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Ideological positioning in conflict
The United States and Egypt’s domestic political trajectory

Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbary

5.1 Background and context

Egypt sits at the strategic intersection of the Mediterranean, African and Arab worlds, and controls the Suez Canal, a vital waterway for oil trade between the Gulf and the US and a strategic conduit for US warships deploying in the Middle East and into the Indian Ocean. It is also a signatory to the peace treaty with Israel and a key US partner in the war on terrorism and extremism in the region. These geostrategic considerations have, since the late 1970s, driven the US to partner with Egypt, and the Egyptian Military in particular, to promote an environment that safeguards US political and economic interests in the region.

The popular protest that ousted President Mubarak in 2011, during what was often called the “Arab Spring”, changed the domestic political trajectory of Egypt, with consequences for the US’s geo-political and security interests. Mubarak stepped down in response to popular protests and the US welcomed the “transition to democracy” in a bid to balance the short-term national security interests and the long-term promotion of freedom and democracy in the region. The outcome of the democratic process was the election of the “Islamist” Muhammad Morsy as President – the Muslim Brotherhood candidate. The US hoped that it would continue security and diplomacy cooperation with Morsy the way it did with Mubarak and, at the same time, espouse the democratic principles for which the US stands. But things did not turn out the way Obama was hoping.

President Morsy diversified Egypt’s strategic partners by reaching out to Russia, France and Iran. He also improved relations with Hamas – an organisation designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation by the US State Department in 1997 (Zanotti, 2014). He visited Iran and Iranian President Ahmadinejad landed in Egypt for the first time in 33 years. Although Egypt was acting as a “free, democratic” country, its strategic partnership with the US was strained, and it was moving away from Washington’s influence. President Morsy also loosened the Military’s grip on decision-making in Egypt, which necessarily entailed a threat to American security interests in the region.

One year into President Morsy’s term, on 3 July 2013, Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Abdul fattah el-Sisi made a statement in which he toppled Morsy and replaced him with a Military-backed transition government. The overthrow of
the Muslim Brotherhood government and the installation of a Military-backed government maintained the US’ strategic interests in the region but constituted a departure from the American ideals of freedom and the promotion of democracy. It marked a significant return of Egypt to the stronghold of the Military establishment and, by implication, a long-awaited return of the US’ most significant regional security partner. However, it stood in stark violation of the American constitutional values of democracy and the rule of law.

The choice for the US is between the status quo represented by the Military-backed government and the deposed Islamist government that has risen to power through free and fair elections. The former, a decades-old strategic ally of the US, toppled a democratically elected president and eventually brought back the Military-backed regime against which the Egyptian people had revolted. The latter, Egypt’s first democratically-elected government, had improved ties with Hamas, dispatched the prime minister to Gaza, recalled the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, opened up towards Iran and is feared to turn Egypt into an Islamic theocracy on the Israeli southern border.

Does the Obama administration champion the status quo that safeguards its strategic interests in the region or does it champion the American ideals of freedom and democracy regardless of its geo-political and security interests? The present chapter investigates the ideological outlook of the US government on the events leading to the removal of a duly elected president. It offers a critical stylistic analysis of Obama’s political statement in response to the overthrow of President Morsy against the political statement released earlier on the same day by the Egyptian Military declaring the “coup”. By examining the rhetoric of both statements against each other, the chapter aims to ascertain the extent to which Obama endorses or dictates the Egyptian Military’s position and perspective.

5.2 Methodology

This section introduces and contextualises the data to be analysed. It also offers an overview of the ten-function analytical toolkit of Critical Stylistics – the approach informing the methodology and analysis.

5.2.1 Data

This study seeks to establish whether the US government coordinates with the Egyptian Military for Egypt’s domestic political trajectory, dictates the course of action for them or simply endorses the political status quo. In order to achieve this objective, the study compares the two statements released on 3 July 2013 by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) and the US government on the removal of President Morsy from office.

SCAF’s statement was released first and in Arabic. In this statement, General Abdulfattah el-Sis, the Minister of Defense in Morsy’s government, ousted President Morsy, suspended the constitution and installed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Adly Mansour, as the interim president. The statement has been transcribed by different news agencies (e.g. Aljazeera, BBC, ahramonline). This study analyses the transcript released in English by SCAF itself. There are two versions of SCAF’s English text, however. The first version was released on 4 July 2013 and is available (The Main Page of the Egyptian Army Forces Speaker, 2013). The second was published a year later on 30 June 2014 on the Egyptian government’s official website (The Egyptian State Information Service, 2013).
The 2014 version of the statement is noticeably edited compared with the 2013 version published on the official Facebook page of SCAF’s spokesperson. Strategic and domestic calculations and other considerations might have prompted the editing of the statement, resulting in a necessarily altered overall focus and effect. This study selects for the purpose of analysis, therefore, the unedited version of the statement, which was released the day after the statement was aired on TV.

Obama’s statement followed later on the same day and addressed the decisions by SCAF and the implications of these decisions for the future of Egypt. The statement is archived under “Statements and Releases” on the website of the White House (The White House, 2013).

5.2.2 Theoretical and analytical framework

The analysis of ideology in political discourse has traditionally focused on the analysis of the mechanisms of legitimisation, delegitimisation, manipulation and persuasion in political text and talk. Since the late 1970s, however, linguistics has provided a more explicit and rigorous framework for the analysis of ideological embedding in political discourse, indeed all discourse. The earliest attempt at an analytical methodology was Critical Linguistics (Fowler and Kress, 1979), which morphed into Critical Discourse Analysis ten years later (Fairclough, 1989). In 2010, however, Lesley Jeffries (2010, p.12) extended this tradition to scrutinise “the precise ways in which texts may transmit, reinforce or inculcate ideologies in their readers” by offering a more comprehensive ten-tool toolkit known as Critical Stylistics.

The Critical Stylistic approach is particularly suited to the present study because of its undivided attention to language in the investigation of textual ideology and because of the coherence of its analytical toolkit. Critical Discourse Analysis, an obvious alternative, broadens the concern with language to include such contextual factors as historical, cultural and socio-political considerations (e.g. Fairclough, 1989), and Critical Linguistics (e.g. Fowler, 1991) is informed only by a five-tool list, viz. syntactic transformation, transitivity, lexical structure, modality and speech acts. The choice of Critical Stylistics, therefore, is guided by the centrality of language in its outlook and the comprehensiveness of its toolkit. In addition to the tools derived from Critical Linguistics, critical stylisticians investigate equating, contrasting, exemplifying, enumerating, negating and representing speech, thoughts, time, space and society.

The analytical toolkit is constituted by ten functions for the investigation of ideology in language. The ten functions are outlined in Jeffries (2010). The first function is naming and describing, which is linguistically realised by: the choice of a noun that “not only makes reference to something, but also shows the speaker’s opinion of that referent” (Jeffries, 2010, p.20); noun modification, a syntactic technique that is used to transform an assertion about entities into an assumption by way of transforming a potential clausal relationship into a noun phrase or noun group; and nominalisation, a morphological process that “turns a process into a nominal (i.e. a verb into a noun)” by packaging up information which could have been the content of a proposition (Jeffries, 2010, p.25).

The second function is representing actions/events/states. It involves the choice of the lexical verb to “present the situation in the way that the author (speaker) desires” either as an action, an event or a state with ideological consequences “for the way in which the situation is seen by the reader/hearer” (Jeffries, 2010, p.37). Lexical verbs are assigned to four categories. The first is material action processes, which are either intentional actions by
human agents (MAI), supervision processes that represent unintentional actions by human agents (MAS) or events (MAE) — actions by inanimate actors. Verbalisation processes, which involve human agents using language rather than performing an action. Mental processes refer to “what happens within human beings” (Jeffries, 2010, p.42) and are processes of either mental cognition (MC), mental reaction (MR) or mental perception (MP). The final category is relational processes, which represent “the static or stable relationships between Carrier and Attributes, rather than any changes or dynamic actions” (Jeffries, 2010, p.43), and are either intensive, possessive or circumstantial.

The third function is equating and contrasting. It examines the way texts “structure the world in terms of equivalence and opposition” (Jeffries, 2010, p.51). These are ideologically motivated non-systematic synonyms and opposites that are set up in the text but not attested in language. Textually constructed equivalence may be triggered by noun phrase apposition, parallel structures, intensive relational equivalence and simile/metaphor-type constructions, while textually constructed opposition is triggered by negated opposition, transitional opposition, comparative opposition, replacive opposition, concessive opposition, explicit oppositions, parallelism and contrastives (Davies, 2013; Jeffries, 2007).

The fourth function is exemplifying and enumerating. Through exemplification, we provide an instance, or a number of instances, of a certain phenomenon; through enumeration, we claim to provide a complete list, with all possible instances listed. Textual carriers of exemplification include “for example”, “for instance” and “to exemplify”, while in enumeration we use a general term followed by instantiations of the term (Jeffries, 2010). Jeffries distinguishes two-part lists (that overlap with the construction of opposition), three-part lists (that serve the symbolic function of complete coverage) and four-part lists (that invite the reader to think of other members of the list).

The fifth function is prioritising (information). The default focus of the proposition may be changed via a number of syntactic operations in order to indicate attitude and ideological priorities. These operations include subordination (the lower the level of subordination, the less amenable the structure to disagreement by the reader), exploiting information structure (which covers fronting and cleft structures, both of which result in contrastive information focus) and transformations (adjectival transformation that results in presupposing the resulting noun phrase, and passive transformation which downplays agency in relation to other parts of the structure).

The sixth function is assuming and implying. Assumptions and implications are used to naturalise ideologies and make them sound like common sense (Jeffries, 2010, p.93). Instead of questioning propositions and relationships, they are tacitly assumed as shared knowledge. This consensual reality is built through existential presupposition (definite noun phrases), logical presupposition (factive verbs, change of state verbs, cleft constructions, iterative words and comparative structures) and implicatures (flouting the maxims of the Cooperative Principle) (Grice, 1975).

The seventh function is negating. A text may produce a hypothetical version of reality in order to inspire belief, desire or fear. In conjuring up the absence of a scenario, there is “the potential for a hearer/reader to conceptualise this hypothetical situation”, which “may have some persuasive power” (Jeffries, 2010, p.107). Textual carriers of this function include negative particles, negative pronouns and inherently negative and morphologically negated words.

The eighth function is hypothesising. Instead of making categorical assertions about reality, the text presents the author’s commitment to the truth of a proposition (perception modality), desirability of something happening or being the case (boulomaic modality), evaluation of the likelihood of something happening or being the case (epistemic modality).
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and evaluation of the necessity or possibility of the proposition (deontic modality). Carriers of this function include modal auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, modal adjectives, modal adverbs and conditionals.

The ninth textual function is representing others’ speech and thought. This power to manipulate the speech and thoughts of others constitutes an act of interpretation and is ideological. Speech presentation is divided into five categories (Jeffries, 2010): narrator’s report of speech (NRS), narrator’s report of speech act (NRSA), indirect speech (IS), free indirect speech (FIS) and direct speech (DS). Thought representation is also divided into five categories: narrator’s report of thought (NRT), narrator’s report of thought act (NRTA), indirect thought (IT), free indirect thought (FIT) and direct thought (DT). These categories represent a descending progression of narrator control over the reported speech/thought.

The last textual function is representing time, space and society. Deictic expressions of place (adverbs, demonstratives, adverbial and prepositional phrases), time (verb tenses, adverbs, demonstratives and time adverbials), person (personal pronouns) and address (titles and address forms) are used create the time, space and social relationships that define the world of the text. As a result, the reader may be caused to abandon their deictic centre (their perspective), adopt that of the text producer and eventually assimilate as common sense the perspective or ideology of the text producer (Jeffries, 2010). This is a manipulative act with ideological consequences.

5.2.3 Procedure

The two statements are subjected to the ten-tool analytical toolkit of Critical Stylistics. Each tool is introduced in brief before the analysis starts and then the tool will be employed to analyse the textual features in both statements and uncover the ideologies permeating them. SCAF’s statement will be analysed first in order to uncover its ideological evaluation of President Morsy and the popular revolt, and Obama’s statement for its adaption of SCAF’s position or dictation of its perspective. Each section of the analysis closes with a comparison of the findings and the ideological outlooks of el-Sisi and Obama. The overall findings of the analysis are summarised at the end of the chapter and inter-statement connections made and related to the objectives of the study.

5.3 Objectives

The Critical Stylistic analysis of the two statements investigates:

1. SCAF’s ideological evaluation of President Morsy, its projection of itself as a national institution and its construction of Egypt under Morsy’s rule
2. Obama’s ideological evaluation of President Morsy, of SCAF’s decision and of the situation in Egypt and SCAF’s representation of Egyptian popular and political perspectives of Morsy’s rule
3. the extent to which US foreign policy endorses, or dictates, SCAF’s position and perspective

5.4 Analysis

The ten tools of Critical Stylistics are used to analyse el-Sisi’s statement for his ideological evaluation of President Morsy and projection of the Egyptian Armed Forces, and Obama’s
statement for his ideological perspective of the Egyptian situation and the parties in it. The objective of the analysis is to uncover Obama’s endorsement or dictation (or otherwise) of SCAF’s perspective.

5.4.1 Naming and describing

In this section, I examine the way the naming practices in the two statements signpost ideological evaluation of the parties in the conflict and the way evaluative propositions are passed as if they were accepted assumptions by packaging the propositions into noun phrases or material action intention verbs into the head of noun phrases.

General el-Sisi’s use of naming conventions signposts SCAF’s ideological position. The Egyptian Armed Forces are mentioned 16 times in the statement, albeit using different labels, while the Egyptian people are mentioned only 8 times. This makes the statement more about the Egyptian Armed Forces than about the people whose aspirations it claims to be protecting. In contrast, President Morsy is referred to twice by his official title and twice metonymically by the presidential institution in which he is serving but is never mentioned by name. He is already excluded from the scene. In addition to statistically dominating the statement, the Armed Forces are constructed more positively than any other party. Packaged inside noun phrases and passed as unquestionable assumptions are its insightful vision – “The Military, dashing from its insightful vision, perceived that the people” – and its commitment to duty, responsibility and integrity – “the Armed Forces […] approached the political scene with hope, desire and commitment to duty, responsibility and integrity”. Assumed as given as well is the construction of the Military as patriotic, in “The Military, as a patriotic establishment, also related its vision”. The Military justifies its anticipated forceful course of action as driven by its national and historical duties: “the Egyptian Military warns, out of its natural and historical responsibility, that it will forcibly and decisively rebel any deviation”. Both these positive constructions are structured in appositive NPs and passed as unquestionable.

To enhance the positive construal of the Armed Forces, el-Sisi constructs President Morsy and Egypt under Morsy’s rule unfavourably. President Morsy is constructed as responsible for “the offenses against the State national and religious establishments” and “the intimidation and threat of the Egyptians”, both of which are structured into definite NPs and assumed as true. He is also responsible for “the causes of national division” and “the reasons of congestion”, which the Armed Forces have stepped up to “contain” and “eradicate”. The national division and socio-political congestion, which are otherwise debatable propositions, are also packaged into definite noun phrases and passed as accepted assumptions. President Morsy – or “the Presidency”, as el-Sisi prefers to refer to him – has also triggered “the current crisis” and “the state of conflict and division”, which are again assumed as given outcomes of Morsy’s rule. In this frame, President Morsy becomes a threat to national unity and SCAF’s actions, which are driven by popular calls “from every urban and rural corner of Egypt”, and so duly justified.

Obama’s ideological perspective, however, is different from el-Sisi’s and this is reflected in his nominal choices. Unlike el-Sisi, Obama is more tolerant of Morsy and more accommodating; he mentions President Morsy by name and official title. In fact, President Morsy and the Egyptian Armed Forces are both referred to three times in Obama’s statement. Obama is carefully keeping the same distance from both parties in the conflict. The frequency of other nouns/nominal groups in the statement highlights Obama’s ideological priorities. Although Obama’s statement is about half the length of el-Sisi’s, the Egyptian people are mentioned
nine times, compared to eight references in el-Sisi’s statement. Obama shows more concern for the people than for the parties in the conflict. But unlike el-Sisi, who makes no reference to democracy in SCAF’s statement, Obama is particularly concerned with the restoration of Egypt’s democratic process; the word “democracy”, and its morphologically related forms, is repeated eight times in the statement.

Obama’s ideological evaluation of the Egyptian situation is also evident in his manipulation of naming strategies. He takes a detached view of the current Egyptian situation, describing it as a “very fluid situation” at an “uncertain period”. Obama acknowledges Morsy’s government as “democratically elected” and urges the Egyptian Military to “return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government”. He has also instructed the relevant US departments to “review the implications under US law for our assistance to the Government of Egypt”. Obama is hinting at a coup but is very careful not to classify the “removal” of President Morsy as a coup because it would, under US law, require an immediate cut-off to all assistance to the government of Egypt. He calls it instead “the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces to remove President Morsy”. Consistent with this detached view, Obama uses the noun “unrest” to describe the Egyptian situation. This noun is often used when we want to focus on a state of disturbance and avoid implicating any party in it. In this same statement, by contrast, Obama names the events that had two years earlier unseated former President Mubarak – “the Egyptian Revolution”. It was a revolution that brought President Morsy to office and it is “the current unrest” that toppled him.

In summary, el-Sisi avoids reference to Morsy and deploys noun phrase modification to pass as an accepted assumption the state of national division and congestion that has necessitated the intervention of the Military. He also implicates President Morsy in all of the assumed socio-political grievances. Obama, on the other hand, avoids reference to el-Sisi and makes the same number of references to President Morsy as to the Egyptian Military. He uses naming conventions carefully to avoid naming the “coup” and to keep the assistance to Egypt flowing, which is crucial to “the maintenance of the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty and crucial bi-lateral security cooperation against international terrorism” (Stock, 2013, p.1).

### 5.4.2 Representing actions/events/states

The analysis now turns to the verbal elements in both statements in order to reveal whether the speakers conceptualise the “happenings” leading to the overthrow of Morsy as actions, events or states, and the consequences that transitivity choices have for agency and causation.

In el-Sisi’s statement, transitivity patterns sustain the positive construction of the Military and its “impartiality” in the unrest unfolding in Egypt. In the first two paragraphs, the Egyptian people appear in two verbalisation process inviting the intervention of the Armed Forces: “the masses who call for its national, not the political role”, “the people who call for its backing”. The Egyptian Military is then structured in six mental processes: “The Egyptian Military has been incapable of turning deaf ears or blind eyes to the movement and voices of the masses”; “The Military […] perceived that the people […]”; “Such is the message received by the Armed Forces”; “the Armed Forces realized this call”; “[the Armed Forces] comprehended its objective”; “(the Armed Forces) assessed its inevitability”. Towards the end of paragraph two, the Armed Forces start taking action. This action is constructed as a careful move taken after repeated calls by the Egyptian people and after careful deliberation by the Armed Forces.
The first move taken is a material action intention process that has no human target. The Military “approached the political scene with hope, desire, and commitment to duty, responsibility and integrity”. The target is the political scene. In their second action, in paragraph three, the Military is also the agent of a material action intention process of conducting reconciliation with the political powers of Egypt: “The Military initiated a call for national dialog” in order to “contain the domestic situation” and undo the damage caused by Morsy and his government. The call for reconciliation was welcomed by all the local political powers but “declined in the last minute by the Presidency”. Right from the start of the statement, the Military is constructed as the agent of positive action targeted towards saving Egypt, and at the end of paragraph three, Morsy assumes the agent role, but as the agent of further damage and of attempts to frustrate the Military’s reconciliation efforts.

The Military continues to figure in material action intention structures and to act positively in order to redress Morsy’s damage. In paragraph four, the Egyptian Armed Forces “presented a strategic assessment of the internal and external situation and of the key challenges and risks encountering the nation”. It is also the agent of “a vision to contain the causes of national division” that the Presidency is blamed for. The favourable projection of the Military continues and so does the negative construction of Morsy and his government.

In the next paragraph, the Military continues to act for the good of Egypt. It “convened with the President” one day before this statement was released. This material action intention process is followed by two verbalisation processes in which the Military “stated its rejection to the offenses against the State national and religious establishments and reiterated its rejection to the intimidation and threat of the Egyptians”. Given the fact that only the Military and Morsy were present in the meeting, the missing agent of the nominalisation “offenses”, “intimidation” and “threat” is implied to be Morsy and his government.

In preparation for the “decision” of the Military, paragraph six starts with an agentless passive structure – “hope was pinned on national reconciliation”. The implied agent is the Military and the people of Egypt, whose hopes are frustrated in the next sentences by the speech of the President that “neither met nor conformed to the demands of the masses”. The Military come back to their agent role in a material action intention structure to “hold consultation with the national and political powers”, except Morsy and the Muslim Brotherhood, who “agreed on a future roadmap […] to terminate the state of division and conflict”. The particulars of the roadmap and the form of government to supersede Morsy are listed in ten attributes structured in the relational process “This road map includes”. One of these attributes contains a morphological nominalisation – “the temporary suspension of the constitution” – and six others contain participle phrases that blur agency: “to hold early presidential elections”, “to form a strong and capable national government”, “to form a commission […] to revise the proposed amendments to the constitution”, “to draw up a media code of ethics”, “to adopt executive measures” and “to form a higher commission for national reconciliation”.

El-Sisi’s statement concludes with five verbalisation processes in which the Armed Forces “appeal to the great Egyptian people”; “warn [against] any deviation from peacefulness”; “salute and praise the honorable and sincere men of the military, the police and the judiciary”; and warns that it will “forcibly and decisively rebel any deviation from peacefulness in accordance with the law”.

In Obama’s statement, on the other hand, transitivity choices carry forward the detached attitude towards the Egyptian situation and the commitment to the democratic process. The statement starts with a verbalisation process in which Obama reiterates “the set of core principles” which the US is committed to. This commitment is paraphrased in the next sentence,
which contains a negated material action intention process – “The United States does not support” whose agent is the US and whose goal is “particular individuals or political parties”. In reference to the unfolding events in Egypt, Obama uses a material action event process – “the current unrest began” – that blurs agency and does not attribute responsibility for the disorder to any party. The first paragraph concludes with a verbalisation process in which Obama calls on “all parties to work together to address the legitimate grievance of the Egyptian people […] without recourse to violence or the use of force”.

Obama’s detachment from action continues in the second paragraph. The paragraph starts with three mental processes in which the US is “monitoring the very fluid situation”, “believing” that “the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people”, and “deeply concerned by the decision […] to remove President Morsy”. These mental processes are followed by another verbalisation process: “I now call on the Egyptian Military […] to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government” and “to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters”. The paragraph ends with another verbalisation in which Obama “directed the relevant departments and agencies to review the implications under US law for our assistant to the Government of Egypt”.

Obama and the US government continue to avoid material action processes. This attitude is carried forward in paragraph three, which starts with two mental processes. The US “continues to believe that the best foundation […] for Egypt is a democratic political order”, and the US government “expect the Military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected”. This is followed by four relational processes that define the goal of any political process, including the political process in Egypt. The goal “should be a government that respects the right of all people, majority and minority […] that institutionalizes the checks and balances upon which democracy depends”; and that “places the interests of the people above party or fraction”. The paragraph concludes with yet another verbalisation process by Obama: “I urge all sides to avoid violence and come together to ensure the lasting restoration of Egypt’s democracy”.

The statement concludes with the attitude of detachment it starts with. The fourth paragraph contains four relational processes that expand on “the will of the people”, “the longstanding partnership between the United States and Egypt” and “the transition to democracy”. The statement finishes with a material action intention process in which Obama assures that the US “will continue to work with the Egyptian people to ensure that Egypt’s transition to democracy succeeds”.

In el-Sisi’s statement, the transitivity patterns effectively build up the case for the removal of President Morsy. The statement begins with the people of Egypt verbalising an invitation to the Military to intervene, which is followed by a series of mental processes and material action process in which the Military deliberates on the situation and attempt a reconciliation before eventually appearing in a verbalisation process in which they warn to “forcibly and decisively rebel any deviation from peacefulness”. Similarly, Obama’s deployment of the patterns of transitivity sustains his ideological outlook. The statement is almost entirely composed of verbalisation, mental and relational processes, which is consistent with Obama’s detached view of the “unrest”.

5.4.3 Equating and contrasting

In this section, I examine the two statements for triggers of textual equivalence and opposition. Equivalence may be triggered by noun phrase apposition, parallel structures or intensive relational equivalence, while triggers of opposition are negated opposition, transitional
opposition, comparative opposition, replacive opposition, concessive opposition, explicit oppositions, parallelism and contrastives (Davies, 2013; Jeffries, 2007).

In el-Sisi’s statements, there are two textual non-systematic opposites that enhance el-Sisi’s ideological outlook. The first textual opposition is between “national” and “political”. The Egyptian Military, emphasises el-Sisi, is a “national” institution that is “distancing” itself “from politics”. In this ideological frame, political parties and political activity become “a-national”. In other words, el-Sisi distances the Egyptian Military from politics and, in turn, distances political institutions and political activity from nationalism. This construction is borne out by the textual distribution of the word “national” in the statement. This word is used 13 times – three times to qualify the Egyptian Military, four times to describe attempts at reconciliation by the Egyptian Military, twice in reference to the threats fended off by the Egyptian Military, three times to describe the political actors that have “positively responded” to calls initiated by the Egyptian Military and once to qualify the government that the Egyptian Military is planning to form. Any act of the Egyptian Military is qualified by “national”, while no action by Morsy and his government is thus qualified. Besides, when reference is made to “national political powers”, the Presidency is always excluded from the intension of the phrase.

The second textual opposition is an extension of el-Sisi’s ideological evaluation of Morsy’s performance as President. The people of Egypt, according to el-Sisi, have summoned the Military to “render public service and necessary protection of their revolutionary demands”; not to “assume power or rule”. The model of government to be offered by the Egyptian Military (offering public service and the protection of revolutionary demands) is constructed as a textual opposite of the model offered by Morsy’s government. In this frame, Morsy is constructed as preoccupied with assuming power or ruling at the expense of catering to people’s needs and demands, which has eventually caused “national division”, “congestion” and a “state of conflict and division” that have necessitated the intervention of the Armed Forces.

In Obama’s statement, by contrast, there is a discoursal construction of opposition across the text as a whole: a textually constructed opposition between the democratic process and the current situation in Egypt, which helps sustain Obama’s ideological evaluation of Morsy and el-Sisi. Obama shows little backing for el-Sisi’s decision. Instead, he declares that “The United States does not support particular individuals or political parties, but we are committed to the democratic process and respect for the rule of law”. He also calls on the Egyptian Military to “return full authority to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible through an inclusive and transparent process”. The current situation is constructed as a diversion from the process of democracy and the core principles for which the US stands. Obama also warns against practices that are associated with nondemocratic regimes. He calls on the de facto authority in Egypt to “avoid arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters and ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected, including the right to peaceful assembly, due process and fair trials in civilian courts”. This construction is borne out by the fact that the word “democracy”, which appears eight times in morphologically related forms, is used in the statement either in reference to Morsy’s rule or, more generally, to the form of government that enabled Morsy’s rule, and always in opposition to the decision of the Egyptian Military to forcibly remove President Morsy. It may be reiterated in support of this argument that el-Sisi did not use the word “democracy” in his statement at all.

In summary, the Egyptian Military is projected in el-Sisi’s statement as a national institution concerned with the delivery of public service and constructed in textual opposition
to Morsy, who is projected as concerned with holding his position and responsible for the national division engulfing the country. Obama’s statement, on the other hand, is more about democracy, the democratic values of freedom and the rule of law, which are constructed in textual opposition to the “non-democratic” situation in Egypt with which the Egyptian Military, and el-Sisi by implication, is aligned.

5.4.4 Exemplifying and enumerating

In this section, I examine whether the instances of listing in the two statements are indicative or comprehensive and the ideological consequences of each choice for the construction of the popular revolution and the parties in it.

In el-Sisi’s statement, three-part lists are used in reference to the Egyptian Armed Forces. The Egyptian Military, says el-Sisi, approached the scene with “hope, desire and commitment” and they were committed to “duty, responsibility and integrity”. The three-part lists suggest completeness and imply clarity of vision. When the Egyptian Military intervened, they were summoned by the people to “contain the causes of national division, eradicate the reasons of congestion, and counter challenges and risks”. The Armed Forces are constructed as having a clear vision about the mission to get Egypt out of the “current crisis”. The road map laid down by the Military provides motives of “trust, reassurance and stability” for the people. The implication is that this is the complete list of demands by the people of Egypt and the Military is well aware of it. The proposed participation of the youth also figures in a three-part list: “partners in the decision-making, assistants to ministers and governors, [and] various executive posts”, which suggests completeness and eventually limits the political participation of the youth in post-Morsy Egypt. The statement concludes by saluting and praising “the honorable and sincere men of the Military, the police, and the judiciary”, again in a three-part “complete” list.

The risks encountering Egypt, however, are structured in a four-part list that suggests incompleteness and invites the recipient to add to the list. The risks concern “security, economic, political and social levels”. The incompleteness of the list implicates Morsy and necessitates intervention by the Military. Also structured in a four-part list is the code of ethics to be imposed on the media in order to ensure “professional rules, credibility, impartiality, and elevation of the higher interests of the State”. The list is left open, opening the possibility for more measures to be imposed in the future.

Like el-Sisi, Obama also makes extensive use of three-part lists, but only in reference to the US and the Egyptian people. The principles the US supports are “opposition to violence, protection of universal human rights, [and] reform that meets the legitimate aspirations of the people”. The rights of the Egyptian people are “the right to peaceful assembly, due process, [and] free and fair trials in civilian courts”. The goal for Egypt is a government that “respects the rights of all people, majority and minority; that institutionalizes the checks and balances upon which democracy depends; and that places the interest of people above faction or party”. Obama goes on to say that the Egyptian people deserve an “honest, capable [and] representative government”. The preference for three-part lists implies an assured attitude towards Egypt, the Egyptian people and the democratic values for which the US stands.

To summarise, el-Sisi uses three-parts lists in his statement to present the Egyptian Military as a competent institution that is conscious of “all” the problems of its people and “all” it takes to redress them. El-Sisi also deploys four-part lists to evaluate Egypt under Morsy’s rule and the measures to be taken to set things right. The openness of the lists construct Morsy as a threat to Egypt and leaves the list of corrective measures open for the
Military to add to. Obama, on the other hand, uses only three-part lists, which project the US as well aware of its own priorities, the rights of the Egyptian people, and the roadmap for Egypt. This tendency to use three-part lists for what we approve of is something that deserves further investigation.

5.4.5 Prioritising

I now examine the ways the speakers in both statements prioritise or downplay parts of the content of their statements via subordination, information structure and transformation, and highlight the ideologies that are tacitly advanced as a result.

El-Sisi’s ideological priorities are signalled by the textual subordination choices in his statement. The statement contains 21 sentences, none of which has more than 4 levels of subordination. This reflects the clarity of his ideological priorities. Of the 21 sentences, 19 have active voice structures, one is an agentless passive structure and there is one passive structure. The 19 active structures foreground the Egyptian Armed Forces. In almost all these sentences – indeed, in practically the entire statement – it is the Egyptian Armed Forces that occupy the highest level of structure. The prioritisation of the Armed Forces in all the active structures reflects the ideological priorities in el-Sisi’s statement. At the lowest level of structure in these sentences are the “innocent people”, “Egyptian people”, their “revolutionary demands”, their “ambitions and aspirations”, “the current crisis”, “the state of division and conflict”, “the law”, “political powers and youths” and “the Presidency”. The only other agent that is prioritised in the statement (in sentence number 14) is the “speech of the President”. Even here, the sentence is negated, and the speech is presented as a source of frustration to “the speech of the President […] neither met nor conformed to the demands of the masses”.

The other two structures in the statement sustain el-Sisi’s ideological priorities. In the passive structure, “Such is the message received by the Armed Forces from every urban and rural corner of Egypt”, the agent is the Armed Forces. Conventionally, agents in passive structures appear in a by-phrase at the lowest level of structure, but the Armed Forces, in keeping with el-Sisi’s ideological outlook, have been promoted higher up in the structure. The other structure is an agentless passive sentence – “Hope was pinned on national reconciliation to lay down a roadmap for the future and provide motives of trust, reassurance and stability for the people, in a way that fulfils their ambitions and aspirations”. In this sentence, it is the ambitions and aspirations of the Egyptian people that are subordinated at the lowest level, and the missing agent is understood to be the Egyptian Military.

Just as el-Sisi’s statement is predominantly about the Egyptian Armed Forces, Obama’s statement is predominantly about the US. His ideological priorities are equally clear. The statement presents a perspective on the status quo in Egypt – a perspective that emphasises the US “core principles” and downplays the “revolutionary demands” of the “people of Egypt”. In 11 of the 15 sentences that make up the statement, it is the US or Obama that is prioritised at the highest level of structure. At the lowest level of these structures are the aspirations of the people: “As I have said since the Egyptian Revolution, the United States supports a set of core principles, including opposition to violence […] and reform that meets the legitimate aspirations of the people”. The Egyptian people are also presented in sentence number four (“The United States is monitoring the very fluid situation in Egypt, and we believe that ultimately the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people”), the Egyptian constitution in sentence number five (“Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned by the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces to remove President Morsy and suspend the
Egyptian constitution”) and President Morsy and his supporters in sentence number six (“I now call on the Egyptian Military to move quickly […] and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters”).

Consistent with this outlook, Obama also prioritises democracy – “No transition to democracy comes without difficulty” – and US-Egypt relations – “The longstanding partnership between the United States and Egypt is based on shared interest and values”. Related to these “democratic practices” is the kind of government Obama wishes for Egypt – “An honest, capable and representative government is what ordinary Egyptians seek” – which receives prominence by being fronted in a cleft-structure. Our last remark here is about President Morsy. Although mentioned by name and official title three times in the statement, Morsy is embedded at the lowest level of syntactic organisation in all three appearances: “Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned by the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces to remove President Morsy and suspend the Egyptian constitution”, “I now call on the Egyptian Military to move quickly and responsibly to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible through an inclusive and transparent process, and to avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters” and “The voices of all those who have protested peacefully must be heard – including those who welcomed today’s developments, and those who have supported President Morsy”.

In conclusion, textual subordination reveals that the ideological priority of el-Sisi is the favourable projection of the Egyptian Armed Forces, which is prioritised at the highest level of structure across the statement, even in the passive structures. All other parties, including President Morsy, the Egyptian people and their revolutionary demands, are downplayed at lower levels of subordination. Likewise, Obama’s ideological priorities are signalled by the levels of subordination in his statement. Consistently at the highest levels of structure in the statement are the US and the promotion of democracy, and at lower levels of subordination come the Egyptian people, the Egyptian constitution and President Morsy and his supporters.

5.4.6 Implying and assuming

The analysis now focuses on the way questionable propositions and relationships are tacitly advanced as assumptions by being structured into existential presupposition structures, logical presupposition structures and implicatures and the ideological effect of these choices on the readers’ perspectives and conclusions.

El-Sisi uses triggers of presupposition and implication to tacitly advance his evaluation of Morsy and his government. The negative construction of Egypt under Morsy is existentially presupposed by being structured in definite noun phrases such as “the offenses against the State national and religious establishments”, “the intimidation and threat of the Egyptians”, “the state of conflict and division”, “the current crisis”, “the causes of national division” and “the reasons of congestion”. In addition, the use of change of state verbs in el-Sisi’s efforts to “bring about a strong and cohesive Egypt”, to “form a strong and national government” and to “provide for the freedom of the media” trigger the logical implicatures that Egypt was neither a strong, cohesive state nor possessed of a national government under Morsy. It also did not provide for the freedom of the press. The comparative “more” in the call to “avoid violence that leads to more congestion and bloodshed” logically presupposes violence and bloodshed. The iterative in “the Command reiterated its rejection to the intimidation and threat of the Egyptians” logically presupposes the Military’s sympathy with the people of Egypt and serves to blame all of the violence and bloodshed referred to earlier.
on Morsy and his government. This negative evaluation of Morsy and his government is not structured in propositions that are open to questioning, but rather are instead covertly assumed as a consensual reality.

In Obama’s statement, on the other hand, the carriers of implication and assumption sustain Obama’s ideological outlook on the Egyptian situation. While Obama recognises Morsy as the President who has been “removed”, he acknowledges “the legitimate grievances of the Egyptian people”, which are existentially presupposed by being structured in a definite noun phrase. He also uses an iterative verb to presuppose acknowledgement that Morsy’s government was legitimate and democratically elected: “I now call on the Egyptian Military […] to return full authority to a democratically elected civilian government”. This presupposition is borne out by Obama’s direction to the “relevant departments and agencies to review the implications under US law for [America’s] assistance to the Government of Egypt”. Under US law, the government of America does not offer financial aid to the government of a country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by Military coup. The designation of the removal of President Morsy as a Military coup, however, is not verbalised and remains an assumption for the reader to work out. In line with this construction, Obama urges “all sides to […] come together to ensure the lasting restoration of Egypt’s democracy”. The nominalisation of the change of state verb in “restoration” extends the endorsement of Morsy’s rule and the rejection of the coup by the Military. Obama concludes the statement by promising to “continue to work with the Egyptian people to ensure that Egypt’s transition to democracy succeeds”. The use of the iterative verb “continue” implies that the US has always been on the side of the Egyptian people and serves to distance the US government from Morsy, the Egyptian Military and all other political players.

In summary, el-Sisi’s assumptions about the chaos resulting from President Morsy’s rule are built into the text to evade questioning and pass as a consensual reality. Definite noun phrases existentially presuppose offenses against national and religious institutions, intimidation of the people and a state of national division. Change of state verbs, iteratives and comparatives logically presuppose political congestion, bloodshed and the absence of a cohesive state and a national government. In Obama’s statement, on the other hand, definite noun phrases, change of state verbs and iterative verbs are used to existentially presuppose the grievances of the Egyptian people and the legitimacy of the deposed President.

5.4.7 Negating

In this section, I examine the way the use of negative particles, negative pronouns and morphologically negated words construct non-existent narratives for the discourse recipients to fear, desire or believe.

The use of negation in el-Sisi’s statement is ideologically significant. El-Sisi negates interest in taking up a political role in post-Morsy Egypt: “the movement and the voices of the masses who call for its national, not the political, role”. He also negates interest in assuming power or in ruling: “the people who call for its backing do not summon the Military to assume power or rule, but to render public service”. He offers a roadmap for Egypt’s future and negates intention to exclude any of the political parties that are from Egypt’s social texture: “a roadmap with initial steps to bring about a strong and cohesive Egyptian society that excludes none of its members and trends”. El-Sisi ends the statement by appealing to the people to “abide by peaceful demonstration” but warns that the Egyptian Military “will forcibly and decisively rebel any deviation from peacefulness”.

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The use of negation, argues Jeffries (2010), constructs a “non-existent” narrative in order to enhance that narrative. It allows discourse producers to textually evoke the very expectations that they are negating; by distancing themselves from these expectations through negation, the discourse producers attribute responsibility for the negated scenario, albeit by implication, to other participants in the discourse.

Only one month after el-Sisi’s statement, the feared non-existent narrative became real. The Military forcibly removed camps of Muslim Brotherhood supporters from sit-ins across the country. Violence erupted, which led to the “more congestion and bloodshed of innocent people” of el-Sisi’s statement. Hundreds were killed and many more arrested, including the Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and the President himself. On 23 September, the Muslim Brotherhood movement was banned and its assets seized by court order. The ruling also banned the Muslim Brotherhood movement from contesting and participating in elections. Later the same year, in December, the Muslim Brotherhood movement was declared a terrorist group. The group was “alienated” and “excluded”. Less than a year after the statement, el-Sisi contested the presidential elections and became president of Egypt with 96.91 percent of the total votes. He took up a “political role”, “assumed power” and eventually “ruled”. This is exactly the same scenario el-Sisi had conjured up by negation.

Like el-Sisi, Obama also uses language with negative shading to conjure up a possible scenario that became real soon after the statement. He urges the Egyptian Military to “avoid any arbitrary arrests of President Morsy and his supporters”. He also urges “all sides to avoid violence” and “come together” for the good of Egypt. Later the same year, this non-existent, negated scenario came about. The Egyptian Military launched the worst security campaign in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. President Morsy and his supporters were “arbitrarily arrested”, imprisoned and later even sentenced to death. The Muslim Brotherhood supporters remained defiant. In August 2013, the Military stormed a sit-in outside Rabaa Aladawiya mosque in Cairo, killing hundreds of protesters. It was clear that the Egyptian Military and the Muslim Brotherhood could never “come together”.

In his statement, Obama also says that the United States “does not support particular individuals” but is “committed to the democratic process and respect for the rule of law”. Despite the stipulation in the US law against offering financial aid to a government that rises to power by militarily deposing a former duly elected leader, President Obama resumed Military and financial assistance to Egypt under el-Sisi. He even congratulated el-Sisi, who toppled a democratically elected president, on his inauguration and affirmed commitment to advancing the shared interests of both countries. Again, every scenario negated by Obama became real.

Analysis of both statements highlights the power of negation in conjuring up an alternative reality that could eventually materialise. El-Sisi negated having political ambitions, aspirations to rule and any intentions to sideline any Egyptian political party. One year down the road, this negated reality became actual reality. Similarly, the hypothetical world conjured up by Obama in which violence erupts and President Morsy and his supporters are arrested came about.

5.4.8 Hypothesising

This section offers an analysis of the use of modal expressions in order to reveal the speaker’s attitude to the propositions in both statements and the ideological impact of these choices on the construction of conflict and the parties in it.
El-Sisi’s attitude of conviction and assertion is sustained by the use of non-modalised language. The message of the statement is communicated almost entirely in categorical assertions. El-Sisi is uncompromising about his vision to “contain the causes of national division, eradicate the reasons of congestion, and counter the challenges and risks in an endeavor to get out of the current crisis”. He is definite about the roadmap to terminate “the state of conflict and division” and intolerant of any “deviation from peacefulness”. In fact, there is only one modal expression in the entire statement, where the median-value epistemic modal of certainty “will” is used in reference to any likely “deviation from peacefulness”: El-Sisi warns that the Egyptian Military “will forcibly and decisively rebel any deviation from peacefulness in accordance with the law”. The use of the modal expression serves to enhance the mood of assertion even further.

Besides being carried by the use of categorical expressions, el-Sisi’s assertive attitude is also expressed using adjectives and adverbs. The Egyptian Military dashed from its “insightful vision” to save the “great”, “brave” and “venerable” people of Egypt. All the national political powers “positively responded” to the Military’s reconciliation attempts, except the Presidency. As a result, the “honorable and sincere men of the Military” will “forcibly” and “decisively” rebel any deviation from the roadmap proposed.

Obama’s detached outlook on the Egyptian situation and the parties in it, on the other hand, is sustained by the use of modalised propositions. Ideologically loaded verbs, adjectives and adverbs express this attitude. Obama uses epistemic modality to express the US belief about Egypt’s future (“we believe that ultimately the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people”), perception modality to express reaction to the removal of Morsy (“we are deeply concerned by the decision of the Armed Forces to remove President Morsy and suspend the Egyptian constitution”) and boulomaic modality to express what the US wishes for Egypt (“we expect the Military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptian men and women are protected”). In addition, Obama uses modal expressions to the same effect. The statement has two instances of the high-value deontic modal of obligation “must”, neither of which involves President Morsy or el-Sisi. The first one relates to the demands of the Egyptian people – “The voices of all those who have protested peacefully must be heard” – and the second to democracy – “No transition to democracy comes without difficulty, but in the end, it must stay true to the will of the people”. The statement also has one instance of the median-value epistemic modal of certainty “will” that refers to future cooperation between the US and Egypt: “we will continue to work with the Egyptian people to ensure that Egypt’s transition to democracy succeeds”. What is not present in the statement is deontic modality involving action by the US. Obama’s call to the US authorities to review the implication for “assistance to the Government of Egypt” and his expression of commitment to work with the “people” of Egypt to ensure that “Egypt’s transition to democracy succeeds” denote the US attitudinal stance, but Obama is not willing to express it more cogently.

Analysis reveals that el-Sisi’s statement is almost free of any markers of modality. It is constituted entirely of categorical assertions, reflecting assuredness of objective and assertiveness of approach. But while a Military leader is categorical, given his absolute power, a democratic president can only be provisional. Obama uses loaded vocabulary and modalised propositions to express support for the demands of the Egyptian people, concern about the removal of President Morsy and expectations about the future of Egypt. Consistent with Obama’s outlook, however, neither Morsy nor the Military is structured in modalised propositions. Obama prefers to remain detached from both of them.
5.4.9 Representing others’ speech and thoughts

We will now examine how the speech and thoughts of other people are presented in both statements, and the way this “sanitised” version of the events leading to 3 July is in line with the speakers’ ideological outlooks.

In his statement, el-Sisi gives himself total freedom to manipulate the speech and thoughts of the Egyptian Armed Forces and the Egyptian people. He uses free indirect speech to report the action of the Egyptian Military (“The Egyptian Armed Forces, more than once, presented a strategic assessment of the internal and external situation”), narrator’s report of speech to report their speech (“the Command reiterated its rejection to the intimidation and threat of the Egyptians”), narrator’s report of speech act to report their speech acts (“The Armed Forces, first and foremost, have announced and still insist on distancing themselves from politics”) and narrator’s report of thought to report even their thoughts (“the Armed Forces realized this call, comprehended its objective [and] assessed its inevitability”). El-Sisi also reports the speech and thoughts of the Egyptian people. He reports their speech acts – “The participants have agreed on a future roadmap with initial steps to bring about a strong and cohesive Egyptian society” – and uses free indirect thought to report what the Egyptian people thought about the speech of their President (“the speech of the President last night, before the end of the 48-hour grace period, neither met nor conformed to the demands of the masses”) and what the people had in mind when they took to the streets of Cairo (“The Military, dashing from its insightful vision, perceived that the people who call for its backing do not summon the Military to assume power or rule, but to render public service and necessary protection of their revolutionary demands”).

Obama, however, starts his statement by quoting directly from an earlier statement he made on Egypt: “As I have said since the Egyptian Revolution, the United States supports a set of core principles”. As head of state, Obama gives himself freedom to report the speech and thoughts of the US government. He uses free indirect thought to report the US’ position on parties in domestic conflict – “The United States does not support particular individuals or political parties, but we are committed to the democratic process and respect for the rule of law” – and to report its reaction to the current unrest: “The United States is monitoring the very fluid situation in Egypt, and we believe that ultimately the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people”. He also uses narrator’s reports of speech acts to report the speech acts of the government: “we are committed to the democratic process” and “we are deeply concerned by the decision of the Egyptian Armed Forces”. In the last paragraph of the statement, Obama uses free indirect thought to report the demands of the Egyptian people: “An honest, capable and representative government is what ordinary Egyptians seek and what they deserve”.

Analysis of the representation of the speech and thoughts of others backs up the interpretive comments on the ideological outlooks of el-Sisi and Obama. El-Sisi, the categorical Military leader, manipulates the speech, acts and thoughts of the Egyptian Military and the Egyptian people in order to construct the removal of President Morsy as a “national response to public grievances”. Unlike el-Sisi, however, Obama speaks in the first person four times to reiterate the values of democracy, calling on the Military “to return full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government”, directing the US government to review “assistance to the Government of Egypt” and urging “all sides to avoid violence”. He also reports the “concerned” reaction of the US government and the “democratic” aspirations of the Egyptian people.
5.4.10 Representing time, speech and society

This function covers the use of deictic expressions of place, time and person, and the creation of a deictic centre from which to narrate the events leading to 3 July, thereby influencing the discourse recipient’s perspective of the Egyptian situation.

In el-Sisi’s statement, the Egyptian Military is constructed as so close to the Egyptian people that it was “incapable of turning deaf ears or blind eyes” to their “movement and voices”. This ‘constructed’ proximity to the “voices of the masses” allows el-Sisi to shift the deictic centre from which the events and reactions are narrated from that of the Egyptian protestors to the Military. El-Sisi uses the proximal deictic expression “this” in “the Armed Forces realized this call” and he moves on to even speak for the Egyptian people and interpret their “call”: “the voices of the masses who call for its national, not the political, role”, “the Military […] perceived that the people who so call for its backing do not summon the Military to assume power or rule, but to render public service and necessary protection of their demands”. El-Sisi also describes the reaction of the Egyptian people to the speech of the President, which “neither met nor conformed to the demands of the masses”.

The projection of the Egyptian Military as ‘omniscient’ is borne out by the sentence structure in the statement; 16 of the 20 sentences in the statement have the Egyptian Military as their subjects and agents. The other four sentences are: a passive sentence the missing agent of which is the Military (“Hope was pinned on national reconciliation”); an active sentence whose agent is the participants in the talks, including the Military (“The participants have agreed on a future roadmap”); the “roadmap”, which was proposed by the Military (“This roadmap includes”); and “the speech of the President”. In the only one sentence where the Military is not grammatically present, el-Sisi gives himself freedom to qualify the speech of the President as out of touch with reality: “the speech of the President […] neither met nor conformed to the demands of the masses”.

In contrast to el-Sisi, Obama does not manipulate the discourse recipient’s outlook on the events. His statement constructs a default deictic field in which the speaker’s (Obama’s) time/place is at the centre. He uses no deictic expressions to suggest proximity to the Egyptian situation, nor does he attempt to narrate from the viewing position of any party in the conflict. The statement recounts the set of principles that the US supports, expresses concern about the future of Egypt and offers a roadmap for Egypt. In fact, Obama distances himself and the US, which is “monitoring the very fluid situation in Egypt” and makes clear that “ultimately the future of Egypt can only be determined by the Egyptian people”. This ideological position is also sustained by the sentence structure in the statement. In 10 of the 15 sentences, it is Obama or the US government, or both, that are the grammatical subject or agent. The other five subjects are the political process, the voices of the people, transition to democracy, the government Egyptians deserve and the US–Egypt partnership.

To sum up, analysis reveals that el-Sisi manipulates the discourse recipients’ outlook, causing them to view the events from the viewing position of the Military. This allows el-Sisi to extend the construction of Morsy as a threat to national unity and Morsy’s removal as a national move towards terminating the state of conflict and division. Obama’s recount of the events, on the other hand, is not manipulative. He occupies the deictic centre and articulates his concern and position. Taking up a detached position, he invites all the parties in the conflict to his own space and to “come together to ensure the lasting restoration of Egypt’s democracy”.

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5.5 Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to examine the role of language in the textual construction of naturalised ideology and in the investigation of ideological position in domestic conflict. The tools of critical stylistics have provided a valuable means of accessing naturalised ideology in el-Sisi’s statement and of detecting ideological perspective in Obama’s statement.

Critical stylistic analysis of el-Sisi’s statement has revealed that el-Sisi constructs a textual opposition between President Morsy as the cause of national division and conflict and the Egyptian Armed Forces as the guardian of the popular revolution. This naturalised ideology is sustained by the findings from the analysis of textual features in the statement. El-Sisi uses definite noun phrases to existentially presuppose President Morsy’s offenses against national institutions, intimidation of the Egyptians and threat to national unity. He also uses change of state verbs, iterative verbs and comparatives to logically presuppose the absence of a national government during Morsy’s rule.

Transitivity patterns contribute to this construction. Analysis of transitivity reveals that Morsy is positioned in material action intention structures and presented as the agent of “damage” and “national division”, whereas the Military is mostly structured in mental and verbalisation processes. When it assumes agency, the Military is the agent of reconciliation efforts and visions – never the agent of action whose goal is Morsy and the Muslim Brotherhood movement. El-Sisi is not presenting the Military as opposing Morsy but as the “guardian of people’s will”. It is a “national” and “patriotic” institution whose action is driven by popular calls and national interests.

El-Sisi uses listing to carry forward this construction. The Egyptian Military is structured in three-parts lists to project it as a competent establishment capable of redressing Morsy’s damage to the nation, which is structured in four-part “open” lists. In addition, the Egyptian Military is consistently structured at the highest level of structure throughout the statement, while Morsy and the Egyptian people are subordinated at lower levels of structure.

Analysis of Obama’s statement has also revealed his ideological position with regard to el-Sisi, President Morsy and the Egyptian revolutionaries. Unlike el-Sisi, who refers to Morsy in non-human terms (“the Presidency”) rather than by name or official title, Obama is more accommodating. He refers to Morsy by name and title and makes almost as many references to him as he makes to democracy. Obama also constructs the removal of Morsy from office as a “decision” by the Armed Forces alone – not a consensual reality as el-Sisi makes it out to be. Obama’s call for the “restoration” of democracy implies recognition of Morsy as a democratically elected president and his call for the reconsideration of US assistance to the government of Egypt implies a classification of the “decision” to remove Morsy as a Military coup. Analysis of the text using the tools of naming and assuming, therefore, shows that Obama neither adopts nor dictates el-Sisi’s position.

In addition to classifying the removal of Morsy, albeit by implication, as a coup and not acknowledging the interim head of state, Obama constructs a textual opposition between democracy and the current situation in Egypt with which el-Sisi is aligned. He refrains from associating with the Egyptian Military or the interim Military-backed Egyptian government and pledges to “continue” to work with the Egyptian people. Obama also uses definite noun phrases to existentially presuppose the legitimacy of President Morsy. He neither endorses nor dictates el-Sisi’s construction of Morsy as an authoritarian ruler who is unresponsive to people’s demands, indifferent about the country’s future and out of touch with his countrymen. He projects Morsy, though using “mild” rhetoric, as a deposed legitimate President whose overthrow by the Egyptian Military must be overturned.
Analysis using the other critical stylistic tools supports the conclusion that Obama neither adopts nor dictates el-Sisi’s position. The statement is presented as a series of verbalisations and mental reactions by Obama to material action processes by others. What the statement emphasises are the US’s core principles, notably the “democratic process” and its commitment to the “rule of law”. These concerns are prioritised at the highest level of syntactic structure, while at lower levels of subordination come the material action processes whose agent is the Military and whose goal is Morsy and his supporters. Obama neither adopts nor dictates el-Sisi’s position.

Another interesting finding from the analysis relates to the differences in the rhetoric of the Military and political leaders on conflict. El-Sisi uses categorical assertions throughout the statement and exercises control of the speech and thoughts of the Egyptian people. The statement is made from the deictic centre of the Military, which helps el-Sisi project the coup as if it were a consensual reality. He gives himself freedom to manipulate the speech and thoughts of the Armed Forces and the Egyptian people. Obama’s conceptualisation of conflict, however, is different. His statement is written in modalised propositions, and his truth is provisional. He occupies the deictic centre from which he articulates his concerns and invites all the parties in the conflict to “come” in order to “ensure the lasting restoration of Egypt’s democracy”. This is an interesting area for further research.

References