

Revolution and Political Transformation in the Middle East



Agents of Change

Volume I

Middle East Institute Viewpoints

August 2011

© Middle East Institute 2011. All rights reserved. Distribution of this work is permitted for non-commercial use, unmodified, with attribution to the Middle East Institute.

The Middle East Institute does not take positions on Middle East policy; the views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute, its employees, or its trustees.

Cover photos, from left to right: Flickr user Nasser Nouri, Flickr user Al Jazeera English, Flickr user Kodak Agfa

For more publications from the Middle East Institute: <http://mei.edu/Publications/WebPublications.aspx>

The Middle East Institute
1761 N St. NW
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 202-785-1141
Fax: 202-881-8861

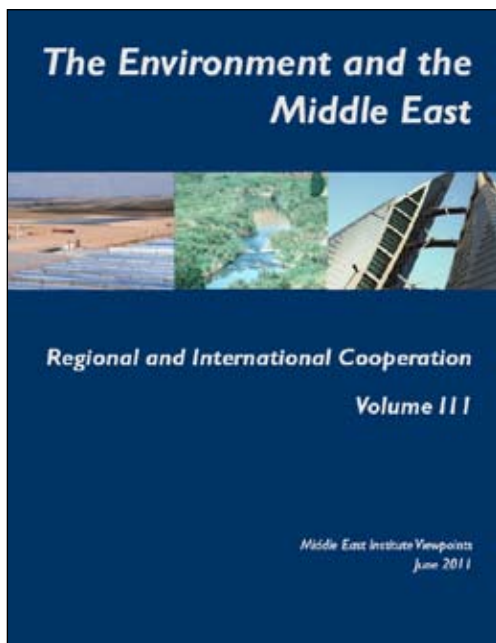
www.mei.edu



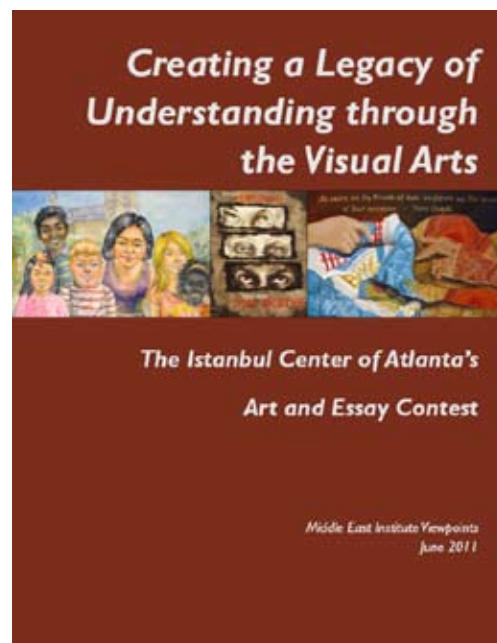
The mission of the Middle East Institute is to promote knowledge of the Middle East in America and strengthen understanding of the United States by the people and governments of the region.

For more than 60 years, MEI has dealt with the momentous events in the Middle East — from the birth of the state of Israel to the invasion of Iraq. Today, MEI is a foremost authority on contemporary Middle East issues. It provides a vital forum for honest and open debate that attracts politicians, scholars, government officials, and policy experts from the US, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. MEI enjoys wide access to political and business leaders in countries throughout the region. Along with information exchanges, facilities for research, objective analysis, and thoughtful commentary, MEI's programs and publications help counter simplistic notions about the Middle East and America. We are at the forefront of private sector public diplomacy. *Viewpoints* are another MEI service to audiences interested in learning more about the complexities of issues affecting the Middle East and US relations with the region. The views expressed in these *Viewpoints* are those of the authors; the Middle East Institute does not take positions on Middle East policy.

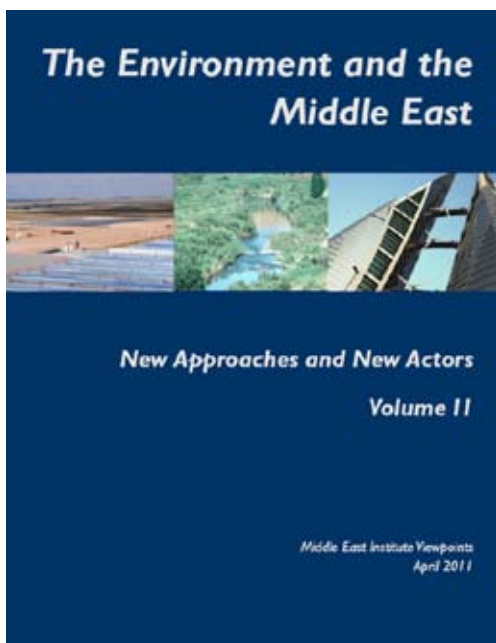
Recent Viewpoints



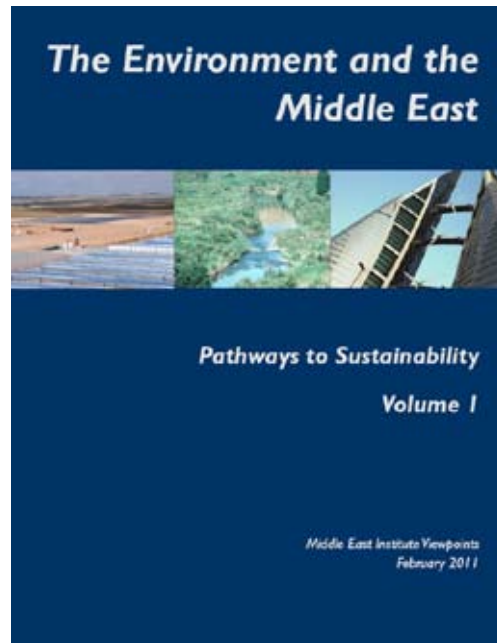
June 2011
The Environment and the Middle East: Regional and International Cooperation



June 2011
Creating a Legacy of Understanding through the Visual Arts: The Istanbul Center of Atlanta's Art and Essay Contest



April 2011
The Environment and the Middle East: New Approaches and New Actors



February 2011
The Environment and the Middle East: Pathways to Sustainability

Click on the images to view these editions online!



Table of Contents

About the Authors	6
Introduction	8
The Power of Strategic Nonviolent Action in Arab Revolutions <i>Stephen Zunes</i>	9
People Power: The Real Force Behind the “Bad Year for Bad Guys” <i>Srdja Popovic and Kristina Djuric</i>	14
Yemen’s Spring: Whose Agenda? <i>Charles Schmitz</i>	19
The February 17 th Revolution in Libya <i>Ronald Bruce St John</i>	25
An Egyptian Summer <i>John Jackson</i>	30
Egypt’s Revolutionary Elite and the Silent Majority <i>Thanassis Cambanis</i>	33
A “Cute” Facebook Revolution? <i>Basem Fathy</i>	39
The Syrian Revolution: The Role of the “Emerging Leaders” <i>Radwan Ziadeh</i>	43

About the Authors



Thanassis Cambanis is a journalist writing a book about Egypt after Mubarak. He is the author of A Privilege to Die: Inside Hezbollah's Legions and Their Endless War Against Israel. He is a columnist for The Boston Globe, and a regular contributor to The Atlantic, The New York Times, and other publications.

Kristina Djuric is research intern with CANVAS, and rising third year History and Political Science double major at Grinnell College.



Basem Fathy is an Egyptian political and civic activist who co-founded many Egyptian initiatives that worked for democracy before the January 2011 revolution, such as the April 6 Movement, the ElBaradei Campaign, and the Egyptian Democratic Academy. He has also worked as a Projects Director with different Egyptian and international NGOs that focus on democracy in Egypt.

John Jackson is co-author of Small Acts of Resistance and the co-founder and Director of the Burma Campaign UK. For the past two decades, John has run international human rights and development campaigns focusing on Asia, Africa, and Latin America across a broad spectrum of issues. He has also covered stories on survivors of conflict in Burma, Cambodia, and the Philippines. John has been a regular commentator on national and international news programs, including BBC World, CNN, and Sky News and has also been published in The Guardian, The Independent, and Prospect magazine. He is a regular contributor to the Huffington Post.



Srdja Popovic is the Executive Director of the Center for Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) and a founding member of the Resistance movement credited with the nonviolent overthrow of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000.

The views expressed in these Viewpoints are those of the authors; the Middle East Institute does not take positions on Middle East policy.

About the Authors (cont.)



Charles Schmitz is the President of the American Institute of Yemeni Studies, a Professor in the Department of Geography at Towson University, and an Adjunct Scholar at the Middle East Institute. He also currently serves on the Board of Directors at the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.

Ronald Bruce St John served on the Atlantic Council Working Group on Libya and the International Advisory Board of The Journal of Libyan Studies. He is the author of five books on Libya, including Libya: Continuity and Change (Routledge, 2011).



Radwan Ziadeh is the Director of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies and a visiting scholar at George Washington University. His most recent book is Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East (I.B.Tauris, 2010).

Dr. Stephen Zunes is a Professor of Politics and chair of the Middle Eastern Studies program at the University of San Francisco. He serves as a senior analyst for the Foreign Policy in Focus project of the Institute for Policy Studies and chair of the academic advisory committee for the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. He is the principal editor of Nonviolent Social Movements (Blackwell Publishers, 1999), the author of Tinderbox: U.S. Middle East Policy and the Roots of Terrorism (Common Courage Press, 2003) and co-author (with Jacob Mundy) of Western Sahara: Nationalism, Conflict, and International Accountability (Syracuse University Press, 2010).



On February 11, 2011, Husni Mubarak resigned as President of Egypt after nearly 30 years in power, echoing the end of Tunisian President Zine El-‘Abidine Ben ‘Ali’s 23-year rule on January 15, 2011. Armed conflict rages in Libya while Syrian military units put down protests in Homs, Hama, and Dayr al-Zor. Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen, and other Arab countries have also seen protests of varying intensity. These events came as a shock to many researchers and practitioners studying the region. While scholars of the Middle East can only speculate which autocratic ruler will be the next to fall, the Middle East Institute opens its series on *Revolution and Political Transformation* by reexamining and placing into context the events of the Arab Spring.

The first volume of this series, “Agents of Change,” focuses on the groups and individuals who have led the popular uprisings throughout the region. Nine scholars, journalists, and activists remind us of the history behind these movements, demonstrate the effectiveness and importance of nonviolent struggle, explore the use of social media and other tools of mobilization, and investigate the characteristics and motivations of the players in the activist and rebel movements in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.

We timed this volume’s release to coincide with the six-month anniversary of the resignation of Mubarak. This milestone reflects in many ways an incomplete transition and, with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces still ruling in a similar to fashion to Mubarak before them, a project that remains to be finished. The pieces enclosed herein are not intended to be a complete analysis, but rather a variety of viewpoints and voices looking back with the benefit of some small amount of hindsight to see what lessons can be learned. Future volumes will deal with government actions and responses to the Arab Spring and seek to discern outcomes and prospects for future change. We hope that you will stay tuned for future volumes in this series, and future publications by the Middle East Institute.

The Power of Strategic Nonviolent Action in Arab Revolutions

Stephen Zunes

The largely nonviolent pro-democracy insurrections that have swept the Arab world in recent months have succeeded in toppling dictators in Tunisia and Egypt and have threatened the survival of autocratic regimes in Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. While even in Tunisia and Egypt there will undoubtedly have to be additional popular struggle to ensure that the overthrows of these US-backed autocrats could lead to real democracy, these revolutions mark a major triumph for Arab peoples and serve as yet another example of the power of nonviolent action.

These remarkable events have changed Arab society. German anthropologist Samuli Schielke, who was present at the demonstrations in Egypt, observed that the sense of unity and power experienced by the protesters in Tahrir Square and elsewhere is necessarily transient. Negotiations, party politics, tactical decisions, and other processes that have subsequently taken place certainly don't equal the incredible energy of coming together in the popular contestation of public space and saying "No!" However, he observed, "thanks to its utopian nature, it is also indestructible. Once it has been realised, it cannot be wiped out of people's minds again. It will be an experience that, with different colourings and from different perspectives, will mark an entire generation."¹

Similarly, after covering both the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, British journalist Peter Beaumont emphasized the significance of this shift in attitude: "A threshold of fear has been crossed. For what has happened in both countries is that the structures of a police state have been challenged and found, to the surprise of many, to be weaker than imagined." Even before Mubarak was forced out, he noted that "a transition of power is already under way" — not as a result of formal negotiations or diplomatic efforts by the United States or the European Union, but from the people effectively seizing power for themselves. The bold actions by what were once relatively small bands of activists "have been embraced by a wider population no longer afraid to speak or to assemble."²

In many respects, what we have witnessed in the Arab world in recent months is part of a global trend of the use of strategic nonviolent action in pro-democracy struggles which has played a significant role in the downfall of scores of dictatorships over the past three decades. In contrast to armed struggles, these nonviolent insurrections are movements of organized popular resistance to government authority which, either consciously or by necessity, eschew the use of weapons of modern warfare. Unlike conventional political movements, nonviolent campaigns usually employ tactics outside the mainstream political processes of electioneering and lobbying. These tactics may include strikes, boycotts, mass demonstrations, the popular contestation of public space, tax refusal, destruction of symbols of government authority (such as official identification cards), refusal to obey official orders (such as curfew restrictions), and the creation

1. Samuli Schielke, "You'll Be Late for the Revolution," February 6, 2011, <http://samuliegypt.blogspot.com/2011/02/now-its-gonna-be-long-one-some-first.html>.

2. Peter Beaumont, "These are Uprisings with all the Energy and Optimism of a Rock Festival," *The Observer*, February 6, 2011.

of alternative institutions for political legitimacy and social organization.

Freedom House recently produced a study that, after examining the 67 transitions from authoritarian regimes to varying degrees of democratic governments over the past few decades, concluded that the vast majority came about as a result of democratic civil society organizations using nonviolent action and other forms of civil resistance. Such transitions did not result from foreign invasion and came about only rarely through armed revolt or through voluntary, elite-driven reforms.³ In another study on civil resistance of more than 300 struggles for self-determination against colonialism, military occupation, and colonial rule over the past century, Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth noted that nonviolent struggles were more than twice as likely to succeed as armed struggles.⁴

The Middle East and North Africa have experienced this phenomenon at least as often as any place else in the world. In Iran, the tobacco strike in the 1890s and the constitutional revolution in 1906 were both cases of mass nonviolent resistance against neo-colonialism and authoritarian rule. In Egypt, the 1919 Revolution, consisting of many months of civil disobedience and strikes, eventually led to independence from Britain.

In another study on civil resistance of more than 300 struggles for self-determination against colonialism, military occupation, and colonial rule over the past century, Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth noted that nonviolent struggles were more than twice as likely to succeed as armed struggles.

In addition to the most recent wave of uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, there have been other recent successful unarmed insurrections against autocratic regimes. Civil insurrections in Sudan in 1964 and 1985 overthrew dictatorial regimes and led to brief periods of democratic governance. A popular nonviolent uprising toppled Mali's repressive Traore regime in 1991, resulting in more than 20 years of stable democracy. In Iran, the largely unarmed insurrection against the Shah toppled the monarchy in 1979 and brought a brief hope for freedom prior to hard-line Islamists consolidating their power; the aborted 2009 uprising may mark the beginning of a more complete democratic revolution. In Lebanon, the 2004 Cedar Revolution forced Syria to withdraw its troops and end its domination of the Lebanese government. Recent years have also seen ongoing nonviolent popular struggles against foreign military occupation, including those by Palestinians in the West Bank, Syrian Druze in the Golan Heights, and Sahrawis in Western Sahara as well as significant pro-democracy protests in such countries as Kuwait, Bahrain, Niger, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere. While these have been chronicled in such books as *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization and Governance in the Middle East*,⁵ there is little appreciation of this history in the West.

3. Adrian Karatnycky, *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2005).

4. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, August 2011). pp. 7–44.

5. Maria J. Stephan, ed., *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization and Governance in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Despite Western stereotypes to the contrary, Islamic countries have been at least as prone to large-scale nonviolent struggles as other societies. One of the great strengths in Islamic cultures which make unarmed insurrections possible is the implied social contract between a ruler and subject. Prophet Muhammad's successor, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, stated this explicitly: "Obey me as long as I obey God in my rule. If I disobey him, you will owe me no obedience." Such a pledge was reiterated by successive caliphs, including Imam 'Ali, who said, "No obedience is allowed to any creature in his disobedience of the Creator." Indeed, most Islamic scholars have firmly supported the right of the people to refuse allegiance to an unjust ruler. Such a willingness to refuse cooperation is a crucial step in building a nonviolent movement and is critical for any successful pro-democracy struggle.

Despite this impressive history, few could have predicted the wave of protests that have swept the Arab world, particularly the 18-day uprising in Egypt in which an estimated 12 million people — perhaps the largest such civil insurrection in history — took to the streets against the Mubarak regime. Ordinary Egyptians — men and women, Christian and Muslim, young and old, workers and intellectuals, poor and middle class, secular and religious — faced down the truncheons, tear gas, water cannons, bullets, and goon squads for their freedom.

It was not the military that was responsible for Mubarak's downfall. While some top Army officers belatedly eased Mubarak aside on February 11, it was more of a coup de grace than a coup d'état. It was clear to the military brass, watching the popular reaction following his non-resignation speech the previous day, that if they did not ease him out, they would be taken down with him. The Army's refusal to engage in a Tiananmen Square-style massacre in Tahrir Square came not because the generals were on the protesters' side — indeed, they had long been the bedrock of Mubarak's regime — but because they could not trust their own soldiers, disproportionately from the poor and disenfranchised sectors of society, to obey orders to fire on their own people.

Nor was it the internet. Social media did help expose the abuses of the regime and get around censorship prior to the uprising and, during the revolt, at times helped with tactical coordination for the protests. It is important to note, however, that less than 15% of the Egyptian population had access to the internet (mostly through cafes heavily policed by the regime) and, for five key days early in the struggle, it was shut down completely. Ironically, it may have helped the movement in some cases, as a number of residents in Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities decided to come out onto the streets to see what was happening first hand since they could not learn from the internet. In addition, worried parents, unable to reach their children by cell phone as a result of the regime cutting off service, also came out into the streets to look for them only to be swept up in the mass popular mobilization.

The Army's refusal to engage in a Tiananmen Square-style massacre in Tahrir Square came not because the generals were on the protesters' side ... but because they could not trust their own soldiers, disproportionately from the poor and disenfranchised sectors of society, to obey orders to fire on their own people.

Nor was the successful, large-scale application of nonviolent tactics that succeeded in bringing down the dictator a result of assistance or training by outsiders. There were a couple of seminars organized by Egyptian pro-democracy groups which brought in veterans of popular unarmed insurrections in Serbia, South Africa, Palestine, and other countries along with some Western academics who have studied the phenomenon, but these seminars focused on generic information about the history and dynamics of strategic nonviolent action, not on how to overthrow Mubarak. Neither the foreign speakers nor their affiliated institutions provided any training, advice, money, or anything tangible to the small number of Egyptian activists that attended. (As one of the academics who lectured at one of these seminars, I can vouch that the Egyptians present were already very knowledgeable and sophisticated in terms of strategic thinking about their struggle. None of us foreigners can take credit for what later transpired.) The writings of Gene Sharp, the noted American academic who brought the study of strategic nonviolent action into the realm of serious social science, was studied by Egyptian activists, along with other theorists, but its application to the Egyptian situation was of their own making.

Nor was it a spontaneous reaction to the Tunisian Revolution, which had emerged victorious in its largely nonviolent uprising against the Zine El-Abidine Ben 'Ali dictatorship two weeks earlier. While the unarmed insurrection in Tunisia certainly inspired and empowered many Egyptians who had long been sunk in fear, cynicism, and apathy, the Egyptian revolution was a long time coming. There was a dramatic growth in Egyptian civil society during the preceding years, with an increasing number of labor strikes and small, but ever-larger, demonstrations led by such youthful, secular pro-democracy groups as Kefaya (meaning "Enough!") and the April 6 Movement (named after a nationwide strike and protest on that date in 2008). Rising government repression, deteriorating economic conditions, and parliamentary elections in November 2010 that were even more clearly fraudulent than most, led many of us to suspect that it was only a matter of time before Mubarak would be ousted in a popular uprising. (Indeed, my visits to Egypt and meetings with pro-democracy activists led me to predict in an article posted on the Foreign Policy In Focus web site in early December that "Egypt could very well be where the next unarmed popular pro-democracy insurrection takes place of the kind that brought down Marcos in the Philippines, Milosevic in Serbia and scores of other autocratic regimes in recent decades."⁶)

The choice of nonviolent means that the Arab revolutions, other than Libya, were not centered primarily on an ethical commitment to nonviolence as much as it was the recognition that nonviolent methods were most effective strategically. Even when Egyptian protesters in Tahrir Square were attacked by government-backed goon squads, they used only the minimal amount of physical force to disarm the attackers and detain them. In Syria, the violence from the anti-regime side appears to have come almost exclusively from dissident security forces, not the civilians.

Similarly in Yemen, with the exception of one tribal faction and some mutinous military groupings, the pro-democracy protests have been remarkably nonviolent, particularly given that Yemen is one of the most heavily-armed countries in the world in terms of individual gun ownership, with some estimates as high as three weapons per person. The fact

6. Stephen Zunes, "Fraudulent Egyptian Election," Washington, DC: Foreign Policy In Focus, December 7, 2010.

that the millions of Yemenis who have taken to the streets have consciously left them at home and largely maintained a strict nonviolent discipline is nothing short of remarkable. At a demonstration in the tribal al-Bayda region in April, men brought guns only to throw them down on the ground shouting “silmiyya!” (“peacefully!”), a common chant of the protests.⁷

These uprisings have demonstrated to the world the true nature of political power: For even if a government has a monopoly of military force and even if a government has the support of the world’s one remaining superpower, it is still ultimately powerless if the people refuse to recognize its authority. Through general strikes, filling the streets, mass refusal to obey official orders, and other forms of nonviolent resistance, even the most autocratic regime cannot survive. Indeed, the dramatic events of recent months have demonstrated that the best hope for democratic change in the Arab world does not come from outside intervention, armed revolution, or top-down reform by elites, but rather from Arab peoples themselves.

7. Sheila Carapico, “No Exit: Yemen’s Existential Crisis,” MERIP Online, May 3, 2011.

People Power: The Real Force Behind the “Bad Year for Bad Guys”

Srdja Popovic and Kristina Djuric

It has been a bad year for bad guys. The events and political changes that marked 2011 were previously thought to be impossible. Yet, before July 1, 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali were out of power and prosecuted, Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih were on their knees, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad was seriously challenged, and, unrelated but equally significant: Osama bin Laden dead and Ratko Mladic in jail.

In what has come to be known as the “Arab Spring,” a wave of protests washed away the regimes of Tunisia and Egypt. Inspired by these events, demonstrators across the region stood up against and seriously challenged the strongmen of Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, and Yemen. The results have been inconceivable; once ruthless rulers, the leaders of numerous Arab countries have been promising reforms, reshuffling governments, and entering into dialogues with opposition groups they once banned. A lot has been written about the Arab Spring but careful analysis of situational environments and focus on the most important issue — how political and social power actually works — have been lost in the shuffle of the fast-paced events.

Conventional wisdom has it that whoever controls the military, police, and media (“pillars of support”) is the one who holds power. However, Gandhi’s efforts to end British rule in India, the drive to defeat Pinochet at the polls in Chile, the Civil Rights Movement under Martin Luther King Jr. in the US, Lech Walesa’s leadership of the Solidarity Labor Movement in Poland, the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, and recently the Arab Spring all prove that governments, no matter how brutal, ultimately rely on the consent of the people. A united movement, committed to non-violence, with a thorough plan to achieve its goals is capable of momentous achievements. A strategic movement is the worst nightmare for every autocrat. It can pull the pillars of support out of government control and force the strongmen to make concessions once considered impossible.

As major powers struggle to make sense of the changing landscape while preserving their interests, the Arab Spring has been sending shockwaves around the world. The question is what the common denominator was. The answer is “People Power,” the power of non-partisan youth movements.

HOW WAS EVERYONE SURPRISED?

The first response to the early phases of Arab Spring was surprise from all parties involved: autocratic regimes in Middle East challenged for the first time by their “obedient” citizens; world media outlets failing to understand the idea of a “leaderless revolution out of nowhere;” decision makers in Western countries always catching up to events as they unfold; and the intelligence services that were constantly missing the point. The confusion resulted from the failure of the

parties listed above to correctly understand the reality of what they were witnessing.

For decades, misconceptions about the situations in North Africa and the Middle East were deeply rooted in people's minds. The international community saw the region as incapable of change, let alone transitioning to democracy. The two possible scenarios were either an "Egyptian/Tunisian model" — a military-supported secular dictatorship — or a "Tehran model" — a dictatorial, corrupted, more or less military-run theocracy. As Falkenrath of the Brookings Institute described the situation, "[...] the Middle East in particular will remain fertile ground for anti-American radicalism for the foreseeable future. As a result, for years and perhaps decades to come, Americans must be ready to live with the risk of large-scale terrorist violence."¹

However, recent events of the Arab Spring proved just the opposite; the "frozen region" appeared to be anything but that. New generations of young people with a strong drive for change, born mostly after the rule of leaders "whose legitimacy has clearly expired"² and whose systems of rule were established decades ago, turned the picture of the frozen Middle East into the one of a dynamic player in the global arena capable of a democratic change. After the events in Tunisia, the young people of the Arab world have awakened to the understanding that they have the power to make the necessary transformation. The newspaper articles read: "The evaluations were obviously false. More than half of the people in almost every Arab country is younger than 30. They [...] like freedom more than political autocracy or religious conservatism. Last year's research conducted in 9 different Arab countries [...] showed that young people rank democracy as a higher priority than qualitative construction infrastructure or good education."³

IT IS STRATEGY, STUPID!

Despite many reports using words such as "spontaneous uprising" and "leaderless revolutions," the history of nonviolent movements clearly demonstrates that there is absolutely no such thing as a simultaneously *spontaneous* and *successful* nonviolent revolution. In Egyptian, Middle Eastern, or any other nonviolent struggle for democracy, the crucial matters which shaped the strategy were "universal principles for success:" unity, planning, and nonviolent discipline.

Since Gandhi, unity has been the main principle of success in nonviolent struggle. Whether it means uniting white people with an oppressed black majority as in the Civil Rights and anti-apartheid movements or, as with the Serbian *Otpor!* [Resistance!] movement, bringing together 18 opposition parties behind one anti-Milosevic candidate, the principle remains equally crucial. The history of global non-violent struggle contains a number of failed attempts due to unity matters (e.g. Zimbabwe, Belarus). Before the elections in Belarus, the opposition was not only divided, but also had completely opposite goals, which evidently resulted in the failure to overthrow President Alexander Lukashenko. As

1. Richard A. Falkenrath, *Grading the War on Terrorism* http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2006/01terrorism_falkenrath.aspx.

2. Ghassan Michel Rubeiz, "Threats to Arab Spring are both Domestic and International," January 7, 2011, http://www.arabisto.com/article/Blogs/Dr_Ghassan_Michel_Rubeiz/The_threats_to_Arab_Spring_are_both_domestic_and_international/107360.

3. "The Making of New Arab World: "The Wonder Generation" is Making the Change," *Politika Online*, February 20, 2011.

written in a Jamestown Foundation report, “Mikhalevich’s announcement reflects the *diverse positions of the Belarusian opposition* [emphasis added], which to date have failed to undermine the influence and authority of President Alyksandr Lukshenka [...]”⁴

However, Egyptians realized the importance of unity. They understood that they had to be united under the same symbols. Individual groups met on Tahrir Square and agreed to abolish different symbols (including the clenched fist — a symbol used by the leading April 6th movement) appearing only under the Egyptian flag. Choosing the national flag as a unifying symbol sent a powerful message to Mubarak. From the very beginning the government marked the protestors as traitors for foreign mercenaries, a common “recipe” of challenged strongmen. Therefore, the united Egyptians that overtook state symbols were sending a perfect message to the government: “We are Egypt. This is our country. We stay, you go.”

Furthermore, their unity shifted the pillar of international community, particularly with regard to the US Department of State and US President Barack Obama, traditional supporters of Mubarak’s regime. The images of Copts and Muslims protecting each other serve as evidence of a strong feeling of unity among the oppressed people against the oppressor, the government, despite their religious differences. The images opened up the eyes of Western audiences, who were aggressively spooked when “analysts warn [...] Hamas and Hezbollah — along with such Islamist regimes as Iran — will try to suppress [democracy].”⁵ Most importantly, the unity among Egyptians was, up to now, strong enough to disperse the fear of failed revolution, and reinsure the international community that the Egyptian people wanted and were fighting for democracy. According to Tina Rosenberg,

“The protests were a model of unity, tolerance, and nonviolent discipline. The different groups put aside their individual flags and symbols to show only the Egyptian flag and to speak, as much as possible, with one voice. [...] Coptic Christians in Tahrir Square formed ranks to protect the Muslims while they prayed; when the Christians celebrated Mass, the Muslims formed a ring around them. Together they embraced soldiers and faced the police with roses.”⁶

The second important principle of a successful nonviolent strategy is planning. In order to run a successful nonviolent revolution, movements from Gandhi to Valensa and Aquino planned strategies for predicting the opponent’s next move and pulled people out of institutions which supported the status quo.

Egyptians had a clear plan to fraternize with military from the very beginning. Mubarak unwittingly aided in this by making series of mistakes. At a certain point autocrats become predictable. Similarly to Chilean strongman Pinochet’s

4. “Belarusian Opposition Prepares for Local and Presidential Elections,” Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 7, Issue 23 (February 3, 2010), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35999.

5. Aarthun, Sarah, “Islamist Groups, Democratic Nations Cast Watchful Eye on Egypt,” CNN, February 12, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/11/egypt.crossroads/index.html?iref=allsearch>.

6. Rosenberg, Tina, “Revolution U: What Egypt Learned from the Students Who Overthrew Milosevic,” Council on Foreign Relations, February 16, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/africa/fp-revolution-u-egypt-learned-students-overthrew-milosevic/p24152>.

famous quote “*Yo o el caos*” [“Me or chaos”], Mubarak insisted that stability depended on his rule.⁷ At first, he tried to play tough, mostly using police. When he realized that tear gas would not disperse the crowds on the streets, Mubarak created a chaotic and lawless situation, pulling the police from the streets and leaving them to the looters and violence. “In the several-hour gap between the police withdrawal and the army’s deployment, chaos reigned.”⁸ His goal was clear: to provoke the military into taking control to end the protests. However, the movement predicted Mubarak’s moves. The people fraternized with the military and organized neighborhood watches with them. Civilians, in partnership with the military, organized checkpoints that tried to ensure that no one brought any weapons to Tahrir Square. They also wrote a new chapter in the development of this type of tactic, with the Tahrir Square movement even employing women to search other women. This was not spontaneous. It required planning, logistics, and training.

The third principle of a successful strategy is nonviolent discipline. Use of humor and low-risk “dilemma actions” (an effective nonviolent weapon) recently appeared again in Eastern Europe where “clapping protests” against Lukashenko gained the sympathies of outsiders and enraged security forces. Such actions “[...] force the authorities to choose between two equally distasteful alternatives: to stand back and allow such activities to continue, taking the risk that they will build into something significant; or to impose harsh punishment on people who are engaged in a seemingly benign activity.”⁹ Similar actions took place in Egypt. Egyptians made an exhibition of funny hats which were originally intended protect a revolutionary from stones, brought children to the square, made the atmosphere cheerful, and limited the level of aggression on the square. Everything was a part of the “we are nonviolent” message. They sustained clear provocations, used humor as a powerful means of diffusing fear, and most importantly maintained nonviolent discipline (the primary reason why the Egyptian revolution was successful and why, for instance, the Libyan revolt has thus far failed).

PEOPLE POWER WORKS

In the past 35 years, 50 out of 67 transitions from dictatorship to democracy have been nonviolent. It is hard to identify a case where military intervention led to a stable, functioning democracy. In other words, nonviolent struggle is the driving force behind democratic change. A rising number of people around the world see what is happening in places like Egypt and Tunisia and recognize the power of nonviolent struggle. CANVAS receives appeals for help for nonviolent struggles from around the world every day.¹⁰ Still, policymakers tend to overlook the strategic value of supporting nonviolent movements.

7. Domenech, Rossend, *Antonio Skármeta: “La Política de Pinochet fue, con todas las Letras, Terrorismo de Estado,”* June 13, 2011, <http://www.elperiodicodearagon.com/noticias/noticia.asp?pkid=679292>.

8. Levinson, Charles, Margaret Coker, and Jay Solomon, “How Cairo, U.S. Were Blindsided by Revolution,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2011 <http://policy.house.gov/must-read-2211>.

9. Barry, Ellen, “Sound of Post-Soviet Protest: Claps and Beeps,” *The New York Times*, 14/07/2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/15/world/europe/15belarus.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all.

10. Center for Applied Non Violent Actions and Strategies, Belgrade, Serbia (ex Otpor!), www.canvasopedia.org.

Consider what would happen if just 1% of the billions of dollars that have been spent in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, instead went to help nonviolent pro-democracy movements through education, book and video translations, development of innovative uses for new media like Facebook or Twitter, and trainings in nonviolent, civic mobilization. Recognizing the power and potential of nonviolent struggle as the real force behind the “fourth wave of democratization” and committing these kinds of resources to such efforts would send a powerful message around the world, reminding millions of oppressed people in places like Burma, Zimbabwe, or Iran that power ultimately belongs to the people. Moreover, it would repudiate extremist arguments that violence is the only way to make a change. In the Middle East, where disparities between the haves and have-nots grow greater every day, providing fertile recruiting ground for extremists, such a message can hardly be more timely. Furthermore, it can help ensure that more “bad guys” do not make it to 2012.

Yemen's Spring: Whose Agenda?

Charles Schmitz

For most of us, the Arab Spring was about young people with aspirations fed from uncensored access to the information of the wider world, but with no opportunity to achieve those aspirations because of poverty, unemployment, and creaky, corrupt political systems ruled by dinosaurs of a past era. This is certainly true in Yemen, but in order to understand the future implications of the Arab Spring in that country we must examine the factors that made people feel that the regime offered them nothing. Although we hear a lot about the dire poverty in Yemen, Yemenis are in some ways much better off than they ever have been. It is true that there were slight declines in per capita income in 2009 and 2010, but Yemenis are healthier, wealthier, and better educated today than ever before, in spite of their infamously high fertility rate. So why did the street explode?

We could argue that it was the expectation of a future economic crash caused by the anticipated decline in oil revenues and recent belt tightening measures that drove people to desperation. There are those that say that poverty is relative (it is) and the glittering cities of the oil-rich Arab Peninsula beckon cruelly to Yemenis whose annual per capita income does not pay a single night's stay in a nicer Emirati hotel. Still others argue that even without looking across the Empty Quarter to the oil-rich Gulf, Yemenis still feel increasingly deprived because although the statistics show that Yemenis are better off, these are aggregate statistics that don't reveal the increasing disparities between Yemenis that are driving social tensions. There may be some truth to any or all of these arguments, but the problem is that Yemen has been in revolt since long before the events in Tunisia and Egypt — and in a period in which the economy was looking very good. Government revenue was rising rapidly from a windfall of high world crude prices when the Huthi rebellion exploded in the north in 2004 and the mass civil disobedience movement spread across the south shortly afterwards. So it wasn't so much people being driven by dire economic straights that fueled these revolts; rather it was the actions of the regime and the politics that exploded, though the two are often difficult to untangle.

The Huthi movement rocked Yemen in the summer of 2004 when few were expecting it. Husayn Huthi was a highly regarded religious scholar from a very prestigious family of the Zaydi elite in Sa'ada. He was also a member of Parliament who was in fact supported by President 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih for a time. In the late 1990's and early 2000's Husayn Huthi promoted Zaydi religious education and summer camps for the young largely in reaction to the use of these same means of recruitment of the youth by Salafi and Wahabi organizations that were preaching the destruction of the Zaydis. This was a real threat to the Zaydi Sada (the religious aristocracy of the Zaydi elite) in Yemen. In the north of Yemen, a tribal leader or common tribesman is still the same tribal leader or tribesman whether or not he follows Wahabism, Zaydism, or any other form of Islam. But the Zaydi Sada have only their religious prestige to bank upon and so the threat of large-scale conversion of much of north Yemen to Saudi Wahabism or some form of Salafism was disconcerting — particularly since these new alternative forms of Islam were actively promoted by people in the Salih regime. In their defense, the Zaydi Sayyids, Husayn Huthi among them, preached religious tolerance, diversity, and the

preservation of a 1,000-year-old tradition of Islam in Yemen.

But the religious issue was only on the surface; in retrospect, the factors that drove the Huthi revolt were similar to the complaints that were to drive the Hiraq (the southern secessionist movement). Most of those that fought for the Huthi were not fighting for religion but for justice. They included tribesmen that felt that their tribal leaders had been coopted by the regime and were paying no attention to their issues in the rural north, or tribes that had been marginalized by people supported by the Salih regime who were coming to Sa'ada to use their power to get rich by grabbing land or by controlling smuggling routes in the north to Saudi Arabia. It was clear to people in the north that the regime supported the Wahabi schools and distrusted the Zaydi elite, meaning that these were political issues wrapped in issues of doctrine. It wasn't so much that Husayn Huthi, his father Badr, or his brother 'Abd al-Malik, who now leads the movement, were fighting for Zaydism that attracted people to the movement; most of those fighting with him were fighting for their own sense of justice and survival against what they came to see as an unjust regime.

The Huthi movement rocked Yemen in the summer of 2004 when few were expecting it.

In much the same way, the southern revolt was not so much about secession as it was a rejection of the injustices that had been brought upon the south in the post-civil war era. The grumbling in the regions of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen began a few years after the war of 1994. Most southerners in fact did not support the secessionist attempt by former head of state 'Ali Salim al-Baydh in 1994; they were for unity and having just been relieved of socialism, they were still excited about the prospect of a liberal democratic Yemen with real economic promise. But the northern regime's attempts to build a political foundation for themselves in the south were incredibly inept and managed to alienate most of those that they should have been courting. For many powerful people in the north, the south was a treasure chest to be looted rather than a country and a people to be politically incorporated.

In 2006, local southern leaders began meeting to try to do something about it and by 2007 the "Tolerance and Reconciliation Committees" had begun to spread their word of civil disobedience across the south. The timing of the southern outbreak after the continued intransience of the Huthi rebellion in the north and when the government's treasury was cash rich was not coincidental. Southern military officers who had been expelled from the military after the war in 1994 wanted their retirement benefits or, if they were young enough, demanded reinstatement to their positions in the military. Salih tried to appease the officers with cash payments and reinstatement of some of their benefits and positions. But the movement would not be appeased and spread to demands for greater control of their own lives and local government.

The movement was met with repression. When the regime's carrots didn't work, the stick came out. Thousands were jailed. Leaders disappeared for long lengths of time and the military set up bases in the main southern towns to control crowds. As the protests spread, the demands escalated to secession and formation of the southern state. Just like in the north, a small problem was mismanaged and bungled until it became an intractable problem that stubbornly refused to

be resolved by the regime's normal means. The secessionist stance was really a refusal to deal with the regime in Sana'a any more. As soon as the new Yemeni Spring movement in Sana'a began to grow and seriously threaten the regime in February 2011, the southern movement relaxed their secessionist demands and spoke about alternative solutions like confederations.

But the most important context for the Yemeni Arab Spring was the struggle for succession that racked the regime during the period of the revolts in the north and south. Yemen shares with Egypt and Syria the distinction of having family dynasties within republics. The discord between the ideals of democracy and progress that the regime espouses and the reality that the ruling family can groom a son to continue a patriarch's 33-year-old rule came to represent the disparaging distance that Yemenis felt between the promises of progress that the oil-rich regime offered and the reality of conflict and corruption they experienced in their daily lives.

What distinguished the Yemeni Arab Spring is that within the core of the regime there were powerful people who opposed the succession of Salih's son to the presidency. The question of succession had already split the Yemeni elite into destructively battling factions long before the street demonstrations of February

2011. 'Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, the powerful general who was the military heart of the regime for decades, was adamantly opposed to the President's son, though 'Ali Muhsin harbored no aspirations for the presidency himself. The al-Ahmar family (unrelated to 'Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar) who commands the Hashid tribal federation that had been the tribal heart of the Salih regime, also opposed the succession. The al-Ahmars had their own reasons for opposing the succession in that Hamid al-Ahmar, unlike 'Ali Muhsin, had long had aspirations for power himself. The struggle within the elite played out in the military conflict in the north with the Huthis where battles would be thrown in order to cast 'Ali Muhsin's troops in a bad light or to strengthen the troops of Ahmed, the president's son. One of the Wikileaks revelations was a request for air support from Saudi Arabia whose coordinates corresponded not to enemy positions, but to the field headquarters of 'Ali Muhsin himself.

... the most important context for the Yemeni Arab Spring was the struggle for succession that racked the regime during the period of the revolts in the north and south.

Adding insult to the injury of the ridiculous farce of democracy that the battle for succession represented was the charade of formal institutional politics in Parliament. In 2006, the alliance of disparate socialist, nationalist, and Islamist opposition parties, dubbed the Joint Meeting Party (JMP), had forged a working political front that presented the Salih regime with a real electoral challenge. For the first time in Yemeni history the elections were real in the sense that the outcome was not clear; there was a palpable sense that the opposition could win. In the end the opposition did not win the presidential elections, but their campaign garnered real credibility. After the elections, though, the opposition parties went dormant, just when the north and the south were racked by conflict. The rebellions of the Huthi and the Hirak made the formal opposition appear completely irrelevant to the burning issues of the Yemeni street.

The political parlor games of the formal opposition included the February 2009 agreement in which they approved the postponement of parliamentary elections while procedural issues were addressed in the election committee and the voter rolls. After protests began in Yemen in solidarity with the Egyptians and the Tunisians, Salih went before Parliament on February 3, 2011 and promised that neither he nor his son Ahmed would run for the presidency in the scheduled 2013 presidential elections. He also proposed that an interim government led by the opposition be put into place to prepare for the elections in fulfillment of apparent promises in the February 2009 agreement. This was partially a move to stave off the kind of movement that had overthrown the Tunisian regime and was on its way to derailing Mubarak's Egypt, but it was also an admission of defeat in the five year struggle to guarantee Ahmed's succession to the presidency.

The Yemeni opposition accepted this deal, but activists in the street rejected it. From the perspective of opposition political parties, Salih recognized that he had lost his long-sought dream to install his son in the presidency and Salih appeared willing to allow the opposition to lead a new interim government. The street, however, saw the JMP's position as cowardly; it gave Salih breathing room. They saw the president as weak, they smelled blood, and they saw the Yemeni opposition parties once again playing into the President's hand. His offer left him in power for two more years to play more games. The street demanded the immediate resignation of the President and all of his family from the government. No more parlor games, the street demanded. The street activists' maximal demands were very popular and the demonstrations grew rapidly. The formal opposition parties were left to sheepishly backtrack on their agreement with the President. Now the street was driving the political agenda, and the opposition parties were scrambling to catch up and they have yet to do so. They appear in public to be a bit clueless, not having much of a plan or initiative. In truth they are not clueless, but they are hamstrung by the great diversity of political trends within their coalition that slows their ability to react. As events have unfolded, the division between the formal political parties and the street has blurred. There is a lot of back and forth between them with overlapping personnel and open lines of communication. This raises the question of who is in the street and what do they represent?

The street activists' maximal demands were very popular and the demonstrations grew rapidly. The formal opposition parties were left to sheepishly backtrack on their agreement with the President. Now the street was driving the political agenda, and the opposition parties were scrambling to catch up and they have yet to do so.

This is an unresolved but critical issue in understanding events in Yemen. The formal opposition parties, the JMP, do not run the street. It began with university students. "Change Square" in Yemen is a traffic circle in front of the new university on Sixty Street, and this is "ground zero" for the street movement. But university students are not independent of Yemeni society and politics and many of the "street" activists were party activists from the main opposition parties. Tawakkul Karman is an example. She has come to symbolize the street with her relentless campaign against Salih. But she is also a party activist of a major opposition group, Islah. So Salih alleges that the street is actually a creation of the opposition parties, and in fact, a creation of his main elite rivals, the al-Ahmar sons, through their leadership of the Islah

party. This is why Salih claims that what is happening in Yemen is not a popular revolt against a repressive government but an elite coup against a constitutional system. And many observers do agree that the Islah party has a dominant presence on the street.

Furthermore, Change Square is being “protected” by ‘Ali Muhsin’s first armored division, after he split from Salih following the massacre of 50 street protestors in March. For long-time Yemen observers, having ‘Ali Muhsin protect the protestors is like having the wolves protect the sheep. ‘Ali Muhsin was commander of the Salih

regime’s shock troops, the one used in the brutal repression of the southern secessionist movement and the scorched earth campaign against the Huthis (Salih’s son Ahmed’s Republican Guards were involved in this as well), and the one that could always be trusted to solve the regime’s toughest security problems without being hindered by the niceties of international law or civil rights. And when protestors were calling for a march on the President’s palace, ‘Ali Muhsin was apparently key in persuading the protestors that the time had not come for such a confrontation, so there are real questions about the independence of Change Square in Yemen, particularly after they were surrounded by ‘Ali Muhsin’s first armored brigade for their “protection” The longest associates and closest rivals of Salih are casting a very long shadow over the street activists in Yemen, raising doubts about the degree of change that is really possible in Yemen.

Change Square is being “protected” by ‘Ali Muhsin’s first armored division ... For long-time Yemen observers, having ‘Ali Muhsin protect the protestors is like having the wolves protect the sheep.

But the party activists in the street have not acted in the interests of their respective parties and, in fact, have done quite the opposite. One of demands that emerged from the street recently is a civilian or civil state (*dawla madaniyya*), with the dual meaning of a non-militarized, civilian state, and a state that is ruled by law. ‘Abdul Majid al-Zandani, one of the religiously-oriented leaders of Islah, opposed the demands for a “civil state,” seeing in it a socialist demand for a secular state. He issued provocative statements saying that the Yemeni state will be governed by God’s law, not secular law. Al-Zandani’s statements were widely condemned and rejected by the street, even by those who are from Islah. Those with party affiliations on the street do not follow the orders of the party organization but tend to prioritize the street as an institution over the party. And the street is quite diverse: there are many tribesmen who abandoned their weapons and came to Change Square against the wishes of their tribal leadership, as well as a large presence of Huthis. People are cooperating from diverse and formerly hostile sectors of Yemeni society in Change Square in a way that truly represents something new.

After a month of Salih’s absence in Saudi Arabia recovering from the assassination attempt in his presidential mosque, the street impatiently appointed an interim council to govern the country. Islah’s Tawakkul Karmen was standing in the central position during the public announcement of its composition, yet the council included ‘Ali Nasser Muhammed and Abu Bakr al-Attas, former top socialist party leaders, both living in exile out of the country. The south and the socialists were heavily represented in the list of people named by the street. The street seemed to be looking for people who did not have immediate invested interests in the current set of political conflicts, yet who were known to the Ye-

meni public as leaders. These were people who the street calculated had the neutrality to lead Yemen to something new. This is far from the position of members of the JMP, of course, who are positioning themselves for leadership in Yemen's future. The street does have its own agenda, which tends to be both critical of the traditional parties in the JMP and extremely hostile to the Salih regime.

Unfortunately, the membership of Change Square's interim government did not include anyone to represent the Huthis, though 'Abd al-Malik al-Mutawakkel from the *Ittihad al-Quwa al-Sha'abi*, the Zaydi political party of the al-Wazir family (and a member of the JMP), was included in the list. This omission of the Huthi was glaring precisely because one of the key achievements of Change Square has been to shift Yemeni politics to some degree from its old foundations so that, for example, the Huthis in the north and the Hiraq in the south were both included as part of the coalition for change. Salih had successfully excluded these two powerful and key groups from the official body politic by branding them terrorists, traitors, and agents of foreign governments. The JMP had effectively been driven from any contact with these groups. Showing their real political force, the activists of Change Square were able to bring these groups back into the dialogue of Yemeni politics by offering the possibility of credible change in the Yemeni regime.

Thus, the question of the future implications of Yemen's Arab Spring is tied to the relative balance of power between the influence of something new, that is represented by the street and its ability to force the formal opposition parties further into uncharted political territory in Yemen, and the long shadow of Yemen's old elite represented by 'Ali Muhsin, the al-Ahmar brothers in the Hashid confederation, and the leadership of the religious organizations within Islah like al-Zandani, al-Ansi, etc., which represent nothing more than a change of face on the old Yemeni regime.

The February 17th Revolution in Libya

Ronald Bruce St John

The recent uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen share associated economic grievances and a common call for responsive government and a more dignified way of life; however, their underlying social dynamics are the product of diverse encounters with the outside world and years of oppression under very different political regimes. This is particularly true in the Libyan case, where socioeconomic and political structures and institutions shaped before as well as during the Qadhafi years have combined to produce a unique political economy. To play a positive role in the construction of a post-Qadhafi Libya, the members of the Contact Group and other states engaged there need to understand these differences, distancing themselves from the idea that the uprisings that make up the Arab Spring constitute a cohesive Arab revolt.

WHAT MAKES LIBYA DIFFERENT

Libya enjoys enormous hydrocarbon reserves, the largest known oil reserves and the second-largest natural gas reserves in Africa, making it a relatively wealthy state when compared to Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. Moreover, the high quality of Libyan crude oil and the proximity of its oil and gas deposits to Europe mean it will enjoy a ready market for those resources in the foreseeable future. Western Europe took the bulk of Libyan hydrocarbon exports before the outbreak of the revolution, and it will do so again once the fighting stops.

Afraid that civil organizations could become centers of opposition, the Qadhafi regime systematically destroyed civil society in Libya. There were no political parties, independent trade unions, Kiwanis clubs, or parent-teacher organizations in Libya before the revolution. Qadhafi was fond of describing a multi-party political system as one in which people are ridden on like donkeys and derided the very idea of civil organizations, arguing that his system of direct democracy made them redundant. Denied civil organizations, Libyans turned to the family and the tribe for individual and group support. In a post-Qadhafi Libya, it will take time to develop civil organizations supportive of democratic institutions. In the rebel-controlled areas, this process has already begun with as many as 80 civil organizations reportedly operating in the Benghazi area. In addition, ten or more daily newspapers, over 30 weekly publications, and a new television channel have opened their doors since the revolution began.

Libya is a homogenous Muslim society, with 99% of the population self-identifying Sunni Muslim compared to the religious fissures found in Egypt and Syria. Moreover, radical Islamist movements are weak in Libya unlike Egypt which has an active Muslim Brotherhood and Yemen with al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula. Even though the Libyan people are conservative in outlook and religious in nature, they have shown little appetite for the radical Islam advocated by al-Qa'ida or its North African affiliate, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb. Libyan nationals made up the second largest group of foreign fighters in Iraq after the Saudis, but their opposition to the invasion and occupation of Iraq does not in

itself portend an Islamist threat in Libya. Much has also been made of the presence of former Guantanamo detainees in rebel ranks; however, they appear to be fighting as individual citizens and not as an organized group. In short, there is limited public interest at this point in an Islamist alternative to the non-ideological February 17th Revolution.

Regarding the recent assassination of General ‘Abdel Fattah Younes, the details surrounding his death are in dispute and may never be known. A longtime associate of Qadhafi, Younes was directly responsible for a number of highly repressive regime policies; consequently, he had many enemies, inside and outside Islamist ranks. While his murder might appear to have broader policy implications, it may represent little more than the settling of an old score. The Transitional National Council (TNC) appears to remain committed to a policy of reconciliation, and in this context, it is important to differentiate between individual acts and the policies of the interim government. Islamists can be identified in rebel ranks; however, there is no evidence to date that they have undue influence over TNC policies or that they are positioning themselves to establish an Islamist government in post-Qadhafi Libya. That said, if the rebellion deteriorates into a prolonged civil war or coalition forces intervene with “boots on the ground,” the potential for militant Islamist groups to increase the space in which they operate will surely grow, a prospect that concerns the TNC.¹ Hence, the risk of al-Qa’ida gaining a foothold in Libya stems more from rebel defeat than rebel victory.

Libya is a tribal society, and as they do in Yemen, tribal identities remain strong, although they are not in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia. Recognizing the power of traditional tribal leaders and fearful that they would oppose his radical reform agenda, Qadhafi initially tried to eliminate their role and influence; however, when those efforts failed, he turned to them for political support. As early as the late 1970s, members of Qadhafi’s own tribe, the Qadhadhfa, together with affiliated tribes, especially the Maqarha and Warfalla, were appointed to powerful political, military, and security posts. In 1993, the Qadhafi regime created a nationwide system of People’s Social Leadership Committees (PSLCs), consisting of tribal leaders and other influential local persons, and in 1996, he brought the PSLCs together in a national PSLC organization. The creation of the PSLCs marked the first time in the history of Libya that its 140 tribes had been organized into even a quasi-national structure. As the Qadhafi regime turned more and more to the tribes for political support, tribal identities were strengthened and tribal affiliation became increasingly important, reflecting both the prohibition on alternative civil organizations and the celebration of the tribe in *The Green Book*, Qadhafi’s ideological manifesto.²

The creation of the PSLCs marked the first time in the history of Libya that its 140 tribes had been organized into even a quasi-national structure.

Over the last few months, some tribes have joined the rebel movement while others have remained loyal to the Qadhafi regime; however, many if not most tribes have tried to remain neutral, either because they are too small or poorly placed to effect the outcome or because they are waiting to see which side will gain the upper hand. In mid April, 61 tribal representatives met in Benghazi where they issued a call for a free, democratic, and united Libya. In so doing, they

1. Noman Benotman, “Libyan Rebels Must Weed out the Jihadists Now,” *The Times* (London), July 11, 2011.

2. Ronald Bruce St John, “Why Tribes Matter,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 2011.

explicitly rejected recent suggestions by Qadhafi that his regime was the only thing keeping the tribes from engaging in internecine violence. Not to be outdone, Qadhafi later convened his own tribal gathering in Tripoli with regime spokesmen suggesting that some 2,000 tribal chiefs representing 851 tribes and tribal factions were in attendance. Given there are only 140 tribes in Libya, the real size and actual composition of the Tripoli gathering has remained in doubt.

In contrast to the ambivalent stand of many of the tribes, the Amazigh (Berber) minority who speak Tamazight and are concentrated in the Nafusa Mountains southwest of Tripoli wholeheartedly joined the rebels. Ethnic populations like the Amazigh and the Toubou around Kufrah in southeastern Libya have long been repressed by the Qadhafi regime, which in its zeal to promote pan-Arabism tried to erase their cultural identity. Looking to a Libya without Qadhafi, the key demand of the Amazigh is that their language be equal in status with Arabic in a new Libyan constitution.³

... Qadhafi later convened his own tribal gathering in Tripoli with regime spokesmen suggesting that some 2,000 tribal chiefs representing 851 tribes and tribal factions were in attendance. Given there are only 140 tribes in Libya, the real size and actual composition of the Tripoli gathering has remained in doubt.

Although regionalism has marked Libya for many centuries, a growing sense of national identity marked the country after independence in 1951 and especially after the Qadhafi regime came to power in 1969. The strength of this national feeling is apparent in the signs the rebels have displayed since the early days of the revolution, signs that read “Benghazi is with Tripoli,” “Libya is one Nation,” and “One Libya Undivided.” Recognizing this widespread interest in and desire for national unity, the TNC has emphasized from the start that its goal is to represent all the people of Libya. In contrast, the Qadhafi regime has continued to perpetuate the myth that its fall would lead to chaos and civil war.

ROAD MAP TO DEMOCRACY

In early May, the Transitional National Council unveiled a road map to democracy which calls for the transition to an elected government to begin with the installation of an interim government made up of TNC members, select technocrats from the Qadhafi regime, senior military and intelligence officers, and a Supreme Court judge. The interim government is to hold municipal elections in rebel-held areas under UN supervision, and with the defeat of the Qadhafi regime, it will organize a national council of municipal representatives to elect a committee to draft a new constitution which will be submitted to a referendum. Once the Libyan people have approved the new constitution, parliamentary elections will be held in four months followed two months later by presidential elections. Despite reported dissension within the rebel movement in general and the TNC in particular, the proposed road map appears to be grounded in democratic convictions and the belief that human rights are universal. More recently, all of the TNC members signed a pledge promising to recuse themselves from political life for four years in any post-Qadhafi government, another indication of their commitment to a democratic

3. Peter Graff, “An Amazigh Cultural Rebirth Begins in Libya’s Mountains,” *The Daily Star* (Beirut), July 13, 2011.

Libya.⁴

The drafting of a new constitution will be a crucial step on the road to a more democratic Libya. In 1969, the Qadhafi regime replaced the 1951 constitution, the only one the country has known, with a constitutional proclamation. The latter document assigned all powers to Qadhafi and his fellow army officers on the Revolutionary Command Council and thus will be of no help. There is support in some Libyan circles for bringing back the 1951 constitution, but it was a flawed document which helped create the conditions leading to Qadhafi's 1969 coup d'état. It called for a hereditary monarchy with a federal form of government and joint capitals in Benghazi and Tripoli. As Libyan politics evolved into a form of benign despotism, political parties were outlawed, demonstrations banned, newspapers censored, and opposition suppressed. A unitary format later replaced the federal government; nevertheless, the graft and corruption continued.⁵ Libyans will need to create a new constitution, and this will take time as there is little in their 60 years of independent life to guide them.

Shortly after the rebels in eastern Libya liberated towns and cities like al-Bayda and Benghazi, they began to form popular committees to collect weapons, control traffic, and supply electricity and water. The structure and operation of these committees is reminiscent of the nationwide system of congresses and committees established by the Qadhafi regime after 1973. Most Libyans were reluctant participants in the latter, which were organized and controlled by the regime; however, many Libyans gained some experience in managing local government institutions and functions which they are now putting to good use. In the rebel-controlled areas, judges, educators, lawyers, and other middle class opponents to the regime are directing this effort, and similar individuals can be expected to do the same elsewhere in Libya as the rebel-controlled area expands.

NEXT STEPS

Some observers have questioned the inclusion of former regime officials in the Transitional National Council; however, the involvement of technocrats with proven administrative skills — as distinguished from ideological stalwarts — will benefit a country devastated by war. It will also send a message of national unity and healing and quiet fears of factional interests and petty retribution. The rebels can learn from the Iraqi experience in which a mass purge of Saddam Husayn loyalists under an American-backed program of “de-Baathification” stripped tens of thousands of officials of their jobs and contributed to years of insurgency.

The rebels can learn from the Iraqi experience in which a mass purge of Saddam Husayn loyalists under an American-backed program of “de-Baathification” stripped tens of thousands of officials of their jobs and contributed to years of insurgency.

The TNC has promised to expand its membership to better represent all regions and interests which is a welcome move,

4. Gert Van Langendonck, “Libya Rebel Council Prepares for the Day after Qaddafi,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 23, 2011.

5. Ronald Bruce St John, *Libya: Continuity and Change* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 37–47.

but it also needs to take additional steps, including an increase in the inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability of its deliberations. TNC meetings have been held behind closed doors with no minutes issued, and the rebel council has offered little or no accounting of how it spent money taken from the Libyan Central Bank or donated by Libyans living abroad. On a related front, the TNC needs to exert stronger command and control over rebel forces in the field. Reports of arson, looting, and the abuse of civilians by rebel forces is highly counterproductive, undermining support for them at home and abroad.⁶ The TNC also needs to take steps to broaden the representation and participation of women in the political process in general and in the interim government in particular. After 1969, the Qadhafi regime promoted a more open, expansive role for women, especially in the field of education; consequently, female activists in Libya were rightly dismayed when the rebels appointed only one woman to the initial interim government.⁷

Finally, the TNC needs to flesh out the proposed transition outlined in the road map and begin institution-building. The road map was a good first step, but rebel plans in a post-Qadhafi Libya remain largely in an embryonic form and detailed, concrete governing and security strategies must be formulated for the decisive days that will follow the end of the Qadhafi regime. Security in the form of a new police force will be an initial concern, but a functioning court system and impartial judges to uphold the rule of law must quickly follow. The speedy resumption of oil production to fund a post-Qadhafi Libya will also be paramount. In conjunction with these efforts, a whole new set of institutions needs to be created, essentially from scratch. This will be a time-consuming and imperfect process; therefore, it is important to advance the process now, improving and refining the output as time and conditions permit. The members of the coalition have an obvious role to play in the reconstruction process; however, it is vitally important to let the Libyans take the lead, providing advice and support as they request it. A post-Qadhafi Libya will have its problems, to paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi as the independence of India approached, but they will be Libya's problems, not those of France, Great Britain, the United States, or any other country, and Libyans must deal with them and learn from them.

6. Human Rights Watch, "Libya: Opposition Forces Should Protect Civilians and Hospitals," July 13, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/07/13/libya-opposition-forces-should-protect-civilians-and-hospitals>.

7. Diaa Hadid, "Taboo-breaking Women among Gadhafi's Biggest Fans," *Associated Press*, June 8, 2011, <http://www.ap.org>.

An Egyptian Summer

John Jackson

Looking across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there is a real fear that both reform movements and revolutions risk snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. The momentum that made so many inspirational gains a few months ago is slowing, and the forces of conservatism remain in control. The only hope is that stamina, vigilance, and strategy will lead to a complete transition to democracy in at least one of the region's countries. Not one revolution has yet been completed. If such a success is to happen soon, I hope it will be in Egypt.

The precarious position of the Egyptian revolution shows how the military establishment might allow the toppling of a dictator but not the relinquishing of its hold on power. In Syria, Yemen, and Libya sufficient loyalty from the military exists for the unleashing of lethal force against civilians on behalf of dictators. The situation of reform movements in other countries such as Jordan, Morocco, and some of the Gulf States continues to remain uncertain. Despite these challenges, there is no doubt about the momentous change that has already taken place across the MENA region. A previously secure status quo has been rocked to its foundations. Everything is in the balance, and no one can predict with any certainty which side of the political spectrum things will fall — continued autocracy or fledgling democracy.

What happens in Egypt is of particular strategic importance. It has the largest population — 80 million people or one quarter of all Arabs. It lies at the geographical center of the Arab world. That world has a variety of governments (monarchies, secular dictatorships, and limited representative legislatures) as well as ethnic, religious, and historical differences. Despite this variety, there is huge potential for a democratic Egypt to inspire, support, and influence similar transitions. A democratic Egypt would be a glaring and uncomfortable example for those smaller autocratic regimes that attempt to cling to the status quo. Their standing will be even further diminished in the eyes of the world and of their own people. Its indigenous democracy movement, free to operate in a newly liberalized political space, could provide strategic, moral, and practical support to activists in other movements. A democratic Egyptian government, like that of the Czech government after the Velvet Revolution, might see it as a duty to support democratic aspirations beyond its own borders. Together with the civil society it would have to represent, it might work towards the goal of a pluralist, democratic, and stable MENA region. An Egypt that has not only brought down a dictatorship, but also emerges as a democracy, could be a powerful force for regional change.

None of these idealistic consequences of a democratic Egypt are guaranteed. A new government will have significant domestic problems to deal with, including high levels of unemployment, extreme poverty (40% of people living on \$2 a day), and the economic damage of a year of political turmoil. But an energized people, a reinvigorated civil society, and a government with new idealistic ambitions can rise to a historic occasion. Just the mere possibility of these outcomes makes the hope for a full and stable transition to democracy in Egypt all the more enticing. But the revolution is far from complete.

A crucial task of the democratic movement during this time is to avoid a common tragedy of so many historical revolutions, as those of France in 1789, Russia in 1917, and Iran in 1979 — the hijacking of power by repressive political forces. When political turmoil and deteriorating economic conditions drag out for too long, well-disciplined, organized, and undemocratic forces promising order eventually seize their opportunity to take control. In Egypt, protestors remain active in Tahrir Square. In a recent protest march, peaceful demonstrators were violently attacked by pro-regime thugs wielding swords, knives, and rocks. The army, out in force, stood by and did nothing as hundreds of protestors were injured. Once again the hospitals have been filled with the bloodied and the beaten. Activists continue to be sent to military tribunals and then to jail, while members of the regime, responsible for over 800 deaths since January 2011, remain at large. Restrictions on the press and freedom of expression are curtailed in ways that former President Husni Mubarak would be proud of. This is a dangerous time for the revolution. To remain non-violent, disciplined, and unified will be hard but essential.

Restrictions on the press and freedom of expression are curtailed in ways that former President Husni Mubarak would be proud of. This is a dangerous time for the revolution. To remain non-violent, disciplined, and unified will be hard but essential.

The military council seems to be moving ahead with elections before the end of the year. Foreign election monitors will not be allowed to observe the process. The movement is under pressure to dive into the competition of electoral politics before all of its demands have been met and before conditions for a truly democratic process are in place. It is forced to compete when it might prefer to coalesce around the core demands of the revolution that started in January. Though the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and the Muslim Brotherhood might want elections to be held before the liberal opposition has time to organize, early elections do not guarantee their candidates' success. Both lack charismatic leadership and have until now lagged behind the moderate, secular, and democratic revolutionary movement — a movement that has proved itself well in the art of winning over public opinion and mobilizing people to come out and take action. When push comes to shove the SCAF's and the Muslim Brotherhood's interests appear to diverge beyond a short-term electoral strategy. The Brotherhood, which has renounced violence and entered into broad-based coalitions, does not seem to be the monolithic and radical organization it once was. If it eventually does do well in an election, by no stretch of the imagination will it result in a radical Islamic theocracy. And even if it did attempt to impose strict religious laws that denied fundamental rights, neither a democratic movement that has just brought down a dictator nor a secular military establishment would sit idly by.

Unlike many of the Eastern European democracy movements in 1989, which had a recognizable and trusted dissident leadership with popular support, the situation in Egypt is different. There is not a clear and identifiable leadership that can negotiate transition and contest power in the same way that Vaclav Havel or Lech Walesa and their teams did. There are older opposition politicians that have backed but not led the revolution so far. The horizontal leaderless nature of the Egyptian movement has been a real strength in achieving the overthrow of Mubarak. The question now is whether it is capable of ensuring a transition to democracy.

Otpor! [Resistance!], the Serbian student movement that helped topple Milosevic has already been studied by some of the key Egyptian activists who toppled Mubarak. But maybe Egyptian activists have yet to employ the most important strategy from the *Otpor* playbook. *Otpor* forced Serbia's fragmented opposition to unify around a single candidate, and then successfully mobilized the electorate, both traditional older voters and progressive (usually apathetic) younger ones, to complete their revolution at the ballot box. It did this despite the anti-democratic actions of the Milosevic regime and a tough and restricted operating environment. It's been done before, and in Egypt can be done again. The forces and conditions that started the Egyptian revolution are still there to complete it. A massive young population looking for better economic opportunities, dignity, and expanded rights; the availability of communications technology that facilitates the expression of discontent and political aspiration; the ability to organize a resistance to the existing system; and most of all a movement that has shown its ability to be strategic and disciplined in pursuing its goals. With a strong and unified opposition that is able to mobilize all the progressive elements in Egyptian society, complete transition to democracy is still very possible. If they achieve this goal — if they turn spring to summer — it will be a wonderful day not only for Egypt, but also for North Africa, the Middle East, and the world.

Egypt's Revolutionary Elite and the Silent Majority

Thanassis Cambanis

It was a small group that set out on January 25, marching on National Police Day to decry the quotidian indignities they suffered at the hands of Husni Mubarak's abusive police. Public protest in Egypt had long been a minority practice, rarely mustering more than a few hundred, or at best a few thousand, core movement activists. The organizers of the January 25 march expected the same base of dedicated demonstrators, and were shocked when the crowd swelled to more than 10,000. Even more surprising was the demand that swelled organically from the crowd: not a call for better policing, but a daring cry, punishable as treason under President Husni Mubarak's pharaonic rule — "The people want the fall of the regime," the crowd chanted.

As the uprising progressed, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians occupied Tahrir Square, eventually forcing Mubarak's resignation on February 11, 2011. The huge crowds quickly dissipated, leaving a reenergized group of activists who have since continued to orchestrate recurrent waves of protests and have purported to negotiate on behalf of "the revolution" with the military junta that inherited power from Mubarak. The leadership team of this group, which I shall call the revolutionary vanguard, expanded from the original coalition that sparked the January 25 protests, but in essence remained markedly continuous with the stakeholders that drove Egypt's pre-January 25 dissident community.

Egypt's uprising raises many pointed questions about nonviolent political transformation. As of the summer of 2011 it would be premature to call Egypt's ongoing efforts a revolution, since the country remains an authoritarian military dictatorship, though one in the throes of a vibrant and contentious reexamination of its system of governance. In this essay, I want to examine the role of a small, elite minority in sparking the January 25 uprising and in shepherding Egypt's political awakening and attempt at radical systemic reform. Was it, in fact, a comparatively tiny group of elite activists that challenged Egypt's military dictatorship? Did those vanguard activists manage to create broader roots in society? And finally, does Egypt's centralized, hierarchical authoritarian state minimize the influence of public opinion, essentially sidelining the "silent majority?"

WHO CHALLENGED EGYPT'S DICTATORSHIP?

The recent history of Egypt's protest movement included manifold small players. The Kifaya movement received much attention in 2005, the year of Mubarak's last presidential campaign, and mobilized many influential members of the older generation of secular human rights activists. The Muslim Brotherhood campaigned vociferously that year as well, and many thousands of its members were imprisoned. In 2008, the April 6 movement gained importance after the Mahalla textile strikes. All along a quiet mobilization was taking place among labor activists, apolitical NGOs, election-monitoring groups, and human rights organizations, all of which were subject to extensive government pressure regardless

of whether they were secular, nationalist, Islamist, or apolitical. Some of the pre-revolutionary political parties, including Ayman Nour's *Ghad* [Tomorrow] Party, the *Gabha* [Democratic Front] Party, and *Tagammu'* [National Progressive Unionist] Party, rallied the enthusiasm of some youth.

By the summer of 2010, two major movements actively courted public anti-regime support: the Brotherhood and Mohammed ElBaradei's loose reform campaign, which called for Egypt to amend its laws and open the system to genuine political competition. The two groups joined forces to gather a million signatures in a petition drive ahead of the fall 2010 elections. Many signatories (a bold act in Mubarak's police state) were driven to that minimal action by their rage at Mubarak's machinations to install his lackluster son Gamal as his heir. Simultaneously, an online campaign organized demonstrators in response to (and channeled rage about) the killing of Khaled Said, who appeared to have been beaten to death by police in Alexandria because of his political views.

These three forces, by January 2011, could be best understood as catalysts or organizational umbrellas rather than as distinct activist constellations. The demonstrations themselves drew on multitudes of unaffiliated people, many of them without a political history, along with hundreds of independent activists. Organizationally, however, the Tahrir Square demonstrations notably depended on the tactical savvy and strategic thinking of the following groups, most of them small:

- Muslim Brotherhood youth, in defiance of their leadership
- The April 6 Movement
- The Freedom and Justice Movement (a secular youth organization not to be confused with the Muslim Brotherhood's newly formed Freedom and Justice Party)
- The *Gabha* Party
- The ElBaradei Campaign

These organizations quickly coalesced in the Revolutionary Youth Committee that continues to play a central leadership role even as its member groups differ over many major political issues and plan to compete with one another in elections. Socialists, workers, and soccer fan clubs known as "ultras" all played a visible role in the street protests but were less visible at setting the protest agenda or shaping its tactics. During the key protests, the official leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood provided crucial muscle, organizing security, medical care, and other key logistics with a capacity that no other group could muster.

In the post-Mubarak age, new political parties and civil society organizations are taking shape at a precipitous rate, and it has yet to be determined which NGOs and political parties will wield influence.

In the post-Mubarak age, new political parties and civil society organizations are taking shape at a precipitous rate, and it has yet to be determined which NGOs and political parties will wield influence. Some are clearly players:

- The Free Egyptians Party, founded and funded by billionaire Coptic Christian magnate Naguib Sawiris, as an old-fashioned liberal party intended to attract Christians and members of the former ruling party.
- The Egyptian Social Democratic Party, a center-left party founded by many leading members of the ElBaradei campaign.
- Labor unions, increasingly freed from state control and expressing the frustration of their membership.
- Professional syndicates, which until now were mostly controlled or dominated by the state, but which now are electing their own leadership.
- Socialists, represented by many left-wing parties.
- Salafist Islamists, whose political views could be defined as counter-revolutionary, but who have seized on their new legal status after Mubarak to plunge into political activity.

Since Mubarak's resignation, the protest movement has periodically reoccupied Tahrir Square, and has marched on various government offices, including the Ministries of Defense and Interior, and has clashed with riot police, most notably on June 27. This contingent includes the five core youth movements involved on January 25, along with increasing numbers of unaffiliated youth. It notably does not include the Muslim Brotherhood, any organized Islamists, or the pre-revolutionary political opposition parties.

Even half a year after the revolution, with Egypt opaquely ruled by the same group of generals, the revolutionaries, with their demands for systemic reform, are still portrayed as fringe radicals.

The non-revolutionary opposition, including parties that existed under Mubarak, like the *Wafd*, the *Ghad*, the Nasserists, and the Brotherhood, have opportunistically coordinated electoral strategies, negotiated with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and have distanced themselves from protesters; in fact, they often join the SCAF in painting continuing protests as radical and destabilizing.

It was a relatively small contingent of politicized youth that first marched on Tahrir and that has since articulated clear revolutionary demands: civilian authority over the military, free speech and political activity, accountability for the former regime's crimes, and full housecleaning of the state's violent internal security apparatus. Even half a year after the revolution, with Egypt opaquely ruled by the same group of generals, the revolutionaries, with their demands for systemic reform, are still portrayed as fringe radicals. The numbers in Tahrir Square dwindled during the month-long summer sit-in, and often faded to tiny numbers in between monthly or bimonthly peaks. Some core activists, increasingly politicized and frustrated by the military's continuation of Mubarak era tactics (arbitrary detentions, secret trials, slander, intimidation), have grown increasingly dismissive of public opinion and the frequently invoked "silent majority." As one activist told me, "We made the revolution without the silent majority. We don't need them now."

HAS THE ACTIVIST VANGUARD PUT DOWN DEEP ROOTS IN SOCIETY?

Increasing disenchantment among some revolutionaries, along with griping among the public and on state media, appears to indicate a disconnect between the revolutionaries and the public. It would be premature and unfounded, however, to conclude that such a rift exists. It might exist now or it might emerge in the future, but it is too early in Egypt's process of political transformation to discern whether the political vanguard speaks for, or is catalyzing, a deep groundswell of support for its aims, or whether its utopian idealism is out of step with Egypt's popular will.

The events and personalities of the first half of 2011 (and the six years of protests that preceded it) suggest that Egypt's revolutionary movement has so far remained a relatively elite affair, but one which drew in broader swathes of the public than any political activity since Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser and the Free Officers seized power in 1952 and ended their country's experiment with liberal democracy. January 25 succeeded at pressuring the regime to make major concessions, including Mubarak's resignation, for many reasons, chief among them:

- Sustained nationwide resistance to the police, which incapacitated the security state's capacity to oppress.
- The support of key constituencies for revolutionary goals, including labor and members of the nation's economic elite.
- The size of the crowds in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and other cities, and their determination to fight back against police brutality.

None of these factors relies on a broad shift in public opinion. In fact, the regime has continued to cultivate anti-revolutionary and anti-reform public opinion using the same tactics as Mubarak. During the initial uprising and in the months since, the state-controlled media, which dominates the Egyptian television and newspaper market, has continued to follow the propaganda line set during Mubarak's rule. Broadcasts and talk shows routinely exclude opposition figures and articulate members of the opposition. In fact, state television and newspapers showcase spurious reports that portray demonstrators as thugs, mischaracterize their demands, and fan public fear about security and economic well-being with un-sourced and often verifiably false reports of lawlessness and economic emergency.

... a structural analysis of Egyptian political life suggests that politics remains elitist, and that efforts to change the system entail a competition for power within the Egyptian elite.

It is unclear where public opinion lies. Credible polling only began after Mubarak's resignation, and there is still a dearth of usable data; as yet it is impossible to track the direction of public opinion. Because of the nature of self-reported opinion in a totalitarian society, along with doubts about the applicability of the polling methods used, most polling

data amounts to little more than a guess.¹ But a structural analysis of Egyptian political life suggests that politics remains elitist, and that efforts to change the system entail a competition for power within the Egyptian elite. Although some revolutionary actors claim to want to build new grassroots organizations through which they can educate the public and create new blocs of support, in practice almost no serious political actor on the scene has changed tactics. The only organization convincingly dedicated to mass mobilization is the Muslim Brotherhood, for whom public outreach has always been a staple tactic. Liberal and left-wing groups have so far failed to devote adequate resources to or recruit a sufficient number of members for the kind of community outreach integral to compelling retail politics. The state also continues its old tactics, addressing the citizenry in a top-down style through one-way outlets like broadcast announcements and communiqués published on Facebook.

The activists themselves are well aware of their status as political elite, despite the diversity of their economic and class backgrounds. Many of the most successful activists come from working and middle-class backgrounds, and from political parties or non-profits far outside Egypt's traditional power centers. In interviews, most of them express a desire to broaden the Egyptian political sphere, an effort echoed by an exploding political consciousness and evident sense of political empowerment among Egyptians.

The only organization convincingly dedicated to mass mobilization is the Muslim Brotherhood ... Liberal and left-wing groups have so far failed to devote adequate resources to or recruit a sufficient number of members for the kind of community outreach integral to compelling retail politics.

HOW MUCH DOES PUBLIC OPINION OR "THE SILENT MAJORITY" INFLUENCE EGYPTIAN DECISION-MAKERS?

Under Mubarak, both the military and the ruling party behaved as if they were immune to public opinion. As a result, both parties responded with great brittleness to the January 25 uprising. None of the powerful constituencies governing Egypt believed that people would revolt in a meaningful or sustained manner. The stumbling response of the SCAF since it assumed formal power on February 11, 2011 reveals that it still has little capacity to gauge public opinion or respond to it. Elections, if held with minimal manipulation, will serve as something of a corrective, but it will take at least one or two election cycles before meaningful alternative political parties have time to build nationwide organizations and grassroots followings.

Because Egypt's dictatorship was so heavily centralized, and indifferent to public opinion, it is likely that governance in Egypt will remain a comparatively elite game. If, however, political freedom expands in the post-Mubarak phase, then the size of the politically active population will expand sizably. Free elections in a competitive system eventually will blunt the raw power of elites, who will depend on the electorate for their power.

1. Polls have been conducted by Gallup, Pew Research Center, The International Republican Institute, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and some media outlets.

The military quite clearly responds to public pressure, even if it has not yet incorporated public opinion into a constructive policy-making process. Large crowds toppled Mubarak. In March, public demonstrations prompted the military to back away from a rigid position on imposing a new constitution. Massive demonstrations on May 27 and July 8 convinced the ruling military council that they now had to worry about the street savvy of secular youth organizations, as opposed to just Islamists. Generals fear the unknown sentiments of lower-ranking officers and enlisted troops. They also fear the sheer size and organizational capacity of the Islamists; the defection of influential elites; the ability of the 1–2 million Interior Ministry employees to play a spoiler role; and the possibility of a return of crowds in the millions, as seen in January and February 2011. This cycle of protest and government reaction, while suggesting a brittle and recalcitrant regime only willing to budge and make grudging, minimal concessions under pressure, also illustrates some level of responsiveness to public opinion.

CONCLUSION

The activists who sparked the January 25 uprising spanned elite activists, formerly apolitical, disenfranchised Egyptians, the working class, and politicized reformist constituents of the old regime. Since the demonstrations began, discussion of the political path forward has engaged not only elites, but also a growing, wider audience. The boisterous and broad debate can be seen in the private media sector, and on state television, despite official pressure. It was also evident in the March referendum on the constitution, in which 18 million Egyptians came out to vote. Compare that to the desultory showing the previous fall, in which the ruling party swept what many believed were rigged elections. As part of the fraud, the government concealed turnout figures, but the most reliable calculations by the Egyptian Association for the Support of Democracy put the number of votes cast around 4 million.

For now, the question is whether the new pro-revolution activists can successfully build organizations and grassroots following, regardless of their ideological bent. Will elections, and the ongoing elite negotiation with the ruling military junta, lead to a system that institutionalizes accountability to public opinion through meaningful elections and rigorous party-based political competition within the government? Or will the composition of the elite at the top of the power pyramid simply change, with one members-only club replacing another?

A “Cute” Facebook Revolution?

Basem Fathy

Two big misconceptions have been circulated about the Egyptian revolution in January 2011: first in the international media, research, and policy circles, and second inside Egypt itself through the Egyptian media. In the international sphere, the misconception was that the Egyptian revolution was a “cute” Facebook, social media, social network, or internet revolution (in which scrappy youths banded together over the internet to create change). Inside Egypt, the second misconception is that it was a pre-planned, organized, orchestrated, well-led revolution. It is easy for those who followed the revolution from the inside and during years leading up to it to know that it was not at all as has been described by the second misconception. Neither was it as described in the first misconception, but rather more complicated: there was a very strong connection between the revolution in Egypt and the internet that could not be ignored. Even this article, which is an attempt to change such misconceptions, will not be able to track the path to the revolution without tracking the development of cyber activism in Egypt during the preceding ten years. This article does not attempt to impose one point of view, but rather to give a more precise explanation about what happened in Egypt from the perspective of a devoted follower, practitioner, and participant in making the events over the last years.

10 YEARS TO THE REVOLUTION

PALESTINIAN INTIFADA AND IRAQ WAR, 2000–2003

History is continuous, and we cannot say that something evolved from a certain point in history. However, for the purposes of this essay, I use the year 2000 as a starting point for the wave that generated the January 2011 revolution, its highest peak. In September 2000, after traditional political structures and Islamist movements filled the void vacated by the social secular mass movement, the second Palestinian Intifada in the Occupied Palestinian Territories provoked a wide solidarity movement inside Egypt, led by the last non-Islamist generation that had been active in the 1970s against the dictatorship of former President Anwar Sadat, who was assassinated by violent Islamists groups in 1981.

This movement generated a surge in activism among students in Egyptian universities, the first since 1979 when Sadat blocked political activities in these schools. It also spawned a group of social movements, one of the most prominent being “the Egyptian People’s Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada.” This solidarity movement not only attracted the younger generation that supported the old guard from the 1970s and gave a youthful flavor to the movement, but also for the first time started to use the internet and new technologies (mainly email), which was very limited in Egypt at the time (45,000 users or 0.7% of the population), to spread the word and to organize the solidarity movement.

Another significant factor during this period was united opposition to the US invasion of Iraq, with wider segments of the Egyptian population and a greater number of youth joining the movement. Tens of thousands of Egyptians gathered

in Tahrir Square (the same square of January 25th) on March 20, 2003 to protest the war on Iraq as it became clear to them, that Mubarak was serving his own agenda rather than an agenda that reflected the popular sentiment.

A large solidarity movement also grew out of this, marked by increases in both the presence of youth and students and the use of the internet and new technologies. The numbers of internet users was certainly still very low (600,000 users), but greater use of email groups, internet forums, and even the appearance of blogs was helpful for spreading the word and mobilizing more people. For the second time, the movement in the streets preceded the movement online and was led by the old generation of social activists.

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION, 2004–2006

At the end of 2004, an overwhelming majority of those who participated in the movements supporting the Palestinian Intifada in 2000 and opposing the war on Iraq in 2003, along with other groups who opposed the regime previously as Liberals or Leftists and even non-violent political Islamists, decided to initiate the “Egyptian Movement for Change — *Kefaya* [Enough]” with the purpose of refusing to allow the extension of Mubarak’s rule or the succession of his son Gamal Mubarak.

While older generations continued the trends of earlier mobilization efforts and started the movement offline, hundreds of young people were also joining, giving the movement a very different flavor. This time, young people were equipped with new technologies. Though not well equipped, they used offline social networks to encourage the use of the internet (mainly blogs) to spread their ideas and organize their activities. The number of internet users in Egypt grew to over 4 million, creating a market big enough to sell the ideas of the change movement, whether to older generations (“Kefaya”) or a more youthful audience (“Youth for Change”).

The number of internet users in Egypt grew to over 4 million, creating a market big enough to sell the ideas of the change movement, whether to older generations (“Kefaya”) or a more youthful audience (“Youth for Change”).

During this period, the Youth for Change invented a distinct method of expressing opposition through their blog. They converted their blogs into online social networks even before the invention of Facebook. This online bloggers community and the movement on the ground were interdependent; the bloggers developed protest methods and ideas online which then transferred to the streets for implementation, creating greater success for those on the ground by giving a larger number of youths access to new tools. For example, when someone was harmed or arrested on the ground, they could use their blogs to publicize the event and gain support locally and internationally. For the third time, everything started offline, but efforts were now being consolidated online.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION, 2006–2008

After 2006, a wave of social protest throughout different segments of Egyptian society emerged with great strength, providing new inspiration for activists and pushing them to focus on the daily social and economic needs of society over abstract ideas like constitutions and democracy. Both the old and young activists failed to make the connection between democracy and the

daily lives of ordinary people, creating a wide gap between “ordinary” people and “non-ordinary” activists. Such a gap caused the spontaneous organization of the poorer classes around their social and economic demands.

After 2006, a wave of social protest throughout different segments of Egyptian society emerged with great strength, providing new inspiration for activists and pushing them to focus on the daily social and economic needs of society over abstract ideas like constitutions and democracy.

In 2008, however, came an important confluence of efforts wherein the political activists — on the ground — supported a call for strikes initiated by workers in Mahalla (a city in the middle of the Nile Delta in northern Egypt with a large labor population — 27,000 workers) for purely social and economic demands. At this time, the Youth for Change reached the peak of its abilities, using the internet for their cause as the number of internet users in Egypt exceeded 9 million. The most crucial qualitative change was that the youth here supported the workers’ social and economic demands by using the internet, including Facebook, to call for a nationwide general strike on April 6, 2008 to demonstrate solidarity with Mahalla workers. The result was a day in which about 50% of the working power in Egypt stayed at home, and hundreds of activists were arrested — an important day in the history of the change movement in Egypt.

EGYPT ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION

After 2008, it became more common in Egypt to use the internet as a tool for political activism. However, we can consider the role of new media here as a natural development comparable to the role of the printing machine since the French Revolution or audio cassette tapes in the Iranian Revolution. In 2009, speaking of democratic ideals, Muhammad ElBaradei returned to Egypt and received strong support by the Youth. In 2010, Khaled Said, a young Egyptian man, was murdered by police officers (who already had a reputation for brutality). At the end of 2010, the Parliamentary elections, which many believed to be rigged, cut the last connection between the regime and the people. Then, at the start of 2011, a church in Alexandria was bombed and Tunisian President Zine El-‘Abidine Ben ‘Ali fled Tunisia following popular protests there. The cascade of these events caused a steady accumulation of anger and a desire for justice and freedom in Egyptian society, forming a strong potential energy that was easily converted by the Tunisian revolution into the spontaneous actions of January 25, 2011.

CONCLUSION

- The most important thing to focus on here is that, in discussing the movement of change or the Youth of Change, it is clear that this movement has never had a significant hierarchical structure with a charismatic leader. Rather, it was always a very large, loose network of young and old activists that at one point decided to gather together for common action, then at another moment to separate and spread. Indeed, some small focal points emerged, some of which were identified by the media, but these focal points were never at the center, but rather acted as nodes in this loose network.
- The influence of factors (conditions, events, and timing) was much greater than the influence of actors (individual people) — even among individual actors, there were too many to identify a singular leader.
- The internet was one factor among many that sparked the eruption of the revolution in Egypt. It was not the most important factor in causing the Egyptian people to feel that they, too, could be successful in emulating Tunisia, as evidenced by the fact that activists' use of the internet failed to achieve their objectives before the Tunisian revolution.
- It was clear that the movement offline was always preceding the movement online, and the movement online suffered when there was a wide gap between online and offline activism.
- As mentioned, the use of new media was a natural development, along the lines of the use of printing machines during the French Revolution or audio cassette tapes during the Iranian Revolution.
- Finally, the descent of the masses onto the streets of Egypt on January 28 was a direct result of the government's decision to clamp down on information, preventing people from watching events unfold from their own homes.

The Syrian Revolution: The Role of the “Emerging Leaders”

Radwan Ziadeh

In January 2011, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad granted an interview to *The Wall Street Journal* in which he claimed that, because he was so close to the beliefs and aspirations of his people, Syria was “immune” to the revolutionary fever of nearby Arab lands.

Syria has the same preconditions for revolution as Tunisia and Egypt: poverty, unemployment, corruption, and repression. What Syrians were looking for was the spark.

Each revolution has a moment of resistance without which it would never have started. In Syria, that spark came in the southern city of Dar’a following the arrest of fifteen schoolboys who had written anti-government slogans on a wall. When their parents assembled to demand their release, the security forces rebuffed them, and as protests grew in subsequent days, those forces killed six protestors. Instead of dispersing the crowd, within a few hours more than 30,000 people had come out to the main square chanting against the governor and the head of the security service. The demonstrations then spread to other Syrian cities and, as of the end of July, had claimed the lives of more than 1,800 pro-democracy protestors.

Protests in Syria have escalated since March 15, 2011, and especially as of March 18, when residents in the southern city of Dar’a rose up en masse to decry police brutality following the arrest and killing of some protestors. The following weeks witnessed demonstrations all over the country — some witnesses reported one million in Hama and Dayr al-Zor.

Despite government claims to the contrary, the slogans chanted in a vast majority of demonstrations indicate that the protest movement is spontaneous, peaceful, and non-sectarian.

The main response from Syrian security and intelligence services has been to use live ammunition to silence growing protests, arbitrarily detain hundreds of protestors, and subject them to torture and ill-treatment. Security forces have also detained a number of journalists, activists, and lawyers who have reported on the protests or called for further protests. Moreover, Syrian security forces in at least two towns prevented medical personnel and others from reaching wounded protestors and prevented injured protestors from accessing hospitals, as reported by Human Rights Watch.

The Syrian regime seems to have learned from the presumed “mistakes” made in Tunisia and Egypt — the media and the army. The Syrian government expelled foreign journalists and prevented international news networks like CNN and al-Jazeera from broadcasting live coverage of the protests. In response, many Syrians posted homemade videos on

YouTube and Facebook, giving them a greater sense of ownership over the movement. That said, the situation remains difficult and fluid, and with no media presence full information is hard to come by. The regime seems to have tried to foment sectarian animosity, especially in Homs where Sunnis and 'Alawites have lived together for decades, but was met by chants of "The Syrian people are one!"

Furthermore, the regime has not shied away from using the army for violent repression, with high numbers killed, missing, or detained. As opposed to Egypt and Tunisia, in which security forces largely held back from overt or widespread violent tactics, there seems to be little restraint from direct action against protests.

The Syrian uprising is more analogous to the situation in Tunisia than it is to the Egyptian revolution. Grassroots movements played a critical role in organizing demonstrations in Egypt, such as the April 6th and the "We Are All Khalid Said" movements. However, in Syria, the iron grip of the security services makes mobilization by organized groups completely impossible. Therefore, demonstrations have spontaneously appeared in different areas of Syrian cities, without prior planning from a national leadership. Although the slogans differed from one city to another, the larger message was the same: freedom, justice, and dignity.

As opposed to Egypt and Tunisia, in which security forces largely held back from overt or wide-spread violent tactics, there seems to be little restraint from direct action against protests.

As the demonstrations grow in size week after week, the slogans chanted have become increasingly bold. Protestors have settled on their final message: "The people want to overthrow the regime." That popular slogan started in Tunisia, was repeated in Egypt, and successfully overthrew two of the most repressive regimes in the Arab region.

It was natural, then, that each city would have emerging leaders who are able to organize the demonstration and decide on the content of slogans and banners. Those leaders have played a pivotal role in organizing and leading peaceful protests. Although the leaders only operate on the local level, their organizing methods evidence good coordination between local leaders, and that coordination may help organize national events in the future.

The mosques, especially in major urban cities, have served a pivotal role as gathering points for peaceful demonstrations. In this way, mosques are similar to the churches that embraced so-called "liberation theology" and played a leading role against military regimes in Latin America. The implementation of the emergency law in Syria more than 47 years ago has not only banned demonstrations and gatherings, but also has destroyed the traditions necessary to train young people to go out, represent, and claim their rights.

The demonstrations' leaders do not belong to any traditional ideology or political party. It is possible that they avoid affiliation with any political party, or even communication with any of the national political leaders, in order to avoid an ideology that may interfere with the basic motivations of their movement.

The traditional opposition parties — most of them were exiled or spent decades in prison — were mostly nationalist and left-oriented. Here we can include the Muslim Brotherhood, which faced an armed struggle with the Syrian authorities during the 1980s which left tens of thousands dead.

All of these opposition parties played a secondary role in the leadership or mobilization of the current demonstrations; they did not even show initiative in guiding and commanding the demonstrations in order to put greater pressure on the regime so it would be overthrown.

Some of the most prominent figures of this traditional opposition are:

- Hassan ‘Abdel-‘Azim and ‘Abdel-Majid Manjuna, leaders of the Arab Socialist Union party.
- Riad Turk, George Sabra, Omar Qashash, and other leaders of the People’s Democratic Party.
- Riad Sayf in Damascus, who was, until his resignation at the end 2010, the Secretary-General of the Damascus Declaration.
- Samir Nashar in Aleppo, Najati Tyara in Homs, Nawaf al-Bashir in Dayr al-Zor, and other members of the Damascus Declaration in different provinces.

As previously mentioned, young emerging leaders have played a pivotal role in organizing and leading the protests. These leaders belong to the middle class and they are highly intellectual. The following are some of these emerging leaders:

- Ayman Al-Aswad, Adnan Al-Mahamid, Mohamed Al-Ammar, and others in Dar‘a;
- Walid Bunni in Al-Tal;
- Moa‘taz Murad and Osama Nassar in Dariya;
- Anas Airod and Anas Elshogry in Baniyas;
- Ahmed Maaz Al Khatib and Yasser Elaytie in Damascus;
- Montaha Al-Atrash in Suwayda; and
- Said Salam, Dana Jwabrah, and Suheir Atassi who played a role in organizing the first peaceful demonstration outside of the Syrian Interior Ministry.

All of these emerging leaders are either in detention or hiding for fear of being arrested, which in turn makes their mission impossible. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, since this revolution lacks an official leadership, it makes it harder for the regime to crack down on the movement, as every day brings the possibility for more leaders to emerge.



Middle East Institute