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Assessing PRC Media Framing and Narratives in Arabic-Language Media Environments

*"China and Arab countries should remain committed to greater strategic mutual trust and firmly support each other on issues which bear on our respective core interests."*¹

Remarks by H.E. Wang Yi, 10th Ministerial Conference of The China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, Beijing, May 30, 2024

Executive Summary

Recent research and policy attention to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) activities has highlighted the need to understand how PRC media disseminate narratives globally. In Arabic-speaking regions, the PRC has expanded cooperation with media institutions since 2022, with the stated aim of shaping public opinion, strengthening legitimacy, and contesting Western narratives. While scholarly attention has increasingly

shifted toward social media ecosystems, traditional media remain a central channel for PRC narrative projection. This study addresses two research questions. First, what influence objectives are reflected in PRC Arabic-language media, and what intended effects do these narratives seek to achieve in Arabic-speaking regions? Second, is the PRC media effective in achieving its intended aims as reflected in the media content, and, if yes, which PRC media narratives gain traction via local media outlets and which don't?

Key Findings

PRC Objectives:

- Building legitimacy as a strategic and development partner: effective.
- Challenging Western influence: partially effective.
- Promoting China's leadership in global governance: limited uptake.

Narrative Uptake:

- Higher uptake: infrastructure, ports, logistics, BRI-related projects; narratives of geopolitical competition; Palestine conflict mediation.
- Lower uptake: abstract ideological frames (e.g. 'shared destiny', 'civilisational initiatives').

Patterns:

- PRC official outlets supply substantially more China-related content than is reproduced by local or pan-Arab media.
- Pan-Arab outlets frequently reframe PRC cooperative messaging within narratives of multipolar conflict.
- Intensification of specific topics in PRC media rarely translates into increased local visibility, with the exception of security and military rivalry frames, where amplification is pronounced.
- Egypt constitutes a key national media ecosystem, with domestic coverage of China approaching pan-Arab levels.

Implications

- China's media influence efforts in Arabic appear pragmatic and selective: frames tied to concrete benefits or aligning with anti-Western narratives travel best.
- Ideological messaging has weak uptake, limiting Beijing's ability to reshape values discourses.
- Narratives circulating within Arabic-language media environments may also shape perceptions among Arabic-speaking diasporic communities in Europe.²

Introduction

Recent attention to the PRC's foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) activities has highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of how PRC media disseminate narratives globally. The PRC's approach is commonly characterised as prioritising regime stability and the expansion of international influence, portraying China as a leader in global governance and a counterweight to Western influence, while embedding narratives of mutual benefit and downplaying concerns related to debt diplomacy and human rights.³ Although scholarly attention has increasingly shifted toward social media ecosystems, traditional media remain indispensable instruments for state-led narrative projection. As Frances L.F. Lee notes, research on political communication in authoritarian systems, including China, consistently highlights the propaganda function of the press, observing that "the news media, typically under tight political control, constitute a core part of the system's propaganda machine."⁴ As the PRC expands its online FIMI ecosystems, state-controlled outlets and state-linked channels continue to function as central components of its external communication architecture.⁵

Existing analyses frequently prioritise English- or Chinese-language sources, which may obscure the scope and dynamics of PRC media activity in other linguistic environments. This is particularly relevant given the multilingual and geographically dispersed nature of PRC state media operations, which complicates efforts to assess their reach and effects.

In recent years, the PRC has signalled an intention to expand its influence in Arabic-speaking regions through both political and practical engagement. Xi Jinping has articulated the goal of promoting PRC official narratives—particularly those related to civilisation and development—within Arabic-language discourse, including through initiatives such as the China–Arab Center for the Global Civilization Initiative, the expansion of the China–Arab Research Center on Reform and Development, and the creation of associated think-tank, youth, and university platforms.⁶

While the dissemination of PRC narratives through think tanks, research

cooperation, and educational platforms may lend a degree of elite-level legitimacy to Beijing's messaging, such channels alone appear insufficient to ensure broader narrative diffusion and internalisation within target societies. Consequently, the PRC has placed increasing emphasis on expanding its media presence. At the Arab Media Forum in Dubai, representatives of CGTN explicitly called for improving "the status, weight and share of the Chinese and Arab media in the global media landscape."⁷ This emphasis was further reflected in the Chinese–Arab Media Cooperation Forum held in Saudi Arabia in December 2022, which brought together government, media, and research representatives from China and 22 Arab countries.⁸ The forum launched a joint partnership initiative between China Media Group (CMG) and the Arab States Broadcasting Union, intended to strengthen exchanges and cooperation among media organisations within the broader China–Arab strategic partnership.⁹

This project examines how PRC media disseminate narratives in Arabic and the extent to which these narratives are taken up across Arabic-speaking regions. The focus on Arabic-language media is threefold. First, as demonstrated above, Arabic-language media environments encompass key geopolitical regions in which the PRC seeks to shape perceptions and influence discourse.

Second, the Arabic-language media environment is also relevant for Europe, as first-time asylum applicants from Arabic-speaking regions constituted the largest linguistic group in 2024, with 210,505 applications (approximately 34.3% of the total).¹⁰ Nation-centric approaches to diaspora may be limited, as diasporic communities are increasingly multi-nodal and maintain complex, ambivalent connections to countries of origin.¹¹ It has been argued that, since the emergence of satellite technology, Europeans with an "ethnic minority background generally appear to watch more television news from their countries of origin than the national television channels in their host countries."¹² With internet and smartphone access, this trend is only increasing. While European media coverage has at times framed the arrival of refugees and migrants in 2015 as a crisis, origin-country and regional media remain linguistically and culturally accessible and may foster a sense of continuity and familiarity for diasporic audiences.¹³

Third, although the majority of the world's Muslims live in non-Arab countries, Arabic functions as a lingua franca that extends beyond Arab-majority states. It exerts global influence because it is both the sacred language of Islam and central for religious authority, education, and media production. As a result, the circulation of PRC narratives within Arabic-language media environments has implications extending beyond Arabic-speaking regions.

Section 1: Research Design and Methodology

The project applies a mixed-methods approach with a layered research design to address two related research questions:

RQ1	What influence objectives are reflected in PRC Arabic-language media, and what intended effects do these narratives seek to achieve in Arabic-speaking regions?
RQ2	Is the PRC media effective in achieving its intended aims as reflected in the media content, and, if yes, which PRC media narratives gain traction via local media outlets and which don't?

To answer the first research question, the project determines the frames disseminated by PRC media in Arabic from 1 December 2022 to 30 June 2025. December 2022 marked the Chinese-Arab Media Cooperation Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The cooperation reportedly “promotes the presence of Chinese media on Arab channels, translating Chinese television shows into Arabic,”¹⁴ contributing to a period of increased PRC media output within Arabic-language media environments.

The report defines PRC media in accordance with the EEAS Third FIMI report, Figure 4: “Classification of Russian and Chinese entities involved in FIMI activities according to the four blocks of the FIMI Architecture”¹⁵ under the ‘state-controlled outlets’ and ‘state-linked channels’ categories. From this category, the Arabic edition of China.org.cn (arabic.news.cn)¹⁶ was selected as representative of PRC official narratives in the Arabic-language media environment. Its outputs are indexed in the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), a multilingual database widely used in media narrative research).¹⁷ China.org.cn is a multilingual official state media platform, described by the outlet itself as an “authorised government portal site to China, published under the auspices of the State Council Information Office and the China International Publishing Group in Beijing”.¹⁸ The study seeks to identify perceived PRC influence objectives

through an analysis of frames disseminated via official media channels. Frames are defined here as central organising ideas “for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue. In political communication research, frames are commonly employed by political actors to structure interpretation, guide public discourse, and shape how issues are presented in news media.”¹⁹ The study combines a top-down, conceptually guided approach with a bottom-up, data-driven procedure to identify communication frames propagated by arabic.news.cn. The bottom-up component refers to the empirical, algorithmic identification of frames from textual data, complementing the deductive, theory-informed framework applied in the top-down stage. The approach draws on the assumption, established in communication research that repeated framing increases salience, whereby “the more an attribute or ‘frame’ appears in a story, the greater its prominence.”²⁰

Initially, PRC official framing was identified in three thematic categories – geopolitics, economy, and values²¹ – along which an initial set of PRC narrative keywords was defined. The dataset was formed accordingly. GDELT offers a pre-defined catalogue of themes covering all included media providing the opportunity to “to look for themes related to [researcher] topics of interest and to plan large-scale analyses”²².

Of the GDELT themes, the project selected those that corresponded to the pre-developed set of PRC narrative keywords across all three thematic categories (e.g. TAX_POLITICAL_PARTY_COMMUNIST_PARTY_OF_CHINA, WB_2490_NATIONAL_PROTECTION_AND_SECURITY, WB_2473_DIPLOMACY_AND_NEGOTIATIONS, WB_1767_ENERGY_FINANCE, SOVEREIGNTY).

This thematic filtering was applied to constrain the dataset to China-relevant coverage, rather than to predefine analytical outcomes. To exclude articles in which China was referenced only incidentally, the dataset was restricted to articles in which China appeared at least twice as a GDELT location, establishing a minimum threshold for substantive relevance. Each article was flagged as belonging to one or more categories (Geopolitics, Economy, Values) based on a mapping of category specific GDELT Themes. The GDELT selection produced 13,750 articles. After scraping the news articles, a random-sample verification was conducted by an Arabic language speaker. Upon validation, the article texts were translated into English using Google Translate. Translation was applied at the analysis stage to enable computational processing and comparative assessment, while frame identification relied on stable semantic patterns rather than fine-grained linguistic features.

First, the draft of candidate frames and corresponding seed dictionaries was developed based on PRC foreign policy discourse. Dictionaries were supplemented using data-driven extraction of salient terms – relevant top unigrams (single words) and bigrams (two-word combinations) were extracted and incorporated into the keyword dictionaries for each frame. The dictionaries were further expanded to include orthographic variants and systematically identified paraphrases. Ambiguous tokens (e.g. 'US') were disambiguated to reduce false positives and ensure consistent frame attribution. The coverage of draft frames in the dataset (e.g., Trade and Investment, BRI/Infrastructure, South–South Cooperation) was

analysed, computing the share of documents containing terms from each frame dictionary.

Secondly, to complement the conceptually defined frames, unsupervised machine learning methods (Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), Non-Negative Matrix Factorisation (NMF), and BERTopic) were employed to identify clusters of frequently co-occurring words that frequently appear together in the analysed Arabic texts. These clusters reveal themes or potential frames that may not have been anticipated in the top-down framework. The word clusters generated by LDA, NMF, and BERT were aligned using top-word Jaccard overlap, and cross-method stable subframes were identified when multiple models produced overlapping word clusters. Multiple clusters capturing the same theme (e.g., 'Trips/Railway/Freight' and 'Railway/Passenger/Trips') were collapsed into merged frames.

As a next step, the integrated frames list was formed. Keyword-based frames detected in the articles were treated as the backbone. Bottom-up emergent clusters were compared against this backbone. Previously uncovered but significant clusters (e.g., Palestine and Green/Climate) were retained as emergent frames, thereby aligning predefined theoretical expectations with empirical patterns in the data. The detailed dictionary for each frame was developed on the basis of initial keyword list, n-grams, as well as word clusters detected by topic modelling.

Finally, an automated text analysis was conducted to identify not only keywords and word clusters of arabic.news.cn, but also the extent to which these words co-occur in patterned ways consistent with identifiable frames. Frame presence was treated as significant when multiple frame-specific keywords co-occurred within the same sentence or a 20-token window, and when repetition reached a minimum threshold (three or more occurrences), reducing the likelihood of incidental or spurious detection. The workflow combined dictionary-based detection with three complementary layers of scoring: (i) structural features, such as whether frames appear in leads,

or body text; (ii) positional and distributional features, including the placement of keywords, their proximity to one another, and their repetition within an article; and (iii) sentiment scoring, which evaluated the polarity (positive, negative, neutral, as well as score ranges from -1 (maximum negativity) to +1 (maximum positivity)) of the surrounding context. For each frame and article, a valence score is computed as the mean of sentence-level scores. Average valence is defined here as the mean sentiment polarity of all articles in which a particular frame appears.

The results from this dataset illustrate how PRC media narratives are constructed and disseminated in the Arabic linguistic environment (Section 2). Based on this data, a conclusion is drawn on the perceived influence objectives of the PRC media through the

Egypt

The study examines the three most-visited online news outlets. The first is the private Egyptian daily newspaper and news portal youm7.com, which held an 11.35% traffic share among news websites and recorded 34.4 million visits in September 2025. The second

Iraq

Iraq's information environment is highly fragmented. As one overview notes, "hundreds of outlets compete for audience and few independent voices face a daily struggle to circumvent state and partisan pressures", according to *Media Landscapes*, an analytical resource created by the European Journalism Centre (EJC) in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

The analysis of the Iraqi media environment faces limitations, including limited coverage in GDELT. Content produced by local editorial offices—the primary focus of this study—is not well represented in the database.

Arabic language and the intended effect on Arabic-speaking regions.

To answer **the second research question**, the paper examines which PRC official narratives in Arabic-language media are syndicated to local media outlets, and the effects of subsequent amplification. Given the relevance of Arabic-language media environments to Europe, as discussed above, the project maps the media environment of Arabic-speaking nations represented among the top 15 countries of origin for first-time asylum applicants in the EU in 2024: Syria, Egypt, Morocco, and Iraq.²³ A list of most visited media websites has been compiled for each selected Arabic-speaking country via the use of Similarweb, a digital intelligence platform that provides insights into website traffic, audience behaviour, and market trends. It estimates visitor numbers, page views, and engagement metrics²⁴ and is widely used in OSINT.

is the privately owned daily *Al-Masry Al-Youm* (almasryalyoum.com), with 16.7 million monthly visits and a 6.4% traffic share in September 2025. The third outlet is elwatannews.com, which recorded 12.9 million visits and a 5.89% traffic share in the same period.

However, according to Similarweb, audiences in Iraq frequently access pan-Arab news platforms, including aljazeera.net and asharq.com, the two most popular news websites in the country. Given data availability constraints and audience reach, the study analyses pan-Arab news platforms as functional proxies for widely consumed Arabic-language news content in Iraq.

The most popular of these is aljazeera.net, which had 4.2 million visitors from Iraq in September 2025. Iraq accounts for 5.25% of all visits to this platform worldwide. Other countries from which aljazeera.net is visited

are Saudi Arabia (12.34%), Morocco (10.07%), Algeria (9.56%), Jordan (8.35%), Germany (6.37%), the United States (5.57%), Egypt (5.51%), France (4.95%), and Canada (4.81%). This also enables pan-Arab benchmarking, given the presence of cross-regional audiences within Arabic-language media environments. The next most popular news platform in Iraq is *asharq.com*, which had 2.1 million visitors in Iraq in September 2025. Visits from Iraq account for 7.3% of the site's global traffic. Other countries from which visitors to this news platform originate are Egypt (38.1%), Saudi Arabia (26.7%), Algeria (10.61%), Morocco (7.16%), United Arab

Emirates (2.39%), Jordan (1.47%), and Germany (0.76%). While GDELT does not cover *asharq.com*, it does cover its sister site, *Asharq Al-Awsat* (*aawsat.com*). *Asharq News* and *Asharq.com* are both part of the Saudi Research and Media Group (SRMG). Ownership alignment does not guarantee identical editorial outputs; however, despite format differences (*Asharq Al-Awsat* as a traditional newspaper and *Asharq.com* as a digital and broadcast platform), their editorial positioning on China is treated as broadly comparable for the limited purposes of frame-level analysis.

Morocco

In Morocco, where media ownership is concentrated among the political and business elites,²⁵ the study analysed three high-reach online news outlets. The most visited is *hespress.com*, with 10.9 million visits and an 8.7% traffic share in September 2025. The second is *Akhbarona.com*, an Arabic-language site focused on politics, the economy, and society

with a pro-establishment line, with 6.7 million visits²⁶ and a 5.47% traffic share in September 2025. The third is *Alyaoum24.com*, a smaller outlet with a 2.43% traffic share and 2.2 million visits in September 2025; it largely follows an establishment line, according to a BBC overview.²⁷

Syria

Syrians constitute the largest national group among first-time asylum applicants in the EU. However, it is currently challenging to reconstruct a full picture of PRC media influence in Syria. Similarweb does not provide website-traffic data for Syria. Sources indicate that the Syrian media environment is fragmented with pan-Arab sources widely used. According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), “Qatar-affiliated outlets, such as Syria TV and Al Jazeera, remain influential, and most international news agencies resumed broadcasting from Damascus as soon as the regime fell”.²⁸ Accordingly, the pan-Arab sources analysed under Iraq are used as partial proxies for the Syrian media environment, reflecting audience consumption patterns rather than domestic media production. The situation may change under new national leadership, as media outlets that previously operated in rebel-held areas or in exile have re-emerged, including

Radio Rozana, Enab Baladi, Al Joumhouria, and Aks al Seir.²⁹

The eight selected outlets were analysed for the presence and characteristics of the PRC propagated frames identified in the representative PRC outlet defined above (*arabic.news.cn*). Dictionary-based frame identification, combined with structural, positional, and distributional features, is used to assess the extent to which PRC-framed narratives are amplified via local outlets, identifying which narratives gain traction and which do not (see Section 3).

Section 2: Identification and Operationalisation of PRC Media Frames in Arabic-Language Media

The study design is based on the assumption that perceived PRC influence objectives and intended aims are reflected in the agenda-setting and issue framing of PRC official media.

Assuming partial overlap in the PRC's foreign policy objectives across regions, the

analysis begins with a top-down approach, initially defining 15 analytical frames to be measured in the PRC official outlet arabic.news.cn. The initial frames cover geopolitical, economic, and value dimensions, representing core dimensions of the PRC's narrative:

Geopolitics	Economy	Values
1. Diplomacy and partnerships,	7. Energy cooperation,	11. Win-win and peaceful development,
2. Security and military rivalry,	8. Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI,	12. Non-interference,
3. Shared future and developmental vision,	9. Technology and digital,	13. Media and cultural cooperation,
4. South-south and Global South cooperation,	10. Trade and investment.	14. Multipolarity and World order,
5. Sovereignty and non-interference,		15. Shared destiny and PRC initiatives.
6. US/ West/ EU competition.		

A preliminary keyword and n-gram scan of the scraped arabic.news.cn dataset indicated that terms associated with most proposed frames were present at varying frequencies. Keywords related to the frames, such as 'Diplomacy and Partnerships', 'Security and Military Rivalry', 'Infrastructure and Mobility/BRI', were especially prevalent in the analysed dataset (see Table 1). Meanwhile, keywords related to frames, such as South-South and Global South cooperation, energy cooperation, multipolarity and world order, as well as non-interference, showed up less frequently. At the same time, the number of articles in which these terms appeared was sufficient to justify retaining the frames for subsequent verification and testing.

A bottom-up approach using LDA, NMF, and BERTopic to identify clusters of frequently co-occurring words produced partially overlapping results, aligning with eight of the predefined frames. In addition, new word clusters emerged, indicating two inductively derived and analytically provisional frames not captured in the initial typology:

- Palestine conflict mediation;
- Energy, technology, and green growth.

Both were added to the frame list for in-depth analysis, and keywords identified through unsupervised methods were incorporated into the frame dictionaries, ensuring alignment between inductive findings and the existing analytical framework.

Table 1. Frame-related keywords mapping in arabic.news.cn (N = 13 750 articles)

Frame-related Keywords Mapping in arabic.news.cn

Category	Frame	Article share in category containing keywords	Article share in category with model identified word clusters
Geopolitics	Security & military rivalry	41,71%	
Economy	Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI	35,57%	26,97%
Geopolitics	Diplomacy_&_partnerships	34,49%	23,82%
Economy	Technology & digital	21,70%	21%
Geopolitics	US / West / EU competition	17,04%	12,76%
Geopolitics	Shared future & developmental vision	15,25%	
Values	Shared destiny & PRC initiatives	14,67%	
Values	Win win & peaceful development	7,32%	16,54%
Economy	Trade & investment	5,94%	18,21%
Values	Media & cultural cooperation	5,77%	10,62%
Values	Energy, technology & Green growth		7,17%
Geopolitics	Palestine conflict mediation		4,92%
Geopolitics	South-south / Global south cooperation	4,63%	
Economy	Energy cooperation	3,90%	
Values	Multipolarity & World order	2,24%	
Values / Geopolitics	Sovereignty & Non interference	1,51%	7,56%

The in-depth Python-based content analysis revealed that, during the study period, the **most frequently observed frames** in the arabic.news.cn corpus were as follows (see Table 2):

- 'Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI'
- 'Diplomacy and Partnerships'.

These were followed by two frames related to competition with Western states:

- 'Security and Military Rivalry'
- 'US/West/EU competition'.

The next six most frequently observed frames – 'Technology and Digital', 'Energy, Technology and Green Growth', 'Shared Future and Developmental Vision', 'Shared Destiny and PRC Initiatives', 'Win-Win and Peaceful Development' and 'Sovereignty and Non-Interference' – each accounted for less than 5% of the corpus during the study period. These frames were retained for analysis on the basis of consistent monthly presence across the study period. On average, each frame

appeared in approximately 10–20 articles per month, indicating a stable level of representation within the PRC Arabic-language news site (arabic.news.cn).

The inductively derived frame ‘Palestine conflict mediation’, capturing references to mediation-related activity associated with the Israel–Palestine context, was identified in 201 articles (1.5% of the dataset).

Predefined frames not supported as systematically present in this study included ‘Media and cultural cooperation’, ‘Trade and investment’, ‘Energy cooperation’, ‘South–South and Global South cooperation’, and ‘Multipolarity and world order’. While each appears in the dataset, their detection counts over the 31-month period were insufficient to treat them as systematically communicated.

Table 2. In-depth frame analysis: presence of significant frames in arabic.news.cn

Frame	Article count in all dataset	Article share in all dataset (%)
Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI	3622	26.3
Diplomacy & partnerships	2352	17.1
Security & military rivalry	1065	7.7
US / West / EU competition	1019	7.4
Technology & digital	657	4.8
Shared future & developmental vision	448	3.3
Win-win & peaceful development	439	3.2
Energy, technology & green growth	342	2.5
Sovereignty & Non-interference	323	2.3
Shared destiny & PRC initiatives	310	2.3
Palestine conflict mediation	201	1.5
Media & cultural cooperation	104	0.8
Trade & investment	102	0.7
Energy cooperation	98	0.7
South-South & Global South cooperation	67	0.5
Multipolarity & world order	37	0.3

The **‘Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI’** frame appears in 26.3% of the analysed corpus. The Belt and Road Initiative is referenced across diverse contexts, which prevented the machine-learning models from assigning related keywords to a single word cluster, as these terms occur across a wide range of contexts and lack cluster-specific distinctiveness. Articles containing the ‘Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI’ frame present infrastructure-related activity as an area of PRC leadership, both domestically and internationally. Several articles describe infrastructure projects in relation to PRC–Arab relations, including references to Belt and Road cooperation framed around a ‘China–Arab community with a shared future’. Examples include initiatives such as the Belt and Road China-Arab Friendship Library programme in Beijing and the Belt and Road Conference on trade and investment held during the China-Arab States Expo. Infrastructure- and mobility-related content is associated with a positive valence in 87.6% of articles. Negative valence is observed in 5.56% of cases, primarily in the context of floods, droughts, or other disaster relief.

Example headlines (illustrative):
 Feature: China–Arab cooperation gains momentum under Belt and Road Initiative; China and Iran agree to continue strengthening implementation of the comprehensive cooperation plan; New publications launched under the Belt and Road China–Arab Friendship Library program in Beijing; Ten years after its launch, the China–Arab States Expo takes economic and trade cooperation between the two sides to new levels.

In articles containing **‘Diplomacy and Partnerships’** frame (17.1% of all dataset), the PRC is positioned as an international actor maintaining relations with state counterparts across multiple regions, including Arab countries. Examples include the PRC-Iran agreement to continue strengthening the implementation of the comprehensive cooperation plan, and discussions between the Chinese Foreign Minister and Iranian and Egyptian counterparts

on bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East. The articles cite experts who state that some Middle Eastern countries are interested in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to achieve peace, stability, and development in the region. The valence of the ‘Diplomacy and partnerships’ frame is predominantly positive (98.85%). Only 22 of 2,352 articles register negative valence. Negative valence is primarily associated with the negative context in which China's leadership is expressed, for example, cross-border crime, telecommunications fraud investigations, and trade- and tariff-related disputes. China's official media also refers to the so-called “debt trap” in Africa, which it characterises as a “narrative trap”.³⁰

Example headlines (illustrative):
 Chinese Foreign Minister holds phone talks with Iranian counterpart on bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East; Chinese and Egyptian foreign ministers hold phone talks on bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East; Interview: Egyptian expert says Middle Eastern countries keen to join Shanghai Cooperation Organization to achieve peace, stability, and development; Chinese Foreign Ministry: China will intensify efforts to combat cross-border crimes; Chinese authorities strengthen cooperation in cross-border telecom fraud investigations; Chinese Foreign Ministry: There is no winner in the trade war and tariff war; Chinese Foreign Minister: The so-called “debt trap” in Africa is a narrative trap; Chinese Foreign Ministry: Most Asia-Pacific countries do not welcome NATO expansion.

Within the **‘security and military rivalry’** frame, which appears in 7.7% of all publications in the dataset, PRC official media presents China as a security provider that defends sovereignty and upholds order while portraying the United States, NATO, and allied frameworks as destabilising and criticising regional militarisation, particularly in relation to Taiwan. NATO- and US-led frameworks are described as expansionist and disruptive

to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. NATO is framed as a source of uncertainty, while AUKUS is framed as undermining peace. U.S. military assistance to Taiwan is portrayed as provocative, with countermeasures framed as defensive responses linked to sovereignty. In contrast, PRC official media frame China as a security provider, stabiliser, peacekeeper, and regional conflict de-escalator. The frame also emphasises domestic whole-of-nation security modernisation, highlighting the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), national security law, AI, data and cyber standards, and public security capacity. As the frame encompasses both PRC self-positioning and the portrayal of opposing actors, its valence is less consistent than in earlier frames. Positive valence is observed in 84.6% of cases, while negative valence accounts for 14%.

Example headlines (illustrative):

Chinese Defense Ministry describes NATO as a “mobile war machine that causes chaos wherever it goes”; Chinese Foreign Ministry: AUKUS cooperation harms efforts to maintain peace and security in the region; Spokesperson: Mainland China condemns U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, warns of serious consequences; Spokesperson: Chinese ‘Blue Helmets’ are an important force in U.N. peacekeeping efforts; China issues report on implementation of Global Security Initiative; China calls on all parties to work together to uphold peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula; China issues new public security standards; Spokesman: China’s military development aims to safeguard national sovereignty and security and maintain world peace.

Articles containing the **‘US/West/EU competition’** frame (7.4% of the dataset) consistently frame the United States and Western states as aggressors or destabilising forces, particularly in relation to PRC sovereignty, trade, and security. The material emphasises China’s defensive, reasonable, and cooperative stance, positioning China as a target of unfair Western pressure and a responsible defender of stability and justice. The United States and

its allies are portrayed as violating sovereignty, weaponising sanctions, and spreading false narratives, framing China as a target of unjust pressure, including sanctions, accusations, and investigations. While China is framed as promoting multipolarity and fairness, with its vision of fairness, cooperation, and global reform, the United States and Western states are depicted as hypocritical hegemonies in decline, whose unilateral actions are framed as harmful to global stability. In this framing, some articles depict China as responsible and open to dialogue, while signalling a preference for stability, framed as conditional on equal terms. Negative valence is higher than in other frames (20.4%), while positive valence accounts for 77.7% of frame instances.

Example headlines (illustrative):

Chinese Foreign Ministry: US turning Taiwan into a ‘powder keg’; Spokesperson: US arms sales are pushing Taiwan toward disaster; China urges the United States to lift sanctions on Chinese anti-drug agencies; China urges US media to stop spreading disinformation against it; Chinese military spokesman refutes US narrative of ‘Chinese cyber threat’; China expresses strong opposition to US accusations against Chinese companies over fentanyl-related cases; Iran’s membership in BRICS and SCO helps combat US unilateralism; The Global South calls for a fairer, more win-win international order and blames the West for ignorance; Special Feature: How US Hegemonic Practices Undermine the Global Trading Order; Iran’s membership in BRICS and SCO helps combat US unilateralism; News Report: The Global South calls for a fairer, more win-win international order and blames the West for ignorance; Chinese Defense Ministry: The video call between the Chinese and US defense ministers on April 16 has positive significance; Spokesperson: Chinese and US officials meet to discuss ways to improve bilateral relations.

The frame **‘technology and digital’** (657 articles, 4.8% of the dataset) portrays

innovation, particularly AI and platforms, as a primary driver of PRC growth and technological leadership. The articles highlight scale and industrialisation, real-world use cases, and governance and standards, including references to AI security governance frameworks.

Example headlines (illustrative):

Report: China's AI market to reach \$26 billion by 2026; China seeks to promote the sustainable and healthy development of the platform economy; More than 1,000 major AI companies in Beijing; AI-powered paediatrician to enter more public hospitals; China plans to formulate more than 50 standards for the AI sector by 2026.

Three related PRC communication frames that appear regularly in Arabic are 'shared destiny and PRC initiatives', 'shared future and developmental vision', and 'win-win and peaceful development'. These frames complement each other and, in some cases, overlap. The frame '**shared destiny and PRC initiatives**', identified in 310 articles (2.3% of the dataset), articulates moral and ideological leadership attributed to China within the material, emphasising unity, harmony, and shared progress, and framing China's global role as 'a community with a shared future for mankind'. This frame frequently references concepts such as the 'community with a shared future for mankind', the Global Civilization Initiative, Belt and Road cooperation, and solidarity among developing nations. The frame '**shared future and developmental vision**' (448 articles or 3.3%) translates these ideological ideas into pragmatic, policy-oriented narratives, presenting modernisation, reform and development partnerships as expressions of this framing. It frames modernisation and reform as part of China's contribution to a global developmental path, often associated with Chinese-style modernisation or South–South cooperation. The '**win-win and peaceful development**' frame (439 articles, 3.2%) translates this vision into diplomatic rhetoric and cooperation. Within this framing, China is presented as promoting peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and mutual benefit, and framed as a steady and

constructive force with ties framed as 'win-win'. Across all three frames, valence is near-universally positive.

Example headlines (illustrative):

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind writes a new chapter in peaceful development; Chinese Foreign Minister Calls for Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind; Xi says China and Kazakhstan are companions on the path of modernisation; Interview: Russian researcher: Chinese-style modernisation is widely applicable in the developing world; Chinese Foreign Minister: China will continue to advocate for justice and strengthen win-win cooperation in 2024; The Chinese Ministry of Commerce calls for win-win cooperation and healthy competition between China and the European Union.

The '**sovereignty and non-interference**' frame appears in 323 articles (2.3% of the dataset). This frame presents sovereignty as non-negotiable in relation to One China/Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, and frames reunification as a historic inevitability. By contrast, it portrays external actors, including the US and its allies, as interfering under various pretexts, including human rights, 'freedom of navigation', and industrial policy. Non-interference is framed as universally applicable, and the material emphasises respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others (e.g. the Middle East, Serbia–Kosovo, Egypt/Suez), and frames support for partners in opposition to external pressure and politicisation. Some articles using this frame signal openness and willingness to cooperate, referencing visa waivers and official visits, alongside cooperation formats such as BRICS, ASEAN and free trade agreements, framed in conjunction with non-interference. Of all the frames analysed, this one received the most polarised coverage in the PRC official media. Negative references accounted for 23.5% of coverage, while positive references constituted 76.1%.

Example headlines (illustrative):

A senior Chinese Communist Party official calls for steadfast progress in national reunification; Chinese Foreign Ministry: China opposes any provocation under the pretext of freedom of navigation; Spokesperson: China firmly opposes any form of official interaction between the United States and Taiwan; Spokesperson: China urges G7 members to stop provocations over Taiwan issue; Chinese Foreign Minister Calls for Respecting the Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of Middle Eastern Countries; Chinese Foreign Ministry: China respects Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity regarding the Kosovo issue; China: Egypt's sovereignty over the Suez Canal is undisputed and it retains the right to manage the canal; Spokesperson: China supports Cuba in opposing foreign interference and blockade; Spokesperson: China supports Türkiye in following its own development path; Spokesperson: China extends visa waiver for 12 countries to boost exchanges; Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson: China Welcomes Visit of US Congressional Delegation; Spokesperson: China is ready to bring more like-minded partners into the BRICS family; Spokesperson: China, ASEAN complete negotiations on FTA 3.0.

The **'Energy, technology and green growth'** framework, identified through a bottom-up approach, accounts for 342 articles (2.5%). It portrays PRC's development as clean, innovative and beneficial. 'Green development' is framed as extending beyond industrial capacity to include ethical modernity and prosperity without harm. Typical storylines reference green transition enablers, technology serving the public good, illustrative case studies and global partnerships. All but one article display positive valence; the exception discusses a China Earth system simulation model released for climate change research.

Example headlines (illustrative):

Building an Ecological Civilisation in China Provides Chinese Solutions for Global Environmental Governance; China's New Development Journey Brings Win-Win Opportunities to the World; Revisiting the Belt and Road Initiative in 10 Years: A Catalyst for Positive Environmental Change; UN Official: China-Africa Trade Cooperation Boosts Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Africa.

Another inductively derived frame is **'Palestine conflict mediation'** (201 articles, 1.5%), which frames China as a neutral mediator and peace broker supporting dialogue, sovereignty and humanitarian relief. The material emphasises multilateral, law-based peace and frames China as contributing to these efforts. This frame frequently cross-links with 'win-win and peaceful development' and to 'shared destiny' frames. Negative valence accounts for 12.9% of instances, while positive valence accounts for 87.1%.

Example headlines (illustrative):

Chinese and Arab Experts: Beijing's Declaration a Step in the Right Direction to End Palestinian Division and Promote Peace in the Middle East Guest Opinion: Chinese Wisdom Illuminates the Path to Palestinian Reconciliation; Chinese Foreign Minister Calls for Respecting the Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of Middle Eastern Countries; Chinese Foreign Minister: China's Role in the Tehran-Riyadh Accord Is No Less Important Than the Agreement Itself; Arab Countries and Parties Welcome the Saudi-Iranian Agreement and Praise China's Role.

The **inferred influence objectives of PRC official Arabic-language media**, and the associated intended aims, may be summarised as follows:

1. Building China's legitimacy as a strategic and development partner in the Arab world. The most frequently observed frames 'Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI' (26.3%) and 'Diplomacy and Partnerships' (17.1%) frame China as a development partner and diplomatic ally in the region. In this context, the 'Palestine conflict mediation' frame frames China as a peace broker by referencing an issue that is highly salient for Arab publics. Although it has a modest share (1.5%), its systematic appearance suggests a degree of emphasis within the corpus. A secondary frame 'Sovereignty and Non-Interference' frames China as opposing violations of national sovereignty in the Arab world, such as what are framed as external interventions in Iraq and Syria.

2. Challenging Western influence. The frames 'security and military rivalry' (7.7%) and 'US/West/EU Competition' (7.4%) reflect a second layer of PRC messaging: framing the United States, NATO, and Western states as destabilising and portrayed as in decline,

contrasted with China as a stabiliser and defender of sovereignty. This dualism frames China as an alternative partner in contrast to Western actors, potentially challenging Western normative influence in the region.

3. Promoting a positive image of China's role in global governance. Through repeated use of frames 'shared future and developmental vision', 'shared destiny and PRC initiatives', and 'win-win and peaceful development', the outlet seeks to circulate concepts like 'a community with a shared future for mankind' in the Arabic public sphere. The overwhelmingly positive framing presents China as a beneficial, responsible, and legitimate leader within the Arabic-language media environment. Additional frames, including 'technology and digital' and 'energy and green growth' contribute to a composite portrayal of China as a modern innovator.

Section 3: Influence of PRC media frames in the Arabic media environment of selected countries

Arabic.news.cn publishes substantially more China-related content than any other analysed media outlet, illustrating an asymmetry between message supply and uptake by local

media. Within the thematic scope covered by the GDELT selection, arabic.news.cn published 13,751 articles—more than the seven other media outlets combined.

Table 3. Total number of China-related articles published by each Arabic-language news outlet

Total Number of China-Related Articles in the Thematic Areas (GDELT Selection)

Region	Media outlet	Total number of China-related articles
China (source)	arabic.news.cn	13751
Pan-Arabic (incl. Iraq, Syria)	aljazeera.net	2567
Pan-Arabic (incl. Iraq, Syria)	aawsat.com	434
Egypt	almasryalyoum.com	1691
Egypt	youm7.com	137
Egypt	elwatannews.com	757
Morocco	hespress.com	493
Morocco	alyaoum24.com	67
Morocco	akhbarona.com	307

Pan-Arab outlets publish more China-related content than the national outlets analysed. Among the sampled outlets, aljazeera.net shows the highest uptake, publishing 2,567 China-related articles—substantially more than any single national outlet—reflecting sustained editorial attention to China as a global actor. Aawsat.com, the other pan-Arab outlet, publishes fewer China-related articles (434) but functions as a selective amplifier, prioritising

high-impact geopolitical and diplomatic coverage.

Pan-Arab outlets disproportionately feature articles containing the ‘US/West/EU competition’ and ‘Security and military rivalry’ frames (see Figures 1 and 2). These frames are not only prominent in pan-Arab coverage, but also over-indexed relative to their proportional representation in the PRC source corpus (arabic.news.cn) (see Figure 3). In the PRC source

corpus, ‘Security and military rivalry’ and ‘US/West/EU competition’ account for 7.7% and 7.4% of articles, respectively. In pan-Arab outlets, the proportions are markedly higher: 30.7% and 56.2% on aljazeera.net, and 25.8% and 50.5% on aawsat.com.

A further frame gaining traction in pan-Arab outlets is ‘Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI’, accounting for 28.2% of China-related coverage on aljazeera.net and 19.8% on aawsat.com. Although ‘diplomacy and partnerships’ is among the most frequently observed China-related frames on aljazeera.net, it is still substantially less prevalent than in PRC official Arabic-language media. Aljazeera.net reproduces this frame 245 times, accounting for 9.5% of its China-related coverage, compared to 17.1% in the arabic.news.cn corpus. The comparatively limited presence of concepts such as ‘win–win’, ‘shared future’, and ‘shared destiny’ in pan-Arab media indicates that PRC normative rhetoric is only selectively retained in these outlets. Instead, pan-Arab media tend to recontextualise cooperative PRC messaging within broader narratives of multipolar contestation, consistent with their established editorial focus on global power competition.

Taken together, the volume of China-related articles published by **Egyptian** outlets approaches that of the pan-Arab group, underscoring Egypt’s importance as a national media ecosystem for PRC-related messaging. Coverage, however, is unevenly distributed. Almasryalyoum.com, a major actor in the Egyptian media landscape, published 1,691 China-related articles during the study period, averaging 54.5 articles per month and indicating sustained continuity in China-focused narratives. By contrast, the other two outlets examined—elwatannews.com and youm7.com—display markedly lower levels of China-related coverage, with 757 and 137 articles published, respectively, over the full analysis period.

The only two frames with a notable presence on the major Egyptian news portal youm7.com are ‘Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI’ and ‘US/West/EU competition’, each appearing

on average approximately once per month over the study period. This limited visibility on youm7.com is offset by higher levels of coverage on almasryalyoum.com and elwatannews.com, which generate substantial China-related content across these two frames as well as ‘Diplomacy and partnerships’ and ‘Security and military rivalry’.

Notably, ‘Diplomacy and partnerships’, ‘Security and military rivalry’, and ‘US/West/EU competition’ receive greater relative prominence in Egyptian media than in the PRC official source corpus (arabic.news.cn) (see Figure 3). While ‘US/West/EU competition’ accounts for 7.4% of China-related coverage on arabic.news.cn, it constitutes up to 28% of China-related content in Egyptian outlets.

Similar to pan-Arab media, Egyptian outlets show limited uptake of abstract value-oriented frames such as ‘Shared future and developmental vision’ and ‘Win–win and peaceful development’, as well as ideologically charged geopolitical and economic frames including ‘Shared destiny and PRC initiatives’, ‘Green growth’, and ‘Sovereignty and non-interference’. Overall, PRC narratives are more frequently reproduced in Egyptian media when framed in pragmatic terms, such as energy cooperation, transport projects, or technological partnerships, while the reproduction of ideologically oriented narratives remains limited.

Moroccan outlets collectively published 867 China-related articles, representing roughly one-third of the volume observed in Egypt. Hespress.com leads China-related coverage in Morocco with 493 articles, followed by Akhbarona.com with 307 articles. By contrast, Alyaoum24.com published only 67 China-related articles, indicating limited and occasional engagement with China-focused topics.

Thematic patterns in Moroccan media broadly mirror those observed elsewhere in the region. Particular attention is paid to the ‘US/West/EU competition’ frame, while ‘Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI’, ‘Diplomacy and partnerships’, and ‘Security and military rivalry’ also receive comparatively high levels of

coverage. By contrast, Moroccan outlets show little uptake of PRC ideological rhetoric, which

is either absent from coverage or reframed using neutral diplomatic language.

Figure 1. Frame publicity indicators in Arabic-language media: number of China-related articles per outlet

Distribution of China-Related Frames in Arabic-Language Media (Article Counts, Capped Scale)

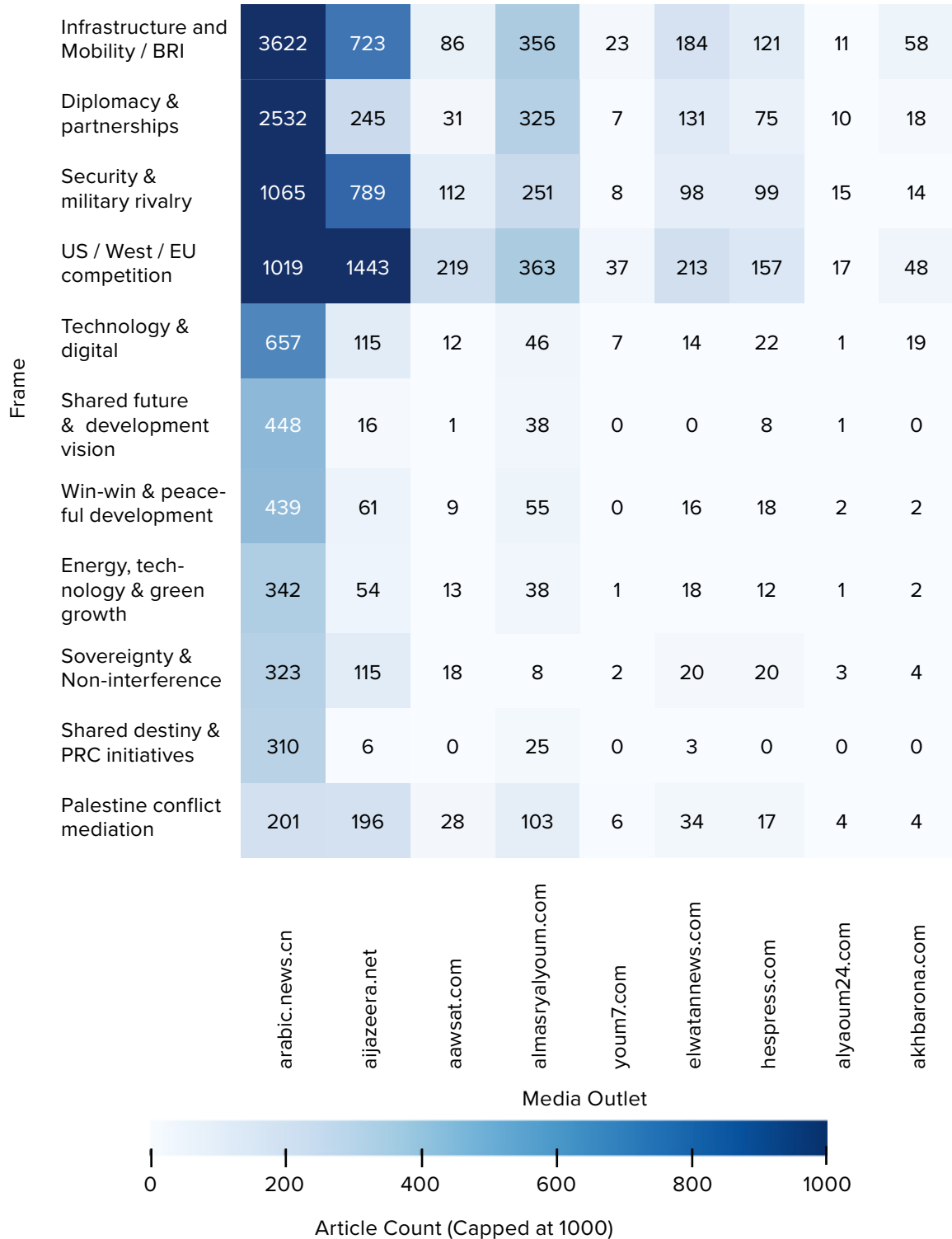


Figure 2. Frame publicity indicators in Arabic-language media: proportion of China-related articles per outlet

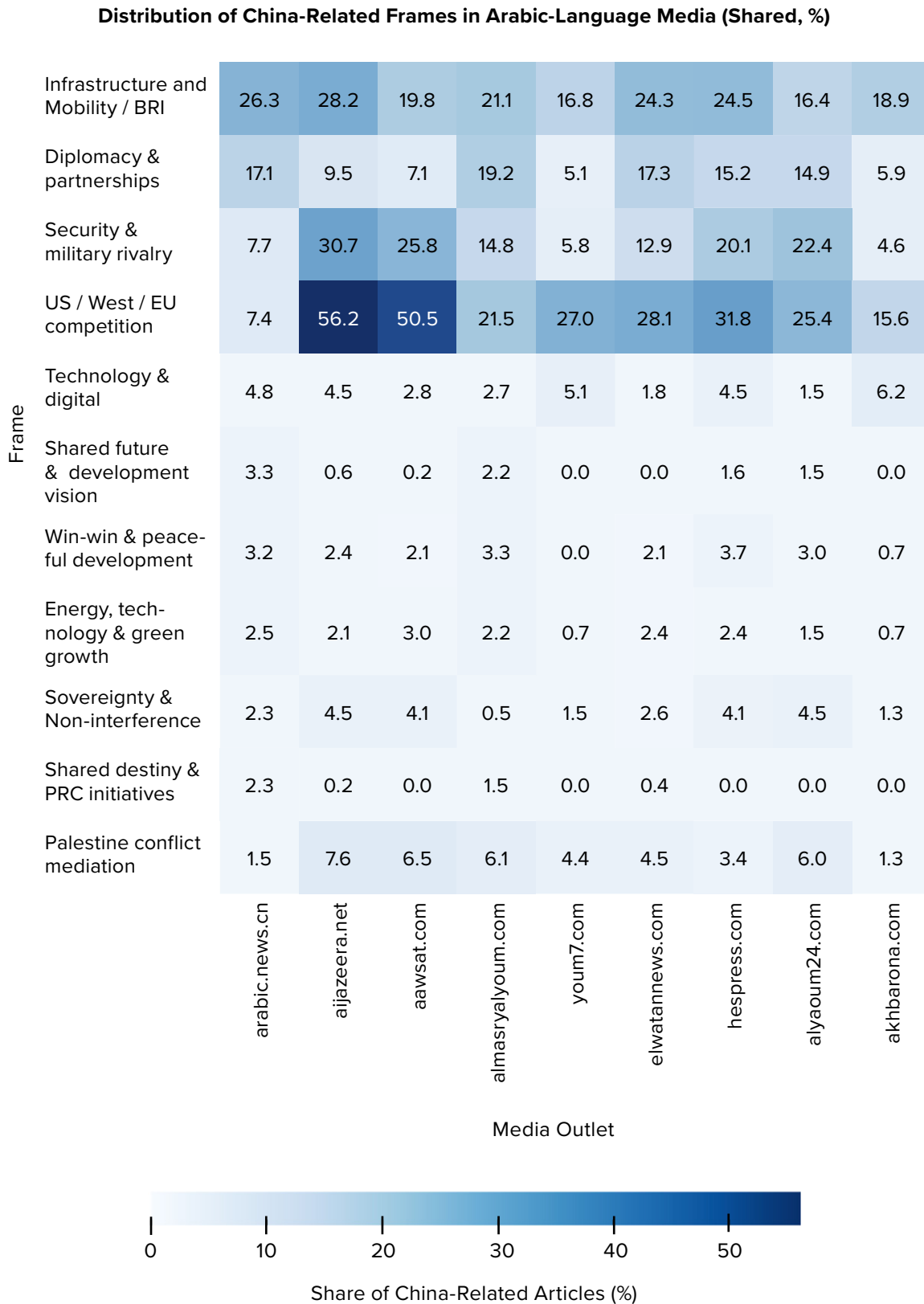
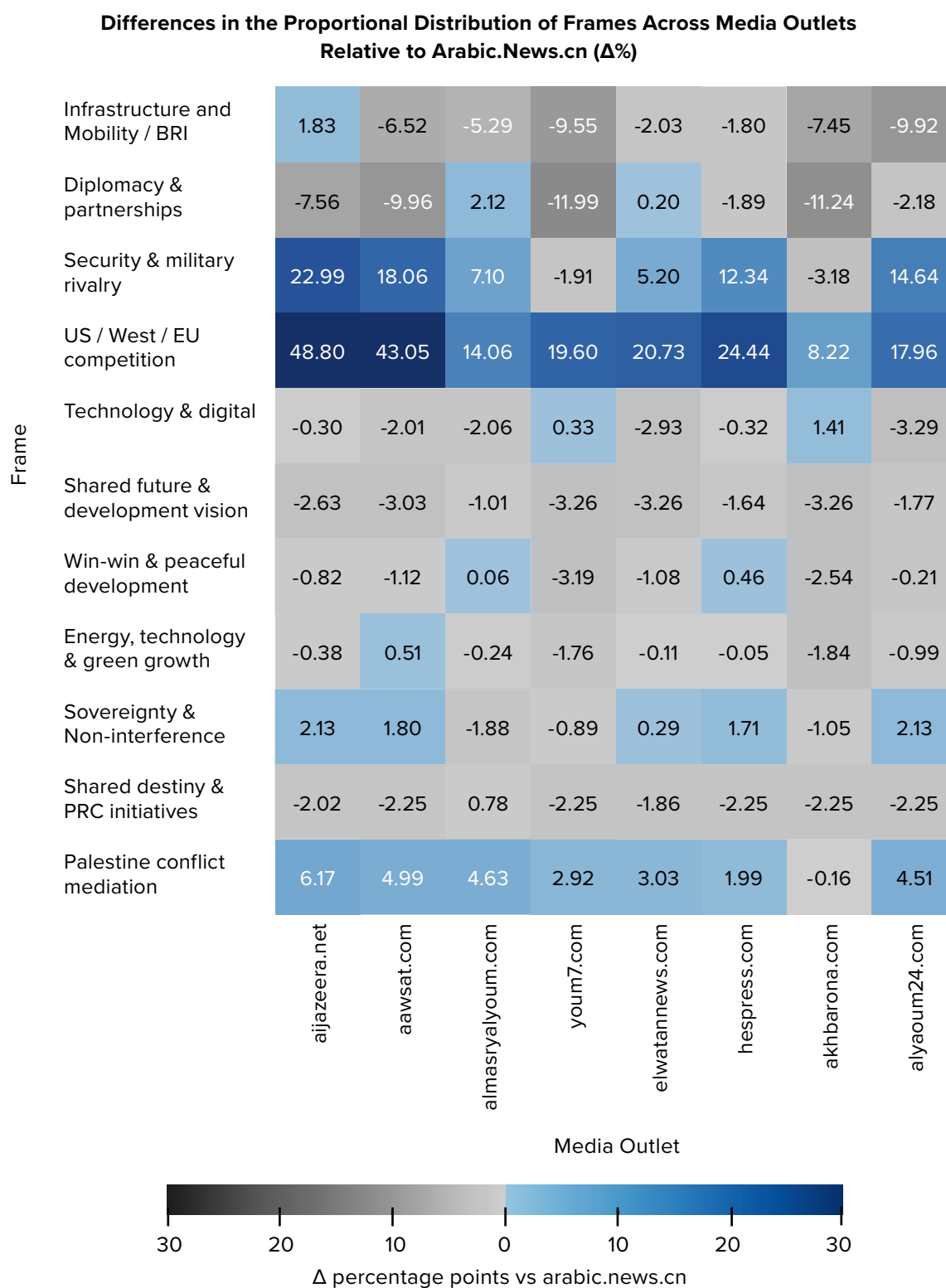


Figure 3. Differences in the proportional distribution of frames across media outlets relative to arabic.news.cn ($\Delta\%$)



The distribution of article volumes indicates that the PRC generates a high volume of China-related content through arabic.news.cn, contributing to sustained regional visibility of the topic. By contrast, only a limited share of

this content appears in non-PRC outlets, the reproduction rate of PRC-framed narratives in local media is modest when compared with the official source corpus (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Distribution of China-related articles across Arabic-language media by country group

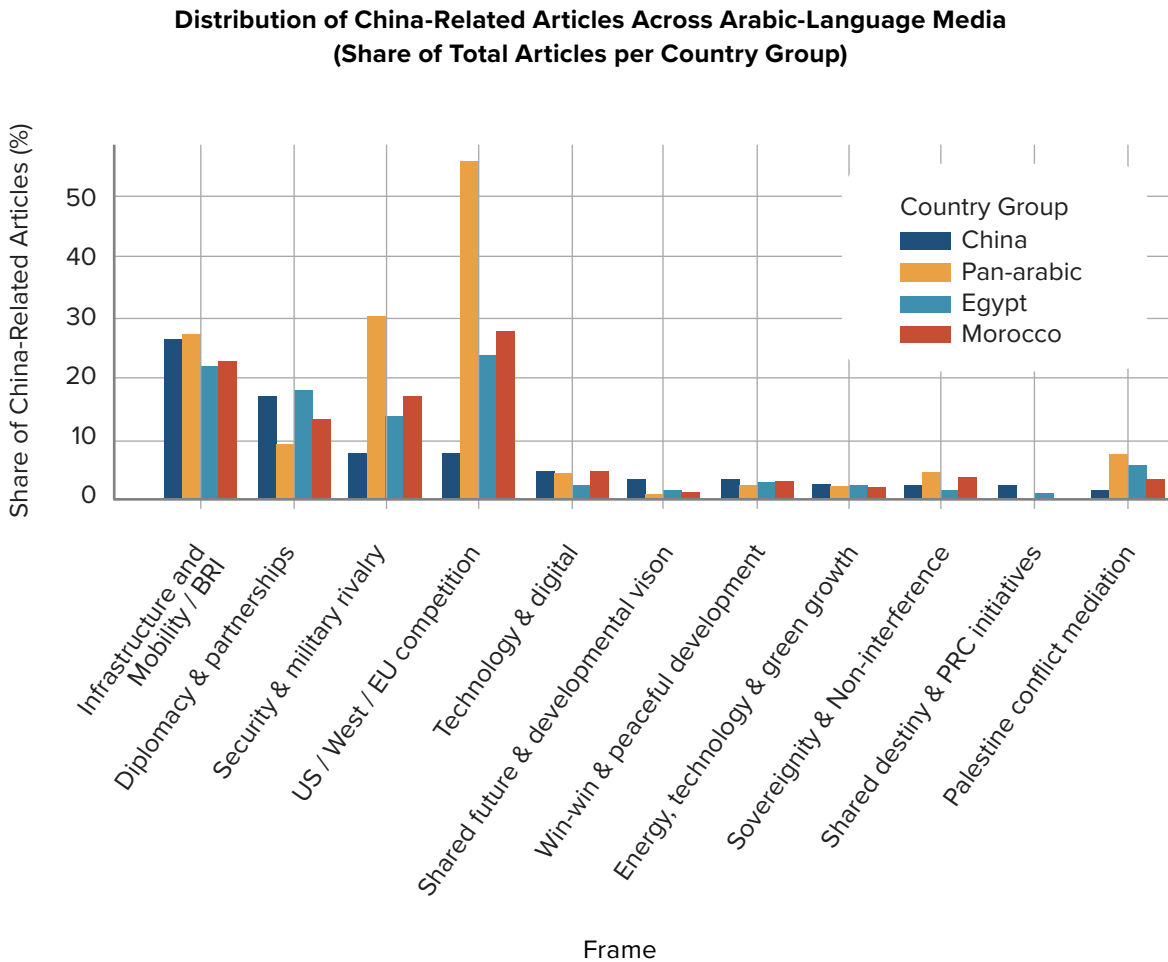
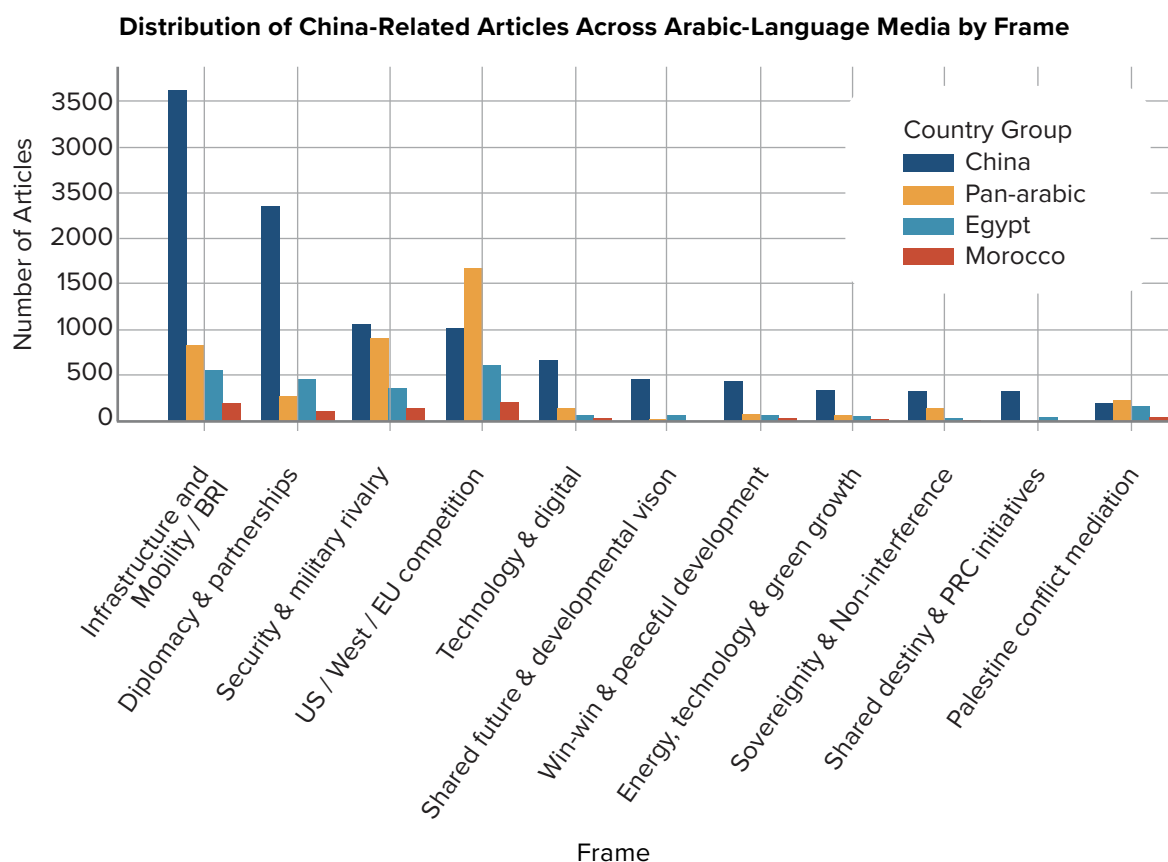


Figure 5. Distribution of China-related articles across Arabic-language media by frame



The distribution of article volumes indicates that the PRC produces a high volume of content through arabic.news.cn, contributing to sustained regional availability of China-related topics. By contrast, only a limited share of this content appears in non-PRC outlets, and the reproduction of PRC narratives in local media remains modest when compared with the official source corpus. This pattern points to a transmission gap: PRC narratives enter Arabic-language media ecosystems but are only selectively amplified, consistent with selective editorial reproduction rather than wholesale adoption.

China’s framing efforts are more frequently reproduced in Arabic-language media when the content disseminated is concrete and competitive. Such frames present China in pragmatic terms, focusing on infrastructure, ports, and logistics, particularly in relation to BRI projects with direct relevance to national economies. Frames most frequently reproduced beyond PRC official media align with

narratives of geopolitical competition, notably ‘US/West/EU competition’ and ‘security and military rivalry’. The ‘Diplomacy and partnerships’ frame is also more widely adopted when it is linked to concrete, country-specific deliverables.

By contrast, frames that remain central to PRC discourse but are under-represented in local Arabic-language media tend to be value-oriented, ideological, or aspirational, such as ‘Shared destiny and PRC initiatives’, ‘win-win and peaceful development’, and ‘Shared future and developmental vision’. This limited uptake is consistent with editorial selection that deprioritises rhetorical or ideologically framed content.

‘Technology and digital’, ‘Energy, technology and green growth’, and ‘Sovereignty and non-interference’ display similarly low levels of uptake, indicating that these frames remain relatively marginal within Arabic-language media coverage. By contrast, one niche frame that achieves comparatively higher

visibility is 'Palestine conflict mediation'. Across the analysed outlets—with the exception of *alyaoum24.com* in Morocco, which publishes limited China-related content overall—this frame appears more frequently in local media than in the PRC source corpus (*arabic.news.cn*).

This pattern suggests that frames aligned with salient political issues are more likely to be reproduced. Nevertheless, coverage remains episodic, with spikes typically occurring in periods of heightened tension or crisis, rather than reflecting sustained embedding. As such, the frame functions primarily as a signal of solidarity, rather than as a stable anchor for China's reputation as a peace-building actor. An analysis of the intensity of China-related coverage in Arabic-language media over the full study period shows that the volume of PRC-generated content fluctuates, with recurring spikes reinforcing an already high level of output. By contrast, levels of China-related coverage in local media remain largely stable, indicating that fluctuations in PRC output rarely translate into increased uptake by domestic outlets (see Figure 6).

For example, during the summer and autumn of 2023, PRC communications placed greater emphasis on infrastructure-related

issues, while in the autumn of both 2023 and 2024, coverage of 'Diplomacy and partnerships' increased. Nevertheless, none of the Arabic-speaking countries analysed showed a corresponding rise in local media attention to these frames (see Figures 7 and 8).

There are, however, notable exceptions. During two periods—March–May 2023 and April 2025—pan-Arab media exhibited marked increases in coverage of PRC-framed narratives. These surges were primarily associated with intensified coverage of the 'Security and military rivalry' frame, broadly coinciding with peaks in PRC output (see Figure 9). In addition, the 'US/West/EU competition' (Figure 10) and 'Palestine conflict mediation' frames generated higher levels of coverage in pan-Arab outlets than in national Arabic-language media, suggesting episodic embedding of these frames within pan-Arab narratives and helping to account for the higher levels of coverage observed.

Figure 6. Monthly frame presence - number of articles with frame by country or country group

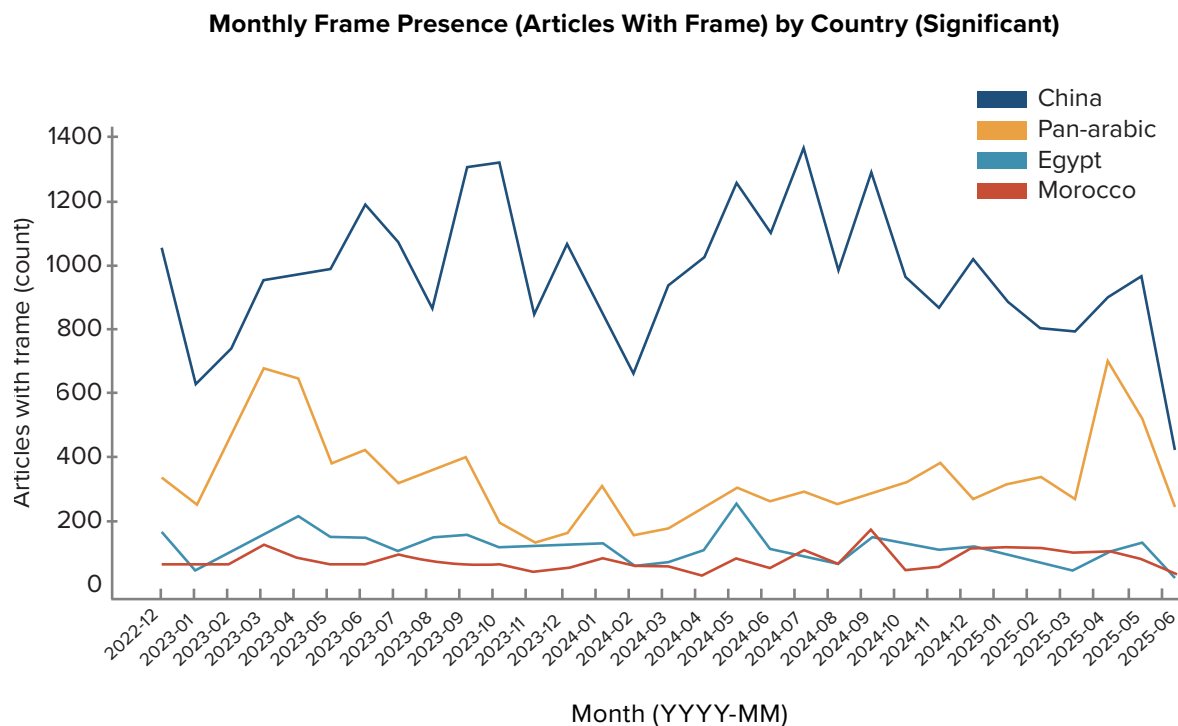


Figure 7. Monthly number of articles containing 'Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI' frame by country or country group

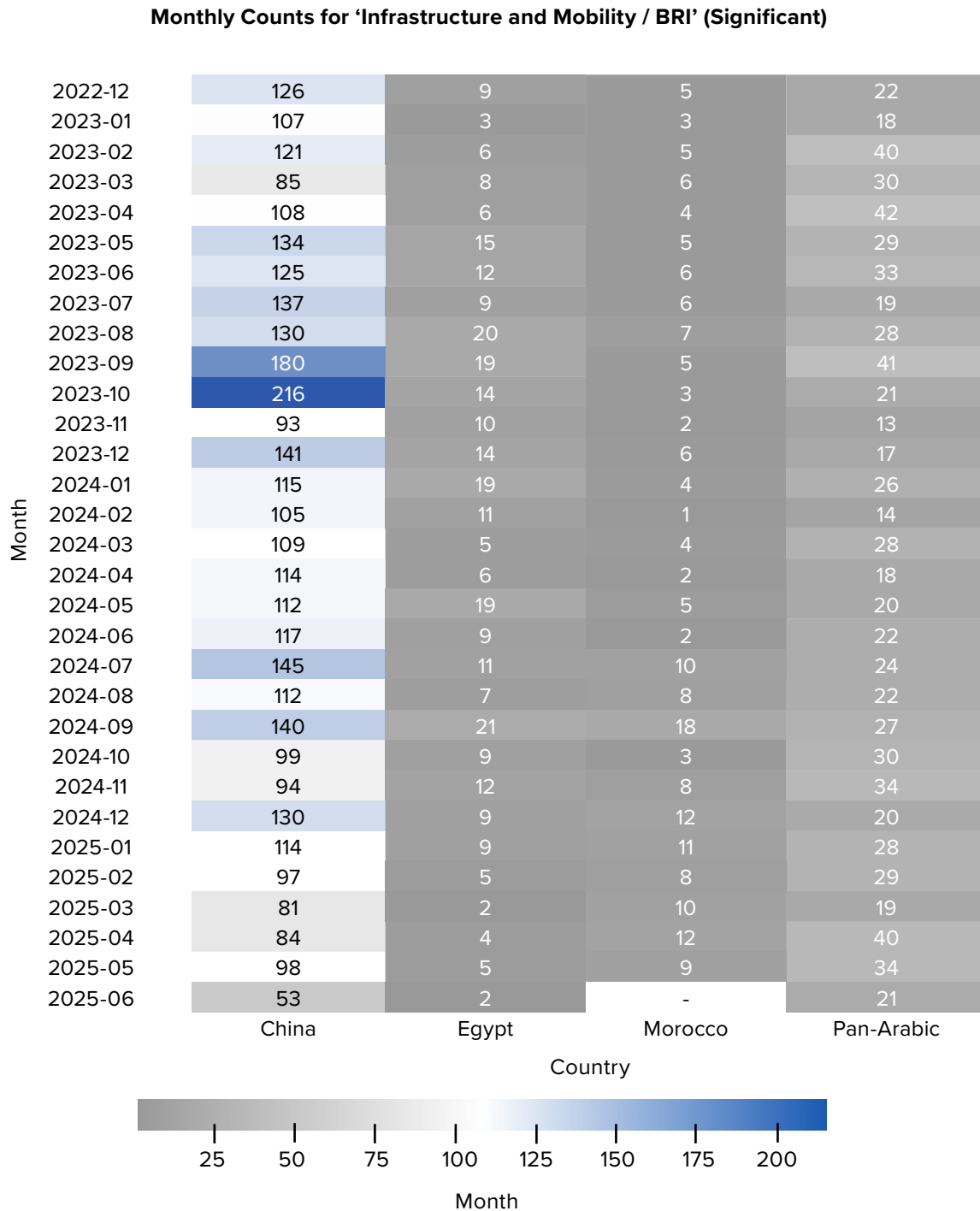


Figure 8. Monthly Number of articles containing 'Diplomacy and Partnerships' frame by country or country group

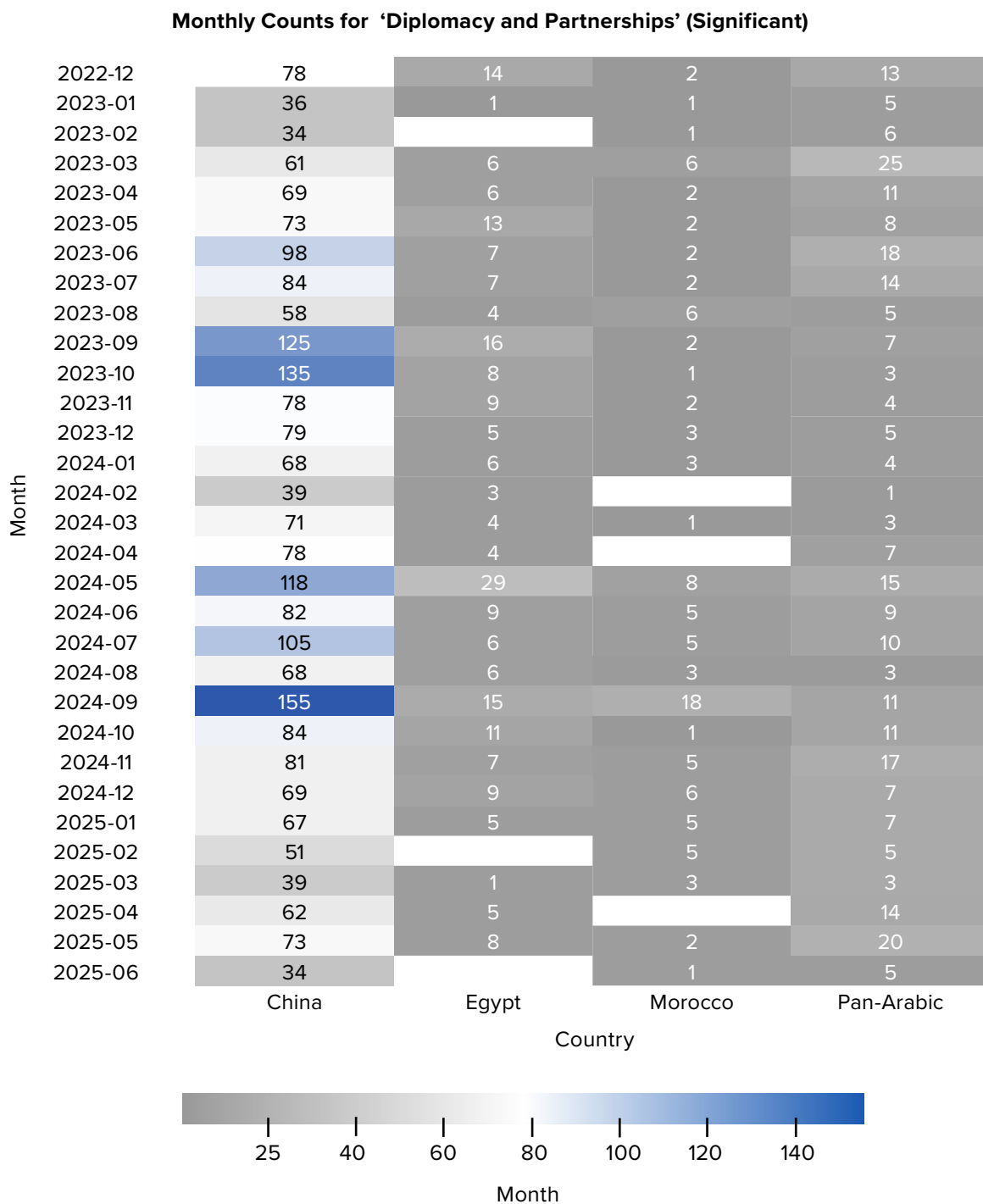


Figure 9. Monthly number of articles containing 'security and military rivalry' frame by country or country group

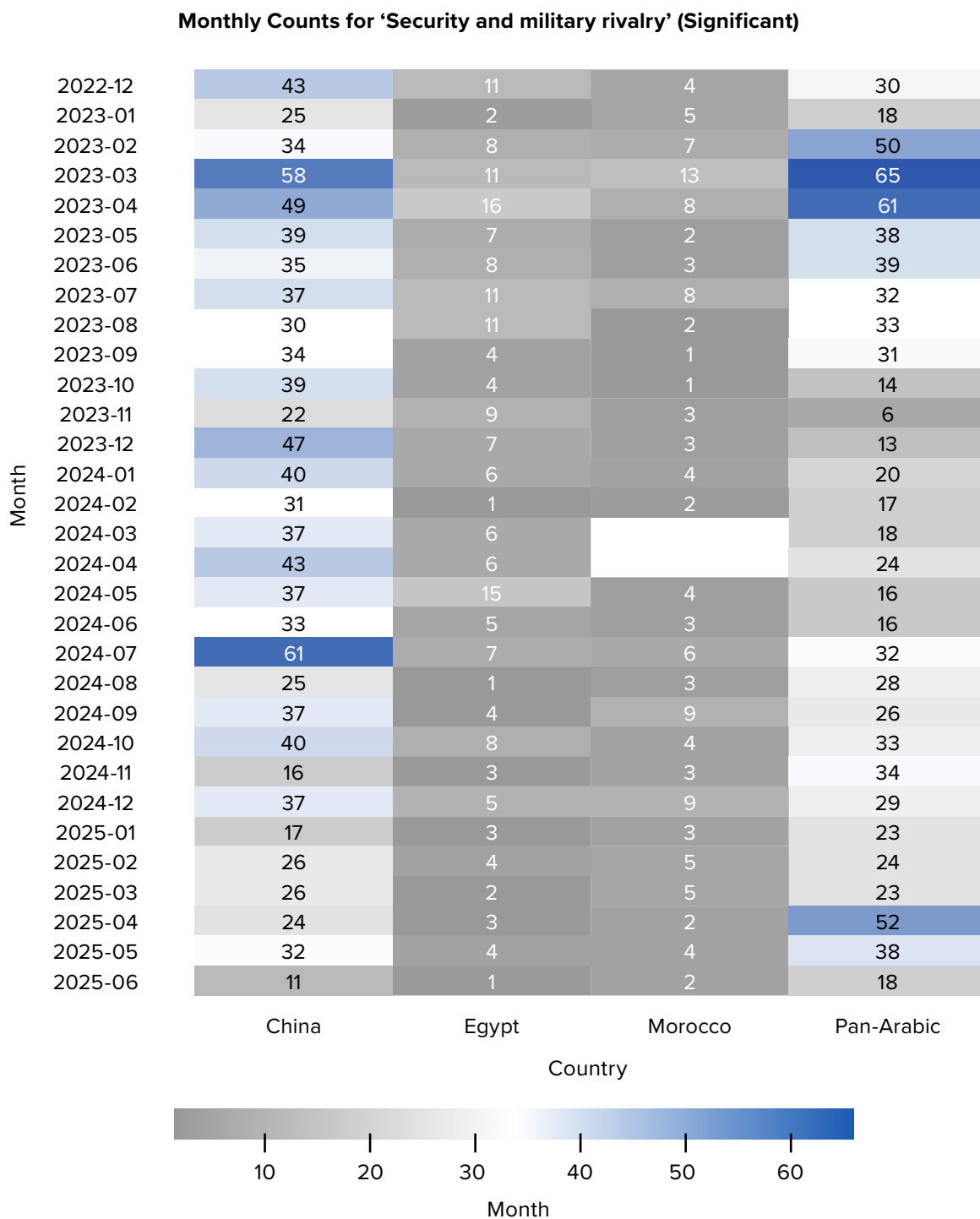


Figure 10. Monthly number of articles containing 'US / West / EU competition' frame by country or country group

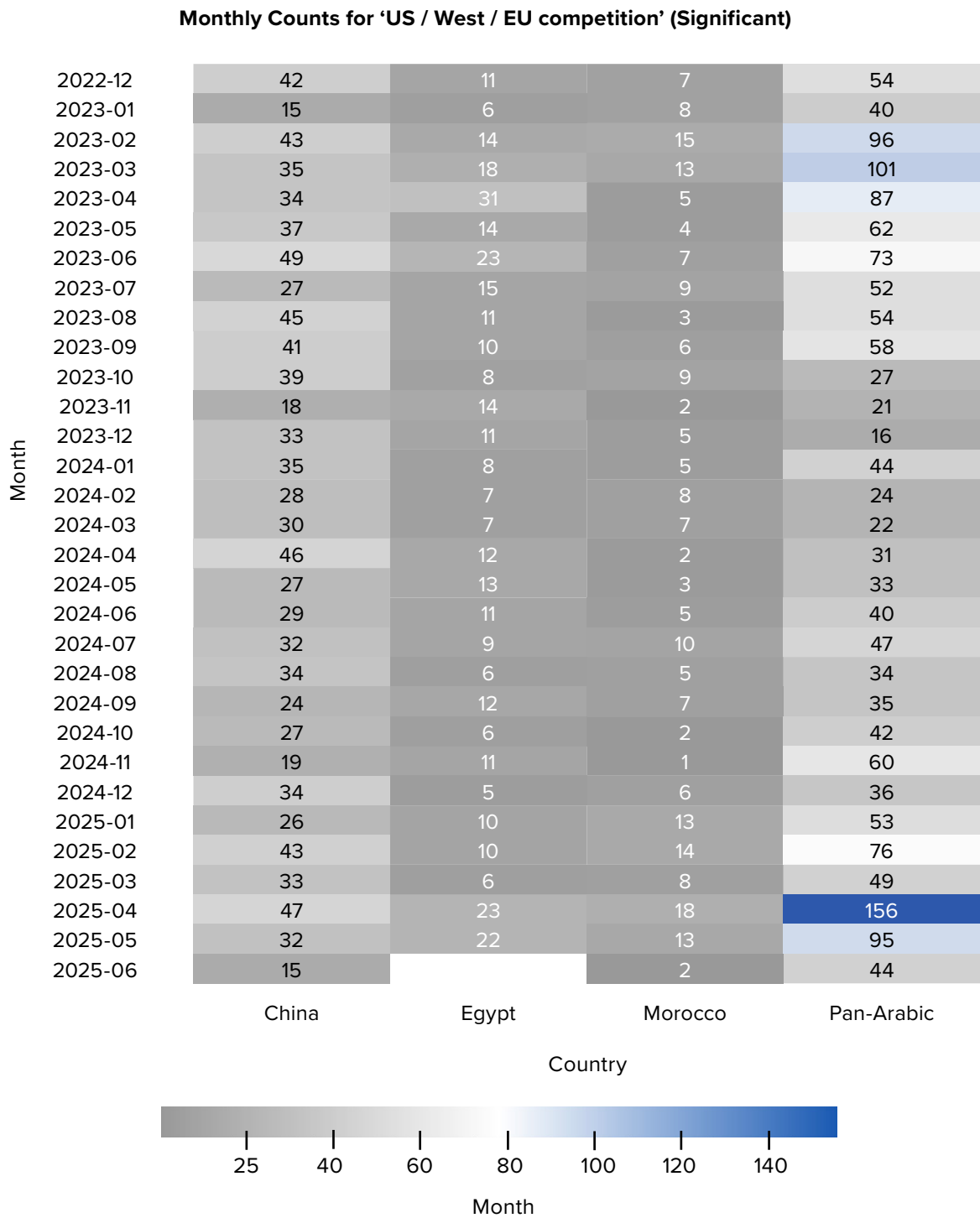
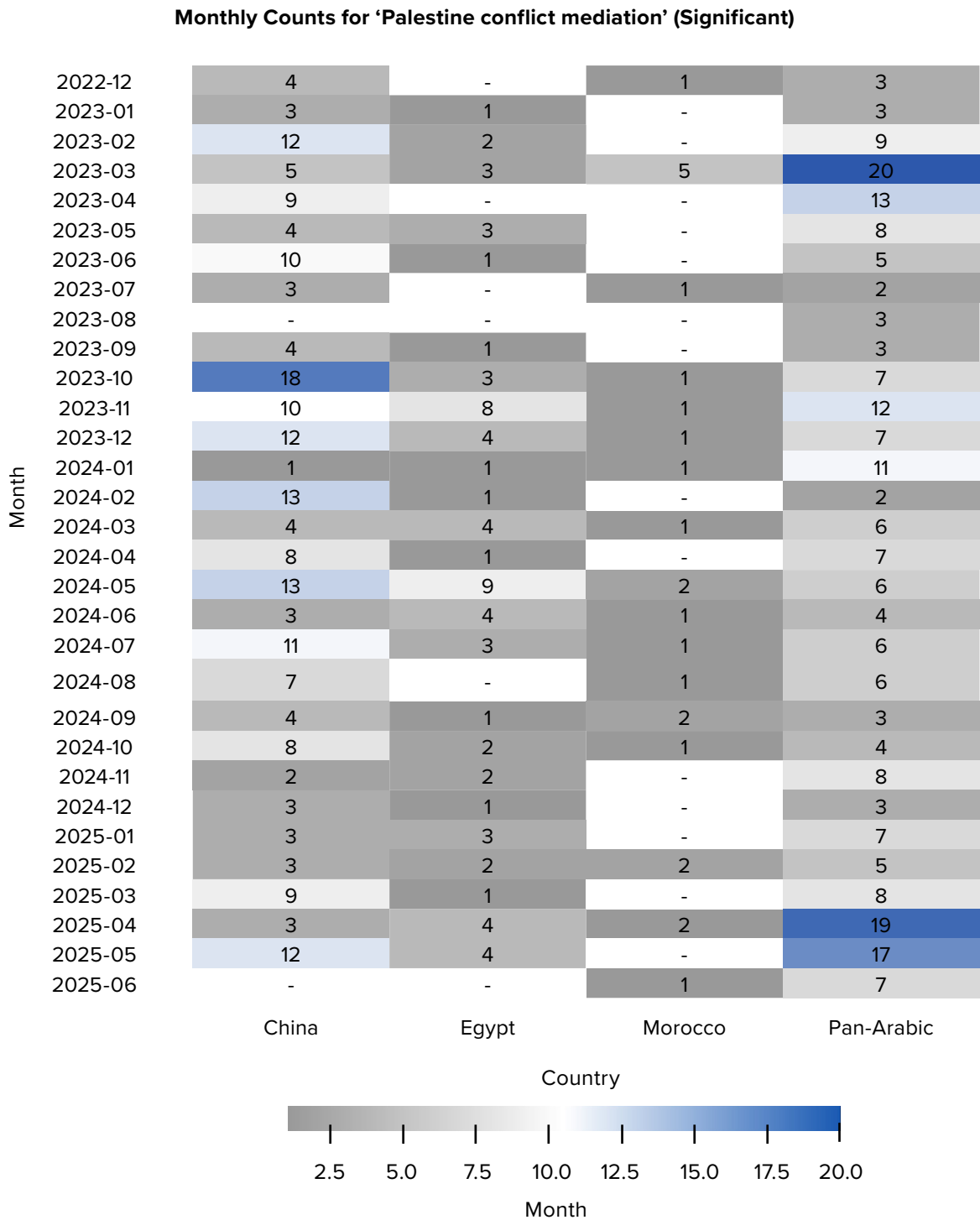


Figure 11. Monthly number of articles containing 'Palestine conflict mediation' frame by country or country group



Although average valence across all outlets and countries is positive, aggregated mean valence scores reveal clear differences in polarity between PRC-controlled and non-PRC media (see Figure 12). The PRC official source corpus (arabic.news.cn) displays a consistently high positive sentiment score of +0.95, whereas pan-Arab and national outlets exhibit more moderate positive scores, ranging from +0.45 to +0.60.

The consistently elevated valence observed in arabic.news.cn indicates an affirmative and celebratory tone applied across nearly all frames. This degree of uniform positivity exceeds levels commonly observed in routine diplomatic reporting and aligns more closely with a highly promotional communication style. Local media do not consistently replicate this tone. While overall sentiment toward China remains positive across non-PRC outlets,

valence levels are markedly lower than in the official PRC source corpus.

Moreover, average valence scores in local media mask internal variation across frames and over time (see Figure 13). Monthly valence trends show that while PRC official media maintain consistently high sentiment, the tone of China-related coverage in Arabic-language outlets fluctuates substantially, coinciding with variation in issue salience and contextual developments. Fluctuations in valence are generally normal in media content, while the consistently high and uniform valence index of arabic.news.cn indicates serious editorial politicization.

Several topics, particularly those related to security, global competition, and geopolitical influence, are covered in a more neutral, and in some cases negative, tonal register.

. Figure 12. Average valence of China-related articles

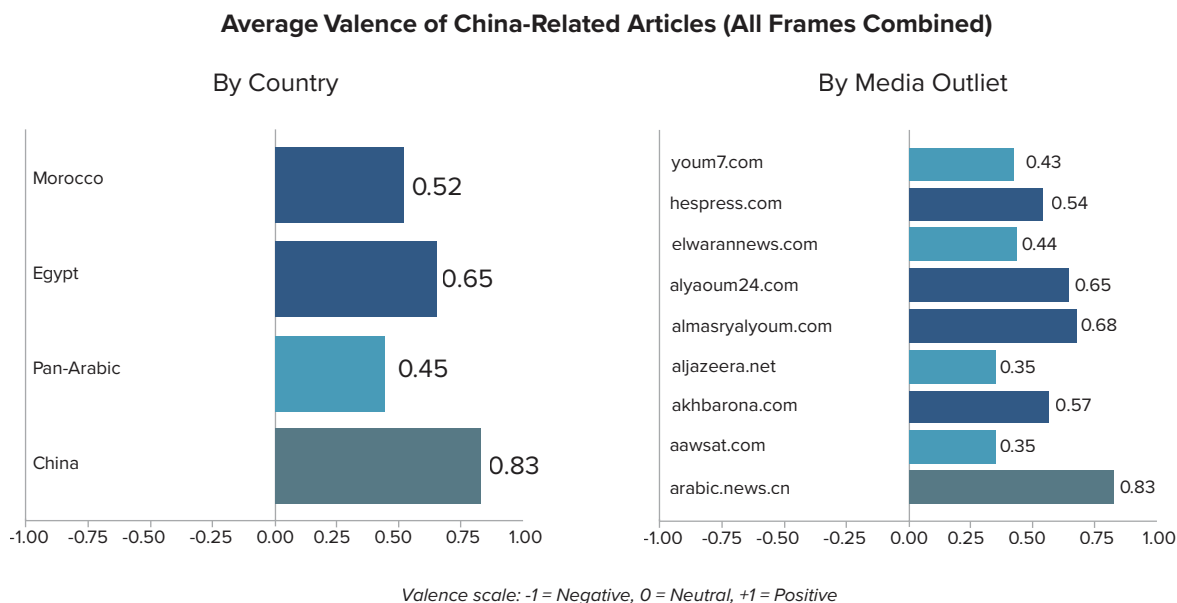


Figure 13. Monthly average valence by country and country groups

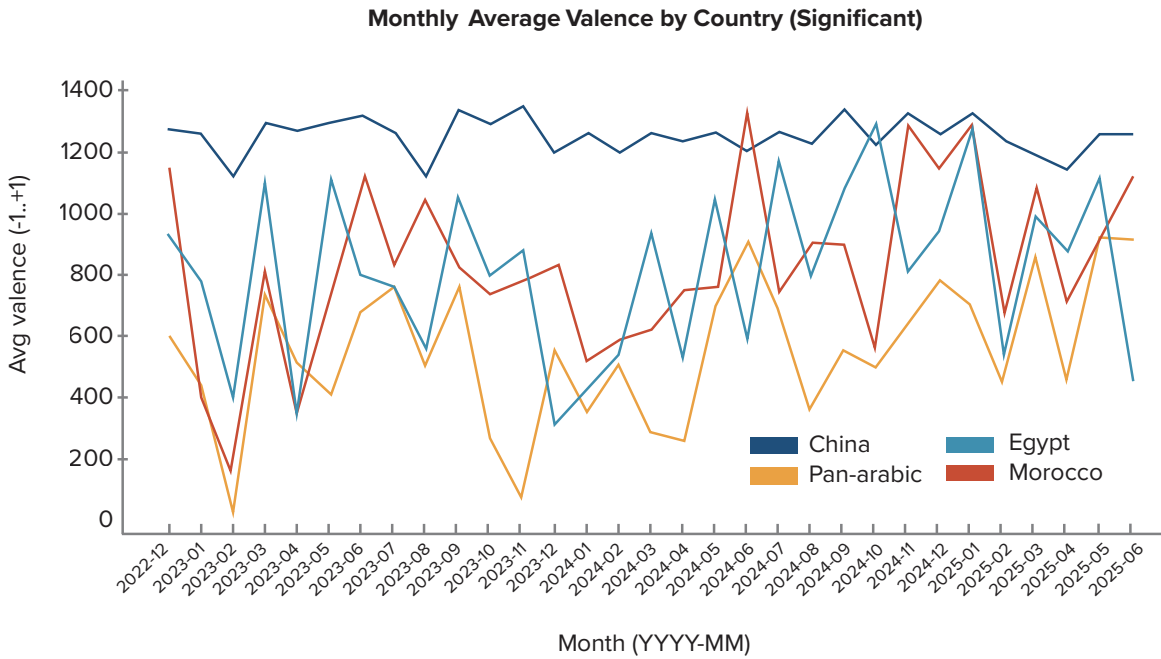
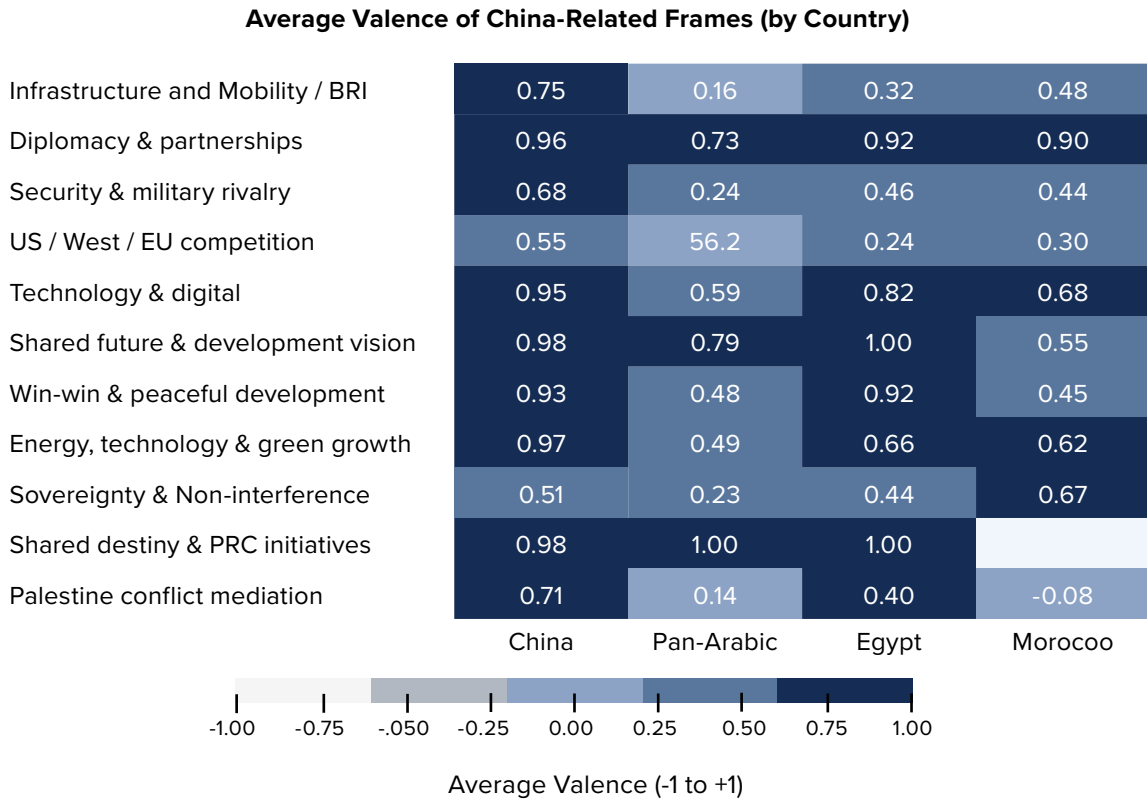
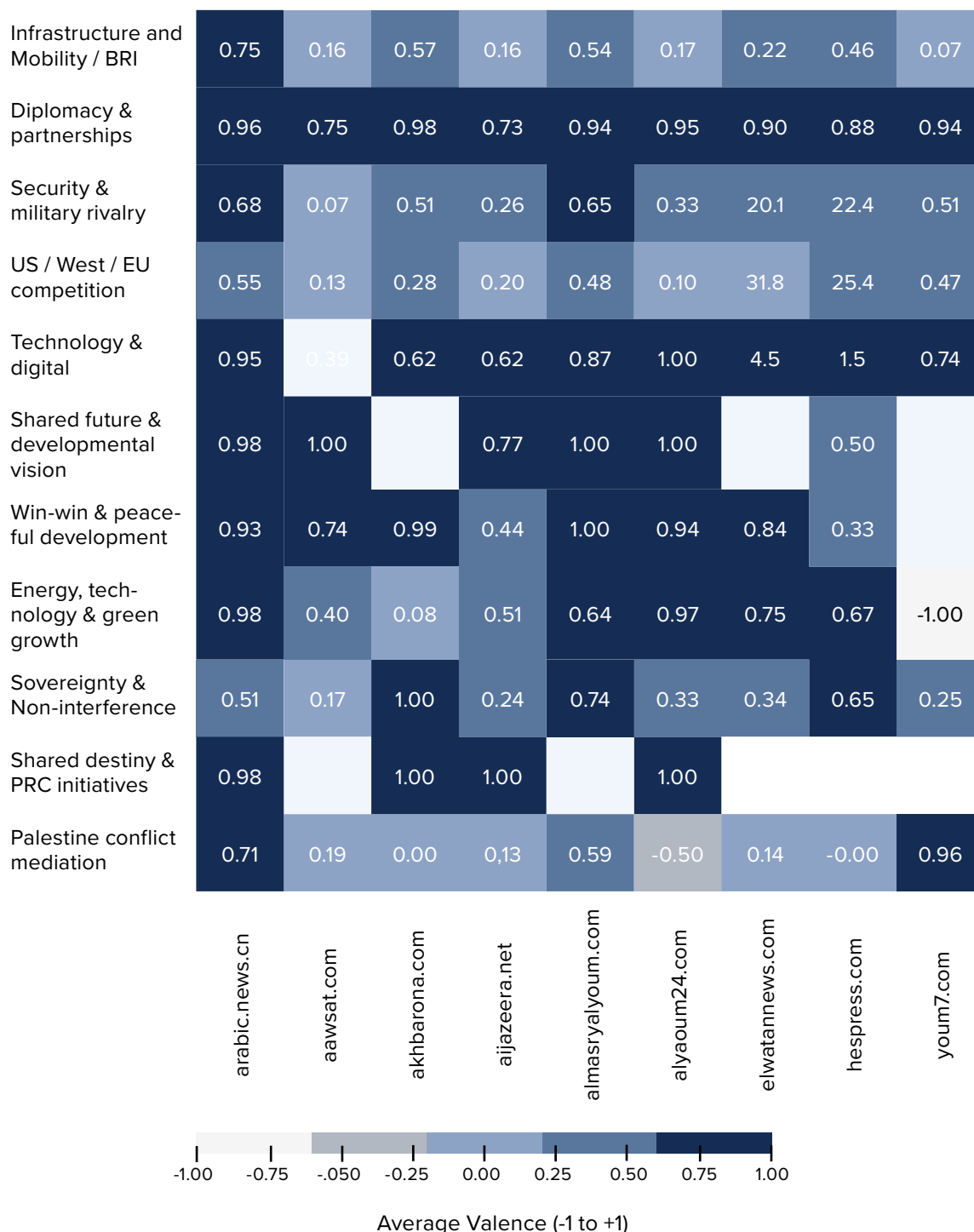


Figure 14. Average valence of China-related frames by country and media outlet



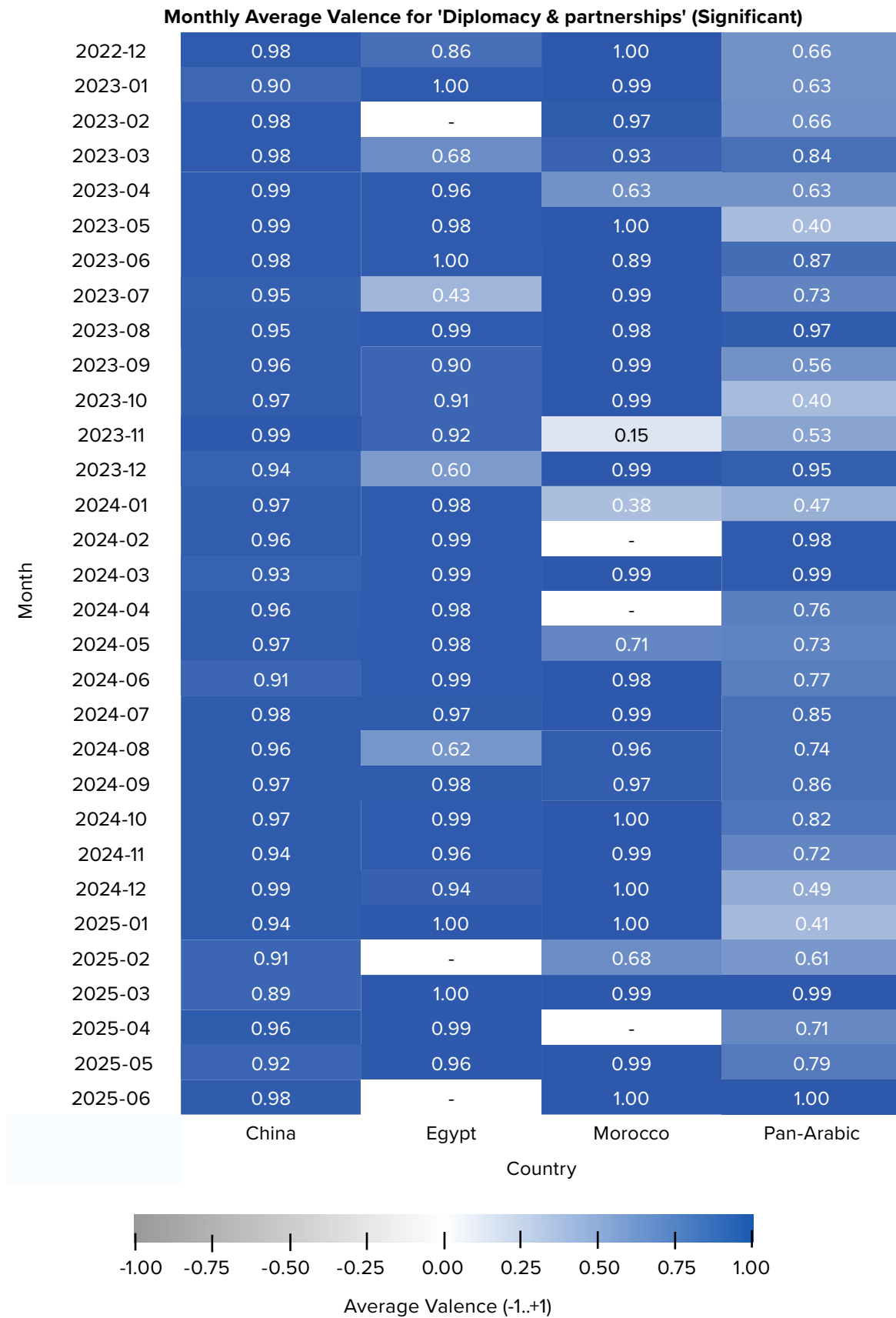
Average Valence of China-Related Frames (by Media Outlet)



Only when high valence coincides with high levels of frame adoption and thematic convergence with PRC official media can closer alignment with PRC narrative framing be inferred. This condition is most clearly met in the

case of PRC partnership discourse, particularly the 'Diplomacy and partnerships' frame, which exhibits consistently high uptake alongside strongly positive sentiment (see Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 15. Monthly average valence for the 'diplomacy and partnerships' frame



By contrast, the 'Infrastructure and Mobility / BRI' frame displays greater divergence in valence, as the strongly positive tone observed in PRC official media is not replicated in local coverage (see Figure 16). Pan-Arab outlets display notably lower valence in their treatment of the 'Security and military rivalry' and 'US/West/EU competition' frames (see Figures 17 and 18). Lower valence scores indicate limited transfer of PRC security and are consistent with more neutral or less overtly

positive positioning in narratives contrasting China with Western actors.

Value-oriented frames and those related to China's technological leadership receive comparatively positive treatment, albeit at low overall levels of visibility. Similarly, the muted valence associated with coverage of 'Palestine conflict mediation' suggests that framing China as a peace-building actor achieves only limited resonance within Arabic-language media coverage (see Figure 19).

Figure 16. Monthly average valence for the 'Infrastructure and mobility / BRI' frame

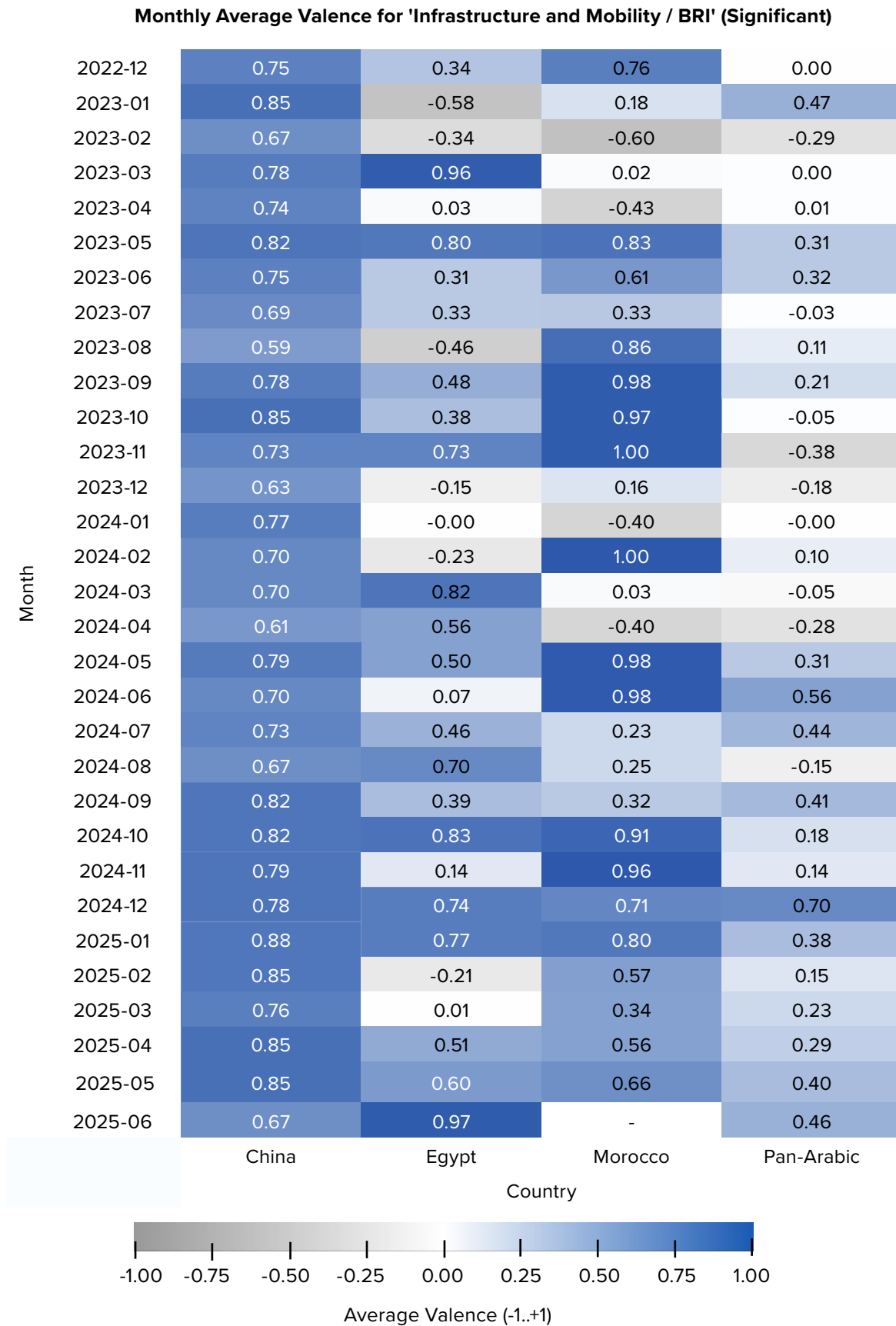


Figure 17. Monthly average valence for the 'US/West/EU competition' frame

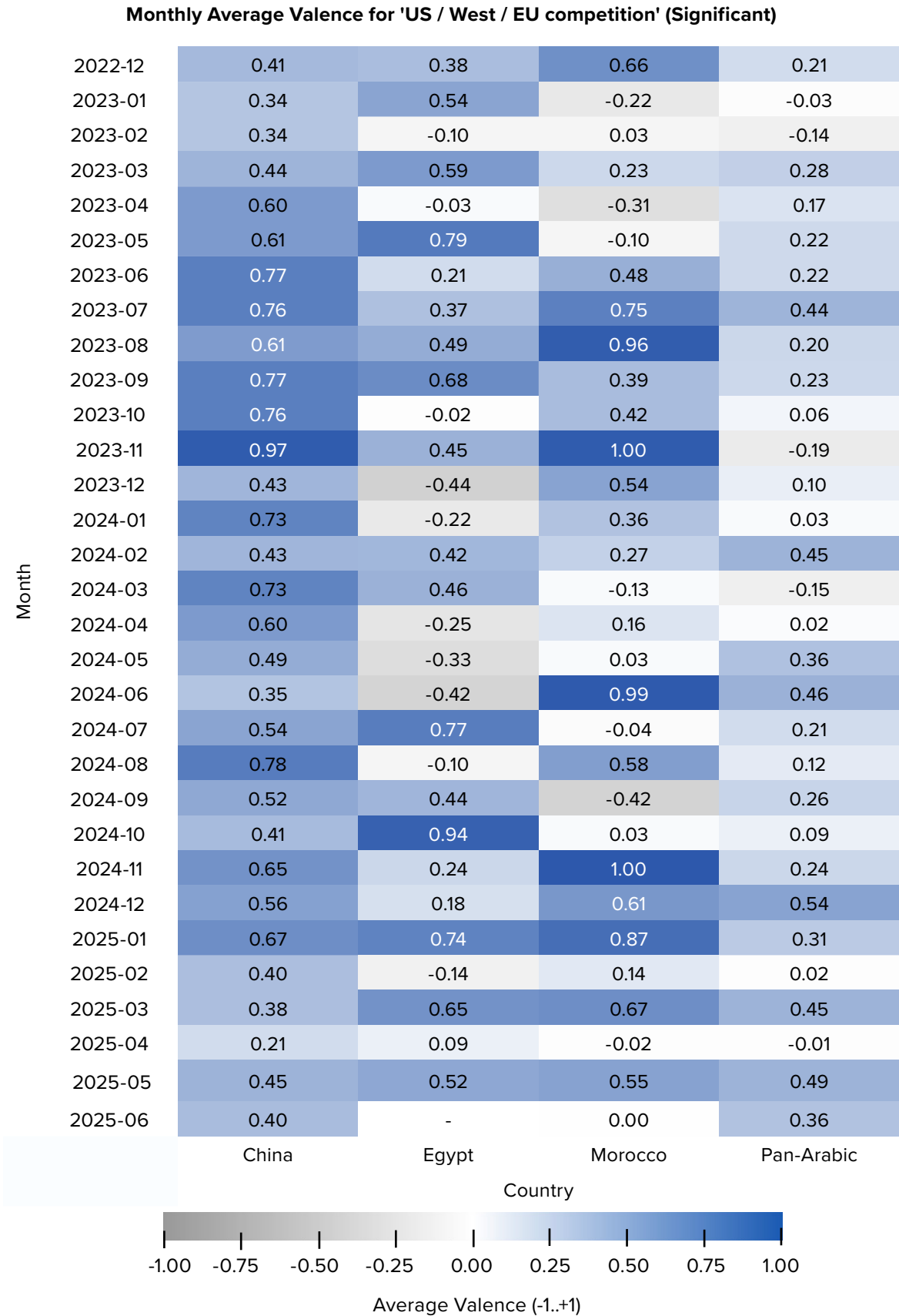


Figure 18. Monthly average valence for the 'security and military rivalry' frame Short-run implications of an increase in the number of adversaries and uncertainty

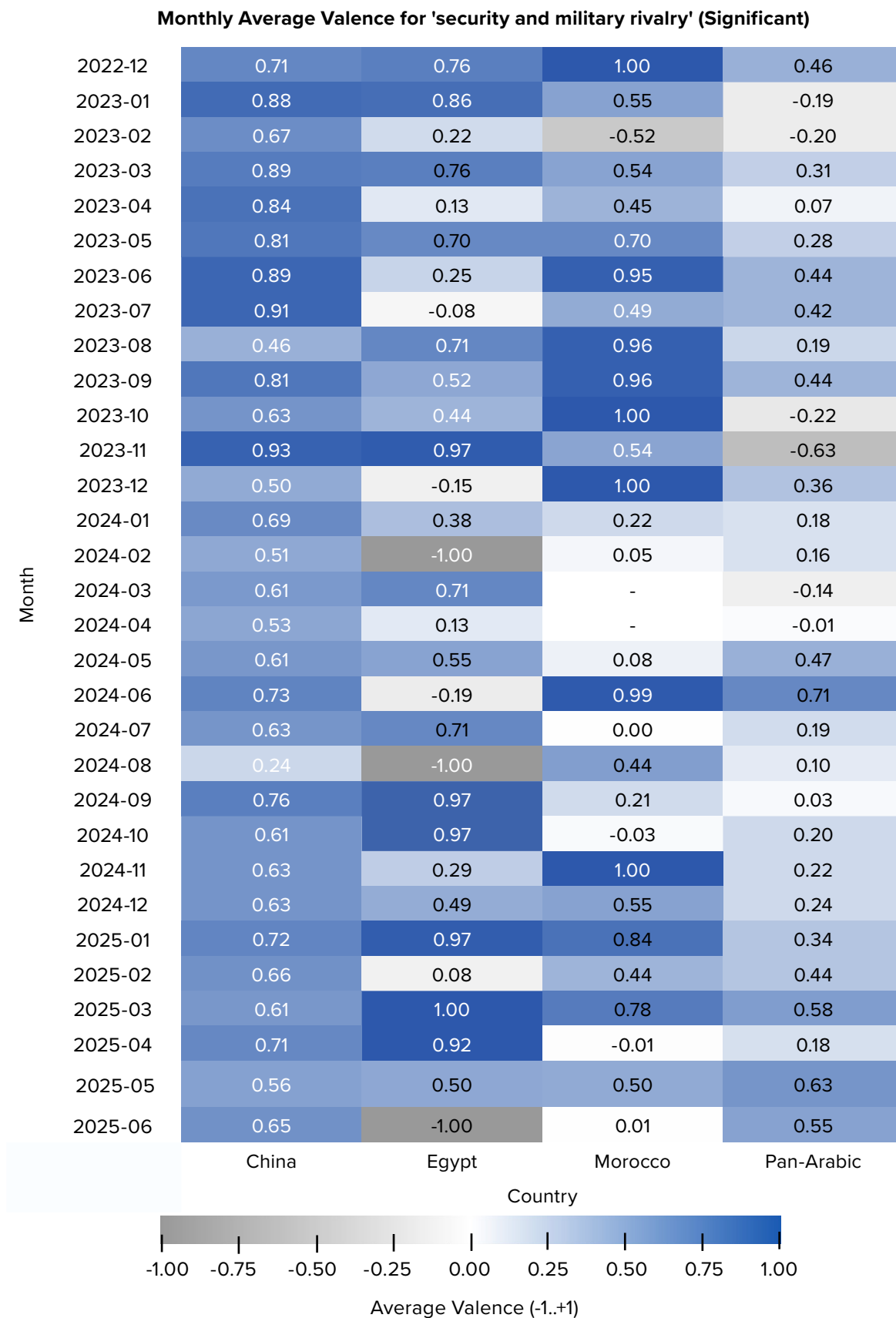
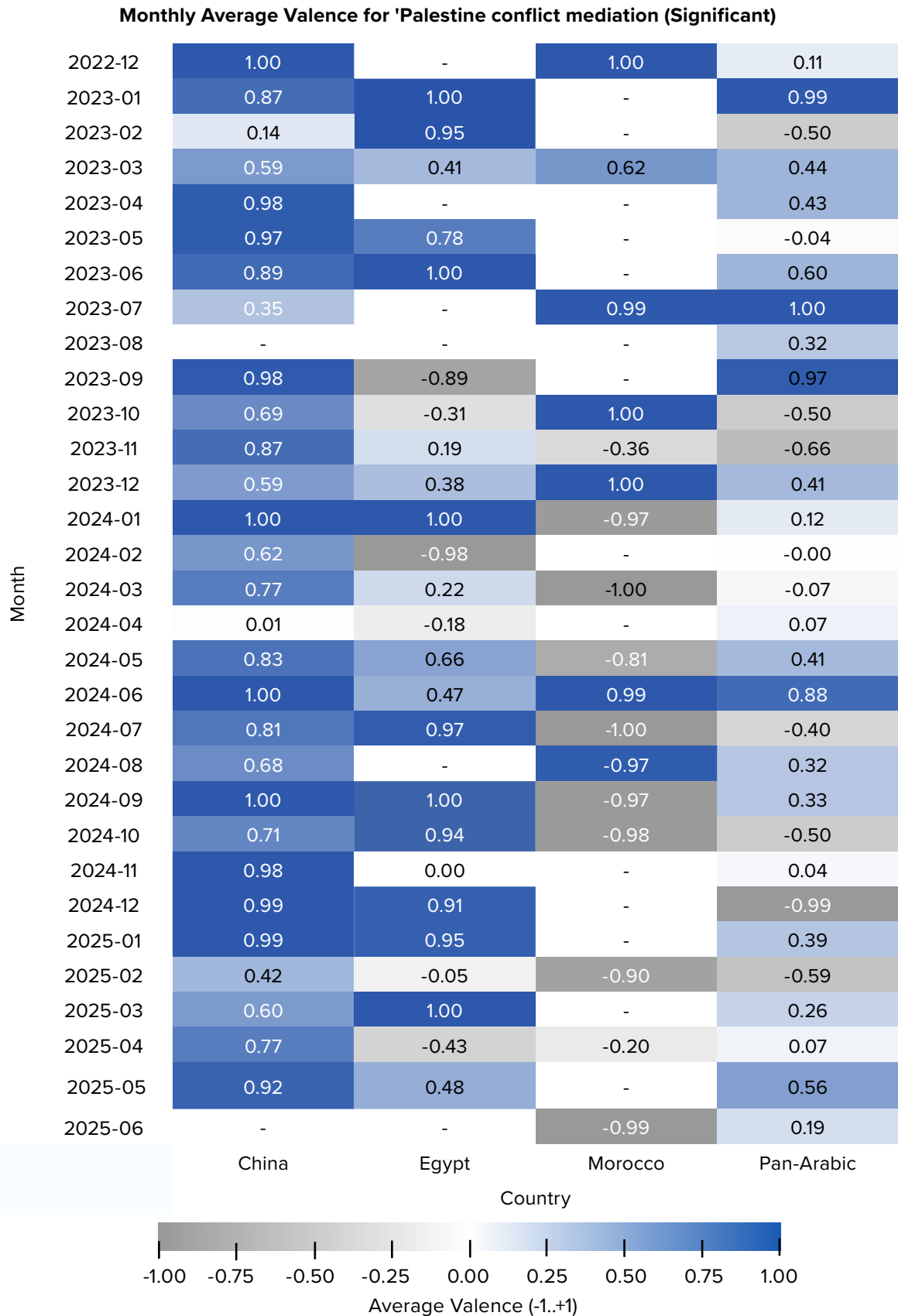


Figure 19. Monthly average valence for the 'Palestine conflict mediation' frame



Based on the data presented above, **PRC media appear to be only partially effective in advancing their intended messaging objectives.**

- 1. Building China's legitimacy as a strategic and development partner in the Arab world – effective.** Frames that present China in pragmatic terms, linked to energy cooperation, technological partnerships, infrastructure, ports, and logistics—particularly in connection with BRI projects affecting national economies—demonstrate clear resonance in the Arabic-language media environment.
- 2. Challenging Western influence – partially effective.** Frames aligned with narratives of geopolitical rivalry, such as 'US/West/EU competition' and 'Security and military rivalry', are more frequently reproduced beyond PRC official media into pan-Arab

and national outlets. However, this uptake cannot be attributed solely to the effectiveness of PRC framing, as critical perspectives toward Western actors are already prevalent in many Arabic-language media environments.

- 3. Promoting a positive image of China's leadership role in global governance – limited effectiveness.** Both pan-Arab and national Arabic-language media show limited engagement with abstract PRC value-oriented frames such as 'Shared future and developmental vision' and 'Win-win and peaceful development', as well as ideologically framed geopolitical and economic narratives including 'Shared destiny and PRC initiatives', 'Green growth', and 'Sovereignty and non-interference'.

Main Takeaways

- The PRC has signalled an intention to expand its influence in Arabic-speaking regions at the political and practical levels.
- The Arabic-language media environment matters for the EU, as first-time asylum applicants from Arabic-speaking regions constitute approximately 34.3% of the total.
- PRC state media appear to pursue three main objectives in Arabic-speaking regions:
 - Building China's legitimacy as a strategic and development partner in the Arab world (effective);
 - Challenging Western influence (partially effective);
 - Promoting a positive image of China's role in global governance (limited effectiveness).
- China remains central to its own narratives, broadly consistent with patterns observed in other regions.
- An asymmetry between message supply and uptake is evident: the PRC outlet arabic.news.cn provides substantially more China-related content than any analysed pan-Arab or national outlet.
- PRC frames enter Arabic-language media ecosystems but are selectively amplified, consistent with selective editorial reproduction.
- PRC framing gains traction in Arabic-language outlets when coverage presents China in pragmatic terms, focusing on infrastructure, ports, and logistics, particularly in relation to BRI projects affecting national economies.
- Frames that travel beyond PRC official media tend to align with locally prevalent narratives of geopolitical competition.
- Both pan-Arab and national outlets show limited uptake of abstract PRC value-oriented frames and ideologically framed geopolitical and economic narratives (e.g. 'Shared destiny and PRC initiatives').
- Pan-Arab outlets tend to recontextualise PRC cooperative messaging within broader narratives of multipolar contestation.
- Egypt constitutes an important national media ecosystem, as the combined volume

of China-related articles in Egyptian outlets nearly matches that of the pan-Arab group.

- Frames aligned with salient political issues are more likely to be reproduced; ‘Palestine conflict mediation’ appears more frequently in pan-Arab and local outlets than in the PRC source corpus (arabic.news.cn).
- Increased output in PRC official media does not typically correspond with higher visibility in local outlets, with a notable exception: pan-Arab media occasionally mirror heightened PRC messaging on security and geopolitical competition, at times publishing

more on these themes than the PRC source corpus.

- PRC narratives are rarely directly contested in Arabic-language reporting and are more commonly reproduced, albeit with varying degrees of emphasis.
- The consistently high valence of arabic.news.cn across frames exceeds levels commonly associated with routine diplomatic reporting and aligns more closely with a highly promotional communication style. Local outlets do not replicate this tone; while sentiment toward China remains broadly positive, it is markedly lower than in the PRC source corpus.

Limitations of the study

GDELT

Although GDELT provides access to a broad range of mass media sources, its coverage is not comprehensive. As a result, the analysis is necessarily limited to the subset of outlets indexed by the platform, introducing structural constraints on outlet representativeness. This constraint is particularly relevant in countries with complex or fragmented media environments, such as Syria, where local and smaller outlets are under-represented.

In addition, GDELT requires the use of a predefined topic taxonomy rather than allowing for fully customised keyword-based selection. While the topic list is extensive, it is not fully transparent, and its internal selection criteria are not explicitly documented. Consequently, topic selection involves a degree of informed judgement, and it cannot be excluded that some relevant articles fall outside the selected categories where predefined topics do not precisely capture the target subject matter.

GDELT also does not allow direct downloading of article texts, providing only links to source content. Articles therefore need to

be scraped separately for analysis. While this additional step does not affect data quality, it significantly increases the time and technical resources required for data collection.

Google Translate

Although machine translation has advanced considerably in the processing of news media texts, it continues to face limitations when handling context-dependent meanings, idiomatic expressions, and rhetorical nuance in journalistic writing. Google Translate operates primarily at the sentence level, which can result in the loss of discourse-level coherence and pragmatic intent across longer passages. In addition, translations may be inconsistent with respect to named entities, political terminology, and culturally specific expressions. These limitations are mitigated in this study by focusing on frame-level analysis rather than fine-grained linguistic interpretation. Frames are comparatively robust to imperfect translation, as they rely on recurring semantic patterns rather than precise lexical or syntactic formulations.

Future Research Directions

- Map Russian narrative frames in the Arabic-language media environment and systematically cross-match them with identified PRC frames to assess potential PRC–Russia frame convergence or cross-amplification.
- Examine the prevalence and circulation of identified PRC frames among social media users in Arabic-speaking regions.
- Investigate the dissemination of identified PRC frames through advanced information manipulation techniques, including the use of AI-enabled content and deepfake technologies.

Endnotes

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