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Research Paper

Analyzing the frameworks of american news reporting on tunisian democracy: a corpus-assisted approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes U.S. news coverage of Tunisia's democratic trajectory between 2011 and 2024 and its connection to American foreign policy in the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. It applies corpus-assisted discourse analysis on an original collection of news articles published in the New York Times, New York Post, National Review, and Wall Street Journal during the Obama, Trump, and Biden presidencies. The American guardianship framework consists of three recurring patterns: Americentrism, benchmarking economic prosperity by capitalist values, and Western ownership of democratic successes. Altogether, these frames present post-2011 Tunisia as both a fragile political experiment and the region's litmus test for democratic viability. While Obama-era coverage celebrated Tunisia as a success story, Trump-era reporting criticized its economic fragility and security concerns. News coverage during Biden's mandate increasingly focused on authoritarian retrenchment under President Kaïs Saïed and the erosion of constitutional norms. By combining corpus methods with critical discourse analysis, the paper conveys how U.S. news outlets placed their respective administrations' geopolitical interests at the center of reporting on Tunisia's democratic development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There has always been an inextricable synergy between global governance modalities and international news reporting frameworks. To wield and maintain influence, states imagine and re-imagine their role in international politics through the use of both hard and soft power, then project that curated image onto the global conscience through dominant narratives [1], [2]. However, the growing polarity of the media landscape and its political economy complicates the relationship between foreign policy and the news agenda. As a political superpower, the United States illustrates this negotiation between the First and Fourth Estates, particularly in its efforts to maintain persuasive coverage of its foreign involvement in the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region.

American diplomacy portrays the U.S. as a benevolent guardian of Western democracy, seeking to instill, protect, and replicate its values in underdeveloped nations as a driver of economic prosperity [3]. A considerable share of American news outlets monitor, evaluate, and comment on political developments in SWANA states [4]. These publications took a keen interest in Tunisian politics after the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, frequently emphasizing the country's democratic transition in contrast to the unrest in its neighbors [5]. The different degrees of White House engagement in Tunisia under Presidents Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden were reflected in this engagement. This research investigates the ways in which press outlets in the United States have maintained a guardianship framework across a number of different administrations, thereby influencing how the rest of the world views Tunisia.

The role of media institutions in perpetuating power hierarchies has long been the subject of discourse and foreign policy scholars. Despite claims of subjectivity, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) efficiently underscores the links between news text patterns and the sociopolitical structures in which they are embedded. Corpus-assisted approaches provide tools to systematically detect patterns of meaning across large text collections, and recent work has combined these with CDA to balance depth and scale [6], [7], [8], [9]. Building on this line of scholarship, this paper applies corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) to American reporting on Tunisia's democratic trajectory. The following section reviews relevant discourse analysis and foreign policy literature, while the methodology section outlines the choices and inclusion criteria on which the corpus was built [10], [11].

This research makes a valuable contribution to analyzing the guardianship lens, which is common in Global North–Global South news dynamics. Despite shifting foreign policy contexts, the analysis identifies Americentrism, benchmarking economic prosperity by capitalist values, and Western ownership of democratic successes as persistent frames across administrations. By documenting the cycles of rupture and continuity, the paper makes an empirical contribution to the study of American news discourse on Tunisia and a conceptual contribution to debates on the interplay between journalism, democracy, and foreign policy.

2. RELATED WORK

Early work in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) laid the foundations for linking linguistic features of texts to broader discursive practices and social structures. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model connected grammar, vocabulary, and structure to social power and ideology [6]. He coined this approach to highlight discourse's political function at the dismay of critics who accused him of subjectivity. Notably, Henry Widdowson argued that CDA foregrounded the analyst's interpretation and lacked methodological transparency [12]. Widdowson accused it of being overly subjective in its analysis of text due to its political commitment and focus on problematizing existing power structures. Fairclough replies that Widdowson's critique misrepresents CDA by conflating the interpretation of a text's meaning with the excavation of how meaning and readings are socially-produced and intertwined with power structures. [13] Furthermore, Fairclough rejects the idea that CDA's political commitment automatically invalidates it, insisting that any approach can operate ideologically, including supposedly "neutral" ones.

Over the 2000s, debates about the limits of discourse analysis, especially the concern that critical readings can drift toward selective interpretation, encouraged a methodological turn to corpus approaches

that could make claims about ideology and framing more transparent and contestable. Baker's key move was to show how corpus procedures like keywords, collocations, and concordances can discipline interpretation by grounding it in recurring distributional evidence across a dataset, while still insisting that close reading is needed to interpret what statistically salient patterns mean in context [9]. O'Halloran extends this logic into media research by offering a practical roadmap for studying media discourse at scale, and by stressing an iterative movement between quantitative patterning and qualitative explanation, with analytic choices made explicit enough to be checked and replicated [14]. Marchi later consolidates this hybrid orientation for news research, emphasizing how corpus methods are well suited to identifying regularities across large and heterogeneous news outputs, across outlets, genres, and time periods, and then linking those regularities to questions of framing, news values, and institutional production [15]. Bednarek and Carr further push the method forward by lowering the barrier to entry for journalism and communications scholars, translating core corpus techniques into an applied toolkit that does not require programming, and showing how accessible computer-assisted analysis can trace patterns of attribution, evaluation, and responsibility without abandoning interpretive questions about power and meaning [16].

Despite the prevalence of corpus-based approaches in journalism studies, pattern-detection alone does not explain how particular interpretations become dominant in news discourse, especially when coverage is closely entangled with foreign policy. Entman's "cascading activation" model is useful here because it theorizes framing as a struggle that moves through a hierarchy of actors, where elite signals, institutional access, and journalistic routines condition which readings gain traction and which remain marginal [17]. This emphasis on institutional coupling resonates with comparative media systems scholarship, which argues that the relationship between media and political institutions shapes the boundaries of legitimate debate and the kinds of narratives that become stable "common sense" within a given system [18]. In foreign affairs reporting specifically, Robinson's intervention is to qualify the popular "CNN effect" thesis by showing that media influence is conditional, more likely when elites are divided and less likely when official frames are coherent and uncontested [19].

The present research builds on this trajectory by adopting CADS to investigate U.S. news discourse on Tunisia. The procedure involves constructing a balanced corpus (see Methods), extracting keywords and collocates, and triangulating quantitative patterns with qualitative readings of texts. Data acquisition followed three criteria: relevance (based on keyword frequency of "Tunisia"), exclusion (to remove wires, briefs, and opinions authored by politicians), and balance (to ensure synchronic and diachronic comparability). This approach situates the study within established scholarship while extending it to a new geopolitical and media context.

3. METHODOLOGY

The American Guardianship Corpus (AGC) was designed for this research following the methodological framework outlined by Marchi [11] and modeled on the News on the Web (NOW) corpus. It includes news stories that were published between January 1, 2011, and November 30, 2024, about Tunisia's democratic growth since the Jasmine Revolution. The corpus is divided into three temporal sub-corpora corresponding to the Obama (2011–2016), Trump (2017–2020), and Biden (2020–2024) presidencies.

The procedure consisted of systematically sampling and preparing news texts. As illustrated in Figure 1, the corpus sampling procedure ensured systematic retrieval and balance across outlets and presidencies. To ensure representational balance, the New York Times was selected to represent liberal coverage, while the New York Post, National Review, and Wall Street Journal represented conservative coverage. A three-to-one conservative-to-liberal ratio addressed the imbalance of Tunisia-related coverage in the NOW corpus.

3.1. The Procedure Followed Three Criteria

1. An article was considered relevant if the keyword "Tunisia" (or a variant) appeared at least eight times across different paragraphs.

2. Articles directly sourced from news wires, briefings shorter than 300 words, and opinion pieces authored by Tunisian politicians were excluded.
3. To prevent repetitive reporting from skewing results, only one article per author per month was included.

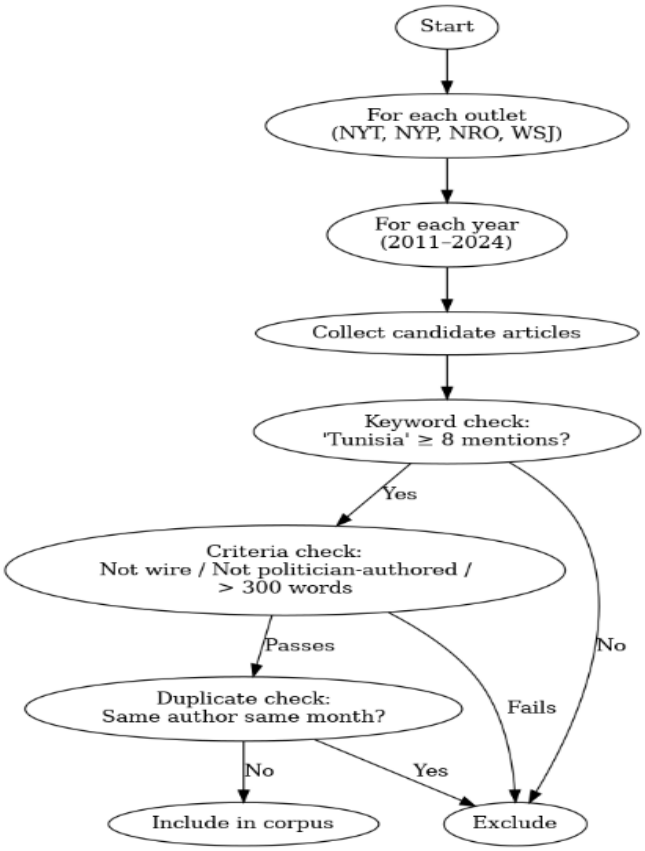


Figure 1. Shows the Flowchart of the Corpus Sampling Procedure Applied in the Construction of the American Guardianship Corpus (AGC)

To ensure diachronic and synchronic comparability, each sub-corpus contained approximately 30–40 files and between 31,000 and 40,000 tokens. Liberal and conservative sub-corpora each consisted of roughly 52–55 files, with token counts between 50,000 and 55,000. This balance was tested by checking token distributions and ranges of key terms across the three sub-corpora. Table 1 summarizes the AGC's design and balance across presidencies and ideological orientations."

Table 1. Corpus Design Overview for the American Guardianship Corpus (AGC), Including Files, Tokens, and Ideological Balance by Sub-Corpus

Sub-corpus	Files (n)	Tokens (~)	Liberal Files (N)	Conservative Files (N)
Obama (2011-2016)	38	38500	9	29
Trump (2017-2020)	32	33200	8	24
Biden (2020-Nov 2024)	34	35800	8	26

The final corpus was constructed through systematic digital retrieval of published news texts from the selected outlets. The sampling strategy ensured diachronic balance across presidencies and synchronic balance across ideological orientations. The corpus design provides a robust dataset for applying corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS), as recommended by Marchi [20] and O'Halloran [21]. The dataset is cited as Ben Fredj.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Synchronic Analysis of Sub-Corpora

4.1.1. Obama Era Findings

The first sub-corpus spans the longest temporal suite of six years, bookmarking Obama's first presidential term and covering his second. President Obama's pre-2011 SWANA region foreign policy remained neutral as he developed key partnerships with several autocracies, notably Hosni Mubarak's. Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation on December 17th, 2010, which sparked a series of popular uprisings in Tunisia ousting long-time dictator Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, took the White House by surprise. The incurring chain reaction of revolutions across the region was a turning point for American politics in Tunisia and North Africa because of the tension it placed on the U.S commitment to supporting long-standing autocratic allies, which in itself clashes with its imperative for spreading a Western model of democratic governance worldwide. Obama navigated that balancing act cautiously by endorsing Arab uprisings while continuing to limit military and political involvement, adopting reactionary rather than anticipatory foreign policy responses.

A synchronic analysis of the Obama corpus reveals that the three most frequent keywords in American coverage of the Tunisian revolution were 'Ennahda' (Tunisia's leading conservative party at the time) with a raw frequency of 90 occurrences, 'Islamists' with 73 occurrences, and 'Obama' with 65 occurrences. The name "Obama" has a normalized frequency of 1.77, which is the highest of any president's name in the three AGC sub-corpora. This shows that Obama's name comes up almost as often as the names of Tunisian politicians. This shows that Americentrism was the main way to cover the early Arab Spring. At this point, news organizations were less interested in Tunisia as an independent country and more interested in how it would affect Obama's Middle East policy, which analysts said lacked a strategic vision. Critics like Robert Kagan contended that Obama's global leadership lacked direction and decisiveness, leaving a strategic vacuum that emboldened adversaries in the region.

A closer reading shows that despite its high frequency, the keyword's range is low and limited to conservative outlets since the New York Post (NYP) and the National Review (NRO) accounted for 94% of references to Obama, with only 6% attributed to the New York Times (NYT). Considering that the terms that appear most frequently within a four-word range from the keyword 'Obama' are 'disillusionment,' 'responsible for,' 'enabled,' and 'negotiate,' we can deduce that conservative outlets mirrored policy analysts' critiques by comparing Obama's withdrawal from Iraq to his relative neutrality towards the Tunisian revolution and subsequent Arab Spring uprisings, especially in Egypt. In 2014, TNR went as far as to claim that Obama "deliberately set out to lose Islam's terror war against the West." This reductive framing echoes persistent orientalist tropes by centralizing the Arab Spring around West–East dichotomies and assuming a geopolitical sameness within the SWANA region. It flattens the complex dynamics of the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings and the Iraq war while stripping the Tunisian public of its political agency by cynically viewing its revolution as an accidental consequence of the region's systemic instability. As shown in Figure 2, normalized frequencies highlight the diachronic pivot from Americentric readings (Obama corpus) to values-benchmarking ("democracy") and then to leader-centric coverage under Saïed in the Biden corpus.

When discussing the peaceful transition of power from Ennahda's caretaker government to president-elect Béji Caïd Essebsi, conservative media applies a similar framing. For example, TNR accounts only for a tenth of the 90 corpus occurrences of 'Ennhada' because it consistently synonymizes the party with 'Islamists', which holds the corpus's second-highest raw frequency and conflates its constituents with 'Muslim Brotherhood', which occurs 13 times but only thrice in concurrence with Egyptian politics. Carnegie Center nonresident fellow Marc Lynch explains that Obama's entanglement and willingness to work with the Muslim Brotherhood post-Mubarak's fall is a departure from decades of U.S. policy, which had been dominated by the conservative foreign policy strategy favored by TNR's editorial line.

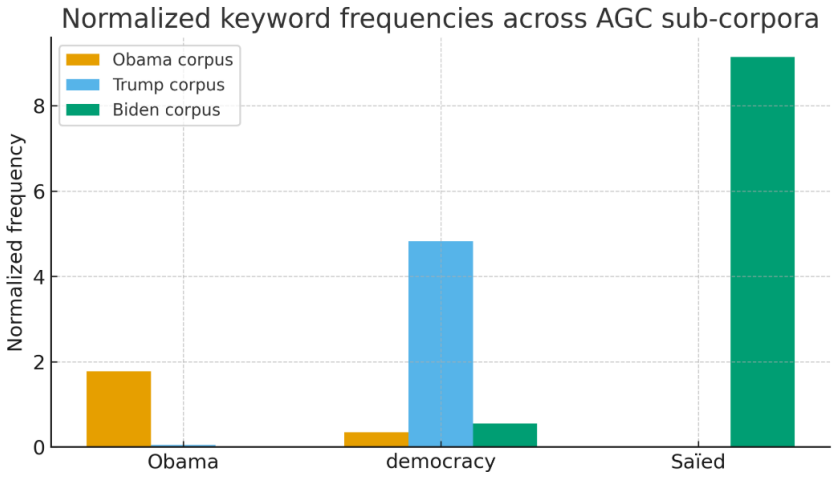


Figure 2. Normalized Keyword Frequencies Across the AGC Sub-Corpora, Comparing "Obama," "Democracy," and "Saïed" to Visualize Diachronic Shifts in Emphasis

4.1.2.Trump Era Findings

The second sub-corpus spans the four-year temporal suite corresponding to Donald Trump's presidential term. Under his "America First" doctrine, Trump's foreign policy towards Tunisia was shaped by his pragmatic interests, focusing on economic and security agenda items such as Tunisia's foreign aid implementation and its counter-terrorism military cooperation with the U.S. This shift came in response to the 2015 Bardo museum terror attacks which prompted Tunisian President Essebsi to announce a state of emergency that lasted well into 2017. While the U.S. positioned itself less as a chaperone of the Tunisian democratic transition and more as a military and economic ally, the keyword 'democracy' occurred 177 times, achieving a normalized frequency of 4.82% in the corpus. It reached a positive keyness of approximately +42 compared to the Obama corpus. Meanwhile, 'Trump' had the lowest keyness of any president's name within their respective corpus, with a raw frequency of 4 [1]. Table 2 reports the most salient keywords per sub-corpus, making visible the lexical pivots that underpin the paper's framing claims.

Table 2. Top Keywords by Sub-Corpus with Raw/Normalized Frequencies and Keyness, Highlighting the Most Salient Terms in each Presidency

Sub-Corpus	Keyword	Raw Freq.	Normalized Freq.	Keyness (+/-)
Obama	Ennahda	90	—	—
Obama	Islamists	73	—	—
Obama	Obama	65	1.77	—
Trump	Democracy	177	4.82	(+=) 42 (vs. Obama)
Trump	Trump	4	—	Lowest among names
Trump	Corruption	—	—	(+=) 28 (vs.Obama)
Biden	Saïed	402	9.14	—
Biden	Constitution	—	—	(+) 85.01
Biden	Decree	—	—	(+) 29.23
Biden	Parliament	140	—	—

At first glance, Trump's disengagement from Tunisian politics may seem at odds with the frequent use of the keyword 'democracy'. However, a closer examination reveals that the keyword occurs in proximity to negatively connoted word clusters, such as "at risk," "economic trouble," and "emerge from the unrest." A comparative inter-corpora keyword analysis shows that, in Obama's corpus, of the 22 occurrences of 'democracy,' more than 70% appeared in conjunction with neutral terms like 'transition' and 25% appeared alongside favorable terms such as 'pioneer,' 'promising,' and 'exceptional' which aligns with Obama's emphasis on Tunisia as a model for democratic transition. This tonal shift showcases that

American news reporting on Tunisia continued to benchmark Tunisia's democratic development against U.S. values and interests [20].

While Obama-era articles celebrated newfound press freedom and unrestricted civil liberties post-revolution, the news agenda during Trump's presidency focused heavily on Tunisia's economic struggle as a potential detriment to its democratic progress. For example, in Trump's corpus, the term 'corruption' achieved a positive keyness of approximately +28, and the term 'migration' achieved a positive keyness of approximately +22 compared to the Obama corpus. Because they stand for the two biggest economic setbacks Tunisia experienced during that time, both keywords are more common. The IMF's three-year-long Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program awarded Tunisia a 2.9 billion loan agreement to bolster its fiscal health, encourage structural reforms, and curb inflation and currency depreciation. The 2016 agreement's ultimate goal was to stabilize the budding democracy's economy. In that regard, the shift in U.S. foreign policy toward Tunisia from Obama's optimism to Trump's pragmatism does not entirely break with the long-standing theme of American stewardship of Tunisian democracy. Instead, Trump's focus on economic growth as a benchmark for prosperity continues this theme, albeit with a different emphasis. Paul K. MacDonald's 2018 paper, "America First? Explaining Continuity and Change in Trump's Foreign Policy," contends that Trump's strategy did not represent as drastic a departure from established norms as he had promised and that "his choices appear driven more by domestic and bureaucratic politics than an overarching vision".

Despite the framework continuity, a few outlying patterns in the Trump corpus are noteworthy. For example, the keyword 'anti-semitism' appears for the first time in the AGC with a considerable raw frequency of 22 and a low range restricted to TNR articles dating back to 2018. Within a five-word range from the keyword, 'Islamists' appeared six times, 'Islamism' appeared four times, and 'Islam' appeared twice. This means that more than half of TNR's news coverage of Tunisia associated anti-semitism with a variant of the word 'Islam'. A closer reading shows that all of these associations appeared after Tunisia denounced Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, where he established a U.S. embassy. Although this diplomatic reaction is typical of any strong ally of Palestine, the conservative outlet interpreted it as Tunisia leaning further into political Islam, even though the secular party Nidaa Tounes headed the government until President Essebsi's passing in 2019.

4.1.3. Biden Era Findings

The last sub-corpus, which covers the 2020–2024 four-year presidential term of Joe Biden, is flawed in two ways. First, unlike the previous sub-corpora, the collected samples extend only through November 2024, rather than December. To neutralize this disparity's impact on findings, the file count per year was adapted for the sake of intra-corpus diachronic balance. Second, the 2019-2022 news agenda was dominated by global COVID-19 studies. Only sociopolitical pandemic coverage of Tunisia was included to comply with the paper's guidelines.

Biden-era American reporting on Tunisia falls somewhat between pragmatism and concern for Tunisia's democratic trajectory, particularly as Tunisia faces economic challenges and political instability under President Kais Saïed. The unigram 'Saïed' appears 402 times in the corpus, divided consistently among articles by the New York Times (NYT) and Wall Street Journal (WSJ). In the Biden era, the keyword's high frequency of 9.14 shows that President Saïed was a key character is American news coverage of U.S-Tunisia relations. In either outlet, the concordance lines often connect the keyword to strong verbs like "dismissed" or "halted," which makes Saïed's actions, especially his decision to suspend parliament in 2021, seem authoritarian. This framing casts him as a strongman leader consolidating power, contrasting sharply with Tunisia's earlier post-revolutionary period, when the focus was on democratic transition.

Biden's sub-corpus is also linguistically focalized on legal and constitutional subject matter. The most prominently-featured unigrams are "decree", "referendum", and "constitution," with the last achieving a positive keyness of +85.This suggests that discussions about Tunisia's democratic prospects are central to the American interests in the region. The terms "decree," which achieved a positive keyness of +29.23, and "referendum," which achieved a positive keyness, highlight the constitutional amendments Saïed advanced to solidify his control over Tunisia's political institutions. Marc Lynch has argued that

Saïed's power grab, such as his suspension of the parliament and his constitutional amendments, marks a sharp departure from Tunisia's early democratic aspirations postJasmine Revolution [21]. This finding echoes patterns in Biden's sub-corpus, where the U.S news agenda prioritized covering Tunisia's grappling with democratic backsliding over the fewer, yet persistent, windows of democratic success.

With the NYT accounting for the majority of appearances, the "Tunisian parliament" appears 140 times in Biden's sub-corpus, the highest raw frequency of any particular political institution in the corpus. This high frequency shows how important Tunisia's political institutions are in the ongoing fights between Saïed and the parliament. The international community's assessment of Tunisia's political trajectory was significantly impacted by the tensions surrounding Saïed's suspension of the parliament in 2021. The Carnegie Endowment found that Tunisia's political institutions have been fractured by Saïed's concentration of power, leaving many analysts questioning the future of democracy in the country. U.S. media outlets echoed that concern and were thus less focused on Tunisia as a model of democratic transition and more concerned with the erosion of democratic norms established in the transition to Essebsi's government.

A closer examination of the frequency of "migrants" within the Biden sub-corpus shows a positive keyness of +72.95 compared to Trump's corpus, indicating a heightened focus on migration-related issues under Biden's presidency. The word "migrants" comes up a lot, which shows how Tunisia is often seen as a stop on Africa's migration journey. This image shows how the Mediterranean route is becoming more important for people looking for safety or a better life. Biden's administration kept the same interest in controlling migration as the previous one, especially because of the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is different from Trump's more hostile focus on immigration restrictions. Biden's emphasis on migration in Tunisia is framed as a humanitarian endeavor, with particular attention to the economic weight migrants pose on the Tunisian economy. Within this context, migration is not only framed as a regional issue but as a burden on Tunisia's economy and political stability.

4.1.4. Diachronic Analysis Across Sub-Corpora

A diachronic analysis of the AGC showcases a thematic convergence between its three sub-corpora. First, the keyword "Arab Spring" consistently appeared equally in Liberal and Conservative news articles, with a raw frequency of 37 occurrences in Obama's corpus, 64 occurrences in Trump's corpus, and 79 occurrences in Biden's corpus. This ascending frequency pattern coincides with a tonal shift, moving from an optimistic outlook on the prospects of Tunisia's democracy during Obama's presidency to a more pragmatic approach under Trump, and eventually to a critical stance in Biden's coverage, reflecting America's concerns over democratic backsliding and the consolidation of power by President Saïed. Figure 3 showcases the rising trends of 'Arab Spring' references across the three presidential mandates, tracking the shift from an optimistic tone to a pragmatic, and ultimately skeptical one.

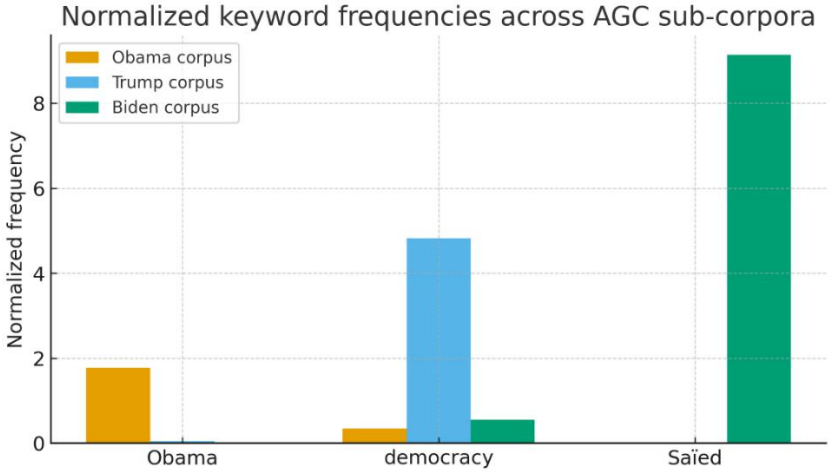


Figure 3. Diachronic Trend of "Arab Spring" Mentions in the AGC, Showing an Ascending Trajectory from Obama to Trump to Biden

As the White House's concerns about positioning Tunisia as the region's democratic litmus test grew, American news coverage framed the 2011 revolution and the following governmental restructuring with increased skepticism. In the Obama corpus, the expression “so-called Arab Spring” accounts for only 3 out of the 37 occurrences of “Arab Spring” and is restricted to the National Review’s conservative coverage. The NYT, on the other hand, praised the power change in 2014, linking the words "Tunisian elections" with the word "achievement" ten times, eight of which were with the word "remarkable." In the Trump sub-corpus, collocates with "Arab Spring" are made in a way that shows contrast, like in the phrase "the only success story to come out of the Arab Spring is in danger," where an antithesis comes after the positive framing of Tunisia's revolution. In the Biden sub-corpus, on the other hand, news outlets often link the "Arab Spring" to words like "failure" and "unfulfilled promise." This shows that people are becoming more disillusioned with Tunisia's state after the revolution. The repeated use of the words "authoritarianism" and "democratic backsliding" makes this feeling stronger.

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By showcasing American concern over Tunisia's democratic trajectory, news outlets implicitly communicate that the U.S. has a responsibility to expand democracy in the MENA region. In fact, outlets closely associated with either end of the American political spectrum implied that Tunisia’s democratic trajectory is directly tied to U.S. foreign policy priorities, from Obama’s early support for the Arab Spring to Biden’s more cautious engagement with Saïed’s authoritarian turn. This limited framing not only disregards the Tunisian public’s evolving cognizance and agency in ruling the revolution as a failed experiment but also rationalizes it as a reflection of U.S. values and international aspirations rather than a matter of internal political dynamics. As shown in Table 3, the distribution of frame categories shifts from Americentrism (Obama) toward benchmarking (Trump) and democracy ownership (Biden).

Table 3. Distribution of the Three Dominant Frames Americentrism, U.S. Values Benchmark, and Democracy Ownership across the AGC Sub-Corpora (Percent of Coded References)

Frame	Obama (%)	Trump (%)	Biden (%)
Americentrism	50	25	15
U.S values benchmark	30	45	35
Democracy ownership	20	30	50

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper examined the evolution of prevailing U.S. news narratives regarding Tunisian democracy over the last thirteen years by creating and scrutinizing a representative corpus of foreign reporting from 2011 to 2024, emphasizing the areas of agreement and disagreement between Liberal and Conservative news organizations within each sub-corpus. In this way, it used established methods from corpus linguistics to analyze media discourse and compared its results to what is known about Tunisian-American foreign relations. The synchronic layer of analysis highlighted three popular themes within the American guardianship framing. First, any editorial interest in Tunisia's political matters placed the U.S at the center of global politics. Second, the news cycle often measured Tunisia's economic

success by the degree to which it adhered to capitalist norms. Third, the U.S media often cast its government as the caretaker of democratic development in Tunisia, taking ownership over the political elite's hard-earned successes.

The analysis followed the growth of U.S. media stories from 2008 to 2024, showing how American Guardianship framing changed and stayed the same over the three presidencies. News stories about Tunisia's politics were very popular during Obama's presidency, especially when they talked about the country's democratic successes. But under Trump's presidency, the news was mostly about practical issues like security and economic stability. During Biden's presidency, news outlets became more interested in Tunisia's politics than its economy. They focused on how democracy was slipping under President Saïed's.

Future literature should expand the use of corpus-assisted discourse analysis to examine the interplay between dominant news frameworks and foreign policy. Additionally, triangulating online discourse with traditional news coverage could further highlight the extent of elite indexing in policy-driven reporting. To expand the scope of analysis, Future researchers could conduct a comparative case study in which they contrast American news framing of a select key issue in Tunisia against local coverage.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Mohamed Ben Fredj	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Informed Consent

Non-applicable as this research did not involve human subjects, personal data collection, or interviews requiring informed consent.

Ethical Approval

Non-applicable, as this study did not involve human or animal research requiring institutional ethical approval.

Data Availability

Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author on request.

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