazhevich (2012: 91) have pointed out in analysing the *New York Times* “a shift from a sympathetic tone toward British Muslims to an open hostility to and an ‘Othering’ of Britain”. Islam became the salient aspect of British Muslim identity after 9/11, and the UK was generally portrayed as “an unequal partner in the fight against Islamic extremism, weakened by its home-grown terrorism” (Greenberg and Miazhevich 2012: 92).

The predominance of a given frame, the negative one, does not imply it to be the only one. Roggeband and Vliegthart (2007) have found a variety of frames, even though media framing appears less varied compared to parliamentary framing. Anderson (2015: 265) has compared Australian coverages on M&I by differentiating between “open” and “closed” frames,<sup>12</sup> and she has observed a variation in time in favour of the former; in her view, as a reaction to critics of “unfair, unbalanced, and inflammatory reporting” on issues related to M&I in the mid-2000s. Bowe et al. (2015) have also studied the USA coverage after 9/11 in binary terms, in their case by attending to the tone: “positive” vs. “negative” frames. The authors have concluded that, whereas negative framing prevails, neutral framing is the one with the greatest presence. In line with Bowe et al. (2015), Bowe and Makki (2016: 551) have concluded in studying mosques as a matter of public debate that “it would be an oversimplification to say representations of Muslims are uniformly negative”.

<sup>10</sup> As to the media stories on immigration, Givens and Luedtke (2005) have found that the mere increase of them contributes to making the corresponding policies more restrictive.

<sup>11</sup> See Eyssel et al. (2015: 197) on how the biased TV representation of Muslims is “one important factor in the widespread emergence and existence of Islamophobia in Germany”.

<sup>12</sup> Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017: 615), worried about the definition of ‘us,’ differentiate between the “cosmopolitan” frame (“open, hospitable and inclusive”) and the “communitarian” one, which they describe as “closed, phobic and introverted”.

While Muslims are mostly ill-treated in media coverage, scholars have also obtained evidence that the diversity and frequency of frames varies according to the editorial line (left or right), the type of newspaper (tabloid or broadsheet) and the territory, at least in the case of countries with sub-state nationalisms. Through critical discourse analysis, Baker et al. (2013<sup>a</sup>, 2013b) have observed a more balanced coverage in the left-oriented newspapers and a greater tendency to associate Islam and terrorism among the tabloids. Scavini (2016: 624) points out that the conservative press expresses “a preoccupation with the rising cultural and religious diversity,” whereas progressive dailies are “more focused on promoting social cohesion and pursuing the joint goals of inclusion and integration”. Berbers et al. (2016) have documented that quality newspapers and those on the left adopt less problematic frameworks than tabloids and right-wing broadsheets. Focusing on Muslims living in Belgium who went to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad in 2013, they have also observed, firstly, that the frames that problematise the Syria fighter situation are used much more frequently than the other frames; secondly, that Flemish newspapers pay more attention to the matter, and, lastly, that they covered it – compared to the thematic or contextualising option – more by the episodic frame than the Dutch press.

## Research Object and Design

Van Dijk (2004: 351 as cited in Hafez 2017: 396) differentiates between racist discourse *directed at* (the racialised) ‘others’ and racist discourse *about* (the racialised) ‘others’. The object of this study is that second discourse; in particular, it tries to assess the extent to which the media discourse on M&I in Spain makes Muslims a strange ‘other,’ an ‘other’ to be suspicious of and to reject, no matter whether they are explicitly wished ill or not. In other words, it aims to analyse whether Islamophobic framing also predominates in the Spanish press or, on the contrary, the pluralism of information is translated into a diversity of frames and even a predominance of the integrative one. Neither all Muslims are the same nor Muslims are only defined by their religious dimension. To be more precise, the question at the backbone of this research is whether and to what extent the Spanish media discourse constructs a homogenising, excluding and problematising imaginary of M&I.

This triple combination is what ultimately characterises Islamophobia (see above). Our study is of a deductive nature (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). We analyse the extent to which the three pre-defined frames occur in the news. As shown in Figure 1, it will be analysed the presence of the inclusive frame – the subject as being part of the reference ‘us’ – vs. the exclusive frame, thus the subject being a strange ‘other.’ Secondly, it will be measured the extent to which M&I are assumed as a homogeneous whole or as a heterogeneous reality. Lastly, we will assess the extent to which the adopted frame problematises M&I or not. Given that the selection of news stories is based on the coverage of M&I, the database introduces a religious bias, so the extent to which the press reduces

individuals of ‘perceived’ Mohammedan faith or cultural identity to its religious dimension – another Islamophobic trait – will not be studied.

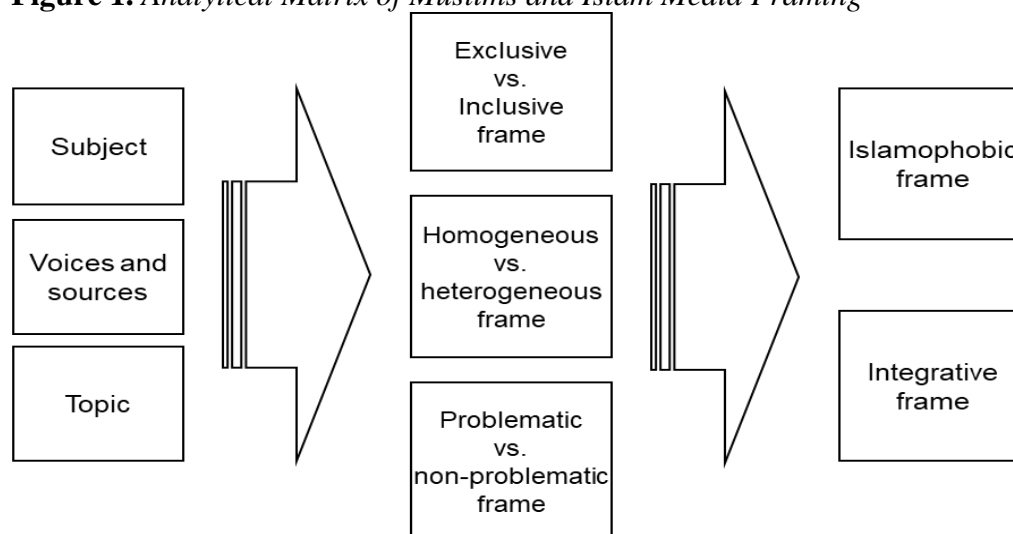
Media discourse is not merely constructed according to one of the frames of each pair, but also as an invalidation of the other one. In those cases, the terms and/or texts of the research are coded as the frame alternative to the one that is invalidated in a given document. On the other hand, the messages transmitted by journalists can also be confusing, ambivalent or imprecise. In such occasions, given the impossibility or difficulty of determining a given frame, it can be concluded that the information coverage does not tend to shape public opinion in one way or another. Those terms and/or texts are coded as of a third frame and labelled as ‘neutral’ (Anderson 2015, Bowe et al. 2015).<sup>13</sup>

As a first hypothesis, it is expected that the predominant frame would be Islamophobic (H1), although it is foreseeable of media coverage to be plural in terms of frames (H2) and left-wing outlets both to be more plural than those on the right and covering M&I according to the integrative frame to a larger extent (H3), with the centrist dailies in an intermediate position. Furthermore, although the centrist newspaper of the study is not Spanish in a territorial sense, but clearly Catalan,<sup>14</sup> ideology is expected to weigh more in framing M&I than territoriality (H4), in coherence with other studies (Durán 2016) and despite the amount of people with perceived-Muslim identity residing in Catalonia (UCIDE 2018). Finally, we cannot expect that each media outlet frames uniformly all the issues that it covers about M&I (H5), so possible internal variations and coincidences among dailies will also be analysed.

To answer the question of the research and test the hypotheses, a matrix has been elaborated from the reviewed literature, mostly from Nickels’ (2007) approach (see also Entman 1993). It allows to identify and quantify how the Spanish press frames M&I. Three analytical categories (first column on the left in Figure 1) determine media coverage of M&I as to framing: (1) the identification of the subject (how M&I are framed); (2) the voices and sources of the discourse (from whom the newspapers feed to build their narrative), and (3) the definition or identification of the news object (what topic or issue is addressed). For the first category, the entries “Islam\*” and “Muslim\*” are coded. The second category implies the codification of all the terms used to specify the persons, organizations or institutions whose opinion is reported, either in direct or in indirect style, that is, whether voices or sources, respectively. As to the third category, the topics of the news are codified in each of the texts. The resulting matrix allows assessing the adopted frame (one of each pair showed in the central column of Figure 1) for each of the categories. The first element of each pair corresponds to the Islamophobic frame, while the second one does to the integrative frame. The systematisation of the analysis – 5,083 words or sets of words have been coded – has been done using the Atlas.ti software.

<sup>13</sup>We avoid the neutral frame in Figure 1 for the sake of clarity.

<sup>14</sup>Catalonia is a region of Spain.

**Figure 1.** *Analytical Matrix of Muslims and Islam Media Framing*

Source: Author.

Many studies focus on the coverage of concrete events, which often receive attention due to the tensions or conflicts around them: construction of mosques (Bowe and Makki 2016), cartoons of Muhammad (Creutz-Kämppi 2008), prohibition of the use of the integral veil (Fernández-Suárez 2016), etc. On the contrary, this study focuses on the normality that is mediatically constructed over a period of time; specifically, the twelve months of 2017. That normality is what becomes Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus,' the 'common sense' of each historical time (1994). After 9/11 and the subsequent Spanish 11-M attacks,<sup>15</sup> 2017 is not a conflictive year over M&I issues. Even the humanitarian crisis of either migratory flows or forced displacement (being the refugees arriving in Europe mostly Muslims) reduced its media impact after having been more acute in 2015.<sup>16</sup> During 2017, on the other hand, jihadist attacks continued to be perpetrated, but they did not convulse or receive the same media attention as before (De Bellaigue 2018); neither did they in the case of attacks in Catalonia, in August. These terrorist incidents make the study of that year more relevant, insofar as such a unique event altered the coverage and in what sense. All that makes of 2017 an optimum year for the study.

The analysis focuses on three of the six Spanish general information newspapers with the most daily readers throughout 2017: from highest to lowest readers, 'El País' (EP hereinafter), 'La Vanguardia' (LV) and 'Abc' (ABC). According to the General Media Survey (EGM, as in Spanish),<sup>17</sup> 'El Mundo'

<sup>15</sup> After New York, Madrid was the largest Western city to suffer jihadist attacks, on 11th March 2004. London would follow them in 2005. From then on attacks have occurred in the same and other Western cities.

<sup>16</sup> Data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees can be consulted at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

<sup>17</sup> EGM depicts a scenario of media consumption in Spain through 30.000 personal "face to face" interviews with results disclosed in April, July and December. EGM has been established as the establishment survey in the Spanish market. EGM reports can be consulted at <http://www.aimc.es>.

(EM) was the second most widely read newspaper; LV shared the third and fourth positions with the Galician ‘La Voz de Galicia’, while ABC shared the fifth and sixth positions with the Catalan ‘El Periódico’. Out of the six, those in the study are also the three whose website had a greater number of unique visitors throughout the period. The election of the three broadsheets is also justified by both their ideological orientation and their editorial headquarters: right-wing ABC and left-wing EP are edited in Madrid and have a national projection (like right-wing EM), whereas centrist LV is published in Barcelona and is markedly Catalan.<sup>18</sup> This aspect is interesting, above all, because Catalonia (unlike Galicia) is the Spanish region with the greatest presence of Muslims, a variable that could affect media framing and justify one of our hypotheses.

Our database is made up of the press clippings in which the terms “Islam\*” and/or “Muslim\*” appear. While most studies focus on these two (Bowe et al. 2015), we add to our search “veil\*,” “scarf\*,” “hijab\*,” “niqab\*,” “burka\*,” “mosque\*,” “minaret\*,” and “imam\*.” We have used the MyNews digital archive. Regarding the news on international issues, the clippings that have been incorporated into the documentary corpus are those using the search terms in the headlines, in the sub-titles, in the leads, in the pull-quotes or in the captions; they are the texts in which, to some extent and whatever the issue and the framing, the topic is Islamised. Insofar as the study of the coverage of jihadist terrorism is a research field in itself and in order to avoid research bias, the journalistic pieces about it and about war conflicts in Muslim-majority countries are discarded. Once the extemporaneous texts located by MyNews have also been discarded, the documentary base is finally made up of 432 analysis units.

## Results

### *Descriptive Approach to Media Coverage*

Our database assembles the journalistic attention provided by ABC, EP and LV to the Islamic throughout 2017. As it is shown in Table 1, EP covered contents on M&I to a lesser extent than ABC and LV. The differences among the newspapers is more marked by type of analysis unit: although the three mostly opt for news and reports, more than half of the total front pages, editorials and letters to the editor are by ABC. The right-wing daily also surpasses EP and LV in the opinion space with more entries: op-eds and columns.

Media coverage is regularly distributed throughout the year, with records accumulated in just over half of the days (see Table 1). LV is the newspaper that devotes attention to Islamic issues for more days (less than a third of the 365 total). Just one entry per day is recorded in 67% (ABC and LV) and in 70% (EP) of those days with coverage. ABC only collects more than two entries in 17 editions, 10 and 8 in the case of EP and LV, respectively. Barely four Spanish news stories provoke more than two pieces of coverage in the same day, be they from the same

<sup>18</sup>For more information on the ideological orientation of the Spanish media, see Humanes (2014) and Durán (2016).

newspaper or from more than one: the decision of a court endorsing the right of a woman to wear the hijab in her workday and the prohibition an inmate for jihadism to use it, the campaign of the diocese of Cordoba in defence of the property and catholicity of the Mosque-Cathedral of the same city, and the terrorist attacks of August in Barcelona and Cambrils, being the latter a close and popular seaside resort town.

**Table 1.** *Media Attention by Words, Days, Documents and Type of Documents (Year 2017)*

		Total (3 dailies)	<i>Abc</i>		<i>El País</i>		<i>La Vanguardia</i>	
			Total	(%)*	Total	(%)*	Total	(%)*
Documents	Total	432	152	35.2%	130	30.1%	150	34.7%
	Front pages	8	5	62.5%	2	25.0%	1	12.5%
	News / reports	325	103	31.7%	110	33.8%	112	34.5%
	Op-eds / columns	70	32	45.7%	15	21.4%	23	32.9%
	Letters to the editor	12	8	66.7%	1	8.3%	3	25.0%
	Editorials	7	4	57.1%	1	14.3%	2	28.6%
	Interviews	10	0	0.0%	1	10.0%	9	90.0%
Words		246,800	77,581	31.4%	73,527	29.8%	95,691	38.8%
Days**		200	85		86		105	

Source: Author.

\*Percentages of row, with respect to the corresponding total of the three newspapers.

\*\*Days with news in the database. The sum of the days of coverage of each newspaper totals more than 200 because there are days when two or three newspapers coincide with news about Muslims and/or Islam.

The other news that have received more attention in the same day are related to the dress of Muslim women (burka or hijab); to the verdict of the Strasbourg Court on the obligation of minors to attend their swimming school classes independently of their religious beliefs; to the Islamophobic attacks in Canada and the UK; to the executive order of the USA President prohibiting the entry from several Muslim-majority countries, as well as to his official visit to Saudi Arabia and his relationship with the Islamophobic organization Britain First; to the Dutch general elections; to the papal trip to Egypt, and to the flee of Rohingya from Burma to Bangladesh. Of all of them, only the pontifical visit and the attacks in the UK (Islamophobe) and Spain (jihadist) were the predominant news for more than a day, seven in the case of the latter (see above).

*Analytic Categories and Media Frames*

The above data hardly allow to deduce the citizens' opinions that the media tend to shape. In order to analyse the frame adopted by the media in addressing issues related to Islam – or in Islamising news contents – we have introduced 100 codes.<sup>19</sup> This has resulted in a total of 22,296 coded records. The next section analyses the frame adopted by the newspapers when referring to M&I as subjects of the published information and opinions. We then address, first, the voices and sources on which the journalistic pieces are based to sustain their discourse, and, in the third section, the topics they address, while also analysing the frames adopted in each of these categories.

The Islamic Subject of Media Discourse

Table 2 shows the frames adopted by the newspapers whenever they refer to Islam or Muslims as a subject, be it individual or collective, and personal or institutional. Having coded more than 5,000 records in this regard, it is observed that the coverage mostly frames M&I as a subject unrelated to 'us' (exclusive frame). The data is all the more significant given that journalistic references regarding Muslim-majority countries have been excluded from this computation when addressing issues in which 'us' does not participate.<sup>20</sup> Also noteworthy is the high percentage of records with a neutral frame, superior to the inclusive one. They are the occasions in which, when referring to M&I, it is not made explicit if they are considered part of or alien to 'us.'

As to the second trait of Islamophobia, the media mostly homogenises M&I. In this case, in addition, it is found that the neutral frame is not very present. On the contrary, and against the problematisation of the Islamic that characterises Western media coverage, in the Spanish case (i) there is a balance between problematic and non-problematic frames of the Islamic subject, and (ii) the problematic frame is present to a lesser extent than the other two Islamophobic ones.

In a complementary way, the binary variants of each frame (inclusive vs. exclusive, etc.) do not only have a significant presence in the global calculation of media coverage, but also in the units that comprise it: all the frames are present in at least 32% of the 380 documents in which an explicit reference is made to the Islamic subject (see Table 3). The articles with the subject framed in an exclusive way predominate over those with entries framed inclusively. However, the texts that contain records with either the subject framed in a heterogeneous way – not all Muslims are the same – and/or non-problematic are more than their Islamophobic

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<sup>19</sup>As presented above in the methodology and it is analysed below, codes have been introduced for each of the categories, frames, newspapers, and kind of document (op-ed, column, interview, and so on), as well as for the different voices and sources (plus whether they are Muslim or not), the different territories at stake in the texts, and the different topics in the news.

<sup>20</sup>It is the case of the news entitled "Morocco starts the fight against the burqa" (EP, 11 January 2017, p.2) and "Morocco prohibits importing, manufacturing and selling burkas in the country" (LV, 11 January 2017, p.6).



variant. There are, therefore, a diversity of frames, and it is not the Islamophobic ones that predominate. Regarding the greater frequency of homogenising records mentioned above, the analysis of their distribution indicates, finally, that those records are concentrated in just over a third of the articles.

**Table 2.** *Media Frame of Muslims and Islam as 'Subject': Codified Records of Each Frame (2017)*

	3 dailies		Abc		El País		La Vanguardia	
	Records	% *	Records	% *	Records	% *	Records	% *
Inclusive frame	369	24.5%	104	17.6%	167	40.5%	98	19.5%
Neutral frame	403	26.8%	125	21.2%	114	27.7%	164	32.6%
Exclusive frame	734	48.7%	362	61.3%	131	31.8%	241	47.9%
Heterogeneous frame	543	27.9%	157	22.4%	170	31.4%	216	30.8%
Neutral frame	114	5.9%	35	5.0%	32	5.9%	47	6.7%
Homogeneous frame	1,287	66.2%	510	72.6%	339	62.7%	438	62.5%
Non-problematic frame	770	39.6%	197	28.1%	312	57.7%	261	37.3%
Neutral frame	400	20.6%	148	21.1%	98	18.1%	154	22.0%
Problematic frame	772	39.8%	356	50.8%	131	24.2%	285	40.7%
Total	5,392		1,994		1,494		1,904	

Source: Author.

\*Percentages of column and by group of frames.

The disaggregation of register data by newspaper (Table 2) reveals relevant differences: in both ABC and LV the presence of each Islamophobic frame is greater than that of the integrative one, although the differences in percentage points between each binary variant are always superior in ABC (rightist and edited in Madrid) than in LV (centrist / Barcelona). On the contrary, EP (leftist/Madrid) reports on the Islamic subject with a predominance of inclusive and non-problematic frames. Yet, while the homogeneous records surpass the heterogeneous ones in EP as well, the difference in percentage points is the smallest of the three dailies.

The homogeneous frame does not always have a negative connotation. It is certainly wrong and harmful to refer to Muslims as an internally undifferentiated community. It is also true that they are occasionally referred to in such terms without any Islamophobic connotation. This was the case, for example, when the press quoted the Canadian prime minister as saying about an extreme right attack in Quebec that it was perpetrated “against the Muslim community.” He added: “we will stand with you”, and also: “you enrich our shared country in immeasurable ways.”<sup>21</sup> In homogenising them, he expressed a conception of ‘us’ that included them (inclusive frame, therefore), and, far from seeing them as a

<sup>21</sup> ABC, 31-01-2017, p.26.

problem, they were the object of a violence that he rejected (non-problematic frame).

**Table 3.** *Media Framing of Muslims and Islam as Subject: Documents with Coded Records of Each Frame (Year 2017)*

	3 dailies		Abc		El País		La Vanguardia	
	Documents	%*	Docs.	%*	Docs.	%*	Docs.	%*
Inclusive frame	123	32.4%	38	28.6%	40	35.4%	45	33.6%
Neutral frame	180	47.4%	72	54.1%	46	40.7%	62	46.3%
Exclusive frame	174	45.8%	57	42.9%	49	43.4%	68	50.7%
Heterogeneous frame	179	47.1%	53	39.8%	59	52.2%	67	50.0%
Neutral frame	329	86.6%	116	87.2%	92	81.4%	121	90.3%
Homogeneous frame	143	37.6%	42	31.6%	48	42.5%	53	39.6%
Non-problematic frame	248	65.3%	69	51.9%	87	77.0%	92	68.7%
Neutral frame	249	65.5%	97	72.9%	58	51.3%	94	70.1%
Problematic frame	204	53.7%	68	51.1%	54	47.8%	82	61.2%
Total	380		133		113		134	

Source: Author.

\*Percentage with respect to the total documents with subject records and by group of frames.

The diversity of frames is also observed in Table 3 with all the frames present in the three newspapers, the frame that appears in less documents is present in at least 29% of them. While the three newspapers published more pieces containing records of exclusive frame than of inclusive one, the other two Islamophobic frames are less present than their integrative counterparts. Even though there are few differences among the dailies regarding the homogeneous/heterogeneous frame, the presence of non-problematic records is seen in 77% of EP documents, 29 points above the percentage of documents of the same newspaper with problematic records. In this respect, LV appears less integrative than EP, but more so than ABC, which balances the number of documents in which conflicting (n=68) and non-conflicting (n=69) frames are recorded.

### *Voices and Sources in Building the Islamic*

As it is showed in Table 4, the media discourse is built on the basis of voices and sources (V&S hereinafter) in 350 out of our 432 documents. They include public institutions and authorities, civil society members and leaders, experts, celebrities and anonymous or unknown people (vox populi). We have additionally differentiated V&S depending on whether they are Muslims or not, in order to check the extent to which Muslims' voice is shared with those exposed to the media.

**Table 4.** *Voices and Sources in the Coverage of the Islamic (Year 2017)*

		3 dailies		Abc		El País		La Vanguardia	
		Documents*		Docs.*		Docs.*		Docs.*	
		Total	% **	Total	% ***	Total	% ***	Total	% ***
Muslims	Institutional	121	34.6%	43	37.4%	33	30.0%	45	36.0%
	Civil society	115	32.9%	25	21.7%	45	40.9%	45	36.0%
	Experts	38	10.9%	10	8.7%	12	10.9%	16	12.8%
	Celebrities	28	8.0%	4	3.5%	13	11.8%	11	8.8%
	Vox-pop	82	23.4%	20	17.4%	32	29.1%	30	24.0%
	Total	201	57.4%	57	49.6%	66	60.0%	78	62.4%
Undefined identity	Institutional	45	12.9%	5	4.3%	12	10.9%	28	22.4%
	Civil society	40	11.4%	3	2.6%	16	14.5%	21	16.8%
	Experts	22	6.3%	2	1.7%	5	4.5%	15	12.0%
	Celebrities	10	2.9%	2	1.7%	4	3.6%	4	3.2%
	Vox-pop	37	10.6%	6	5.2%	17	15.5%	14	11.2%
	Total	68	19.4%	19	16.5%	22	20.0%	37	29.6%
Non-Muslims	Institutional	185	52.9%	72	62.6%	56	50.9%	57	45.6%
	Civil society	92	26.3%	27	23.5%	31	28.2%	34	27.2%
	Experts	57	16.3%	20	17.4%	14	12.7%	23	18.4%
	Celebrities	28	8.0%	10	8.7%	10	9.1%	8	6.4%
	Vox-pop	80	22.9%	22	19.1%	30	27.3%	28	22.4%
	Total	248	70.9%	93	80.9%	75	68.2%	80	64.0%
Total		350		115		110		125	

Source: Author.

\*Documents with coded records of voices and sources (V&S). The totals that are showed in four rows (horizontally) do not match with the numbers in their respective columns (vertically) because documents often contains more than one voice or source of a different kind.

\*\* Percentages with respect to the total of documents with V&S records (N = 350).

\*\*\*Percentages with respect to the total of documents with V&S records of each newspaper (NABC=115, NEP=110 y NLV=125)

Opinions and testimonies of non-Muslims appear in 71% of the texts (see Table 4). Although the amount of those that give voice to the Muslims is lower, they are collected in more than half of the documents. Whether Muslim or not, institutional V&S predominate. The other actors are also present, especially civil society agents, followed by vox-pop. Non-Muslim institutions, in any case, are the unique actor present in more than half of the texts. By newspapers, Muslim V&S occur in less documents in ABC than in any other. The right-wing daily is also the one that leaves the actors without religious identity ascription in fewer texts and the one that incorporates non-Muslim institutional V&S to a larger extent. No significant differences appear between EP and LV. And, while both dailies expose their readers to Muslim V&S in more than 60% of their documents, the texts with non-Muslims V&S are at least 13 points below the coverage that gives them ABC.

The inclusive and the exclusive frames have a balanced presence, although non-Muslim V&S stand out with an exclusive discourse (see Table 5). The

predominance of the Islamophobic frame is greater when attending to the homogeneous/heterogeneous frames, with a presence of non-Muslim V&S much more accentuated in this case (61% of documents). On the contrary, the problematic frame does not predominate. It is rather balanced with the non-problematic one, no matter whether V&S are Muslim or non-Muslim. ABC is less inclusive than LV, which in turn is less inclusive than EP. Actually, the leftist daily is the most inclusive regardless of whether V&S are Muslim or non-Muslim. Even so, the three are more exclusive than inclusive, and it is LV that publishes the greatest number of documents with V&S in Islamophobic frame. In line with the inclusive frame, EP is also the newspaper that covers Muslims as a heterogeneous collective in more texts in relative terms. It follows LV. ABC incorporates such V&S in less than a third of its documents.

**Table 5.** *Voices and Sources in the Media Framing of the Islamic (Year 2017)*

	3 dailies					ABC	EP	LV
		Docs.*		Doc s.	%**	Docs.*	Docs.*	Docs.*
Inclusive frame	Muslims	75 (21.4%)	Institutional	46	61.3%	21 (19.6%)	28 (41.2%)	26 (28.0%)
			Civil society	51	68.0%			
			Experts	15	20.0%			
			Celebrities	9	12.0%			
			Vox-pop	38	50.7%			
	Undefined	25 (7.1%)				3 (2.8%)	9 (13.2%)	13 (14.0%)
	Non-Muslims	106 (30.3%)	Institutional	81	76.4%	34 (31.8%)	33 (48.5%)	39 (41.9%)
			Civil society	47	44.3%			
			Experts	20	18.9%			
			Celebrities	13	12.3%			
			Vox-pop	38	35.8%			
Neutral frame	Muslims	92 (26.3%)	Institutional	56	60.9%	27 (25.2%)	26 (38.2%)	39 (41.9%)
			Civil society	60	65.2%			
			Experts	20	21.7%			
			Celebrities	11	12.0%			
			Vox-pop	48	52.2%			
	Undefined	37 (10.6%)				3 (2.8%)	11 (16.2%)	23 (24.7%)
	Non-Muslims	133 (38.0%)	Institutional	105	78.9%	43 (40.2%)	42 (61.8%)	48 (51.6%)
			Civil society	56	42.1%			
			Experts	33	24.8%			
			Celebrities	12	9.0%			
			Vox-pop	51	38.3%			
Exclusive frame	Muslims	76 (21.7%)	Institutional	49	64.5%	44 (41.1%)	34 (50.0%)	61 (65.6%)
			Civil society	41	53.9%			
			Experts	20	26.3%			
			Celebrities	11	14.5%			
			Vox-pop	31	40.8%			
	Undefined	23 (6.6%)				8 (7.5%)	15 (22.1%)	26 (28.0%)
	Non-Muslims	133 (38.0%)	Institutional	93	69.9%	54 (50.5%)	32 (47.1%)	53 (57.0%)
			Civil society	50	37.6%			
			Experts	38	28.6%			
			Celebrities	16	12.0%			
			Vox-pop	42	31.6%			
Heterogeneous	Muslims	128 (36.6%)	Institutional	79	61.7%	34 (31.8%)	44 (64.7%)	50 (53.8%)
			Civil society	78	60.9%			

frame			Experts	28	21.9%			
			Celebrities	15	11.7%			
			Vox-pop	52	40.6%			
	Undefined	37 (10.6%)				4 (3.7%)	13 (19.1%)	20 (21.5%)
	Non-Muslims	109 (31.1%)	Institutional	80	73.4%	34 (31.8%)	36 (52.9%)	39 (41.9%)
			Civil society	51	46.8%			
			Experts	31	28.4%			
			Celebrities	12	11.0%			
			Vox-pop	41	37.6%			
Neutral frame	Muslims	113 (32.3%)	Institutional	77	68.1%	31 (29.0%)	40 (58.8%)	42 (45.2%)
			Civil society	74	65.5%			
			Experts	21	18.6%			
			Celebrities	14	12.4%			
			Vox-pop	51	45.1%			
	Undefined	44 (12.6%)				5 (4.7%)	13 (19.1%)	26 (28.0%)
	Non-Muslims	116 (33.1%)	Institutional	94	81.0%	39 (36.4%)	36 (52.9%)	41 (44.1%)
			Civil society	56	48.3%			
			Experts	28	24.1%			
			Celebrities	11	9.5%			
			Vox-pop	44	37.9%			
Homogeneous frame	Muslims	158 (45.1%)	Institutional	98	62.0%	47 (43.9%)	45 (66.2%)	66 (71.0%)
			Civil society	86	54.4%			
			Experts	36	22.8%			
			Celebrities	24	15.2%			
			Vox-pop	66	41.8%			
	Undefined	53 (15.1%)				6 (5.6%)	17 (25.0%)	30 (32.3%)
	Non-Muslims	214 (61.1%)	Institutional	160	74.8%	79 (73.8%)	65 (95.6%)	70 (75.3%)
			Civil society	81	37.9%			
			Experts	52	24.3%			
			Celebrities	24	11.2%			
			Vox-pop	74	34.6%			
Non-problematic frame	Muslims	138 (39.4%)	Institutional	86	62.3%	35 (32.7%)	49 (72.1%)	54 (58.1%)
			Civil society	80	58.0%			
			Experts	27	19.6%			
			Celebrities	22	15.9%			
			Vox-pop	63	45.7%			
	Undefined	31 (8.9%)				3 (2.8%)	18 (26.5%)	30 (32.3%)
	Non-Muslims	169 (48.3%)	Institutional	131	77.5%	55 (51.4%)	57 (83.8%)	60 (64.5%)
			Civil society	70	41.4%			
			Experts	34	20.1%			
			Celebrities	16	9.5%			
			Vox-pop	61	36.1%			
Neutral frame	Muslims	139 (39.7%)	Institutional	91	65.5%	39 (36.4%)	38 (55.9%)	62 (66.7%)
			Civil society	87	62.6%			
			Experts	32	23.0%			
			Celebrities	17	12.2%			
			Vox-pop	56	40.3%			

	Undefined	48 (13.7%)				5 (4.7%)	14 (20.6%)	29 (31.2%)
	Non-Muslims	143 (40.9%)	Institutional	109	76.2%	49 (45.8%)	40 (58.8%)	54 (58.1%)
			Civil society	65	45.5%			
			Experts	42	29.4%			
			Celebrities	18	12.6%			
Problematic frame	Muslims	139 (39.7%)	Vox-pop	50	35.0%	44 (41.1%)	34 (50.0%)	61 (65.6%)
			Institutional	85	61.2%			
			Civil society	83	59.7%			
			Experts	29	20.9%			
			Celebrities	18	12.9%			
	Undefined	49 (14.0%)	Vox-pop	57	41.0%	8 (7.5%)	15 (22.1%)	26 (28.0%)
	Non-Muslims	165 (47.1%)	Institutional	122	73.9%	66 (61.7%)	41 (60.3%)	58 (62.4%)
			Civil society	68	41.2%			
			Experts	46	27.9%			
			Celebrities	19	11.5%			
			Vox-pop	56	33.9%			
Total***		350				107	68	93

Source: Author.

\*In parentheses, percentages with respect to the the total number of documents with voice and source (V&S) records. \*\*Percentages with respect to the total of documents with corresponding Muslim or non-Muslim V&S records (third column on the left). Thus, for example, the 46 documents in which Muslim and institutional VyF appear with an inclusive frame account for 61.3% of the 75 documents with Muslim VyF framed that way.

\*\*\*Total of documentos with V&S records.

Once again EP is the most integrative when considering the non-problematic frame, followed by LV, which nevertheless is the most Islamophobic regarding the problematic frame, that is, LV is the newspaper that publishes the highest percentage of documents with V&S holding a problematising discourse of M&I. In line with what the data indicate in relation to the dichotomous pairs inclusive/exclusive and heterogeneous/homogeneous, both ABC and LV present higher percentages in the Islamophobic component of the problematic/non-problematic pair than in the integrative one. On the contrary, EP, with V&S problematising M&I in 60% of the documents, increases the percentage significantly to 84% of the texts where V&S frame the Islamic in a non-problematic way.

That there is at least one specific record in a given document does not imply that there are many more. Hence the relevance of also attending to the records themselves as a whole. Table 6 reveals, in line with the above, that EP is the most inclusive newspaper, as well as the least exclusive. It is also the one that mostly projects a heterogeneous image of M&I. Homogeneous representation predominates in the three media, especially in ABC, which is also the most exclusive daily. Regarding the third dichotomy of frames, ABC is not only the media outlet that offers the most problematic image of M&I. It is also the only newspaper that builds its discourse relying more on the V&S to frame the Islamic in a mostly problematic way. It is worth noting, however, that its non-problematic records reach almost 40% and that the problematising entries barely exceed 45%. EP is the only one that offers a percentage of non-problematic records higher than 50% and of problematic ones below 25%.

**Table 6.** *Islamic Media Framing: Coded Records of Voices and Sources (Year 2017)*

	3 dailies			Abc			El País			La Vanguardia		
	Total		%	Total		%	Total		%	Total		%
Inclusive frame	1,696	453	26.7%	498	140	28.1%	535	172	32.1%	663	141	21.3%
Neutral frame		639	37.7%		162	32.5%		192	35.9%		285	43.0%
Exclusive frame		604	35.6%		196	39.4%		171	32.0%		237	35.7%
Heterogeneous frame	2,270	638	28.1%	648	116	17.9%	733	238	32.5%	889	284	31.9%
Neutral frame		447	19.7%		136	21.0%		143	19.5%		168	18.9%
Homogeneous frame		1,185	52.2%		396	61.1%		352	48.0%		437	49.2%
Non-problematic frame	2,270	1,122	49.4%	650	257	39.5%	734	428	58.3%	886	437	49.3%
Neutral frame		372	16.4%		100	15.4%		125	17.0%		147	16.6%
Problematic frame		776	34.2%		293	45.1%		181	24.7%		302	34.1%

Source: Author.

\*Percentages of column and by group of frames.



The Thematic Agenda of the Islamic and its Framing

All the countries or sets of them that appear in the press clippings regarding M&I have been coded. Spain barely represents 20% of the media coverage throughout the entire year (see Table 7). The percentage rises to less than 70% if the territorial horizon of 'us' is expanded to the West. 40% of the texts do not report about other geographic and cultural realities at large, but, to be precise, to Islamised news on international issues unrelated to 'us.' It implies that, even if the newspapers cover other events of Muslim-majority countries or that affect Muslims, no reference is made to their religious identity in reporting. Hence, the coverage of those events is not part of our database.

No significant imbalances are observed between the components of each binary frames. It should be pointed out, nonetheless, that (i) the proportion of exclusive texts is high (81%) only when it comes to news about the non-Western world; (ii) the homogenising frame predominates in the coverage about Spain and the West, and (iii) Spain and the West are framed to a greater extent in the non-problematic way, while the problematising and non-problematising coverage of M&I is balanced when addressing non-Western territories. Finally, it is significant the scarce presence of exclusive texts when dealing with Spanish news, and, secondly, that almost 45% of the records of such dichotomous frames respond to a third one, i.e., the neutral frame. Thus, when reporting about people because of their Muslimness, they are not rejected as strangers, but neither are they included as members of 'us.'

Table 7 also includes the topics of media coverage. The topics covered in more news (between 15% and 19% of the total) are those related to religious clothing, those which explicitly consider Islam relationship vis-à-vis 'us,' and those referred to both the violence of 'them' and the violence against 'them.' The texts on Islam as a religion in general, on women in Islam, on mosques and imams, on President Trump, on elections, and explicitly referring to Islamophobia are also above the median. Together, texts on the violence against Muslims and texts explicitly alluding to Islamophobia account for 25.5% of the 432 units of analysis.

A greater predominance of the Islamophobic frames is observed in considering the topics one by one. Once again, however, the press does not problematise M&I: the non-problematic frame is superior to the problematic one in half of the topics – in most of them, by more than 20 percentage points, higher in the case of news about Islamophobia and in which, without using such a term, some form of violence suffered by people for being Muslims is reported. M&I are portrayed as problematic especially in the news on cultural issues.

Considering that we codify the core theme or themes of each document, only ABC and LV get to devote more than 20% of their texts to a given topic – the violence of Muslims. In combining the documents about the violence that Muslims suffer and the documents that explicitly allude to Islamophobia, the three newspapers address the topic in more than 20% of their coverage, although EP is the only one that does it in more than 30% of its coverage (n = 44).

None of the newspapers biases its coverage by adopting a unique frame (see Table 8), not even on whether the Muslims are part of 'us' or not. That is not against the evidence that the exclusive and the homogenising frames predominate, both of them slightly more so in ABC than in EP and LV. The most significant differences among the three newspapers are seen again on whether M&I entail a problem or not. On the one hand, it is the dilemma in which the media expose the public to an imprecise image (neutral frame) to a lesser extent. On the other hand, EP is the daily with the least problematic coverage. It is also the one that frames in a non-problematic way to the largest extent, both in its full coverage and when covers the topics to which it pays more attention. There are only two topics that covers with a problematic frame in more documents than the corresponding median: the violence of them ( $n = 10$ ) and the elections ( $n = 8$ ).

There are fewer differences between ABC and LV than with EP, although a somewhat more Islamophobic coverage is observed in the first one. For example, if both dailies opt for the problematic frame of Muslim women and clothing, LV matches with EP in considering the relationship between Islam and 'us' in a largely non-problematic way, and balances its coverage of mosques and imams between the problematic frame – to which ABC tends – and the non-problematic one. In line with these results, ABC transmits to its readers a negative image of M&I regardless of whether news are relative to Spain, extend to the West or refer to the rest of territories. EP mostly frames M&I as non-problematic regardless of the territory at stake, resulting LV in an intermediate position (see Table 8).

The attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils do not appear as a topic because the news about terrorism have been excluded in this study. However, the press addressed collateral issues to both the perpetration of the August crimes and the consequent state response. In fact, we noted above that, taken together, such issues received the most media attention. No other topic has deserved so much coverage in a concentrated space of time and by the three newspapers in unison. Between August 18 (the day after the attacks in Barcelona city) and September 5, 37 out of the 51 news in our database were related to the attacks. In line with what might be expected from the reaction of the Western press to jihadist attacks, ABC ( $n=6$ ) adopted a mostly exclusive, homogeneous and problematic frame in a greater percentage of texts during those days than in the seven and a half previous months. On the contrary, LV ( $n=15$ ) turned from largely exclusive and problematic framing to portray M&I primarily in an inclusive and non-problematic way, although in percentages slightly lower than EP ( $n=16$ ).<sup>22</sup> Finally, ABC reduced the percentage of pieces with problematic frame after the period of coverage of the attacks (from 64% to 45%), just three points above the pieces framing M&I in a non-problematic manner. Both EP (over 50%) and LV continued to favour the non-problematic framing of the Islamic.

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<sup>22</sup>EP increased the amount of documents with such frames by 13 and 10 percentage points, respectively.

**Table 7. Islamic Media Framing: Proportion of Documents Coded by Topics and Territories (Abc, El País and La Vanguardia. 2017)\***

		Records		Inclusive frame	Neutral frame	Exclusive frame	Heterogeneous frame	Neutral frame	Homogeneous frame	Non-problematic frame	Neutral frame	Problematic frame
		Total	%**									
Topics	Islam (religion)	39	9.0%	16.7%	30.0%	53.3%	43.6%	0.0%	56.4%	34.1%	17.1%	48.8%
	Interreligious dialogue (with Islam)	23	5.3%	11.1%	16.7%	72.2%	39.1%	8.7%	52.2%	45.8%	29.2%	25.0%
	Islam vs. 'us'	68	15.7%	26.6%	14.1%	59.4%	29.0%	1.4%	69.6%	31.5%	12.3%	56.2%
	Woman	48	11.1%	35.7%	35.7%	28.6%	39.6%	12.5%	47.9%	29.6%	14.8%	55.6%
	Clothing	70	16.2%	23.2%	51.8%	25.0%	22.9%	35.7%	41.4%	38.3%	13.6%	48.1%
	Family	14	3.2%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	42.9%	31.3%	18.8%	50.0%
	Public moral	27	6.3%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	48.1%	14.8%	37.0%	14.3%	7.1%	78.6%
	Other religious or cultural practices	8	1.9%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	37.5%	0.0%	62.5%
	Freedom of expression	2	0.5%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	Mosques and/or imams	55	12.7%	40.4%	36.2%	23.4%	32.7%	14.5%	52.7%	43.3%	23.3%	33.3%
	Mosque of Cordoba	6	1.4%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
	Laicism	4	0.9%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Islamophobia	44	10.2%	28.6%	47.6%	23.8%	15.9%	6.8%	77.3%	84.8%	6.5%	8.7%
	Violence against them	66	15.3%	33.3%	12.5%	54.2%	29.2%	3.1%	67.7%	76.1%	10.4%	13.4%
	Violence of them	84	19.4%	17.2%	35.9%	46.9%	46.4%	8.3%	45.2%	23.7%	8.6%	67.7%
	Trump	36	8.3%	8.3%	13.9%	77.8%	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	58.3%	13.9%	27.8%
	Pontifical visits	26	6.0%	5.3%	5.3%	89.5%	53.8%	11.5%	34.6%	42.9%	21.4%	35.7%
	Elections	42	9.7%	39.4%	18.2%	42.4%	23.8%	2.4%	73.8%	44.4%	17.8%	37.8%
	Sport	11	2.5%	20.0%	30.0%	50.0%	9.1%	27.3%	63.6%	63.6%	0.0%	36.4%
	Refugees	15	3.5%	0.0%	13.3%	86.7%	0.0%	13.3%	86.7%	53.3%	20.0%	26.7%
	Other	19	4.4%	25.0%	62.5%	12.5%	31.6%	21.1%	47.4%	60.0%	25.0%	15.0%
Territories	Spain	88	20.4%	30.0%	42.2%	27.8%	19.3%	19.3%	61.4%	45.3%	17.9%	36.8%
	The West***	297	68.8%	26.5%	36.0%	37.5%	19.3%	13.1%	67.6%	47.1%	14.4%	38.6%
	Non-Western countries and territories****	172	39.8%	4.1%	15.1%	80.8%	47.2%	8.8%	44.0%	36.9%	18.2%	44.8%

Source: Author.

\*Percentages of row and by group of frames. \*\*Percentages of column. \*\*\*The Western countries that were part of the media coverage are European ones, along with Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and the USA. References to Europe and the West themselves, as well as to the European Union and the Christian world are also coded as 'the West.'

\*\*\*\*The registered non-Western countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burma/Myanmar, Central African Republic, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The explicit references to the "Islamic world" are also counted.

**Table 8.** *Islamic Media Framing: Documents Coded by Either Topic or Territory and by Newspaper (Year 2017)\**

		Inclusive frame	Neutral frame	Exclusive frame	Heterogeneous frame	Neutral frame	Homogeneous frame	Non-problematic frame	Neutral frame	Problematic frame
Topics	Islam (religion)		<b>LV (→9)</b>	<b>ABC (58)</b> EP (29)	EP (40)		<b>ABC (54)</b> <b>LV (12.5)</b>	EP (10)		<b>ABC (33)</b> <b>LV (12.5)</b>
	Interreligious dialogue (with Islam)			ABC (83) EP (100) <b>LV (40)</b>	ABC (12.5) EP (=)**	EP (=)**	EP (=)** <b>LV (33)</b>	ABC (37.5) EP (67) <b>LV ((38.5%))***</b>		<b>LV ((38.5%))***</b>
	Islam vs. 'us'			<b>ABC (76)</b> <b>EP (6)</b> <b>LV (5)</b>			<b>ABC (70)</b> <b>EP (35)</b> <b>LV (9)</b>	<b>EP (9.5)</b> <b>LV (4)</b>		<b>ABC (75)</b>
	Woman	<b>LV (10)</b>	<b>(←33) EP</b>	<b>ABC (22)</b>	<b>EP (23)</b> <b>LV ((48%))</b>		<b>ABC (50)</b> <b>LV ((48%))</b>	<b>EP (13)</b>		<b>ABC (60)</b> <b>LV (29)</b>
	Clothing		<b>ABC</b> <b>EP</b> <b>LV</b>		<b>LV ((39%))</b>	<b>EP (→6)</b> <b>LV ((39%))</b>	<b>ABC (50)</b>	<b>EP (21)</b>		<b>ABC (31)</b> <b>LV (4)</b>
	Family	LV (100)			ABC (100) EP (100)		LV (33)			ABC (100) EP (20) LV (10)
	Public moral	EP (100) LV (100)	ABC		ABC (33) EP (14)		LV (9)			ABC (67) EP (75) LV (54)
	Other religious or cultural practices	ABC (100)		EP (33) LV (100)			ABC (100) EP (100) LV (100)	ABC (100)		EP (20) LV (100)
	Freedom of expression		EP				EP (100)	EP (50)		
	Mosques and/or imams	<b>ABC (6)</b> <b>EP (26)</b>	<b>(←9) LV</b>				<b>ABC (29)</b> <b>EP (9)</b> <b>LV (19)</b>	<b>EP (36)</b> <b>LV ((42.9%))</b>		<b>ABC (12)</b> <b>LV ((42.9%))</b>
	Mosque of Cordoba		LV	ABC (80)			ABC (80) LV (100)		LV	ABC (80)
	Laicism		ABC (→22) LV		ABC (=)	ABC (=)	ABC (=) LV (100)			ABC (100) LV (100)
	Islamophobia		(←17) ABC <b>EP</b> <b>LV</b>				ABC (100) <b>EP (70)</b> <b>LV (65)</b>	ABC (86) <b>EP (85)</b> <b>LV (63)</b>		
	Violence against <i>them</i>		<b>(←37.5) ABC</b>	<b>EP (47)</b> <b>LV (33)</b>			<b>ABC (46)</b> <b>EP (17)</b> <b>LV (80)</b>	<b>ABC (56)</b> <b>EP (71)</b> <b>LV (62.5)</b>		
	Violence of <i>them</i>		<b>LV</b>	<b>ABC (46)</b>	<b>LV (30)</b>		<b>ABC (25)</b>			<b>ABC (74)</b>

				<b>EP (54)</b>			<b>EP (5)</b>			<b>EP (21) LV (28)</b>
	Trump			<b>ABC (90) EP (67) LV (57)</b>			<b>ABC (60) EP (50) LV (43)</b>	<b>EP (58) LV (50)</b>		<b>ABC (30)</b>
	Pontifical visits			<b>ABC (92) EP (100) LV (60)</b>	<b>ABC (12) EP (50) LV (20)</b>			<b>ABC (11) EP (25)</b>		LV (17)
	Elections	<b>EP (8) LV (25)</b>		<b>ABC (19)</b>			<b>ABC (87.5) EP (40) LV (9)</b>	<b>ABC (28)</b>		<b>EP (6) LV (9)</b>
	Sport		LV (→17)	ABC (33) EP (100)			ABC (100) EP (100) LV (50)	ABC (33) EP ((50%)) LV (33)		EP ((50%))
	Refugees			ABC (100) EP (83) LV (80)			ABC (100) EP (83) LV (80)	EP (33) LV (40)	ABC	
	Other	ABC (100)	EP (→33) (←50) LV		EP (43)		ABC (100) LV (40)	ABC (100) EP (71) LV (18)		
Territories	Spain	EP ((35%))	ABC (→5) EP ((35%)) (4←) LV				ABC (67) EP (26) LV (19)	EP (74) LV (27)		ABC (40.5)
	The West****		(8←) EP (→8) LV (→13)	ABC (25)			ABC (67) EP (38) LV (34)	EP (39) LV (21)		ABC (24)
	Non-Western countries and territories****			ABC (96) EP (68) LV (62.5)	EP (53)		ABC (10) LV (1)	EP (19)		ABC (20) LV (20)

Source: Author.

\*For each group of frames, the predominant frame in each newspaper is recorded for the corresponding subject or territory. The difference in percentage points with the corresponding binary frame is indicated in parentheses. In case the predominant frame is the neutral one, the second frame with more records is indicated by an arrow; the difference is shown in parentheses if the difference between the binary frames is greater than 10 points. If a newspaper is not consigned in a given combination it is because there is no registered data for it. The topics in which the records of the newspaper and topic at stake are above the median of that newspaper by topics are highlighted in bold.

\*\*The equal sign in parentheses indicates that the records are evenly distributed among the three variants of a given group of frames, neutral one included

\*\*\*The percentages that coincide between two variants of a given group of frames are shown inside double parentheses.

\*\*\*\*See table 4.

## Conclusions

It is not strange to encounter the question of why a xenophobic organization has not gained parliamentary strength in Spain, contrary to the success of them in a large part of Europe (Alonso and Rovira 2015).<sup>23</sup> As to the rejection of M&I, opinion polls show that this is a less widespread attitude in Spain than among its counterparts. A recent Pew survey (2018) indicates, e.g., that it is the sixth European country (and the first among the Mediterranean ones), with more people saying (74%) that they would accept Muslims in their family (see also Dennison and Dražanová 2018). One contributing factor in the receptive attitude of Spaniards towards those who profess Islam could be mass media. Our analysis of the Spanish media discourse supports the hypothesis.

We have analysed whether the opinion and the attitude that the press tends to shape is Islamophobic or integrative. For this we have attended to the extent to which it opts, respectively, for the exclusive vs. inclusive, homogenising vs. heterogenising, and problematising or not of M&I. It has been done taking into consideration both the total coverage records and the documents in which these records appear in relation to the categories ‘subject’ – references to the Islamic subject – and ‘voices and sources’ – which the media use to shape the image of reality in reporting. The third category analysed was the news topics, which have been coded as a unique record per document.

The empirical evidence shows that there is no incitement to violent action against Muslims; it is not a racist media discourse directed against the Muslim ‘other.’ An image of rejection of the Islamic is projected, nonetheless, to the point of being possible to read definitions of the hijab as a “castrator veil”<sup>24</sup> and of Islam as an “ideology of imposition”<sup>25</sup> as well as categorical statements such as “they do not try to integrate themselves into Spanish society.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, most ‘subject’ records see Muslims as a stranger or outsider (exclusive frame) belonging to a community of undifferentiated peers (homogeneous frame). As a result, there is a racist discourse about the Islamised ‘other.’ However, if on the one hand the different integrative frames suppose at least a quarter of the coverage, the non-problematic one equals the problematic one. In the case of V&S, the presence of the former is even larger.

To sum up, the Spanish media coverage is more homogenising than exclusive, although it presents both Islamophobic traits. On the other hand, it is more balanced in its framing of M&I as a problem, and in fact it tends to portray the Islamic as non-problematic. The democratic principle of pluralism of information is translated, in any case, into a plurality of frames. Thus, while the H2 is confirmed, the H1 is qualified. This is all the more so because the diversity

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<sup>23</sup>This study was conducted and concluded prior to the 2018 Andalusian elections, as a result of which Vox, a far-right formation, won 12 seats in the regional Parliament, and prior to the 2019 general elections (24 seats). In the absence of due research, the media coverage of the candidacy seems to have focused on issues other than its Islamophobic discourse.

<sup>24</sup>ABC, 22-5-17, p.76.

<sup>25</sup>LV, 18-3-17, p.23.

<sup>26</sup>ABC, 27-8-17, p.3.

of frames is accompanied by a plurality of V&S: both institutional and non-institutional, and both Muslim and non-Muslim. In this regard, it can be concluded, on the one hand, that there is no silencing or exclusion of either Muslim or extra-institutional V&S. On the other, that, even though both institutional and non-Muslim V&S predominate, and even though they are mostly framed Islamophobically, it occurs again with the exception of the problematic frame.

H3 and H4 are also confirmed: centrist LV appears less integrative than leftist EP, but more so than right-wing ABC, from which it can be inferred that, being ideology important, territoriality is not a relevant factor to explain framing of M&I. Regarding EP it is worth adding that it is also the newspaper that Islamises contents to the lesser extent, both by the number of published news and by the total amount of words of its coverage, but also by the volume of opinion entries. Even though LV and ABC publish more news than EP, what is published by each of them is reduced to less than one third of the days of the year – less than a quarter in the case of ABC and EP. In the absence of comparative elements with other media systems, it allows to deduce, perhaps not disinterest in M&I issues, but willingness not to Islamise the public agenda. The hypothesis would be supported by the low percentage of news specifically related to the Spanish reality. It remains open for future research.

The analysis of the media topics corroborates the conclusions reached so far and allows to validate H5. The news published in the context of the attacks of August have been particularly enlightening: at a critical juncture, for it was susceptible to racist reactions (Islamophobic on this occasion), both EP and LV opted for reducing the presence of the Islamophobic frames and for increasing the integrative ones in addressing the multiple aspects they covered vis-à-vis their previous coverage of M&I. ABC opted for a more Islamophobic discourse than the one it was holding so far. At the same time, nonetheless, the right-wing daily reduced its coverage to less than half the number of pieces of the other two newspapers; that is, it became more Islamophobic while, potentially neutralising its social and political impact, Islamised to a lesser extent.

Taking together the diversity of frames and the differences pointed out among the newspapers, the Spanish press projects a rather homogeneous image of M&I and tends to shape it as a strange ‘other,’ explicitly or implicitly excluded from ‘us.’ It would not be contributing, therefore, to the inclusion of Muslims as a perceived part of an actually pluralistic or multicultural society. But neither can be said of the media discourse that is fuelling fears, tensions or hostilities towards M&I. More often than not, the Islamic dimension of reality appears as an issue that is avoided, firstly, in avoiding the Islamisation of subjects and topics and, secondly, by the relevant presence of the neutral frame in Islamised coverage. This kind of silence could help to understand the absence of rejection by Spanish public opinion, the Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ that would be contributing to shape, but such a silence could also be implying an absence of knowledge of the equal ‘other’ with which ‘we’ live more and more on this side of the Mediterranean.

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## Black Sea as Literary and Cultural Space: State of the Art and Prospects

By Yordan Lyutskanov\*

*It is argued that the notion of 'literary space', as developed from diverse perspectives by scholars within the disciplinary contexts of cultural geography and literary studies, is a convenient tool to evoke interdisciplinary research that has its focal area about literary studies; and hence potentially contributing to overcome a state of the art which perpetuates the position of studies on the Black Sea literatures and cultures at the margin of humanities (or: on the verge of not being constituted as a subject in humanities). Attempting a critical overview, I discern two main shortcomings of studies on the Black Sea region/area: (i) a tendency to 'naturalise' and dehumanise their subject, which correlates with specific interdisciplinary constellation; (ii) and a multilayered commitment to imperial agendas, some exogenous to the geographic region and some not. Tracing diverse theoretic perspectives in adopting the concept of 'literary space' (as a driver of imagination, as a field of interaction, and as an ambient of non-occurring events), and minding the mentioned shortcomings, I come to a set of prospective research issues which, as I believe, can bring a scholarly field to birth.*

**Keywords:** *Autonomy of Research, Black Sea Studies, Literary Space, Marginalisation of Humanities, 'Subalternisation' of Unimportant Others.*

### Introduction

In the spring of 2018 a conference call for papers was issued under the promising title "Black Sea as Literary and Cultural Space" (with some variations in the title across the main organising institution's website<sup>1</sup>). The text of the call (Nuselovici and Dokhturishvili 2018) disappoints with the lack of critical focus, thematic omnivoraciousness and postmodern commonplaces (deterritorialisation, (post)transnationality, multiculturalism) that, inter alia, fail to address, or figure out, the region's individuality; and any region's individuality. The main body of the text is based on an optimistic, simplifying and teleological postmodern narrative on how things have happened in comparative literature which used to be methodologically nationalist but later it liberated itself. It remains unclear how this universal treatment of our days ('be transnational in focus!') can be helpful in addressing literatures that have never been juxtaposed before, even within the framework of rigid methodological nationalism(s). However, the call brings to the fore a usable concept, 'literary space'. The book of abstracts

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<sup>1</sup> Compare (CODFREURCOR 2018) and (Iliia State University 2018).

(Black Sea Littoral 2018) contains some promising research proposals but fails to orchestrate a focussed whole. I will briefly defend my contentions below; here it would suffice to say that the mentioned shortcomings reflect the state of the art in the field, or in a field in its prenatal state; and that a proceedings volume might necessitate modifying the stated contentions but could neither replicate nor check the preliminary considerations that follow.

This article is written from the standpoint of a literary scholar who is aware that its topic is situated at the intersection of... geography and a number of other disciplines, most notably: history, linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies and, one among others, literary studies. Yet the concept of 'literary space' seems to me a convenient tool to evoke interdisciplinary research that has its focal point (or area) in (or about) literary studies; and hence potentially contributes to overcome a state of the art which perpetuates the position of Black Sea studies at the margin of humanities. In the first section of my article, I will introduce to the state of the art in Black Sea studies which I view as a scholarly field in a prenatal phase, in order to contextualise and support my claim that 'literary space' and 'cultural space' could be the conceptual tool to bring the mentioned field to birth. In its second section, I will relate my intuitions about polysemy of 'literary space' to previous uses of this concept by scholars<sup>2</sup> and will briefly approach some potential or actual issues of the hypothetical field of Black Sea studies adopting the respective explications of the concept.

### **Black Sea Studies and Humanities: Drafting the State of the Art**

The region's *minor and unapparent otherness* with regard to Europe/North Atlantic West, partly grounded in the lack of apparent subjection to European colonial powers of modernity, is precisely what makes research on it, in a post-modern/postcolonial context, especially challenging. There are both theoretical and empirical reasons to think that most voices coming from it, and their hypothetical choir (harmonious or cacophonous), seem not enough alien or enough (demographically etc.) significant to be let, or invited to, sound. In brief, they do not speak for anything like the 'Global South'. They are let sound in the way Europe's *own periphery* is let: in the sub-modes of (self-) deconstructing nationalism<sup>3</sup> and of deconstructing renascent imperial aspirations.<sup>4</sup> The former

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<sup>2</sup>As a rule, I shall omit works which used the concept without defining it, as if a common language expression. I myself shall be using the concept in the same way in the first part of the article. I also exclude from consideration strings of works, mainly in Slavic studies, which use the terms "*chronotop*" and "*chudožestvennoe prostranstvo*", the former coined by Mikhail Bakhtin and the latter sanctioned probably by the medievalist Dmitriy Likhachëv.

<sup>3</sup>As are Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian discourses in the volumes of *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* (I deliberately refrain from full reference).

<sup>4</sup>It is a tacit assumption of the two last sentences above that scholarship from and on nation-states in Europe's periphery has only the two mentioned options for ideological and methodological framing of its occupations, if this scholarship wishes to be published by renowned journals and publishers. And that scholarship devoted to the European core and to the 'Global South' has more options. Reasons for this divergence of possibilities are embedded in the structure of the international

sub-mode is felt in Neal Ascherson's (1995) and Charles King's (2004) histories and in the *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* editorial instruction to authors to avoid ethnocentrism (SEEBSS n.y.)<sup>5</sup>. The latter sub-mode is felt in variegated criticism of Russian imperialism (for example, in the seminal work of Susan Layton [1995]) and of neo-Ottomanism. A work approximately coeval to the first moves of neo-Ottomanism (on them see: Çolak 2006), seminal study by Eyup Özveren (1997), discussed below, tellingly models the period *following* Ottoman hegemony as (the) one to be emulated. King's 2004 history of the sea lacks such bent or sympathy and indirectly and unintentionally aggrandises the period of Ottoman hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

Metageographical stereotypes<sup>7</sup> and the realities of the Cold War should have had stagnating effect on a notion of Black Sea space (as a driver of imagination, as a site of interaction, and even as an ambient). Post-Cold War policies of gaining favour, or ingratiating, with the West prove as no less destructive (King 2004: 239<sup>8</sup>).

Recent attempts at thinking the countries/communities/societies around the sea not separately but as an interrelated whole<sup>9</sup> can reiterate the Cold War divide,<sup>10</sup> just as numerous works on Russian military and political expansionism/ revisionism do it.

It is my impression that in recent research four kinds of works seem to prevail: geopolitics; economy; practical sociology and political science<sup>11</sup>; prehistoric and ancient archaeology. The disciplinary scope of the probably only international academic journal to contain "Black Sea" in its title, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* (associated with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy), and of the probably most long lasting book series to contain it, *Black Sea Studies* (issued by the Danish National Research

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scholarly field and its entanglement with political and economical structures and agencies. The issue is intimately tied with the topic of the present article, but addressing it needs a separate one.

<sup>5</sup>The journal is published since 2001.

<sup>6</sup>As for mid-sized powers, represented by the nation-states of the region that lack imperial past, it seems that their moral and intellectual capital to decolonise themselves has been entirely spent in and devoured by the rise and moral/symbolic fall of nationalism, between early 19<sup>th</sup> and late 20<sup>th</sup> c., so that the only source of credit for their self-perpetuating agency, apart from post-modern (self)deconstruction of nation and at least moderation of nationalism, remains Western scorn for regional former empires.

<sup>7</sup> See (Lewis and Wigen 1997); but also, in particular, geography of prestige associated with EU enlargement.

<sup>8</sup>"The portrayal of one's own country as more attractive to foreign investors, more politically stable, even more civilized than those just down the coast has remained the normal mode of discourse. Today, there are few places in the world where political elites and average citizens know less about their neighbours than around the Black Sea".

<sup>9</sup>"The objective of the workshop is to develop the idea of the Black Sea littoral as an international meeting place of the socialist world". This is an excerpt from a workshop call for papers, "The Black Sea in the Socialist World", which was to be held in February 2015 in the University of London (Conterio 2014).

<sup>10</sup>Why not thinking of sides across the divide juxtaposing them, hypothesising, for example, their mutual complementarity, no matter successfully or not?

<sup>11</sup>E.g. studies of implementability of modern Western political and societal culture in mainly post-Soviet settings.

Foundation's Centre for BSS), epitomises the status quo. To put it otherwise: research on BS is either completely torn from current economic and political agendas, or overtly perceived as instrumental to them (the confession in Sideri and Roupakia (2017: 24)<sup>12</sup> is indicative).

Such a constellation keeps a notion of a Black Sea space outside the core of humanities reproduced through a general humanitarian education (in secondary school and university courses for non-specialists) and epitomised by literary studies.<sup>13</sup> Focus on social sciences and ancient history/archaeology (disciplines that are closest to viewing their subjects as natural objects) maintains, in the academic space, a 'nomothetised' – a moderately dehumanised – image of the Black Sea area and its inhabitants. It/they largely remain(s) outside the scope of 'ideographical'<sup>14</sup> inquiry.

The journal *Karadeniz-Blacksea-Черное море*<sup>15</sup> can be viewed as a challenge to the above outlined interdisciplinary constellation. It is issued quarterly since 2009 by a Turkish publishing house,<sup>16</sup> is worth devoting a separate article to. Here, the disciplinary context is one of social sciences (which are designated as the journal's "subject" in CEEOL) and (actually to no lesser extent) humanities. I will restrict myself to a brief analytic summary based on ten issues from the 38 available at CEEOL (Karadeniz 2009-2018): the earliest four (2009), four from 2014, and the latest two (2018).

Within the first issue, if a Black Sea area surfaces at all, it appears not like a site of contact but as a site of repressed 'Turkish-/Turkicness',<sup>17</sup> that is under revival through the research published in the journal. There is no editorial, to explain the name and programme of the journal. Authors are Turks and Turkic ethnics from Russia<sup>18</sup>, later from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan too. Two articles are published in Russian, while the rest are in Turkish. Some of the summaries are hard to understand due to the quality of their English language. Throughout this and next issues BS appears as a contact zone, in both spatial and symbolical terms. In this zone two kinds of 'Turkish-/Turkicness' meet: of Turkey and of a space comprising Eastern Europe<sup>19</sup> and Inner Asia. Already in the third issue two articles were published which forged a *cross-BS Turkic*

<sup>12</sup>“As the Black Sea region represents Europe's borders to the East and also the space where European identities and borders have been challenged through various types of migrations as well as enlargement, we hope this collection of essays becomes a useful tool for all those interested in contemporary politics – and EU politics more specifically”.

<sup>13</sup>I view literary studies as the core of humanities because it seems to me that literary studies' subject, literature, converges art, (verbal) language and ideology in the most balanced and far-going way, in comparison to historiography, visual arts etc., probably with the exception of theatre and cinema. This assessment rests on the intuitive assumption that the multitude of possible subjects of 'idiographic' inquiry (see the next note) can be viewed as sharing 'family resemblance' based on three features the combination of which grasps the nature of human species and the uniqueness of its representatives: 'artistry', 'lingualness' and 'ideologicity'.

<sup>14</sup>I recall here Wilhelm Windelbandt's basic typology of sciences.

<sup>15</sup>Note the morphological 'Turkification' of the name of the sea in English.

<sup>16</sup>See (CEEOL 2019). I was unable to obtain more specific information.

<sup>17</sup>It is an ambiguity supported by the formal identity of terms in the Turkish language.

<sup>18</sup>With one apparent exception, a Russian Turkologist of Russian or Ukrainian ethnicity.

<sup>19</sup>Esp. but not only Crimea and Tatarstan.

interliterary space. Greek and Armenian presence in the history of the region was tacitly circumvented, while the two articles within the journal's first year which mentioned Christianity in their summaries (half-pronouncedly) introduced it as an exogenous agency in the region.

Moving to 2014, no. 1, apparent change is brought about by inclusion of English-language articles<sup>20</sup> and of Georgian author (who publishes in Turkish). At first sight, language shift can be viewed as move towards further internationalisation (even globalisation) of the journal. Yet it is noteworthy that Russian authors appear more inclined to switch to English. This models an implicit hierarchy of languages of publication: English (worth switching to), Turkish (*maybe* worth switching from), and Russian (*surely* worth switching from). Cooptation of author from Georgia indicates and nurtures the same hierarchy, probably driving Turkish closer to the top position of English and promoting it as regional *lingua franca* (instead of Russian).<sup>21</sup> In the second issue we see Siberia and the Asian Far East included in the symbolical geography of 'Turkish/cness'. In the third issue, an article contributes to the following turn in forging a (cross) BS literary space: a national of one BS country (Turkey) writes about the literature of another BS country (Russia). It is a rare approach on the pages of *Karadeniz*, but it is expected, for it adds another aspect to a desirable, from Turkish standpoint, hierarchy in distribution of knowledge. If Turkish is to be the *lingua franca* of the region, Turks have to be (the experts) in things about the region, while non-Turks can be just experts in their national matters<sup>22</sup>. I did not notice a reciprocal contribution: it seems that Russian specialists in Turkish literature publish elsewhere. A similar contribution, "'Myth of Sacrifice' in the Texts of Russian and Bulgarian Literature", is published in the latest issue available through CEEOL (2018: 2).<sup>23</sup> The text of the English abstract gives reasons to think that the author read her Bulgarian source(s) not in the original but in Russian. If I am right, the aforementioned hierarchy of languages is extended: medium-sized vernaculars from the region are at the bottom so far (the case of Georgian scholar writing in Turkish).<sup>24</sup>

Moving to 2018, no. 1, I find noteworthy the focus on Anatolia and archaeology, and the disappearance of Turkic authors from Russia/former USSR.<sup>25</sup>

Characteristically enough, while not successful in forging an international/transnational BS region, or in constituting such a region as a frame and unit of

<sup>20</sup> By a Turkish and by Russian authors.

<sup>21</sup> My conclusions rest on numerically scarce data. Hence they can be factually misleading. Whatever the case, I insist on the theoretic significance of applying such an approach to a scholarly journal and its languages.

<sup>22</sup> Compare with the global stance of Anglo-American, and partly French, German and Russian, academia.

<sup>23</sup> After the present article was submitted, no. 1 for 2019 of *Karadeniz* appeared at CEEOL. I cannot comment the contents of this issue.

<sup>24</sup> Practicalities should not be ruled out: creating of research centres promoting acquisition of regional vernaculars and knowledge based on surveying sources in the original language consumes time and resources. Publishing in languages with drastically lesser number of speakers than Turkish poses other challenges...

<sup>25</sup> As witnessed by the list of authors in no. 2, the mentioned disappearance was a temporary one.



analysis, the journal fails to address an eponymous territorial entity too. I mean the so called Black Sea Region of Turkey, one of the administrative divisions of the Republic. Studies of sites, events and phenomena related to BSR territory are too sparse across the journal. While produced by academics from the this very region, it remained entrapped in a paradigm of excavating ‘Turkishness outside Turkey’ and thus remained a Turkish national edition, one expressing attitudes linkable with the ideologies of Pan-Turkism and, to a lesser extent, of Neo-Ottomanism.

An article published in the journal’s second issue (2009: 2), under the title “The name of ‘Kara Deniz’: a view from Caspia and Bulgaria”, epitomises the stance of symbolical (re)appropriation of the sea on behalf of (a) Pan-Turkism:

*In searching for roots of the denomination “Black Sea”, which today has a universal popularity, researchers immediately refer to the Anatolian Turks as the main and easiest source [...] The Anatolian Turks were not first to use the ‘black’ form, and could not be source for other nations for chronological and historical reasons. Source of this name, which was spread as far as Iceland at the very beginning of its occurrence in sources, is again Turks, but we need to have a glance at Bulgar and Khazar worlds. This essay claims that the “black” in the Black Sea is likely included in the Bulgar legacy of the region. (Karatay 2009).*

It is noteworthy that Karatay (2009: 67-69) does not circumvent the Iranian interpretation (authoritatively articulated by Schmitt 1989) but downplays it (not mentioning it in the abstract). Downplaying is symbolically/politically relevant. As well-known, history of Black Sea can be viewed (and is usually viewed) as North-Eastern extension of the Greco-Roman one: the sea is being discovered by ancient Greeks and thus is being included into history *sensu stricto*, and so on. There are reasons (archaeological evidence etc.) to model a history of BS from Iranian standpoint, from the perspective of Iranian ‘oecumene’. A Turkish/Turkic-centred history is a third broad-scale option. Editors of *Karadeniz* come close to a paradigmatic shift in Black Sea studies, albeit clumsily: demonstrating political engagement and no reflection on the political relevance and on the reflexivity<sup>26</sup> of their enterprise.

*KAREN* (*KAREN* 2015-2019), issued by the Institute of Black Sea studies of Karadeniz Technical University in Trabzon, is another Turkish journal worth paying attention to in this article.<sup>27</sup> The name of the journal is derived from the Turkish-language abbreviation of the issuing institute.<sup>28</sup> It also lacks a program-

<sup>26</sup> Circular relation between them and their research subject.

<sup>27</sup> All seven, actually six of seven, issues are freely accessible at journal’s website (see “Archive”).

<sup>28</sup> Block letters are used by journal itself, see <http://www.ktu.edu.tr/karenjournal>. The name is an abbreviation based on the phrase “Institute of Black Sea Studies” in Turkish, “*Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü*” (relevant letters italicised by me). However, the journal itself offers a slightly different reading: “*Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi (KAREN)*/ The Journal of Institute of Black Sea Studies” (<http://www.ktu.edu.tr/karendergi>). One word, “*dergisi*” (‘journal’) apparently does not contribute to the abbreviation. Apparently, “KAREN” was found enough suitable. I am tempted to suggest than not only euphony was a criterion. The name of the journal coincides with an Armenian male name, “Karen”. Incomplete coincidence does not indicate symbolic appropriation but symbolic displacement.

matic editorial (or it cannot be found, as the first issue altogether). The only article in its “current”<sup>29</sup>, seventh, issue – which addresses a Black Sea space within the field of humanities – performs, at the same time, a symbolic retroactive appropriation of a territory across the sea, as seen from the title: “A Look at the Social, Cultural, Economic, and Religious Development of Crimea during the Seljukian Era”. The second issue contains four articles with local focus, on Trabzon, from the fields of archaeology, history, political science and applied sociology. As in the current issue, the only text which explicitly thematises a Black Sea region/area is devoted to geopolitics and scramble over hydrocarbons, viewing that area as a zone of contention between Russia and the West (Turkey being either a part or an ally of the West). In the third issue the mentioned strategy of (re)appropriation is typified by a fragment from an article’s summary: “The peninsula located at the Northern Black Sea is called Crimea. Turks living there are called Tatars.” (KAREN 2017, 1: 16<sup>30</sup>). The issue (as well as the subsequent ones) retains the localist archaeological-historical focus on Trabzon (and, partially, Pontus: Giresun, Samsun, Rize etc.). It backs up preoccupation about contemporary Russian “revisionism” (in no. 2) with an investigation of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian plan to capture Istanbul. An article from the fourth issue devoted to a poet from Borchalo, an area in South-Eastern Georgia, extends the logic of (re)appropriation towards Caucasus; difficult to follow as it is, the wording in the summary’s initial sentence suggests Turkish autochthony and Georgian exogeneity in the mentioned area: “Today it [“Borchali”, sic] is divided into different regions and borrowed under the administration of the Republic of Georgia, living as an old Turkish homeland from old dates.” (KAREN 2017, 2: 14<sup>31</sup>).<sup>32</sup> The last three issues add nothing substantial to the journal’s profile.

Despite declaration that “KAREN is an *international* peerreviewed journal indexed by Index Copernicus” etc. (KAREN 2019, [1]: [3]<sup>33</sup>; emphasis added), the overwhelming part of the articles is written in Turkish and by Turkish scholars – just as is the cast of the editorial and advisory boards. Despite introducing the fashionable requisite of ORCID numbers alongside author’s names, publications overwhelmingly address Turkish themes and conceptualise them ethnocentrically. It fails in constituting and even demarcating a BS region as a unit of analysis.<sup>34</sup> But it succeeds in substantiating, in quantitative not

<sup>29</sup>Actually, it is the current, seventh issue; clicking on the link “Vol 1-1” at <http://www.ktu.edu.tr/karenjournal-archie> (Accessed 15.7.2019) leads to the same text as clicking on “Vol 5-7”.

<sup>30</sup>[http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi\\_30b43.pdf](http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi_30b43.pdf) (accessed 15.7.19). I deliberately refrain from referencing the author of the article which contains the cited statement, preferring to view the statement as ‘institutional’.

<sup>31</sup>[http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi\\_ab1c0.pdf](http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi_ab1c0.pdf) (accessed 15.7.19). I deliberately refrain from referencing the authors of the article which contains the cited statement, preferring to view the statement as ‘institutional’.

<sup>32</sup>Overall, two attempts by Turkish scholars to address medieval Georgian history are to be found in the journal; yet their summaries provided me no reasons to consider them anything more than extensions of research in Turkish/Turkic history, they lack both regionalist and Kartvelological focus.

<sup>33</sup>[http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi\\_df374.pdf](http://www.ktu.edu.tr/dosyalar/karendergi_df374.pdf) (accessed 15.7.19).

<sup>34</sup>It ‘fails’, if we assume that a corresponding intention existed at all.

qualitative terms, a territorially narrower prospective unit of research, the BS littoral of Anatolia (or “Black Sea Region” in Turkish administrative terms).

A research group at Columbia University,<sup>35</sup> calling themselves “Black Sea Networks” and devoting themselves to the “collaborative initiative to investigate the Black Sea as a hub of cultural, political, and historical interest”, for now seem to only demarcate a research territory and academic niche (prospective master’s and doctoral programmes in ‘BS s/Studies’ etc.) (Black Sea Networks 2019). A mere list of participants and a brief declaration of intention are hard to assess, yet in this case two peculiarities provoke comment. First, a neo-colonial structure of the research enterprise is suggested: a prestigious Western institution shapes a team abundant in affiliated and non-affiliated natives of the off-shore territory which constitutes the research object. Second, an interdisciplinary compromise, balancing between mainstream interest in political phenomena and marginal humanities, is offered. Both peculiarities promise too timid a departure from, and maybe even a reiteration and strengthening of the state of the art in the field. The multileveled neo-colonial power relations that shape international distribution of academic labour, that are embodied in a hierarchy of exogenous standpoints and institutions<sup>36</sup>, and that shaped the interdisciplinary constellation outlined above would be embodied in a collective agent at the highest hierarchical position<sup>37</sup>. And these relations would be projected into the up to now missing disciplinary core (non-applied humanities and non-applied literary studies in particular).<sup>38</sup>

As already noted, *Karadeniz* and *KAREN* make partly visible and are possibly committed to a self-empowering, self-exalting and self-exempting vision of the region; the same could be argued about *SEEBSS* (although the aspiring agency is less easily identifiable and the aspiration far less pronounced). Let us call this kind of agency (neo)imperial. It embodies a certain structural tendency, hinted at in the previous paragraph: the tendency of ‘externalisation’ of authoritative knowledge on the region. The “Black Sea Networks”<sup>39</sup> completes the tendency, embodying the structural possibility of a neo-colonial agency. I would provisionally define a (neo)colonial agency as a(neo)imperial one with substantial offshore possessions. Its main characteristic relevant to my argument is extraterritoriality; or principal

<sup>35</sup> Actually 5 of 12 members of the “core team”, incl. the “principle investigator”, are from Columbia University.

<sup>36</sup> The farther is an institution the more prestigious is its opinion. It would suffice to add here that such symbolic geography is unalienable from collective imagination in societies undergoing either Europeanisation or de-Sovietisation and that most BS societies undergo both processes (Turkey of AKP being the sole regional agent which probably is more or less free from both self-colonising discourses).

<sup>37</sup> This agent is or will be internationally visible *par excellence*, which exactly matches the neo-colonial power relations in and outside academia.

<sup>38</sup> After this article has been submitted to peer-review, brief bios of the members of the “core team” of the project appeared on the website. The project website could have systematically indicated those research achievements and interests of the project participants which back up their participation in the project. Whatever the case, it is possible to analyse individual research records in order to make prognosis on the group’s prospective activities more accurate; but this would have been an undeserved tribute to a reputation.

<sup>39</sup> It remains unclear why plural is used.

exogenousness, if conceived from the standpoint of the offshore possession, BS region in our case.

Tendencies towards ‘exogenisation’ of authoritative knowledge and ‘nomothetisation’ of the subject of research in scholarship on societies etc. around the Black Sea are deeply congruent to each other.

*Homo ponticus*, if such exists (=can be plausibly evoked to existence by scholarship), has still not been invested the constitutive properties of modern humanity (and it is them that position him/her on a par with any contemporary scholar – howsoever ‘post-modern’ the latter may conceive of himself), his/her humanity found/projected into/associated with pre- and postmodernity. This is so even if we count for the possibility that some communities less than other lean to put their experiences into literature (just as some seem to be less leaning to represent/experience sea as domestifiable space).

In particular, we still lack a volume on Black Sea literatures to bring together “articles on the development of the various literatures or parallel phenomena in them”, even less one to indicate “any explicit relationships or contrasts among the different traditions”. (I cited past conclusions of Hilary Kilpatrick (2000: 83) which addressed the state of the art in the study of Near<sup>40</sup> Eastern literatures). Kilpatrick does not focus on another aspect of the situation, no less valid for the hypothetic field of BS studies in humanities.

In line with the international division of academic labour, whereby the periphery is assigned (or assigns to itself) only occupation with one’s own (still national) self and with the most prestigious international core, research on BS region in BS countries even lacks institutionalised forms. Such state of the art gives some reasons for more far-going scepticism on the prospects of cross-Black Sea regional integration than the one expressed in (Manoli 2010)<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, interpreting (physical and mental) artefacts related to places within the BS basin as artefacts signifying a Black Sea space could be prone to nostalgic imperial agendas, as is the case, for example, with *Karadeniz*.

A recent collective research project on the BS region demonstrates concern with viewing 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries links between Europe and Black Sea societies and cultures as links of [bi-directional] exchange, not of [unidirectional] transfer (Kaser and Gutmeyr 2018: 17-20). Such a concern is justified by new data on how ‘the things were’, but it has a normative force too: one apparently related to reluctance to reiterate colonial power relations through the means of scholarship. One wonders whether we can extrapolate this normative framework to our contemporaneity, arguably characterised by post-, counter- and non-nationalist / post- etc. ethnocentric scholarship predominant in the West and, arguably, resistant nationalist / ethnocentric in countries around the Black Sea. One wonders whether encouraging non-ethnocentric research on BS issues contributes to knowledge transfer (which is unidirectional) rather than exchange. One wonders

<sup>40</sup>I insist on the appropriateness of this denominator, instead of “Middle”.

<sup>41</sup>Tacit teleologism and geopolitical/geocultural bias in Manoli’s article (“Yet, to date there is still no blueprint for Black Sea regionalism to deepen cooperation and integrate into the European community.” [2010: 323 (abstract)]) presents another problem, possibly typical for the majority of studies on the region, which, however, I prefer to not comment here.

why 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century locals are recognised as holders of knowledge to be shared and early 21<sup>st</sup> century ones are not. If in position of academic publisher, I would abstain from discouraging ethnocentric studies in favour of non-ethnocentric, being aware that, a century or more ago, it was ethnocentric – in the sense of nationalist and in the sense of Eurocentric – knowledge that was transferred into the region, being reputed to be advanced.

It can be argued that it would be premature to deconstruct ethnocentric scholarships from the Black Sea region before even letting them share a common stage and ground; whether we wish that or not, scholarship in and beyond the region is organised along national, that is, cryptoethnic and (crypto)ethnocentric, lines, the same being with various societal structures; despite globalisation. Yet two of the too few histories of the Black Sea – King's and Ascherson's – seem to take this arguably premature stance. Intersubjectivity prior to subjects, or, rather: transnationality prior to internationality, transsubjectivity prior to intersubjectivity seems the overarching epistemic filter in these works. From appreciating vernacular cosmopolitism to championing the current (neoliberal, EU or else) one, circumventing imperial and especially nationalist legacies as burdensome, probably with the tacit excuse that marine space, unlike land-locked, marginalises 'vernacularist' ideologies<sup>42</sup> like nationalism from the outset.<sup>43</sup>

These considerations hint at the possibility of making a scholarly use of focus on BS (region) that goes beyond justifying and researching the subject (BS, or BS region) itself. That is, scholarly research on 'things Black Sea' is not only a goal in itself (especially provided that Black Sea region proves a viable unit of analysis) but an opportunity to challenge metageographical stereotyping; and to challenge the *monologue* for *two* voices involving Eurocentrism and its postcolonial others.

In a way, Ascherson follows the specific logic of Russian Orientalism in the Caucasus: dividing the locals into interesting (and noble) savages and not-so-interesting (and not noble) (quasi)civilised Orientals; a divide noticed by Susan Layton (1995); unpremeditatedly, he falls into the monologic discourse of colonists vs nomads, civilised vs barbarians and... Greeks vs Scythians. Russians, Byzantines of Trebizond and Poles fit the first; Khazars, Tatars and Abkhazians the second category. Many of those who fit in neither remain outside the story. The Crimean Karaims are actually the only exception in Ascherson's book.

Hence research focussing on interactions between more than two kinds of actors, ideally to implement and extrapolate the fourfold sociolinguistic typology of Henri Gobard, is desirable. Binary structuring of the object reinforces 'civilisational myopia'. The latter seems to be one of the properties of general historical writing about BS. It comes to testify that the use of postcolonial/

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<sup>42</sup>Referring to the sociolinguistic typology of Henri Gobard (1976; discerning four mutually complementing functions of language: vernacular, vehicular, referential, mythical), I demarcate the possibility of considering nationalism as an ideology that forges a societal etc. order through overestimating 'vernacular' values and artefacts. It seems possible to chart a typology of ideologies basing on their privileging one or another function of language and prescribing a relevant world order.

<sup>43</sup>A sentiment against 'terrestrial order' is felt in Ascherson (1995: 274-275) ("[...] But it is a thought from inland [...]"); in the book of King – in subtler, diffuse, ways.

postmodern analytic repertoire is selective. What people knew about an object *implicitly* coincides with what ancient Greeks-and-their-intellectual-heirs-in-the-West knew (as in King 2004: 12-13). Greater cultural mixing between Greeks and barbarians is explained with hypothesised higher level of development of “civilisations and political structures” of some of the barbarians (King 2004: 34); the explanation depends on implicit assumptions too. The myopia has both epistemological and axiological dimensions.

What lies on the surface as a tool of knowledge is taken *as if by default* as the best /only possible/frame-forming tool; namely, the Greek and Roman written sources. As a result, BS is depicted as the north-eastern fringe of Hellenic and then Roman civilisation; instead of being depicted as the south-western fringe of the Scythian/nomadic/steppe nomos,<sup>44</sup> the western of the Iranian one,<sup>45</sup> or the ‘door’ for the Caucasian cultural community to marine interaction... A history to reckon all the mentioned perspectives would fit an important methodological requirement of Westphal’s geocriticism (on geocriticism see below, section 2) and could be viewed as its extrapolation from literary into cultural studies.

Given the precedent of Nikolay Trubetskoy’s *View on Russian history not from the west but from the east* (1925), the lack of ‘geo-optical’ daring in a history written in the 2000s is even more disappointing. On the other hand, to write a history of BS against the almost complete lack of precedents is already a feat. Yet what would constitute a breakthrough is any attempt to write of BS places, events, and artefacts from the perspective of *nomoi* different from the Greco-Roman and the European ones.

Civilisational egocentrism on behalf of a West tracing its genealogy to ancient Greece<sup>46</sup> pervades even writing that consciously tries to count for the lop-sidedness of the ‘Hellenes vs. barbarians’ divide (and its derivatives). The intellectually prudent and grammatically correct sentence “As is well known, from the remotest Antiquity the indigenous and nomadic non-Greek populations of the Pontic region were persistently viewed as one of the major ‘Others’ (e.g. Hartog 1980)” (Bilde and Petersen 2008: 9) tellingly lacks a grammatical object specifying the subject of perception, or, to put it otherwise, the ‘locus of enunciation’. Viewed by whom? Why someone’s standpoint is so powerful that it even does not require explication? Such is the power of discourse. Next, to recognise that an encounter is transformative for those who meet, that no one of them is superior, and that no one of them is deserving more attention are (three) different things, but Bilde and Petersen (2008: 10) seem to overlook the difference.

I attempted a preliminary epistemological contemplation on the tacit assumptions in, and to some extent the repertoire and the methodologies of, Black Sea studies. I shall try to explain now why and how introducing the concept of ‘literary space’ in these studies could stimulate epistemological self-awareness in

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<sup>44</sup>As partly implemented in (Vinogradov 2008), who reckons with the validity of “a pattern of historical development for the region which differs from the customary division of ancient history into Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods” (13).

<sup>45</sup>As initiated in (Nielsing and Rehm 2010).

<sup>46</sup>No matter which: of “wartime intellectuals [...] in Athens” or of “Ionian colonists at Olbia or Chersonesus”, to use Ascherson’s dichotomy (1995: 275).

them and help overcome an unfavourable interdisciplinary (and institutional) constellation which deprives regional academia, intellectual elites and, ultimately, societies from cognitive and historical agency.

### **Explanations of the Concept of ‘Literary Space’ and Respective Black Sea Studies Prospects**

Taking the standpoint of what seems to me common reason (albeit one shaped by philological education), I understand literary space to be trifold:

- (i) A product, matter and, possibly, a driver of (literary) imagination;
- (ii) A site of interaction between literatures, potentially leading to or, possibly, a symptom of the existence of what theory has called “[inter]literary centrism”, “interliterary community” (terms of Dionýz Ďurišin)<sup>47</sup> or even “world-literature” (understood as analogue of Braudel’s “world-economy”, see Domínguez, Saussy and Villanueva, 2015: 36);
- (iii) A site of mere collocation of literatures.

Hence: a myth, a field of powers, and an ambient.

The first perspective on ‘literary space’, the one that models it as ‘myth’, can probably be best supported by the notion of ‘literary space’ worked out in “literary geography”; a subdiscipline or scholarly practice that has been developed within the confines of British cultural geography for decades (see Hones 2008: 1303-1305, 1312-1313 and 2010, 2014: 164, 169, 170). Literary geography “regards texts as events that happen in the course of sociospatial and intertextual interactions” (2014: 11); while literary space is viewed here as the dynamic simultaneity provided by intertextuality within a text (2014, 17). It is considered not only as an entanglement of fictional and factual whence neither can be given prominence (2014: 12-13, 108 etc.) but also as a phenomenon which is unmappable (117).

To say it otherwise: a space becomes a literary space when its representations and knowledge production about it can and are analysed with the tools of narratology, hopefully one that had overcome the notion of space as ‘container’ (compare Hones 2008).

Basing “literary geography” on understanding of space not as a “grid”, “container” and setting but as process(ual)<sup>48</sup> (2011: 686-688; 2014), Sheila Hones apparently (2014: 170) denies that such understanding is mastered by the more

<sup>47</sup>“A ‘specific interliterary community’ refers to the coexistence of several literary systems whose level of interaction is close to that of national literatures [to that within a national literature]”, unlike a “standard interliterary community”. “Literary centrisms” are defined by Ďurišin either as “regional bodies larger than communities” or as “communities that play a large-scale integrative role” (Domínguez 2012: 103; [rephrasing] added).

<sup>48</sup>But also omnipresent, with permeable boundaries, and plural/heterarchical (Hones 2010: 61; after Thrift 2006).

recent projections of literary studies into the field of geography. The latter are exemplified by Franco Moretti's *Atlas of European Novel* and Bertrand Westphal's *Geocritique*. It seems that the main criticism against Moretti is that he gives ontological priority to 'factual' over 'fictional'; against Westphal – that, despite due acknowledgement of the co-formative power of 'fictional'<sup>49</sup>, he understands space as a measurable container.

Seen from this perspective, a BS literary space could be and will be discernible on the condition that insights and the methodology of literary geography are implemented. Within such context, the issue of whether an experience of literary space can be put on a map<sup>50</sup> seems to have secondary importance; deliberation whether it exists or not would have a primary one.

Understanding of literary space within literary geography of geographers shares a basic intuition with an earlier conceptualisation within the field of literary studies. It can be viewed as unpremeditated concretisation of the intuition (Jacobsen 1982) that a literary space is a (kind of) "potential space" as defined by the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott (1971). Mary Jacobsen shows that literary space is neither inner nor outer; that it cannot sustain claims for final truth or correctness; that it involves the readers into "willing" (non)-"suspension of disbelief".

In some partial way, the understanding of literary space as 'space-as-organised-by-rhetoric', or as the space organised by rhetoric<sup>51</sup> (see Wooten 2000), also fits the perspective of literary space as a product, a matter and a driver of imagination.

Westphal's awareness regarding the historically changing gap between perception of space and representation of space (2011: 57-59<sup>52</sup>, 84<sup>53</sup>-86, 132<sup>54</sup>) fits too. It lets view literary space as a magnifier and an obscurer of that gap and gap's change over time. Closer to the core of his theoretical project, we can view literary space as a tool for realisation, a specimen, a facet and maybe a concentrate of immanent intersubjectivity of any space.<sup>55</sup> Thus, BS as literary space would be constituted through "an intertextual chain that will be consolidated over time and across many different books (or paintings, or films, etc.)" (Westphal 2011: 117-8) that refer to BS.

<sup>49</sup>"[G]eocriticism confronts a referent whose literary representation is no longer seen as distorting, but as foundational" (Westphal 2011: 113).

<sup>50</sup>A review of diverse approaches to this possibility from the domain of literary studies is offered by Urška Perenič (2014).

<sup>51</sup>As suggested by Greco-Roman sources and shared by at least some of the scholars in classics.

<sup>52</sup>If a representation of space can be "sclerotic" (57), it can be non-sclerotic too, and these can vary over historical time and cultural space. "In the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, no attempt was made to account for the physical, *objective* world, but only for a world designed by God and recognized by men" (57-58). The latter statement does not, of course, testify to a belief (on behalf of Westphal) that physicality of space/world was not perceived by St. Brendan.

<sup>53</sup>"Is mimesis always based on fidelity to appearances? [...] In postmodernity, the gap between the world and the text has been significantly reduced [...]".

<sup>54</sup>"The dominance of the visual, which is actually more pronounced in discourse and metaphors than in perceptions [...]".

<sup>55</sup>From the standpoint of geocritique or geocriticism, intersubjectivity or multifocalisation is that what makes space a space.



The second perspective on ‘literary space’, modelling it as a ‘field of powers’, is compatible with (A) an extension of Fernand Braudel’s theory of historical space into literary studies (the extension prefigured by Dionýz Ďurišin’s theory of interliterarity [Ďurišin 1989 etc.] and recognised by Cesar Domínguez [2012: 103]); with (B) adaptation of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of culture to issues of comparative literature (as performed by Pascale Casanova [1999] 2007);<sup>56</sup> and with (C) the literary topology of Juan Bruce-Novoa (1975; 1988; 1990).

For Casanova and those who take her work, albeit with some criticism, as a point of reference (as Leypoldt, 2015; or Hibbitt 2017), literary space is a loose synonym for (inter- or transnational) literary field.

As for Bruce-Novoa, his “literary space” seems to be a dynamic constellation of works experienced in their relationship “to other texts and/or events which form and define their area of movement” – from other literary works to “oral tradition, film, music, history or multiple facets of social interaction” (1990: 158-159). Speaking of BS as literary space in the sense of Bruce-Novoa, and minding his reference to George Steiner’s definition of culture<sup>57</sup>, would mean to hypothesise that a constellation of literary works exists which persists in time and can be labelled as BS.

Regarding studies of the BS, anticipatory to this perspective (to its first theoretical variant: Braudelian understanding of historical space) was a study by Yaşar Eyüp Özveren (1997). According to Özveren, Black Sea region was indeed a world-system within the global world-system, or world-within-the-world, during the long 19<sup>th</sup> c., as far as material goods and financial capitals were concerned; that is, it existed as a supralocal entity and as a unit of analysis – economically. More important, a general conclusion could be drawn from the mentioned study that a ‘supralocality’ can exist as an entity impermanently, probably periodically: thus helping avoid regionalist/arealist essentialism. As far as I know, there are no works inquiring whether the historical condition described by Özveren is extendable to exchange of non-material goods (ideas, ideologies, images, attitudes) and of artistic and literary artefacts and models.

It can be argued that indispensable hints at how to probe the existence of a Black Sea interliterary space, or Black Sea world-literature, are to be found in works by Johann Strauss (2003 etc.) and Hilary Kilpatrick (2000).

The third perspective, supportable by findings that sometimes in a meeting between cultures neither acculturation nor transculturation<sup>58</sup> can occur, would confront us with the insight that a non-event is also an event<sup>59</sup>; and would allow us admit that it is the structure of a certain space that welcomes – or not – one or

<sup>56</sup>Casanova relies on Braudelian intellectual experience too (Hibbitt 2017: 9). An explicit preliminary theorisation on implementability of Bourdieu’s theory of field in comparative literature see in Boschetti 2012.

<sup>57</sup>“Defined ‘topologically’, a culture is a sequence of translations and transformations of constants” (cited in Bruce-Novoa 1988: 264).

<sup>58</sup>Brief discussion of the difference between the ‘acculturation’ and ‘transculturation’ perspectives see in Domínguez et al. 2015: 63-64.

<sup>59</sup>As historical introduction to the issue in BS setting may serve the article by Jakob Munk Højte (2008). Compare with more general scepticism in Ascherson (1995: 9): “But my sense of Black Sea life, a sad one, is that latent mistrust between different cultures is immortal”.

another theory of space (primarily, grid vs. processual, i.e., ‘space-is-out-there’ vs. ‘space is created through imagination and interaction’). An article in comparative literature (Ljuckanov 2014: 296-7) has expressed the caution that a BS interliterary space might turn, upon performing necessary research, a mere interliterary collocation. Yet it conveyed the methodological suggestion, or recommendation, not to rule out a story of non-success from objects of inquiry.

All conceptualisations of literary space referred to above can contribute in one way or another to better understand our material-ideal object, Black Sea; to unpacking it from political-economic and geopolitical uses, interpretations and concerns.

Focus on the ‘literary’ up to this point comes from the limits of my vocation. Yet I am aware that non-artistic and non-verbal manifestations of cultural spaces exist. A wide variety of tangible and intangible assets (from folklore to signs on money to eating habits to loanwords etc.) that are invested value within the broad zone of human agency inbetween/alongside economy and politics can stimulate imaginative coherence. The latter could be interlocal, intercommunal, interpolitical [between polities], international etc.; and it could be perceivable by locals, by outsiders or by both.<sup>60</sup>

As far as I can judge, the triple semanticisation of ‘literary space’ can be effectively extrapolated to the concept of ‘cultural space’. The latter concept, if semanticised and used with the view of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology, could become a cornerstone for de-marginalisation, or indeed the bringing to birth, of a field. It would be a rigorist use that would abstain from studying political and economic phenomena and that would (deconstruct and) avoid political and economic concerns in the choice of research topics.

## In Lieu of Conclusion

I would outline sets of research issues (I would not dare to say a research agenda), which set, if implemented, would bring a field out of its prenatal phase.

The following research desiderata can be a good starting ‘intellectual site’ towards the aforementioned unpacking and de-marginalisation:

- negotiating the notion of BS region as a viable unit of analysis in literary and cultural studies;
- elaborating the concepts ‘literary space’ and ‘cultural space’ based on material from literatures and cultures from the BS region;
- testing the workability of concepts ‘BS literary space’ and ‘BS cultural space’ (the whole set was more or less addressed by the paper proposals of Özveren (2018), Charriere (2018), Durnali & Emeç (2018), Johadze (2018), Lomidze (2018) / Lyutskanov(2011)<sup>61</sup>, Mamatsashvili (2018),

<sup>60</sup>But see also: the specific way in which literature (in comparison to music, architecture etc.) evokes space; or BS as space evoked by literature (and not music etc).

<sup>61</sup>This text appears as Gaga Lomidze’s (2018) in the *Abstracts of Communications* brochure (<https://iliauni.edu.ge/uploads/other/48/48797.pdf>, 42) and as Yordan Lyutskanov’s (2011) at

Sabatos (2018), Skvirskaya (2018) and Svanidze (2018) [abstract only in Georgian], and partly by a group of proposals using the thematic pattern ‘BS in the works of N’, for the October 2018 conference, but the text of the conference call makes me believe that these papers will remain *membra disjecta* in the proceedings volume);

- addressing or drafting or preconceiving the *differentia specifica* of such a ‘space’, that is, implementing an ideographical approach (in the sense of W. Windelbandt) on the level of methodology from the outset.

The latter is what the 2018 conference call exactly failed to do. From the theoretical toolbox of postmodern/postcolonial studies it has chosen those which are likely to have universal applicability (hence we have the preconception of one more Carribean, one more Medditerranean, one more East-Central Europe... – one more site, still unoccupied, to try the toolbox). If the conference succeeded in something, this is to summon scholars with diverse backgrounds interested in contributing to a field that emerges.

Further on, focussing on the following set of issues related to the symbolical capital acquirable by scholars and communities of the Black Sea area to make a scholarly field worth existing, could be helpful:

- (in)coherence between written and oral sources on Black Sea related events, localities, artefacts etc (If BS is the “birthplace of civilisation and barbarity”, why not considering it the birthplace of conflict of interpretations based on written vs. oral memory respectively?);
- (in)coherence between ‘indigenous’ and ‘outsider’s’ preconceptions and interpretations;
- competing, conflicting, complementary and incompatible interpretations of mythological figures associated with Black Sea and foundational for Hellenic and European sense of cultural and interpretative superiority (see Beridze’s paper proposal for the 2018 conference)
- analysing interactions between *more than two* kinds of cultural or societal actors within the Black Sea region / area, ideally to extrapolate the fourfold sociolinguistic typology of Henri Gobard<sup>62</sup>;
- performing expositions on BS places, events, artefacts from the perspective of *nomoi* (world-orders) *other than* the Greco-Roman and the European one(s)<sup>63</sup>.

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“Academia.edu”(https://www.academia.edu/36548275/Comparative\_literatures\_of\_the\_Black\_Sea\_region\_Call\_for\_papers).

<sup>62</sup>It views any linguistic situation as one of potential or actual tetraglossia, which is characterised by mutual complementarity of languages, as in diglossia (distinguished from bilingualism). Within tetraglossia, languages assume the functions of a vernacular, a vehicular, a referential or a mythological language.

<sup>63</sup>To turn again to the Tbilisi 2018 conference, such perspective is suggested by Licheli & Guinashvili (2018) and by Margaryan (2018).

These issues would stimulate the mentioned scholars and communities conceive their own condition in terms of responsibility for voices that were silenced because of methodological and civilisational myopia.

Cross-Black Sea comparisons on any topic within any field of humanities are desirable at any moment. Cross-BS focus is likely to have a disciplining effect, by circumventing the possibility of circumscribing research within already established domains like Balkan or Caucasian studies. Such comparison could be especially useful through performative deconstruction of the metageographical divide between a “Europe” and an “Asia”.<sup>64</sup>

Addressing a number of other issues could have a methodological and indeed epistemological disciplining effect on a scholarly community to come and could make it fit the *reflexive* character or ideal mode of social sciences and humanities, that is, the circular relationship between scholarship and subject:

- inspecting (in)significance of scholarship on enhancing/suppressing an idea of BS space and thus investigating the (prior) reflexivity of social sciences and humanities in the case of BS studies;<sup>65</sup>
- epistemological contemplation on (lack of) implicit civilisational bias, on the thematic, conceptual etc. repertoire, and on the methodologies in Black Sea studies.

The 2018 conference resulted from French-Georgian institutional cooperation. If it involves other institutions from the BS region as peers, it could turn into the appropriate institutional framework for the research field to be born outside the constraints of neo-colonial distribution of intellectual labour.

To summarise, prospective research on BS region should:

- (i) overcome civilisational and epistemological myopia (which favours Eurocentric accounts based on written sources in Greek, Latin and Western languages);
- (ii) evade monism (classificatory pattern based on the distinction between ‘culture/civilisation’ and ‘barbarity’);
- (iii) make explicit use of the reflexivity of social sciences and of humanities;
- (iv) be focussed on cross-BS research topics; and
- (v) be supported by *intra*regional institutional cooperation.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Yet even cross-BS focus can depend on stereotypes undermining the nascent field from within, as critical analysis of conference held 10 years ago shows (Lyutskanov 2011).

<sup>65</sup>Considerations on applicability and desirability of applying the interpretative framework of Said’s ‘Orientalism’, see Parastatov and Kondrasheva 2018: 314-315, could be a reference point, just as the diverging/converging reassessments of Byzantine, Ottoman and Russian imperial orders vis-à-vis symbolic devaluation of nationalism in western scholarship. See also Ascherson 1995: 119-120: “Renate Rolle, the German archaeologist who is now the best-known Western interpreter of Scythian research in Russia and Ukraine [...] evidently felt that her image of Scythian girls trained to muscular and nervous perfection had to be walled-off from the contemporary triumphs of East German women athletes, hardened and unsexed by anabolic steroids. [...]”.

- (vi) Region's experience as one that is (i) neither colonial nor metropolitan and (ii) neither 'European' nor 'non-European' still needs an adequate metalanguage to be worked out.

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<sup>66</sup>The latter *desideratum* is well realised by Prof. Alexis Nuselovici, who pronounced and insisted on the idea of holding a sequence of conferences on BS region in countries of the BS littoral on regular basis (oral communication during the 2018 conference). (This note was added after the article had been reviewed).

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## Spatial Variations of Sea Level along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast

By Tarek M. El-Geziry\* & Mohamed A. Said<sup>±</sup>

*This paper is based on hourly sea level data from six tide-gauges distributed over the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. These data are used to calculate the tidal characteristics, the spatial variations of the mean sea level, its annual rates of increase and seasonal variations. Twelve astronomical tidal constituents are constructed using the T\_TIDE package. Along the coast, tides are of semidiurnal type, and the mean sea level increases from west to east with a difference of 35 cm between the two extremities. The sea level rate of increase varied between 1.0 mm/yr (west) and 6.4 mm/yr (east), with an overall average rate of 3.4 mm/yr. This is higher than the rates of the global and whole Mediterranean basins, but meanwhile is less than the rate of the eastern Mediterranean basin. The sea level examines a seasonal trend with usual lows in spring and highs in summer. The seasonal variations tend to be mostly affected by the air pressure scheme and wind regime over the coast. Land subsidence is another factor, which must be considered upon investigation of sea level variability along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. However, this needs to be verified and concluded through more robust actual geological observations and analyses.*

**Keywords:** *Astronomical tides, Egypt, Mean sea level, Mediterranean Sea, Sea level rise, Seasonal variability.*

### Introduction

The Egyptian Mediterranean coast stretches over about 1200 km from Sallum (31°30'13"N; 25°06'54"E) in the west to Rafah (31°17'19"N; 34°14'28"E) in the east (Figure 1), comprising four different sections on the basis of the physiographical characteristics. Accordingly, different coastal dynamical features may be expected for investigation at each of these sections. The most western section (Section 1) is the northwest Egyptian Mediterranean region, which extends from Sallum to Alamein and is characterised by the highest elevation above the mean sea level (MSL) along the entire Egyptian Mediterranean coast (Santamaria and Farouk 2011). Section 2 presents the middle northern Egyptian Mediterranean region extending from Alamein to Alexandria, comprising Alexandria Western Harbour, the main Egyptian port on the Mediterranean. The third section is the Egyptian Nile Delta region, which extends from Rosetta to Port Said, where the

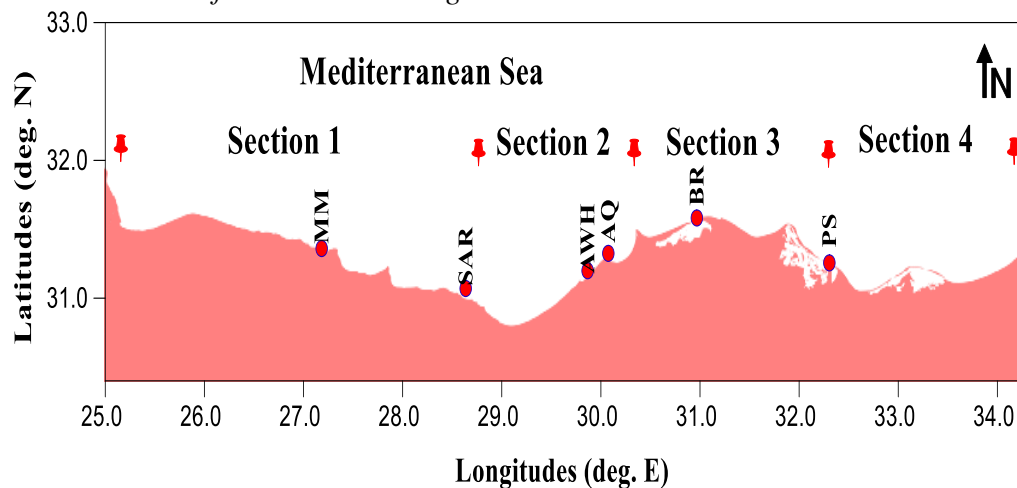
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highest population density inhibits and the main zone of Egypt agriculture activities exist. Lastly, the most eastern section (Section 4) is the north-eastern Egyptian Mediterranean region, which extends from Port Said to Rafah comprising the main zone of Egypt industrial and commercial activities, including the Suez Canal. Along this prolonged coast, five coastal lakes in connection with the Mediterranean Sea take place. These are Mariut, Edku, Burullus, Manzalah and Bardawil from east to west, respectively. These Delta Lakes are key ecosystems that act as a protective zone for inland economic activities (UNDP 2014). In addition to this coastal lake system, the Egyptian Mediterranean coast is characterised by the existence of different ports and harbours, some of which are commercials, e.g., Alexandria, and others serve mainly fishermen societies, e.g., El-Burullus.

**Figure 1.** *The Egyptian Mediterranean Coast with its Four Geographical Sections and Locations of the Six Tide Gauges Used in the Present Work*



Source: Author.

The observed sea level variations in the Mediterranean Sea are attributed to both the meteorological conditions impacting on the interannual and higher frequencies changes (Gomis et al. 2006) and to the steric parameters influencing the regional changes (Tsimplis and Josey 2001). The sea level variations in the eastern Mediterranean basin, as in the whole basin, are driven by changes in the driving forces of climate and are affected by the anthropogenic factor. Within the Basin, the sea level decreased between 1960 and 1994 due to the increase in the atmospheric pressure (Tsimplis and Josey 2001), and the steric heights decreased as a result of cooling of the upper waters of the eastern Mediterranean (Tsimplis 2002). After 1993, warm air caused sea level in the eastern Mediterranean basin to rise (Tsimplis 2002). In the Levantine Basin, a SLR (sea level rise) of 10 mm/yr off the Israeli coast during the period 1990-2001 was noticed by Shirman (2001). The same rate was revealed for the period 1992-2002 (Rosen, 2002). Larnicol et al. (2002) suggested that the changes observed in the sea level anomalies during the period 1995-1999 in the Levantine are related to variations in the deep and intermediate water masses distributions in the whole Eastern basin.

By analysing hydrographic data (temperature and salinity) to investigate the sea level changes in the Mediterranean Sea, Tsimplis (2002) concluded that most of the sea level variability in the eastern Mediterranean basin during the last 5 decades is due to steric changes in the upper waters directly linked with cooling. Vigo et al. (2011) used 16-year altimetry data set (1992-2008) to investigate the sea level variations in the Mediterranean Sea. Their results revealed that the amplitudes of the annual cycle vary from 4 to 11 cm, except for a small area of value around 16 cm at the south-east of Crete corresponding to the Ierapetra gyre activity. They concluded that the major features of the Mediterranean Sea circulation are driving the highest seasonal variability in the observed sea level. The thermosteric contribution in the observed sea level variations is also dominant in the Levantine Sea (Passaro and Seitz 2012).

The observed sea level variation off the Egyptian Mediterranean coast results mainly from the combination of the astronomical tides and surges. Tides, as in the whole Mediterranean basin, are mainly semidiurnal, with a general tidal range in the order of a few centimetres (Moursy 1994, Moursy 1998, Tayel 2008, Hussein et al. 2010, Saad et al. 2011, El-Geziry and Radwan 2012, Said et al. 2012, Radwan and El-Geziry 2013). Surges, on the other hand, have more impact on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. They may reach 1.0 m elevation under the effect of the meteorological factors (El-Geziry and Radwan 2012). The combined impact of astronomical tides, storm surges and sea level rise (SLR) can severely affect lives and coastal properties (Douglas 2001). Off the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, the SLR rate has ranged between 2.0 and 3.0 mm/yr over different periods (El-Fishawi and Fanos 1989, Frihy 1992, Frihy 2003, Shaker et al. 2011, and Maiyza and El-Geziry 2012). In addition to the SLR problem, the above-mentioned four regions along the Egyptian Mediterranean Sea are shown to examine various environmental stresses that are mainly attributed to anthropogenic activities: urban, touristic, industrial and agricultural; resulting in pollutants of land-based sources (UNDP 2011). The environmental problems related to coastal development, the alteration of the coastline and borders of the wetlands and watersheds, and the biological threats are all characteristic of these sections (UNDP 2011, UNDP 2014). Erosion is an additional problem, particularly in the Delta zone, where engineering and constructive works are constantly required as a means of protection (Frihy 1992, Frihy and Lotfy 1994, Dasgupta et al. 2009, El-Sharkawy et al. 2009, El-Raey 2010). The Egyptian Mediterranean coast has been identified as highly vulnerable to climate change induced SLR. Dasgupta et al. (2009) ranked Egypt in the top ten most impacted countries (out of 84 developing coastal countries considered world-wide) for population potentially displaced due to a 1m sea-level rise. Studies on the vulnerability of Alexandria to SLR revealed that a 0.3 m increase in the sea level would inundate large parts of the city; resulting in infrastructure damage, in displacement of over 500000 citizens and in a loss of about 70000 work opportunities (El-Raey et al. 1999). Alexandria was also ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in terms of population exposed to coastal flooding in 2070s (El-Deberky and Hunicke 2015). Syvitski et al. (2009) identified the Nile and Niger Deltas as being the most threatened of the African deltas due to land subsidence and human interference.

All these factors reflecting the importance of monitoring the sea level variations along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast motivated this analysis of sea level, which includes, for the first time, a set of sea level data covering the whole Egyptian Mediterranean coast. Results from such research are necessary not only for monitoring sea level but also for preparing a mitigation program for coastal defence.

### Data and Methods of Analysis

The present work is based on hourly sea level records from six tide gauges distributed over the Egyptian Mediterranean coast as shown in Figure (1). These gauges were deployed at Mersa Matrouh (MM), Sidi Abdel-Rahman (SAR), Alexandria Western Harbour (AWH), Abu-Qir Bay (AQ), Burullus new harbour (BR) and Port Said (PS) from west to east, respectively. The periods of data are different for each location (Table 1), with the longest records (30 years) at AWH and the shortest records (4 years) at MM. The recorded sea level at each location is referred to the zero level of the instrument.

**Table 1.** Location Names, Tide Gauge Positions and Periods of Records of Sea Level Data in the Present Study

Location	Nomination	Tide Gauge Position		Period of Records	% of Missed Data
		Lat. (° N)	Long. (° E)		
Mersa Matrouh	MM	31.360	27.183	4 years (2003-2006)	0
Sidi Abdel-Rahman	SAR	31.070	28.836	5 years (2012-2016)	0
Alex. Western Harbour	AWH	31.183	29.983	33 years (1974-2006)	9.1
Abu-Qir Bay	AQ	31.325	30.075	21 years (1990-2010)	0
Burullus	BR	31.582	30.986	6 years (2003-2008)	0
Port Said	PS	31.256	32.305	8 years (2003-2010)	0

Source: Author.

The sea level records were analysed; in order to get the astronomical tidal constituents; using the T\_TIDE package (Pawlowicz et al. 2002), which works under the Matlab<sup>®</sup> environment. T\_TIDE is principally based on the concept of the ability of expressing the tidal amplitudes at any location as the sum of all the harmonic components:

$$\eta(t) = \sum_n A_n \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{T_n} t + \phi_n\right) \quad (1)$$

Where,

- $\eta(t)$  vertical displacement of the sea surface as a function of time (m)
- $A_n$  amplitude of a harmonic component (m)
- $T_n$  period of a harmonic component (s)
- $\phi_n$  phase of harmonic component

The T\_TIDE package may give up to 68 tidal constituents. A signal-to-noise power ratio (SNR) is computed based on the square of the ratio of amplitude to amplitude error, and is used to identify significant constituents. The latter (those with  $\text{SNR} > 1$ ) are marked with a “\*” in the result sheet of the T\_TIDE analysis (Pawlowicz et al. 2002). As tidal amplitudes in the Mediterranean Sea are of a few centimetres, the present work focuses only on the 12 major tidal components for all: diurnal, semidiurnal and long period oscillations. These are defined, according to Kowalik and Luick (2013) in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *The 12 Major Tidal Constituents Generated Using the T\_Tide Package in the Present Study*

<b>Diurnal Constituents</b>	<b>Semidiurnal Constituents</b>	<b>Long period Constituents</b>
O <sub>1</sub> Principal lunar diurnal	M <sub>2</sub> Principal lunar semidiurnal	Mf Lunar fortnightly
K <sub>1</sub> Lunisolar diurnal	S <sub>2</sub> Principal solar semidiurnal	Mm Lunar monthly
P <sub>1</sub> Principal solar diurnal	N <sub>2</sub> Lunar elliptic semidiurnal	Sa Solar annual
Q <sub>1</sub> Larger lunar elliptic	K <sub>2</sub> Lunisolar semidiurnal	Ssa Solar semiannual

Source: Kowalik and Luick (2013).

The Mean Sea Level (MSL) is often defined as the average value of levels observed each hour over a period of at least a year, and preferably over about 19 years, to average over the cycles of 18.61 years in the tidal amplitudes and phases, and to average out weather (Pugh and Woodworth 2014). According to this definition, the MSL is calculated in the present study based on the hourly sea level sets. On the basis of the calculated MSL, together with the obtained astronomical constituents: principal semidiurnal (M<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>2</sub>) and main diurnal (K<sub>1</sub> and O<sub>1</sub>), the terms describing the main tidal characteristics (Moursy 1994, 1998) along the southern Levantine Basin were calculated. This comprises the highest high water level (HHWL), the lowest low water level (LLWL), the mean high water spring (MHWS), the mean low water spring (MLWS), the mean high water neap (MHWN) and the mean low water neap (MLWN).

Moreover, the type of tides along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast was determined using the constituent factor (Pugh 2004). According to the value of the F factor, the type of a tides can be defined as follows: if F ranges between 0

and 0.25 then a semidiurnal cycle results; if  $F$  ranges between 0.25 and 1.25 then a mixed mainly semidiurnal tide occurs; if  $F$  ranges from 1.25 to 3 then a mixed mainly diurnal tide occurs and finally a diurnal tide results for  $F$  values great than 3 (Pugh 2004).

$$FF = (H_{O1} + H_{K1}) / (H_{M2} + H_{S2}) \quad (2)$$

Where,

$H_{O1}$  is the principal lunar diurnal constituent amplitude;

$H_{K1}$  is the luni-solar diurnal constituent amplitude;

$H_{M2}$  is the principal lunar semidiurnal constituent amplitude; and

$H_{S2}$  is the principal solar semidiurnal constituent amplitude

Annual and monthly mean levels were calculated for each data set to present the final results and discussion in the present work.

## Results

### *Tidal Characteristics along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast*

Table 3 shows the constructed twelve constituents' amplitudes and phases at each investigated location in the present study. Despite the weakness of the observed astronomical tides along the coast, the  $M_2$  constituent is still the key player in the observed variations in the astronomical tides, as in the worldwide known places of semidiurnal tides. The  $M_2$  amplitude has its minimum value (0.6 cm) at SAR and its maximum value in PS (13 cm). Sidi Abdel-Rahman location has the lowest astronomical tidal elevations among the six investigated locations. This may be attributed to the deployment location of tide gauge, which is an enclosed bay with a narrow opening connection to the open sea. The obtained information on the astronomical elevations was used to calculate the different water level characteristics along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. The results are shown in Table (4). It can be easily deduced that tides along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast are of mainly semidiurnal type. While the highest HHWL occurred at PS (87 cm), the lowest LLWL occurred at MM (23 cm). PS and SAR had the maximum and minimum values, respectively, for both the spring and the neap water ranges.

### *The Spatial Pattern of the Mean Sea Level (MSL)*

The spatial variations of the MSL along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast are presented in Table 4. The MSL increases all the way long from MM to PS, *i.e.* from west to east, with a total difference of 35 cm between the two extremities. AQ and AWH have the same MSL of 48 cm, which is in good agreement with previously calculated MSL at the two locations over different periods (Saad et al. 2011, El-Geziry and Radwan 2012, Said et al. 2012, El-Geziry 2013). The

present MSL slope along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast agrees with the general atmospheric pressure scheme over the Levantine Basin (Tsimplis et al. 2005, Gomis et al. 2008, Oddo et al. 2014).

#### *Spatial Variations of the Annual MSL (Sea Level Rates)*

The annual MSL variability and trends at the six tide gauge locations along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast are shown in Figure 2. Results revealed a general trend of increase in the annual MSL along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast but with different rates. It can be deduced that the regions of sections 3 and 4, comprising the Nile Delta, examine the highest rates of increase being 4.8 mm/yr, 3.8 mm/yr and 6.4 mm/yr at PS, BR and AQ, respectively. On the other hand, the three other rates of increase are 2.2 mm/yr, 1.0 mm/yr and 2.4 mm/yr at AWH, SAR and MM, respectively. The average rate of the SLR along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast is 3.4 mm/yr. This is larger than the global SLR rate for the 20<sup>th</sup> century of  $1.8 \pm 0.5$  mm/yr (Church and White 2006, 2011) and for the whole Mediterranean basin rates, over the same period, of 1.1-1.3 mm/yr (Tsimplis and Baker 2000). Meanwhile, it is less than the Eastern Mediterranean rates of 04-20 mm/yr (Cazenave et al. 2001, Rosen 2002, Klein et al. 2004, Tsimplis et al. 2008, Vigo et al. 2011, Passaro and Seitz 2012).

#### *Spatial Variations of the Seasonal Sea Level Variations*

The seasonality in the recorded sea level is a major cause of its observed variability (Torres and Tsimplis 2012). Different coastal regions can be influenced by different meteorological and oceanographic factors, such as atmospheric pressure, wind system and the thermohaline steric effects (Gill and Niiler 1973). Along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, previous studies in the seasonal variability of sea level are scarce, although this is important for coastal risk assessments and mitigation plan initiation to face risks from SLR, storm surges and floods. Monthly mean variations of sea levels along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast based on the present data sets are shown in Figure 3. This shows that the sea level along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast examines a seasonal trend with usual low values in March and April (spring season) and higher ones in August (summer season), except at Sidi Abdel-Rahman, where the maximum mean monthly sea level was in December. November and December (late autumn/early winter seasons) also examines high mean monthly values. The seasonal sea level variability along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast can thus be concluded to be consistent with the atmospheric pressure scheme over the coast and the wind regime.



**Table 3.** The Twelve Constituents' Amplitudes and Phases at Each Investigated Tide Gauge Location

	Freq.	MM				SAR				AWH				AQ				BR				PS			
		A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error	A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error	A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error	A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error	A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error	A (cm)	Amp. Error	$\phi$ ( $^{\circ}$ )	Phase Error
SA	0.000114	4.0	0.80	312	11.46	4.0	0.79	312	12.51	9.0	1.30	334	7.94	5.7	0.80	327	8.48	6.8	0.90	336	7.93	9.8	0.13	344	6.59
SSA	0.000228	2.4	0.80	332	18.71	2.4	0.80	332	19.00	2.5	1.30	318	29.11	2.6	0.80	313	18.58	4.0	0.90	290	13.42	6.5	0.13	305	9.98
MM	0.001512	1.2	0.80	191	73.94	1.2	0.80	191	74.03	0.3	1.30	177	119.85	2.2	0.80	128	17.02	1.8	0.90	12	96.10	1.7	0.13	249	189.92
MF	0.00305	2.8	0.80	118	60.96	2.8	0.79	118	60.94	0.7	1.30	92	6.65	2.0	0.80	110	42.70	2.0	0.90	58	72.29	2.6	0.13	67	46.03
$Q_1$	0.037219	0.8	0.15	12	94.08	0.8	0.15	12	94.10	0.1	0.10	272	44.45	0.6	0.13	13	7.63	0.5	0.13	280	119.42	0.4	0.14	257	150.27
$O_1$	0.038731	0.2	0.15	257	40.24	0.1	0.15	258	42.00	1.0	0.10	326	3.88	0.9	0.13	304	67.67	1.2	0.13	245	51.61	1.2	0.14	259	56.84
$P_1$	0.041553	0.1	0.15	41	72.81	0.1	0.15	41	72.83	0.5	0.10	257	9.09	1.0	0.13	51	70.57	1.1	0.13	20	68.56	1.0	0.14	15	74.28
$K_1$	0.041781	0.4	0.15	34	21.56	0.5	0.15	335	21.60	1.4	0.10	355	3.10	0.3	0.13	344	20.89	3.3	0.13	13	20.30	3.2	0.14	8	21.99
$N_2$	0.078999	1.1	0.13	54	76.30	0.1	0.14	267	75.90	0.7	0.20	20	14.74	0.4	0.07	19	102.50	0.4	0.08	264	108.35	0.3	0.08	261	145.34
$M_2$	0.080511	5.2	0.13	54	9.99	0.6	0.14	281	10.10	5.2	0.20	245	42.10	2.0	0.07	234	12.04	3.7	0.08	326	12.82	13.5	0.08	323	13.84
$S_2$	0.083333	3.2	0.14	322	15.23	0.5	0.14	316	15.03	2.9	0.20	310	3.58	1.3	0.07	307	15.31	2.0	0.08	247	22.45	2.2	0.08	250	20.85
$K_2$	0.083562	0.3	0.14	87	21.91	0.3	0.14	87	22.01	0.8	0.20	333	10.10	0.7	0.07	345	43.16	0.6	0.08	270	63.32	0.6	0.08	273	58.81

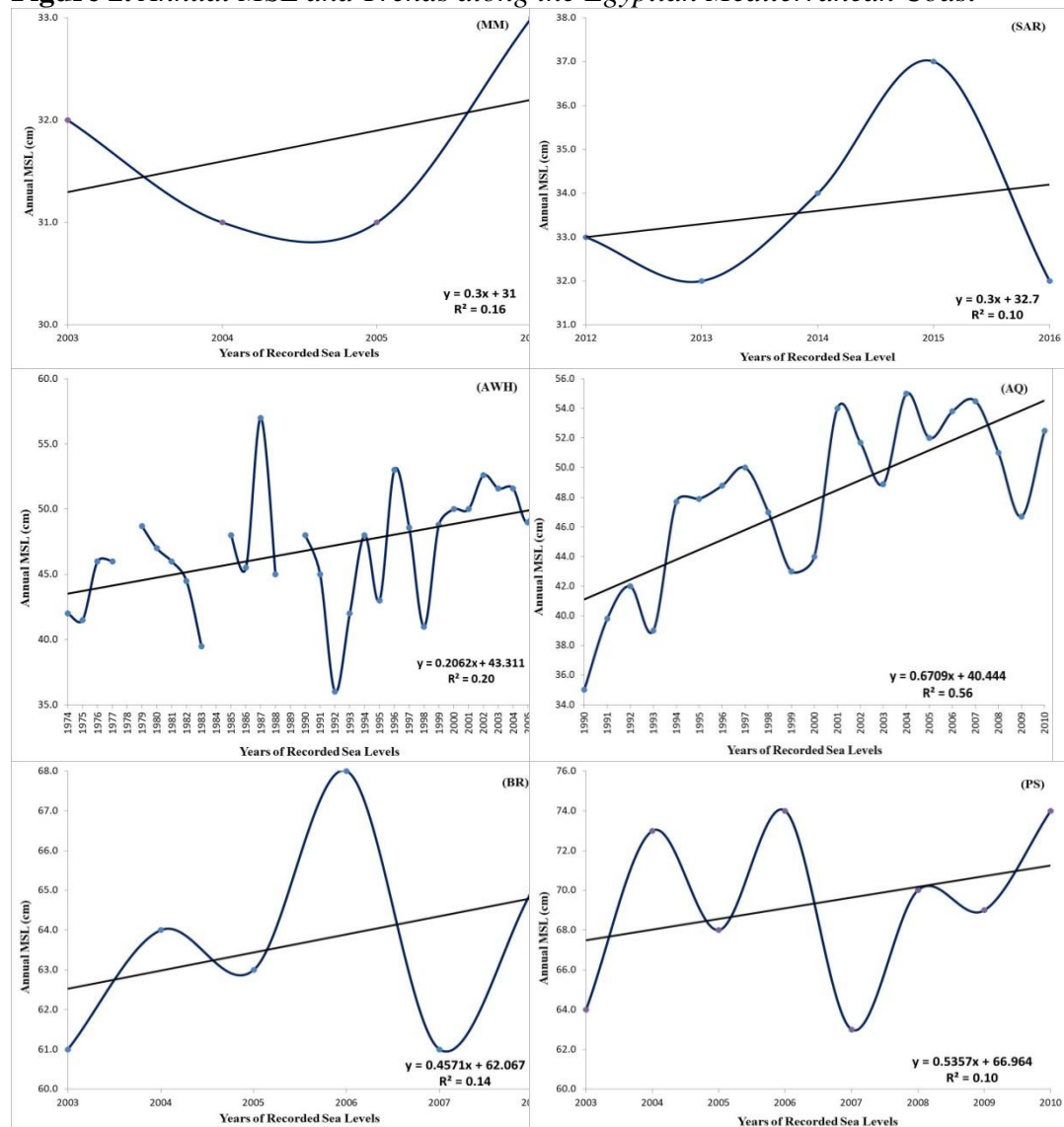
Source: Author.

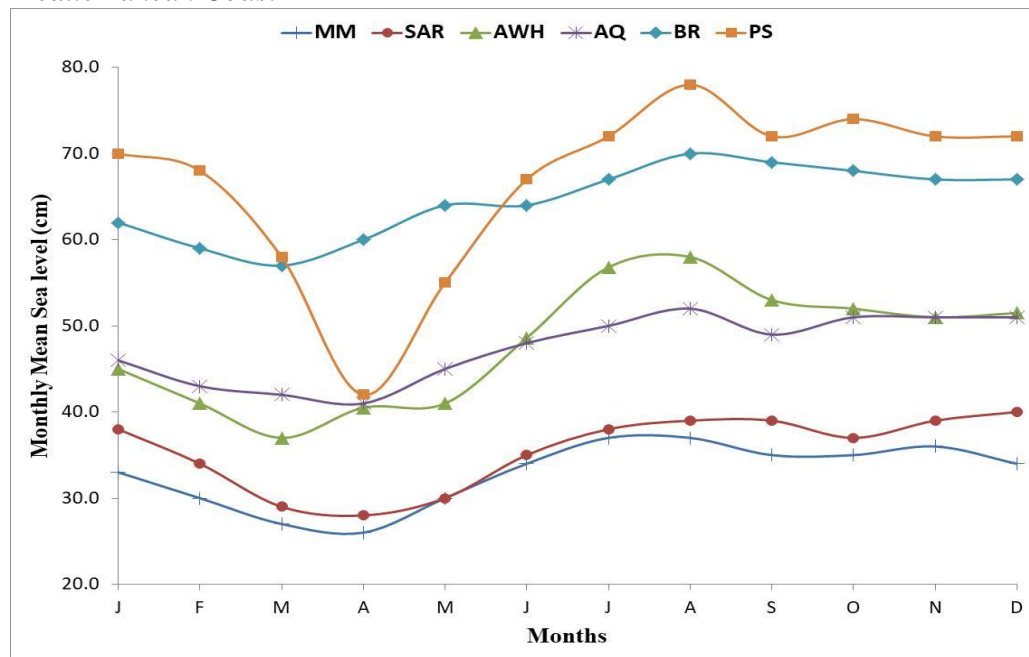
**Table 4.** Tidal Characteristics along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast

	MM	SAR	AWH	AQ	BR	PS
FF	0.10	0.45	0.30	0.37	0.79	0.28
MSL (cm)	32	35	48	48	62	67
HHWL (cm)	41	37	57	53	72	87
LLWL (cm)	23	33	37	43	52	47
MHWS (cm)	40	36	55	51	68	83
MLWS (cm)	24	34	39	45	56	51
Spring range (cm)	16	2	16	6	12	32
MHWN (cm)	34	35	49	49	64	78
MLWN (cm)	30	34	45	47	60	56
Neap range (cm)	4	1	4	2	4	22

Source: Author.

**Figure 2.** Annual MSL and Trends along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast



**Figure 3.** Seasonal Variability in the Recorded Sea Levels along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast

Source: Author.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Sea level data from six tide gauges were used to study four aspects of coastal sea level: (1) Tidal characteristics, (2) Spatial variations of the MSL, (3) Annual rates of variations in the MSL and (4) Seasonal variations of sea level, along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. The study analysed more extensive data than previous studies along this coast.

The T\_TIDE package was used to produce the twelve major tidal constituents. Results revealed that astronomical tides along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast are of mainly semidiurnal type with amplitudes in order of a few centimetres. The amplitudes of the solar annual constituent ( $S_a$ ) ranging between 4.0 and 9.8 cm along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast are in agreement with Vigo et al. (2011) who concluded that the amplitudes of the annual cycle in the Mediterranean Sea vary between 4.0 and 11.00 cm. The  $M_2$  constituent is the key player in the observed astronomical variations, and reaches its maximum in the eastern part of the coast. Amplitudes and phases of the different tidal constituents in the present study are in a very good agreement with those previously concluded for AWH (Moursy 1998, Tayel 2008, Hussein et al. 2010) AQ (El-Geziry 2013) and PS (Moursy 1998, Tonbol and Shaltout 2013). This is the first study of these characteristics off El-Burullus, Sidi Abdel-Rahman and Mersa Matrouh. As such, there was no reference upon which to compare the present work.

The MSL over the different periods of records at each location was calculated. Results revealed very significant variations in the MSL, with a general slope of declination from east (PS) to west (MM) along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast.

This agrees with the general atmospheric pressure scheme of Lows and Highs over the Levantine Basin (Tsimplis et al. 2005, Gomis et al. 2008, Oddo et al. 2014).

Analysed tide-gauge data showed that the rate of increase in the sea level is not evenly distributed along the Egyptian Mediterranean Coast. The overall average rate of SLR along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast is calculated to be about 3.4 mm/yr. However, it worth mentioning that the mid-to-east part (AQ, BR and PS) of the coast examines higher rates than its mid-to-west part (AWH, SAR and MM). This may be attributed to the pronounced land subsidence taking place in this eastern region of the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. This also comes in agreement with the conclusion of Frihy (2003) who assessed the exposure of the Nile Delta coastal zone to the SLR consequences and identified four main sections along the Nile Delta Coast as most vulnerable to SLR including; Burullus and Manzala lakes, western backshore zone of Abu Qir Bay, Manzala-Port Said area, and Ras El-Barr Beach. His study estimated that about 30% of the Nile Delta coast would be vulnerable to SLR. Moreover, the present results open the door for further investigation on the key factors affecting this part of the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, especially the land subsidence rates. Recent observations of the subsidence rate at Alexandria using permanent GPS (Woppelmann and Marcos 2012) showed moderate values of  $-0.4 \pm 0.2$  mm/year. Maiyza and El-Geziry (2012) concluded that the rate of sea level variation off the Egyptian Mediterranean coast is controlled not only by the oceanographic factors but also by the land subsidence process, which has much more impact ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) than the former ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ). Larger rates of subsidence were observed at the eastern part of the Nile Delta off Port Said, which is subsiding at 5mm/yr and, SLR and its potential impacts would therefore become more severe than other parts of the Nile Delta (El-Raey 1997). Comparing projected 21<sup>st</sup> century SLR and digital elevation data indicates that the Nile Delta region will not remain safe from flooding during the current century without effective adaptation measures, such as shore protection, emission reductions, and integrated coastal-zone management (Shaltout et al. 2015).

The seasonal variations of the sea level along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast examine a seasonal trend with low values in spring season and higher ones in summer. This is in agreement with the conclusions of Moursy (1994). Further investigation on the oceanographic and meteorological factors, is a must; in order to get more comprehensive idea about the mechanism of seasonality and to build robust conclusion on these variations.

So, in conclusion, the Egyptian Mediterranean coast is vulnerable to the sea level rise. However, its mid-to-east part is much more vulnerable to this rise than its mid-to-west part. The flooding risk assessment of this region, comprising the Nile Delta, is a must for designing plans of coastal defence and protection. More research is needed on the oceanographic and meteorological forces impacting on the seasonality of variations in the sea level along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. Also, the present study strongly recommends more investigation on the land subsidence rates along the coast in general and off the Nile Delta in particular.

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## Mythos Politicus: A Theoretical Framework for the Study of Political Myths

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*The relationship between myth and politics is widely studied in social sciences, mythology and political science. However, the diverse literature on the politics/myth engagement neither offered a comprehensive study for understanding the different instances of the myth/politics engagement, nor tried to offer any analytical framework for analyzing political myths into political realities. Part of this inadequacy might be attributed to the multifaceted nature of both of the political and the mythological phenomena and the other part is due to the variety of shapes that political myths might take. For this reason, this paper aims from exploring the literature on the myth/politics engagement at offering a general theory for the study of political myth by exploring its different instances. Out of these instances and by focusing on one type of political myths which is the foundation narrative the paper will try to offer an analytical framework for the study of political myth into political reality. Foundation narrative is chosen due to its revelatory character of the different values political founders cherish and its ability to explore their vision for the future. This makes the concept of political myth of a practical importance to judge the consistency of politicians' discourses and explore their vision for future. Focusing on Egypt, the paper will try to apply its analytical framework to analyze the different foundation narratives of the Egyptian state and the crisis of its current foundation narrative.*

**Keywords:** Egypt, Myth, Politics, Foundation, Narrative, State.

“Faust: I write, in the beginning was the Deed!”  
Goethe (1808) *Faust* Part I

### Introducing the Theory of Political Myth

Political mythology is a rich field. It studies, mainly, how politics formulates myth and how myth influences political actions. As a matter of fact, a theory for such a topic cannot be outlined perfectly in one single paper or a book. Yet introducing its main definitions, features, approaches, circumstances, and functions is a necessary task to be undertaken, if one wants to understand the myth/politics engagement. From such a task the concept of foundation narrative could be understood and a proper usage of the concept could be made in studying the Egyptian case.

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*Terminology and Definitions*

Myth comes from the word *mythos* that stands in Greek for the revealed, declared sacral words, that's why myth differs from the mere *logos* which also means 'word' (Stevanovic 2008: 26). The word *mythos* signifies an authoritative statement about something revealed or sacral, while *logos* represents a word of truth reached by reason through evidence and augmentation (Stevanovic 2008: 28). Myth is the divine address of men. It is the story of the absolute truth and the representation of 'the Reality' in the words of gods in some metamorphosis figurative and ambiguous manner (McDonald 1969: 141).

Definitions of myth are diverse and many. Oxford dictionaries defines myth as "a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon" (Oxford 2016). While Cambridge online dictionary defines myth as 'an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts' (Cambridge 2016). Scholars also vary over the definition of myth. Schorer argues that 'a myth is a large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience' (Schorer 1959: 360). Claude Levi-Strauss defines myth as 'language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at [taking off] from the linguistic ground on which it keeps on rolling' (Levi-Strauss 1963: 210). While Mircea Eliade defines myth as, 'always an account of creation, ... a dramatic breakthrough of the sacred' (Eliade 1998: 5-6), and he argues that:

*the myth components are (1) the history of the deeds of the supernatural being (2) that history is considered to be completely truthful because it refers to the real and sacred since supernatural beings have made it (3) myth always regards to the 'creation' it shows how something started to exist or how a way of life, an institution, and way of work had started. consequently, myths creates the beginning of every significant human act, by knowing myth one knows the source of things, which one can also overpower and manipulate by his free will, it is not about the external abstract cognition but about a cognition expressed through rituals by solemn telling of stories or through performing the rite to whom it serves as a cause (5) the purpose is that myth, through a way or another, has to be experienced so that every one can be possessed by the sacred devastating power of events that it evokes and lives again' (Eliade 1963).*

While Frankfort claims that:

*'myth is the form of poetry that transcends poetry by declaring one truth, a form of thinking that transcends thinking by wishing to reach the truth that it declares, myth is a form of action, ritual attitude that doesn't realize itself in the act but has to be declared and pronounced in the poetic form of truth' (Stevanovic 2008: 28).*

On the other hand, Political myth can be defined as 'a work on a common narrative which grants significance to the political conditions and experiences of a social group' (Benoit and Bottici 2010: 16), while Flood maintains that 'a

working definition of political myth would be; an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past present or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group' (Flood 1996: 44).

From the above, political myth reflects an account that claims to be the transcendent absolutely truthful story about politics. It targets social groups and communicates to them some standard of significance/insignificance so they can judge political experiences. Hence political myth has an account of how things started to be, a target group and criteria for judgment. Established on these, the author argues for his concept of 'foundation narrative'. The foundation narrative is the political myth narrating the foundation story of a state or republic or a regime and the values that should be learnt from it. Such a story not only describes the narrative of the founders, but also gives a clue about their vision for the future. It is mythological since it represents itself as the ultimate truthful account of history and the origins of things, and it uses unconventional language to communicate the values it preaches for the future. But to understand foundation narrative as a political myth, one has to understand political myth better by understanding its different features.

### *The Features of Myth*

Myth regardless of its different manifestations in politics, society and religion, and inspite of the inability to draw a line among its various manifestations in these spheres, mythological accounts have common features that myth reveals itself through.

### Myth Claims the Truth

Myth by its claim to know the story of things and the revelation of the absolute declares that its account is not to be judged as either truthful or false, because simply it is 'The Truth' and its details represent the elements of truth. That's why myth not only gives an account about the reality of things but also it enables an orientation inside the world by providing its believers with absolute standards for conceiving and evaluating things (Stevanovic 2008: 29). Mythological accounts do not speak about everyday life but about the crucial existential issues in life of and human relationship with the world. They explain to man why he had experienced something and what can he expect from the future (Stevanovic 2008: 29). In addition, the mythological claim of truth and its judgmental power give a sense to the world and offer positiontionalies and values that are moral, anthropological and human. Consequently, myth cannot be verified or justified because it gives the very criteria for verification and justification and in turn cannot be verified by them (Stevanovic 2008: 30, Morong 1994). Moreover, myth speaks in total, it explains the totality of things, the time before time, and it has its own causal relations between its elements, 'it freely chooses causes' (Stevanovic 2008: 27). That's why mythological accounts are very fundamental, total, absolute, justifying but cannot be justified.

### Myth Has a Unique Relation with Time and History

Myth by its nature has a unique relation with time and history. Political myth, and myths in general, can be considered ahistorical/atemporal in the sense that they lie outside the chronology of time since they dictate their own chronology. Yet offering such 'different' a chronology does not make a myth non historical or not temporal because this might represent a judgment on myth by a chronology it did not offer. Myth cannot be judged as historical or not historical because simply they narrate their own story of history. Myth stands outside history and draws a chronology of its own. Consequently, such chronology cannot be judged by any other chronology. Myth is fundamental in this regard.

Myths are a historical/atemporal because they are stories about the beginnings and origins which nothing is to be perceived before or outside (Stevanovic 2008: 29). Nevertheless, myths are also historical and temporal by their interest in offering accounts for histories and temporal chronologies. Myth not only narrates the past and how things started, but also this start that myth narrates determines how the future would look like (Stevanovic 2008: 31). That's why myth is uniquely able to 'bridge old and new, the past and future, to absorb new meanings and to give structure to the inchoate', and more importantly, to 'declare prophecies' (McDonald 1969: 143). However, this mythological appeal to the past and the beginnings of things does not mean merely conservatism but a yearning to some perfect situation which need not to have ever existed before. It only represents an ideal way of life that guides the myth targets to reform their living and take future actions. This proves why the mythological relation to the past does not mean simply replication of the old (Stevanovic 2008: 31).

### Myths are Symbolical Constructs

Due to the 'arational' nature of *mythos*, it tends to comprehend and judge realities by measuring their conformity to a fundamental construct it creates. This construct represents the divine, the absolute and the original. It is the truth myth stands to claim. Such a construct is formulated into symbols, these symbols evoke emotional feelings in the target groups and represent to some extent some of their cherished values. Symbols by relating themselves to emotions can start to give meanings of what is good, bad, ugly, etc. This symbols/emotions relationship formulates the construct. Myth defines its different elements and narrate itself by using symbols invoking emotional feelings and absolute definitions. The choice of these feelings and definitions must somehow respect the emotional criteria of judgment in the target group, otherwise myth will gain no ground and will appear as alien. Therefore, each myth includes symbols for what is the good, the bad and the enemy. Such symbols are absolute and unjustified except in the feelings of respect, awe and disgust held by the target group. The uneasiness or the absence of an emotional-base welcoming such a construct in the target group might render myth senseless. For this reason, myths usually offer symbols welcomed emotionally, and by their judgmental power based on that constructs, can give sense to the huge data one receives daily by

his senses from the world. The relation between these symbols reveals how myth wishes the orientation of man towards the world and other men to be. These symbols 'define the geography, topography of everyone political world' (Stevanovic 2008: 34).

### The Human Role in the Mythological Drama

The divine word, the stor(ies) of origins and the prophec(ies) of destiny cannot be accepted in the human world without some role given to men. The cosmic drama can never be understood without some role for man. The role of human beings in myth usually takes the form of a mythical ruler/founder/hero, and a chosen group or people. This hero, through some divine mythical mission, is sent to save the nation, conquer challenges, destroy the corrupt order and either start the new better order or renovate the community (Stevanovic 2008: 37, McDonald 1969: 144). Accompanying this political ruler/hero is the chosen people that solely represent the heroic act of victory and foundation, or receive the divine mission on the hands of the mythical ruler. So the chosen people are either the founder or the followers of the founder. In both cases they are destined to engage into some heroic and divine mission (Tamse 1975: 17).

### Myth as a Concept is Indestructible

Myth gives sense to the world because at the very base of every category of judgment there is some symbols related to some myth that claims to represent the truth and knowledge of the origins (McDonald 1969: 143). Myth is the fountain of truth. Truths, no matter their sources, start by an absolute story of how things 'are'. This story cannot be justified since it narrates the beginnings which no beginnings preceded, the first word which nothing before was written, and in this way truth is related to myth, and every judgment of truth invokes some myth. Thus myth runs deeper into the political and social experience of humans since it lies at the base of every human judgment on the world. That's why every endeavor to demystify the socio-political world will lead inevitably to new forms of mystification. Man cannot but live meaningfully, he needs judgments, that's why he needs criteria and a myth at their base. Examples for re-mystifications as a consequence of demystification are many such as the Marxist endeavor to sink religion deep in the cold water of rationality led to the march of history as a new myth put to replace the divine providence and the natural law (Engels and Marx 2010). Also Nietzsche's superman was put instead of the dead god and Hobbes's leviathan emerging out of some imaginal state of nature was put instead of the absolute church divine mission (Nietzsche 2006, Grant 2009). So myth is imperishable since it solely can justify human experience, choices and, by and large, the human existence (Stevanovic, 2008: 34). Therefore, man lives not with but through myth (Grant 2009: 27).

*Approaches to the Study of Political Myth*

Varied are the approaches to the study of political myth. The paper divided these approaches into four main approaches: the conservative, the radical, the instrumental and the epistemological. They are named approaches since they have a vision for what myth is, what it does to society and how myth could be understood as a phenomenon.

The Conservative Approach

The conservative approach claims that the role of political myths is to help stabilize and harmonize the community and the political system. Within the conservative approach stands Emile Durkheim who believes that myth and religion are created to support the status quo and enhance solidarity and social cohesion (Tamse 1975: 6). While Karl Mannheim believes that both ideology and myth play a role in the rationalization of the status quo. For Mannheim, myth expresses the irrational endeavor for preservation, and ideology gives it a rational form (Mannheim 1954, Morong 1994: 10).

Malinowski might uniquely represent a link between the conservative and the radical approaches to myth. Malinowski claims that myths justify the existing order by offering a model that suggests a continuity between the present and that model, and in this sense one respects his reality since it represents a continuity or a resemblance with some past on a mythological level and that reality has to keep following that level to legitimize its sustenance. Consequently, myth not only preserves, but also encourages innovating a certain track for the future (Malinowski 1954: 176, Tamse 1975: 6-7).

The Radical Approach

The radical approach includes thinkers and social scientists who believe in the constructive and revolutionary role of myth. They either claim this explicitly or they are understood to support such a vision. Primarily among them is Geroge Sorel who thought that myths can arouse an enthusiasm necessary for a class or nation in combat with the existing order (Tamse 1975: 9). This necessary myth consists of images imbued with emotions, will and a vision of a new world and a new human role after the conversion to the belief of such myth (Tamse 1975, Sorel 2004). Also Fredrick Nietzsche sought explicitly from his *Birth Of Tragedy* and implicitly through his Superman in Zarathustra to restore the role of myth in enhancing and emancipating man from his current condition (Nietzsche 2007). Karl Marx, though implicitly, offered the myth of the march of history as a guide for the revolutionary class to change the world for a better place (Engels and Marx 2010).

### The Instrumental Approach

The instrumental approach treats myth uniquely as a tool that is useful (or operational) to achieve various things and different roles depending on the situation. These roles need not to be strictly radical or conservative since myth can actually do both. For Plato myth can mean and do different things. Myth can be a message transmitted from a generation to generation to keep the memory of society (Grant 2009: 20). In *Phaedo* it is also curative for the individual because telling and retelling myth can invoke better behaviors and stop improper ones (Plato 2016, Grant 2009: 21). Moreover, myth is the preamble of laws that justifies their formulations. Finally, myth can be a model for preferred arrangements that regulates the foundations of a real city in the future and the myth would be the paradigm for such an endeavor (Grant 2009: 21). The medicinal noble lie is one of the famous platonic examples in this respect (Plato 2000). Also, John Mbiti the African philosopher and theologian argued that the mythological conceptions a society has of some perfect Eden times can play a double role in conserving the cultural and social arrangements that underscores such conceptions. Also at the same time these conceptions of perfection provoke a reformist attitude against reality in order to be make it close to the images imbedded in the perfectionist conceptions (Mbiti 1971). Finally, for Mircea Eliade the concept of the 'Sacred time' represents the mythological ideals one yearns for, while our life and history are profane times that are encouraged to be more close to these sacred times (Eliade 1959).

### The Epistemological Approach

The epistemological approach treats myth as a phenomenon that influences the conditions through which man understand and knows the world and politics. Myth enables man to make sense of his world, orient him and introduce some order to the chaotic manifestations of his reality. Claude Levi-Strauss, though a structuralist, can be considered in this approach. Strauss considers myth to be providing an explanation for a phenomenon that we cannot understand otherwise (Levi-Strauss 1955: 429). The purpose of myth therefore is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (Edelman 1998: 133). Also Clifford Greetz believes that symbols usually tied mythically to meanings are important to relate facts to values, and thus make sense of the world by giving a world view that demands a certain morality (Greetz 1973: 127, Morong 1994: 19).

Blumenberg, in addition, starts from an idea that the existential anxiety man feels in a world whose conditions are not under his control makes him creates some powerful imaginal magnitudes. These magnitudes can be comprehended and help eliminate his fear by some procedures man must undertake (Blumenberg 1985). One example of the magnitudes that man imagined and created to control his reality and eliminate his fear was the state (Grant 2009: 23). Edelman, on the other hand, argues that myth help humans to cope with widely shared anxieties, but typically fails to analyze problems adequately and rarely solve them. Yet

the very dependence of the citizens on their government to ward off evil makes them more susceptible to a political myth of the ability of the government to fight evil and eliminate anxiety, they then believe in the political myths offered by their government in different forms (Edelman 1998: 131).

From these different approaches, the circumstances for the emergence of myth, the functions of myth and the elements could be grasped. This is the occupation of the coming sections.

### *The Circumstances for Myth Emergence*

Myths in general, and political myths in particular, are debatable topics when it comes to their spontaneity/artificiality of their origins. While some believe that myth is a spontaneous phenomenon related to the human condition (Grant 2009), others believe that myth is an artificially created phenomenon (Sorel 2004), and else believe it could actually be both depending on the situation and the consciousness of the mythical subject and whether he is aware of being subjected to myth or not (Stevanovic 2008). Therefore, the circumstances for the emergence of myth differs according to one's vision of the spontaneity/artificiality of the myth. The paper sorts out four kinds of circumstances for the emergence of myth and classifies them to be: dispositional, orientational, contextual, pragmatic and reactive.

#### The Dispositional Circumstance

This circumstance indicates that myth by itself emerges spontaneously due to the very mythological disposition in mankind. Hans Blumenberg and David Grandt claim that the situation of anxiety associated with the human experience of an uncontrollable reality impels man to imagine myth and become mythical. The human feeling of inability to control the forces of reality makes him spontaneously imagine mythical magnitudes of some forces that are able to stabilize, give a clue and tame this reality in his favor. Man lives through myth. Otherwise, reality would be terribly worrisome and terribly fearsome, reducing man to complete passiveness and a deep feeling of horror (Blumenberg 1985, Grant 2009).

#### The Orientational Circumstance

The orientational circumstance assumes that man by his nature is objective and tends to seek some goal, his very objectiveness compels him to seek some orientation in the form of an 'ideal' to follow and fulfill. Man cannot live without ideals/goals for which he dedicates his everyday endeavors. This need for orientation makes man seeks some way of life within which yearning for some paradise is formulated into a mythical tale. He endeavors for it in his diverse activities in society and politics. Eliade (1959) and Mbiti (1971) hold this vision of the need for orientation that leads to the emergence of myth. Both claim that such an orientation towards the eternal times, the nostalgia for past

unlimited happiness, the pleasure of serenity and goodness of the ancestors days orient men and rescue them from the meaningless repetition of the profane/historical times within which man feels the burdens of his imperfection and pains.

### The Contextual Circumstance

The contextual circumstance indicates that certain contexts are riper than others for the emergence of myth. The ripest context for the emergence of myth is the time of crisis, when social reality becomes complicated, ugly and stressful to the extent that it impels people to yearn and accept unconventional accounts that promise for a better reality. Times of economic and social tensions are the grounds upon which political myth usually spreads (Stevanovic 2008: 34, Cassirer 1946: 288). Mythological accounts of the coming savior, the charismatic leader, the impending collapse, the end of the world and the punishment of god are but few examples for myths, hopeful and hopeless, that emerge at the times of crises.

### The Pragmatic Circumstance

The pragmatic circumstance indicates that the narrow and limited goals of politics invite the creation of myth either for preserving the status quo or changing it. Plato as mentioned before can be included. A more clear and brilliant account in this regard is the work of the Ethiopian Amasrom Legesse. Legesse, while studying the Borana Oromo nation in Ethiopia and its religious figure 'the Qallu', indicated that the necessity of creating a myth for the sublime origin of the Qallu emerges from the need for assuring the various tribes that he is neutral. Also the myth of sublime origin creates a distance between him and his subjects which maintains his neutrality because at the end of the day the Qallu is from one or another family in the community and nothing can prevent doubts that he might favor his group other than a sublime myth of his unique origin. The expedience of the founders made them create the habit and the myth that the origin of the Qallu have to be always unique and sublime, so that a distance between him and the rest of society including his own social group could be drawn and his neutrality could be guaranteed. Such a mythical account of origin can take the form of a heavenly descent of the Qallu, or an unconventional arrival to earth and to the tribe. The need for stability in power relations impels politicians to publicize some kind of myth to sustain their distance from the group and the masses to whom they belong (Legesse 1973: 46).

Moreover, political myth can be used pragmatically to inspire changes. Here myth can take the form of a political religion that encourages its believers to change the evil situation and effectuate the good community they dream for. George Sorel as mentioned before represent such a vision of myth as a political religion needed for the revolutionary group (Sorel 2004).



### The Reactive Circumstance

According to this circumstance, myth emerges out of the endeavor to cancel it. In other words, when the social agents try to demystify the social sphere, they cannot but re-mystify it by invoking a new myth in place (Stevanovic 2008). The illusions of prophets' revelation were replaced by Spinoza's natural right based on an imagination of a state of nature (Spinoza 2007). Nietzsche's god was replaced by the promise of a totally other reality that can take place at the hands of the superman (Nietzsche 2006). The idea of religion was renounced and replaced by the Marxist historical march (Engels and Marx 2010). The absolutism of the church was replaced by another absolute magnitude of the modern state for Hobbes (Grant 2009: 13). Therefore, according to this vision, myth emerges as a reaction to the action of canceling it. By default, such a vision of myth assumes that man by his nature has a mythological disposition to create and re-create myths.

### *Functions of Myth*

A plethora of functions can be deduced from the various approaches, features and circumstances of myth but it would be more clear and distinct to order them into categories because otherwise myth would look like doing all the things for all people. The categories for myth functions are: existential, epistemological, conservative and reformatory. However, it should be noted that each category does not exclude the functions of the other because the mythological phenomenon is very complicated and the borders among such functions are usually blurred. But for the sake of clarity these functions have to be outlined separately.

### The Existential Functions

Existential functions are functions fulfilled by the political myth to meet the needs imposed by the existential condition of man. Melteniski argues that man's purpose from myth is to transform his existence 'from chaos to order' or cosmos (Meletinsky 1998: x). Moreover, myth prevents the situation of doubt, incoherence and disorder that man encounters or may encounter in reality. David Grant and Blumenberg, as before indicated, argue that the existential anxiety of man in an uncontrollable reality impels him to imagine magnitudes of power that will help stabilize his reality, eliminate his fear and sympathize with him (Grant 2009: 40, Blumenberg 1985: 50). These imaginal magnitudes of power are political myths *par excellence*.

### The Epistemological Functions

Myth offers symbols that enable us to understand the data collected from reality and judge them according to these symbols in a meaningful way. The huge amount of data one collects daily wants a 'danda' in Stephen peppers terms to interpret them (McDonald 1969: 145). This construct 'danda' measures the degree

of conformity of this data against it. Any making sense of the world depends on such a 'danda' construct that tend to pose itself as absolute criteria for judging what is sensible and what is nonsense. Clifford Greetz claims that these sacred symbols of mythological background 'identify facts with value at the most fundamental level', they offer meanings to experiences (Greetz 1973: 127, Morong 1994: 19). Levi-Staruss also declares that 'the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction' (Levi-Strauss 1955: 429, Edelman 1998: 133). Therefore, Myth by its symbols -which relates causes to effects and facts to values- enables one to comprehend, make sense and judge reality in general, and make sense of and judge political reality in particular. 'Without myth ; language, human relations and power would be inefficacious' since there would be no categories of good/bad, meaningful/meaningless, true/false that allow one to conceive things meaningfully (McDonald 1969: 144).

### The Conservative Functions

Among the main, if not the most primary, functions of political myths is to justify the existing order, harmonize the social existence and maintain the status quo. Durkheim, Meleteniski and Manheim, as indicated earlier, all agreed on this point to various degrees (Meletinsky 1998: x, Manheim 1954). Karl Marx also with his conception of the attributes of superstructure-ideology can be understood to give myth a role justifying the wholesome relations of the socioeconomic existence (Marx 1999).

### The Reformatory Function

Since Plato with his noble medicinal lie, the use of political myth was expedient to recommend preferable political behavior (Plato 2000). From a radical/reformist point of view, myth can be 'created' or 'employed' to effectuate change of the existing order. Also myth by its orientation to some glorious past or promising future encourage changing and reforming reality towards more better conditions (Eliade 1959, Sorel 2004, Stevanovic 2008).

### *Types of Myth and the Foundation Narrative*

From the previous presentation one can infer different types of political myths. These types could be inferred from the functions and circumstances of myth emergence. One could enumerate types like existential myths (Blumenberg 1985), conservative myths (Manheim 1954), revolutionary myths (Sorel 2004), operational myths (Plato 2000), reactive myths (Grant 2009), in addition to foundation myths which is the focus of our paper and is termed also as foundation narrative. Such a change in terms is due to studying foundation political myths in the discourse of politicians. At this moment myth becomes formulated as narrative at the hands of the political actor.

Although each type of myth has its own significance, foundation narrative is chosen more than else due to its having a more practical significance than the

rest. Existential, conservative, revolutionary, reactive and operational myths are general terms that explain the different formulations of political myth. Yet by putting the political myth into time and place, political myths could start to have practical and analytical significance. Foundation narratives can be considered as this type of political myths placed into a certain time (foundation) and place (state). Such placing of myth in time and place requires from researchers to justify choosing this certain time and this certain place when analyzing political myth(s) of a certain context.

This paper chose the moments of state foundation as time and the discourse of state founders as place for its analytical horizon. Such a choice can be justified by different reasons. Place-wise, the paper argues that the state continues to be the fundamental phenomena for the study of politics. Temporally, the rise and fall of states (republics and political regimes as well) are one of the most dramatic events in the political history of any nation. However, choosing the moment of foundation has more practical significance than the moment of collapse. The paper argues that analyzing the foundation narrative formulated by state founders offers an insight into their values and their vision of the future. As shown above and would be shown next in illustrating an analytical framework for the study of myths, political myths are charged with systems of morality and an account of time. The practical significance of extracting such notions from the foundation narrative of a certain political agent/founder is that it enables one to judge the consistency between the politician's practice and discourse as shaped in his founding narrative and it also allows one to explore which vision of the future such a political actor has in mind. These two elements allow political analysts to judge better the discourse and the visions of state founders and political agents. Also for a dramatic moment like an emergence of a state (a republic or a political regime as well) allows a more clear view of the messages communicated by the state founders.

Historical research too can benefit from studying foundation narrative, as such a narrative can be used as a benchmark to assess the later practices of a certain political agent or ruling elite. For the above reasons, placing political myth into the time of foundation and the place of the state makes the foundation narrative a legitimate quest in our paper. In addition, and for more clear understanding of foundations narratives, the paper will try to employ its analytical framework in studying the consecutive narratives of the Egyptian state and understanding its current narrative crisis.

#### *An Analytical Framework for Political Myths and Foundation Narratives*

To better analyze any phenomenon, one has to deconstruct this phenomenon into its simplest parts, understand its nature and the interrelations among these parts, then re-construct it again. To put it simply, for one to analyze political myths there are certain elements that one has to explore in the myth. In addition to exploring these elements the relations between these elements have to be elaborated. This section outlines these fundamental elements for analyzing political myths (and foundation narratives included) with an exploration of their interrelationships

when possible. The elements of myth vary according to the structure and the content of each myth, yet -in general- political myths have some common elements that could be gathered from the diverse literature on myth. They are, *inter alia*, the following elements:

#### Target and Reference Groups

Political myths target social groups since myth could not be political if it did not spread and gain some ground in the world of men. And the extent of myth acceptability varies according to its ability 'to ignite' political expectations in its target groups who will be its social force (Stevanovic 2008: 34). In the myth this target group is oriented towards the ideal of some symbolic reference-group whose way of life and values are the wishes of the target group. For example, in national socialism there is the 'actual people' target-group whom the Fuehrer will move to be more like 'the true people or *Folk* reference group' which the target group wishes and endeavor to resemble (Harmon 1994: 449). Yet reference groups in political myths need not to be attainable or be imitated perfectly in reality. However, their importance to the myth lies in their symbolic power of orienting the target group to the ideals of the myth.

#### A System of Political Morality

Myth usually has a system of morality that defines what is good, who is good, what is evil, and who is evil. These are translated into some descriptions of the preferable political behavior, the best way of life, the rejected, criminal, immoral or traitor behaviors, and most importantly, the enemy or the threat or the challenge that the target group is destined to face (Morong 1994: 17) .

#### An Account of Time

Political myths usually narrate and offer some account of time, how things started to be, how the end would look like and the possible trajectories of time, one preferable and the other avoidable. The choice of one trajectory over the other depends on the system of morality outlined by the myth. Therefore myth contains elements of cosmology (beginnings), epistemology (symbols), axiology (morals) and chronology of time according to its own mythological narration of events.

#### A System of Causality and Responsibility

Each political myth has its own system of causality. This system is very unique and needless to be suitable to any prevalent relations of political causes and effects because myth as such claims to be the narrator of the truth and therefore needs no justification. It needs not to adopt the framework of the inferior reality which it is invoked against. That's why different myths have different unique internal relations between causes and effects of the same phenomenon

(Stevanovic 2008: 27). Each myth differs according to its system of causality, its morality and mission. Myth dictates 'which causes what' and the consequences of different political behaviors. Associated with this system of causality there is a system of responsibility stating who is responsible for which good/bad/evil conditions that occurred and who is responsible for the set of actions needed to be taken'.

### The Divine Mission

Usually political myth indicates a mission for the agents targeted by its story. It outlines the actions needed to be done either to reach the endeavored goal, or to prevent the impending collapse, or at least shows how to adapt oneself to the course of events. This mission is 'divine' in the sense that it reflects the utmost wisdom, the best/truthful comprehension of the situation and the best choice to be taken and never to be negotiated. Who would negotiate a divine message!

### **Egypt: A Long History of Foundation Narratives**

After outlining this detailed theory for the different instances of myth, political myths (including foundation narratives) and how to analyze its diverse elements and understand their interrelationships, it is important to put such efforts into practice by focusing on a certain case study. For this reason, the paper will try to analyze the consecutive crucial foundation narratives in the political history of Egypt and understand the crisis of its current narrative.

Egypt, one of the oldest civilizations in history, has a millenniums-old relationship with politics and the state. As well known, Egypt has one of the oldest 'unified' nation states. Although Egypt had witnessed different kingdoms, empires, colonialisms and republics with different rulers, there are important turning points in the political history of the Egyptian state. Important among them are Narmer's foundation of a unified Egypt (31<sup>st</sup> Century B.C.), Mohamed Ali Pasha's foundation of modern Egypt (1805), the free officers Nasserite Foundation (1952), and Post-June 30, 2013 republic Foundation and the exceptional role of former General and incumbent president Abdulfattah Al-Sisy (2014-) in that foundation.

Aside from June foundation which is considered by some to be a 'restoration' not a 'foundation', the author chose the rest of foundations due to their quintessential importance in the formulation and reformulation of the Egyptian state. However, June foundation is studied to engage these analyses of past foundations with some contemporary narrative of foundation.

As a matter of fact, history is narratives since the same event can never have an unanimous reading across time, place or among historians and politicians. What is of importance to the current task is how each state founder (or probably group of founders) tries to narrate his own story his own way. In such a story he aims to communicate some ideas and values to be learnt and cherished. Not only values,

but also his vision for the future could be understood by his contemporaries and later historians could assess his consistency accordingly.

Narmer (sometimes Menes Narmer) is credited to be the first king who founded a unified Egypt and established the first dynasty. Narmer's narrative is usually extracted from his famous palette in which he was depicted on the two sides of the palette wearing both the crowns of the north and south kingdoms of Egypt indicating his success in unifying the south and the north of Egypt by force and how this was celebrated by Gods. The foundation narrative of Narmer is an excellently complete example for a foundation narrative. First of all the narrative is a mythos *par excellence*, it is imbedded into a divine atmosphere. Included in it are all the elements one can need; The hero (Narmer), an account of time (battles of unity, and processions of glory), a target group (people of Egypt), a system of morality (the glorification of unity, victory and force and the denouncement of disunity, defeat and weakness), a system of causality (Narmer is the cause of unity), a system of responsibility (Narmer was responsible for unity and his defeated enemies were responsible for disunity) and the morale of this story was always the importance of unity for the Egyptians and the glorification of the leader who is usually a military leader (Wikinson 2000).

This leader was capable of achieving unification not simply by his wisdom but by his force and military victories. From that foundation moment onwards the king, also the warrior, had been glorified by Egyptians to the extent of worshipping. And the values that Narmer sought to communicate by his palette are up till now cherished by Egyptians and the Egyptian state. The values of unity and the supremacy of the king-the warrior is quintessential up till now in the Egyptian politics and political culture (Pratt 2005). Here one witnesses a myth that outlined a set values in the story of foundation and that myth succeeded to maintain influence on the founded state for millenniums to come in the future.

Another crucial turning point in the history of Egypt- and the most important turning point in its 'modern' history- is the foundation of modern Egypt by Mohamed Ali Pasha whose reign covered the period 1805-1848. Ali (1769-1849) founded a modern Egypt in the sense of establishing a state on the western style structure of government that contains ministries (*dwaween*), clear division of political and administrative roles, a bureaucracy, a professional organized army and all were controlled by one secular ruler. Yet the paradox of Mohamed Ali is that he represents the opposite of Narmer. Menes Narmer founded Egypt as a heroic king glorified by the gods and Egyptians, and communicated a set of values that has to be cherished by the posterity but Mohamed Ali's foundation was to a large extent empty of any heroic spectacles. Ali, not an Egyptian, had outmaneuvered all his political rivals until the *Ulema*, (Muslim clergy and local chiefs) deceived by his pretending political selflessness, delegated him with power. To make it worse, the establishment and the consolidation of his power was associated with a massacre he committed against the *Memlukes*, his remaining political rivals, whom Ali with his known shrewdness invited to his Citadel and in a single event staged a slaughter against them killing most of them (El-Sorbony 1926). The paradox of such modern Egypt is that it has no foundation narrative; it was founded on no heroism and no clear set of values from the 'beginnings'

and such a lack of narrative didn't enable Ali to reflect to his subjects some clear vision of the future. On the contrary, Ali's reign was established by political maneuvers in the atmosphere of deception, ambiguity and in the aftermath of a massacre. This gives no clear messages or values from the founder to the state and the people. And gave modern Egypt no clear vision of a future it must endeavor for. This made Khaled Fahmy (2002) to argue that Ali was not a national hero in any sense of the word, he was just grafting an autonomous kingdom for his family out of the Ottoman dominion. Not to mention that his inability to speak to the people was partly due to their illiteracy and his Turkish tongue. Such a lack of narrative might have exacerbated such a bleak vision of his intention.

Since Ali was credited to be the founder of modern Egypt, having no narrative, he was only praised for his achievements with no story of greatness apart from being chosen by the representatives of the people at one point because of his success in deceiving them. Moreover, Ali's advent to power was during a period in world politics famous for its secret alliances and secret policies. Ali in turn kept his intentions unclear especially in an atmosphere of international, regional and domestic multilateral political conflicts imbued with conspiracies (El-Sorboni 1926) .

Modern Egypt from that moment until Nasser's foundation showed no clear vision of any mission which its consecutive leaders could seek and fulfill due to the simple reason of the absence and the inability to make a foundation narrative since the founder days. One can attribute this inability to the language and illiteracy barrier, and other like Fahmy (2002) might attribute it due to Ali's lack of interest to make a narrative to the people, this people whom were merely the fuel of his expansionist endeavors. However, both ways one ends up with a foundation with no narrative, leading to a rule with no clear values or vision for the future.

The British occupation of Egypt (1882-1954) might have ignited the reactive sentiments of independence and nationalism (Hussein 1996), but once Egypt won that independence, there emerged a need for a new foundation narrative to fill the moral vacuum made by the absence of any morally inspiring foundation narrative since Ali. Only after a turn of a century and half since Ali, Nasser and his comrades from the free officers would offer such a narrative.

Coming to the 1952 free officers' popularly supported revolutionary seize of power, one can notice that the free officers- formally led by General Mohamed Naguib (1901-1984) while the real leadership was for Nasser- offered Egypt a new foundation narrative much needed since the days of Ali (Younes 2012). This time the foundation narrative (expressed in the seize of power radio announcement by Sadat in 1952) expresses the ability of the Egyptian young armymen who represent the sons of the fellahin (*lit. Egyptian peasantry*) to remove the corrupt king, oust his unjust Turkish speaking elite, fight imperialism and end the feudal system. The foundation narrative of the free officers and later on of Nasser was complete. It had the hero (Nasser and the officers), the target group (the Egyptian people), an account of time (how Egypt was corrupted and defeated by traitors and colonial collaborators), a system of morality (the goals of independence, dignity, justice, democracy and the enemies of corruption,

despotism, feudalism and imperialism). These enemies were represented as the ones responsible and the causes of the disease, treason and defeat. On the contrary, the army young officers- the sons of the poor Egyptians led by Naguib and later on by Nasser salvaged Egypt from them and restored its lost pride and wealth. This represents among other things the mission of fighting these enemies and the aim of achieving the goals of justice and democracy.

What was more unique in the Nasserite foundation narrative is the addition of a new mythological element to the narrative. That is the 'mythological reference group' whom the actual people should imitate. The reference group is 'The People' or 'The great people of Egypt', a concept which Nasser the leader formulated and his later successors consumed. According to such a formulation, the leader solely understands and comprehends the true characteristics of the People and accordingly moves the actual people, or in Sherif Younis's terms 'The population', to imitate that reference group of the People. The leader by his speeches and policies would move 'the population' in order to be 'The people' (Younes 2012: 237-243). The problem with this concept of an imaginary reference group is its vagueness and the monopoly of the leader in comprehending and dictating it. This enabled the Egyptian leaders through their personal discourse and the use of media to claim how should the actual people behave and act in order to be more worthy of the title 'the great people of Egypt'. Hitherto, the foundation narrative of Nasserite Egypt continued its influence at the hands of all his successors, each adding his own content to the structure of the narrative according to the circumstances.

However, such inheritance of concepts did not go smoothly, as ruptures are usually expected in any machination of power. During the aftermath of January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution, a revolution dramatically defeated and contained by the military in two years, one can find instances where the Nasserite reference concept gets challenged. The supreme council of armed forces SCAF, that assumed power after the ouster of Mubarak on February 2011, was in the habit of issuing military announcements. Within these military announcements one can frequently notice the repetitions of two main phrases: (great people of Egypt) and (honorable citizens). Following social media at this period, one can find political activists, perceiving SCAF as a continuity of the ousted regime, frequently mocking their repetitious terms and their fantasy of the 'honorable citizen' whom they believed as only a manipulative term to deceive people into following their orders. Honorable citizens are the term reserved for those who follow SCAF and any conspiratory accusation reserved for challengers. Such a mock of cowed people by revolutionary activists made the term 'honorable citizens' associated with citizens complicit with governing authorities. A whole sarcastic series named 'the honorable citizens' finding resemblances of the pro-authority complicit behaviors of such 'honorable citizens' in the history of Egypt was broadcasted on YouTube by some anti-regime Facebook page (Sanah 2018).



### **The Post-June 30, 2013 Egyptian Republic: The Narrative and the Future**

The June republic foundation narrative can be gathered among different sources from three fundamental speeches; the (June 30, 2013) announcement by the Egyptian military command as a reaction to the June 30<sup>th</sup> nationwide protests rebelling against The Muslim brotherhood President Mohamed Morsy. The (July 3, 2013 ) speech by the then general and Minister of Defense Abdul Fattah Al-Sisy in which he declared the removal of president Morsy and the suspension of constitution after consultation with various national political forces. And the most important speech among them is the speech on July 23, 2013 in which general Sisy, later on president Sisy, addressed the Egyptian nation at the graduation ceremony of the military academy. The importance of that speech lies in the fact of its inclusion -for the first time since the ouster of Morsy - of a clear narrative for the political circumstances of the removal and what should be next. However, among these speeches and declarations still there are common themes that might help in constructing a picture for the narrative of such a republic, and explore the challenges and the future as drawn in this foundation narrative.

First of all, President Sisy contributed more than anybody else in formulating the foundation narrative for the June Republic due to his de facto leadership of all the political events in Egypt since June 30, 2013 until his inauguration as a president in 2014. However, this June republic narrative faces many challenges that might influence its comprehensiveness and; consequently, its vision for the future. The elements of the June republic narrative include: a target group (the Egyptian people, and more specifically the anti-Muslim brotherhood large segments of the Egyptian population), which means that the message to the target group gives two contradictory statements, one of hopeful expectations and the other of threats. The expectations are reserved for the anti- brotherhood segments and the threats to the pro-brotherhood. Yet these hopeful expectations are to an extent paradoxical. President Sisy (the hero of the narrative) founded the state by a call to combat the future threats posed by terrorists (whom he enlists the brotherhood among). In his famous military academy speech, Sisy addressed Egyptians ‘to go out to the streets to authorize the army and police to combat terror and violence’ (Al Nashaby 2013). His message is not relieving like the normal foundation narratives which usually claim victory, the end of threat and the start of a new hopeful episode. Sisy notes ‘The situation was very dangerous’ and the ‘ousted president’ was ruling in order to destroy the state’, so Egyptians have to be ready on the occasion of violence to ‘authorize the army and police in order to combat violence and terrors’(Al Nashaby 2013).The June republic narrative is born from threats. It promises no further than battles against peril, these battles in some speeches were chosen, in others were imposed.

Such a narrative born in an atmosphere of horror and need cannot communicate any values which can reflect the vision of the emerging state. Nothing could be understood more than the vague promise of making Egypt *ad el donia* (lit. as big as the world), which does not surpass the level of mere

enthusiasm and propaganda and reflects no clear vision aside from the battle against terrorism (Al Nashaby 2013). It can only communicate a call for war, a call for mobilizing ceaseless efforts to go into the battle. While in fact, states throughout history were often founded after the finished battle; such finished battle usually narrates the heroism of the warriors who will turn on a new leaf and start a promising future. Yet the June foundation narrative narrates the heroism of the hero whose heroism is not complete but still in need of more battles, the hero is both a hero and an imperfect warrior. He embattled the threat yet the threat was not defeated by him and still looms in the horizon. One year after his inauguration and in his speech at the UN, the former General and the incumbent popular president stressed the threat of terrorism he was invited to fight (Masr 2015). This gives the impression that this republic was born in war and not as the habit of most states 'after' the war. In Such incomplete narratives no values could be extracted, only a future of future-battles could be grasped, President Sisy frequently through all his speeches stresses this war atmosphere which poses the question: how the June Republic would look like if understood according to its foundation narrative? In fact, it would look like a regimen still caught in war and in need for a future foundation narrative to conclude that war by describing some ultimate victory yet to be accomplished.

Another paradox in the June republic narrative is that the threat the nation has to fight is always unclear and usually described in the passive voice. For although the president clearly describes his enemies of the nation, he still point to some conspiracies and threats in the making. This was mentioned in all the three founding speeches pointing to *Mo'amarat bi tohak* (lit. *some conspiracies in the making*). He described 'these conspiracies as targeting the state institutions' and that 'the conspiracies against the state is big' which is re-mentioned again in President's words two years after inauguration (Nahar TV 2016). But it is not clear who is behind them, which indicates that the system of political morality is incomplete because the identities of the evil and the good and the lines between them are not clear. This is unlike, for instance, the clearly identified enemies of Menes's palette and the free officers' foundation speech. Also the system of causality and responsibility is incomplete since a huge part of the story is being narrated in the passive voice.

Moreover, the mission or the 'divine' mission as narrated by the founder does not call for certain behavior other than the delegation to fight battles and unity during these battles. President Sisy argues, 'it is not important to be hungry, what is important is to be like that, (showing his closed fist as a call for unity)'. It communicates that this mission is to be held in an atmosphere of peril and deprivation. All this reflects no value and outlines the huge challenge and ambiguity that June republic is going to face in the future. This ambiguous challenge is the lack of vision for future and the continuous living in a situation of war, these situations of wars usually demands temporary unconventional measures and continuously changing behaviors. One can simply see this unconventionality in the continuous imposition of emergency laws in Egypt during Sisy's reign.

This means that if the June republic was not provided in the near future with any other foundation narrative, it would be always captive to the mood of emergency, arbitrariness and temporariness in all its actions. The challenge of the future is that its vision is absent from the beginnings. However, it might be the virtue of our analysis of foundation narrative is to reveal or explore how the discourse of politicians might uncover their visions and in turn enlighten the subjects under their rule of the challenges imposed by that rule. The June republic seems to be destined to live in the unconventional incomplete realm of continuous battles; such a realm absolves politicians from giving clear positive promises of reform and offers them pretexts to continually impose unconventional measures. These incomplete narratives invoke a sense of war in imagination and emergency in practice and between both rights are violated.

### **Foundation Narratives and what to make of them?**

By now it might become clear that the study of political myth and foundation narratives can be of benefit for political theory and practice. Foundation narratives offer a very important material to understand the elements of discourse offered at the moment of foundation. This is not only a matter of getting information about beliefs held at exceptional moments, it also offers a benchmark for assessing the consistency between the vision elaborated at the moment of foundation and the later practices of the founders. Further research also can work on the idea of how the vision of the future offered at moments of foundations dominates the latter practices of founders and their successors. Can one claim that the foundation narrative dictates the trajectories of the future for the state? This is a question that merits historical studies and comparisons between various states narratives. What this paper offered is to link the potentialities of future with the possibilities outlined at the moment of foundations.

In addition, political practice can make use of studying political myths and foundation narrative. As outlined in the paper, the different formulations of political myths and foundation narratives reflect different intentions of politicians. Subjects of power and political activists can witness three types of founding elites: the first: an elite with a clear and complete narrative upon which this elite can be assessed and negotiated. The second: an elite with no foundation narrative and this entails that they are either a continuity with an existent discourse of power and they can be assessed upon this discourse, or their lack of narrative might be a sign of their lack of concern to communicate with masses. This was seen in Mohamed Ali's case and how such a type of founders-though seems obsolete by our contemporary criteria- still poses a challenge to a free society and an accountable authority. The third: an elite like June's elite, which is an elite with an incomplete myth that stresses the exceptional threat of the current moment and claims that this exceptionality requires unconventional measures, same as those taken at war. Narratives formulated in the passive voice and frequently eluding to some hidden agendas not only gives no clear vision of the future, but also call for a sacrifice for the sake of fighting an unknown threats. This type of

incomplete narratives, unlike the obsolete previous type, poses immense challenge to public liberties and rights. A narrative that found a state 'within' the war not 'after' the war overwhelms its subjects with the feeling of horror and requires from them, in some Hobbesian melancholy, a total surrender of liberties.

Further research can also work on developing the elements of the analytical framework offered in this paper by employing it in different circumstances so that different formulations of political myth could be found and theorized. Such an attempt can be consolidated by linking the realities of different regimes narratives with the situation of freedom and rights in their respective societies.

## Conclusion

Politics and myth is tied throughout history, since man can live only through an experience of some myth that guides his action in reality and offers him criteria for judgment. Foundation narratives is one among different formulations of political myths, it is a political myth that narrates the account of foundation by the political-community founders. It accounts for the foundation events and outlines the values they wish to communicate and the vision they are to pursue. In order to understand this, the papers outlined a much needed general theory for the study of the diverse instances of myth, including definitions, features, approaches, circumstances, and functions. Out of this theory for political myth an analytical framework for analyzing political myths and specifically foundation narratives is established. To put such analytical framework into place and time, foundation narratives are studied by focusing on the interesting Egyptian case. The long history of foundation narratives offered by the consecutive formulations of the Egyptian state was studied to analyze how each narrative projects a certain configuration of values, and vision for future upon which the discourses of political leaders can be judged as consistent or not. Though Egypt first foundation at the hands of King Narmer offered a complete foundation narrative, Modern Egypt suffered a narrative crisis since its foundation by Mohamed Ali was empty of heroic spectacles. That crisis was alleviated later only with the advent of the Nasserite Egypt and its narratives of the great people of Egypt and the army of the nation. The crisis began to reveal itself again with Post June 30, 2013 republic foundation. The dedication of the founder of this republic to fight terrorism represented the republic inability to establish a narrative of any victorious heroism that could communicate a vision for the future. The continuous absence of this narrative might expose this republic to a future of continuous arbitrariness, lack of vision and expose its citizens to the continuous vagaries of the unconventional sense of war. Such unconventionality absolves rulers from political responsibility and violates rights by invoking a sense of emergency.

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