Article
Socio-Political Events and Music: Egyptian Songs Supporting ‘Abd al-Sisi

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Abstract: This article presents the results of research conducted on Egyptian popular songs, categorized as patriotic and showing their writers’ support for ‘Abd al-Sisi. He was first a general, Minister of Defense and commander of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. When protests occurred in Egypt in 2013, he remained the main actor on the political stage. Then, he became marshal, resigned from his army positions, became the candidate for presidency and finally became president of the Republic. The author of this article briefly describes what happened in Egypt in this short time (2011–2014), and answers the main research questions which concern the messages of the songs, discussing whether the messages changed from the beginning of these events to the moment when he became president of Egypt. She points out how the songs follow the political events, and presents the results of her own participant observations, including photos from when she was living in Egypt from the middle of June 2013 to October 2014. She introduces this phenomenon, how the country changed in a few months and how the culture (music/popular culture) was an important part of the country’s changes that influenced these song’s messages.

Keywords: ‘Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi; Egypt; patriotic songs; army; Egyptian culture

1. Introduction

Using patriotic songs to show citizens that they are united in facing their difficulties and as support for the army, soldiers or leaders is, in fact, nothing new in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Traditional media—firstly only radio, from May 1934 when the national Egyptian Radio station was established (Nassar 2010, pp. 67–68), then also television from 1960 (Nassar 2010, p. 72)—were the main transmitters of patriotic values in the country. The period of time after World War II is significant. The Egyptian State Information Service explains: “(…) the role of the radio at this stage was to draw and report the real values of the Egyptian personality\(^1\) from all aspects: economic, political and social (…) The Egyptian Radio is the national radio and pioneering in the whole region. It has remained the cultural and lightning lantern from the time of its establishment in 1934 until now. It has played a national role and presented the giants of thought and stars in all fields. It was the voice of the Egyptian people, taking part in the treatment of its issues and problems and expressing its hopes and inspirations” (SIS 2019).

The role of television is also crucial in relaying special messages via patriotic songs. “Egyptian state television (…) is still considered an important means of presenting different kinds of songs, including via concerts and video clips.” (Nassar 2010, p. 75). Of course, currently, we can also hear these songs on the Internet, but these two tools, radio and television, were the most important during the period in which the research was conducted, as use of the Internet may be chosen, but what is broadcasted on the radio or television is, somehow, imposed. One can change the channel, but what if these songs are available on both private and governmental radio stations and TV channels? This is what happened in Egypt in 2013 and 2014 when the research was conducted.
The present article attempts to investigate a few popular Egyptian songs from the time when the former president of Egypt, Muhammad Mursi, was removed from office to when Abd Fattah al-Sisi was sworn in as president. The criteria for a song being chosen were that it should have more or less directly supported al-Sisi, but that it was definitely connected with his position, i.e., one is sure, without any doubt, that the lyrics were connected with al-Sisi. It should be clearly mentioned that the author of the article lived in Egypt from the middle of June 2013 to October 2014, and she made personal participant observations in this setting. Due to the political situation, this was a particularly fruitful time for patriotic songs, especially songs about the army and the solidarity of Egyptians—Muslims and Christians. In this article, the author decided to present the results of her research conducted on songs showing support for Abd Fattah al-Sisi, in order to portray this phenomenon and provide details on what happened in Egypt in the second half of 2013 and the first half of 2014. She finds it especially important that different media presented the situation at that time in Egypt in different ways (e.g., as a coup—Hume 2013—and as fulfilling the nation’s wishes—Butty 2013). It is worth examining what kinds of messages music conveyed to the nation. It is obvious that the Egyptian media supported changes in the country, and that is why the popularity of the analyzed songs was very high. What was observed during the participant observations was that people followed the “craziness” of the media and celebrated by listening to and playing these songs wherever they could—examples of this are presented in the article.

2. Literature Review

Despite the fact that the events mentioned in the article are relatively fresh in Egyptian history, there are numerous articles mentioning patriotic songs. Of course, there are more books or works mentioning the general political situation in Egypt, such as, for example, the work of M. Cherif Bassiouni, Chronicles of the Egyptian Revolution and its Aftermath: 2011–2016, in which he also mentions the figure of al-Sisi (Bassiouni 2017), although in this paper, the work concerning patriotic songs is more about reflection. Nevertheless, due to scientific duty, there is a need to mention as well that the author of this article has also published a few works in which she mentions his activities and the historical events from 2012 to 2013, as well as the results of her research on Egyptian patriotic songs (Wolny 2018; Wolny-Abouelwafa 2020a, 2020b).

Due to the fact that there have been many research studies conducted on the general connection between music and politics, this topic will not be discussed in this article very widely. One example can be given to maintain the scientific level of the publication, namely S. Frith’s World Music, Politics and Social Change (Frith 1989). Maciej Bialas’s research is also important for this paper. He details the social communications which music takes part in:

(A) The situation of communing with music—“a musical work is a carrier of aesthetic values; there is a canonical model of music (…)” (Bialas 2012, p. 11).

(B) The situation of enjoyment of music—“a musical work is a carrier of ludic values; the music is an entertainment filling the free time (…)” (Bialas 2012, p. 12).

(C) The situation of political instrumentalization of music—“a musical work is a carrier of political values. The music is used to define and expose outlooks, ideological and political attitudes (…)” (Bialas 2012, p. 12).

For this paper, the second and especially third points are significant. Patriotic songs, more or less (it depends on the song), are used to fill free time, but mainly they define and show the “needed” political attitudes at a specific moment.

Lydia Goehr also wrote about this in Political Music and the Politics of Music (Goehr 1994). A similar topic was covered by John Street in The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics (Street 2014). Courtney Brown wrote a book in which he connects music and politics very strongly, Politics in Music. Music and Political Transformation from Beethoven to Hip-Hop (Brown 2008). All these research works show that there is a strong connection between music and politics.
The topic of music or general popular culture in Egypt has been previously analyzed. Scholars have presented the results of their analyses on the history of patriotic songs, e.g., V. Danielson’s *The Voice of Egypt. Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (Danielson 2008) or L. Lohman’s work about cultural preservation of music and Umm Kulthum, who served the diverse political agendas of the Egyptian state (Lohman 2010). These works explain when the phenomenon of Egyptian patriotic music started and that it was directly connected to Egyptian politics.

Furthermore, E. Podeh and O. Winckler wrote *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt*, and A. Elsheikh wrote *The Political Hero Figure in Egyptian Songs: A Linguistic Reading—With Particular Reference to Jamal Abdel Nasser* (Elsheikh 2012). These two works are important as comparisons to the songs created for al-Sīsī, especially since even Elsheikh in his literature review cites Podeh with the words, “In fact, “the link between Nasserism and popular culture was nowhere as salient as in the field of music. Gabriel Rosenbaum shows [how] Umm Kulthum, Abd al-Halim Hafiz, and Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, all of whom were personally acquainted with Nasser” (Podeh and Winckler 2004, p. 23)” (Elsheikh 2012, p. 25).

Moreover, D. Mostafa wrote a book about the military in popular culture, ranging from a historical to a more recent (2011) perspective (Mostafa 2017). In addition, a chapter was devoted more directly to the relation between Egyptian popular music and nationalism, in which she mentioned, among other things, “Egyptianness” and the fact that after the 2011 revolution, the “interrelationship between nationalism and popular culture has been empowered (…). The revolution has provided space, opportunity and horizon for new creativities to emerge by the masses who enabled and energized the revolution, and who have given it its national “Egyptian” flavour through their popular discourse of chants, slogans, songs, paintings, murals and poetry” (Mostafa 2013, p. 155). In her latest book from 2021, which she wrote with A. Elbendary, she connected culture (among other things, songs), politics and urban space (Mostafa and Elbendary 2020).

A similar topic, Egyptian nationalism and its connotation with music, was raised by M. Frishkopf in his work (Frishkopf 2008). Gameel and Ghetany (2019), also concentrating on nationalism, but in terms of the song “Bušrit Hīr”2, on which they conducted a discourse analysis.

M. Soliman wrote an article about the relation to culture using Arab patriotic songs, in which she concentrated mostly on Egypt. She mentioned, among other things, the reasons for the popularity of patriotic songs, especially in the context of the Arab Spring (Soliman 2015).

3. Methodology and Aim of Research

The author collected 8 patriotic songs from 2013 to 2014 that were more or less directly dedicated to ‘Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī. After that, she chose 4 for the research on the basis of their direct linkage to al-Sīsī. The timeline was divided into two different stages, with different songs representing these stages. The first stage is characterized by songs where ‘Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī is not the main hero, but more or less a part of them, and secondly, where he is the main hero of the songs.

The main thesis of this article is that Egyptian singers created songs for ‘Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī, the main actor of Egypt’s political scene in 2013 and 2014, in order to support him taking power in Egypt.

The most important research question that was posed is, what exactly was the message of the songs? The second question relates to whether the messages changed from the beginning of events to the moment when ‘Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī became president of Egypt.

The research was divided into two approaches, an analytical approach with critical discourse analysis and content analysis, while the second approach involved participant observations.

The analysis categories were the messages of the songs, how ‘Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī was presented and what his role in the country was at that moment (general, president can-
didate, president). Due to the fact that songs support political figures, critical discourse analysis and a socio-cognitive approach were chosen. The question about what the reality created by the songs was had to be answered.

While analyzing the songs, the author concentrated on the textual layer, which is why she used the Białas approach, as previously mentioned. On the one hand, songwriters express their feelings, and let people have fun and enjoy themselves; on the other hand, singers express their vision of the country and their support for al-Sīsī. Here, the clue is that sometimes the audience does not necessarily feel that the songs presented by a favorite singer are in some way political (like the first analyzed song, which “just” supports the beloved army), while other times this is clear (like with other analyzed songs).

The author used qualitative methods since for her, a holistic understanding of the songs’ lyrics and the socio-cultural and political situation of Egypt in the given time period were the most important. The qualitative method used in the analysis is subjective.

From a theoretical point of view, Stuart Hall provides theories of representation of meaning via language: the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist approach. In his article, he deals with the intentional approach, as he wrote, “It holds that it is a speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends they should mean” (Hall 2013, p. 10). This is exactly what we observe in the songs. The writers choose the meaning of the words and special messages for fans, in this case Egyptian citizens.

Michel Foucault’s approach should also be mentioned, as well as his power analysis methods. Among other things, he focuses on the power–knowledge relationship. In theory, songs are created by independent artists, but if we enter deeply into their activities, we will see that they support ‘Abd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī and his politics. There is no need to present all the profiles of the artists, as that is not the topic of this paper, but there is a scientific duty to mention that art can be created with genuine grassroots sentiment, but also can be created closer to the authorities and profit from it, e.g., artists present their songs almost all the time on the TV and radio, join concerts and meetings where the president appears to sing for him and huge Egyptian audience (such events are also transmitted on television), join political rallies where they can also extend their popularity among Egyptians and many other things. As we can see, even if the authorities do not command the specific song, there is a strong connection between them and the artists. The songs, following the particular politics, shape the way Egyptians should think and—later—vote. This concerns, as well as Egyptian, foreign artists. We can not forget that Egyptian audience has been the most important one in the whole Arab world since the second half of the XXth century.

Also, theories of propaganda apply here. As Krzysztof Dziomdziora wrote, we mention here social propaganda, which “integrates, homogenizes its recipients in terms of attitudes and ideas, unifies their behavior according to a specific model, promotes a certain lifestyle, and attacks other environments and social groups” (Dziomdziora 2008, p. 17). This propaganda is not directed from above, as anybody can be propagandists.

It is also white propaganda, as we know exactly the senders of the messages and their intentions, and is internal, as it is directed to people inside a country. It is also audit propaganda, as it is used by the radio and all sound media, including records and television.

To analyze the socio-cultural aspects and to mention the situation in the Egyptian media, the author also employed participant observation. The interviewers with whom she spoke were young Egyptians (ages 18–32) working in different fields (most of them were in tourism, but two of them were engineers in international companies). Altogether, she interviewed more than 27 Egyptians, chosen from those who took part in the demonstrations supporting al-Sīsī. Unfortunately, only 27 names were left in her notes. Her other notes were lost. She selected interviewees randomly (taking care to have representatives of different ages and genders), interviewed in the form of casual conversation about the current situation and their opinions. Of these, 7 were Christians, while the rest, 20, were Muslims. She spoke also to a lot of Egyptians on the streets, but did not record their names. All of them supported al-Sīsī and all of his actions.
4. Egypt before 30 June 2013

In 2011, after 30 years of reign, Husnī Mubārak was removed from power. The so-called Arab Spring changed the authorities of Arab countries and their histories. Almost one and half years later, Muhammad Mursī, originally from the Muslim Brotherhood organization, in the second term of presidential elections, beat Ahmad Śafīq by gaining a small advantage. On 30 June 2012, he was sworn in as the president of the Arab Republic of Egypt (Rashwan 2012). During his presidency, many protests took place. However, they reached a peak before the one-year anniversary of the inauguration of Mursī as president. Exactly one year after he took power, on 30 June 2013, millions of Egyptians again took to the Egyptian streets. This time, they wanted his dismissal. According to Reuters, military sources said that 14 million people demanded Mursī’s resignation (Fayed and Saleh 2013). As is often the case during such dynamic situations, it is impossible to say exactly how many Egyptians actively protested against his rule. As a response to the occurring events, the president’s supporters also appeared on the streets. There were clashes between them. According to the data provided by the media, the number of demonstrators against Mursī was much higher than that for his supporters (Polityka 2013).

In the contemporary history of Egypt, the date 12 August 2012 is very important. That day, Muhammad Mursī dismissed the former Minister of Defense and Commander of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and appointed the person who soon would change the course of Egyptian history—General ʿAbd Fattāḥ al‑Sīsī (El Gundy 2012).

The president was accused, among other things, of monopolizing power and for inefficiency in solving the country’s economic problems. According to the Tamarrod, under the petition of the dismissal of Mursī, around 22 million signatures were collected (Ahram Online 2013b). This is almost 9 million more than the number of votes which he had collected one year previously in the presidential elections (according to official results, he gained 13,230,131 votes) (Ahram Online 2012).

Mursī called for national dialogue (not for the first time during his presidency, see CBC 2012) and dismissed calling an early vote (AP 2013). Although he agreed that he had made a few mistakes during the first year of his presidency, he declared that they could be corrected (Xinhua 2013). The Tamarrod movement denied this proposal. “There is no way to accept any half measures (…) There is no alternative other than the peaceful end of power of the Muslim Brotherhood and its representative, Mohammed Morsi” (BBC 2013a).

Egyptians started to die once again in demonstrations and clashes. Before 30 June 2013, the Egyptian army announced that it was ready to intervene only to protect Egypt against internal conflict. The Minister of Defense, ʿAbd Fattāḥ al‑Sīsī, called all political parties to forestall the crisis. On 30 June 2013, when major demonstrations took place in the streets, it was said that they were likely the largest crowds in Egyptian history (Polityka 2013). Michael Hanna, who has analyzed the situation in this country for years, affirmed that “the scenes of protests are unprecedented in size and scope, and seemingly surpass those during the 18-day uprising that toppled Mubarak” (Kingsley 2013b).

As a result of social discontent, a few ministers resigned from their positions. In the issued statement, the representative of the armed forces said that “the national security of the state is in severe danger” (Carlstrom 2013). Furthermore, he added that if politicians did not find a solution that would obviate disputes, the army would introduce its proposition of a solution, the so-called “road map”, which comes from its political and historical duties (Carlstrom 2013; Abdelaziz et al. 2013). ʿAbd Fattāḥ al‑Sīsī underlined that the army would not plug into politics (BBC 2013b). However, the army, from the very beginning, wanted to show people that it was on their side—the air force flew the national colors in Cairo’s sky just over the protestor’s heads. Among the people, more often one could hear the slogans, “Il‑Ğayš wa‑aš‑ša ʿib īd wā ʿda”, which means “The army and the people—one hand!”. The leaders of the opposition also called on the army to take action.
5. Egypt—July 2014

In his TV appearance on 2 July 2013, President Mursī said that he would not resign because he had a democratic mandate to hold office. He denied the army’s ultimatum. On 3 July 2013, the army informed him that he would no longer be the head of state. He was moved to an unknown place and, until the end, he did not accept this decision. Ḥādī Mansūr, the President of the Constitutional Court of Egypt, took over the duties of the President of Egypt. The author of the article was a witness to the explosions of happiness which this statement triggered throughout the Egyptian streets (Figure 1). Many believed that a new era for Egypt and for General al-Sīsī had started. For some Egyptians, he remained a synonym of positive changes and hope for a “better tomorrow”. Though not everybody accepted the army’s decision, the love which al-Sīsī received from his fellow citizens surpassed even his own expectations. His charisma captured many Egyptian hearts. It has to be mentioned that on the first day of “the new reality”, supporters of Mursī also showed their dissatisfaction.

There were more riots, and again people started dying in them. Finally, General Ḥādī Mansūr asked people who supported him to go out of their homes and demonstrate their support for the army and police “to give me the mandate and order that I confront violence and potential terrorism” (Kingsley 2013a). Though not everybody accepted the army’s decision, the love which al-Sīsī received from his fellow citizens surpassed even his own expectations. His charisma captured many Egyptian hearts. It has to be mentioned that on the first day of “the new reality”, supporters of Mursī also showed their dissatisfaction.
was a very difficult time for Egypt. They were terribly worried about the future of their country. However, what actually happened was different.

Muslims and Christians, hand in hand, started to protect churches, which the author of the article heard about from a few Egyptian Christians from different cities. This could also be observed on social media and television. Egyptians posted photos, for example, from Sūhāḡ, where Muslims put their hands around the church to protect it during the marches of supporters of Mursī and the Muslim Brotherhood. The next day, the author of the article heard the announcement of the army on the radio, which declared help for the police and the rebuilding of the destroyed churches.

Egypt was very close to a civil war, which ultimately did not occur. Also, Egyptian television and radio started immediately broadcasting songs and videos of patriotic songs showing the support, love and unity of the Egyptian citizens— Muslims and Christians. One can say that the media and popular culture were extremely helpful at this time, because they reminded people everywhere on the radio, on television, in coffee shops, “we are together!”, “we are united”, “we are hand in hand”, “we are brothers!”. There were old and also many new songs that were released during this time to show that Egypt was united, and that there was no difference regardless of religion because they all lived in one homeland. In the opinion of the author of the article, on the basis of her observations, cultural support was a big part of the success of what happened. On the whole, this is why it is important to conduct research on the patriotic songs from this time.

6. Egypt—After July 2014

The current position of ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī since 3 July 2013 has changed diametrically. In January 2014, he was appointed by ʿAdlī Maṣūr as marshal, and at the end of March, he resigned from his army positions and announced that he would run in the presidential elections (Tawfeeq and Gümüçhian 2014). The elections took place on 26–28 May 2014, and with a turnout of 47.5%, ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī received 96.91% of the votes, 23.78 million votes (i.e., 10 million votes more than Mursī two years previously) (Ahram Online 2014). Again, his supporters had reason for happiness and celebrations (Figure 2). They took to the streets of Egypt with flags in hand, dancing and singing. Cars blocked the streets; patriotic songs blasted from speakers. From home windows, patriotic music could be heard and Egyptian flags were seen flying.

Figure 2. 04.06.2014. Egypt. People celebrating on the streets following election of the new president. Al-Sīsī’s era in Egypt had officially started.

His ushering in as general field marshal and finally as president generated positive feelings among many Egyptians. In the shops, people could buy various gadgets with his photo or effigies: flags, hangers, caps, shirts, different posters, etc. The greatest novelty during Ramaḍān was “toy lamps” in the shape of al-Sīsī (Figure 3). This kind of lamp is called a fānūs, and is strongly connected with Egyptian culture. Most of these al-Sīsī’s fawānīs played Ramaḍān songs, but not all of them. Some of them played a very popular song of the time that had no connection with this situation, but was a typical patriotic song
for the army. It was the *Tislam il-ayādī* song, which had been enjoyed by Egyptian society since the beginning of the events of 2013.

![Figure 3. al-Sīsī’s fānūs.](image)

7. **Patriotic Songs for Egypt**

Egyptian patriotic songs are extremely popular in the country of the Nile, and can be heard there almost every day on the radio or television. Some people listen at home, some in their cars while driving, in coffee shops and others at parties. In situations when there are significant, dangerous events going on in the country, these songs are played much more frequently. Egyptian patriotic songs may cover various genres of music; they may be calm and solemn or funny and lively, and additionally can be played during parties, weddings and in coffee shops. This likely contributed to these songs gaining such widespread popularity.

Throughout the world, creating patriotic songs that worship political leaders is nothing new, the same as in Egypt. As an example, the song for president Mubārak manifested as [Ihtarnāḥ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj97e6lZ57w), which means “We have chosen him” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com))

8. **Tislam il-ayādī**

When Egyptians went to the streets, songs reverberated from the radio and TV, the main target being to evoke patriotic feelings in citizens. Egyptian TV programs were interrupted by songs talking about love for Egypt, and videos and photos showed crowds on streets with flags. Viewers could see older and younger people, and women and men. With the change in power, everyone could see celebrating citizens, fireworks, people with flags drawn on their faces and posters presenting al-Sīsī. Slogans on the unity of the army and the people could constantly be heard on the streets. The author of the article was witness to a number of situations when mothers were handing their children to soldiers on tanks to take videos and photos. She saw people hugging young and older soldiers and congratulating them. People also sang and danced to the new patriotic songs.

The biggest hit among the songs about the army and connected with the change in power was the *Tislam il-ayādī* song. The dictionary of Egyptian dialect explains the expressions of *tislam ẗāl(ak)* in this way: “(may (your) hand stay safe)” an expression of thanks or congratulations to one who has done or made something with his hands” ([Hinds and Badawi](https://books.google.com/books?id=0420)). The author of the article translates these words as “thank you” or “(God) bless hands which did”. That is why the title of the song can be translated as “God bless these hands”.

It is a song that has basic lyrics and is lively, energetic, catchy and modern, with an upbeat melody that praises the Egyptian army. In the song, there is a reference to the
fourth Arab–Israeli war. The writer of the lyrics underlines that soldiers are heroes dying for Egypt—for both Muslims and Christians—and that Egypt and Egyptians are proud of them. The singer sings that Egypt calls the soldiers “her children”. The soldiers are described as those who fought and will fight for the homeland. The writer of the lyrics sends thanks to the hands of young and old soldiers—the troopers and marshal. According to the lyrics, it is Egypt that calls to Egyptians for them to live together, hand in hand, and, finally, that they grew up together in one homeland and with its resources, so they cannot let someone defeat them. They will win and they will do it with God’s will. Egypt is described as the most important place for its citizens. Even if they travel to different countries, they always miss it and feel as if they will die if they are far from it for long. Egypt is their sense of life and their home, which connects them. Nobody wants to change Egypt, and he who relaxes close to the Nile forgets about his pain. Egypt took care of its children, so now they are ready to repay it and correct the anomalies. This part should definitely be understood as a reference to the time of Mursī’s rule.

God is with Egyptians and supports them in the fight for their homeland’s future. The soldiers will protect the borders of the country, its wealth and honor. The families are never sure if a soldier will come back home because he can come back only as a winner. Finally, Egypt is worth any cost. Soldiers will fight until they die or stay alive for the cause. Mothers of soldiers cry, but, on the other hand, are happy and proud of their children. Of course, the writer of the lyrics wishes for the soldiers to be safe and in good health.

In the songs, there is occasionally a direct reference to Abd Fattāh al-Sīsī, for example, “When we didn’t know what to do, the voice full of nostalgia sounded”. He said: “our hand will be cut if they hurt Egyptians”. These words were said by real Egyptians: “For God’s sake! He promised and fulfilled a promise” (YouTube n.d.d). The inspiration for the author of the lyrics were certainly words said by al-Sīsī during his speech at Future University (YouTube n.d.c). Another part states, “Millions of greetings to the soldier and marshal, for the greatest one, for those who draw for us the road. From me to you, the most basic present—greetings for the generous man!” (YouTube n.d.d). In this section, we can see the reference to the “road map” for the country, which al-Sīsī proposed when he removed Mursī from power. Furthermore, there is a fragment calling him “hero” and referring to his words about the army: “who said sharply: be careful of the anger of the mountains. Egypt says to you today: bless the hero who said it” (YouTube n.d.d).

These songs incited citizens of Egypt to behave in various ways. The author of this article witnessed such situations on a few occasions. For example, in a coffee shop that was full of people, when there were other songs playing, people were sitting calmly and talking, and children were playing. When they heard Tislam il-ayādī come on the radio, they all jumped up and started dancing.

In another situation, the author of the article was shopping for vegetables close to a beauty salon, exactly at the moment when a groom arrived with a band to pick up the bride. They were playing typical wedding songs. Some people were watching them, but most of the people from the streets were concentrating on themselves. This changed when the band starting playing the song Tislam il-ayādī. Some cars even stopped, and people started to dance and sing. It was as if there were hidden cameras and we were on a Bollywood movie set, and it was just a happy Egyptian street.

A similar thing happened during the Russian, Georgian and Commonwealth Culture Week Festival in Hurghada (17–23 January 2014), which was full of Egyptian artists and audience members. What was surprising was that the biggest hit of the festival was Tislam il-ayādī, which was played when the crews of the artists were changing the stage. During this time, the song and its video were shown. It always received substantial applause from the audience, and people were singing, jumping and dancing.

As has been explained, when Egyptians heard this song, they were happy, they stopped talking mid-conversation, they sang and sometimes even danced. It was so popular that it was presented even at official concerts, for example, for the occasion of the third anniversary of the January 25th revolution.
The author of the article personally met people who were not fans of the changes that happened in Egypt, but would nevertheless let go of their inhibitions when they heard this song as though they were its biggest fans!

Despite the fact that this song was dedicated to the Egyptian army, not strictly al-Sisi, it presents him as the person who could lead both the army and the whole country to a better future. His words could be found in the song, as was proven above. This song was a flagship of the change in power in Egypt. It is impossible to discuss songs about the army or for al-Sisi in contemporary Egypt without mentioning Tislam il-ayadī. That is why this song deserves special research attention.

In the background when this song was played would be a video showing the magnitude of the army. It presents the powerful army and Egyptian soldiers, flags and singing artists. In theory, the song was dedicated to all soldiers, to the whole army, not exactly to ’Abd Fattāḥ al-Sisī, but his presence in the video is also definitely underlined.

This song accompanied the most important events in Egypt in 2013 and 2014, for example, the presidential elections (Figure 4) and the constitutional referendum (Figure 5), which took place on 14th and 15th of January 2014. This piece was strongly positively identified with everything that happened with ’Abd Fattāḥ al-Sisī.

Figure 4. At the time, when the position of al-Sisī was changing from an army officer to the president, citizens took to the streets to show him support, for example, in this way. Egypt, January 2014.

Figure 5. “We see in you... future of the homeland” — Egyptians went out to the streets to show ’Abd Fattāḥ al-Sisī their support; Hurghada, January 2014.

9. ’Ayzīnak

After the events in 2013, songs started being written that were dedicated strictly to one person— ’Abd Fattāḥ al-Sisī. He was not just a part of them, but was in fact the main hero.

The next song, which was frequently transmitted by the radio and on television, was a song entitled ’Ayzīnak, which means “We want you”. According to the lyrics, the whole
country wants nobody other than al-Sisi. These words “ʿayzīnak” are repeated many times in the songs (YouTube n.d.a). They want ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī because they want to live peacefully, happy and with a better future without fear, lies and injustice. Egypt is his “amāna”, which has a very integral meaning in Egyptian culture. It is something we can give to somebody to keep for us, protect and take responsibility for nothing bad happening to it. If Egypt again were faced with problems and unrest, only al-Sīsī would be able to calm them. The artists who sing the songs emphasized that they did so only for him. They sing that this is his responsibility to the people and he has to do it—he should lead the country because this is the “people’s order” (YouTube n.d.a). This is what they call freedom, and they believe that he will help Egypt and their co-citizens. For them, he is simply the best of the Egyptians, and he will protect Egypt and let it develop. They also hope that God will protect him.

10. Al-Mufid Al-muhtaṣar

Al-Mufid al-muhtaṣar, which can be translated as “To the point”, is the next song which was dedicated to ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī. The singer sings that all Egyptians are with him, and it was he who protected them and the country from the danger. He will also always protect Egypt, which will grow and develop thanks to him. He was also the person that Egyptians felt they needed. The lyrics display confidence that he will be chosen as president of Egypt. The singer sings that she gives to him her voice and Egypt as an “amāna” (which was explained above). The author of the lyrics believes that the God is with al-Sisi, protects him and “with who the God is, he has to win” (YouTube n.d.e), as the song says.

11. Rabbinā Wayyāk

Rabbinā Wayyāk, which can be translated as “God is with you”, is the next song which concentrates only on al-Sisi. It is another very positive and energetic piece, showing support for the man who changed the history of Egypt.

The songs starts with the words explaining that God and Egypt’s love (as it is exactly mentioned in the lyrics—“hearts” (YouTube n.d.b)) are with ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī. According to the lyrics, God made the leader strong and that, thanks to God’s permission, Egypt will grow, bloom and succeed. And all this will happen with al-Sisi. We find out in the song that Egyptians have put the country into the hands of an experienced man who does not care or worry about his life, and that God will help him to win against his enemies. Finally, Egyptians gave him their children for him to protect them!

The author of the lyrics underlines that al-Sisi is with Egyptians and Egypt through the “crisis and difficult moments” (YouTube n.d.b). Also, that “God rewards us the past year” (YouTube n.d.b). Again, as in previous songs, here we can see the reference to the events in 2013 and Mursī’s rule.

Again, al-Sisi’s words are almost directly quoted. The author alleges he is quoting the president’s words from when he said that Egyptians should hold hands together to build a future for their children, to build a life (YouTube n.d.b). No one should worry about Egypt—Egyptians inside nor outside of the country—because now the homeland is in the hands of a good and clever leader.

The song is created in the form of congratulations for Egypt and Egyptians for the good decision which was made in choosing ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī. What is interesting is that the author of the lyrics sees this decision as having even wider importance. He sends congratulations also to the “Arab homeland and to the whole Arabic nation” (YouTube n.d.b). This means that he sees this decision as good for all Arab countries.

The author of the lyrics describes al-Sisi as an honorable person with a strong will and principles. He is a person who sends the army to fight when it hears the calling of the nation. He is an experienced leader, a respected father and the brother of all Egyptians.
12. Summary of the Lyrics

There are numerous Egyptian songs that were dedicated to the army or beloved homeland. While discussing Egypt, the political and socio-cultural events that happened in 2013 and 2014 and the recent history of this country that changed the direction of politics and history of the Middle East, it is essential to mention the songs written about the current president of this country—ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Šīşī.

In a majority of the songs, there is the motif Ṭaṣr Umm id-Dunya, which means “Egypt mother of the world”. This is also connected with the main message—if Egypt is the most important thing for its citizens, they also need to find a person who will care about their homeland and protect it from any danger. And this is what all the songs talk about: the man who is a strong, independent leader, who will not have fear of anything for the good and protection of his homeland; the one who took responsibility in a time of danger and led the country to a better future; the one who is supported by the citizens and who God supports; the one who is special because there is no other person like him; the one who “felt” the needs of Egyptians and the only one thanks to whom Egypt can grow and develop for future generations. And Egypt is “amāna”, something given to al-Šīşī to keep, protect and take responsibility for so that nothing bad happens to it.

13. Brief Discussion of the Videos of the Analyzed Songs

It is worth analyzing not only the lyrics of the songs but also their videos. As was mentioned, a number of songs convey similar messages, and the mode is quite the same. They differ only in the time of their release and what position ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Šīşī held then—general, marshal, when he left the army; candidate for presidency or maybe already the strong president of the great Egypt. However, the descriptions of the hero and the adoration for him are comparable. The same can be said about the videos. Many of the shots and photos are almost the same, especially in reference to the army and exercises of soldiers. In a few videos, particularly those of the army, there are also parts showing the coffins of fallen soldiers draped with Egyptian flags.

We can detail a few common attributes of the videos. The flags of Egypt are ever-present. Happy children, mainly holding flags of the country, are very often shown in the videos. They represent the hope and the future of the country. There are also crowds of Egyptians holding posters presenting al-Šīşī. We can also see happy crowds, people dancing, shots of protests and different parts of Egypt (mainly Cairo).

In the newer videos, a new slogan also appears—Tahyā Maṣr (“Long live Egypt”), which is directly connected with president al-Šīşī, who repeats these words many times in his speeches. In the video to Rabbinā Wayyāk, the written words Tahyā Maṣr can be seen as well.

A characteristic fact of these videos is the rather small number of religious accents. If there are some, they occur in the form of the shaking of hands between a Muslim and Christian. “We are all Egyptians—religion does not determine us. All together, hand in hand, we will work for Egypt, and together will build the country”, the songs seem to say.

In most of the videos, the profile of ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Šīşī is shown frequently, as well as in recordings from the army’s training, where he can be seen as well. With the change in his position as a candidate for the presidency of the Republic to the president himself, there are more photos and shots of al-Šīşī in a suit. In the background of the videos, parts of speeches of the hero can be heard. ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Šīşī is presented in the videos as a strong, independent leader who will not fear anything for the good and protection of his homeland. On the other hand, he is presented as an empathetic and sensitive man, who kisses children and hugs the elderly. He is shown as a friendly, kind, smiling person. From the songs, we can guess that most of the society supports him—women, men, the elderly and the young; all of them are happy with him, and the future of the country will be better.

ʿAzīzīnak is the only one of the analyzed songs which actually has no music video; we can see only the singers singing.
14. Conclusions and Findings

Overall, numerous songs have been created for al-Sīsī covering different genres, from solemn to lively. He is described using various epithets. Each song has its own way of showing love to the beloved leader. He is the one who loves Egypt, and who is among and for Egyptians. He is the person for whom the good of Egypt is the most important.

On the whole, there have been plenty of songs throughout history devoted to political leaders, but what has happened in Egypt since 2013 is especially interesting to observe. In such a short period of time, for such a large number of people, for millions, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī became a real national hero. The songs were created simply because there was a demand for them, and thanks to them, many artists gained popularity. We can say that political events changed not only the history of Egypt but definitely influenced its media as well.

At the same time, as more songs appeared, the more the citizens spread (more or less consciously) the message about the strength of the army and country (because a strong leader was coming, or the country had a strong leader if he had already been chosen then), and they helped people feel better in difficult times. In countries like Egypt, there is a strong connection between media and society that cannot be ignored when analyzing any cultural, political or social texts.

As mentioned before, the analyzed songs—the same as in history with previous leaders—had a significant connection with the figure of ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī, his transformation from being “just” a Minister of Defense and Commander of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and becoming a hero and person thanks to whom Egypt could be a strong and prosperous country. The “Egyptianness” mentioned by Mostafa (2017, p. 3) is also very visible in the analyzed songs, and is connected with the belief that only with al-Sīsī (not, for example, Mursi) can Egypt be the real Egypt, where everybody—Muslims and Christians—can feel safe.

Such songs as those described in this article become extremely popular when the country faces problems, when there is a need for unity for the good of the homeland, or when there is a need for unity for some special purpose. When the author of the article was in Egypt during the mentioned time, she had the great opportunity to observe how politics, media, culture and society permeate, and their borders blur. It is especially important in such a culture as the Egyptian one, where music, TV and generally the media have a particular resonance, and where relaying messages via this medium has much more power than using any official speech or written article.

Even if the songs were created because of the “need of the moment” and people really supported al-Sīsī, it should be mentioned that this research will permit greater understanding of the mechanisms that govern the mass media world, reading social moods and, at the same time, learning more about the mechanisms of propaganda used in different parts of the world (here: in Egypt).

15. Future Thoughts

This research was conducted at the time when president ʿAbd Fattāḥ al-Sīsī was applying for his first presidential term. In 2018, he was again selected as the president of Egypt. In 2019, there was a presidential referendum, and the Egyptian parliament ratified changes to the constitution, in which, among other things, the presidential term would be extended from 4 to 6 years. In 2023, Egypt witnesses new elections, but they are running in a different atmosphere—the Ukraine–Russian war has affected the Egyptian economy, as has war in Gaza. Nevertheless, it is worth conducting new research about Egyptian patriotic songs, and especially for its leader, to see whether the message has changed or not, and in order to see in which direction Egypt is going.

16. Limitations

Although this research aimed to investigate songs, there were some limitations. First of all, not all of the sources that the author recalled from Egyptian television or radio could
be found. She had to rely in a few cases only on her notes from 2013/2014, when she carried out participant observations.

Moreover, the author did not decide to write the number of views of the songs from YouTube—which could show their popularity—because in 2013 and 2014, these songs were mainly present on the streets, television and radio. Furthermore, the number would not be valuable, as they show the general number of “views” from all over the world, not only from Egyptian fans living in Egypt. That is why these numbers are not reliable for this research.

Moreover, some of the songs, e.g., Buşrit Hîr by Husayn al-Ǧasîmî or Râgl Ibn Râgl by Nansî Ağram, are not officially dedicated to ‘Abd Fâṭṭâh al-Ǧisî. It was a huge question as to whether they should be mentioned in the article or not, but because officially his words are not found in the lyrics and they do not seem to support him (even if the researcher has some doubts about this), they were not the subject of this article.

There were probably also songs against ‘Abd Fâṭṭâh al-Ǧisî, but these were not present in the mainstream media, on the streets, at coffee shops or at weddings. They were also not available on YouTube in Egypt.

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### Notes

1. This has been underlined by the author to focus attention on the quoted words.
2. A song released in 2014 convincing people to take part in the presidential elections in 2014. The song was sung by an Emirati singer who very much supported Egypt (i.e., Egyptians and, in a manner of speaking, al-Ǧisi and his politics).
3. In the article, ISO transcription for Arabic and Egyptian dialect names are used.
4. Main initiator of the demonstrations against Mursî; in Arabic, *tamarrod* means “rebellion”.
5. Ramaḏān—ninth month according to the Muslim calendar when Muslims abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset.
6. The plural form of fâṇūs.
7. The war that happened in October 1973. It began on the 6th of October when the Egyptian and Syrian coalition launched a surprise attack against Israel on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, which occurred also during the 10th of the Islamic month of Ramadan, which is why other names of this war are the Ramadan War, the Yom Kippur War, or the October War, for the month when it happened.

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