

## **Intermedia Agenda Setting or International News Flow? Cross-Lagged Comparison of Elite International Newspapers**

SHIMAA HASSAN ALI MOHAMMED  
Minia University, Egypt

MAXWELL MCCOMBS  
University of Texas at Austin, USA

According to the hypotheses of the international news flow, the media of the central countries does not talk about a peripheral country's news, and if any, it only talks about the negative news. Adding the scope of intermedia agenda setting, this study examines how Western media like *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* deal with Egyptian news and how their agendas could transfer or affect each other or the Egyptian media. The results show that intermedia agenda setting occurs in the international sphere; however, there is no dominant agenda, and that the hypotheses of international news flow remain valid.

*Keywords: intermedia agenda setting; international news flow; Egypt*

Agenda-setting theory describes the power of media and how it portrays the world for us. Newspapers get more powerful when they publish events out of our reach. International events are usually out of our reach, and if they are considered important, audiences shape their opinions according to what they read in the media, not what actually happened. This illustrates the responsibility that newspapers bear and how it is important to know who sets newspapers agendas. Although the number of potential sources shaping the media agenda is large, an important factor is other media's agendas, which is known as "intermedia agenda-setting" (McCombs, 2014, p. 112).

Intermedia agenda setting concentrates on how various media agendas influence one another. Researchers have found evidence of intermedia agenda setting among many types of media and in different countries. Nearly all media are influenced and affected by other media agendas. However, few studies have been able to examine more than one country to provide comparative information. The majority of intermedia agenda-setting studies are national and local studies.

This study provides evidence of international intermedia agenda setting in three countries, and its results support the hypotheses of international news flow theory that central countries do not publish much

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Shimaa Hassan Ali Mohammed: shimaahassan211@gmail.com

Maxwell McCombs: maxmccombs@utexas.edu

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news about peripheral countries. Moreover, the news they publish is about crises or disasters, whereas the publication of good news is very limited.

The current study examines the question, Can the agenda of an elite newspaper lead the agendas of elite newspapers in other countries? To answer this question, the authors collected data (guided by the international news flow hypotheses) from three elite newspapers: *Al-Ahram*, from Egypt, *The Guardian*, from the UK; and *The New York Times*, from the United States, starting from July 1, 2015, until June 30, 2016. There are long-standing relationships among the home countries of these three newspapers, two central countries, the UK and the United States, and a peripheral country, Egypt. The year-long period selected for study was a relatively quiet period after the tumult of the 2011 Arab Spring and the subsequent years in Egypt. The general answer to the research question is that there has not been a dominant agenda throughout.

### **Intermedia Agenda Setting**

The concept of intermedia agenda setting specifically refers to the influence of various news media on each other (Billard, 2019; McCombs, 2014). The concern here is how media agendas are being shaped instead of how they shape the public's agenda. To what extent the agenda of a news organization reflects the content of another medium and deals with the content in a manner similar to the original medium (Du, 2008).

Many reasons explain why intermedia agenda setting occurs. Studies illustrate that small media follow large ones—for example, *The New York Times* affects many other media outlets in the United States (Golan, 2006; Kushin, 2010). Another reason according to Dearing and Rogers (1996) and Lim (2006, 2011) is when there is an important event and a news organization does not have any correspondents to provide information, it follows other media coverage of this event.

Evidence for the important role of intermedia agenda-setting on the media agenda has been provided by numerous studies that examined a wide range of news media. Some of these studies examined relations among newspapers (Du, 2013; Sikanku, 2013). Others investigated the mutual relations between newspapers and TV in Egypt (Fathey, 2013), the United States (Roberts & McCombs, 1994), and in Belgium (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008). Almost all these studies emphasized that newspapers have a strong influence on TV, and not the other way around.

Recent studies have examined the concept in cyberspace and have focused on how dynamics have changed in an online news environment (e.g., Ku, Kaid, & Pfau, 2003; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta, 2008). For example, Jang (2010) explored the mutual relations among newspapers, TV, and Internet bulletin boards. He found that the influence of newspapers on Internet bulletin boards is more than TV effects on Internet bulletin boards in Korea and the United States. This is in agreement with Lim (2006), who found that the leading online newspaper influenced the issue agendas of both the secondary online newspaper and the online wired service in South Korea.illard (2019) and Stern, Livan, and Smith (2020) found that intermedia agenda setting occurs between online and legacy media without any dominant medium all the time. Often this influence depends on the issue itself. Su and Borah (2019) noted that Twitter is more likely

to influence newspapers' agendas in terms of breaking news, whereas newspapers are more likely to lead Twitter's agenda in terms of ongoing discussions during nonbreaking news periods.

Finally, the long-standing practice of journalists looking over their shoulders to see what stories published by other news organizations has become profoundly easier with the advent of more accessible online editions of newspapers. Boczkowski's (2010) longitudinal study of two major newspapers in Buenos Aires not only found intermedia agenda setting but also that the homogeneity of their news agendas increased over time. We expect that the three elite newspapers in our study also looked over their shoulders to see what stories their colleagues were publishing.

### **International News Flow**

After World War II, the debate over international news flow was at its peak. In 1953, the International Press Institute described the news exchange between developing and developed nations as imbalanced. Many studies reported that international news flow was dominated by Western industrialized countries, specifically by the major international news agencies (Kim & Barnett, 1996). Many researchers have found an imbalance in news flow and coverage as a limited number of nations are constantly covered while most nations receive limited or no coverage (Golan, 2006; Grasland, 2019).

In the past few decades, many of these studies have focused on the the United States and developed countries (Chang, 1998; Waver, Porter, & Evans, 1984). On the contrary, others have studied developing countries (Ekeanyanwu, 2007; Wolfe, 1980). In the case of Egypt, the focal point of this study, many studies have discussed the coverage and flow of Egyptian news (AbdEl-Rahman, 1984; Dawood, 2008; Saleh, 2003) in the international media, especially after the dramatic shift in the political situation that started on January 25, 2011. These studies focused on the events of the revolution and its flow in TV channels (Dube, 2013; Guzman, 2016), newspapers (Alasuutari, Qadir, & Creutz, 2013), and social media (Russell, 2011).

All previous studies have investigated two points of view. The first one comes from the industrial nations. They argue that the world is a free marketplace for the flow of information as well as news. In addition, the unhampered flow of information is a means of promoting peace and understanding, besides spreading technical advances (Figenschou, 2014), and that the imbalance in flow between them and the third world is the logical result of the development gap between the two parties. In contrast, the second view comes from journalists and researchers in the third world. They argue that the so-called free flow of information and news is in fact an alternative term for Western domination of developing countries with the aid of powerful news agencies (Ekeanyanwu, Kalyango, & Peters, 2012), especially with no similar agencies in the third world. The greatest concern of the third world is cultural invasion and the loss of their identity (AbdEl-Rahman, 1984). What supports their perspective is the scarcity of news about the third world, reporting the negative in the majority of news reports (Golan, 2006).

The main question in this era is "what makes an international event newsworthy and another to be overlooked?" The goal of all media outlets is to increase their audience. Therefore, they select their stories according to news values. The stronger the news norms, the greater the opportunity to get published. In

general, to be judged newsworthy, an event must be held in a framework that is already familiar and recognizable by newsmen and the audiences (Clausen, 2004, p. 28).

### **News Norms**

News norms are the factors that guide gatekeepers while selecting news to publish. These news norms are divided into two categories: country-based factors and event-based factors.

### ***Country-Based Factors***

According to Galtung (1971) and media dependency theory, the world is divided into two parts. The center represents the developed countries and the periphery represents developing countries. The interaction among countries is based on their position (center, semi-peripheral, peripheral) in the global system (AbdEl-Rahman, 1984; Jones, Van Aelst, & Vliegenthart, 2013; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Walter, Sheaffer, Nir, & Shenhav, 2016; Wanta & Golan, 2010). Scholars argue that center countries dominance exists in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Ekeanyanwu (2007) found that southern hemisphere nations are rarely mentioned in Western media unless a disaster/crisis occurs there.

Segev (2016) asked, "Why are some countries mentioned very frequently in international news while others are not?" (p. 200) His findings are consistent with other studies that the economic power of a country is the most significant variable associated with its prominence. Guo and Vargo (2020) examined news coverage from news websites in 67 countries. They found that economically influential and more populous countries continue to set the world news agenda in reporting international politics, but smaller countries may have the potential to determine how their own countries are portrayed by the outside world. Also, they found that old factors are still valid in hybrid media.

Overall, scholars argue that the most important factors are the hierarchy of nations, which is usually determined by economic power including international trade, amount of foreign aid, business investment among countries, military power, geographical size, population, physical distance, cultural affinity, language, migration, intermarriage, travel, historic relations, past colonial relationships between states, shared religion, and shared civilization (Kim & Barnett, 1996; Lee, 2007; Walter et al., 2016).

Grasland (2019) found that most of the international news flow circulation remains valid. The salience of countries in the media continues to be strongly determined by size effects, with prominent coverage of rich countries. The effect of geographical distance and shared language remains a significant factor of media coverage in newsrooms. Only exceptional events, such as long-term political or economic crises in Yemen, Ukraine, or Syria provide the opportunity for poor countries to appear prominently in the global media.

"This is analogous to the logic of agenda-building in the domestic context and the media's tendency to focus on the powerful politicians. Accordingly, we would expect richer or larger countries as more newsworthy and to be featured more prominently" (Walter et al., 2016, p. 525). This appeared clearly when an Italian student in one of UK's universities died in Egypt (Regeni) and in the media coverage after his

murder. On the contrary, no newspaper covered the death of Sobhy (an Egyptian citizen), who was found murdered in Naples, Italy. Another example is George Floyd, who passed away on May 25, 2020, in the United States. Most of the prestigious media outlets in the world talked about his death because he is an American citizen—nonetheless, hundreds in the world die in the same way but are not known because they are not in a central country.

### ***Event-Based Factors***

While many events happen everywhere and at every moment, only some events are chosen to be published. Journalists struggle to manage and assess these events and their newsworthiness. Regarding international news, scholars suggest many factors that affect the newsworthiness of international events, such as deviance, selection, additivity, and replication (Schwarz, 2006), meaningfulness, continuity, thresholds, unambiguity, frequency, consonance (Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991), importance, composition, relevance to elite nations, elite people, persons, or bad news (Kim & Barnett, 1996).

Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) defined deviance as “a characteristic (positive or negative) of people, ideas, or events that set them aside from others in their region” (p. 23). Events that pose a threat or events that have the potential to create large-scale social change are classified as deviant events as occurred in the case of Arabic Spring. Conflicts or terror attacks can be considered as deviant events, which means they are newsworthy.

Another important factor is the perception of international correspondents as the gatekeeper affecting which news is worth and which is not. Most journalists and correspondents choose human stories as more significant than other stories. “However, if the news source is from the periphery, where there is an absence of foreign correspondents, the event will be slow in reaching the headquarters of global news agencies and therefore stands a fair chance of being ignored” (Louw, 2009, p. 53). That is because the media publish timely news and do not broadcast an event many days from its happening. Consequently, having many correspondents in a country enhances its opportunity to appear in media.

Haynes (1984) has indicated that there is a great similarity in international news in regard to topic selection—political relationships between nations and domestic politics occurring in foreign countries are the primary focus of foreign news across the world journalism (Du, 2008).

Because of the same news norms, many international media outlets monitor other media outlets and news agencies to publish the most newsworthy stories. This is international intermedia agenda setting.

### **International Intermedia Agenda Setting**

In brief, the newsworthiness of international news mainly results from “gatekeepers’ assessment of country-based or event-based variables” (Golan, 2006, p. 323). Besides these gatekeeper factors, scholars have found some evidence that intermedia agenda setting occurs among major international media. Livingston and Asmolov (2010) found that *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times* still maintain a strong international presence in the core and strategic

peripheral centers of the world news structure. The results did not explicitly mention intermedia agenda-setting theory; however, it supports the idea. Golan (2006) analyzed international news in *The New York Times* and its influence on subsequent international coverage on three U.S. TV network evening news programs. He found that the newsworthiness of international events results from an intermedia agenda-setting process between *The New York Times* and the TV programs.

Qian (2009) found evidence of the influence of *The New York Times* on the agenda of Chinese newspapers to cover the Beijing Olympics. However, the study does not depend on international news flow theory in interpreting the results. Its results emphasize the news flow from center Western news outlets to other countries. (Even when the event is in China, *The New York Times* could set the Chinese agenda). Another important study in international intermedia agenda setting is Du (2008). Using both intermedia agenda setting and international news flow as approaches in his study, Du could not answer the question "Does Western media indeed have a stronger influence on the media agenda of non-Western countries than vice versa?" (p. 141). Nonetheless, Du (2008) found evidence that intermedia agenda setting occurs at an international level.

Thus, scholars argue that intermedia agenda setting should be considered as an influential factor in determining international news coverage. With a focus also on international news coverage, the current study aims to examine the intermedia agenda-setting effect of major American and British newspapers' agendas on the Egyptian newspaper agenda.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Many of the previous studies applied intermedia agenda setting locally or in one country. Few studies have explored the international sphere, especially between central and peripheral countries. This study goes beyond these limitations and combines international news flow hypotheses with intermedia agenda-setting hypotheses to investigate whether or not Western media have the ability to influence the agenda of non-Western media. Some studies have found evidence of this influence (Qian, 2009), whereas others could not determine it (Du, 2013).

This study examines these questions and a basic intermedia agenda setting hypothesis:

*H1: There are significant relationships among the agendas of The New York Times, The Guardian, and Al-Ahram. To test this hypothesis, three relations have been examined:*

- The relation between *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* issue agenda.
- The relation between *The New York Times* and *Al-Ahram* issue agenda.
- The relation between the *Al-Ahram* and *The Guardian* issue agenda.

*RQ1: Is there any evidence that The Guardian, The New York Times, and Al-Ahram agendas influence each other's issue agendas?*

- *Sub-RQ1: If so, which agenda leads the other agendas across time lags?*

Here, the hypothesis predicts that the three newspapers are concerned with the same events. But the question asks if it is possible to identify an agenda that could affect the other two.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample of Countries***

In line with the theoretical framework of international news flow, the United States and UK were considered as representative of Western industrial countries, and Egypt as a non-Western and peripheral country. The reason for choosing the UK is its colonial relationship with Egypt for decades and the United States for its economic and political ties with Egypt for years. According to international news flow theory, these are important factors that may affect media agendas and cause intermedia agenda setting.

### ***Newspaper Sample***

To determine which online newspapers are eligible to be studied, researchers relied on a number of criteria. First, the position of an online newspaper on the Alexa website, which ranks websites according to accessing categories of the top 500 all over the world, news category, and country category. Second, scholars specializing in the area of international communication were consulted to further ensure validity. Additionally, the archive availability on newspapers websites was another aspect that affected selection. As a balanced result, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Al-Ahram* (English edition) websites were included in the research for media agendas.

Another reason for selecting these newspapers is that the Egyptian media usually keep an eye on them. With regard to the Egyptian TV shows and newspapers, there is a space for the international media, and you will often find *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* featured in Arabic subtitles; nevertheless, this not found for other countries like Italy or Spain.

We have depended on the English version of *Al-Ahram* because according to Vliegthart and Walgrave (2008), different languages will decrease intermedia agenda-setting influence. Consequently, the most prominent English-language Egyptian newspaper has been analyzed. In short, the newspapers were selected according to the State Information Services (2015) report, Alexa site, and specialized scholars in international media.

### ***Data Collection***

To collect data, an archiving tool was used for all three newspapers, from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016. This period was selected because it represents a kind of stability in Egypt. According to the international news flow hypotheses, the central countries publish about the peripheral countries only when there is a crisis, disaster, or negative events. In the Egyptian case, the international media gave attention to Egypt starting in the Arab spring of 2011. After that, Dr. Morsi (a member of the Muslim Brotherhood organization) ruled until

2013 when protests were raised again by his opponents. Then followed a transition period with Adly Mansour as a president from July 4, 2013, to June 8, 2014. Finally, El-Sisi took charge in 2014, but his opponents protested again until 2015, when he was able to control the situation. This research examines the subsequent stable period to ascertain how much attention given to a peripheral country from two central countries in regular times and in during such a time which agenda could lead the other agendas.

In *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, we used the keyword *Egypt* to determine the sample as this research is interested in analyzing the number of topics that the central countries would cover of a peripheral country like Egypt. Stories which have Egypt as the main theme have been collected, then only news forms have been analyzed, eliminating all opinion and investigative forms. The reason for this is that the findings of previous studies show that intermedia agenda-setting effects occur more among news forms (Lim, 2011).

To collect data from *Al-Ahram*, the same issues that appeared in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* or one of them were collected to allow the comparison of how frequently the news websites covered the same issues. Also, it will not be applicable to analyzing all news related to Egypt in the major Egyptian newspaper's website. This means simply analyzing almost the whole website, and very limited news every appeared in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. With respect to *Al-Ahram*, keywords from the events were used, such as Regini, Journalists Syndicate crisis (or journalist union crisis, searched with both keywords), Mubarak, Morsi, protests, Egyptian parliament and so on.

Following previous research, the salience was measured by counting the number of stories on each issue. The ranking on the basis of these frequencies was then compared between the news websites. Spearman's correlation was used to measure relations between agendas because it is the appropriate coefficient for the ordinal variables and has been used in agenda-setting studies since the first study in 1972. Cross-lagged correlations and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (Rozelle & Campbell, 1969) were used to measure intermedia agenda-setting relationships. These are reliable procedures to examine the causal relationship between two variables during the two time periods because the baseline estimated the expected values when there is no causal relationship between two variables. In agenda-setting research, the Rozelle-Campbell baseline statistic is the value expected by chance alone (Lim, 2011; McCombs, 2004; Shahzad & Siraj, 2020).

The main question for this study is "which agenda can lead other agendas?" All intermedia agenda-setting studies use a time lag correlation to answer this question because time lag demonstrates the time-varying causal effects of one agenda over another. Following Qian (2009), this study divides the whole year (which is the study time period) into four time periods. Each period is three months. Three cross-lagged correlation analyses have been performed: Time 1-Time 2, Time 2-Time 3, and Time 3-Time 4. Time 1 period is July 1-September 30, Time 2 period is October 1-December 31, Time 3 period is January 1-March 31, Time 4 period is April 1-June 30.

### ***Intercoder Reliability***

To test intercoder reliability, two coders (one author and one independent coder) coded approximately 20% of the collected data (140 news stories) to measure agreement levels. These articles were randomly selected. Intercoder reliability was computed using Holsti's (1969) reliability formula, where



$M$  is the number of times the coders agree, and  $N1$ ,  $N2$  represent the total number of coding decisions per coder  $CR = 2M / (N1 + N2)$ .

The intercoder reliability in this study is 89.3%. One reason for the disagreement is that some news stories have more than one theme, and selecting a central topic was difficult. For example, the headline of one story published in *The Guardian* is "Muslim Brotherhood Conspired Prosecutor, Egypt Claims" (2016). One coder coded it as terror and the other one as politics. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), intercoder reliability over 75% is desired, therefore 89.3% is acceptable in this study.

## Results

### *The Newspaper Agendas*

Table 1 shows the issue agenda of *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* about Egypt and the extent to which *Al-Ahram* has paid attention to these issues. In general, the results confirm the findings from research on the flow of international news that there is a lack of news related to the third world, and in the case of any news is published, it is about a disaster/crisis or mostly negative reports (Golan, 2006; Ekeanyanwu, 2007).

**Table 1. Issues and Their Ranks in All the Three Newspapers.**

Issues	Newspapers					
	<i>The New York Times</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>		<i>Al-Ahram</i>	
	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank
Foreigners killed	34	1	61	1	56	4
Human rights	33	2	46	3	69	1
Accidents	24	3	54	2	59	3
Terrorism	20	4	20	5	29	5
Corruption	8	8	6	8	67	2
Egyptian parliament	5	10	3	9.5	6	10
Financial crisis	8	8	9	7	13	7
Foreign policy	8	8	3	9.5	10	8.5
Egyptian history	9	6	25	4	10	8.5
Others	17	5	15	6	14	6
Total	166		242		333	

#### *The New York Times Agenda*

The issue agenda in *The New York Times* starts with foreigners killed in Egypt by terrorists, unintentionally or for unknown purposes. Second, human rights issues in Egypt. The third issue is the accidents that happened at the time of the study. Terrorism is the fourth issue in *The New York Times*, which was often related to Sinai and what happened there as well as ISIS. The fifth category contains many issues with few frequencies such as education, health, and other issues. The sixth issue is the Egyptian

history and ancient Egypt with its monuments and kings. Then, "financial crisis," "corruption," and "foreign policy" with the same frequency. The Egyptian parliament is the last issue to appear.

Contrary to what was expected, *The New York Times* was not interested in covering the Egyptian parliamentary elections, which were among the most important elections in the history of Egypt. Overall, *The New York Times* was the newspaper with the least coverage of Egyptian events during the study period.

#### *The Guardian Agenda*

Like *The New York Times*, the first issue on *The Guardian's* agenda is foreigners killed in Egypt. This issue is frequently repeated in *The Guardian* due to Regeni's crisis. Regeni was an Italian PhD student at Girton College, Cambridge University, in the UK. *The Guardian* was interested in covering his murder more than any other foreign murders. The second issue is "accidents," in which *The Guardian* covered many accidents that happened in Egypt or were related to Egyptian airplanes during the study period.

The third issue is human rights in Egypt. Although it is the third issue, it was of a high frequency. In fourth place comes Egyptian history, which was mentioned more in *The Guardian* than the other two newspapers. Because of the British colonization in Egypt earlier in the 20th century, *The Guardian* is still interested in informing its readers about Egyptian history, ancient Egyptians, and new discoveries, especially King Tut and Queen Nefertiti. This result is consistent with international news flow theory that colonial countries will continue to have strong relations with the countries they have occupied, and the former ruler is likely to follow up on their important events and news. This explains why *The Guardian* publishes more news about Egypt than *The New York Times*.

Terrorism ranks fifth place with the same frequency as *The New York Times*. The sixth category is "other," which contains many different issues with small frequencies. The financial crisis was ranked seventh in place of corruption, foreign policy, and the Egyptian parliament. Also, *The Guardian* was not interested in covering election news just as *The New York Times*.

#### *Al-Ahram Agenda*

Unlike the previous two newspapers, *Al-Ahram* has the human rights issue in the first place. This can be attributed to the fact that the current Egyptian regime is very keen to respond to any accusation directed against Egypt, especially about human rights. Therefore, *Al-Ahram*, as a prominent newspaper in Egypt, took this issue upon itself and refuted what other international newspapers had said.

The second issue is corruption in the former regimes. The third issue is accidents, which received great attention in all three newspapers. The fourth issue is foreigners killed in Egypt, and the fifth one is terrorism. Perhaps these last two issues had low ranks because they spread fear among people, and *Al-Ahram* as an influential newspaper that has a social responsibility toward its country and its readers. The sixth category is "others," which contains many issues with low frequencies. The financial crisis ranks seventh, which is an interesting finding. While citizens feel the crisis, *Al-Ahram* does not talk much about it. Then, Egyptian history, foreign policy, and finally the Egyptian parliament.

### ***Relations Among All the Agendas***

The top three issues in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, foreigners killed, human rights, and accidents, account for more than half of the stories on the newspapers' agendas—54.8% for the *Times*, 66.5% for *The Guardian*, and 55.3% for *Al-Ahram*.

Applying Spearman rho to compare the agendas of *The New York Times* and *Al-Ahram* (0.66,  $p = .038$ ), the association between the two agendas is statistically significant. The agendas of *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* are also similar to each other (0.93,  $p < .001$ ), and the association between the two agendas is also statistically significant. However, the relation between *The Guardian* and *Al-Ahram*, (0.56, *ns*) was moderate, but not significant at the 0.05 level. These results partly support H1.

The relation between *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* can be illustrated in terms of the international news flow. They have very similar agendas toward events happening in Egypt. As previously noted, the center countries do not provide much news about the peripheral countries, and even this news is about a disaster/crisis or negative reports in most of their reports. Although *The Guardian* published many more reports about Egypt than *The New York Times*, the relation between *Al-Ahram* and *The New York Times* was stronger than *Al-Ahram* with *The Guardian*. This means that the *The Guardian* is interested in publishing events about Egypt more than *The New York Times*, but with an agenda different from *Al-Ahram* and more like *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* published less about Egypt, but with a convergent agenda for *Al-Ahram*.

### ***Agendas Across Time***

For this section and beyond, all analyses and correlations will be only for the first nine issues without the "others" category. The "others" category has some combined issues that have received little attention each. It was important in the previous analyses to know all the issues that concern all newspapers as well as their ranks, and "others" was among them. However, from now on, it would be unreasonable to investigate its transfer from one agenda to another as it is not a single issue like the other issues.

#### *The New York Times Agenda Across Time*

A total of 149 news articles were identified and analyzed in *The New York Times* after eliminating the "others" category. According to Table 2, the number of issues covered decreased across time, then increased again at Time 4 to reach its peak. No issue was the first in all times; the rank order for all issues varies over time.

**Table 2. Ranks of Issues in The New York Times Across Four Time Lags.**

Issues	Time lags								Total
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		Time 4		
	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	
Foreigners killed	9	1.5	15	1	6	2	4	4.5	34
Human rights	8	3	4	4	9	1	12	2	33
Accidents	2	6.5	3	5	4	3.5	15	1	24
Terror	9	1.5	5	2.5	4	3.5	2	6	20
Corruption	2	6.5	1	7.5	0	9	5	3	8
Egyptian Parliament	0	8.5	2	6	3	5.5	0	9	5
Financial crisis	4	4	1	7.5	2	7	1	7.5	8
Foreign policy	3	5	0	9	1	8	4	4.5	8
Egyptian History	0	8.5	5	2.5	3	5.5	1	7.5	9
Total	37		36		32		44		149

*The Guardian Agenda Across Time*

A total of 227 news articles were identified and analyzed in *The Guardian* after eliminating the “others” category. According to Table 3, the number of issues increased in Time 2 then decreased in Time 3 and reached its peak in Time 4. The Egyptian Parliament election ranged between number 8 and 9 at all times. No issue was the first in all times.

**Table 3. Ranks of Issues in The Guardian Across Four Time Lags.**

Issues	Time lags								Total
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		Time 4		
	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	
Foreigners killed	8	2.5	27	1	17	1	9	3	61
Human rights	12	1	8	3	9	3	17	2	46
Accidents	6	4	4	5.5	12	2	32	1	54
Terror	8	2.5	6	4	4	5	2	5.5	20
Corruption	4	6.5	1	8.5	1	6	0	8.5	6
Egyptian Parliament	1	8	2	7	0	8	0	8.5	3
Financial crisis	4	6.5	4	5.5	0	8	1	7	9
Foreign policy	0	9	1	8.5	0	8	2	5.5	3
Egyptian History	5	5	12	2	5	4	3	4	25
Total	48		65		48		66		227

*Al-Ahram Agenda Across Time*

A total of 319 news articles were identified and analyzed in *Al-Ahram* after eliminating the “others” category. According to Table 4, the number of topics decreased from Time 1 to Time 2, then increased in Time 3 and reached its peak in Time 4. The corruption issue ranked first for the Times 1, 2, and 3—

nonetheless, it ranked fourth in Time 4. Additionally, the foreigners killed in Egypt issue was in second place in Time 1, then decreased to third place in Times 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 4. Ranks of Issues in Al-Ahram Across Four Time Lags.**

Issues	Time lags									
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		Time 4		Total	
	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	Rank	<i>N</i>	
Foreigners killed	15	2	7	3	16	3	18	3	56	
Human rights	8	5	8	2	21	2	32	2	69	
Accidents	1	8	0	9	10	4	48	1	59	
Terror	11	3.5	6	4	7	5	5	6	29	
Corruption	20	1	16	1	22	1	9	4	67	
Egyptian Parliament	2	6.5	1	7	3	6	0	9	6	
Financial crisis	11	3.5	1	7	0	8.5	1	8	13	
Foreign policy	0	9	1	7	1	7	8	5	10	
Egyptian History	2	6.5	5	5	0	8.5	3	7	10	
Total	70		45		80		124		319	

#### **Results of Intermedia Agenda Setting**

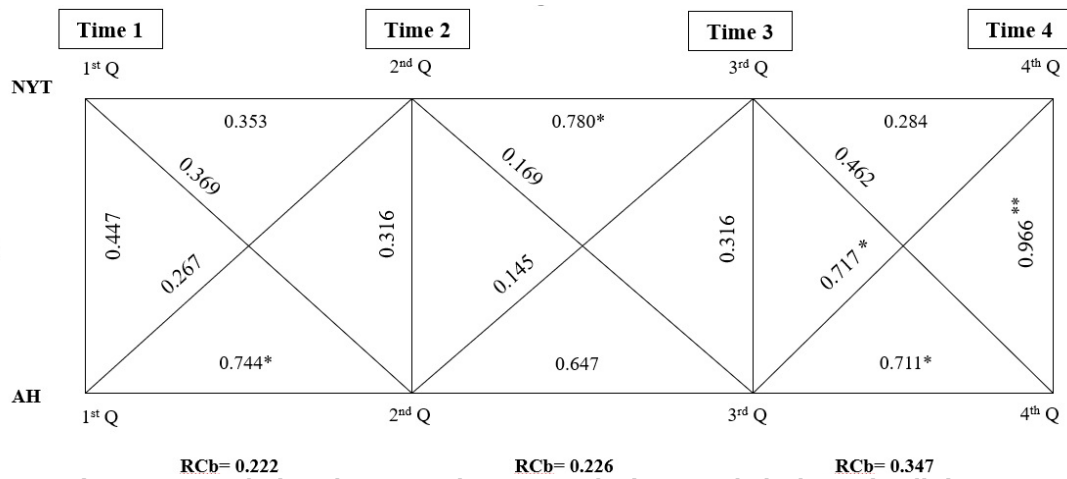
To answer the main question of this study, "Is there any evidence of intermedia agenda-setting among *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *Al-Ahram*?" cross-lagged correlations among the agendas across the four times were conducted (see Table 5). These cross-lagged correlations (e.g., Roberts & McCombs, 1994) were compared with the Rozelle-Campbell (Rozelle & Campbell, 1969) baseline statistic.

**Table 5. Correlations Among Agendas Across Four Times.**

		NYT	NYT	NYT	NYT	TG	TG	TG	TG	AH	AH	AH
Spearman's rho		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
NYT	Rho	.353										
Time2	Sig.	.351										
NYT	Rho	.494	.780*									
Time3	Sig.	.177	.013									
NYT	Rho	.264	-.008	.284								
Time4	Sig.	.493	.983	.459								
TG	Rho	.600	.792*	.869**	.432							
Time1	Sig.	.088	.011	.002	.245							
TG	Rho	.400	.915**	.775*	-.034	.780*						
Time2	Sig.	.286	.001	.014	.931	.013						
TG	Rho	.326	.778*	.761*	.573	.821**	.735*					
Time3	Sig.	.392	.014	.017	.107	.007	.024					
TG	Rho	.294	.534	.746*	.606	.686*	.619	.829**				
Time4	Sig.	.443	.139	.021	.084	.041	.076	.006				
AH	Rho	.447	.267	.021	.000	.347	.216	.162	-.305			
Time1	Sig.	.228	.487	.957	1.000	.360	.577	.676	.425			
AH	Rho	.369	.316	.145	.222	.453	.256	.276	-.094	.744*		
Time2	Sig.	.328	.407	.709	.565	.221	.505	.472	.810	.022		
AH	Rho	.301	.169	.316	.717*	.477	-.004	.494	.186	.481	.647	
Time3	Sig.	.431	.664	.407	.030	.194	.991	.177	.632	.190	.060	
AH	Rho	.338	.210	.462	.966**	.563	.185	.746*	.740*	.017	.237	.711*
Time4	Sig.	.374	.587	.210	.000	.114	.634	.021	.023	.966	.539	.032

Note. \*Correlation significant at 0.05 level; \*\* correlation significant at 0.01 level.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the reciprocal relations between *The New York Times* and *Al-Ahram* in two times, from Time 1 to Time 2, as both cross-lagged correlations exceed the Rozelle–Campbell (Rozelle & Campbell, 1969) baseline, whereas from Time 3 to Time 4, where again, both cross-lags exceed the Rozelle–Campbell baseline.

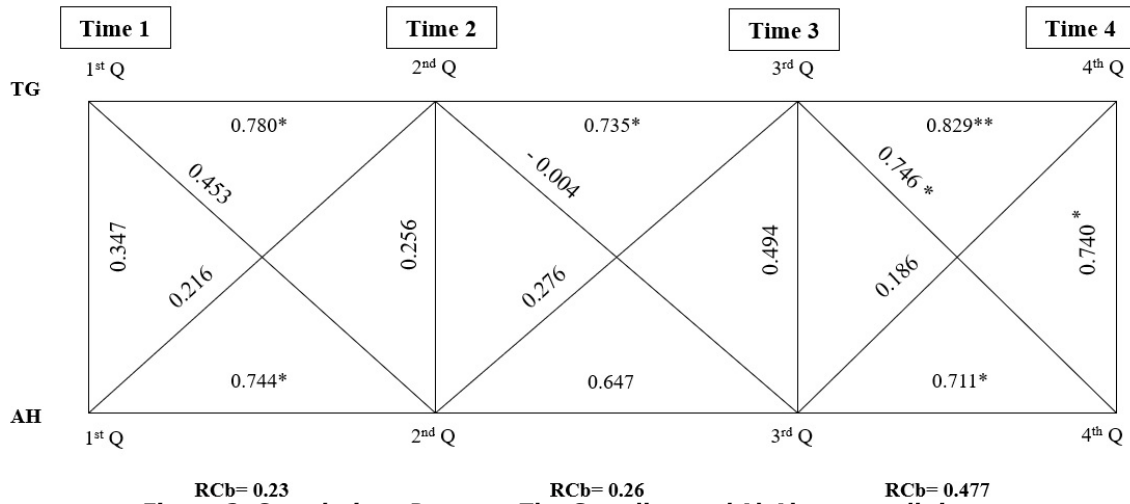


**Figure 1. Correlations between The New York Times and Al-Ahram in all times.**

However, the cross-lag from *Al-Ahram* at Time 3 and *The New York Times* at Time 4 is much stronger. Also, there is a strong relation between the two newspapers at Time 4 (0.966), which may mean the newspapers were affected by the same important events, particularly accidents and foreigners killed. In Time 2 to Time 3, there is no relation between the two agendas, as both relations are less than Rozelle-Campbell baseline.

Therefore, there is no intermedia agenda setting between *Al-Ahram* and *The New York Times*. There are only reciprocal relations, which indicates that the two newspapers can affect each other without any dominance from one over the other.

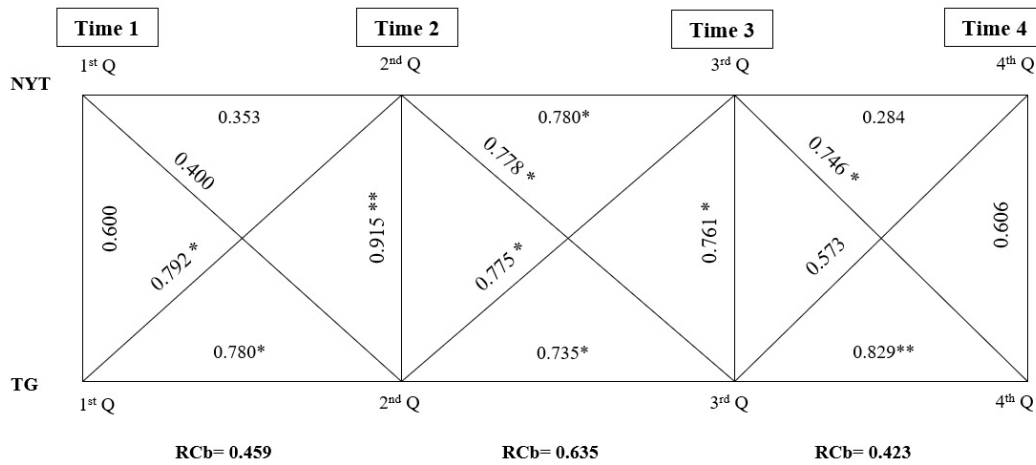
Figure 2 indicates the mixed relations between *Al-Ahram* and *The Guardian*. While *Al-Ahram* influenced *The Guardian* agenda in one time interval, *The Guardian* influenced *Al-Ahram* over two-time intervals. *The Guardian* in Time 1 set the agenda for *Al-Ahram* in Time 2 (0.453) and again from Time 3 to Time 4 (0.746). *Al-Ahram* at Time 2 set *The Guardian's* agenda in Time 3 (0.276).



**Figure 2. Correlations Between The Guardian and Al-Ahram at all times.**

The Guardian set the issue agenda for Al-Ahram in Time 2, whereas Al-Ahram set the agenda for The Guardian in Time 3, and The Guardian again set the agenda for Al-Ahram in Time 4. Within Time 4, The Guardian and Al-Ahram had similar agendas (0.74).

The relationship between The Guardian and the New York Times is shown in Figure 3. The cross-lagged correlations indicate that The Guardian in Time 1 influenced The New York Times in Time 2 (0.792). This correlation exceeds the Rozelle–Campbell baseline. At Time 2 to Time 3, both cross-lagged correlations between The New York Times and The Guardian are greater than the Rozelle–Campbell baseline. This describes a reciprocal relation between the two newspapers. At Time 3 to Time 4, the correlations between The New York Times and The Guardian again exceed the Rozelle–Campbell baseline, which is a reciprocal relation between the two newspapers.



**Figure 3. Correlations Between The New York Times and The Guardian in all times.**



In general, intermedia agenda setting appeared among the three newspapers at four times. *The Guardian* set *Al-Ahram's* agenda at two times, *Al-Ahram* sets *The Guardian's* agenda at one time and *The Guardian* set *The New York Times'* agenda at one time. In four other instances we found reciprocal relations. *The New York Times* did not set the agenda of the other newspapers at any time interval.

Answering the RQ, there is evidence of intermedia agenda setting across all time lags, but with no dominance for any of them. In other words, every website was affected by other websites.

### Discussion and Conclusions

This study poses the following question: Among international media, is there evidence that one news medium can lead the agendas of other websites? To answer this question, content analyses of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Al-Ahram* coverage of major events in Egypt from July 2015 until June 2016 were conducted and analyzed using Spearman correlations, cross-lagged correlations, and Rozelle-Campbell baseline. The results showed that no agenda can lead other agendas all the time, and this finding aligns with many studies (e.g., Ku et al., 2003; Lee, Lee, & Lancendorfer, 2005; Vargo & Guo, 2017; Wallesten, 2007) that there are interactions and reciprocal relations among all agendas without any long-term dominance of one of them across time lags.

Of the nine relationships through time, only four reveal evidence of the influence of one news organization on the agenda of another news organization. *The Guardian's* agenda in Time 1 affected both *The New York Times* and *Al-Ahram's* agendas in Time 2. This finding can be attributed to the reason that *The Guardian* gave concern to the death of Regini, the Italian student who was studying at UK University and was found dead in Egypt while applying his study to an Egyptian sample. This raised interest in other foreigners who were killed in Egypt as well as terror and human rights issues in Egypt. On the scale of news value, these events are deviant, negative, threatening, and relevant to elite nations, which means they are newsworthy. *The Guardian* was concerned about these issues in Time 1 and then influenced *The New York Times'* agenda and *Al-Ahram's* agenda in Time 2. In this case, *The New York Times* published worthy news events, but *Al-Ahram*, the Egyptian newspaper, published a denial and tried to represent Egypt differently than what the international media said. In many places, *Al-Ahram* explained what it called the true information about Regini's death or the deaths of other foreigners. In other words, *Al-Ahram* tried to play the role of an advocate for reforming the Egyptian image in the minds of the international audience.

Then, the *Guardian* was affected by *Al-Ahram's* agenda in Time 2–Time 3. Therefore, *Al-Ahram* was affected by *The Guardian's* agenda. It is like they are talking to each other. This finding can be attributed to two reasons; the first is using Egyptian journalists as correspondents for *The Guardian*, which, of course, affects the agenda of both newspapers. The second reason is that *Al-Ahram* usually responds to all the accusations directed against the government or the Egyptian president, as it is the major English newspaper speaking in the name of Egypt to the world outside. Consequently, its agenda was often a response to what was published in international newspapers the previous time.

Central media agendas were expected to lead the peripheral media agenda, according to international news theory, or the peripheral media agenda leading the central media agenda according to

what Guo and Vargo (2020) found in their study that smaller countries may have the potential to determine how their own countries are portrayed by the outside world.

However, the main finding is that no agenda can lead all other agendas all the time or even most of the time. However, in agreement with international news flow theory, almost all the stories about Egypt in both newspapers were negative news, as Egypt is a peripheral country for both the U.S. and the UK media.

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