Which Civil Society?
The Role of Traditional Media in Shaping the Politics of NGOs in Egypt
Nermeen Kassem
RESEARCH REPORT

WHICH CIVIL SOCIETY?
THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN SHAPING THE POLITICS OF NGOS IN EGYPT

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This study focuses on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other formal, organized associations as constituting elements of civil society. It mainly explores the role of traditional, state-run media as tools for both; promoting policy, and providing feedback about NGO-related policies. For the purpose of this study, the social construction and policy design theory is employed. The main proposition tested is 'the target population proposition'. In order to answer the questions of the study, content analysis of Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs in Egypt, and thematic framing analysis of state-run news media articles were employed. The research delineates that policy tools of the law impose significant burdens on, and grant sub-rosa benefits to NGOs that vary according to their social construction and level of power. State-run media variously frame policy rationales of Law 70 of 2017. This distinction in policy rationales draws the line between developmental NGOs and other advocacy organizations whose goals are perceived as sources of threat to the sovereignty, political independence, and national interests of the state. The study presumes that state-run media would function as a mental heuristic that filters information in a biased manner in order to promote the new law. It was found that NGOs are dichotomously portrayed as either imposing threat to the nation-state, or creating opportunity for development as valenced frames of policy rationale were obtained by the press.

Acknowledgment

This publication is part of a series of papers produced under the title “Breaking the Mold: Arab Civil Society Actors and their Quest to Influence Policy-making” within a project coordinated by the “Civil Society Actors and Policy-making in the Arab World” program at IFI. This project was funded by a grant from the Open Society Foundations.
INTRODUCTION

Civil society organizations are the product, as well as components, of civil society. They are supposed to support functioning democracy, or contribute to transition towards democratic form of governance in developing and transitional nations. It has been argued that civil society is “not an entity which lends itself to being an object of policy [and that] any attempt to deliberately ‘build’ a civil society is falsely conceived” (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 4). However, designing related policies – that target specific population – could shape civil society (or its components) being conceived as a social construction. As a concept, civil society is assumed to function as a framework for discussions that involve manifold issues of the changing nature of the state, the nation-state’s position within a changing world system, changes in domestic social forces and the forms they take, and the interconnectedness of relations among actors on these three levels (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 5). In Egypt, NGOs have played an important role in development and political processes over the last three decades. Some have taken this role further and assumed that civil society “play an important role in compensating for the failure and incapacity of the state.”

After thirty years of Emergency Law in force, an intermittent violent struggle between State forces and militant Islamic groups, which resulted in thousands of arrests and casualties and further tightening of power, it could be argued that Egypt is going through an ambiguous phase in its quest for democratization. “In this complex situation, the work and affiliation of NGOs, and their interaction with each other and in relation to the State are constantly being reshaped” (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 5). This is a specific case in which a changing context of policy-making and politics may result in challenges to the aspired transformation towards democracy rather than supporting it. In fact, repressing independent NGOs could be “offensive against democratization”. In Gersham and Allen’s words (2004, p. 38):

“The regimes of the broader Middle East have almost perfected [the model of maintaining a more ambiguous position by] softening the harsh reality of authoritarian rule by permitting degree of political space for relatively tame or managed NGOs while consistently undermining or harassing genuinely independent or assertive groups. In Egypt, for instance, NGOs must carefully gauge how much democratic advocacy they can afford to engage in at any given time”.

In the 1990s an estimated number of 28,000 NGOs operated in Egypt (Weiss & Wurzel, 1998). These NGOs were registered with, and regulated by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and operate under Law 32 of 1964. According to this law, all NGOs are divided into two categories: Gamiyat Re’aya (welfare organizations) and Gamiyat Tanmiya (development organizations - known as community development associations, CDAs). CDAs are semi-governmental organizations which are often described as appendages of the state bureaucracy. They are highly dependent on MOSA for funding and staffing. Advocacy Groups are groups that lobby to influence public policies instead of only providing services directly. They include organizations involved in human rights, women’s rights, and the environment. These organizations are usually staffed by professionals and activists and depend heavily, if not exclusively on foreign funding. Due to the political nature of their activities, many advocacy groups – especially those working in the fields of human rights, legal services and ‘democratization’ – find themselves involved in confrontations with the state and are constantly harassed.

It is noteworthy, however, that NGO classification is rather problematic. NGO activities are neither heterogeneous, nor static given that both donor funding priorities and local needs are ever-changing. NGO activities may in some cases fall under more than one activity. It is obvious that it is advocacy groups that can mainly be juxtaposed against the other activities. In fact, according to figures provided by MOSA, approximately 84.1% of registered NGOs work in areas of social aid, local community development and cultural, scientific and religious services (Ibrahim, Lachant & Nahas, 2003, p. 13).

Laws that regulate civil society have become progressively more restrictive since the 1990’s. For example, Law on Associations and Community Foundations (Law 84 of 2002) and the Implementing Regulation for Law 84 of 2002 (Ministry of Social Affairs [Now Ministry of Social Solidarity and Justice] Decree 178 of 2002). The Penal Code was amended on September 21, 2014 to increase the penalty of receiving foreign funding with the intention of harming the national interest to life imprisonment or execution. This has intimidated the organizations and caused a complete disruption of their work as they remain at risk all the time®. As the International Center for Not-for

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2 http://humanrights-monitor.org/Posts/ViewLocale/3107#.WxzgjeuGPIU
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- Profit Law (ICNL) notes, states with restrictive laws on NGOs tend to exhibit one or more of the following characteristics (Gershman and Allen, 2004, p. 39):
  ▶ A “closed” or command economy;
  ▶ government by leaders with autocratic tendencies;
  ▶ the belief that political dissent — whether internal or within neighboring country — is a threat to the current regime or incumbent party;
  ▶ concerns about religious fundamentalism or, more specifically, jihadist Islam;
  ▶ a contagion or copycat effect of similar legislation or practices introduced across neighboring regimes;
  ▶ a record of human rights abuse;
  ▶ a concern about alien or foreign influences.

Nevertheless, Egypt remained home to a relatively large and vibrant civil society sector. However, recent developments in the legal framework of NGOs has introduced civil society to a whole new phase in its development. The latest report from the ICNL about Civic Freedom Monitor in Egypt states: “President Sisi approved an extremely restrictive new law to govern civil society organizations (CSOs). Law 70 of 2017 . . . is one of the most draconian civil society laws adopted in the MENA region if not worldwide.” The latest world report from Human Rights Watch about ‘Egypt Events of 2016’ added that “parliament swiftly approved [the] new law regulating NGOs after no public debate or input from civil society.”

Following the development of the legal regulation of civil society organizations in Egypt over the last four decades suggests, on the one hand, that the government — using state-run/owned media as one of its arms — negatively perceives and constructs NGOs, especially human rights organizations. These organizations are expected to be the target of the new law on NGOs, as they are often considered as a threat to the security of the State. The media in Egypt are strictly regulated by a combination of structural arrangements, whereby the government monopolizes the press and broadcasting and legal controls prevent journalists from reporting freely on sensitive domestic issues or deviating from official foreign policy when reporting on international affairs. The efforts of the government to suppress dissent and shutter critical news sources have produced a media environment in which most public and private outlets are firmly supportive of the regime. This has been arguably attributed to the government’s “fear [of] the negative impact of watchdog journalism and untethered opposition on their own positions of power” (Dunn, 2011, p. 15).

The Egyptian press is divided along ownership lines with the government owning stock in the three leading daily newspapers: Al-Ahram (The Pyramids), Al-Akhbar (The News) and Al-Gumhuriya (The Republic), often described as “semi-official.” Their editors in chief are government appointees and they generally follow the government line, although criticizing government policies occasionally. Accordingly, there is a need to understand the nature of the role played by state-run media in the process of designing and passing the law.

On the other hand, the growing restrictions that have been enforced on NGOs by the consecutive laws imply that NGOs’ practices that are expected to inform future policy and politics fail to feed forward for public policies that could meet the purposes of solving public problems, supporting democratic institutions, or producing greater equality of citizenship. It is suggested then that ‘community development associations’ and ‘advocacy groups’ represent distinct types of civil society organizations, and that the law would treat these organizations differently in terms of what each group gets, when and how. Hence, inferences about the social construction of each type, their reaction to the law and pro-action for new policies could be made.

Based on the above, this study aims to answer the question: how state-run media frame civil society, and whether — and how — these media frames reinforce policy tools and rationales. It highlights media representations of NGOs based on the extent of their political power and social construction status (positive/negative) on the deserving and undeserving axis. The role that alternative media may play in feeding forward for, and informing new policies and politics is the focus of a subsequent, future research.

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3 http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/egypt.html
4 http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/egypt.html
5 https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/egypt
7 Ibid.
**MEDIA AND THE POLITICS OF ‘UN-CIVIL SOCIETY’ IN EGYPT**

Egyptian civil society has evolved alongside government restrictions which have become stricter over time. Civil society in Egypt has passed through four distinct phases during which the government has developed various legal methods to control and affect the size and scale of its reach into civil society and its control over the activity of NGOs. Each of these four phases has had its own set of codes and regulations. On the one hand, prospect for Egypt’s developing civil society has been envisaged as one of a “protracted crisis” (Al-Sayyed, 1993). This foresight seems to have been validated to this day. The legal frameworks governing civil society have constantly been described as ‘draconian’ (Rahman, 2002). On the other hand, the media is expected to play a significant role in disseminating information that might support (or hinder) the development of civil society. This section commences by discussing the first three phases of the legal framework of civil society organizations in Egypt. It then highlights the media’s role in the development of civil society.

The first phase of civil society development, which took place up until World War II, has witnessed the rise of new classes, namely a working class and a professional middle class, with which came the right of association for professional groups they formed. The first group to acquire such a right was the political elite, mostly lawyers and businessmen. Egypt’s 1923 constitution, perceived as liberal, provided a legal but shaky framework for political life under the monarchy. However, the right to establish trade unions was not recognized until the 1940s, three decades after the first professional association of Egyptians, the Bar Association, came into being (Rahman, 2002, p. 242). These associations comprised the mainstay of civil society and were mostly private, philanthropic organizations. As these organizations were under the auspices of royal family members, the government did not get involved with regulations (McGann, 2007).

The second phase of civil society development began under the rule of President Nasser. The government and its role in society as a whole shifted. The state became authoritarian, and as such, began to pursue policies aimed at societal control. During this phase, the Civic Association Code, Law 32/1964, gave the government great powers over civil society, including the power to reject the formation of organizations and to consolidate or dissolve groups at its discretion. The Egyptian society has been greatly influenced by the Emergency Law, which was implemented in 1967 during the Arab-Israeli War. The law dramatically expanded police powers, suspended constitutional rights, and legalized censorship. The law contributed to NGO ‘pushback’ as it gave the government, then, the legal right to act in any manner which it believes is needed for its ‘national security (McGann, 2007).

The third phase of Egyptian civil society development began in the 1980s with the emergence of a new role for civil society: that is “participant in the processes of development and democratic evolution” (Agati, 2007). In this period, the government has increasingly focused on economic development, which has allowed for the implementation of more liberal, market-oriented economic reform. Different sources indicate that the number of associations expanded considerably in the mid-1970s, but have stagnated since the mid-1980s. The biggest increase in the number of such associations was registered during the period 1976 to 1981, rising from 7,593 to 10,731 (41%). The onset of both political and economic liberalization encouraged various social groups to set up their own organizations. Nevertheless, authorities have viewed such expansion as ‘politically risky’ (Al-Sayyed, 1993).

In 1999, the Egyptian government began to entertain the idea of a law that pertained specifically to NGOs. The draft of the law that was to regulate NGOs, Law No.153, was crafted by the government without the direct consultation of civil society and was sent to parliament for approval. It was approved, but it was criticized as unconstitutional and was repealed by the Supreme Constitutional Court in 2000 for procedural reasons. Though repealed, this law laid the groundwork for the law which was to come (Agati, 2007). From 2002 until 2017, civil society in Egypt was governed by the provisions of the Law on Associations and Community Foundations (Law 84 of 2002). Law 84/2002 was quickly and quietly passed, again with no consultation from the NGOs it would come to affect. The law was very similar in content to Law 153 and would be used “as a tool for the government elite to control CSOs” (Agati, 2007). The law is very broad in scope and allows the government to control almost every level of NGO operation (McGann, 2007).

Despite the highly restrictive nature of NGO laws, the civil society sector expanded and was relatively large and vibrant when the 2011 Revolution began. In effect, the restrictive legal framework in Egypt did not serve...
to ban civil society outright but rather gave enormous discretionary powers to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and other government agencies. In practice, this authority was brought to bear against organizations and individuals that crossed the government’s ‘red lines’ in pushing for social reform and political liberalization.

The fourth and current phase of Egyptian civil society development: Regardless of having reservations concerning 23 out of 89 articles, almost a third of the new NGOs law, the State Council, a judicial body that reviews legislation, approved a draft law paving the way for parliament to send it immediately to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi who signed the draft into Law on May 29, 2017. It has been argued that the new law aims to “erase civil society” and is regarded as part of a “wider crackdown on human rights groups.”

The media is expected to play different roles in democratic and autocratic societies, but in both the relationship between NGOs and the media is always unequal. It has been argued that civil society organizations (CSOs) suffer from “asymmetrical dependency” (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993, p. 125)—CSOs need media but media do not necessarily need to cover CSOs to fulfill their mission of disseminating information. For example, NGOs change and reframe their message and mission to be more palatable for media audiences in order to gain media support for their causes. Further, under autocratic regimes specifically, opposition organizations and independent media must navigate enhanced government scrutiny in order to spread their messages (Rogerson & Heiss, 2014b). Reasons for asymmetry are two-fold; one has to do with civil society organizations as sources of news, and the other stems from media organizations and whether they are independent or state-run outlets. News organizations embrace certain news values by which they decide what is worth covering. It has been found, for example, that organizations involved in violent actions learn to exploit the media’s desire for sensationalism and the coverage of disruptive actions. Hence, such organizations are able to showcase their actions to global audiences, disseminate their messages to interested parties, and gain recognition and legitimacy (Nacos, 2016). Drawing the media’s attention does not seem to be an easy job for CSOs though. Human rights causes that are adopted by the global advocacy community are not always those with the most compelling normative claims. Rather, “tacitly and at times openly, needy groups vie with one another for the world’s sympathy, elevating themselves above their competitors and differentiating themselves from similar causes” (Bob, 2005).

News values and editorial agendas could be another source of asymmetry. These values and agendas vary between state-owned/run (Al-Ahram English) and independent (Daily News Egypt and Egypt Independent) media outlets. Comparing state-owned and independent Egyptian English-language media publications, it was found that advocacy NGOs are used as sources sparingly in comparison to overall journalistic output. State-run media tends to be more superficial in its use of NGOs as sources while independent media have closer connections to advocacy NGOs and are more likely to identify specific individuals and use direct quotes and paraphrases. Unexpectedly, it was found that Al-Ahram uses NGO sources more than independent publication when reporting on police torture, which does not seem to be in line with its state-sponsored editorial position (Rogerson & Heiss, 2014b). This is likely because Al-Ahram ran a special electoral portal during the parliamentary and presidential elections to provide information about candidates (Rogerson & Heiss, 2014a).

The Internet is a form of media that produces, consolidates and shares information with the “masses.” It has been argued that the Internet’s growth as a news source serves as a challenge to traditional media, since many of the previous constraints and controls by corporations or the government are more difficult to apply online (Sreberny and Khiabany, 2010). Gance et al. (2000) argue that the Internet provides a space for those who have typically been silenced by the military or government controlled media to speak up. Schuler and Day (2004) discuss how the Internet can expand the public sphere to allow for democratization on a larger scale. It could be inferred, then, that both independent media outlets and non-governmental organizations seek to spread distinct messages. Further, it has been argued that activists utilizing social media apparatuses tend to denounce joining parties, preferring instead to form and join movements with a mission similar to NGOs such as eradicating illiteracy, poverty and housing problems. This group of activists forms what is referred to as ‘independent political movements’, illustrated by focusing on independent media (Sharbatly, 2014, p. 20).

However, using the Internet technology to disseminate such distinct messages and to advocate for causes does not seem to balance the state-run media agenda or to serve as the panacea for civil society problems. As Sharbatly (2014) put it: 8

“One problem of using social media in political deliberation concerning Egypt is the lack of sustainability in online campaigns which should ideally convert into offline collective action... a sustainable civil society and a truly diverse public sphere rests on more sustainable, offline action, which can indeed bring about significant changes in the Egyptian political sphere.” (p. 3)

This study attempts to understand civil society organizations as constructed by the recently approved NGOs Law. It seeks to explore the burdens—as well as the opportunities—that are structured by the new NGOs Law. It also analyzes traditional, state-run media performance to explore what frames have been used to reinforce the shaping of target populations (NGOs) by the new law as social constructions with certain attributes.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH GOALS**

**Social Construction of Target Populations**
Schneider and Ingram’s theory of social construction and policy design informs the design and application of the current study. This theory was developed to better understand why public policies sometimes fail to meet their purposes of solving public problems, supporting democratic institutions, or producing greater equality of citizenship (Ingram et al., 2007, p. 93). It focuses on the socially constructed values applied to target populations and knowledge, and the consequent impact these values have on people and democracy. A distinct facet of this theory is that it explicitly embraces a normative dimension (Ingram et al., 2007). It seeks to explain “… why some groups are advantaged more than others independently of traditional notions of political power and how policy designs can reinforce or alter such advantages” (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 334). In a sense, the theory is a direct response to the questions of who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950)? Central to the theory is the assertion that in order to address these classic questions, we must also understand why some groups get benefits and others get burdens. (Pierce, et al., 2014, p. 3)

Schneider and Ingram include social construction within their approach to understand the policy process. Their brand of social construction relies on a variant of bounded relativity where meaning varies by context but does so in a systematic and generalizable fashion. In specifying the generalizable constructs of their theory, Schneider and Ingram (1993, 1997) seek to illuminate how policy designs shape the social construction of a policy’s targeted population, the role of power in this relationship, and how policy design “feeds forward” to shape politics and democracy. (Pierce, et al., 2014, p. 2)

The theory is founded upon eight assumptions. These eight assumptions can be divided into three categories (Pierce, et al., 2014, p. 3): (1) the model of the individual, (2) power, and (3) the political environment. Together, the assumptions belonging to these three categories interact to inform two core propositions within the theory: First, the target population proposition, or the recipients of policy benefits and/or burdens, and second, the feed-forward proposition. In linking this conceptualization of target populations to the second core proposition of
the theory, Schneider and Ingram emphasize that the policy treatment of target groups based on their social construction and power is not just relevant at a given point in time. Rather, the way target populations are treated through policies has “feed-forward” effects (p. 4).

Assumptions relating to the three categories of the theory are summarized in Table 1. The conceptual framework as shown in the table leaves room for assuming and exploring the potential role of media in the social construction and policy design process. Table 1 delineates how these media-related assumptions relate to the three trajectories mentioned above; social construction of a policy’s targeted population, the role of power, and feeding forward to shape politics.

**Target Population Proposition**

“Policy designs structure opportunities and send varying messages to differently constructed target groups about how government behaves and how they are likely to be treated by government. . . . The allocation of benefits and burdens to target groups in public policy depends upon their extent of political power and their positive or negative social construction on the deserving and undeserving axis.” (Ingram et al., 2007, pp. 98, 101)

Figure 1 summarizes the classification of target population as indicated in this proposition. On the social construction dimension, individuals are perceived as being on a continuum of undeserving to deserving. Similarly, on the power dimension, individuals are viewed on a continuum of powerful to lacking power. According to this classification, the *advantaged* are expected to receive a disproportionate share of benefits and few burdens. *Contenders* are expected to receive sub-rosa benefits and few burdens that are highly visible but easily undermined. The *dependents* are expected to receive rhetorical and underfunded benefits and few but often hidden burdens. Finally, *deviants* are expected to receive limited to no benefits and a disproportionate share of burdens (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

**Feed-Forward Proposition**

“The treatment of target groups through policy design has enduring effects on the political orientation and participation patterns of target populations.” (Ingram et al., 2007, p. 98)

Schneider and Ingram's treatment of policy design delineates this proposition more clearly. They define policy design as the content of public policy as found in the text of policies, the practices through which policies are conveyed, and the subsequent consequences associated with those practices (Schneider & Ingram, 1997).

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9 Exploring the feed-forward proposition falls outside the scope of the current study.
## TABLE 1. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND POLICY DESIGN, AND RELATED ASSUMPTIONS OF THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE MEDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions of the Theory of Social Construction and Policy Design</th>
<th>Assumptions of the Potential Role of the Media</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model of the Individual</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Actors cannot process all of the information relevant to make a decision, and therefore rely on mental heuristics to decide what information to retain.</td>
<td>1. Actors may depend on media sources to serve, along with other opinion leaders, as mental heuristics who help them make a decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mental heuristics filter information in a biased manner, thereby resulting in a tendency for individuals to confirm new information that is consistent with preexisting beliefs and reject information that is not.</td>
<td>2. Impartiality of media sources is questionable. Media, especially state-run media, may serve as mouthpieces to the government and, hence, influence actors' perceptions in a way that confirms new information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People use social constructions in a subjective manner that is evaluative.</td>
<td>3. Media sources may contribute to <em>shaping</em> people's perceptions about social constructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social reality is boundedly relative where individuals perceive generalizable patterns of social constructions within objective conditions.</td>
<td>4. This may influence people's perceptions about social reality that is related to the frames that media promote in order to shape (or reinforce the shape of) social constructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Power is not equally distributed among individuals within a political environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Policy creates future politics that feeds forward to create new policy and politics.</td>
<td>6. Actors, especially those who are burdened by a policy, are expected to utilize alternative media in order to influence future politics and to feed forward to create, or <em>re-shape</em>, new policy and politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Policies send messages to citizens that affect their orientations and participation patterns.</td>
<td>7. Actors' perceptions about media role may relate to different forms of participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Policies are created in an environment of political uncertainty.</td>
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</table>
Based on the above, the current study starts by setting the ground for discussing the social construction and amount of power of civil society organizations by first analyzing the policy tools of law 70 of 2017. This discussion would inform the analysis of state-run media frames of the new law, how the ambiguous political environment may influence, and be influenced by, the framing of the policy rationale that state-run media adopt, and how these frames might influence the social construction and power of NGOs.

The cyclical dynamic among policy design, target populations, and feed-forward effects (see Figure 1) suggest two possible lines of investigation; either policy design is a function of social construction and power creating a proposition of target populations, or social construction and power is a function of policy design creating a proposition of feed-forward impacts. An analytical pursuit of either of the theory’s core propositions depends if an observer is trying to explain the creation of a policy design that targets a population, or the feed-forward impacts of a policy design (Pierce, et al., 2014, p. 6).
The social construction of target populations is an important, albeit overlooked, political phenomenon. The theory contends that social constructions influence the policy agenda and the selection of policy tools, as well as the rationales that legitimize policy choices. Particularly important to the current study, “constructions become embedded in policy as messages that are absorbed by citizens and affect their orientations and participation” (emphasis added). The theory is important because it helps explain why some groups are advantaged more than others independently of traditional notions of political power and how policy designs reinforce or alter such advantages. An understanding of social constructions of target populations augments conventional hypotheses about the dynamics of policy change, the determination of beneficiaries and losers, the reasons for differing levels and types of participation among target groups, and the role of policy in democracy (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 334).

There is considerable interest in literature on policy design in why some designs are chosen, rather than others, and what differences these choices make in policy impacts on target populations (Dryzek 1990; Ingram and Schneider 1991; Linder and Peters 1985; Lipsky and Smith 1989; Salamon and Lun 1989; Schneider and Ingram 1990a; Smith and Stone 1988). The social construction theory contends that some elements of design (especially the policy tools and the policy rationales) will differ depending on the social construction and political power of the target population.
Policy tools refer to the aspects of policy intended to motivate the target populations to comply with policy or to utilize policy opportunities (Schneider and Ingram 1990b). Rationales are important elements of policy design because they serve to legitimize policy goals, the choice of target populations, and policy tools. Rationales justify the agenda, policy goals, selection of target populations, and the tools chosen. The kinds of rationales differ depending upon the social construction of the target population and can be used either to perpetuate or to change social constructions (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The agenda, tools, and rationales of policy communicate messages to target populations that inform them of their status as citizens and how they and people like themselves are likely to be treated by government. Such information becomes internalized into a conception of the meaning of citizenship that influences their orientations toward government and their participation. Citizens encounter and internalize the messages not only through observation of politics and media coverage but also through their direct, personal experiences with public policy.

Much of the recent research in political communication deals with one or more of the following three questions (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 55, 56): (1) how do the news media “set the frame in which citizens discuss public events” (Tuchman, 1978, p. ix) and consequently “narrow the available political alternatives” (p. 156)? (2) How do politicians and advocacy groups actively “court” the media to polish their images and frame debates over public policies (see Hertsgaard, 1988; Pertschuk & Schaeztel, 1989)? (3) How do audiences process news information actively and construct meanings using their preexisting cognitive representations (e.g., Graber, 1988; Livingstone, 1990)? One nagging problem for research in these areas has been how to convincingly link news texts to both production and consumption processes (McLeod, Kosicki, & Pan, 1991; Neuman, 1989). This study presents a framing analysis approach to this problem. The basic idea is to view news texts as a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts.

The role of media in politics is one of many variables that have been considered to be significant political phenomena by contemporary political scientists. The actual social constructions of target groups, as well as how widely shared the constructions are, are matters for empirical analysis. Social constructions of target populations are measurable, empirical, phenomena. Data can be generated by the study of texts, such as legislative histories, statutes, guidelines, speeches, media coverage, and analysis of the symbols contained therein. Social constructions also can be derived from interviews or surveys of policy-makers, media representatives, members of the general public, and persons within the target group itself (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335).

Framing and Media Frames

Media frames are defined as patterns of representation and interpretation of symbols and themes that organize the discourse. They enable reporters to sort and pack the information effectively for their audience (Gitlin 1980). Frame Analysis maintains that we all actively classify, organize, and interpret our life experiences to make sense of them. The “schemata of interpretation,” which are labeled “frames,” enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) occurrences or information. Gitlin (1980) uses the same conception of framing in his study of the relations between the news media and the Student New Left movement. He defines media frames as “persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (p. 7). He links the concept directly to the production of news discourse by saying that frames “enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely [and to] package the information for efficient relay to their audiences” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). To Gamson, a frame is a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143) to events related to an issue. It is the core of a larger unit of public discourse, called a “package,” that also contains various policy positions that may be derived from the frame as well as a set of “symbolic devices” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143) that signify the presence of frames and policy positions. There are five such devices that signify the uses of frames: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Entman (1993) defines framing in the media as a process through which some aspects of reality are chosen and become more significant in the text. He identifies four factors in this process: the problem, the causes of the problem, moral judgment, and a solution. A sentence might have all four or none. The framing, as Entman sees it, has four stops: the reporter, the text, the audience, and the society. Although it is conceivable that journalists can use a multitude of ways to frame the news, the literature seems to point to at least four ways in which news is commonly framed: (a) conflict frame; (b) human interest frame; (c) responsibility frame, and (d) economic consequence frame (Valkenburg et al.,
For Reese (2007), frames are socially shared organizing principles that meaningfully structure the social world. They are a part of culture, they guide how the elite construct information, they affect journalists’ information selection, they are manifest in media texts, and they influence cognitions and attitudes of audience members.

The key idea is that strategic actors, journalists, and audiences do not simply reflect or transport the political and social realities. In contrast, politics, issues, and events are subject to different patterns of selections and interpretations. These interpretations of issues are negotiated, contested, and modified over time. In light of this, frames are selective views on issues — views that construct reality in a certain way leading to different evaluations and recommendations (Matthes, 2012, p. 251). Entman (1993) summarized these functions of frames in his seminal definition:

“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (p. 52)

Snow and Benford (1992) argued, successful frames must diagnose a problem, prognosticate solutions and tactics, and motivate the movement to action. These strategic frames are selected and modified by journalists who bring in their own frames as well. Tuchman (1976) described journalistic frames as useful tools that journalists apply to cope with the information tide. Eventually, journalistic frames are manifest in news media content; as a result, different news outlets frame political issues in quite different ways (e.g., Kolmer & Semetko, 2009; Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

“The media’s function in society can be defined on a scale. On one end, it is perceived as a tool to promote social change and to monitor the government, and on the other end, as an agent that reinforces what are considered the accepted norms. By the choice the media makes, it is establishing, in a way, what is accepted and what is external to the popular norms. As a part of society, the media is also influenced by the power hierarchy and by the accepted norms. The effects are circular: The media helps reinforce the norms, and at the same time it is influenced by them and by the power distribution in society. Conclusively, weak groups might not have access to the media and thus gain no coverage by it.” (Vraneski & Richter, 2002, p. 6)

That is particularly important, when bearing in mind that the media’s coverage can have an influence on legitimization processes, and on political and public agendas.

Based on selection processes and working routines, journalists provide an overall context for an issue within public debate through the classification of information (e.g., Price et al., 1997; Tewksbury et al., 2000). This is then characterized as the ‘process by which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience’ (Nelson et al., 1997a: 221). Thus, a news frame is more than just an isolated argument or position on a topic – it represents a coherent construction of an issue (Nelson and Kinder, 1996; Pan and Kosicki, 1993).

‘Risk’ and ‘Opportunity’ Frames and the Social Construction of Public Support

Scholars from multiple disciplines employ the term “framing effect” to refer to phenomena (Druckman 2001b: 226-231). One of the better known usages is where an effect occurs when different, but logically equivalent, phrases cause individuals to alter their preferences (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). This typically involves casting the same information in either a positive or negative light (Levin et al. 1998: 150). Previous studies have repeatedly shown that news frames can affect the evaluative direction of thoughts (e.g. Price et al., 1997; Valkenburg et al., 1999), interpretations (e.g., Rhee, 1997) or perceptions of an issue (e.g., Nelson et al., 1997b; Nelson and Kinder, 1996). With regard to their effect on public opinion, news frames thus have to be seen as a powerful tool in constructing meaning in public debate and in shaping understanding of political issues.

Within this study’s context, I define ‘risk’ as the expectation of a future disadvantageous situation and the perception that an action or process may involve an unpleasant future outcome (see, for example, Rothman and Salovey, 1997). Similarly, framing issues in terms of ‘opportunity’ involves the perception that an action or process may involve a pleasant future outcome and is connected to an expectation of likely future advantages.

The obvious starting point to build a theory of framing effects is Tversky and Kahneman’s (1979) prospect theory. Their theory, however, provides little insight into the processes and conditions under which the effects might occur (Jou et al., 1996: 2, Fong and McCabe 1999: 10927). Prospect theory explains risk attitudes given a particular frame — risk aversion in a gains frame and risk-seeking in a losses frame, as in the disease problem – but it does not clarify why
the frame exerts power over decision-making. Jou et al. (1996: 9) fill this gap by showing that “framing is a form of manipulating the salience or accessibility of different aspects of information” (also see Levin et al., 1987: 52-53). The frame induces individuals to think in terms of losses or gains by making the given domain accessible in their memory, which in turn, drives their risk attitudes. Accessibility involves “passive, unconscious processes that occur automatically and are uncontrolled” (Higgins and King 1981: 74). Levin et al. (1998: 164-166), nonetheless, explain that attribute framing occurs through a similar accessibility process where “the positive labeling of an attribute leads to...favorable associations in memory [and] negative labeling of the same attribute ...evokes unfavorable associations,” and this in turn shapes overall evaluations. For example, in the employment problem, the term “unemployment” makes unfavorable associations relatively more accessible, and this shapes preferences.

The basic idea behind framing effects that by selecting some information and highlighting it to the exclusion of other information, news frames can shape the audience's interpretations of issues, candidates, and events (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009). Druckman (2001a) argued that an “[emphasis] framing effect is said to occur when, in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions” (p. 1042). Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997a) demonstrated that issue frames tell people how to weigh the often conflicting considerations that we face on a daily basis. There is ample evidence that news frames can decrease or increase the salience of an issue or consideration when citizens form their political opinions (e.g., de Vreese, 2004; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011; Matthes, 2008).

News media can hence portray the same topic in very different ways by emphasizing certain aspects of an issue at the expense of others. Previous research have examined the effects of framing on public support in terms of ‘risk’ and ‘opportunity.’ For example, in their study of the effects of framing on a common EU foreign and security policy (CFSP) De Vreese and Kandyla (2009) found that participants in the ‘risk’ frame condition showed significantly lower levels of support compared to participants in the ‘opportunity’ condition. Those in the ‘risk for the nation-state’ condition were significantly less supportive of CFSP than those in the ‘risk for the EU’ condition. The framing effect was moderated by fear of globalization so that individuals more afraid of globalization exposed to the ‘risk’ frame condition were significantly more susceptible to ‘risk’ framing than individuals with low fear of globalization. Levin et al. (1998) provided a classification of valence framing effects from a psychological point of view by identifying three distinct fields: (1) attribute framing, (2) goal framing and (3) risky choice framing. In a subsequent study, Levin et al. (2002) were able to confirm framing effects for attribute and for risky choice framing but not for goal framing. Attribute framing refers to the effect of either positive or negative framing of some characteristics of an object or an event on people's evaluations. Goal framing deals with the effect of persuasive messages that frame an action or behavior as having either positive or negative consequences. Kalichman and Coley (1995) found that a ‘loss’ frame in the context of HIV prevention had a clear effect on the likelihood of women to get tested. Schneider et al. (2001) found that low-income women from different ethnic groups were more likely to obtain mammography screenings after being exposed to a ‘loss’ frame compared to a ‘gain’ frame. In their study of the mutual impact between environmental conflicts, their press coverage, and public decision-making, Vraneski and Richter (2002) found that the roles of the media with regard to the framing and reframing of protracted environmental conflicts in Israel presents some kind of balanced influence — both positive with regard to providing coverage to social and environmental justice frames, and negative as related to its influence on the perpetuation and even the strengthening of adversarial patterns within the civil society.

However, framing effects are not necessarily omnipresent. News media are just one source in the formation process of individuals' attitudes and opinions (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). Media effects research has repeatedly provided evidence that people do not respond to the content of media messages in the same way (see Zaller, 1992). Consequently, news frames may not be expected to affect all individuals equally and framing effects research has recently started to pay attention to the influence of individual orientations and attitudes of media users that exist prior to exposure to news frames (De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009). Nevertheless, the role of different concepts as potential moderators is still mixed. The role of political knowledge, for example, in moderating the effects of news frames has been repeatedly examined (Schuck and De Vreese, 2006; Druckman and Nelson, 2003; Nelson et al., 1997). An individual's 'need to evaluate' (Druckman and Nelson, 2003), degree of expertise (Druckman, 2004) and relevant values (Slothuus, 2005) have also been found to moderate framing effects.
There are also a number of frames-related factors that determine if individuals will be influenced by frames or not. For instance, it has been found that only those frames that are continuously on the agenda are likely to exert an impact (i.e., frame repetition, see Matthes, 2008). Furthermore, framing effects tend to be weaker when competing frames are present (see, e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007). Although many media effect studies acknowledge the relative nature and general dependency of observed effects on other factors, the analysis of those variables, however, is lacking more systematic approaches. According to Scheufele (2000), models of framing effects have to pay more attention to the individual orientations and attitudes of media users that exist prior to the exposure to certain news frames. It has been argued that certain conditions could moderate and possibly eliminate a frame’s impact (Druckman, 2004, p. 681). First, by highlighting negative or positive information, the frame leads individuals to subconsciously focus on that information (e.g., lives lost or lives saved, unemployment or employment) and this leads to the given (negative or positive) evaluation/preference. Second, under certain conditions, individuals do not assimilate the accessible information (i.e., do not focus on the negative or positive information) – it is these conditions that will moderate and possibly eliminate a frame’s impact. Third, one moderator lies with the individual. Accessibility research shows that individuals who possess the motivation to think more deliberatively about the problem at hand will be more likely to engage in conscious processing (e.g. Fazio 1990; Thompson et al. 1994, p. 475; Stapel et al. 1998).

Framing effect is not fully independent – it is moderated by political knowledge. Less knowledgeable individuals were generally more affected by the experimental manipulation and more susceptible to risk framing. This result supports earlier findings, which found a relationship between low political information and higher susceptibility to framing effects (e.g. Kinder and Sanders, 1990). It should be noted, however, that this is very likely for all issues in modern democracies because, first, there is usually a struggle over frame definition among political elites and, second, journalists prefer conflict and thus usually follow the journalistic norm of covering both sides. In addition, frames with weak arguments exert weaker effects. Strong frames involve compelling and convincing facts, or they appeal to emotions, such as fears or anger (see Chong & Druckman, 2007). Finally, framing effects depend on the credibility of news sources, prior attitudes, and interpersonal communication among citizens (see Druckman, 2001a; Matthes, 2008). Druckman (2004, p. 81) concludes that “framing effects depend in critical ways on context – as a result, framing effects appear to be neither robust nor particularly pervasive. Elite competition and heterogeneous discussions limit and often eliminate framing effects. Homogenous discussions do the same among experts.”
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Based on the above, the current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the aspects of policy (Law 70 of 2017) that are intended to motivate the target populations to comply with policy or to utilize policy opportunities (policy tools)?

2. What are the aspects of policy (Law 70 of 2017) that are intended to legitimize policy goals, the choice of target populations, and policy tools (policy rationales)?

3. How do state-run media frame the policy tools that are intended to motivate the target populations to comply with policy or to utilize policy opportunities?

4. How do state-run media frame the policy rationales that serve to legitimize policy goals, the choice of target populations, and policy tools?

5. How are the target populations of the new NGOs Law classified according to social construction and power (the benefits and burdens allocated by the new policy)?

6. How do state-run media frame the target populations of the NGOs Law (what messages are embedded in the new law?)

Research Method

The study uses process-tracing, a method which draws on a number of empirical sources to trace the (intervening) independent variables (the NGOs Law) and possible variations on the dependent variable (construction of NGOs, feed-forward practices, related perceptions about, and uses of, media), as well as uncovering and discussing explanations for that possible variance (Hermansen et al., 2017, p.4) to investigate how new NGOs policy was portrayed in the media coverage as either ‘risk’ or ‘opportunity.’ The empirical basis consists of reports and written documents, and state-run media coverage of Law 70 of 2017-related news.

- **Text analysis:** Related documents and reports (i.e., Human Rights Watch, Human Development Report, Human Rights Monitor, and Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies).

- **Thematic analysis:** Framing devices in news discourse may be classified into four categories, representing four structural dimensions of news discourse: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 59). In the current research, thematic structures analysis is employed in order to answer questions about state-run media portrayal of Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs in Egypt. *Al-Ahram* national newspaper is used as a representative of state-run press. It is a state-owned daily and it is the oldest in the Arab world10. It has a large circulation so that its inclusion further contributes to the representation of the national press. This national daily is an opinion-leading quality newspaper within the Egyptian press landscape and it represents a balanced spectrum of political orientation (e.g., Hagen, 1993).

Some news consists of so-called issue stories that focus on one issue or topic at a time and report several events, actions, or statements related to the issue. A story of this kind contains certain hypothesis-testing features: Events are cited, sources are quoted, and propositions are pronounced; all function as logical support for the hypothesis. A theme is presented or implied, and evidence in the forms of journalists’ observations of actions or quotations of a source is presented to support the hypothesis (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 60). The hypothesis-testing features result from the nature of news as a form of knowledge (Park, 1940) and journalism as a knowledge-acquiring discipline using the logical empirical principles of the social sciences (Cans, 1979). A news story may thus be viewed as a set of propositions that form a system of causal or logico-empirical relations. This is called hypothesis-testing (or research finding) aspect of news discourse “thematic structure” (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 61). Causal statements are often made explicitly in a news story through the use of such words as *because, since, or for.* Sometimes, causality is less explicit by the contingent relations among a set of propositions, indicated by phrases such as *if…, then… and not… unless.* Still, many factual reports often make causal representations of a news story implicitly by simply presenting actions in a context in which one may be seen as an antecedent and another as a consequence (van Dijk, 1988). A hypothesis does not have to be the headline or lead sentence. Very often, to appeal to human interest and to increase psychological proximity to the audiences, journalists start a story with a vivid image or a concrete case and gradually lead to a point that logically functions like an empirical generalization.

may consider a thematic structure as consisting of a summary and a main body. The summary is usually represented by the headline, lead, or conclusion. The main body is where evidence supporting a hypothesis is introduced that contains episodes, background information, and quotes. Similarly, one may identify subthemes and their empirical support through episodes, background information, and quotes in a complex news article. A thematic structure of a news story, therefore, is a multilayer hierarchy with a theme being the central core connecting various subthemes as the major nodes that, in turn, are connected to supporting elements.

- **Period of study:** framing analysis was conducted for news articles published between 1 November 2016 and 30 June 2017 (one month before and after the NGOs Law was announced as a draft and ratified).

- **Data collection:** The articles were collected manually using Al-Ahram online archive. Articles from all sections of the newspaper except sports, advertising and supplements were included in the analysis. Only articles were selected which headlines contained at least one out of a list of keywords on a thematic level (e.g., NGO, civil society, human rights and foreign fund). The signifying power of the structural elements of news articles (i.e., headline, lead, episodes, background, and closure) varies in the same descending order. A headline is the most salient cue to activate certain semantically related concepts in readers’ minds; it is thus the most powerful framing device of the syntactical structure (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). Therefore, the current research relies on headlines to sample articles for analysis from the total number of articles that resulted from searching by the keywords. As a result, 84 articles of Al-Ahram fit the requirements for the overall time period and were included in the sample.

### RESULTS

**Policy Tools of Law 70 of 2017 and the Social Construction of NGOs**

Analysis of this legal framework delineates the burdens imposed on NGOs operating in Egypt by Law 70 of 2017. The following section presents a detailed picture of the rising and systematic use of both legal and extralegal policy tools in restraining domestic NGOs.

Common legal measures of governmental-imposed burdens include the following:

**Registration Limitations**

Registration is mandatory for all entities that practice “civil work,” defined in the law as non-profit activities that aim to achieve societal development. Informal (unregistered) associations and foundations are prohibited. Registration is by “notification,” but requires a burdensome submission of extensive documentation, and allows the ministry broad discretion to reject the registration during a 60-day waiting period.

**Funding Restrictions**

The ministry must issue a special letter to a bank affiliated with the Central Bank of Egypt before an organization may open a bank account. Advance approval from the National Agency to Regulate the Work of Foreign NGOs is required for an organization to receive foreign funds or funds from Egyptian individuals abroad. Approval from the Ministry is required thirty days before an organization receives or collects any donations from domestic sources.

- **Foreign Funding:** Law 70 prohibits any association from receiving foreign funds, donations, and grants – whether from outside Egypt or from foreigners inside Egypt – without approval from the National Agency to Regulate the Work of Foreign NGOs (“Agency”). The law requires that associations notify the agency within thirty days of receiving funds in the association’s bank account, after which the Agency has 60 days to approve the notification of pending funds. If it does not approve the funds, or does not respond at all, the association cannot keep or use the funds (Article 24).

- **Domestic Funding:** Law 70 imposes limitations on associations’ access to domestic funding as well. The law provides that associations must obtain prior consent from the Ministry of Social Solidarity before they may fundraise or receive any donations (Article 23). Further, they must notify the Ministry of all cash funds and donations received from inside Egypt.
Law 70 requires that associations obtain advance approval from the Ministry of Social Solidarity before they may “cooperate with, join, affiliate with, or participate with” any foreign organization or entity. (Article 19) Associations may only open branch offices in foreign locations with permission from both the Ministry and the Agency. Egyptian authorities have also issued travel bans to prevent numerous individuals (including association representatives and civil society activists) from traveling outside Egypt to participate in international conferences and meetings. Authorities have prevented representatives of international organizations from entering Egypt as well. This was the case, for instance, with Egypt scholar Michele Dunne, who was turned away at Cairo Airport in December 2014 while trying to attend a foreign affairs conference.

First, Law 70 of 2017 expressly limits the activities that CSOs may engage in. Associations and foreign NGOs are restricted to activities “in the fields of development and social welfare” (not further defined), and the activities must align with the state’s development plan and priorities (Article 14). Numerous activities require prior government permission before CSOs may undertake them, including conducting field research and opinion polls, or concluding an agreement “of any form” with any foreign entity (Article 14(g-h)).

Second, Law 70 also explicitly authorizes the government to interfere in the internal affairs of an association. For example, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and National Agency to Regulate the Work of Foreign NGOs have the legal right to “take the necessary procedures” to rectify any association’s activities or products that are in violation of the law (Article 26). The Minister may appoint acting members of the Board of Directors of an association where there are insufficient members to hold a meeting (Article 40); the Minister may also dissolve the Board of Directors for a variety of reasons, including if the board has not convened a meeting of the General Assembly for two consecutive years or if the association has violated provisions of Law 70 related to fundraising (Article 42).

Third, while Law 70 provides that associations may only be dissolved by judicial decision, it provides vague grounds (rationales) for such decisions, thereby inviting subjective and arbitrary decision-making on dissolution decisions (tools). Vague grounds include if the association:

• “[C]ooperates, joins, subscribes, or affiliates with” a foreign association, authority, organization or other foreign entity without obtaining prior permission from the Agency.
• Threatens the national unity or public order or public morals.

Fourth, Law 70 and other provisions of Egyptian law make harsh sanctions — including imprisonment and steep fines — available for associations’ and their members’ violations of the law. Conducting “civil work” activities as an unregistered association, conducting activities that threaten the national unity, and receiving foreign funds without prior governmental approval are all examples of violations that may be punished with up to five years’ imprisonment and a fine of up to £1 million Egyptian Pounds (approximately $55,500 USD) (Article 87). Certain provisions of the Penal Code, in particular Articles 86bis and 98, also penalize particular activities relating to associations.

Finally, the security apparatus has historically interfered in associations’ activities and operations, and incidents of harassment have increased since the 2011 Revolution. For instance, in December 2011, authorities raided and shut down the offices of six international and Egyptian organizations, and commenced a two-year trial of NGO employees marked by procedural violations (reopened in 2016 as Case No. 173/2011). In December 2013, security authorities raided the offices of the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, and detained and beat six employees. Egyptian officials raided and searched the Egyptian Commissions for Rights and Freedom’s (ECRF) offices in Cairo in October 2016; witnesses said the officials appeared to be part of Egypt’s police apparatus. Security authorities also shut down the El-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture in February 2017, after repeated attempts to shutter the Center and freezing of its assets in 2016.

Such restrictive tools have been assumed to be a manifestation of a counter-trend to the acceptance of democracy promotion, in the early 1990s, as a norm of practice within the international system, especially those that seek to empower civil society; promote free media; and strengthen democratic political parties, institutions, and processes. It has been further argued that “new legal restrictions on — and extralegal
are distributed (according to their headlines) into three subthemes; the main focus of the state press debate was on the ‘utility rationale’ (n = 44) followed by ‘threat rationale’ (n = 28). The least number of analyzed articles were dedicated to discussing the policy tools of law 70 of 2017 (n = 12).

First, NGOs – especially those who advocate for human rights – were repeatedly portrayed as a source of threat to the stability of the state. Negative connotations have been frequently used to frame human rights NGOs as arms of foreign states and back doors for interference in the internal affairs of the national state. The quote attributed to Abdel Hady Al-Qasabi, Head of Parliament’s Social Solidarity, Family and Persons with Disabilities Committee, conspicuously placed in the first paragraph (November 11th, 2016), clearly makes this statement. He described foreign funds as “random,” which highlights the threats those funds might impose on the higher interests of the State, and, correspondingly, implies the need for imposing controls in order to organize NGOs’ receipt of these funds. This point was reinforced very specifically through coupling foreign funds with depicting recipient NGOs as “suspicious organizations,” as described by Alaa Abed, Head of Parliament’s Human Rights Committee (November 10th, 2016). The threat subtheme was more vividly expressed through the report of the “custody of funds of Azza Soliman the Head of the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance” (December 15th, 2016) who was accused of receiving “illegal” foreign funds.

In contrast, state-run media mention NGOs when discussing less socially salient topics, such as elections, and even when discussing potentially salient topics like media and censorship or activism, their reporting tends to be less personal and more explanatory than independent media coverage (Rogerson & Heiss, 2014a).

This threat frame was intermittently linked to the ‘war on terrorism’ and the danger that receiving foreign funds and distributing information about human rights “assumed” violations might impose on the national security. This rationale was, hence, utilized to raise a red flag and pave the way for public ‘acceptance’ of impediments to — democracy assistance have assumed menacing proportions and pose a major new threat to the advance and consolidation of democracy” (Gershman and Allen, 2004, p. 37).

**State-Run Media Framing of Policy Rationale and Social Construction of NGOs**

The current study also examines the issue framing of the recently enacted Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs from a qualitative perspective. It employs thematic structures analysis in order to frame analyze issue stories that focus on civil society in Egypt (see Appendix 1 for sample analysis). Results indicate that state-run media (represented in Al-Ahram newspaper) has been promoting a dichotomous image of civil society organizations. This representation is based on the nature of those organizations and the type of activity they practice in society. The dichotomous social construction theme is very effective in depicting the status of civil society organizations. It portrays the dual proposition towards NGOs by the state. It also implies how this perception might ultimately contribute to shaping audience perception about civil society. This dichotomous framing of NGOs goes in line with the social construction of a target population refers to (1) the recognition of the shared characteristics that distinguish a target population as socially meaningful, and (2) the attribution of specific, valence-oriented values, symbols, and images to the characteristics (Schneider and Ingram, 1993, p. 335).

| TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS ARTICLES BY SUBTHEMES |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **FRAMES**                    | **THREAT**      | **UTILITY**     | **CONTROLS**    |
| n = 84                        | 28 news articles| 44 news articles| 12 news articles|

Within this umbrella frame, several subthemes were derived from the logical relations of the propositions, quotations, sources, and depictions. Additional to being explicitly framed, several subthemes emerged and were employed to support the central ‘dichotomous social construction of NGOs’ theme. Threat and utility rationales were variably indorsed by state media in order to reinforce the dual perception and portrayal of civil society organizations on the one hand, and to justify imposing significant burdens and conferring little benefits on different NGOs and the use of related policy tools on the other.

Table 2 outlines the key frames that are presented in the Al-Ahram sample. A total number of 84 articles were thematically analyzed. These articles Women's Legal Assistance” (December 15th, 2016) who was accused of receiving “illegal” foreign funds.
controls in order to face those fears and lessen related negative sentiments.

Second, a twofold presentation of the utility subtheme was deployed. The aim, on the one hand, is to indicate, and stimulate, collaboration between the State and civil society organizations — especially those operating in the developmental field. NGOs came across as development partners. Collaboration between the State and developmental NGOs was emphasized as a doorway to solving urgent issues and achieving societal gains. For example, the quote attributed to Hanan Al-Rihany, the Head of Education Sector at Misr Al-Kheir Organization, contains a substantive argument asserting that collaboration between government, private and civil sectors is essential for societal development and prosperity.

This rationale is revealed through the use of the words "collaboration," "integration," "government support," "essential partners," "sharing burdens with the State," "voluntary culture," "NGOs as mediators between citizens and the State," "civic diplomacy," and "national role of NGOs" to characterize the aspired relationship between the government and civil society organizations; the depiction of NGOs' effort in the development process as "thankful and productive;" the reporting of joint national projects with official institutes of the State such as the Ministry of Immigration, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education, the Ministry of Investment, and, of course, the Ministry of Social Solidarity which has a direct supervisory role on NGOs under the new law. This frame goes in-line with Gershman and Allen’s analysis (2004, p. 44) of the types of measures most often used to impede democracy assistance. They argue that repressive governments seek to “undermine the NGO sector by establishing ersatz or captive groups, or Government-organized NGOs (GONGOs). Governments use these organizations to appear to be supportive of civil society, to channel funding to preferred causes and away from opposition groups, and to discredit independent NGOs or opposition groups by claiming that government-affiliated organizations are the only “legitimate” civil society.”

On the other hand, ‘utility’ subtheme was used to cast social responsibility of contributing to the developmental process and sustaining the interests of the State on the shoulders of civil society organizations. The ‘utility’ frame was utilized both positively and negatively. For example, Misr Al-Kheir non-governmental organization was depicted as “socially responsible for coming up with untraditional solutions of society problems as one of civil society organizations” (3rd November, 2016). A shaming and blaming approach was also obtained as civil society was held responsible for falling short on supporting vital matters such as “the river Nile-related issues” (March 29, 2017). Most importantly, ‘utility’ frame was created and emphasized by highlighting the vital role of civil society in solving issues that are related to the daily lives of citizens such as education, health and food. This is supposed to set sentimental bonds between the public and civil society organizations, and to pave the way for building collective acceptance of their involvement in developing the society. This finding is in line with previous research that has demonstrated that citizens’ utility perceptions highly predict public support for European integration in general and CFSP in particular (Gabel, 1998a, b; Carruba and Singh, 2004).

Figure 3 summarizes the research main findings.
Less salient in the debate is the *controls* subtheme. It was both explicitly and implicitly presented in *Al-Ahram* newspaper sample articles. Explicit presentation mainly aimed at citing and explaining articles of the NGOs Law to the public. Implicit controls were framed as a necessity either to circumvent threats that are imposed by foreign interference mainly invited by human rights organizations, or to organize and utilize NGOs resources, expertise and efforts as developmental partners of the State.
CONCLUDING REMARKS: STATE-RUN MEDIA FRAMING AND CIVIL SOCIETY TAMING

This research starts with analyzing elements of policy design that are embedded in Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs in Egypt. It has been argued that elements of policy design (especially the policy tools and the policy rationale) will differ depending on the social construction and political power of the target population (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). At a first glance, it seems that various policy tools of Law 70 of 2017 impose all-encompassing burdens on several types of NGOs. A closer look, however, delineates the way these policy tools might distinctively impose burdens on and grant benefits to NGOs that vary according to their social construction and level of power. For example, the law employs different policy tools to deal with receiving funds. While imposing limitations on associations’ access to domestic funding (Article 23), the law prohibits any association from receiving foreign funds, donations, and grants – whether from outside Egypt or from foreigners inside Egypt – without approval from the National Agency to Regulate the Work of Foreign NGOs (Article 24).

This distinction in the scale and level of policy tools draws the line between developmental NGOs and other advocacy organizations. In fact, Law 70 expressly limits the activities that CSOs may engage in. Associations and foreign NGOs are restricted to activities “in the fields of development and social welfare” (not further defined), and the activities must align with the state’s development plan and priorities (Article 14). It is clear, hence, that only human rights and political reform organizations [face] the full weight of the [NGOs] law.”11 This implies (according to the social construction theory) that advocacy organizations are negatively constructed (as a source of threat to the nation state). It also implies that these NGOs are perceived by the state as ‘powerful trouble makers’ who require heavy policy tools for regulation and control. These attributes, hence, place advocacy organizations in the ‘contenders’ position on the typology of social construction of target groups (Ingram et al., 2007).

Concurrently, it is inferred that developmental NGOs are positively constructed, powerful groups. On the one hand, they function within the scope permitted by the state and they refrain from getting involved in politics. On the other hand, they possess resources and expertise and are often described as appendages of the state bureaucracy. Although policy tools of Law 70 of 2017 might seem burdensome to these organizations as well, yet “when burdens, rather than benefits, are directed at the advantaged groups, the tools will be less predictable and more likely to change; but self-regulation that entrusts the group to learn from its own behavior and voluntarily take actions to achieve policy goals will be preferred along with positive inducements” (Schneider and Ingram, 1993, p. 339). Abdelhady (2017) confirms this view of political tools for developmental NGOs12. He asserts that:

“Civil society organizations, especially social service providers, operate within certain code of practice that is not necessarily influenced by the law. These organizations have been practicing for a long time and their work is almost self-propelled. The government might find a significant opportunity in utilizing the resources and expertise of these organizations and would use their agency as apparatus for development. It is too early, however, to comment on how civil society organizations might be influenced by the new law. They need to engross their own policy tools based on their interpretations of the law and then regulate their work accordingly.”

It is worth noting that by implementing such policy tools by Law 70 of 2017, it is expected that shifts in power relations would pertain less power to ‘contender’ NGOs causing them to descend to ‘deviants’ status, while developmental NGOs might remain powerfully ‘advantaged,’ or descend to ‘dependents’ position according to the resources they possess and the partnership relations they build/maintain with the state.


Framing analysis of state-run newspapers confirms this line of thinking. This research provides empirical evidence for the presence of a ‘risk’ and an ‘opportunity’ frame in national press coverage of the recently enacted Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs. It was found that NGOs are dichotomously portrayed as either imposing threat to the nation state, or creating opportunity for development. This concept of valenced frames has a strong theoretical foundation in prospect theory (Tversky and Kahneman, 1979). Two-fold policy rationales were presented in press to legitimate policy goals, the choice of target populations, and policy tools. The kinds of rationales differ depending upon the social construction of the target population and can be used either to perpetuate or to change social constructions (Schneider and Ingram, 1993).

For powerful, positively viewed developmental NGOs, the rationales commonly featured the group's instrumental links to the achievement of important public purposes, currently conceptualized in terms of national defense and economic competitiveness. Emphasizing the efficient role that developmental NGOs could (and should) play as a partner in the national plan of development, media frames have justified legally-induced ‘active inclusion’ of NGOs in the developmental process. “Efficiency as a means for achieving the instrumental goals of policy will be emphasized as the reason for the selection of [this] particular target group and particular tools” (Schneider and Ingram, 1993, p. 339).
For contending NGOs (those that are powerful but have negative constructions), the rationale was sharply different. As they received burdens, the public rationale overstated the magnitude of the burden and interpreted it as a correction for their greed or excessive power. In the current situation where the burden is real, advocacy NGOs were led to believe that they did not have enough power or made errors in their strategies. They were told that the policy was inevitable once public attention was directed to their privileged, irresponsible powerful position. Being blamed for threatening national security alongside promoting ‘war on terrorism’ frame, the need for what could be called legally-induced ‘active intrusion’ by the state has been presented and justified. It could be said, hence, that the target population of Law 70 of 2017 is being deconstructed by the tools and rationales of the law, which might result in creating a docile civil society with little capacity for feeding forward for a new (or amended version of) the law.

Journalists usually produce news texts with the guidance of “anticipated audience responses” (see Cans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978) amongst other guidelines. When it is transmitted to audiences, the structural and lexical features of the news text will “have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate” (Hall, 1980, p. 135). It is expected, then, than these valenced frames of risk and opportunity might incite feelings of fear and hope among citizens giving room for public acceptance of the new law and related practices. However, audiences will interpret news presentations from media actively (see Livingstone, 1990). It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the exact nature of the constructive interpretation processes. Suffice to say that such interpretive activities involve processing the structural and lexical features of the news texts, relating them to the knowledge bases in their memory, and deriving inferences of the semantic meanings from the texts (see van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). The potential impact of news frames on public opinion, however, becomes crucial when we assume public opinion to be influential in affecting real policy decisions (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1983).

It is also expected that the many burdens casted on NGOs’ shoulders as compared to the sub-rosa benefits bestowed on some of them may instigate a process of feed-forward for new policy and politics in order to counter the government’s hegemony on the civil society organizations. A process in which alternative media are expected to be utilized as tools for change. This feed-forward proposition is the focus of a related-following research.
REFERENCES


Association, Chicago, IL.


### APPENDIX 1

**THEMATIC FRAME ANALYSIS OF NEWS ARTICLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTENCE</th>
<th>PROPOSITION</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HL 11 Nov. 2016</td>
<td>Al-Qasabi: The draft NGO law separates the development of society and political action «random» foreign funding</td>
<td>The dichotomous social construction of civil society</td>
<td>Source: Abdel Hady Al-Qasabi, Head of the Committee of Solidarity, Family and Persons with Disabilities in the Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1 – S3</td>
<td>The significant agreement between the members of the Committee of Solidarity, Family and Persons with Disabilities in the House of Representatives on the NGO draft law submitted by the «Support Egypt» coalition</td>
<td>Subtheme2: Building trust + acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The committee has (thoroughly) reviewed the articles of the draft Law, and there are a number of amendments by deletion and addition were made to some articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The solidarity committee and the Human Rights Committee have been coordinating this Law, which has been welcomed by more than 200 members so far</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4 – S7</td>
<td>The philosophy of the law depends mainly on the distinction between those (who wish to make a real contribution to the development of the society) through civil action and between those (who seek to achieve personal benefits)</td>
<td>Support main theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Law basically aims at eliminating (random foreign funding)</td>
<td>Levels/sources of threat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The draft law includes a separation between work in the field of community development and the confusion between partisan, union and political work</td>
<td>Levels/sources of threat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The draft law sets conditions for the acceptance of funding whether this funding is domestic or foreign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The draft stipulates the need for transparency and clarity in dealing with these funds and placing them in the space allotted to them</td>
<td>Support subtheme2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8 – S11</td>
<td>Further details about the articles of the law</td>
<td>Support subtheme1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12 &amp; S13</td>
<td>Committees that follow this law - including the Commission on Human Rights and the Legislative and Constitutional Committee - are interested in supporting civil society in the performance of its developmental role</td>
<td>Support main theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENTENCE</td>
<td>PROPOSITION</td>
<td>THEMES</td>
<td>COMMENTS</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone is also keen to establish prevention controls of the misuse of funds donated by the citizen</td>
<td>Support subtheme 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S14 – S16</td>
<td>The law aims to regulate the work of civil society organizations and the activities of NGOs</td>
<td>Support subtheme 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eliminate the randomness of foreign funds and conclude related issues,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Levels/sources of threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give civil society organizations freedom to deal, and maintain the highest interests of the country and respect international conventions and reciprocity</td>
<td>Support subtheme 2</td>
<td>Conditional trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Civil Society and Policy-making

The increased role of civil society actors is a major recent phenomenon attributed to the advancement in communication as well as to the social, political and economic transformations. This program looks at a wide spectrum of civil society actors and their role in policy-making. We study how civil society actors organize themselves into advocacy coalitions and how policy networks are formed to influence policy processes and outcomes. We also look at policy research institutes and their contribution to the translation of knowledge to policies. The media’s expanding role, which some claim to be a major player in catalyzing protests and revolutions in the Arab world, will also be explored.

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The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (AUB Policy Institute) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region.

We are committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.

Main goals

▸ Enhancing and broadening public policy-related debate and knowledge production in the Arab world and beyond
▸ Better understanding the Arab world within shifting international and global contexts
▸ Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world
▸ Disseminating knowledge that is accessible to policy-makers, media, research communities and the general public

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