COSMOS WORKING PAPERS

Bread, Freedom, Human Dignity: Tales of an Unfinished Revolution in Egypt

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Mobilizing for Democracy: Democratization Processes and the Mobilization of Civil Society

The project addresses the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in democratization processes, bridging social science approaches to social movements and democracy. The project starts by revisiting the "transitology" approach to democratization and the political process approach to social movements, before moving towards more innovative approaches in both areas. From the theoretical point of view, a main innovation will be in addressing both structural preconditions as well as actors' strategies, looking at the intersection of structure and agency. In an historical and comparative perspective, I aim to develop a description and an understanding of the conditions and effects of the participation of civil society organizations in the various stages of democratization processes. Different parts of the research will address different sub-questions linked to the broad question of CSOs' participation in democratization processes: a) under which (external and internal) conditions and through which mechanisms do CSOs support democratization processes? b) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms do they play an important role in democratization processes? c) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms are they successful in triggering democratization processes? d) And, finally, what is the legacy of the participation of civil society during transitions to democracy on the quality of democracy during consolidation? The main empirical focus will be on recent democratization processes in EU member and associated states. The comparative research design will, however, also include selected comparisons with oppositional social movements in authoritarian regimes as well as democratization processes in other historical times and geopolitical regions. From an empirical point of view, a main innovation will lie in the development of mixed method strategies, combining large N and small N analyses, and qualitative comparative analysis with in-depth, structured narratives.

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Abstract: When at the height of the 'Arab Spring' Egyptians from all walks of life took to the streets to oust one of the Arab world's most long-standing dictators, it took both Egyptians and outside observers by surprise. This report explores the events commonly described as the January 25 Revolution in Egypt, as well as the immediate transitional period that followed the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, marked by recurrent unrest and mobilization. Starting from a detailed empirical description of the events themselves, it will illustrate the conditions that led to the uprising by embedding them in a more structural analysis covering the regime's origins and historical trajectories as well as more recent developments in the last ten years. Together these circumstances created a set of political opportunities that inventive actors seized upon to set in motion a process that in the course of only a few weeks mobilized a cross-class coalition to bring about the seemingly impossible. However, in elucidating the transitional phase and the struggles it entails in more detail, the report also shows how the opportunities and processes conducive to the breakdown of Egypt's authoritarian regime are not necessarily those most conducive to the establishment of a new, democratic one.

Keywords: Egypt, Authoritarianism, Social Movements, Mobilization, Regime Change

This report deals with the momentous change witnessed in Egypt over the last year, when the seemingly impossible happened. In the aftermath of what would come to be dubbed the Sidi Bouzid Revolution[1] in Tunisia, Egyptians managed to overthrow one of the Arab world's longest standing dictators in their own 25 January Revolution. We refer to the events as a revolution throughout this report, because this is how the actors themselves describe their nature, and because it is the terminology employed by many newspaper commentators, observers, and academics. However, a word of caution is in order: the transitional process has so far shown very little prospect of turning into a full blown social revolution, in that there has been very little economic and social change, and in fact it may even be argued that the nature of the political process

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[1] In Western media, this revolution has often been called the Jasmine Revolution after the example of the color and flower revolutions in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. However, Tunisians themselves prefer the name Sidi Bouzid Revolution after the city of its origin, Sidi Bouzid, where a street vendor named Mohammed Bouazizi self-immolated in protest against undignified living conditions.

so far has turned out to be rather conservative in its effects on social and economic conditions, especially for the long (and still) politically marginalized masses. What is more, even though nobody can deny the momentousness of the achievement of bringing down Husni Mubarak, with part of the elite that served as one of the pillars of the previous regime – the army – in power, and amidst an increasing crackdown on protesters and civil society, the application of even the narrowest concept of political revolution is at the very least questionable.

Periodization

When defining a periodization of Egypt's transition from authoritarianism several caveats are in order. These caveats relate to the question of when exactly the transition started, as well as the question of its end point. Regarding the former, there are several possible starting points, the most obvious being the beginning of the so called 'January 25 revolution' on 25 January 2011, in the course of which long term ruler President Husni Mubarak was toppled. The other, less obvious one would situate the 2011 revolution as the peak point of a broader cycle of contention starting with the 'resuscitation of civil society' that began in the early 2000s with campaigns in support of the Palestinians, moving on to contentious movements devoted to domestic issues in 2004/5. While this is certainly no less legitimate a categorization than the previous one, it poses some problems regarding the identification of medium to short term causal factors that affected the structure of political opportunity faced by the youth groups that organized the events that led to the January 25 Revolution. Furthermore, while the dating of events always implies a cut-off point that takes one actor's position into account more fully than another's, locating the start of the transition period at the beginning of the 2000s would unduly privilege the perspective of the activist groups to the detriment of the general populace, as well as most elite actors not part of the opposition landscape. Thus, for these reasons, the beginning of the transition period is temporally located at the start of the revolution in 2011.

As regards its end point, the first and foremost of the aforementioned caveats is that as of yet there is no clear end point to the transition process. While it is true that Egypt is witnessing its first mostly free and fair parliamentary elections, this process is at the same time accompanied by other, more worrying developments which suggest that it is as yet too early to speak of a transition to democracy. Instead, this report will divide Egypt's transition period into two phases, the first will deal with the process of regime breakdown, and thus the downfall of Egypt's long-term dictator President Husni Mubarak. The second will deal with Egypt's uneasy transition under the nominally temporary guidance of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Inherent in the very nature of these most recent processes is the fact that they have yet to be concluded. Thus the end of the second phase will be somewhat arbitrarily

placed at the time of writing of this report in January 2012. Instead of speaking of a transition to democracy, I will follow Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter and speak instead of a transition from authoritarian rule, which leaves the possibility of a reestablishment of authoritarianism as old wine in new bottles open (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

In order to better embed the protest events, the following paragraph will be devoted to a quick summary of the formal steps of the transition process initiated by the SCAF after Husni Mubarak stepped down on February 11 2011. The following sections then move on to discuss the protest events and actors proper. The post-revolution transition process started with the SCAF fulfilling one of the central demands of the revolution by suspending the parliament – the latter having been constituted following rigged elections in 2010 that had for many Egyptians signified the death of their hopes for peaceful change – and the constitution on 13 February, two days after Mubarak resigned. After Assam Sharaf took office as prime minister on March 3 2011 following bouts of protests, the next step on the timeline of Egypt's 'formal' transition process came with a constitutional referendum, held on March 19, passed with a strong majority of 77% that at the time many observers interpreted as much a vote on the military's performance/popularity as on the details of the proposed changes themselves. These formal steps often followed a distinct trajectory whereby

> "the SCAF deliberated these crucial legal and institutional issues behind closed doors, subsequently leaked details about the content of the deliberations, gauged the reactions of political players, and then adapted the rules – again behind closed doors. In addition, the SCAF attempted to generate some form of popular legitimacy for itself by holding a constitutional referendum on 19 March 2011 in which Egyptians were called upon to vote on 11 changes to the 1977 constitution. In a move typical for the high-handed approach of Egypt's current military rulers, the SCAF subsequently issued a constitutional declaration which it presented as the result of the referendum, but which included 63 constitutional changes instead of the 11 that had been voted upon in the referendum (see Albrecht & Bishara 2011; Koehler 2012a). Among those, article 56 is especially problematic since it invests the SCAF with wide ranging executive and legislative powers and thus gives the current situation of military rule a quasi-constitutional façade." (Koehler 2012a, 16)

As a next step in preparing the upcoming parliamentary elections, held in three stages between 28 November 2011 and 10 January 2012[2], a first version of a much disputed electoral law was issued by decree in much the same fashion as on July 20 2011, only to be substantially revised in the months following its publication.[3] After a period of sustained insecurity, parliamentary elections were

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[2]Al Jazeera: Egypt sets parliamentary poll dates, 27.09.2011,
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/09/2011927141328264948.html
[3]http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/04/parliamentary-elections-law

finally set to take place in a three stage process on November 28 2011, December 14 2011 and January 3 2012. This parliament, currently dominated by Islamist forces after their overwhelming electoral victory, will then help choose a 100 person strong constituent assembly in the future, tasked with drafting a new constitution. After intense political debate, presidential elections are now set to take place at the end of May 2012.[4] Until then, however, the power of the new parliament remains severely curtailed:

> "[M]ilitary rule casts a shadow over its future responsibilities: The constitution gives the People's Assembly the power to legislate and "oversee the work of the executive branch," but the SCAF holds overlapping authority to make and object to legislation, issue public policy, convene and adjourn parliament, and appoint and dismiss the prime minister and cabinet."[5]

Protest

This part will chronicle the main protest events and developments in Egypt's transition from authoritarian rule, covering approximately one year from January 2011 to January 2012. This period will be subdivided into two parts as described above, a period of authoritarian breakdown and a transition period with an open end. Even though the former is much shorter in terms of the time it covers, spanning from just 25 January to 11 February, it will be given equal space due to the dramatic nature of the events that unfolded during the struggle to end Husni Mubarak's 29 years of rule.

The January 25 Revolution (January 25 2011 – February 11 2011)

In the conventional story, the events that later turned into a revolution started when the popular Facebook group 'We are all Khaled Said' used its platform to call for a demonstration against torture and police brutality on January 25, the 'National Police Day' in Egypt. The call, which went out on about 8 January, and was also publicized by TV channels such as Al Jazeera, quickly attracted the (virtual) support of hundreds of thousands of Facebook members.[6] Behind this call was a conglomerate of members of different youth groups that had formed in the last couple of years, among them the 6 April movement (named after a general strike in April 2008), the Coalition to Support El-Baradei (a group in support of Mohamed El-Baradei and his potential bid for the presidency of Egypt), the youth wing of the Democratic Front party and the Justice and Freedom movement.[7] On the day itself, what was expected to be a

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[4]Al Jazeera: Egypt to hold presidential poll in May,
15.02.2011http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/02/201221510046239254.html
[5]Al Jazeera: Explainer: The role of the Peoples' Assembly,
17.11.2011http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/egypt/2011/11/20111117102952384413.html
[6]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011
[7]The account of the lead up to these fateful demonstrations reads almost like a spy novel, with secret daily

larger than usual demonstration, but nonetheless a singular event, for the first time managed to gather huge numbers of people, often spontaneously from the neighborhoods passed through. Protests erupted in a number of Egyptian cities between 25 and 26 January, becoming fiercely violent in the case of Suez, where battles with the police continued for days to avenge the death of protesters.[8] The regime, taken by surprise by the sheer number of protesters that had turned out on the 25th, made a largely ineffective move to contain the protests anticipated for the 28[th,] and attempted to block first online services such as Facebook and twitter, and then on the night of 27 – 28 to cut off mobile phone services.[9] Nonetheless, on 28 January, in Cairo alone hundreds of thousands of protesters marched on the streets, chanting the by now well know slogan that united their demands, from the economic to the political – "the people want the overthrow of the regime".[10] This day also marks the first day of the 'capturing of Tahrir, which was to remain in protesters' hands throughout the revolution until the day President Mubarak finally stepped down on the 11th of February. The regime itself, shaken in its self-confidence by the Sidi Bouzid Revolution that culminated in the ouster of President Ben Ali on January 14th 2011 in Tunisia, reacted by oscillating between the tried and tested tactics of repression, mixed with concessions, when Mubarak on his first speech in the night from January 28th to the 29th offered the dismissal of the hugely unpopular Nazif government. That same day, Omar Suleiman, former security chief was appointed the first vice president of Egypt under Mubarak, putting the nail to the coffin that was the rumored aspirations of the President's son, Gamal Mubarak's, bid for power in the 2011 presidential elections. At the same time as Egypt's police withdrew from the streets, the military started to appear in Cairo and other Egyptian Cities, while as some claimed, the state had effectively ceased to exist in Egypt's countryside, where state presence had been traditionally weak" (Crisis Group 2011, 5).

While the regime was thus struggling to find the right strategy to deal with the protests, the occupation of Tahrir square was in full swing, with thousands having set up camp and participants ranging from rich to poor, across the political spectrum, and across religious divides. On 1 February President Mubarak gave yet another speech in which he not only offered constitutional amendments long sought after by Egypt's opposition forces, but also promised to not run again in the upcoming presidential elections, staying instead to guide

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meetings, and only five people who knew the full plan, each directing a group of a further 20 activists. These groups were to then start protests from separate locations, joining up later. In the run up to this day, activists distributed flyers instructing people on 'How to Revolt' which detailed not only their demands, but also strategic goals like the "seizure of key government buildings" or the "attempt to incorporate police and military officers into the ranks", down to appropriate clothing (goggles, scarves, comfortable shoes, flowers as signs of peacefulness) through trusted e-mail networks according to a snowball system.
[8]Crisis Group report, p. 3
[9]The tactic of the regime to cut communication networks in an effort to keep people at home dramatically backfired in this context. Many people were already on the streets for prayers, and those that were not came out onto the streets simply to get information on what was happening on the ground.
[10]Crisis Group, p. 4

a peaceful transition process in the six months till the elections were to take place.[11] This speech shifted the balance in Mubarak's favor for a short moment, or as one activist observed, after this speech, "had there been a referendum on the presidency, Mubarak would have won".[12] Thus, while the numbers protesting in Cairo and other cities at points approached millions (some say about 12 million were involved overall), the President managed to garner the support of many.[13] Events on the following day shifted the balance back in favor of the protests again however, as the now infamous "battle of the camel" saw largely peaceful anti-regime protests in Tahrir attacked by pro-Mubarak supporters mounted on horses and camels and armed with knives, sticks, and clubs.[14] Subsequently, on 5 February, in a desperate bid to save what could be saved, the President's son, the widely unpopular Gamal Mubarak, finally resigned, and with him the entire leadership of the equally unpopular ruling National Democratic Party. The party that had effectively stopped operating at the start of the revolution was now left head- and leaderless. The cessation of violence as well as a widely publicized and highly emotional interview with Wael Ghoneim[15] which provoked an overwhelming amount of sympathy led to a swelling of the protesters' ranks on 7 and 8 February, days which saw some of the largest crowds in Tahrir and Cairo since the start of the revolution.[16] These last days were characterized by a back and forth between the protesters and the regime, intertwined in a stalemate where protesters had become trapped inside the square, fearful of the consequences and indeed what they perceived as inevitable revenge on those who had organized the protests should they leave Tahrir before the regime stepped down, and the government tried a mixture of intimidation and partial concessions in a bid to split the opposition on the square.[17] However, on 9 and 10 February the workers' call for a general strike shifted the balance yet again in favor of the protesters, sealing the fate of the regime. Thus, many believe that it was the workers' involvement in the protests, paralyzing what was left of the economy, that led the military, and its representative in the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), to finally side against the regime, and pressure Mubarak to step down from power.[18] After renewed mass demonstrations on 11 February Mubarak finally stepped down at 4 in the afternoon via an announcement by Vice President Omar Suleiman.

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[11]The Guardian, Hosni Mubarak's speech: full text, 02.02.2011,
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/02/president-hosni-mubarak-egypt-speech.
[12]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011
[13]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011
[14]Al Jazeera: Timeline: Egypt's Revolution, 14.02.2011,
http://www.aljazeera.com/NEWS/MIDDLEEAST/2011/01/201112515334871490.html
[15]The leader behind the Arabic facebook page 'We are all Khaled Said'. The interview took place after his release from prison after a 12 day detention
[16]Al Jazeera : Timeline: Egypt's Revolution, 14.02.2011,
http://www.aljazeera.com/NEWS/MIDDLEEAST/2011/01/201112515334871490.html
[17]Interview with activist, Cairo, 28.04.11
[18]Interview with activists, Cairo, 28.04.11, 09.05.11, 07.05.11, see also: Jadaliyyah, English translation of interview with Hossam El-Hamalawy on the role of labor/unions in the Egyptian revolution, 30.04.11

Egypt's uneasy transition (February 2011 – January 2012)

While the protests spanning from 25 January to 11 February achieved the unthinkable and removed Mubarak from power, this turned out to be the 'easy' part of what many hoped would culminate in Egypt's transition to a sustainable democratic system. The country now moved into an uneasy period of military rule in which deep fault lines between political forces and between them and the military came to the fore. Thus, almost a year after the fall of Mubarak, while the country held its first mostly free and fair elections, it also witnessed some of the worst clashes between protesters and security forces since the revolution, with the military all the while engaging in a prolonged clampdown on civil society and the free press.

The red thread running through this period of increasing political crisis was the continuing efforts, especially of young revolutionaries and leftist forces, to press for their demands via regular protests. These protests, usually scheduled for Fridays, initially started out as a way to celebrate the achievements of the revolution, then later pushed for the fulfillment of additional demands. However, even though some activists remained suspicious of the military even as temporary rulers of the country from the very start of the transition process, the majority of protesters continued in their endeavor in a cooperative spirit. Protests were less a way of challenging the new authorities and more a tried and tested way of achieving particular demands. Their success record initially seemed to prove them right, with the military compromising on demands such as the trial of high-ranking regime officials and even Mubarak and his immediate family.[19] However, as early as April, the SCAF also started to use more heavy handed tactics for dealing with protesters, resulting in the end of an unofficial consultation process between the military and several youth groups, including 6 April as well as several members of the Youth Revolution Coalition, on 10 April 2011.[20] Up until the elections, this period is thus interspersed with several attempts at a 'second revolutionary wave' to kick-start the democratic process that many youth activists had become increasingly frustrated with. Protests such as the "Second Friday of Anger" on May 27th to press for the trial of Mubarak, his family and his associates were held in this spirit, part of a "pattern whereby demonstrations are called almost every time a decision is made deemed incompatible with the will of the revolutionary forces"[21]. While these protests were still somewhat successful, they also revealed deep splits within the 'revolutionary forces' whereby most of the youth movement organizations and large parts of the political movements were in favor of protests, while Islamist and conservative forces were mostly against. Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), even though its youth wing especially formed an integral part of the revolution itself, and was one of its primary beneficiaries,

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[19]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1047, One hundred heady days, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1047/eg20.htm
[20]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1050, Unity remains elusive, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1050/eg1.htm
[21]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1049, Revolution's second wave, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1049/fr1.htm

more often than not opposed the ongoing protests together with various Salafist and more fundamentalist Islamist groups. Instead, like many of the more established political forces, they advocated a return to the 'normal' political process and a focus on organizing and preparing for the upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for fall 2011. In this respect the MB shared the interests of the SCAF, which during this time had successfully fended off the demands of many political forces to write a constitution before choosing a parliament.[22] Instead, the demanding requirements for getting a new party licensed kept political actors busy.

All through June it seemed like the SCAF's calculations had paid off, with no major protests taking place. This was to change, however, by the end of June, when the fire was reignited by clashes between the military and the families of 'martyrs' who had died during the revolution, who demanded trials for Mubarak and state officials involved in the killing of protesters, as well as the payment of financial compensation promised by the government after the revolution. These clashes ushered in the 'second wave of the revolution', a prolonged sit in which would see Midan Tahrir blocked for weeks and starting on 8 July, the 'Friday of Reckoning', when a number of youth groups together with more established political actors and even the Muslim Brotherhood staged protests to save the revolution, driven by their "fear that the revolution is not materializing in line with the aspirations that followed the toppling of Hosni Mubarak".[23] According to news sources, however, these protests did not involve more than 20 000 people and after the initial protest on 8 July, mostly comprised by a mixture of young revolutionaries with leftist or progressive backgrounds, ordinary Egyptians with a hodgepodge of grievances, and dozens of street vendors that had become a permanent presence in Tahrir after the revolution.[24] Not only did the tone get harsher and more anti-military on the side of the protesters, the SCAF also became increasingly irritated as became manifest in Communique No 69 in which they accused 6 April and Kifaya of treason, being trained by foreigners, spreading rumors, and driving a wedge between the army and the people. This sit-in lasted till 1 August, the first day of Ramadan, when the military moved into Midan Tahrir to forcefully evict the remaining protesters who had set up camp in the square, a move which was, according to observers, supported by a majority of Egyptians who had grown weary with the continued blockage of Cairo's central traffic hub.[25]

This was only a prelude to the clashes that were to follow during the fall and early winter months however. While the month of Ramadan remained comparatively quiet, September not only saw renewed clashes between the army and protesters on 9 September, but also a resurgent nationwide strike wave

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[22]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1049, Another revolution? http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1049/eg10.htm
[23]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1055, Back in tahrir, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1055/fr1.htm
[24]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1057, Back to square one, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1057/eg1.htm
[25]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1058, A revolution in peril, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1058/eg31.htm

in the public sector, starting from 17 September.[26]

The events of 9 September marked the first in a series of escalating protests in which the SCAF, rather than being the addressee of particular demands related to the transition process, came to be the actual target of the protests, with protesters increasingly focusing on the handover of power to a civil authority at the earliest possible time, the removal of Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, and an end to military trials. These events, which at this point marked the most violent 1 million man march so far, also indicated the increasingly violent character of the confrontation between mostly young protesters and the military.[27] They also resulted in the extension and expansion of the state of emergency by the SCAF, who had previously announced that while they respected the right to protest, they would not provide security.[28] With the gloves thus off on both sides, the coming months were to witness three more protest events turn ugly in a climate of deepening political crisis that saw the Islamists, whose reluctance to get involved in protests in favor of a focus on the electoral process paid off, win a resounding victory at the ballot box. Events took a turn for the worse on October 9th, when during what has been dubbed the 'Maspero Massacre' 25 protesters died in an army crackdown on Copts and civil society activists protesting against the demolition of a Coptic church.[29] In the wake of these events followed the intensification of what can only be described as a crackdown on civil society in general, with critical newspaper articles banned, bloggers persecuted and civil society organizations harassed.[30] The spiral of escalation intensified again a month later when the army violently cleared remaining protesters, mostly consisting of the relatives and families of martyrs who had died during the revolution, from Midan Tahrir. In the following days Midan Tahrir and the streets bordering the square, especially Mohamed Mahmoud Street, turned into a battleground between the army and a renewed surge of protesters angered by the violent treatment of martyrs' families. The battle raged for days, ultimately leaving at least 45 protesters dead and over 1000 injured.[31] The last confrontation in this increasingly violent series of protests challenging military rule (at the time of writing) took place on December 16th in front of the Cabinet Office in Qasr Al Aini Street, where clashes erupted after the army forcefully cleared a month old sit-in. These clashes left at least 17 protesters dead, and also provoked international criticism when pictures surfaced of army personnel beating and stripping women.[32]

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[26]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1066, Strikes continue, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1066/eg8.htm

[27]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1064, Sidelined or in the lead? http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1064/eg09.htm

[28]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1065, Tahrir fatigue, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1065/eg08.htm

[29]Al Ahram Weekly, No .1068, 'We did not kill protesters', http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1068/eg01.htm

[30]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1070, Censorship revived? http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1070/eg8.htm

[31]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1073, Revolution – part II, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1073/eg3.htm

[32]Al Ahram Weekly, No 1078, The challenges ahead, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1078/eg11.htm

Structural Conditions

In examining the structural conditions in which the revolution and the subsequent transition process were embedded and which constrained and shaped their structure and outcome, one has to differentiate between genuinely political conditions such as the type of authoritarian regime the protesters faced, as well as the social and economic conditions that underlie political institutional factors. What is particularly interesting in this case is the fact that while the political conditions of authoritarian rule had remained largely unchanged in recent decades, and thus represent a rather static image of the structural conditions, the social and economic conditions underwent profound transformations, thereby altering the socio-structural make up of regime support and incorporation. These changes left the regime of Husni Mubarak increasingly vulnerable to challenges to its rule by alienating it from most sectors of society, save a small circle of business elites, which in the end turned out to be insufficient to sustain its rule.

The Husni Mubarak regime may be classified in several ways, as indeed it has been. Thus, with reference to the military background of the late President, the regime has been qualified as military by some observers (Gandhi 2008), whereas others (Hadenius and Teorell 2007), looking at the presence of formal institutions, have classified it as a limited multiparty regime. However, taking into account the mere window dressing of formal institutions such as political parties, parliaments etc. for the underlying power arrangements in Egypt, these classifications seem to hold limited explanatory power to a) understand actual structures of power, as well as b) their relation to the events per se, as well as the specific actor constellations that drove them. A slightly different path will thus be followed in classifying Egypt as a (post populist) personalist regime.

Personalism refers to a regime type in which political power is highly centralized, where informal modes of decision making prevail, and clientelism structures the relations between the political elite and the populace (see Bratton & van de Walle 1997, Pawelka 1985). In these regimes, the personalist leader is the center of political power and at the helm of the political system. But whereas the president might accrue vast formal powers, in effect this is a manifestation of underlying structures of power, with the president standing at the top of a pyramidal structure of personal authority bound together by a vast network of patron-client relations (Pawelka 1985: 34; Jackson & Rosberg 1982: 22, Roth 1968: 196; also: Snyder 1992; Bratton & van de Walle 1997: 65-66). Since the system is highly personalized, power within it is accorded less to formal offices as to those most loyal, and those closest to the ruler or his family (Eisenstadt 1973: 15). In contrast to Weber's concept of patrimonialism, of which personalism (or neopatrimonialism as it is also often called) is a modern form, personalist regimes are often highly institutionalized, with a vast

bureaucracy, and all the trappings of modern political systems such as political parties, parliaments, and constitutions. However, these institutions play quite a different role to their formal counterparts in democracies, since they serve as channels for clientelism and patronage, as a means of authoritarian control and elite management (Koehler 2008).

Since the formation of the multiparty system under President Sadat in 1976, regular multiparty elections for parliament have taken place in Egypt since 1979 (Beattie 2000: 241), making elections a regular feature of Egyptian political life. However, not once during that time has the ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), achieved less than a comfortable two thirds majority in parliament – from 87 % in 1984 to 77 % in 1987, 81 % in 1990, 94 % in 1995, 87 % in 2000, and 70 % in 2005. While the NDP was thus ultimately part of the regime, an instrument of parliamentary control as well as a channel for clientelistic inclusion in the spoils of the regime, opposition parties did exist. Of the 21 official parties, however, only five can be seen as somewhat relevant: the liberal Hizb al-Wafd, the leftist Hizb al-Tagammu', the Nasserist Hizb al-Nasseri, the liberal Hizb al-'Amal, and Hizb al-Ghad (Stacher 2004, 216f.). These opposition parties, their formal status notwithstanding, played on a tightly restricted and massively skewed playing field, with restrictions ranging from outright repression, the use of formal laws and regulations, to the ultimate tool of emergency laws, in place since Sadat's assassination in 1981. Thus, while they were allowed to play some part in the political life of Egypt, those parties that did gain formal status may oftentimes more adequately be described as a form of 'loyal' opposition that played according to the rules of the game the regime set in exchange for a limited amount of votes and access to spoils, with one of the few exceptions to this being the illegal, partly tolerated, but just as often repressed Muslim Brotherhood. The same observations moreover applied to Egypt's associational life in general. (Albrecht 2005)

Thus, while party politics in one form or another were part of Egypt's political life at least since Sadat took over the leadership of the country following Nasser's death, the socio-economic basis of regime support changed significantly over the years, with profound consequences for its survival. Without going into too much historical detail, from the military coup that brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in 1952 onwards the basis upon which the regime built its legitimacy via the more or less selective incorporation of key sectors of society became increasingly narrow, essentially leaving it with a significant lack of legitimacy within and hence control over society. Under Nasser, what has commonly been described as a social contract between the regime and the people was instituted that guaranteed basic social standards, jobs, and food in exchange for political acquiescence via corporatist incorporation coupled with the strong repression of those that did not accept the boundaries of the system. Thus, Nasser's regime, while initially ruled by a clique of military men, later turned to what were essentially populist-corporatist

mechanisms in order to sustain and deepen its rule, enacting land reforms to redistribute land to poor farmers - aimed at disempowering the previously influential landed classes - building corporatist labor unions that imposed tight controls on labor activity, while at the same time increasing the living standards of workers by establishing a job guarantee for university graduates. This was done essentially by grossly inflating the public sector, while at the same time banning political parties. Thus,

> "by the end of the Nasserist period, the public sector had dominated all economic activities, except agriculture and retail trade. In 1970/71 it accounted for 74 per cent of industrial production, 46.1 per cent of all production, 90 per cent of investments and 35.2 per cent of GDP" (Ayubi 2001, 199-200).

Thus Nasser's form of Arab Socialism, while highly repressive on the political front, at the same time improved the living conditions of the working and middle classes, and arguably to some extent also for peasants:

> "All foreign enterprises and large and medium-sized Egyptian enterprises were nationalized. Their workers became state employees whose standard of living, along with many middle class Egyptians, improved markedly. Public-sector workers received extensive social benefits, such as health care; access to consumer cooperatives, which sold subsidized food and other basic commodities; subsidized housing; pensions; the right to elect representatives to management boards of all public enterprises; and an annual cash distribution of 3 percent of the profits of public-sector firms. The minimum wage of many workers was doubled. Real wages increased by one-third from 1960 to 1964, while the number of weekly hours of work declined by 10 percent. The government guaranteed all university graduates a white collar job and all high school graduates a blue collar job. Firing a public-sector worker required a review by a committee including representatives of the union, the Ministry of Labor, and management" (Solidarity Center 2010, 11-12).

This was to change under Sadat. From a historical point of view, the current workers' movement in Egypt represents a long-term consequence of the *infitah* (opening) policies initiated by Anwar al-Sadat in the 1970s (see Pawelka 1985, Waterbury 1983). Aiming to open the Egyptian economy to the forces of the world market, this reorientation ultimately led to the dismantling of large parts of the public sector, and to the rise of new crony capitalist elites closely affiliated with the ruling circles (Baker 1990, Beattie 2000, Kienle 2003). While narrowing the basis for regime incorporation on an economic level, Sadat at the same time broadened the basis of political inclusion. In 1976 he split up the ruling party into three different political streams, and established a formal multiparty system. Since 1979 regular multiparty parliamentary elections, albeit marred with irregularities, repression and fraud, have taken place (Beattie 2000: 241).

Things changed again under Mubarak, partly as the result of external necessities, and partly due to the rise of parts of the new business elites not only to economic but also to political power from the early 2000s onwards in the wake of Gamal Mubarak's promotion to important positions in the ruling party. This process found its preliminary climax in the formation of the Ahmed Nazif government in 2004, which included many members of the Gamal-affiliated business elite such as Rashid Muhammad Rashid and Mahmud Mohi al-Din as Minister for Trade and Minister for Investment respectively (Collombier 2007, Hassabo 2005). This change in the incorporation strategy had its roots in the 1990s, when Egypt first started to enact structural economic reforms, pushed by an agreement with the International Monetary Fund that led to a first, albeit circumscribed wave of privatization. However, with the rise of Gamal Mubarak to an increasingly prominent position in the ruling party, and with him many foreign educated economic reformers, privatization sped up significantly from 2004 onwards. At the same time, the political sphere and indeed basic liberties in general contracted significantly. Hence while Nasser limited political liberties and participation while increasing economic incorporation, Sadat shifted this balance towards more participation for less economic incorporation, and Mubarak in the end circumscribed both, leaving not only the lower classes, but also the middle classes increasingly impoverished. Repression also heightened significantly, to a degree where it seemed arbitrary even to people not usually involved with the political sphere. In parallel to the contraction of the political and economic sphere by the 2000s, international and regional phenomena moved many Egyptians. The second Palestinian Intifada, the US led war on Iraq as well as its broader Middle East campaign thus set the tone on the international front, whereby Egypt was an essential ally in the region for the US on the one hand, but this role was, on the other, frowned upon by the domestic audience (Sharp 2005). In this decade of a tightening domestic sphere combined with a troubled regional and international environment lay the foundations of what can be called the 'resuscitation' of Egyptian civil society from the 2000s onwards, as will be discussed in the section on contingent political opportunities.

Contingent Political Opportunities

The exploration of contingent political opportunities, similarly to the part exploring protest events as such, will be subdivided into two parts. The first will chronicle the changes in political opportunities that shaped the opposition landscape in the period running up to the breakdown of authoritarianism and the fall of Husni Mubarak. While the causal factors in this first period are to a much greater extent located in the past, stretching over a significant amount of time, the causal factors of the second period – the period of an uneasy transition with an unknown outcome – will run more in parallel to the protest events that make

up the main cornerstones of the second period. Thus, the part covering the causal conditions of the first period is much more elaborate and lengthy, whereas less space will be devoted to chronicle the causal triggers and mechanisms of the second period due to its brevity.

A decade of dissent – a tale of the intermediate conditions of an unfinished revolution

The first decade of the new millennium witnessed substantial changes in Egypt's political sphere during which social structural changes combined with contingent events to transfigure political opportunities. Thus, embedded in a changing media landscape, the increasing political and economic marginalization of large strata of society (including the middle class), as well as heightened state repression, was the formation of mobilizing structures of political activism, that is the building of coalitions between different opposition parties and figures culminating in the development of the protest movement Kifaya in 2005, and finally events such as the brutal murder of Khaled Said that would turn middle class frustration into outrage, making them increasingly available for mobilization via newly developing forms of internet activism in combination with street action.

By most activist accounts the tale of the resuscitation of Egypt's civil and political society after the relative calm of the 1990s starts with the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000. It is a tale of renewed cycles of mobilization throughout the decade, often with foreign policy oriented backgrounds as in the case of the Intifada, the war in Iraq, Israel's war in Lebanon, the Gaza blockade etc., but it is also one that increasingly involves national politics, especially from 2004 onwards with the emergence of Kifaya, to the (oftentimes pejoratively called particularistic even by democracy activists) workers' strikes from 2006 onwards, and finally to what can be called the mobilization of the middle classes via the campaign in support of Mohamed El-Baradei, and the case of the brutal murder of Khaled Said. It is a tale of emerging networks of activists interconnected through cross-cutting participation within the different movements that sprang up during that decade and that socialized a new generation of activists, as well as reactivated 1970s student activists that had dropped out of politics in the meantime. They thus set the stage on which alliances between different actors crystallized in opposition to the regime and action repertoires were shaped amongst opposition actors.

The initial mobilization impetus from the support groups of the Palestinian Intifada politicized many, especially at universities around the country, and led to a revival of activism which ultimately converged in late 2004 and throughout 2005 in what some have termed the 'Caireen Spring' during which multiple protest movements sprang up to protest the lack of

democracy in view of the upcoming 'election year'.[33] The most vocal and prominent of these was the Egyptian Movement for Change (al-Haraka al-Masriyya min agli-l-Taghiir), or Kifaya (Enough!), a largely urban, middle class based pro-reform movement.[34] While Kifaya was thus able to capitalize to some extent on a pre-existing level of mobilization when it emerged in 2004, it also innovated on existing forms of protest mobilization by, for example, breaking the taboo of directly criticizing the President, his family, or members of the ruling elite. Hence, one of the most frequently heard slogans at early Kifaya protests was "batil Husni Mubarak, batil al-intikhabat".[35] Accordingly, the security presence at Kifaya's first public appearance in December 2004 was heavy, with police and security forces almost outnumbering the protesters themselves. While the movement's demands also addressed Arab nationalist issues directed towards the international arena, its domestic demands mainly centered on 'more democracy for Egypt,' a minimal consensus that had not been easily won. It was this basic demand, however, that made it resonate within the opposition sphere, and arguably also in the international and to a lesser extent national media:

> "All of this [demonstrations against the war on Iraq] coincided with the democracy project of the Bush administration. In Arab newspapers there were huge debates about the future of democracy and whether it would come to the region by way of US tanks. This in a way laid the ground for debates later in 2003 and all through 2004 that led to the recognition that democracy indeed was the missing link. The idea of democracy and of moving against Mubarak became central to the movement. Kifaya from this perspective was the culmination of this process of ideological radicalization. In this sense, Kifaya was also a historical necessity. All the objective circumstances were pushing in this direction. The genius of Kifaya thus was its timing, not its name as some others have suggested".[36]

The opposition figures that signed Kifaya's first official declaration came from across the political spectrum, and the composition of the activists that took to the streets under the banner of Kifaya was similarly diverse. Yet there were considerable differences in the strength of involvement of opposition political parties. Whereas the officially licensed opposition parties were only meagerly represented, those parties not enjoying formal recognition were particularly

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[33]The following description of the rise and fall of Kifaya, as well as the development of the workers' movement (up to page 18) first appeared in Koehler and Warkotsch 2009

[34]*Kifaya* held its founding conference on September 22 2004, in parallel with the annual conference of the ruling NDP. Their first demonstration took place on December 12 2004.

[35]The slogan is probably best translated as "illegitimate: Husni Mubarak, illegitimate: the elections," with the verb "*batala*" literally meaning "to be void and invalid." The slogan was commonly extended to include members of the president's family such as Suzanne, Gamal, and 'Ala Mubarak, but also especially hated public officials such as Interior Minister Habib al-'Adli or institutions such as the State Security Services ('Amn al-Dawla).

[36]Interview with activist, Cairo, 7 May 2011.

active. Examples from this second category include Hizb al-Karama (Dignity Party), a party with Nasserist leanings, Hizb al-Wasat (Center Party), an Islamist leaning party which had been fighting for formal recognition for some years, and Hizb al-'Amal (Labor Party), a socialist-turned-Islamist party which had been 'frozen' by the state in 2000. Of the officially recognized parties, younger activists of Hizb al-Tagammu' (National Progressive Unionist Party, NPUP) and Hizb al-Ghad (Tomorrow Party) were prominent, while the establishment sectors of those parties remained visibly absent. A significant number of younger activists also came from groups with strong leftist leanings, such as the Trotskyite Revolutionary Socialists (al-Ishtirakiin al-Thawriin) and activists involved with the Socialist Studies Center (Markaz al-Dirasat al-Ishtirakiyya). Most of these younger activists were joined in a sub-organization called "Youth for Change" (al-Shabab min agli-l-Taghrir).[37]

The tactical consideration behind the staging of illegal demonstrations was to discredit the regime in the eyes of the national public as well as vis-à-vis international observers and allies. Public criticism from a pro-democratic protest movement was intended to unmask the regime's pseudo-democratic façade and expose its essential lack of popular support.[38] 2005 was an ideal year for such purposes. With the country's first multi-candidate presidential elections[39] in September and parliamentary elections scheduled for October and November, 2005 was a 'big election year' in Egypt. Kifaya focused on these prominent political events in their slogans and demonstrations and, despite select instances of sometimes severe repression, the security forces overall treated the movement with surprising lenience.[40]

Kifaya's ascension on the political scene in Egypt in 2005 signalled several shifts in contingent opportunities. With respect to actor constellations, it signified the increasing impatience of the younger, middle class parts of the opposition with playing the tame counterpart to a repressive regime which denied them access via formal channels of participation (exemplified by the now legalized Hizb al-Wasat, which had been trying to gain legal recognition for years without success). Thus, amongst the (usually in-fighting) opposition, some more significant splits appeared, separating those who continued to be loyal from those willing to contest the regime more openly. What is more, by

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[37] Youth for Change had originally been designed to facilitate communication and coordination between *Kifaya* and various leftist student groups.

[38] Interview with leading member of *Kifaya*, October 18 2005, Cairo.

[39] The initial target for protest was the presidential referendum scheduled for the fall of 2005. This explains *Kifaya*'s original slogan of "*la li-l-tawrith, la li-l-tamdid*" (no to inheritance, no to extension). When in a surprise move in the spring of 2005 multi-candidate presidential elections were announced, *Kifaya* denounced these elections.

[40] One of the most severe incidents took place at a demonstration on 25 May 2005. This instance attracted widespread attention because plain-clothes thugs, associated with the security forces, specifically targeted female demonstrators. This incident proved consequential for *Kifaya*, the resulting international outcry was instrumental in significantly reducing the repression and violence with which demonstrations were met. It also provided the movement with additional energy and weekly demonstrations almost took on the character of a tradition.

forming Kifaya and engaging in protracted protests over the course of 2005, these opposition actors also set an important precedent showcasing that contesting the regime was possible (since this had not been part of the opposition repertoire before), hence altering the very opportunities that protest actors were to encounter in the future. But it also signified something beyond actor constellations – a profound change in Egypt's media landscape, one that was not caused by Kifaya itself, but that helped spread its news. These changes were threefold. First, the rise of satellite television such as Al-Jazeera enabled even small and relatively impotent movements to reach an international audience made up of governments, human rights NGOs, and pressure groups. Second, in Egypt's tightly controlled media landscape, where most TV and radio stations and newspapers were state owned, some relaxations of control was seen from 2004 onwards with the introduction of the privately owned newspaper Al Masry Al Youm and several more in its wake, which then grew increasingly influential in proving independent news and giving opposition opinions an outlet. Third, the internet and with it phenomena such as blogging, online news, and later on twitter and Facebook gained notoriety as a new and promising way of expressing dissent to an extent that was previously unknown.

However important these changes might have been in the long run, in the short run they did not enable the opposition to gain any significant advantage at the parliamentary elections of 2005. The aftermath of the astounding losses of the opposition - expected in fact if not in extent - in the 2005 parliamentary elections was characterized by a period of crisis. Kifaya all but disappeared from the political scene, while the opposition parties were further weakened by internal conflict. Drawing its own lessons from the elections, in early 2006 the state started to crack down on the Muslim Brotherhood, opposition journalists, and judges that had become too outspoken over the judicial supervision of the elections (Wolff 2009). In particular the case of judges Mahmoud Mekki and Hisham Bastawisi led, starting in May 2006, to renewed mobilization in support of their cause. In marked contrast to the restraint the security forces had shown in 2005, however, this time the activists met with severe repression. As a consequence at least 55 Kifaya activists were arrested and faced trumped-up charges ranging from illegal assembly to disturbing public order.[41] Thus while the years 2004 and 2005 seemed the culmination of a revived civil society, with multiple protest movements calling for democracy blossoming, this scene was in disarray only a year later, and not only due to increased repression by the regime, but also because their strategy for mobilizing for change had essentially failed to reach the people and lead to any significant amount of change.

However, the demise of the political protest movements after 2006 was far from the end of protest mobilization per se. Instead, Egypt witnessed one of the most sustained fully fledged workers' mobilizations since World War II,

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[41]Al-Ahram Weekly, No. 794, 11-17 May 2006, Stamp of Authority,
http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/794/eg5.htm

involving at least 1.8 million workers at one time or another. This wave started in the traditional hotspot of labor mobilization, the industrial city of Mahalla al Kubra, where in 2006 24 000 workers went on strike over unpaid bonuses (El-Mahdi 2011). The period between 2004 and 2008 alone saw about 1900 strikes, which

> "spread from their center of gravity in the textile and clothing industry to encompass building materials workers, transport workers, the Cairo underground Metro workers, food processing workers, bakers, sanitation workers, oil workers in Suez, and many others. In the summer [of 2007] the movement broadened to encompass white collar employees and civil servants" (Solidarity Center 2010, 14).

In August 2007, an estimated 20 000 teachers followed, as well as employees of the Cairo Metro, and female workers at the Mansoura-Espana textile factory, to name but a few. Workers' mobilizations reached an unprecedented height in 2007, with 590 incidents of collective action reported, compared to 222 in 2006, and with a total amount of workers involved ranging between 300 000 and 500 000. (El Mahdi 2011, 6)

While originally focused on more classical bread and butter issues, the strikes took on increasingly political overtones with calls for the formation of independent unions outside the reach of the state-controlled official EFTU. While the rise in labor activity thus coincided with the rise and concomitant decline of the political movements of 2004/05, there was only scant cooperation between the two. This lack of cooperation and coordination originated within both the political and the labor movements. The former, apart from having little contact with the labor movement to begin with (what little contact there was mainly took place via strategically located labor activists running labor rights NGOs such as Kamal Abbas), often believed that the economic demands of the labor movement were too particularistic to bring about large scale structural change, and economic demands alone could not mobilize large groups of people.[42] Workers, who felt little affinity with the political sphere to begin with, sought to keep their distance from overt political activity out of fear that this might be perceived and portrayed as their being instrumentalized by political forces such as the Muslim Brotherhood, raising the chances of repression while lowering those of success in securing their demands:

> "When demands become political, the government is afraid of interference by the opposition. If the demands are purely economic, the probability of success increases. This is because of the political elite's mindset. The government rather wants to deal with strikes by asking 'what does it cost?'".[43]

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[42]Interview with political analyst and long time activist, Cairo, 05/13.10.2005
[43]Interview with labor rights activist, Cairo, 12.03.2008

The gap between the two only started to narrow with the apparent sustainability and partial success of the labor movement, but it was 2008 before the remnants of Kifaya started to at least rhetorically reach out to the labor movement, and spin-offs of the youth mobilization that would later become known as the 6 April movement made the cause of the workers their own. The key date in this respect is said to be 6 April 2008, the date from which the latter movement took its name. 6 April 2008 marked the date for which the textile workers of Mahalla El Kubra had called a general strike to protest working and wage conditions, a call that soon got taken over by political activists, to the dismay of many labor activists. While downtown Cairo stayed relatively calm, partly due to an overwhelming security presence, violent clashes erupted in Mahalla itself, in the aftermath of which many workers and activists were arrested.

This event also marked the first appearance of the 6 April youth movement, founded by youth activists with Hizb Al Ghad, who had used Facebook to endorse the strike. While originally formed for this occasion only, overwhelming online resonance compelled the group to stay active beyond its original purpose, and continues today, with members of 6 April involved in organizing the previously mentioned calls for demonstrations on National Police Day, as well as the day that became the starting point for the revolution. Many more groups would come to emulate their particular formula of Facebook activism coupled with 'real life' events, the most prominent of which was the 'We are all Khaled Said' group, which issued the original call for the revolution on January 25 2011. One of the characteristics of activism that followed in the footsteps of the 6 April movement, apart from the extensive use of internet communication tools such as Facebook, was its cross ideological nature, gathering people around specific demands that transcended the dividing lines between Islamists, leftists and liberals. Not only did they eschew the display of overtly ideological positions, they also rejected tight coupling with existing political forces, especially the existing opposition parties, something that would recur in the run up to and during the revolution itself (Shehata 2008, 6).

The next stepping stone on the way to the revolution was the substantial mobilization that occurred after Mohamed El-Baradei, the former head of the UN's Atomic Agency, hinted at the possibility of his running for president, should the 2011 elections meet democratic standards, in an interview.[44]

The publication of these statements in November 2009 led to the 6 April movement rallying on Facebook behind his nomination as a candidate, and to the formation of the National Association for Change (NAC), a group gathering many well know opposition activists such as former Kifaya coordinator George Ishaq, as well as the Coalition to Support El-Baradei, a more youth-oriented movement organization that, while coordinating its activities with the NAC,

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[44]Al Ahram Weekly, Never say Never, 12 - 18 November 2009 Issue No. 972,
http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2009/972/eg4.htm

retained its independence. Things really kicked off when El-Baradei, after a long absence from Egypt's political scene, returned to Egypt in February 2010 to enthusiastic support for his campaign for constitutional change in the form of a frenzied virtual campaign sustained by many younger activists, as well as the so called 1 Million signature campaign which saw even the Muslim Brotherhood involved in collecting signatures for his reform proposals. However, while the El-Baradei 'phenomenon' led to substantial renewed mobilization and much hope that change was finally upon them among many opposition activists, the campaign lost a considerable amount of steam in the course of the year. Whether this was due to E-Baradei's continued extended travels abroad, or his perceived unwillingness to commit to the fight for change in Egypt, it left many supporters disappointed. This was especially true after the (massively rigged) parliamentary elections in spring 2010, which according to observers were organized mainly by Gamal Mubarak and his clique, and which marked the point "when politics died" for many opposition activists.[45]

The last and final stepping stone on the domestic scene was the infamous case of the death of Khaled Said. Khaled Said was a young, middle class professional, who after accidentally capturing film of police involved in drugs business, footage which he subsequently put up on youtube, was brutally beaten to death by the police. While police violence is not a rare occurrence in Egypt, this case was different for several reasons which have to do with his class background as well as his lack of prior involvement in political activism. As has been noted before, police repression and violence and impunity from punishment for those who commit these acts is an everyday feature of lower class life in Egypt, especially for young people. At the same time this is less true for people of middle class background, where the assumption up until recently was that as long as you stayed clean and away from politics (which was dirty anyway), you would not have to face police brutality yourself. This perception, especially for young, middle class people changed with the Khaled Said case, as he

> "put a face to torture in Egypt, one that the activist middle class can identify. […] Young kids with access to the internet saw themselves in him. He was known in his community, and people could no longer hide behind the mental veil of thinking, 'maybe he was an actual criminal and deserved it.' There was no mistake in this one. So the story was bound to resonate,"

in the words of Ahmed Seif al-Islam, a human rights lawyer and co-founder of the Hisham Mubarak Law Center.[46] His case, and the widely circulated pictures of his corpse, led to the formation of the eponymous Facebook group 'We Are All Khaled Said' that expressed exactly this sentiment that 'none of us is safe

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[45]Interview with activist, Cairo, 03.05.2011
[46]Al Masry Al Youm, Year Ender: Egypt's torture face revealed, 31.12.2010,
http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/year-ender-egypt%E2%80%99s-torture-face-revealed

from this, it could happen to each and every single one of us, without the police ever being held accountable,' and which quickly rallied hundreds of thousands, the majority of whom had never been involved in politics before.

Lastly, while the development of actor networks and alliances during the 2000s set the stage for what was to come, the event that lit the fire for many was arguably what has been dubbed the Sidi Bouzid revolution in Tunisia, where the self-immolation of a street vendor protesting against undignified living conditions sparked mass protests that led to the downfall of long term dictator Ben Ali on January 14 2011. However, while this certainly shook the Arab world, and arguably provoked a shift in the perception of the 'structuredness' of the regime they were facing, it is too easy an to simply state that what went happened in Tunisia led to what happened in Egypt. Thus, while this example may have led to many non-activists joining the protests, if even just out of curiosity, the activists involved in organizing the original event that took place on January 25 were long term activists that had prepared the demonstration well before Ben Ali fled Tunisia on the 14th, and this was a call that had gone out for three previous years (albeit with different results). It was thus the unique interaction between these more contingent political opportunities and the structural changes that had taken place over the last decades that produced the stunning events of the January 25 revolution.

Contingent Political Opportunities during the Transition Period

Compared to the first revolutionary phase of the transition, protest actors in the second phase faced a somewhat more simplified yet significantly less predictable elite structure. Thus, while some activists (especially leftists) had their doubts about the SCAF's democratic credentials, as well as their willingness to institute proper democratic processes and hand over power to civilian authorities as soon as possible[47], most former opposition actors as well as the wider population were willing either to give them the benefit of the doubt or whole heartedly embrace and support their rule. However, as shown above, as time wore on activists became increasingly disillusioned with the way the military was handling the transition process as well as the nature of the military rulers themselves. The military on the other hand, with their lack of patience with overt dissent having become ingrained over the past decades, were increasingly unwilling to tolerate continued protests – not only because regular Friday protests in Midan Tahrir brought one of Cairo's central traffic hubs to a standstill on a regular basis, but also and particularly because they viewed the continued protests as a sign of disrespect for their role during the revolution and for them as an institution as such. Together these factors led to a relatively quick shift in repressive tactics by the military and a concomitant contraction in opportunities for organizing challenges to the military outside the formal

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[47]Interview with activist, 09.05.2011

political arena. This contraction of space for opposition actors has been chronicled by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, who note widespread human rights violations in a recent report that it is worth quoting at length:

> "On the negative side too, the SCAF maintained the state of emergency continuously in force since 1981 and in September confirmed that it would enforce in full the draconian Emergency Law (Law 162 of 1958) and extend it to criminalize acts such as blocking roads, broadcasting rumours and "assault on freedom to work". These changes directly threaten freedom of expression and association, and the rights to assembly and to strike – and even reverse reforms that the Mubarak government had felt obliged to make by public pressure in recent years. Other tough new laws were introduced, such as the Law on Thuggery (Law No. 10 of 2011) enacted in March to criminalize intimidation, "thuggery" and disturbing the peace, doubling sentences already prescribed in the Penal Code and providing for the death penalty. The SCAF further tightened restrictions on media freedom, warning newspaper editors and journalists against publishing anything critical of the armed forces without prior consultation and permission. As well, human rights NGOs were threatened with prosecution if they accepted funding from abroad without prior permission. Journalists, bloggers and judges were investigated by military prosecutors or imprisoned by military courts for criticizing the army's human rights violations during the uprising and the lack of reform. Some of the SCAF's legal changes and policies targeting basic rights reinforced long-standing patterns of serious human rights violations, while others – such as subjecting women protesters to forced "virginity tests" – represented disturbing new forms of abuse. From the end of February onwards, the armed forces used violence to forcibly disperse protesters on several occasions. They used tear gas and rubber bullets and fired into the air with live ammunition and accused those they detained of looting or damaging public or private property or other crimes" (Amnesty International 2012, p. 12-13)

Thus while the increasingly restrictive environment for political activity, reminiscent of the Mubarak era, was the permanent backdrop to the spiral of escalation that marked the Fall months of 2011 and the clashes between protesters and the army, there were also more dynamic forces at work to be found in the coalitional shifts among former 'revolutionary forces' and the army, as well as splits within the revolutionary coalition. The shift in the alliance pattern that arguably hurt the revolutionary coalition the most was the Muslim Brotherhood's entering into what appeared to be a conservative alliance with the military rulers. Always of rather mixed revolutionary credentials, the Muslim Brotherhood, poised to be the major beneficiary of the revolutionary struggle (on the side of the former opposition forces that is, the military being the main beneficiary on the side of the former regime elite), decided it could reap most of these payoffs by focusing on normalizing the political process, a goal they shared with the SCAF. Thus, from very early in the transition period

the MB advocated abandoning the streets in favor of focusing on the creation of political parties and organizing the upcoming parliamentary elections, which they wanted to see held at the earliest moment possible, similarly to the SCAF. They were supported in this by Salafist groups, which though traditionally apolitical had decided to engage with the political process on this momentous occasion. While the MB, the only comprehensively organized political force with any kind of grassroots basis, and endowed with generous financial assets, was the one force that could profit from early elections, many of the other political forces, revolutionary or not, were decidedly opposed to a tight election schedule. The new political party law issued by the military rulers, while considerably more liberal than that of the Mubarak era, still imposed high hurdles on registering a party, amongst them the requirement for 5000 signatures and publishing these signatures in a major daily newspaper. Many opposition activists felt that these restrictions were meant to privilege not only more established political forces, but also well-endowed forces catering mainly to middle and upper class audiences. The post-revolutionary era was thus characterized in terms of alliance politics by a move towards conservatism in which the military, as the only remaining elite actor (more on this in the section on elites as actors in the transition process), entered into what seemed like a pact with the only political force with promising electoral prospects and hence a potential future majority party in parliament in order to push for an agenda of early elections, the suppression of further protests, and the normalization of political life (Koehler 2012, 13).

With the MB defecting to the side of the military, the revolutionary coalition was thus essentially bereft of its broad-based mobilization potential, leaving only those whose entry into the political process was stunted by their lack of political resources – be that in terms of political experience, organizational skills, or financial assets - to take to the streets. Whereas the revolution had so far fallen short of satisfying many of their demands, the successful imposition of early elections without knowing the rules under which they would take place shifted the parameters of the political debate to extremely technocratic issues of electoral system choices, the benefits of one electoral system over another – technicalities that were ill-suited to produce wide-scale mobilization amongst people who had little to no knowledge of the subject matter. On the other hand the emerging alliance pattern shaped the debate in that it produced increasing polarization along the religion/secularism cleavage to the detriment of issues such as social justice, creating a cleavage pattern that the protesters had little opportunity to alter and which in terms of the discourses and framings of the debate eventually put them at a significant disadvantage (Koehler 2012, 12).

Protests in this transitional period therefore mirror the increasing political marginalization of youth groups, which often lacked cohesive structures that could be transformed into organized political forces. While the revolution itself was a phase when the mobilization potential and stamina of these youth groups

drove developments, the period afterwards called for different sets of political skills, leading to the rise of more entrenched and traditional political actors like parties and long-time politicians, pushing aside the youth groups in the bargaining game with the SCAF over the future nature of the political system. The bargaining process essentially became elite-dominated, with little room for the less politically experienced youth activists. Yet here we also see differences between activists. While those with long histories of student activism or activism within different oppositional vehicles like Kifaya often joined political parties (Ziad El Alimi, Mustafa al Naggar), and could thus translate their political significance during the revolution into political capital in its aftermath, many of the youth activists did not manage to take that step successfully, and were thus reduced to relying on the one instrument that had served them well in the past – demonstrations in Midan Tahrir. So not only did Egypt's revolution fail to bring new strata into the political process (to a much lesser extent than the revolution in Tunisia for example), but the political game in some ways looked eerily similar to its pre-revolutionary version, with similar sets of actors competing with each other under slightly more open conditions and with a less certain endpoint to the process.

Actors in the Transition

Elites

If one takes Perthes' definition of politically relevant elites (PREs) as a starting point for delineating Egypt's political elites, an approach that has been popular with students of Arab politics, one is faced with a certain dilemma as to how to distinguish between those elites in power, those influential and close to them, and those opposed to them that nonetheless enjoy privileged access to the media, the discursive structure of the debate, and greater degrees of regime tolerance (which in countries such as Egypt before the revolution can be viewed as one invaluable resource amongst others for opposition actors). Perthes defines the PRE as

> "those people in a given country who wield political influence and power in that they make strategic decisions or participate in decision making on a national level, contribute to defining political norms and values, and directly influence political discourse on strategic issues. The PRE thus encompasses the political elite, defined as those top government, administrative, and political leaders 'who actually exercise power' or 'persons whose strategic position in large and powerful organizations and movements enable them to influence political decision making directly, substantially, and regularly.' The PRE reaches, however, beyond the political elite to include groups and segments that contribute to political processes or influence them from various sidelines." (Perthes 2004, 5)

This definition, however, opens up a Pandora's box with respect to how to differentiate between elite actors within the regime and elite actors opposed to them who are part of Egypt's broader opposition and civil society landscape. Although drawing the line between genuine opposition elites and regime elites is a tricky business in a country where during the rule of Mubarak 'loyal' opposition actors were tolerated to some extent, as long as they stayed within predefined limits and did not cross any red lines, for the purposes of this report it is still a worthwhile endeavor. In discussing elite actors during our two transitional phases, we will thus restrict ourselves to those members of the political elite in official or unofficial positions of power with direct (not indirectly transmitted through media access) influence to alter and influence decision making.

Traditionally speaking, Egypt's elite was made up of those people close to the President himself; many of them in 'official' positions of power, but others not. This so-called old guard was found in the higher echelons of the ruling NDP, as long time ministers or personal advisers to the president. The positions they held sometimes changed, but the people, most of whom had been with Mubarak since he started his Presidency, stayed the same. The most prominent among them included the former NDP Secretary General Safwat al-Sharif, former Presidential Chief of Staff Zakaria Azmi, former Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kamal Al Shazly, former Director of General Intelligence Omar Suleiman, former senior advisor to Mubarak and rumored grey eminence Osama al Baz, former Minister of Agriculture Youssuf Wali, former longtime Speaker of Parliament and later Minster of Parliamentary Affairs Fathi Sorour, as well as former Minister of Defense Hussein Tantawi.[48] These old guard members share certain characteristics in that they emerged together with Mubarak from various public, state-related institutions, such as the military, public bureaucracies and ministries. Thus, the ruling National Democratic Party, while not a center of power itself, served as a vehicle to provide positions for those people installed via their connections with the president, as well as to control a potentially unruly organization (which was also one of the main instruments of control in the parliament) on the other. Another organizational locus of power, even though few knew exactly how powerful until the revolution, was the military. (Blades 2008, 2) Hailed as one of Egypt's few institutions to command integrity as well as efficiency, the military's influence ranged, according to commentators, from backbone of the regime in its function as last resort, to active political agent, influencing events and decisions behind the scenes. What is clear is not only do many high ranking figures come from a military background, including Mubarak himself, but the military establishment is also deeply interlinked with politics and the economy:

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[48]Al Masry Al Youm, Gamal Mubarak and the discord in Egypt's ruling Elite, 02.09.2010,
http://www.egyptindependent.com/node/75005

> "Until this very day, the role of the military establishment in the economy remains one of the major taboos in Egyptian politics. Over the past thirty years, the army has insisted on concealing information about its enormous interests in the economy and thereby keeping them out of reach of public transparency and accountability. The Egyptian Armed Forces owns a massive segment of Egypt's economy—twenty-five to forty percent, according to some estimates. In charge of managing these enterprises are the army's generals and colonels, notwithstanding the fact that they lack the relevant experience, training, or qualifications for this task. The military's economic interests encompass a diverse range of revenue-generating activities, including the selling and buying of real estate on behalf of the government, domestic cleaning services, running cafeterias, managing gas stations, farming livestock, producing food products, and manufacturing plastic table covers."[49]

The military only answer to the president himself, and retired generals are to be found deeply entrenched in the political system, with 21 out of 29 appointed governors retired generals.[50] Their interests were thus tightly linked with the state in an economic sense, but also more directly to the survival of the Mubarak regime. (Blades 2008, 22)

These old guard and military figures were complemented, and as many believed replaced, by a so-called young guard, made up of the President's son Gamal Mubarak and a cohort of foreign-educated business cronies that started filling up the NDP ranks from the early 2000s onwards. Gamal himself was an investment banker in London in the 1990s before his return to Egypt, where he quickly rose to prominence. In 2000 he was placed on the General Secretariat of the NDP, and in 2002 became head of its Policies Secretariat:

> "The NDP's party conference in September 2002 further strengthened the hand of the younger Mubarak's cohort. Safwat Sherif replaced Youssef Wali as secretary-general, and Gamal Mubarak became head of the NDP's new Policies Secretariat. Significantly, the NDP's General Secretariat grew to include more businessmen MPs (Hossam Awad and Hossam Badrawi). Elections by the six thousand delegates in attendance decisively shifted the General Secretariat to favor Gamal Mubarak's platform" (Brownlee 2007, 147).

His platform included a pronouncedly reformist orientation, with a special emphasis on economic liberalization. That Gamal and his 'young guard' had gained track is epitomized in the ascension of the 2004 Ahmed Nazif government, which included along with Gamal seven associated businessmen and drove an aggressive economic liberalization policy. Thus in the mid to late 2000s, and in the wake of Gamal Mubarak's rise to increasing political power,

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[49]Jadaliyya: The Army and the Economy in Egypt, 23.12.2011, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3732/the-army-and-the-economy-in-egypt
[50]How Gamal brought the Whole Mubarak House Down, Al Ahram Weekly, 15.04.2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/9988/Egypt/Politics-/How-Gamal-brought-the-whole-Mubarak-house-down.aspx

Egypt witnessed a tight interlinking between economic and political power to a degree that had not been seen before. Positions of power afforded their owners access to economic resources, but economic actors as such always remained subordinated to the political logic of regime maintenance. During Gamal Mubarak's time, however, business elites began to penetrate the different strata of political power, epitomized in the corresponding rise (and fall) of Gamal's friend and steel magnate Ahmed Ezz.

The rise of Gamal Mubarak as well as his perceived grooming for 'hereditary' succession was not universally met with approval, however, and not only amongst opposition actors, but also within the elite itself. Specifically, both members of the old guard and the military establishment viewed the rise of both Gamal and his coterie, as well as his reformist neoliberal agenda, with suspicion:

> "Gamal's second push on the path to power in the ruling party's ranks was established in September 2002 when the NDP held its eighth general congress. Under the slogan 'A New Style of Thinking,' the Policies Secretariat was created and headed by Gamal Mubarak. This was announced before a televised audience and around 6,000 of the party's political bureaucrats. The new secretariat marked a significant shift in favour of Gamal and his associates from the world of business, particularly since it produced a Higher Council for Policies (HCP), including 200 members, mostly young businessmen and academics allegedly tasked with relieving Egypt of the old socialist policies of the 1960s and antiquated viewpoints – as Gamal once called them. Gamal's position as secretary for policies had become the party's second most powerful position, only after its chairman: Mubarak the father. In July 2004, a major reshuffling of the government reflected this new guard's control on the NDP and ministries with cabinet positions held by businessmen and liberal-oriented economists. Ahmed Nazif headed a cabinet that was notable for including Youssef Boutros Ghali as minister of finance, Rashid Mohamed Rashid for industry and trade, Ahmed Guweily in charge of investments and Ahmed El-Maghraby with the housing portfolio. Ghali, Rashid and Mohieddin were dubbed "Gamal Mubarak's trio" and entrusted with drawing up the government's economic agenda."[51]

While Gamal Mubarak's rise represented a political threat for the old guard, whereby one part of the elite threatened to push aside or at least diminish the influence the other, for the military, whose vast economic holdings depended and still depend on the state, it was an economic as well as a political threat:

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[51] How Gamal brought the Whole Mubarak House Down, Al Ahram Weekly, 15.04.2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/9988/Egypt/Politics-/How-Gamal-brought-the-whole-Mubarak-house-down.aspx

"Contacts agree that presidential son Gamal Mubarak's power base is centered in the business community, not with the military. XXXXXXXXXXXX[52] said officers told him recently that the military does not support Gamal and if Mubarak died in office, the military would seize power rather than allow Gamal to succeed his father. However, analysts agreed that the military would allow Gamal to take power through an election if President Mubarak blessed the process and effectively gave Gamal the reigns of power. XXXXXXXXXXXX opined that after Gamal became active in the NDP in 2002, the regime empowered the reformers in the 2004 cabinet to begin privatization efforts that buttressed the wealthy businessmen close to Gamal. In his estimation, the regime's goal is to create a business-centered power base for Gamal in the NDP to compensate for his lack of military credentials. A necessary corollary to this strategy, he claimed, was for the regime to weaken the military's economic and political power so that it cannot block Gamal's path to the presidency."[53]

Thus, on the eve of the revolution, the country was living with an aging President whose health was widely believed to be deteriorating but who had nonetheless announced his intention to run for a sixth time for President, a potential successor who was widely unpopular with the opposition, whose business cronies were seen as responsible for economic reforms that had left many Egyptians increasingly impoverished, and who was viewed with suspicion at best by the other segments of the elites. The revolution itself unfolded in the shadow of these dynamics of elite change. The prospect of hereditary succession was one of the core concerns voiced by opposition figures over the years, and Gamal's political platform had led to a worsening in the lot of workers who suffered under corrupt privatization practices, as well as the general living conditions of ordinary people, all of which contributed to bring them onto the streets.

These elite changes and conflicts also played into the unfolding of the revolution itself. While Mubarak and much of his old guard initially failed to comprehend the extent of the events and the severity of the threat they posed to the regime and its survival, Gamal Mubarak and his cronies were – at least according to mainstream accounts – more active in trying to save the regime, albeit using tactics of regime repression that not only failed to halt the mobilization but actually served to foment public anger when they (allegedly) orchestrated the battle of the camel. While the old and young guards thus tried to stave off the protests by all means possible, the army played a more ambiguous role. Whereas the former stood to lose unambiguously should the regime fall, the latter, due to its high prestige in society, as well as its rather less than ironclad hold on its lower and middle ranks, faced a more complex payoff. On the one hand, the army, or at least its higher echelons, are not only linked to but a deeply entrenched part of the regime itself. Due to their political stature, as

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[52]The identity of XXXXXX is not disclosed in the cable.
[53]Cable #2091, from the embassy in Cairo to Washington,
23.09.2008http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/09/08CAIRO2091.html#

well as their economic interests, they could thus have very little interest in seeing the regime fall. On the other hand, the doubts the Tunisian revolution had sown about the impossibility of bringing down the regime, combined with the reluctance to get their hands dirty alongside loathed rivals for resources from the other security branches as well as their tenuous hold over the lower army ranks, led the military leaders to at least keep their position open, not siding clearly either with the protesters or the security services.[54] In the short run this benefited the protesters, who felt encouraged by the reluctance of the army to intervene and sought to interpret this as army support for their cause. However, a more appropriate assumption seems to be that the army tried to avoid taking a stance for as long as they could, and only decided to force Mubarak out when it became clear that at least the face of the regime, as well as its leading figures, had to go.

If we take a closer look at elite developments after the revolution during the transitional phase, we see that while before the events a more diverse elite picture with various competing elite segments vying for either more influence or seeking to protect the influence they already held, with Mubarak at the center arbitrating the different factions was in place, after a picture where only one of these elite segments remains now applies, and members of the other two elites, that is the old guard and Gamal and his cronies, have been put on trial.[55] Thus, whether the SCAF put members of former rival elite segments on trial due to an urge to satisfy popular demands or, conversely, in order to settle old scores remains open to speculation. It is clear, however, that in the short and in the long run, as the only elite segment remaining, the army has taken steps to secure its interests, both economic and political, against future rulers, should they actually hand over power as planned in June 2012. Thus, as Perthes remarks: "Elites are never, even in revolutionary situations, totally exchanged. In most Arab states, incumbent elites significantly influence the formation of the new elite that will replace them." (Perthes 2004, 10)

Civil Society Actors

Regarding the civil society actors involved in Egypt's transition process, we will continue to follow the strategy of breaking down the narratives about the roles of the different actors into two phases, during regime breakdown on one hand and in the transition phase proper on the other. For most actors involved, this will mean referring to the pre-revolutionary period in order to illustrate their origins, organizational capabilities and mindsets. The discussion of actors will therefore be somewhat internally inconsistent in that some actors constitute actual organizational entities, some are more loosely formed movements and

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[54]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011

[55]Al Ahram Online, The Battle of the Camel trial reunites cornerstone figures of Egypt's former regime, 12.09.2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/20967/Egypt/Politics-/The-Battle-of-Camel-trial-reunites-cornerstone-fig.aspx

groups, and others are part of a diffuse collective belonging to a certain 'social class' without clearly defined boundaries, and who did not actually step onto the revolutionary scene as actors proper before the mobilization that led to the downfall of Mubarak. The rationale for including the latter in this part on actors in the transition is that while they may not constitute organized groups which can be analyzed using the same somewhat restrictive categories, their presence on the streets in significant numbers during the breakdown of Husni Mubarak's regime as during parts of the transition period that followed is what 'made' the revolution in the first place. Thus, even if they do not boast the same degrees of coherence and organizational capacity as civil society groups proper, leaving them out of the discussion would not only restrict the view on the revolution to a very elitist perspective, it would also give a very truncated picture of the complex interactions between different groups and their strategies, and how these differences accounted for the trajectories of the transition phase.

Pro-Democracy Movements

With regards to the pre-revolutionary period, the groups involved in organizing at this point were, as already mentioned, the 6 April movement, the Coalition to Support El-Baradei, the youth wing of the Democratic Front party, and the Justice and Freedom movement. These youth movements, far from being spontaneous ad hoc creations, had actually acquired an extended organizational history rooted in the civil society mobilizations of the beginning of the 2000s by the time of the revolutionary upheaval. These first demonstrations led to the formation of the Egyptian Popular Committee in Solidarity with the Intifada (EPCSI), which centered on the plight of the Palestinians at the start of the second Palestinian Intifada. The EPCSI was a movement that initially focused on providing help to Palestinians through donations of blood and funds,[56] but later turned into a source of activism in Egypt well beyond its initial purpose. Many of the activists that became recurrent figures on Egypt's opposition scene and moved on to participate in various other protest organizations were drawn from amongst its members. On the one hand, the EPCSI involved re-mobilized figures who had been active during the student protests in the 1970s, but on the other also served as the site of politicization for many new activists from Egypt's universities and beyond.[57] Demonstrations continued throughout 2001 and 2002, which then seamlessly ushered in protests against the US led war on Iraq in 2003. It was then that activists involved in both protests in support of the Intifada and against the war on Iraq merged to form the 20 March Popular Campaign for Change, another key organization on Egypt's activist scene, and the first to transcend the line between demands exclusively focused on foreign policy issues, and demands linking international conditions to domestic politics

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[56]Al Ahram Weekly, No. 748, A Chronology of Dissent, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/748/eg10.htm
[57]Interview with long-term activist at the Socialist Studies Center and the Revolutionary Socialists, September 25 2005, Cairo.

and ultimately the nature of the Egyptian regime:

> "The main difference between the pro-Intifada mobilization and the 2003 mobilization was the level of radicalism. The pro-Intifada protests were something like a charity. The regime could easily say that it was in favour of the Palestinians as well. Even some activists were surprised when there were clashes with the police because they did not perceive their mobilization to be directed against the regime at all. 2003, by contrast, was a clear attack against the regime. The focus started to turn on Mubarak, people were tearing down his pictures and shouted slogans denouncing him. In general there was the feeling that Mubarak was the appropriate target of mobilization".[58]

The second organizational milestone on the road to the formation of the aforementioned youth movements was the Egyptian Movement for Change, or Kifaya, which started to mobilize against the president and his son in 2004, just before the important election year of 2005 which saw both the presidential referendum (later transformed into the first multi-candidate presidential elections by the regime) and parliamentary elections. With the opposition's failure to significantly impact the elections ushering in a period of protracted crisis within the movement, as well as amongst opposition parties, Kifaya all but ceased to play a role in shaping the oppositional arena except as a vehicle for opposition figures to voice demands in the press, and occasionally at conferences. Thus, after 2006, activists previously involved in Kifaya started to move away, with many younger activists involved in its youth wing, Youth for Change, moving on to other, more grassroots-oriented projects such as Tadammon, and later the at first largely internet-based 6 April movement.[59] As one activist put it, it was not that people actively quit Kifaya, because there was nothing to quit, it was simply necessary for the time being, but after the parliamentary and presidential elections it had simply served its purpose.[60]

Thus, the different youth groups were a more or less direct outcome of the organizational changes in the opposition landscape, starting with the demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinians in 2000.

While within these groups people belonged to different political currents, some liberal, some leftist, some from the far left, there remained considerable similarities consistent with the organizational characteristics of the previous organizations. What united them was the fact that a) they were all relatively young people, mostly in their 20s and 30s, that they were b) activists, many of whom had been involved in opposition politics, human rights work etc. for quite some time, and that they c) came from a similar middle class background. These activists had not only participated in demonstrations for years, they had actively

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[58]Interview with activist, Cairo, 07.05.2011
[59]Dina Shehata, talk at a joint panel discussion on: "From Revolution to Transformation: Egypt 2011/ Germany 1989" by the American University in Cairo and the Freie Universität Berlin, 08.05.2011
[60]Interview with activist, Cairo, 28.04.2011

partaken in organizing them, thus refuting the claim that the revolution was a spontaneous uprising inspired by the events in Tunisia. To be sure, Tunisia had an impact, but for the most part only with regard to their hopes of getting bigger numbers onto the streets than their demonstrations would normally attract.[61] What is even more important than the fact that these were not essentially new actors on Egypt's opposition scene was that these were actors that were well connected amongst each other, that had cooperated previously, that had members who had often attended the same universities, and had collected experience in organizing opposition activism within and outside the confines of the university campuses.[62] Thus, when talking about initial mobilizers, those who put out the calls for action, we are talking about young, educated, well connected and mostly middle class activists. These facts also help to shed some light on the other factor in this pre-revolutionary period that has received much media attention: the role of social networking sites such as Facebook and twitter in getting the calls for protest out and publicized, as well as in attracting a significant following on the streets on January 25 itself. What we thus have to keep in mind is the fact that these tools, while crucial for initial mobilization in terms of their potential to disseminate information to a broad audience avoiding the tightly controlled regular channels of communication, are tools that are common/widespread only among certain parts of the population. What is more, they were tools that had been used for similar purposes from at least 2005/6 onwards, yet as one analyst remarks with vastly differing results in terms of turnout.[63] Thus, while Facebook & Co were important, their role is not sufficient to explain the extent of the mobilization witnessed during the revolution. And while it is certainly true that they improved their strategies and tactics in terms of secrecy and surprise elements, these were essentially still tried and tested strategies for opposition movements.

While these actors still represented a fairly coherent picture during the run up to the revolution as well as during the revolution itself, this was to change during the transition phase. Some of the more experienced actors involved in networks with political opposition parties in addition to their university networks moved on to join several political parties in a bid for parliamentary representation. Thus, these actors were considerably more reluctant to join the continued calls for protests organized by groups such as 6 April alongside several revolutionary youth coalitions formed during or after the revolution. This development drove post-revolutionary processes in decisive ways in that on one side the revolution and the post-revolutionary opening of the electoral process to former opposition actors allowed a new generation of young activists and politicians to get a foot in the door of the political process – which would of course have been denied to them under the old regime. Thus,

[61]Interview with activist 28.04.11
[62]Particularly important in this regard were the activist networks from Cairo University
[63]Rabab Al-Mahdi, talk at a joint panel discussion on: "From Revolution to Transformation: Egypt 2011/ Germany 1989" by the American University in Cairo and the Freie Universität Berlin, 08.05.2011

this development funneled new and fresh blood into the political process, affording Egypt's young political talent a stake in the emerging new (and potentially democratic) regime. On the other side, this funneling off of the most talented, ambitious and experienced opposition activists also meant that the youth movements were essentially bereft of leaders with previous experience in organizing political activities. Hence, while the networks established between youth activists before and during the revolution remained mostly intact, serving as the basis for further mobilization, at the same time, their most experienced members, and thus those with the most political capital to succeed under the new conditions, left to join more organized political forces that were better positioned to profit from the new political arrangements. Particularly prominent amongst those political parties that attracted young activists were the Social Democrats, and Hizb Al-Adl, the former being joined by Ziad Al-Alimi, one of the original organizers of the January 25 protests, and the latter by Mustafa Al Naggar. Thus, this brain drain left the revolutionary youth groups somewhat ill positioned to further their own claims in ways that were likely to lead to success when it started to become clear that not only was the military using increasingly violent methods against them, but also that the general populace was far from being supportive of their taking to Cairo's streets in continued protests.

Religious movements - The Muslim Brotherhood

The role of Islamists, and particularly members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), is fairly ambivalent looking at the overall period. This ambivalence was already apparent during the first phase, the overthrow of Husni Mubarak, even though nobody, not even the most staunch leftists, would deny the role they played in the revolution. The MB, as one of Egypt's oldest yet technically illegal opposition groups, while allowing their youth wing to attend the protests, had originally decided to stay formally out of them, afraid that this would either lead to the protests being portrayed as an Islamist attempt to overthrow the regime or, if not successful, provoke a violent backlash against the group, which is one of the most regular targets of regime repression. One leading figure described the calculation behind this decision in the following way:

> "We provided material and support to the Revolution, but we realized that the regime depended on the presence of the MB to scare people. The Minister of the Interior said on 25 January that the protests were instigated by the MB. Also the President was saying on 1 February that there was only him or the MB. We anticipated this reaction."[64]

Thus, while hesitant to directly endorse the revolution under its own name at the very beginning, at the same time the MB did nothing to prevent youth and

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[64]Interview with MB member, Cairo, 22.05.11

individual members from attending either. That their fear of repression was not entirely unfounded is clearly borne out by the fact that several of their leaders were arrested in the run up to 28 January in a bid by the regime to prevent the protests from garnering widespread support. After the initial success of the January 25 protests, and after debates within the group, they finally decided to throw their weight behind the revolution on January 27 and called on their members to join after the next day's Friday prayers.[65] Apart from the sheer numbers of supporters they brought to the protests, what many activists credit them for is the efficiency with which they organized the defense around the embattled protesters in Tahrir, preventing them from being "crushed" by the regime and its plain clothes thugs.[66] That they were able to play such a role was largely due to their nature as one of Egypt's only organized opposition forces, with a solid grassroots base, strict organizational discipline, and independent finances. It was this superior degree of organization and discipline that allowed them to uphold the defense line at Midan Tahrir with an efficiency lacking is all the other groups present during the protests.

However, the protests in general as well as the involvement of MB members uncovered a fault line amongst activists. This crack had been growing in recent years, and eventually resulted in a split within the organization itself. In past years there had been an increasing sense of frustration among younger activists with an older generation of opposition politicians that were perceived as not only patronizing in their approach of dealing with youth, but also as too complacent towards a regime which had afforded them limited but nevertheless some political space – which exceeded that afforded to the opposition in other Arab countries such as Tunisia or Syria. Thus there are legitimate doubts as to whether the MB leadership, had it decided to issue an actual ban on protesting on 25 January, would have succeeded in controlling members of their younger generations in particular.

That this generational cleavage should be taken seriously was made surprisingly visible in the second, transitional phase following the downfall of Mubarak, and the concomitant split between parts of the MB's young guard and its leadership. In one of their greatest successes in decades, shortly after the downfall of Mubarak the military licensed the MB-affiliated (albeit nominally independent) Freedom and Justice Party. The MB leadership's attempts at imposing party discipline, whereby MB members were only allowed to join the Freedom and Justice party and were banned from either forming their own parties or joining others, led to open conflict between young MB members, and particularly those closely involved with organizing the protests, and the MB leadership. These young members instead founded the Egypt Current Party and joined a coalition with the Revolution Continues Alliance, which however did

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[65]Interview with MB member, Cairo, 22.05.2011
[66]Interview with activist, Cairo, 03.05.2011

rather poorly in the parliamentary elections.[67] What is interesting about the young members of the MB going there own way is the fact that this move fits into an overall pattern of de-ideologized network building, especially amongst younger activists, and that is also visible in organizations such as 6 April, which defines itself via common overall goals (more democracy) and the adequate means to reach them (street protests), but differs in terms of the concrete ideological orientations of members. Thus, activists from this young generation themselves remarked how they differed from the so-called 70s generation of former student activists that now dominates the political scene, in that there are no deeply entrenched battles and enmities among leftists and Islamists, a characteristic which afforded them the opportunity to form networks of university activists across the political spectrum and focus on the common enemy – the former regime under Husni Mubarak.[68] While this was certainly a welcome departure and one that broadened their opportunities for cooperation in the perspective of young activists, it remains something that older generations, especially in the MB, regard with suspicion.

The older MB leadership played a decidedly conservative role in this second phase in that in collaborating with the military rulers they endorsed not only the return to normalcy and the demand to abstain from further protests, but also the SCAF's envisioned electoral system, the timetable for parliamentary elections, and the order in which the constitution and parliamentary elections should be dealt with. There are two main reasons behind this. On the one hand, the MB is the force positioned to benefit most clearly from elections being held as early as possible, and from the constitution being written by a parliament likely to be dominated by the MB itself. It is the only organization with any grassroots base to speak of that can mobilize substantial amounts of people, that is widely known in the populace (this is a problem that plagues liberal and leftist forces especially, perhaps with the exception of the Wafd and Tagammu), and that commands a coherent, disciplined, experienced and efficient organizational apparatus. However, for this to take effect and the MB to truly benefit from its unique position in this transitional phase, the support of the military in terms of licensing and tolerating their party was needed. This in turn depended on the amount of threat the SCAF believed the MB to pose – hence the discouragement of protests as destabilizing as well as the endorsement of the various SCAF proposals. That this was a risky game to play became clear, however, when the SCAF, taken aback by the scale of the victory of the MB at the polls, announced that they did not view the upcoming parliament as fully representative and reserved the option to change the balance of power by appointing additional members, thus breaking their implicit or explicit pact with the MB:

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[67]Egyptian Current Party, Jadaliyya, 18.11.2011, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3156/egyptian-current-party
[68]Interview with activist, Cairo, 24.05.2011

"In a rare briefing with foreign journalists on Wednesday, army General Mukhtar al-Mulla said that parliament's ability to choose a 100-member assembly that will draft the new constitution will be constrained by military-approved "parameters", according to media reports. Just a day after the first round of parliamentary voting finished, delivering Islamists roughly two-thirds of the available seats, Mulla, a member of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), said the country's new parliament could not be broadly representative of Egypt because elections are occurring 'in such unstable conditions'. 'What we are seeing is free and fair elections ... but they certainly don't represent all sectors of society,' Mulla said, according to the Guardian. He said that the military would appoint an advisory civilian council to act as an intermediary between the SCAF, parliament and the cabinet - which itself was appointed by the military. All four groups would have to agree on the composition of the 100-member constitutional assembly, Mulla said. 'There will be an agreement beforehand on the form of this constituent assembly between the cabinet, the advisory committee for the military council, and the parliament,' he told reporters."[69]

Thus, while the old leadership of the MB represents an essentially conservative force with respect not only to its ideological stance but also to its positions on change, the viability of street action, and the role of new or younger generations in the political system, their young generation, with their tightly interwoven networks with fellow university students belonging to different ideological orientations, is more firmly rooted on the side of the young protesters who refuse to be complacent about the pace and direction of change during the transitional phase.

Workers' Movement

The question of working class impact in recent Egyptian events has so far remained contested. Disagreement concerns how much influence the workers' calls for general strikes had on the outcome of the revolution, their presence on Tahrir before the call for a general strike, as well as their influence on strategies and tactics. What is clear by all accounts is that the general strike was the first time in the revolution that the workers, as a more or less organized force, came into play and thereby significantly shifted the balance of accounts in favor of the protesters, helping to at least speed up the process of bringing down Mubarak. What is less clear is the role of the workers before they issued this general call. While some argue that they were not present at all, some say they were there all along, only as individuals rather than as 'workers'. This becomes clearer if we take into account the fact that workers had only very recently started to establish their own unions independently of the state-controlled corporatist union federation the EFTU, which served more as an instrument to impose control from above rather than a representation of workers from below.

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[69]Egypt's army asserts constitutional control, Al Jazeera, 09.12.2011,
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/2011128131643467405.html

Moreover, during the revolution employers also went on strike, leaving factories closed: "During the first weeks, the factories were closed, so the workers decided individually to go or not to go. There were no independent unions, of course, so there was also no collective decision making."[70] Thus, whether workers showed up on Tahrir or not depended on their own political attitudes as citizens, and not, at least in the early days, on any collective union decision. "When they were called back to work, however, they went on strike. That was in the last three days. And they went on strike for openly political reasons"[71]. Thus the workers' involvement, like that of other social strata, cannot exclusively be judged according to whether they were involved in and organized way. Instead, many of the workers that had become politicized starting from more economically-oriented demands forwarded in the workers' strikes from 2006 onwards, attended the demonstrations from the very beginning.[72] What is crucial in this respect is the fact that

> "since 2006, more than 1.8 million of people were involved in strikes and that's not including their families and friends who thereby heard about it. The breaking of fear like that cannot be called insignificant, if you have 1.8 million who have somehow contended with authority in some way".[73]

Thus, it was the experience of contesting authority over an extended period of time that contributed not only to workers being ready to mobilize, but also to their inventing their own particular ways and strategies of dealing with a regime reluctant to give in to their demands, with the physical occupation of space via sit-ins for example:

> "If you look at the tactics adopted during 18 days, the labor movement was important. For example occupations and sit-ins in the streets are labor tactics, especially the not leaving space part [i.e. the occupation of significant spaces like factories, squares]. The taking over of significant places like the main TV station are tactics that came from the tax collectors in 2007 with their sit-in in front of the parliament".[74]

With the political struggle in the second, transitional phase increasingly focusing on laying down electoral rules and the struggle over whether a parliament should be established before a constitution written (the MB's and the SCAF's position) or vice versa (the position of many leftists and liberal movements and parties), workers, in terms of their struggle as well as their grievances, fell by the wayside. For many political actors, the transitional phase

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[70]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011

[71]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011

[72]Interview with activist, Cairo, 09.05.2011

[73]Rabab Al-Mahdi, talk at a joint panel discussion on: "From Revolution to Transformation: Egypt 2011/ Germany 1989" by the American University in Cairo and the Freie Universität Berlin, 08.05.2011

[74]Interview with activist, Cairo, 24.05.2011

was one in which genuinely political questions needed to be dealt with, rather than getting hung up on 'particularistic' economic questions.[75] Hence, the political discourse of the day increasingly marginalized workers' rights and interests, and perpetrators even included some progressive forces (an exception here are the activists and politicians associated with very leftist parties and coalitions like the Egyptian Socialist Party, which did not however occupy an equal space in the mainstream discourse compared to other parties, and either did not formally register as a political party at all or did very poorly in the elections).

However, this did not mean that the workers as an organized force played no role in this second phase. Instead, after the brief phase of the fusing of opposition energies during the breakdown of the regime, the workers' economic struggle took its separate path, as it had before the revolution, often pitted against significant obstacles in the SCAF. Thus, the year after the revolution saw numerous strikes throughout the year, and a veritable strike wave starting from September 17. It also saw the founding of an independent union federation, the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), on 30 January 2011. Before the revolution, in addition to Egypt's state controlled, corporatist Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), workers had fought for and succeeded in securing the establishment of three independent unions, but only after a massive strike wave that shook Egypt's economy in the latter part of the 2000s. In contrast, 2011 saw the formation of over 300 new unions organized under the banner of the EFITU, yet these were not officially permitted by the military rulers, who had already passed a law outlawing and heavily penalizing strikes and protests in March 2011.[76] Thus, while the networks of the workers' movement persisted into the second phase of the transition, many of the features that had characterized their earlier activism – the separation of their protest from 'genuine' political protest, both in terms of protest events and the discourses of the political protesters, the lack of positive feedback between economic and political protests (which ironically would have transformed the revolution from a theoretical gimmick into an actual social and political one), their complete absence as a force on the political scene (indeed, one of the most promising new parties, the Social Democratic Party, did not include the workers' movement either programmatically or personally, unlike its European counterparts), and hence potential to have an impact on the future of the political system.

Lower Class Participants

The question of strategies that sprang from the specific way in which social

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[75]Time Magazine, Has the Revolution Left Egypt's Workers Behind?, 23.06.2011,
http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2079605,00.html
[76]Joel Beinin, What have workers gained from Egypt's revolution? 20.07.2011,
http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/07/20/what_have_workers_gained_from_egypt_s_revolution

strata interacted with authority played a big part in the events analyzed here in terms of the strategies that proved crucial in holding on to physical space, and thus how protests were shaped not only by middle class youth using social media, but also by lower class participants that actively shaped the repertoire available to protesters. It was these people from in and around Cairo that made the ultimate difference in terms of the extent of mobilization compared to protests that had been staged in previous years:

> "While groups of professional youth revolutionaries led the organization, what made it successful was that millions joined. If it had not been for the marginalized, the third class of Cairo and its surrounding areas on the 28th things would not have moved. What united these people was that all of them hated Mubarak, but none of them was mobilized because of electoral politics, but rather because there are no jobs, they have no food".[77]

It was these people that made the occupation of Tahrir successful, not just in terms of numbers, although they arguably accounted for a huge chunk of the demonstrators, but in terms of complementing the tried and tested (and usual failed) tactics that middle class activists brought to the table. As one of these activists recalls,

> "on the 25th it was mainly middle class people mobilized through the internet. But on the 28th it was different. And people from the lower classes were essential for fighting against the police. I for example never even thought about attacking soldiers or police. Activists would just run away and collect themselves somewhere else and try the same again. The people who came with the idea of attacking back were not activists. The experience people had in encountering police in their daily lives is very different. [...] Political activists were not on those fronts defending Tahrir simply because they lack the skills. People from the middle class are not normally in contact with the police in their daily lives, and political activists encounter them but in a different way than lower class people".[78]

When considering those that mobilized in protests against the regime for the first time in their lives during the revolution it is important to note that Egypt is a country with sharply divided spheres of interaction between regime, political actors, and different social classes. The political sphere in particular is completely detached from the everyday lives of the majority, either because it is seen as something far away from everyday life, where a language that ordinary people do not understand is spoken, that is discourses that are simply not meaningful to people because they cannot relate them to their everyday lives. Thus key terms like democracy either do not resonate at all or resonate differently from their intended perception, very simply in terms of the language

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[77]Interview with activist, Cairo, 07.05.2011
[78]Interview with activist, Cairo, 03.05.2011

itself. Thus, while almost every home has access to satellite television nowadays, this does not necessarily foster an understanding of politics or a sense of belonging. News, be it in written or in televised form, is usually conveyed in some form of classical Arabic, whereas the majority of Egyptians speak the local dialect. In a society that knows no grassroots organization in political terms, where the different social strata are profoundly separated, and this separation has always been actively promoted by the regime, there is complete alienation of the lower classes from the political sphere that is not understood, has no apparent relation with their daily struggles, and where they simply do not belong. Thus, one activist recalls handing out flyers to promote their newly formed party after the revolution, and one man, while interested, thought he would not be able to join because he was wearing the uniform of a street cleaner. Thus politics for most people is a domain reserved for elites, not the common people.[79]

In this respect, not much has changed for the majority of participants from lower classes. The institutionalization of the post-revolutionary process, as well as the focus on the technicalities of organizing the future political system, has left them outside the process, as marginalized politically as they were before. Hence, when the clashes between the military and protesters turned violent, street children and marginalized young urban men in particular were to be found at the front lines of the battle, searching for and at least temporarily finding a renewed sense of meaning. What this reflects is the fact that especially for these young and socially marginalized men the revolution meant more than just toppling Hosni Mubarak, it meant regaining agency and in that process dignity. For them, taking part in the protests was to be part of a society that had so far neglected them:

> "Lawyer Tarek El Awady is representing 82 children arrested for taking part in last month's violent demonstrations outside the Cabinet and parliament buildings. He says these street children sought shelter, food and companionship from protesters encamped downtown. Abdelhamid says the children tell her and other protesters that they are the only Egyptians who make them feel they are important. […] Their advocates say most, if not all, of these kids live on Cairo's streets, and that they see the revolution as a way to escape their isolation from society."[80]

> "The Square, the 'safe' zone, contained a truly socially mixed crowd. […] On the front line, by contrast (and naturally so given the nature of the battle), the demographic was predominantly (though not exclusively) young, male, and socially marginal. […]But the majority of frontline fighters came from the substantial population of young, socially marginal men from Cairo's peripheral 'ashwa'i (informal) neighborhoods. They are sometimes called the wilad sis.

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[79]Interview with activist, Cairo, 03.05.2011

[80]Egypt's street kids are revolution's smallest soldiers, NPR, 04.01.2012,
http://www.npr.org/2012/01/04/144692425/egypts-street-kids-are-revolutions-smallest-soldiers

[…] They were not fighting for any high-minded outcome such as democracy; in fact, most possibly they do not think anything 'good' will come out of this fight. But the fight gives them back their dignity, even if temporarily. Karama for them means their bodies not being subject to torture and mistreatment at checkpoints and police stations. […] But the frontline and the Square are also part of one whole. The frontline's raison d'être is (partly, originally) to protect the Square, even if it also developed into a fight for its own sake. Without the on-the-ground crowd of ultras and the wilad sis prepared to stop police violence with their own bodies, and most importantly, to hit back, the largely middle-class opposition could not have held the Square for long. The strength of Tahrir Square, physical, political, and intellectual (tens of thousands of people, substantially of middle class demographics, including the occasional celebrity, making politically articulated demands) made the fight on the frontline possible and somehow 'legitimate.' Without the protection of the greater cause of the Square, the brutal force of the army would have crushed the not-so-photogenic fighters a long time ago, with nobody paying any attention. They would have been swept away and forgotten as vandals and thugs."[81]

Thus, while many lower class participants faded back into their everyday lives, some of the marginal young defenders of Tahrir, as well as those families of 'martyrs' that died during the revolution remained, with few options other than protests at their disposal to try to redress their grievances.

Middle Class Participants

The detachment of the political sphere from most people in society does not affect the lower classes only. It also engulfs the middle classes, albeit for entirely different reasons. The majority of Egypt's lower classes shun politics because it simply has no perceived relevance for their daily lives, but they do encounter authority and hence repression in those daily lives. The interaction of the majority of Egypt's middle class (excluding political activists and opposition politicians, which although composed almost exclusively of middle class people represents a minority within this class) with the political sphere, however, was of a radically different nature. They were just as alienated from the regime as the lower classes, and the political sphere had just as little to offer by way of a remedy. Not because it was elitist, but because involvement in politics either could not change the conditions you faced and, in the worst case scenario, could land you in jail,[82] or because politics and thus politicians both from the opposition and the regime were perceived as essentially dirty:

"I went to the first anti-Mubarak protest in 2004 but did not get further involved with activism back then in part because I was scared, I felt safer as a human rights defender than as a political activist. But another part was also due

[81]The Battle of Muhammed Mahmud Street, Jadaliyya, 28.11.2011,
http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3312/the-battle-of-muhammad-mahmud-street_teargas-hair-
[82]Interview with activist, Cairo, 27.04.2011

to the victory of stereotypes about political activists and opposition. That stereotype is that they are not clean people that are manipulating the young people to be in the forefront of protests for their own aims and agendas"[83].

Thus, many of the young, educated middle class professionals simply left the country, some vowing never to return. This attitude about the rationale for involvement or lack thereof changed significantly with the events that have taken place over the last two years or so which have shifted the balance of rewards for involvement/non-involvement. Part of this change in pay offs – and here the standard narrative about the impact of social networking sites is correct – certainly has something to do with the ease with which information flows on these sites, and the ease of getting 'involved' by simply clicking a button, with no risk of getting beaten up on the streets. This eased many middle class, young professionals and students into full blown activism on the day of the revolution.

A few, and particularly those that had been active in the human rights and NGO sector, remained part of the political process despite not being mobilized in protest activity before, joining newly forming political parties like the Social Democrats. The majority, however, went back to their regular lives.

Conclusion

Egypt has undeniably witnessed incredible changes ushered in by the momentous events of the past year. Contrary to the opinions of many, it is not yet accurate to say that they fall short of the expectations – of observers and participants alike – for a meaningful transformation towards a more just and democratic political system. Now that the underlying structural processes that caused the masses to rise and the youth to rebel are gone, much potential for future conflict and mobilization nevertheless remains. In future scenarios this could either lead to a tightening of the grip of the state on society, or to a final and necessary push for democracy. What is clear as of now, however, is that with significant elite segments still in control of the organized means of power and coercion in Egyptian society we have so far witnessed neither a political nor a social revolution, nor a transition towards democracy.

The processes have not been without lessons, however. Egypt's January 25 'revolution' has taught onlookers and participants alike about the necessity of networks of trust and organization between actors established through repeated interaction and cooperation in mutual endeavors and sustained via multiple channels ranging from face to face interaction on university campuses to virtual interaction via facebook and co over time, as those in social movement research well know. It has taught of the power of emulation set by the Tunisian example, as well as the pressure that protesters united across class lines can exert on a seemingly overwhelmingly powerful regime. However, it also taught that those

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[83]Interview with activist, Cairo, 03.05.2011

strengths essential to bringing down an authoritarian regime are not necessarily those that will be essential in supporting a sustainable transition towards a more democratic one. Hence, the youth-driven, leaderless character of the 'revolution' was its greatest asset but became its greatest weakness, at least where the youth activists that carried the organizational process in the run up to the 'revolution' are concerned. When political concerns turned away from easy to unite demands – i.e. the end of Mubarak – that glossed over substantial differences in the reasons that brought people to the streets, towards the technicalities of organizing elections, electoral system choices or the advantages of one electoral system over another and the founding of political parties, these activists lost ground to experienced political players as well as a deeply entrenched military that in 'protecting' the return to normal politics resorted to the very same methods activists had come to the streets to defeat. Only time will tell whether the messy beginnings of the transition process will lead to a lucky end, but so far Tunisia's new regime seems better prepared for democratic endeavors than Egypt's.

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