Country leaders or Instagram stars?

A comparative study about portrayals of mediatised politics in the East and the West

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of digital media has opened new doors for political communication and has removed the barrier of mass media which prevented politicians from directly communicating with the public. This has also intensified the process of mediatisation, resulting in a lack of political logic in politics and the increasing domination of media logic in political communication. The current research aims to study how mediatised politics is portrayed in the East and the West by taking the political leaders of Egypt and the United Kingdom as case studies. Due to the increased popularity of visuals in political communication and the persuasive qualities of images, this study focused on the analysis of visuals. Given Instagram's popularity as an image-sharing platform, 160 images were gathered from the Instagram accounts of the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The selected images were then analysed through a Visual Critical Discourse Analysis, guided by the main concepts of the study, namely framing, which was used to investigate portrayals of media and political logic, and celebrity politics. The analysis of the images resulted in five distinct patterns which demonstrated how the politicians presented themselves on the social media platform and the techniques they used to send their messages to the public. These patterns were the political leaders' representations as ordinary citizens, father or son figures, overseers of projects, people celebrating holidays or commemorating memorial days, and country leaders. Although the patterns were mostly common between both leaders, and the role of media logic was apparent in both of their images, there was a distinct difference in the ways both leaders presented themselves online. The most evident difference between how each of them crafted their online personas through mediatised politics was that while Boris Johnson used social media to look more like an average citizen through the commercialisation of his images, Abdelfattah El Sisi's images portrayed him as a powerful political leader with strong ties to other world leaders through the concept of connectivity.

KEYWORDS: mediatisation, politics, social media, Egypt, UK

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1. Introduction

Media has historically largely contributed to the exercise of political authority (Hjarvard, 2013). However, in recent years, the popularity of traditional media has decreased, while social media has emerged as a platform for political information, thus increasing its importance within the political realms and offering new opportunities for political communication (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021). This could be associated with the fact, that while news coverage platforms regularly mediate conventional political communication (Peng, 2021), social media enables politicians to directly engage with voters without the need for news gatekeepers (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). With the increasing popularity of digital media and the modernisation of culture and society, media has also gained a more prominent role in social realities, giving rise to deep mediatisation (Hepp, 2019). This term refers to the connection of digital media with different aspects of social life and its growing relevance in various non-media-related fields of activity in modern society, such as politics (Hepp, 2019; Hjarvard, 2013; Marcinkowski, 2014).

The rise of social media has also resulted in an increasing interest in the study of politicians' social media communications and the factors which result in their success (Peng, 2021). Earlier political campaigns rather focused on text-centred social media communication techniques (Munoz & Towner, 2017). Nevertheless, throughout time, they have steadily changed their focus away from textual to visual communication, making use of social media platforms' affordances of new ways for the management and the presentation of one's image (Munoz & Towner, 2017). This change has also opened doors for increasingly persuasive political communications through such visual facilitators (Munoz & Towner, 2017).

Instagram is one of these social media platforms that has grown to become one of the most popular image-sharing applications over the last two decades. According to Statista Search Department (2021b), an estimate of one billion people has been found to use Instagram every month, with over 70% of the users being under the age of 35. The social media network's rising popularity and potential for reach have made the platform an attractive venue for political communication (Munoz & Towner, 2017).

As a social media platform, Instagram is known for its focus on visuals (Ekman & Widholm, 2017; Munoz & Towner, 2017), with an estimate of 95 million images uploaded daily by users (Mendonça & Caetano, 2021). Visuals are also an essential aspect of politics, playing an important role in how power is exercised and contested (Mendonça & Caetano,

2021). Nevertheless, despite the crucial role of visuals, previous studies regarding political leaders' messages on social media have primarily analysed the impact of textual content (Peng, 2021). Visuals have also been ignored or dealt with in a cursory manner in conventional political science (Mendonça & Caetano, 2021). Hence, this research focuses on analysing visual messages of politicians that are shared on Instagram specifically by two country leaders as representatives of the East and the West.

The United Kingdom (UK) was chosen to represent the West, as throughout history, from the times of the British Empire, the state has been known for its great geopolitical power (Thompson, 2011). The UK has not only been considered a regional economic and political power, but also one that is dominant globally (McCourt, 2014). The state is also one of the nine countries possessing nuclear weapons globally (Morris, 2011) and has been the fourth biggest spender on the military in 2021, following the USA, China, and India (Statista Search Department, 2022b). This has also made the British military one of the strongest in the world (Morris, 2011).

Egypt, on the other hand, is the most populated country in the Middle East and the Arab world (Abd-Allah & Moustafa, 2014), as well as the largest state within the region in terms of size. The country has been long considered a regional power, given its status as an Arab leader (Monier & Ranko, 2013). Therefore, to compare the representations of political leaders between the East and the West, Egypt and the UK have been selected as countries representing these two parts of the world. The current study focuses on the leaders of the two countries, namely Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, and British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. As such, the selection of these country leaders as a focus of the current research is explained by the British role as one of the largest western liberal democracies (Saldaña et al., 2015), as well as the key position of Egypt in the Middle East and North Africa (Seeberg, 2013).

1.1 Research Question

Recognising the key role that social media plays nowadays in politics, and specifically considering the importance of visual communication, this study focuses on the analysis of political images on Instagram by borrowing ideas from mediatised politics and analysing how they figure in the platform. Through a comparative study about the portrayals of politics in the East and the West, it aims to answer the following research question: *How is*

mediatised politics portrayed in the Instagram accounts of country leaders Boris Johnson and Abdel Fattah El Sisi?

Furthermore, to answer the research question, the following sub-questions are also discussed throughout the paper:

SQ1: How is celebrity politics demonstrated on the Instagram pages of Boris Johnson and Abdel Fattah El Sisi?

SQ2: How do the Instagram posts frame the two country leaders in terms of political and media logic?

SQ3: What cultural elements are displayed in the Instagram posts of the two leaders?

1.2 Academic and Social Relevance

The role of social media in Eastern politics was greatly emphasised during the Arab Spring in the early 2010s, when social networking platforms were used to mobilise collective action during the anti-government uprisings in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). However, most of the research available on the role of media, and particularly social media in political communication focuses on western democracies (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). Therefore, this study aims to address the research gap by shedding light on the portrayals of mediatised politics in the East, through providing a comparative case study on the communication of messages by eastern and western political leaders, focusing on the portrayals of mediatised politics in the Instagram images of the British Prime Minister and the Egyptian President.

Mediatisation of politics, which addresses how media is changing institutions such as politics (Hjarvard, 2013), is used as a departure point in this thesis. However, it is not the intention to measure how politics have been changing, but to observe how mediatised politics is present on Instagram. As such, the intention is to shed a qualitative light on the phenomena by observing how politicians are incorporating the language of media. Within that, this study aims at not only contributing to the literature in the field, but also providing an understanding of the current strategies used by political leaders in a mediatised world.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The next chapter addresses concepts and theories that support this research, such as social media, mediatisation, mediatisation of politics, celebrity politics and framing. Then,

the third chapter discusses the qualitative approach of this research and dives into the details of the data gathering process through a purposive sampling method. Next, it provides a description of the analysis process, justifying the used methods and operationalising the main concepts. Chapter four discusses the findings of the study, providing an overview of the patterns that have emerged throughout the visual analysis conducted on the official Instagram pages of British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El Sisi. These patterns are the political leaders' representations as ordinary citizens, father or son figures, overseers of projects, people celebrating holidays and commemorating memorial days, and country leaders. Throughout the fourth chapter, these patterns are also discussed in association with previous research. The last chapter concludes the study by providing a thorough recap of the analysis and summarising the important research findings in connection to the research goals. The chapter further provides an answer to the research question and reflects on the outcomes, limitations, and opportunities for future lines of research.

2. *Theoretical Framework*

The following section outlines the key concepts that form the spine of this study. The chapter first provides an overview of social media, particularly focusing on Instagram, which is the platform under scrutiny throughout this study. Then it explains the theories of mediatisation and political mediatisation, which function as a departure point for the analysis. Next, it addresses one of the several concepts that stream from the broad theory of political mediatisation, celebrity politics. Finally, it refers to the theory of framing, which will be used to trace political and media logics throughout this research. The chapter closes with a brief review of all the addressed theories, concepts, and their connections to one another.

2.1 Social Media

The increased popularity of the internet at the end of the 20th century opened new doors for communication and interaction (Miller et al., 2016) and made social media an integral part of people's lives all around the world, including average citizens, non-profit organisations, software suppliers, different kinds of companies and governments (Shirky, 2011). As of January 2021, around 4.2 billion people worldwide have been found to actively use social media (Statista Search Department, 2021a), and this number is continuously rising due to the increase in global internet penetration (Stephen, 2016). Despite the popularity of social media platforms, within communication studies, there is no widely agreed-upon definition for the tools that we describe as social media (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Nevertheless, one of the more comprehensive ways to describe it is by defining social media as online platforms that give users the opportunity to engage with others and present themselves to both large and small audiences "who derive value from user-generated content", as well as the idea of engaging with others (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p .50). Boyd (2015) complements this view by describing social media as a phenomenon helping people rethink the role of technology in information transmission, community building, and communication.

Throughout recent years, social media platforms have also become important sources of political information, offering people alternative ways to consume and get engaged with the news (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021), providing new avenues for the creation and dissemination of political discourses (Strömbäck, 2008), and mobilising collective action by connecting millions of people all over the world (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). The Arab Spring in the early 2010s – also called the "Facebook Revolution" by many (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013) –

can serve as a key demonstrator of the crucial role of social media in political processes. Unlike traditional political communication outlets, social media platforms give politicians the opportunity to avoid news gatekeepers and freely communicate with citizens through their profiles (Peng, 2021). That is why more scholars nowadays are interested in analysing politicians' social media messages and studying the key to their success (Peng, 2021). Politicians nowadays have been using various social media techniques to gain more support from the public, making this topic a more interesting one for scholars to study.

Instagram, which is the primary platform analysed throughout this study, is the fourth most popular social media application in the world, following Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Statista Search Department, 2022a). The social media platform was launched in 2010 (Olof Larsson, 2021) and was bought by Facebook (now Meta) in 2012 (Russmann & Svensson, 2017). According to Statista Search Department (2022a), an estimate of one and a half billion people actively use Instagram every month, with over 70% of the users being under the age of 35, which indicates that the platform is more popular among the younger internet users.

Instagram is a "visual-centric" (Munoz & Towner, 2017, p. 291) social media platform that focuses on photos and videos. As of June 2022, Instagram allows users to share photos, videos, Instagram Reels, stories, and live broadcasts. This focus on visual content facilitates new opportunities for self-representation and image control (Munoz & Towner, 2017). Through various specialised styles of addressing the public, visual political communication mixes the private and professional realms of politicians' lives on social media platforms (Ekman & Widholm, 2017).

Political pictures are popular among audiences due to their visual appeal and ability to convey information in a concise manner (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). The wide affordances of Instagram for its users and its popularity have driven many political leaders – among which many country leaders around the world – to have their personal profiles on Instagram to communicate with their audiences more freely without the mediation of news media (Ekman & Widholm, 2017), and particularly reach younger potential voters (Olof Larsson, 2021). As a medium, Instagram, encourages a strong sense of individuality, with its users being rather performative in their display of self and personality staging (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). This makes the platform an interesting one to analyse, especially for the purpose of studying portrayals of mediatised politics through the social media outlet. Hence, this thesis focuses on the personal Instagram accounts of British Prime Minister Boris

Johnson and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, to analyse their posts on the social media platform.

2.2 Mediatisation and Politics

Mediatisation is a key theory in communication studies and contemporary sociology, as it refers to the overarching modernisation process of culture and society as a consequence of the growing importance and integration of media in other institutions (Hjarvard, 2013; Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). The term has arisen as a major concept for reconsidering long-standing, yet basic questions regarding the increase in media's influence on culture and society (Hjarvard, 2013; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Mediatisation seeks to define and comprehend the profound changes that contemporary society is experiencing, as media and communication technology progressively are becoming a crucial part not only of people's daily lives but also the institutional part of all societal sectors (Hjarvard, 2013; Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). The theory has been useful for studying the ways in which media – acquiring authority and defining social realities – converge with other social constructs, such as politics, religion, family, and play, leaving a long-term impact on them (Hjarvard, 2013). Studies of mediatisation emphasise media's role in transforming social and cultural affairs and driving change in all layers of society (Hjarvard, 2013).

Although mediatisation has become prominent over the past decades, as a term, it dates back to the early 19th century during Napoleon's reformation of the German states (Livingstone, 2009). As a process, mediatisation has taken place throughout history as a pivotal juncture in the reconfiguration of social developments around new means of communication, such as with the advent of the printing press in the 15th century, or the invention of the telegraph in the 19th century (Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). Nevertheless, Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that the current wave of mediatisation has emerged in the 1980s with the development of communication technologies, and explain that because of the unprecedented speed and scale of the ongoing process, it is expected to go deeper and further. Various scholars argue that this intensification of mediatisation has come as a consequence of digital media (Hepp, 2019). Hence, the term deep mediatisation has been coined in order to describe the "advanced stage of the process" (Hepp, 2019, p. 5), when all aspects of social life are closely connected to digital media.

It should be noted that people engage with media institutions, structures and affordances in various ways and degrees. Therefore, the mediatisation process cannot be

considered linear or uniform (Hepp, 2019; Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). This is particularly emphasised by the fact that the prerequisite for mediatisation, which is access to advanced technological infrastructures, is not evenly distributed among societies (Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019), as a result of the digital divide (Warschauer, 2003). Hence, some societies are highly mediatised, while others are not, due to their restricted access to communication technologies.

Hjarvard (2013), who is one of the prominent scholars studying mediatisation, explains that the effect of media on culture and society is defined by the increase in dependency on media logic, which combines both the technological structure of media and the media content (Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). Simply put, media logic refers to the norms and procedures that regulate the activities of media (Altheide & Snow, 1979). Although mediatisation points out the growing relevance of media in various non-media-related fields of activity in modern society, such as science, religion, law, or sport (Hjarvard, 2013; Marcinkowski, 2014), this thesis will particularly focus on the mediatisation of politics. Nevertheless, the concept of mediatisation stands as the departure point of this study since this research takes the concept of political mediatisation as a premise and studies how politicians are incorporating media logic.

2.2.1 Mediatisation of Politics

Mediatisation of politics is one of the many branches that fall under the umbrella of mediatisation. This process-based concept emphasises the impact of media on the political domain (Mazzoleni, 2014; Strömbäck, 2008), and its degree is based on the extent to which political logic is driven by media logic (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). On the most basic level, the term indicates a situation where media have become the primary source of information and a means of contact "between the governors and the governed" (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 230). Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) argue that mediatisation of politics takes place when a political institution loses its sovereignty and depends on mass media for its essential tasks.

Media logic and political logic are two fundamental notions in almost all studies of political mediatisation (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Mazzoleni (2014) describes the mediatisation of politics as a "tug-of-war between political and media logic" (p. 49), where each of the logics presents a distinct institutional system with distinct objectives, each with

its own set of players, rules, processes, requirements, and interests (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

Political logic is explained as a concept with three main directions: *polity, policy,* and *politics* (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). *Polity* addresses the set of rules that govern political processes and institutional constructs, while *policy* emphasises the processes of identifying issues, developing policies, and executing them (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Finally, *politics* implies the process of acquiring support for a political candidate, party, or platform (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Media logic, on the other hand, refers to the fundamental laws of media (Marcinkowski, 2014), "newsworthiness" (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 17), commercialisation and technological aspects (Esser, 2013). While political logic has a more fixed nature, media logic is a more malleable concept and changes according to different mediums.

Politics and communication have been intertwined since the emergence of the two concepts, and the former has been inclined to rely on the latter to accomplish its goals (Mazzoleni, 2014). However, the rise of mass media has forced politics to compete with other influential new players in the public sector who targeted the same audiences more efficiently (Mazzoleni, 2014). The era of mass media has been followed by the emergence of digital media, which has opened new doors for political communication and had a crucial role in politics (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021).

For a long time, the role of the internet and social networks was undervalued by political leaders, who gave preference to the control of public agendas through conventional media platforms such as public television channels (Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019). Nevertheless, due to the decreasing popularity of traditional media and the establishment of social media platforms as key sources of political information (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021), over time, politicians were forced to adjust to and make use of this "new environment of high visibility" (Voltmer & Sorensen, 2019, p. 44). This indicates that political leaders' use of social media platforms is nothing but a result of this ongoing process of a greater degree of political mediatisation, which is also illustrated by the crucial role played by social media during recent election campaigns worldwide (Mazzoleni, 2014). Thus, the current study largely builds upon the theory of political mediatisation as its derived concepts and ideas as a background, linking it to the use of social media by political leaders for the purpose of targeting larger and more diverse audiences.

Strömbäck (2008) has specified four dimensions for transformation within political mediatisation. According to him, the first dimension of political mediatisation is how media is becoming the most significant or dominating source of information within society. The degree of media independence from political institutions in terms of regulation is the second dimension of political mediatisation defined by Strömbäck (2008). The third dimension refers to how media content is controlled by political or media logic. Finally, the fourth dimension is how political players are guided by political or media logic. Throughout this research, the empirical focus is put on the fourth dimension of political mediatisation, as the goal of the study is to analyse the portrayals of the two country leaders within their social media pages, looking for traces of media and political logic within the content that is shared on their personal Instagram accounts.

2.2.2 Celebrity Politics

Celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), mediatised leaders (Campus, 2010) and personality politics (Lobo & Curtice, 2014) emphasise the role of media logic in political communication and are all concepts that stream from the broad theory of political mediatisation. Mediatised leaders (Campus, 2010) is a concept which refers to a specific technique of image management of political leaders to gain more followers by crafting an appealing image of the politician through positive media coverage. The current research addressed this concept within the framing dimension, as later explained. Meanwhile, personality politics (Lobo & Curtice, 2014) emphasizes the role of political leaders and their personal characteristics on electoral processes, as a result of increasingly mediatised politics. Similarly, celebrity politics explains how politicians tend to focus on aspects of their personal lives on social media (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). Therefore, since this study focuses on the personal Instagram pages of country leaders, where the politicians are usually already greatly personalised, as their images are the main focus of the accounts, it is more fitting to look for traces of media logic within the social media posts of the politicians through the help of the concept of celebrity politics.

Celebrity politics portrays the intensification of political mediatisation (Ekman & Widholm, 2017) and refers to the instances when a politician's behaviour resembles that of a celebrity on social media, which involves the sharing of private life and getting engaged with pop culture for the sake of gaining support (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019; van Zoonen, 2006; Wheeler, 2013). Furthermore, since modern social media communication is largely

based on the notion of connections with other users and the public, "connectivity" (Ekman & Widholm, 2017, p. 16) also takes centre stage in political communication, driving politicians to rely on image management strategies similar to people within the media or entertainment industries. The term connectivity, here, refers to the tendency of politicians to deliberately select visuals for social media, in order to publicly showcase specific connections with others, such as officials, media personalities and everyday people, and display their interrelationships (Ekman & Widholm, 2017).

Celebrity politicians are seen to be connected to the rise of a post-democratic system, where politics have been transformed into a show for an audience of spectators rather than citizens (Street, 2012). This tendency is specifically emphasised through social media platforms, which have become of great importance for "political performativity" (Ekman & Widholm, 2017, p. 19) and identity formation, leading politicians to rely on the use of celebrity management strategies, that are also utilised by players in the global entertainment industry. Van Zoonen (2006) describes celebrity politics as the result of popularisation and personalisation, providing a mix between pop culture and political discourses. The author argues that the concept forces political leaders to make appearances on entertainment and sports platforms, where attire and appearance are keys to success (van Zoonen, 2006). Through the daily production of content on Instagram, politicians visually present their professional as well as private life, which is a distinctive characteristic of celebrity culture (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). This often makes political leaders look more like celebrities than politicians who are responsible for policy making and the well-being of their citizens.

The concept of celebrity politics follows the notion of media logic, as it is guided by the idea of commercialisation, which makes the theory a rather appropriate one for tackling the research question of this study. Hence, elements relating to celebrity politics guide the analysis of the visual texts on the social media pages of the two political leaders, as they also address the use of media logic within political communication.

2.3 Framing

Inspired by Goffman's (1974) work, framing theory – a key concept in media studies – highlights how communication is presented. The theory recognises the capacity of media communication on influencing peoples' interpretations of the given information and on altering their impressions of what is represented (Munoz & Towner, 2017). This could be implemented by politicians by strategically designing their social media imagery based on

media logic and through different techniques such as showcasing themselves as closer to the citizens, coming across as more persuasive in their messages and winning the votes of the public. This is also a notion highlighted by the theory of mediatisation, which focuses on how the increased influence of media logic drives change within the society (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). For this research, framing is going to be used to observe how media logic and/or political logic are being used by politicians on Instagram.

Entman (1993) argues that frames emphasise certain fragments of reality while masking others, which may cause viewers to react differently. This technique is traditionally employed by news outlets through their use of specific words, terms, and visuals to influence how certain problems, ideas or individuals are perceived by people (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Although framing studies have been most often applied for the analysis of written texts (Berger, 1991), visual framing has also been used to study a variety of topics, such as the depictions of gender and specifically the framing of women in advertisements (Kang, 1997), the visual representation of international conflicts in news (Greenwood & Jenkins, 2015), or the portrayal of political actors through different kinds of media outlets (Munoz & Towner, 2017) which comes to highlight the role of political mediatisation.

One concern in the studies of political mediatisation is that politicians often construct frames according to media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979) so that the likelihood of their media coverage is higher (Matthes, 2012). In doing so, they tend to shift public attention away from major concerns to minor and sometimes irrelevant stories, which are influenced by a dominating media logic, favouring personalisation, sensation, and conflict (Matthes, 2012; Strömbäck, 2008). This is most often done through visuals, as images demand less cognitive load to process, making viewers more inclined to accept visual rather than textual framing (Ferguson 2001, as cited in Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Hence, the framing theory will be used by the current research for the analysis of the photos shared on the Instagram pages of the British and Egyptian leaders, and for the study of the meanings, these images connote.

Media logic is described as a "format" by Altheide and Snow (1979) and refers to the organisation of materials in a specific way based on journalistic principles, commercial aspects, and norms that are common in news production (Esser, 2013). However, as the term shifts according to different mediums, it can also indicate various storytelling techniques that are aimed at attracting people's attention through various means, such as the

depoliticization, simplification, personalisation, polarisation, spectacularisation and dramatisation of messages (Esser, 2013; Strömbäck, 2008).

On the other hand, as already mentioned, political logic refers to the use of fundamental political values, the creation and implementation of policies and programs that aim to resolve problems within the society, as well as the presentation of the politics-oriented self (Esser, 2013). Therefore, the following research will also search for frames within the posts of the politicians, that are based on political logic.

2.4 Summary

To summarise this chapter, the previously discussed concepts and theories lie at the heart of this study. Instagram, as a social media outlet, provides a platform for visual self-communication not only for ordinary people but for public figures and political leaders as well. As a theory, political mediatisation, which is used as a departure point and basic premise, focuses on the transformation of politics as a result of its reliance on the technological and symbolic functions of media, and its growing dependence on media logic rather than political logic. Departing from mediatised politics, the concepts of framing and celebrity politics guide the current research to trace media logic within the posts of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, explaining how the mediatisation of politics is portrayed within the personal Instagram accounts of the political leaders.

3. *Method*

The following chapter addresses the research method used to provide an answer to the main research question and the sub-questions throughout this study. First, it offers a rationale for the research design, explaining the reasons behind choosing the qualitative approach of Visual Critical Discourse Analysis as the choice of research method for the current study. Then, to guarantee the credibility of the current research, it provides a thorough description of the collected data, addresses purposive sampling as the sampling method selected for this research, and describes the sampling units that formed the dataset, justifying the selection of the units within the dataset. Moreover, an explanation of the data collection process sheds light on how the data was gathered for analysis and how the research was designed. Finally, the chapter also offers a full description of the operationalisation of the main concepts analysed within the study, as well as a detailed description of the specific methods of data processing and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

To answer the research question and analyse the mediatised portrayals of the chosen political leaders on their social media platforms, a qualitative research method was selected. This approach relies on the process of data segmentation into units, the search for repeating themes, and finally, the reassembling of the analysed data, in accordance with the research question (Boeije, 2010). Instead of focusing on numbers like quantitative methods, a qualitative approach rather focuses on the systematic study of how meanings are formed and how symbolic materials are interpreted (Schreier, 2013). Additionally, this research method is based on the study of observations, in order to identify hidden implications and patterns (Babbie, 2017). A qualitative research method was seen as fitting for this study, as it allows researchers to analyse and make sense of the links and patterns presented by both visual and textual materials (Brennen, 2017). This method was particularly useful for this research, as it was suitable for the research question under study and helped the researcher to analyse the data in more depth to discover underlying meanings, explore how mediatised politics was portrayed on the social media pages of the two country leaders, and find patterns within the dataset. Moreover, this thesis seeks to provide a qualitative observation of how mediatised politics appear on Instagram as guided by framing and celebrity politics, which adds to the quantitative studies in the field that address the impact of media on politics.

Besides clarifying the reasons behind basing the current study on a qualitative research method, it is also crucial to discuss the importance of conducting a visual analysis. Communication not only relies on the use of words but also on non-linguistic elements (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Despite the facilitation of Instagram for its users to share texts along with photos and videos, the social platform follows an 'image first' philosophy because, unlike other social media networks, it assumes that the users interact visually while sharing texts is merely an alternative (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). Within political communication, images greatly influence the public's perception and comprehension of politicians' messages and actions due to visual appeals and the ability to convey a large amount of information in a brief amount of time (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Thus, this thesis focuses on the visual aspects of the posts on the Instagram pages of the two country leaders by adopting a Visual Critical Discourse Analysis method. This method of analysis studies how images convey meaning and especially emphasises their role in the communication of power relations (Machin & Mayr, 2012), which makes it the most fitting research method for this study because it closely relates to what this study aims to achieve. Machin and Mayr (2012) argue that meanings are often implicit and can only be revealed by focusing on the linguistic and visual nuances, which lie at the heart of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

The toolkit for Visual Critical Discourse Analysis, as explained by Machin and Mayr (2012), was utilised for the analysis of the images throughout this study. This is a method based on semiotics, which analyses the denotations and connotations of images (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The denotation process requires the analysis of the objects, events, people, and places demonstrated throughout the images. While the connotation process relies on the analysis of the ideas, values and concepts communicated by the components present in the image. Hence, denotation is based on the study of the represented objects or people on a descriptive level, while during the connotation process, the analysis took place on a symbolic level (Hall et al., 2013). Machin and Mayr (2012) have further underlined the necessity of carefully looking at the objects, the setting, and the salience in the image when conducting a visual analysis.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

As already mentioned, the data analysed for this research was in the form of Instagram posts. This kind of data is considered a primary data source, as it is taken directly from those

that have produced the data initially. The sampling units of the current study formed a dataset containing 160 posts from the official Instagram accounts of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, being 80 posts collected for each leader.

A purposive sampling method was used to collect the data from the accounts of the two leaders, in order to ensure that the dataset selected was relevant for the current research (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Purposive sampling is a non-probability method, which necessitates both systematic and flexible decision-making (Emmel, 2013). This sampling strategy also allows the researcher to have a stronger influence on the sample selection and relies on the researcher's judgement, which can result in a certain bias and lack of representativeness in the sample (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Thus, to minimise bias, the process of the data selection is explained in detail and the selection of a representative dataset that included a wide variety of posts has been a priority for the researcher throughout the collection of the sampling units. The dataset included 80 posts shared on the Instagram pages of each of the two leaders. The public nature of both pages implied that ethical standards concerning privacy and consent were thus fulfilled.

The data was selected according to the following criteria, which is later justified: 1) The posts had to entail images only; 2) They had to be posted within the following two time frames 01/09/2019-28/02/2020, or 01/11/2020-28/02/2022; 3) They had to be shared by the official Instagram page of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson or Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi; 4) If the images mostly consisted of text, they had to include other elements as well; 5) In case of "carousel posts" (a form of an Instagram post which contains several photos that can be swiped through), only the cover image had to be selected.

The posts were selected via the Instagram application following specific criteria and were saved as screenshots for further analysis. Each saved post included an image (visual) and a caption in the form of text. Although the focus of the analysis was on the images that were studied through a Visual Critical Discourse Analysis, the captions of the posts also provided context and additional information which helped the analysis of the images whenever the context of the image was not clear. The textual information was also analysed on the basis of denotation and connotation as complementing the images.

Since public discourses are usually guided by the ongoing social processes, and discourses on social media are no different, posts regarding the situation that was caused by Covid-19 had been dominating the social media realm after the start of the global pandemic.

Therefore, for the sample to be more varied, as already mentioned, the selected sampling units were taken from two different time frames. Half of the units (40 units from each leader) were collected from the posts that had been published before the outbreak of the global pandemic, namely within the six-month time frame between September 1, 2019, and February 28, 2020, while the other half was taken from the posts shared between November 1, 2020, and February 28, 2022, which was the 16-month time frame prior to the collection of the sample.

The selection of images only ensured that all the units had the same format. Opting for images over videos was also explained by the fact, that by choosing photos, the study could include a wider variety of data and ensure saturation of the dataset (Schreier, 2013), while by selecting videos, the size of the sample would be smaller and would thus risk be less representative. Furthermore, the images selected had to be shared by the official Instagram accounts of the two leaders, because the main research question studied how mediatised politics was portrayed specifically on the official accounts of the politicians. The inclusion of elements other than sole text was important so that the study could visually analyse the image through those elements. Finally, the selection of the cover images from the "carousel posts" was justified by the fact that the officials who had posted them had regarded these images as the most relevant for their message by choosing them as the cover of the post, hence they were seen as the most fitting ones to be selected and included in the dataset.

The dataset included different types of posts from the Instagram pages of the two chosen leaders. Within the images analysed, there were examples when the politicians were seen sending their greetings to the nation on the occasion of different national or religious holidays, portrayed with children, family members, common citizens, and other political leaders, as well as taking part in various both national and international summits.

Furthermore, the first-time frame of the posts that were selected and analysed (01.09.2019-28.02.2020) coincided with the UK General elections on December 12, 2019, where Johnson was campaigning for the country to leave the EU (Tomkins, 2020). Therefore, most of the posts within that period were related to the elections campaign and featured the British Prime Minister meeting with citizens of all ages, social classes and professions, while the posts from the second time frame were more official and featured Johnson in more professional settings.

3.3 Operationalisation

When looking at the demonstrations of celebrity politics within the Instagram posts of the two leaders, this study highlighted the instances when the political leaders' behaviours were similar to that of celebrities on social media. Such behaviours were characterised by drawing attention to the private lives of the politicians (van Zoonen, 2006), portraying them in semi or non-professional settings, sharing parts of their private lives, and highlighting their engagement with renowned public figures (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). Therefore, images that depicted the politician in a non-professional setting or shed light on the private life of the politician by portraying his family members, were coded as demonstrations of celebrity politics. Posts, where the political leader was seen with popular figures such as celebrities and businessmen, were also coded as carrying traits of celebrity politics.

When analysing the framing techniques used within the posts of the politicians, the study focused on the frames that displayed instances of media logic and others that depicted political logic. By referring to frames that displayed instances of media logic, the researcher referred to images that were commercialised (Esser, 2013) through depictions of personalisation, sensation, dramatisation, or conflict (Matthes, 2012; Strömbäck, 2008). Political logic, on the other hand, was detected in images where one could see the depiction of core political values, as well as the focus on policies and initiatives aimed at resolving societal issues (Esser, 2013). Images that contained commercialised depictions, such as portraying the politician with children and common citizens or setting them in sensationalised contexts were coded as carrying traces of media logic. To find the dimension of political logic, the study was guided by Strömbäck and Esser's (2014) three fundamental components of politics that shape political logic and distinguish it from the logics of other social institutions: *polity*, *policy,* and *politics*. Therefore, the image was coded to have demonstrated political logic, when the post addressed (a) the guidelines regulating the political process in the specific country, (b) the practices of identifying issues and formulating and executing policies or (c) the process of acquiring support for the party, or platform the politician belonged to (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

Within the scope of looking at the mediatisation of politics, it was also important to analyse the role that the British and Egyptian cultures played throughout the Instagram posts of the two leaders. This was done by studying elements related to religion, the military, the monarchy (in the case of the UK), as well as the countries' histories and values that were reflected in the images shared on the official Instagram accounts of the two leaders. Such

themes that related to the culture and the core values of the political leader's country were analysed separately and were coded as carrying national cultural elements.

3.4 Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, the images within the dataset were analysed using the tools for Visual Critical Discourse Analysis described by Machin and Mayr (2012). The concept of portrayals of political mediatisation was addressed by observing the media logic among the selected images with the help of the three sub-themes introduced through the three sub-questions. During the first phase of analysis, the images were studied separately based on their visual elements. Some examples of the analysed images can be found in Appendix A. Throughout this phase, the denotation and connotation of the images were studied, and special attention was paid to the objects, settings, and salience within the images, as proposed by Machin and Mayr (2012). Within this phase, whenever the contexts of the images were not known, or the events, objects or people portrayed within the images were unknown, the captions were also analysed to provide the needed information to successfully complete this phase of analysis. During the analysis of the denotation of the images, the researcher described what could be seen within the post, in terms of objects, setting and salience. Over the course of the connotations analysis, on the other hand, the researcher addressed the meanings that the depictions created and the underlying messages that they conveyed through the objects, setting and salience within the image.

Through the study of the objects, the researcher analysed the ideas and values communicated by the objects depicted in the image. The analysis of the setting relied on the study of the messages that were communicated through the space, lighting, as well as general setting throughout the image. Finally, the study of the salience, as proposed by Machin and Mayr (2012), was based on the analysis of the cultural symbols, size, colour, and the tone that were used in the image, along with the foregrounding or overlapping of subjects, which all played a key role in the emphasis of specific elements through the composition of an image.

After an analysis of all the aforementioned elements, the researcher examined the descriptions made for each post in order to find the links between the descriptions of the units and the theoretical concepts that guided the research and assign codes to each unit accordingly. The coding process was based on the analysis of the images for deriving themes and patterns from the dataset, rather than relying on a priori assumptions (Thomas, 2006).

Hence, an open coding analysis was conducted, and although the concepts of the sub-questions were observed within the dataset during analysis, they were kept separate from the patterns. The themes that had emerged during the coding process were later connected to theories and explained further. Additionally, the images analysed were also categorised according to the logic that they were based on, in order to illustrate the kind of logic the political leaders' posts were mainly built upon.

Finally, the common themes found among the images posted on the Instagram pages of the two country leaders were reported, discussed, and compared with the aim to provide an answer to the research question and the sub-questions.

3.5 Credibility

In order to ensure the reliability of the study, it is necessary to maintain the transparency of the research process by providing a description of the research strategy and the methodologies of the data analysis (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, as cited in Silverman, 2011). Validity, reliability, and objectivity are all goals of a successful research (Winter, 2000, as cited in Tracy, 2010). Credibility is key in ensuring the quality of the current study. Moisander and Valtonen (2006, as cited in Silverman, 2011) have proposed two methods for meeting the reliability standards in a non-quantitative work. The first is for the researcher to ensure the transparency of the research process, while the second is to provide theoretical transparency (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, as cited in Silverman, 2011). Throughout this study, the researcher aimed to provide both; first, by providing thorough and detailed descriptions of the research method as well as the process of data analysis, and second, by explaining the theoretical perspectives which have guided the interpretations. In order to ensure a higher plausibility for the current study, the researcher also kept a reflexive log of the significant observations and decisions made throughout the data collection process (Riessman in Silverman, 2011). Moreover, samples of the dataset and coding are provided in Appendix A to demonstrate the transparency of the research and the soundness of the method and result. Finally, the thesis also used multiple concepts as standpoints through which to look at the visual representations and interpret the findings related to the political leaders on Instagram, in order to ensure a higher validity of the research (Silverman, 2011).

3.6 Summary

To summarise, the current research used a qualitative research method, more specifically the tools for a Visual Critical Discourse Analysis by Machin and Mayr (2012) to analyse sampling units and study how mediatised politics was portrayed within the selected images. The dataset included 160 images taken from the official Instagram pages of Boris Johnson and Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the political leaders of the UK and Egypt respectively. The units within the dataset were collected through a purposive sampling method, which ensured that the selected posts were representative of the general sample and were fit for answering the research question and the sub-questions. The operationalisation of the main theories and concepts studied throughout the analysis was necessary. Therefore, this chapter touched upon the bases on which celebrity politics, framing and cultural elements were coded throughout the study. Finally, the notion of credibility was given specific attention by addressing the factors that would ensure higher reliability and validity for the current study.

4. Results & Discussion

The analysis of the 160 Instagram posts from the official Instagram accounts of the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson resulted in five key themes representing the types of images that were posted on the accounts of the country leaders. Although four out of the five patterns were common among the posts of both leaders, there was a clear difference between the way each portrayed his image and created his online persona through the Instagram posts.

The findings suggest that the two politicians maintained their online presence through portraying themselves as caring father or son figures, overseers of projects, people celebrating holidays or commemorating memorial days and finally, reflecting their roles as country leaders. By approaching the public as a caring father or son figure, they showed their ability to take care of their respective countries and their citizens, regardless of age. Furthermore, their portrayal as overseers of projects suggested that they felt responsible for the state projects and closely followed them, in order to ensure their effective implementation and success. By sending greetings to the public on various holidays or memorial days, they showed their respect for different religions, and cultures, addressing the minorities living in their countries on their holidays. Finally, their portrayals as country leaders reflected their primary role of drafting and discussing policies, attending, and hosting key summits representing their countries, as well as developing diplomatic relations with not only neighbours, but also different countries all around the world. One theme that stood out only within the Instagram posts of the British Prime Minister was his representation as an ordinary citizen. By depicting himself as an ordinary citizen, Johnson created a sense of being closer to the public and being one of them.

The analysis showed that the majority of Boris Johnson's Instagram posts (48 out of the analysed 80 images) were dominated by media logic. While Abdel Fattah El Sisi's posts were mostly based on political logic (53 out of the analysed 80 images). In some of the cases, both logics were equally present in the image and therefore, the image was coded as carrying both political and media logic and was therefore categorised as a mix of the two logics. An overview of the findings is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

The Common Themes Within Each Element

Theme	Common Elements

Caring father or son figure	-	taking care of children
	-	taking care of the elderly
Overseer of projects	-	inspecting the processes of governmental projects
	-	getting briefed about developments
Greetings on holidays and memorial days	-	posting designs with various greetings on them
	-	addressing minorities within the country
	-	images of the leader celebrating a holiday
	-	commemorating special occasions
Country leader	-	official settings
	-	attending conferences and summits
	-	delivering speeches
	-	meeting with officers or other country leaders to develop their diplomatic relations
Ordinary citizen	-	doing physical labour
	-	making appearances with regular citizens
	-	dressing casually
	-	displaying athletic talents and passion for sports

4.1 Caring Father or Son Figure

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the two country leaders' Instagram posts was their portrayals as caring father or son figures. This category of posts referred to the representations of the leaders as people taking care of the more vulnerable citizens, namely the elderly or children. Linkages with culturally respected symbols such as children and elderly associate the leader with compassion and kindness (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Furthermore, as Munoz and Towner (2017) had found out throughout their research, social media users are more likely to "like" such as images that include family or children. Within their images as father figures, the leaders were depicted painting with children, hugging them, reading them a book, or giving them some goods. As son figures, on the other hand, they were pictured serving the elderly. Although such associations, specifically with children, have been found more commonly among female politicians (Munoz & Towner, 2017), in this case, the two male leaders of the UK and Egypt had also used this technique to

garner more support from the public by coming across as compassionate people, while also highlighting the family values within both countries.

This theme is closely related to the concept of mediatised leadership (Campus, 2010), which recognises the importance of a politician's image for driving public opinion and refers to a particular strategy of image management by political leaders to gain more followers. Campus (2010) illustrates how mediatised leaders use media to make virtual connections with the public and establish personal relationships with them through presenting one's appealing personality and thus garnering their support. This can be also seen among the images of both Boris Johnson and Abdel Fattah El Sisi, although to a much larger extent within the former's posts than the latter's.

Figure 4.1

Caring Father or Son Figure

The images within this theme were dominated by media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979), as shown in Figure 4.1, since they portrayed the political leaders in commercialised settings which had nothing to do with politics or policy-making – the core responsibilities of a politician (Esser, 2013). The images within this theme were also closely related to the concept of connectivity, as the images of the politicians were deliberately selected for social media, depicting them being closer to vulnerable citizens such as children and elderly and having relationships with them (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). Such images that feature political leaders with children, or the elderly usually aim to paint a compassionate image of the politicians (Schill, 2012). Within patriarchal societies, the protection of vulnerable citizens such as women and children, as well as showing respect to family suggest framing the politician as an ideal surrogate father figure for the nation: as "a protector, provider, and moral compass" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 20). Featuring a politician with children, in particular, highlights the softer side of the person, suggesting that when making decisions about war or the economy, the politician will have the most vulnerable citizens in minds (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Therefore, through the use of this strategy, the politicians portray

themselves as compassionate leaders who take care of their more vulnerable citizens and therefore, can be trusted as country leaders who are responsible for making crucial decisions deciding the fate of the people of the country.

Although, unlike the *ordinary citizen* category, which is later explained, the caring father or son figure was a common theme among the Instagram posts of both the British Prime Minister and the Egyptian President, Johnson's account had more posts which fell under this theme and therefore his posts were more likely to portray him as a compassionate leader. This could be explained by the rather populist leadership style the British Prime Minister has adopted (Alexandre-Collier, 2022; Flinders, 2020; McKee et al., 2021; Schoor, 2020) and his tendency to portray himself as a common citizen to establish stronger connections with the public (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Therefore, the images that were posted on the Instagram accounts of the political leaders also reflected the personas that they had created for themselves and the type of leadership they had adopted.

4.2 Overseer of Projects

Another pattern that was found within the images on the two politicians' official Instagram accounts was their representations as overseers of projects. This theme referred to images where the country leader was seen inspecting the processes of various governmental projects. Within this category, the politicians were seen for example, closely following the military trainings of their armed forces, overseeing the construction of new cities and highways, watching the process of COVID-19 vaccinations in hospitals, getting briefed about developments within the army, being informed about the military operations of the countries' armed forces within international territories, and more.

Usually, the images that fell under this theme depicted the political leader surrounded by other officials responsible for the projects in question, who were seen briefing them about the state and the process of a particular governmental project or showing them around to see how the process was developing, whenever that was possible. Most often the officials that were seen in the photos were military officers serving at the countries' armed forces. Within the photos of the Egyptian President, this could be connected to the power that the Egyptian Armed Forces have gained after the revolutions in 2011 and 2013, and their complete control over the country's political and economic systems (Marshall, 2015). While the military presence in the photos of the British Prime Minister could be explained by the fact that the projects Johnson was getting briefed about were either military operations that the

country's Armed Forces was carrying out overseas, or the military situation on international borders.

Figure 4.2

Overseer of Projects

These images, as illustrated in Figure 4.2, showed the political leaders as being in control of the projects that the state was responsible for carrying out and portrayed them as being the ones ensuring that these projects were implemented effectively and successfully. A few of the images within this category carried traces of media logic through the use of the celebrity politics concept (Wheeler, 2013), as the political leader was seen in non-formal wear, was present with his wife or the image was generally rather commercialised, which is one of the aspects of media logic, entailing the production of media content based on economically centred considerations (Esser, 2013). Some of the images were also related to the concept of connectivity (Ekman & Widholm, 2017), as they deliberately displayed the close relationships of the country leaders with others, such as army officers, engineers, or project managers.

Additionally, the images in this category often included dramatisation of the frames or the political leaders' poses in the images, which are considered a type of commercialisation (Esser, 2013). This added dramatisation added more emotions to the images, making them more fit for commercial and entertainment purposes. Nevertheless, the majority (15 out of the 18 images which fell under this category) of the images within this theme were based on political logic, as they portrayed the political leader carrying out the policy aspects of political logic (Esser, 2013), such as meetings with officials to see how the state policies were implemented within the armed forces, or healthcare centres. Although being portrayed as an overseer was a common theme within the posts of both of the leaders, this category was most often applicable to the images on Abdel Fattah El Sisi's Instagram account (13 out of the 18 images which fell under this category). This could be directly connected to his military background and his former role as the Egyptian Defence Minister, as well as to the control of the Egyptian Armed Forces on the economic and political systems of the country

(Marshall, 2015). This could also be linked to the prevalence of the corruption as one of the biggest issues in Egypt (Fayed, 2017) and El Sisi's efforts to make these state projects more transparent and show the public his accountability for such large projects.

4.3 Greetings on Holidays and Memorial Days

The third theme found throughout the analysis of the images was that of the political leaders celebrating holidays or commemorating special dates. This refers to the greetings that were posted on the Instagram accounts of the politicians on different religious and national holidays or commemorative dates. Some examples of these holidays were Christmas, Diwali, Hannukah, Independence Day, Victory Day, Remembrance Day, and others. Sharing such images contribute to the public's perception of the political leaders as approachable and accessible to voters (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). This category also relied on positive pathos, as the images demonstrated a political ethos which is built on empathy, inclusivity, and a humble personality (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019), and thus portrayed the politician under a more positive light, depicting him as a rather down to Earth person, closer to the common people.

All but one of the posts on El Sisi's account which fell under this category were in the form of designs with some texts in the form of greetings on them, according to the occasion. Johnson's posts, on the other hand, were more personalised, as most of the images on his account, as he was personally seen celebrating the occasion, with only one exception in the dataset, where he used an image with text to greet the Scots on St, Andrew's Day, as seen in Figure 4.3. Furthermore, another difference between the two leaders, was that unlike Johnson who also addressed the sexual and gender minorities on the occasion of Pride Month, El Sisi only addressed ethnic and religious minorities in the country. Thus, all these greetings within the dataset were framed using both political and media logic (Esser, 2013) and were closely connected to the cultures within both countries.

Figure 4.3

Celebrating Holidays

The political leaders' greetings were mostly dedicated to national holidays. However, they also often addressed the minorities within their countries, as a gesture of respect and in an effort to make these groups feel more included and welcomed within the society. Although these were commercialised and often personalised images, specifically in the case of Boris Johnson, they also reflected the state's official position towards the minorities in the countries and were hence a mix of both political and media logics. (Esser, 2013). For an example, Johnson was seen at a decorated Sikh temple, covering his head with a bright orange piece of clothing, wearing a traditional orange scarf, and greeting the local Sikhs on the occasion of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550 birth anniversary, who is the founder of Sikhism. In other instances, he was seen making appearances at a Hindu temple on Diwali and at a Jewish synagogue on Hannukah, while dressing in the traditional outfits of the cultures for each of the occasions. This could be explained by the fact that being seen with ordinary people or people from a minority group makes a leader look more authentic and trustworthy (Lilleker & Liefbroes, 2018, as cited in Lindholm et al., 2021). As illustrated in Figure 4.4, within the images of the British Prime Minister which fell into this category, Johnson was often presented as one of the minority group members in traditional garments, thus making the community members relate to him more and find him more likeable.

The use of visual religious symbols, such as places of worship, candles, crescents, crosses, or other icons also helps the political leaders to come across as more compassionate people (Grabe & Bucy, 2009) and thus increase their popularity. Furthermore, such images of the politician taking part in cultural or religious celebrations are more powerful than if they solely shared textual greetings on the occasions of these holidays (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). These images are also more spreadable and more likely to boost the popularity of the politician among the public (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019).

Figure 4.4

The British Prime Minister on Various Religious Holidays

As illustrated in Figure 4.5, Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, often posted greetings on the occasions of Islamic, or Egyptian national holidays (11 out of the 17 of his photos which fell under this theme), such as the October Victory Day or the Sinai Liberation Day. In other instances, the President also sent his greetings on New Year's Day, Coptic Christmas, and Easter, as well as Mother's Day and Labour Day. The only example when the Egyptian President made an appearance in an image posted on a holiday was Mother's Day, when he delivered a speech celebrating "the Egyptian women and ideal mothers", as the caption of the image explained. Hence, unlike Johnson's posts, El Sisi's greetings were based on more nationalistic or patriotic themes. This was also reflected by the frequent use of the Egyptian flag in the designs of these images (in 7 out of the 17 of his photos which fell under this theme).

Figure 4.5

President El Sisi's Instagram Posts on Various Holidays

The images within this theme reflected the cultures of the countries, with the UK having a more diverse society, including different minority groups from various cultures and religions (Parekh, 1998), while Egypt being a more family-oriented (Amin, 1999), traditional, conservative country (Hamas Elmasry et al., 2014) with a strong military presence (Marshall, 2015), and a population composed of an Islamic majority and a Coptic minority (Ibrahim, 2019). Furthermore, although Johnson's photos within this category were more personalised, commercialised and based on media logic (Esser, 2013), the images that

fell under this theme generally reflected the state's position regarding different ethnic and religious groups within the respective countries. Therefore, many of the images were based on a mix of both media and political logic.

Another remarkable finding was that cultural or national elements were also very often seen within these images. For an example, the poppy symbol which marks Remembrance Day in the UK and the Commonwealth countries, was often seen in Johnson's images. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the Egyptian flag and coat of arms were also frequently displayed in the images of the Egyptian President which fell under this category.

4.4 Country Leader

The fourth theme that emerged as a result of the analysis of the 160 images on the Instagram accounts of the two politicians reflected their role as country leaders. This category referred to the images in which the leaders were in official settings, attending conferences and important summits, delivering speeches, meeting with officers or other country leaders to develop their diplomatic relations. These images were mostly dominated by political logic (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), as the two leaders were most often portrayed in formal settings, carrying out their responsibilities as politicians, addressing policies, and developing political relations with other officials, as illustrated in Figure 4.6. Nevertheless, there were also traces of media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979) within the images, as the concept of connectivity (Ekman & Widholm, 2017) was evident in many of them, with the images showcasing the relationships and close connections of Johnson and El Sisi other high-ranking politicians and heads of state.

Figure 4.6

Both Country Leaders Carrying out Their Responsibilities in Formal Settings

Despite the domination of political logic within this theme, as illustrated in Figure 4.7, some of the images categorised into this group were also largely based on media logic, as in some instances the meetings between the country leaders took place in less formal settings,

or featured family members of the leaders, making the meetings more personalised and commercialised (Esser, 2013). Such examples were the meeting between Boris Johnson and Joe Biden, both of whom were accompanied by their wives, as well as the meetings between Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron, and El Sisi and Muhammed Bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, both of which took place in less formal settings, as the country leaders were seen sitting on couches and having a laugh with one another. These examples highlighted the more warm and friendly relations between the countries whose leaders were portrayed in the images. In other instances where media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979) was dominant within the image, the politician was portrayed as enjoying mass appeal, was seen along with public figures, which connected to the notion of celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), or the image was commercialised through specific framing. An example of this was the image where Johnson appeared with Bill Gates – a public figure and philanthropist – to announce a partnership. In another instance, Johnson was seen being greeted by a big crowd of his supporters, with several cameras flashing lights at him, after finishing his speech in a large auditorium. Therefore, although the occasions were formal, there was a clear use of media logic within the images.

Figure 4.7

Both Country Leaders Carrying out Their Responsibilities in Semi-Formal Settings

Nevertheless, even the images that reflected political logic (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014), were framed, groomed, or edited in ways that would make them fit for the intentions of media. This was specifically done through the camera angles or salience within the photos, which included the use of specific colours to give a more attractive look to the image, or the deliberate arrangement of which was used in the composition of the image (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Such an example was the image of Boris Johnson leaving Downing Street, walking through a door surrounded by two large paintings of William Pitt, the wartime political leader of Britain during the Seven Years' War and Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Dark, moody colours were dominating the image, however there was a backlight illuminating the figure of Johnson, making him stand out. This image

portrayed Johnson as the successor of the two figures within the paintings and through the use of lighting and a lower camera angle to capture the photo, gave the British Prime Minister a more powerful look. Another example of such a framing technique with made the image fit for the intentions of media, was the image of the Egyptian President having a very serious discussion with the leaders of some of the biggest world powers (Russia, Germany, and France). Within the image, the hand gesture of El Sisi and the placement of the camera suggested that he was leading the conversation among the other leaders.

Another tendency that was found withing the images was that Johnson's meetings were more often with western politicians, especially American ones, while El Sisi was more likely to be seen with eastern leaders, specifically ones from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This finding could be due to the US role as a Western leader (Buzan, 2008) and the rising power status of the UAE (Gibbins, 2017). Moreover, it was notable, that the Egyptian President's Instagram account featured more images which fell under this pattern of *country leader* (43 out of the 80 analysed images) than the ones on the British Prime Minister's profile (32 out of the 80 analysed images).

4.5 Ordinary Citizen

Throughout the dataset, there was a distinctive tendency to present the political leader as an ordinary citizen. This tendency was most often visible within the posts of the British Prime Minister, who has gained a reputation as a rather populist leader for his usual informal behaviour (Alexandre-Collier, 2022; Flinders, 2020; McKee et al., 2021; Schoor, 2020).

Social media is known for its crucial role in communicating the development of contemporary populism, which largely relies on emotions and is rather unrestrained and personalist, challenging the high standards of the society, basing on a type of mobilisation, which allows direct contact among the leader and the followers (Mendonça, & Caetano, 2021). This was also demonstrated throughout the current study. In 24 out of the 80 Instagram posts on Johnson's official Instagram account, the British Prime Minister was either portrayed to have different skills and talents or was shown behaving more like a common citizen rather than a country leader and statesman. This theme was later found to be similar to that of Grabe and Bucy (2009), which described the characteristics of a populist politician, mentioning that the latter was often portrayed as an ordinary person, making appearances with regular citizens, dressing casually, displaying doing physical work or showing their athletic talents.

The British Prime Minister was often captured doing different kinds of physical labour, as illustrated in Figure 4.8. For example, he was portrayed as a baker, wearing an apron which read "Get Brexit Done" on it and selling donuts to members of the Jewish community in the UK, at a local bakery. On a different occasion, he was seen at a fish market in Scotland, wearing a fisherman's hat and a white coat, surrounded by local fishermen. Other examples of the Prime Minister acting as an ordinary citizen doing physical labour included images where he was seen as a farmer feeding lambs, a plumber fixing pipes, an airplane mechanic working on construction and an employee at a tea factory. Such populist behaviour, portraying the political leader as an average citizen, fosters feelings of empathy among the general public towards the politician (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). By highlighting the similarities between oneself and the public, politicians also attempt to create a sense of connection among the public, so that their messages are more persuasive and easier accepted among the audience. This is reflected within the British Prime Minister's posts, who, by presenting himself as doing different kinds of labour, aims to identify himself with the common citizens and in that way come across as someone who understands them well, and will therefore think about them when drafting state policies and making crucial decisions for the country. Hence, such a strategy would consequently make common citizens more likely to vote for the Conservative Party, which was led by Johnson during the UK General elections.

Figure 4.8.

Boris Johnson Portrayed as an Ordinary Citizen

Moreover, as demonstrated in Figure 4.9, the British Prime Minister's passion for sports was also demonstrated through his Instagram posts. In several instances he was shown playing football with a local team of teenage boys on a field, boxing with "Get Brexit Done" written on his boxing gloves, or supporting the national sports teams, watching their games, and cheering for them while often wearing their jerseys. Such engagement with sports highlights the masculinity of the politician and as a result, hints at his capacity to be an

authoritative, decisive leader for the country (Moore & Dewberry, 2012). Throughout history, sports have been associated with masculinity among various cultures (Moore & Dewberry, 2012). For a number of political leaders, the image of a manly figure doing sports has shown to be a successful public relations strategy (Moore & Dewberry, 2012). Such a depiction helps men relate to the political leader due to their shared masculine behaviour, while women see him more as an ideal persona that they can "look up to and admire" (Moore & Dewberry, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, this is yet another way for Johnson to appeal not only to sports fans, but also everyday citizens who are more likely to see him as a manly, strong figure through these images.

Figure 4.9.

Boris Johnson Demonstrates His Passion for Sports

This theme was also related to the concept of celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), as the country leader was shown highlighting his private life and was often portrayed in semi or non-professional settings much like a celebrity. For example, the British Prime Minister's Instagram posts often featured his pets or family members. As illustrated in Figure 4.10, in several images, he was portrayed with his dog, going to the polling station, being accompanied by his wife or father, receiving his COVID-19 vaccine, dining at a local diner, interacting with regular working-class citizens and often dressing in casualwear. Such associations of political leaders with family and hobbies aim to "humanize" their images and evoke sympathy from the public (Campus, 2010). While the use of casual wear, portrays the politician as an average person, giving him a more approachable look (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). The method of portraying oneself as an everyday citizen is common among popular politicians, such as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, and former US President George W. Bush, who have all used similar strategies (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019; Mayer, 2004; Mendonça & Caetano, 2021).

Figure 4.10

The Concept of Celebrity Politics Reflected Through Boris Johnson's Images

It is to be noted that the images which fell under this theme were dominated by media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979) and were clear examples of mediatised politics (Hjarvard, 2013). The images where Johnson was presented as an ordinary citizen were commercialised and personalised, which are some of the characteristics of mediatised politics (Esser, 2013; Strömbäck, 2008). Furthermore, the majority of the posts that were included in this theme were published within the period preceding the UK General Elections in December 2019. During that period, Johnson was busy campaigning to win the elections and thus needed to gain the public's support. Therefore, these posts portrayed the British Prime Minister as closer to the British citizens, with a good understanding of their wants and needs (Steffan, 2020), which increased the connection between them and Johnson's likeability among the British public. In fact, these persuasive strategies utilised by the British Prime Minister, or his PR team, might have indeed shown their results, as following the UK General Election, the Conservatives, led by Johnson, celebrated their victory with the greatest parliamentary majority since the 1980s (Tomkins, 2020), which comes to show that the strategies used by the party and their leader could have indeed been successful.

4.6 Summary

The political leaders used various techniques to form their online persona and appeal to the public through their online presence. This was most often done through portraying themselves as closer to the public by highlighting their similarities and coming across as compassionate leaders who cared about their citizens. Nevertheless, although this tendency was noticed among both of the leaders, it was clear that the British Prime Minister was more likely to use this technique as a way to garner support than the Egyptian president, especially within the time period before the UK General Elections in December 2019, when Johnson had to campaign to get the votes of more British citizens. Johnson not only often acted as a protector of the vulnerable citizens and celebrated both national and international holidays,

depicting himself as a member of different religious groups, but also presented himself as an everyday citizen by having images of himself in different non-formal situations, behaving like an everyday person doing physical labour, supporting sports teams, and eating in local diners. The Egyptian President, on the other hand, was more often depicted in formal situations, attending conferences, meeting political leaders, and overseeing governmental projects. This could be connected to El Sisi's military background as the former Defence Minister of the country, as well as the strong military presence in the country (Marshall, 2015), which already suggests that the Egyptian officials would be more formal and careful in their behaviour.

This difference between both country leaders was also noticed throughout the framing methods used in their images. While most of Boris Johnson's images were personalised, commercialised (Esser, 2013) and based on media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979), El Sisi's images, on the other hand, were more often based on political logic (Strömbäck, 2008), as they portrayed the Egyptian President in formal settings, developing diplomatic relations or addressing state policies.

The concept of celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013) was also found more often among the images of the British Prime Minister, given his tendency to appear in non-formal settings and display aspects of his private life through making public appearances with his wife or dog. The theme was also noticed in images where Johnson acted similar to a celebrity by being depicted waving at crowds who displayed public affection towards him or being accompanied by public figures such as Bill Gates or Sir David Attenborough, for an example. Throughout President El Sisi's images, on the other hand, this concept was seen less often and was mainly emphasised by his hand gestures, waving at a group of citizens.

The cultural elements that were demonstrated through the images of the leaders were mainly the flags, in the case of President El Sisi, and the poppy flowers, in Johnson's images. Nevertheless, the cultures of both countries were also demonstrated through the depictions of family values and strong military presence in both of the cases. Furthermore, the rather diverse culture of the UK was reflected the images of Johnson, who addressed the different religious, ethnic, sexual and gender minorities within the country, while El Sisi mostly sent his greetings on national, Islamic or Coptic holidays.

The studied images painted a populist image of the British Prime Minister and a rather authoritative figure of President El Sisi, as while the majority of Johnson's images were rather informal, portraying him with common citizens, behaving like one of them, El Sisi's

images were more serious, showing the President in formal settings, attending conferences, as well as meeting with other politicians and army officials. Thus, the images emphasised that Western politics is more based on populism through commercialisation and personalisation (Mudde, 2004), while Eastern politics is rather connected to authoritarianism (Bellin, 2012). The study further displayed the more mediatised nature of Western politics when compared to the Eastern one.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to present a comparative case study on how mediatised politics was present in the East and the West, by taking the political leaders of two of the most prominent countries on both sides of the world as case studies. Due to the increased popularity of visuals in political communication and their ability to easier influence public perception (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011), this study focused on the analysis of images. Given the growing prominence of digital media and its crucial role in political communication (Hepp, 2019; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021), as well as Instagram's popularity as an image-sharing social media platform, 160 images were gathered from the official Instagram accounts of British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El Sisi. A purposive sampling approach was used as a method of data collection, to ensure the relevance of the dataset for the current research (Sarstedt et al., 2017). In order to minimise bias throughout the selection of the dataset (Sarstedt et al., 2017), the process of data collection was explained in detail and justified throughout this paper, while the selection of a representative dataset that included a wide variety of posts had been a priority throughout the collection of the sampling units. The selected images were then analysed through a Visual Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012), according to the objects, salience and setting depicted within the visuals. The analysis of images was also guided by the main concepts of the study, namely, mediatisation of politics (Strömbäck, 2008), celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), framing (Goffman, 1974) and the cultural elements that were present within the photos. This qualitative analysis resulted in five distinct patterns, which demonstrated how politics was mediatised on the Instagram accounts of the British Prime Minister and the Egyptian President, both of whom crafted specific online public personas for themselves on the social media platform and used certain techniques to communicate their messages to the public. The found themes were the portrayals of the two political leaders as ordinary citizens, caring father or son figures, country leaders and people who sent greetings on holidays and memorial days.

The results demonstrated that political mediatisation (Strömbäck, 2008), indeed played a significant role in both eastern and western realms, and that the images of both leaders were frequently based on media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979). Although the discovered patterns within the images were mostly shared by the two leaders and the role of media logic was apparent for both, there was a distinct difference in the way each of the politicians painted his online persona. Despite the presence of mediatised politics in both of their

images, the leaders used different aspects of the concept to communicate their messages online to the public, through their Instagram accounts.

Media logic stood out within the images of the British Prime Minister through commercialisation of images (Esser, 2013), the depiction of mediatised leadership (Campus, 2010) and celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), as well as Johnson's frequent personalisation (Strömbäck, 2008) through his portrayals as an ordinary person doing physical labour, playing, spending time with his pet and family. There was a clear aim in his images to look more like the public, to persuade them and catch their attention by coming across as closer to them. This was done through images, where the Prime Minister was depicted interacting with common people, meeting supporters, doing physical labour, playing sports, eating at local diners, supporting the national British sports teams, playing with children, serving the elderly, and more. Therefore, the majority of his images were based on media logic and lacked political logic (Esser, 2013; Strömbäck, 2008). Furthermore, Johnson also made sure to come across as appealing to the diverse British society (Parekh, 1998), by addressing various minority groups throughout his posts on different occasions, and by portraying himself as one of them.

Meanwhile, mediatised politics was usually portrayed within the images of Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El Sisi, through the notion of connectivity (Ekman & Widholm, 2017). The majority of his images were taken in formal settings, depicting him attending important summits and conferences, or meeting with military officials, other politicians and heads of state. This aimed at showing the close relationship of El Sisi with the aforementioned people, portraying him as a man who had authority and strong connections with other heavyweights. Although the images of the Egyptian President were, to a certain extent, also based on media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979), compared to those on Johnson's Instagram account, political logic was more evident in them, as they more often showcased the President in settings, where politics and policies were addressed.

Therefore, while mediatised politics was more often used in the images of Prime Minister Johnson, to show his strong connections to common people, his ordinariness and playful character, in El Sisi's posts, it was more often used for portraying the President's image as a strong political leader and a serious diplomat. The findings of this study further reflected the populist leadership style of British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson (Alexandre-Collier, 2022; Flinders, 2020; McKee et al., 2021; Schoor, 2020), and the rather traditional leadership style of Egyptian President, Abdelfattah El Sisi. These were also connected to the

cultures and norms in both societies, highlighting the domination of populistic political ideologies in the West and the rather conservative nature of the political communication in the East.

5.1 Social and Academic Implications

This study contributes to previous research (Lindholm et al., 2021; Mendonça & Caetano, 2021) on visual communication of politics on Instagram and the research about political communication in the East (Ekman & Widholm, 2017; Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019; Munoz & Towner, 2017; Olof Larsson, 2021; Peng, 2021), by adding the perspective of the East in comparison to the West, in an effort to address the gap in the literature, drawing comparisons between how politics is mediatised in these two parts of the world. It furthermore aims to add to the academic discussions on mediatised politics by providing a thorough comparative study addressing the concept, illustrating the similarities and differences between how the increasing role of media logic within politics is portrayed within the images of two country leaders from two different cultures.

Amid the growing importance of digital media in political communication (Hepp, 2019; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021), as well as the increasing role of social media as a source of political information (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021) and its affordances of new ways for the creation and dissemination of political discourses (Strömbäck, 2008), this study aims to shed some light on how social media can be used to portray politicians as celebrities. In doing so, the current research also complements studies in mediatisation, as it observes how the changes in society are reflected in media and incorporated by politicians.

The following study, furthermore, addresses the issue of an increased mediatisation within modern society, which is resulted due to the growing autonomy of media within other non-media-related institutions (Hjarvard, 2013). This thesis paper also aims at shedding some light on the risk that this presents for politics, which is under the threat of losing its core, institutional, political logic (Esser, 2013), as a result of its growing reliance on media logic (Altheide & Snow, 1979).

5.2 Limitations and Future Lines of Research

One of the limitations of this research is that the study is based on a comparison between two different parts of the world, while only focusing the analysis on two political leaders, one from each of the regional powers within the specific part of the world. These

two countries might not be able to fully represent the other states within their specific regions, as every country has its own unique way of management, according to the citizens of the country and based on a wide range of factors. Therefore, a better approach would be to select multiple political leaders from each part of the world and conduct a comparative analysis of their images. However, given the limited time and scope of this project, the two leaders were selected as part of a case study.

Another point of weakness within the study is that both selected country leaders are male politicians. One of the main concepts of this study, celebrity politics (Wheeler, 2013), is thought to work in gendered ways, where men can combine private and political lives to form a "hybrid political persona" (van Zoonen, 2006, p.19), while women have distinct boundaries and portray traditional ideals of political citizenship. Therefore, future research could draw such comparisons between male and female political leaders to demonstrate the different ways in which their visual communication on social media is depicted or interpreted and to illustrate how mediatised politics is portrayed among each of the genders.

Finally, although the aim of this research is to shed a qualitative light on the phenomenon of mediatised politics by observing how politicians incorporate the language of media throughout their visual communication, another opportunity for future research could be to base the study on quantitative grounds, exploring the effects of different approaches within mediatised politics. Conducting a qualitative visual analysis requires making some rather subjective choices such as, for instance, interpreting the hidden meanings of images or explaining the different kinds of logics that the images are based on. Therefore, although throughout the current study, the researcher operationalised the theories that guided the analysis of the visuals and aimed at making the research process and the theories used as transparent and descriptive as possible to increase the reliability of the study (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, as cited in Silverman, 2011), there could have still been some unintentional biases within the analysis. However, this can serve as an opportunity for future scholars to approach the topic through a quantitative lens, measuring the impact that such mediatised politics can have on the public and the extent to which it can be successful as a way of communication between political leaders and the public.

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Visual Critical Discourse Analysis

Image	Denotation	Connotation
	General: Johnson is smiling and selling the donuts he has made at a local bakery. A crowd of happy-looking customers have gathered in front of the donut display at the bakery to buy them. *Objects*: Johnson is seen wearing an apron with the text "Get Brexit Done" in the colours of the British flag over his formal shirt and tie. The bakery customers are wearing traditional Jewish hats and clothing. *Setting:* The image is taken indoors, at a bakery. Johnson is standing in front of the display, selling the pastries, while the bakers in the background in their protective headwear are taking photos of the scene. *Salience:* The happy customers are at the focus of the image, along with the Prime Minister, who is	*General:* The PM is portrayed as an ordinary citizen, baking and selling pastries, which makes him look closer to the public and increases his popularity among those who see Johnson as one of them. The image is based on media logic through commercialisation and displaying the British Prime Minister in an informal setting, surrounded by everyday citizens, acting as one of them. *Salience:* The Jewish hats and garments the customers are wearing suggest that they are Jews. Johnson thus aims to acquire the support of the Jewish community in the UK ahead of the Brexit elections and present himself as being

selling them the pastries with a welcoming smile.

closer to the public and having a good understanding of their problems and needs. *Objects:* The "Get Brexit Done" writing on Johnson's apron and the faces of the happy customers suggest that apart of being happy about buying donuts, the customers are also supportive of the Brexit elections and the Prime Minister's stance. It also shows their support and trust towards Johnson. *Setting:* Inclusion of the supportive members of the Jewish minority suggests the Prime Minister overall good relations with ethnic and religious minorities and aims at gaining more support not only from the Jewish community in the UK, but other minority groups as well.

General: Egyptian President El Sisi is sitting on a stage accompanied by a host and their conversation is being watched by an audience of people and journalists.

Objects: There is a large vase with flowers on the left side of the stage at the back. The Egyptian flag is seen right behind El Sisi, while in the background, one can read "Ask the President" written in large white Arabic letters on the red stage background. Multiple cameras capturing the moment can also be seen filming what is happening on stage.

Setting: The President seems to be answering questions asked by the public in front of a large audience and journalists, who are following the discussion.

Salience: The President and the host are at the centre of attention. There is a large contrast between the

General: The President is portrayed as a country leader.

Political logic: The president is sitting in a formal setting, answering the questions that the public has sent. The caption of the image suggests that the discussed questions are about the policies the government has taken in the previous years and their plans for the future in the fields of education, development of the youth, the fight against terrorism, the support for small businesses and more.

Media logic: The image presents an event for the press to cover.

Objects: The Egyptian flag behind the president gives the image and the setting a more formal and serious look.

| red colour of the stage background and the grey floor. | *Setting:* N/A |
| | *Salience:* The contrast of the dark red stage background and the grey floor further emphasises the formal setting. |