

TURBULENT YEARS IN EGYPT, 2000-2011: SOCIAL PROTESTS AND
THEIR EFFECTS ON THE UPRISING OF JANUARY 25, 2011

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TURBULENT YEARS IN EGYPT, 2000-2011: SOCIAL PROTESTS AND
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ABSTRACT

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M.S., Program of Middle East Studies

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This thesis argues that the notion of an “Arab Awakening” in the Arab uprisings that started in Tunisia in 2010 and spread to Egypt and across the region is not a fair assessment. Protest movements had already been going on for many years in the countries where these uprisings took place. This thesis considers each of these uprisings to be a separate case and therefore argues that the processes that each country underwent should be evaluated within the framework of that country’s own internal dynamics. In this context, the thesis deals with the waves of protests during the period leading up to the January 25 uprisings in Egypt, particularly in the last decade, and especially with the changing of protest culture. The thesis claims that Egypt’s protest culture began to spread with the Second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, and then with the US invasion of Iraq the direction of the protests started to change from anti-Israel and anti-USA to anti-Mubarak regime, which protesters now perceived as the main problem. In this context, the thesis deals with the events that intensified the revolution, with the aim of evaluating these events from the inside

through interviews with youth members from the April 6 Youth Movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, Independents, and Revolutionary Socialists.

Key Words: Arab Uprisings, Hosni Mubarak, 25 January 2011, Youth Movements, Protest Culture

ÖZ

MISIR'DA ÇALKANTILI YILLAR, 2000-2011: TOPLUMSAL AYAKLANMALAR VE 25 OCAK 2011 AYAKLANMALARI ÜZERİNE ETKİLERİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Çalışmaları

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Bu tez, 2010 yılında Tunus'ta başlayan ve Mısır'a ve bölgeye yayılan Arap Ayaklanmaları için ortaya atılan kullanılan "Arap Uyanışı" kavramının çok doğru bir değerlendirme olmadığını savunuyor. Nitekim protestoların yaşandığı ülkelerde uzun yıllardır süregelen bir protesto hareketi mevcuttur. Ve bu tez, yaşanan her bir ayaklanmanın kendi içinde ayrı bir vaka olarak görmekte, ve bu nedenle her bir ülkenin geçirdiği süreçleri kendi iç dinamikleriyle değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu tez, Mısır'ın 25 Ocak Ayaklanmaları'na giden süreçte özellikle son on yılda protesto kültürünün değişmesiyle yaşadığı protesto dalgalarını ele almaktadır. Tez Mısır'ın özellikle 2000 yılında başlayan İkinci Filistin Ayaklanması ile protesto kültürünün yayılmaya başladığını ve sonrasında ABD'nin Irak işgaliyle protestoların yönünün anti-İsrail ve anti-ABD olmaktan çıkıp esas sorun olarak gördükleri Mübarek rejimine doğru yön değiştirdiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu tez bir nevi devrimi yoğuran olayları ele almakta ve devrimde rol oynayan 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi, Müslüman Kardeşler Gençliği,

Bağımsızlar ve Devrimci Sosyalistler üyeleriyle yapılan görüşmelerle olayları içeriden bir gözle anlayabilmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Ayaklanmaları, Hüsnü Mübarek, 25 Ocak 2011, Gençlik Hareketleri, Protesto Kültürü

To My Family...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ERSAP	Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OMCT	World Organisation Against Torture
PCSI	Popular Committee to Support the Intifada

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Egypt witnessed a mass wave of protests, which would lead to the overthrowing of the Mubarak regime. The protests began on January 25, and just 18 days later, Omar Suleiman, the Vice President, announced that Mubarak was renouncing his power and the Supreme Council of Armed Forces would be responsible for the administration.¹ Here we must ask where we could find answers to the question of which caused the 2011 uprisings. Can we find a practical solution by just looking at what happened in 2011 in Egypt, in Tunisia, or in the overall region? We cannot. This would be “ignorance of the historical continuity of national and global struggles against injustice and regimes of exploitation over decades,” as expressed by Maha Abdelrahman.² This is certainly the case for the 2011 Egyptian uprising as well, as the previous decade had formed a basis for collective action in Tahrir Square in 2011.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that the only motivation of these protesters was the inspiration they received from their counterparts in Tunisia or other places and that simply because of that they started to protest and wanted to change something in their own country. Such an explanation reveals an ignorance of the historical continuity of contentious politics and people’s anger towards the regime. As Maha Abdelrahman writes, “the history of struggle against the authoritarian, exclusionary political system in Egypt could not be reduced to a single

¹ “Suleiman: Mubarak Waives Office,” Al Jazeera, February 12, 2011, accessed on June 10, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2011/02/2011211165022206735.html>.

² Maha Abdelrahman, *Egypt’s Long Revolution: Protest Movements and Uprisings*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 29.

decade.”³ Since the 1950s, Egypt had witnessed various contentious politics, even during the Nasser period. Throughout the reign of Sadat, many food riots took place, and protests against Mubarak and his regime began during the early days of his reign.⁴ Not surprisingly, these protests were met and brutally suppressed by the police and the military, like in many authoritarian regimes. In other words, for many years, Egyptians were hindered from the right to express their ideas in the public sphere. Gatherings and lobbying activities were banned under the Emergency Law, and people who organized demonstrations or marches were insulted, arrested, or worse.⁵ However, instead of becoming depoliticized because of repression, people developed new techniques and networks to take action.

According to Abdelrahman, especially with the first decade of the 20th century:

Ways and aspects of the struggle have changed in various ways: new forms of organizations and tactics, working outside formal political organizations, interchangeable membership of multiple organizations, intensive cross-ideological cooperation and pushing the boundaries of what were regarded as acceptable demands by political opposition.⁶

On the other hand, the last decade was particularly essential because despite excessive state repression, after 2000, Egyptian protestors began to make their voices heard, and they became even more visible on the streets. At that moment in time, the demonstrations took the form of everyday protests, known most commonly as “after school” protests. Furthermore, networks started to be created then, and the cooperation of different groups for a common purpose served as a dress rehearsal for 2011.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

⁵ Rabab El-Mahdi, “The Democracy Movement: Cycles of Protest,” in *Egypt: The Moment of Change*, edited by Rabab El-Mahdi and Philip Marfleet (London: Zed Books, 2009), p. 87.

⁶ Maha Abdelrahman, *Egypt’s Long Revolution: Protest Movements and Uprisings*, p. 30

1.1. Argument

In 2010, the Arab world was the scene of many uprisings after riots started in a small seaside town in Tunisia, Sidi Bou Said. A street vendor there, Mohamed Bouazizi, had his fruit cart confiscated by the police, who allegedly beat and insulted him. In protest, he set himself on fire, dying a few weeks later. Public reaction escalated quickly in Tunisia, leading the Tunisian president to flee the country, and similar revolts spread across the region as a whole. This thesis argues that although these revolts spreading to the countries of the region had common features, each country's own internal dynamics triggered that country's revolt. In this context, as argued here, each country should be evaluated by itself. These events, considered by some researchers as the "Arab Awakening," should not be evaluated in a vacuum with an ignorance of the decades-long history of protest in the region. In this respect, this thesis treats Egypt as a case study and evaluates the protest movements that were already growing there in response to local and regional developments of the last decade, leading up to the resignation of Mubarak. In contrast to popular evaluations of a sudden "awakening," this thesis argues that there had already been a protest movement in Egypt for many years and protests particularly gained momentum throughout the country after the year 2000. In this point, research question of the thesis is that how the uprisings in the last decade of Egypt effected the uprisings in 2011. To be able to answer to this question, the thesis handles both regional and domestic events and their effect on Egyptians.

In additional, reason for choosing Egypt as a case study is that Egypt has historically and geopolitically had a leading role in the Arab world, especially during the Nasser period. This leading role is also related to Egypt's period of modernization during the reign of Mohammad Ali, and because Egypt is a country that has had a state structure for a long time. Furthermore, it is one of the largest Arab countries, both geographically and demographically. Thus, events in Egypt have the power to affect the region as a whole.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis is primarily based on qualitative research methods, relying on primary and secondary sources such as academic books in English and Turkish, journal articles, newspaper articles, and some official websites and online resources. Apart from these, this thesis includes five interviews with the activists of 25th January 2011 Uprisings. The first two interviewees are members of the April 6 Youth Movement, while the third interviewee is an ex-member of the youth branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The fourth is a member of the Revolutionary Socialists and the last interviewee is an independent activist. These interviews were conducted in semi-structured form with members of the groups that played a role in the revolution in Egypt. The interviews provided valuable insight for the analysis of the internal dynamics of the process leading to the revolution. This thesis also both explanatory and argumentative study.

1.3. Organization of the Thesis

When looking at the uprisings in Egypt in 2011, it can of course be claimed that the protesters in Egypt were affected by the uprisings in Tunisia. That idea of solidarity, hope, and change had effects on people in Egypt, leading them into action because they had common desires for democracy, wanting measures against corruption and the ensuring of economic development, among other reforms. However, it should not be said that this was the only reason for their anger, their wish for change, and their collective action. The Egyptian protesters did not take to the streets simply because they were encouraged by what happened in Tunisia. They had a more influential agenda, which had been growing day by day over the past decades. In this context, this thesis aims at a historical analysis of one particular decade in Egypt and its relations with national, regional, and international developments. Instead of reducing the causes of the events to globalization or neo-liberal policies, this thesis examines the events within the context of the contentious politics of Egypt since 2000.

In this framework, the following chapters will analyze the impacts of regional and domestic developments in Egypt since 2000. By doing so, these chapters will facilitate an understanding of how the Egyptian protestors responded to those regional and domestic events, why those developments were critical for them, and how earlier protests and demonstrations affected the following ones in Egypt. The Introduction has provided the aim of the thesis, the argument and structure, and a literature review. In Chapter 2, as a first sub-title, there will be given some information about early Mubarak Era. After that, some regional events will be outlined and their effects on the Egyptian people will be examined. This includes three main events: The Second Palestinian Intifada, the invasion of Iraq, and the Hezbollah-Israel War. Each will be addressed in detail and their effects on Egyptian protest culture will be examined. These three events have been chosen because The Second Palestinian Intifada and invasion of Iraq by the United States of America had brought different ideological groups together and gave them chance to know each other better and set new networks. Moreover, these two events were in huge numbers. These two protests were not directly aim at the Mubarak regime, but more Egyptians were getting angry to Mubarak and his regime's policy. On the other hand, Hezbollah-Israel War made Egyptians to understand that real danger is Mubarak and regime itself. In Chapter 3, the focus will shift to domestic developments that affected Egyptian protest movements. This chapter will explore the Kefaya Movement and its origins. Furthermore, the attitudes of Egyptian academics and judges toward the Mubarak regime will be examined, and finally, labor activism and its effects on the uprising of January 25, 2011, will be studied. In Chapter 4, more recent events leading to the uprisings will be examined. Paraphrasing Kuran, some key events surpassed the people's patience and left them unable to tolerate the regime's politics any longer.⁷ Increasing repression, torture, and injustice day by day brought people to an eventual breaking point. The murder of Khaled Said was a key moment for most Egyptians to speak out against continued brutality. The 2010 Parliamentary elections, the New Year's Eve attack on the Coptic Church, and the Tunisian Revolution are other crucial moments just before the Egyptian Revolution. This chapter will also investigate the role of Egyptian

⁷ Timur Kuran, "Sparks and Prairie Fires: A Theory of Unanticipated Political Revolution."

youth, the Ultras, and social media, as well. Finally, in the Conclusion, the general findings of the thesis will be analyzed.

Before moving on to these issues, this introductory chapter will close with an examination of the early Mubarak era. It would not be possible to evaluate the events of 2011 without a brief analysis of this key historical background.

1.4. Literature Review

On January 25, 2011, on National Police Day, Egypt's Tahrir Square witnessed a mass demonstration against the Mubarak regime. Just 18 days after the uprisings, Mubarak had to step down from power. Egypt was on the eve of a change in its modern history. However, these protests were considered by some scholars and experts on the region as "unexpected." This is because the existing literature on the Middle East is still narrow and continues to see the region as "exceptional."⁸ The area is usually exposed to such interpretations based on the viewpoints of outsiders. Seeing people living under authoritarian regimes as "silent" is a limitation of our understanding of the region. An authoritarian regime can be seen stable if we are only looking through the lenses of that regime. Valbjørn says that "there has been a too narrow focus on the regime level."⁹ This narrow understanding leads us to see everything from the state's or the regime's point of view. As a result, this narrow view affects the research on the region and creates some prejudices, such as seeing events there separately and as irrelevant from those in the rest of the world.¹⁰ What is necessary is to look from the inside and try to understand people's motivations for the protests.

⁸ Derya Göçer Akder, "Theories of Revolutions and Arab Uprisings: The Lessons from the Middle East," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013), p. 90.

⁹ Morten Valbjørn, "Upgrading Post-democratization Studies: Examining a Re-politicized Arab World in a Transition to Somewhere," *Middle East Critique* 21, no. 1 (2010), p. 30.

¹⁰ Ibid.

On the other hand, Asef Bayat says that it is now widely known that the Arab revolutions were met with surprise by all. Even intelligence services, regional experts, and academics were surprised by the uprisings that began in Tunisia and quickly spread to Egypt.¹¹ As Bayat points out, every revolution is actually a surprise, even when observers or activists are sure that the revolution is coming. As an example, he discusses how de Tocqueville found the French revolution inevitable but was still surprised by it.¹² Bayat asks why this surprise is the case. For Timur Kuran, what made the revolution unexpected was the “silence” of the people.¹³ For people who are closed to the idea of change for any reason, he does not see the necessity for taking actions to make change occur.¹⁴ People can choose to remain silent, and this silence can make a society appear stable. However, sooner or later, a small event can surpass the limits of individuals’ patience and take them to the streets.¹⁵

Asef Bayat, however, thinks that this statement is not suitable in explaining the Arab uprisings. Having lived in both Iran and in Egypt before the revolution, Bayat states that people were in fact expressing their problems in all areas and that they were speaking openly on buses, in taxis, in markets, and on the streets—in short, everywhere.¹⁶

¹¹ Asef Bayat, “The Arab Spring and Its Surprises,” *Development and Change* 44, no. 3 (2013), p. 587, accessed on August 12, 2019, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/dech.12030>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Timur Kuran, “Sparks and Prairie Fires: A Theory of Unanticipated Political Revolution,” *Public Choice* 61, no. 1 (1998), p. 60, accessed on August 12, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30025019>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bayat, “The Arab Spring and Its Surprises,” p. 588.

As will be explained in more detail in the following chapters, with the Mubarak regime, in the 1980s, the opposition in Egypt remained limited to traditional party policies. Student protests remained on campuses and all other protest movements could only be carried out to the extent permitted by the regime. Bayat states that some new political opportunities began reaching Egypt in the 2000s.¹⁷ He says there were protests against the regime's practices in many areas, from rising bread prices to shortages of water. The increasing protest culture of young people is another dimension to be considered. In this case, Bayat's remarks about the uprisings were met with surprise because Middle East observers had not assessed Arab society from the inside.¹⁸ Gregory Gause says that the unpredictability and surprising nature of the uprisings were due to the previous explanations of experts, who had been stating that the Arab authoritarian regimes were stable.¹⁹ He also says that academics as well as regional analysts should try to understand what has changed and caused uprisings against Arab regimes that had been stable for decades.

H.A. Hellyer states that the internal dynamics of Middle Eastern states and the region in general were not given much importance.²⁰ However, this does not mean that regional experts or academicians did not monitor the region. He takes Egypt as an example and says that it is a country with a long history and civilization, which has always attracted the attention of the West due to its strategic position, but at the same time, the internal political dynamics were ignored because the country had

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bayat, "The Arab Spring and Its Surprises," p. 588.

¹⁹ F. Gregory Gause, III, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011), p. 82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23039608.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Afd72dfd7b0951e93973aa7b9c0d7ffe4>.

²⁰ H.A. Hellyer, "The Chance for Change in the Arab World: Egypt's Uprising," *International Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2011), p. 1314, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41306992.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A7dad463889626a3ca3b530a7391f6b54>.

been under the rule of an authoritarian regime for a long time and showed few signs of change.²¹

Migda and Magid Shihade, on the other hand, claim that the West's obsession with the Arab world has been going on for centuries and that the West continues to misunderstand the Arabs, despite claiming superior knowledge, and this is because of Western-based academic theories.²²

²¹ Ibid.

²² Migda Shidade and Magid Shihade, "On the Difficulty in Predicting and Understanding the Arab Spring: Orientalism, Euro-Centrism and Modernity," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 17, no. 2 (2012), p. 59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41853035.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5782aca5943fee397f210e279d7d865f>.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS COLLECTIVE ACTION: HOW DID REGIONAL EVENTS AFFECT THE MASSES AND MOVE THEM TO ACT?

2.1. Early Mubarak Era

Looking at the characteristics of Mubarak's regime, we also see what he inherited from his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, in 1981 when he assumed the presidency. When President Sadat was assassinated, Mubarak was Vice President, and Sadat left behind both political and economic problems. Economically, Egypt had high levels of foreign debt to a degree that it had never seen before. On the one hand, the country was facing significant inflation.²³ Moreover, the economy was vulnerable to external factors and was unable to provide most of the workforce with well-paying jobs. On the other hand, according to Galal Amin, another point to be noted in the second half of the presidency of Anwar Sadat is that there was a noticeable increase in the national income. However, this increase was not due to a rise in local production. The increase in GDP was mainly related to immigration to the Gulf countries, the reopening of the Suez Canal, and the increase in revenues from tourism.²⁴ Amin says that since the increase in income was not a result of a rise in production in the country, it was highly dependent on economic and political developments in the region. Consequently, it was very fragile, which led to an unexpected drop in revenues.²⁵

²³ Galal Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak 1981-2011* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

Politically, it is hard to say that Sadat left a very noteworthy legacy. Sadat detained political prisoners approximately one month before his assassination, and many opposition group members, ranging from Nasserists to the Muslim Brotherhood, leftists to independents, and Muslims to Christians, were also arrested.²⁶ Sadat had closed down almost all opposition newspapers. Islamist movements and groups, however, had the opportunity to organize well in his time. While Sadat imposed restrictions on all other opposition groups, Islamic groups were exempted from such treatment because he was trying to gain the support of the Islamist groups against the leftist groups.²⁷ This was because Sadat was pursuing different policies than those of the Nasser era. He ruled the country with liberal policies, and this was not appealing to many leftist groups, especially the Nasserists.

In the words of Ayubi, “President Mubarak has inherited a complex legacy from the Nasser and Sadat eras, and with it a *mélange* of policies and institutions that date back to the period of ‘socialist transformation’, or else to the days of the ‘open door policy’.”²⁸

On the other hand, it can be claimed that the Egyptians enjoyed a “honeymoon”²⁹ with Mubarak during his first three years. Galal Amin points out that the real Mubarak era only started after 1984. He says that during the first years of Mubarak’s reign, people felt some hope for the democratization of the country. When Mubarak took office, one of the first things he did was release political prisoners and host

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak*, p. 4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Nazih N. Ayubi, “Government and the State in Egypt Today,” in *Egypt Under Mubarak*, edited by Charles Tripp and Owen Roger (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 10.

²⁹ Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak*, p. 4.

them in his office.³⁰ In doing so, Mubarak was trying to compensate for what Sadat had done to the opposition groups. Mustafa Kamel al-Sayyid says that Mubarak had also employed certain tactics to bring the opposition under his control. The first one, according to al-Sayyid, as Amin also emphasizes, was to create a space for them by reducing the pressure on dissident publications and journalists. Thus, by portraying himself as more democratic than his predecessor, he planned to avoid any possible opposition against him. As a second strategy, he left the more radical opposition groups, and especially the Islamists, to the army's control.³¹

Tarek Osman says that the fact that Anwar Sadat was assassinated in front of Mubarak and that Mubarak was wounded in the attack made him extremely concerned about security.³² This was reflected in his domestic policy. According to Osman, the relative freedom of the press, allowing the opposition to act, was an intentional policy, and loosening strict practices for some unions was also among the tactics that Mubarak used to placate Egyptian society.³³ He was trying to reduce the impact of restrictions on people by creating a relatively "free space" for these groups. Of course, these practices never turned into permanent political reform because they were only tactics carried out by the regime.³⁴ The return of the opposition press was particularly promising for Egypt's political life. Since 1952, the opposition press had been under severe pressure, and in the last year of Sadat's reign, most of the press organs were suppressed. Because of that, this development of Mubarak's "free space" was momentous for Egyptian intellectuals, who had been

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Mustafa Kamel al-Sayyid, "What Went Wrong with Mubarak's Regime," in *Egypt's Tahrir Revolution*, edited by Dan Tschirgi, Walid Kazziha, and Sean F. McMahon (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), p. 15.

³² Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to the Muslim Brotherhood* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 182.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 186.

oppressed for a long time and were now at the peak of their freedom of expression.³⁵ However, their optimistic feelings did not last long. Gamal Amin states that, like many other intellectuals, he was also mistaken in that optimism.³⁶

In addition, opposition parties that respected the law were allowed to publish newspapers, and the growing numbers of these private newspapers attracted more readers than other newspapers. Mubarak also allowed the broadcasting of private satellite channels towards the end of this period. These channels were broadcasting talk shows, not news programs, and they became very popular in a short span of time among the Egyptian people.³⁷ The fact that these talk shows were so popular with the public, together with the state's desire to compete with Arab satellite channels such as Al Jazeera, gave the state's TV channels an opportunity to criticize some government policies, although these criticisms were carefully monitored and controlled.³⁸

Another point to be emphasized here is that during the Mubarak period steps were taken to promote the use of computers and the Internet. Of course, the regime was unaware that it was creating a very important tool for opposition groups. The Egyptian regime saw the use of computers and the Internet as an indicator of modernization and believed that their use would be beneficial, not realizing that these tools would be used against the regime itself in the future. Businessmen helped schools and families by supplying computers, and computers were sold at low prices to spread their use. Thanks to these efforts, the use of computers and the Internet increased rapidly, from 16.3 million in 2009 to 22.6 million in December 2010.³⁹

³⁵ Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak*, p. 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁷ Al-Sayyid, "What Went Wrong," p. 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Opposition groups came to understand the importance of these new tools very quickly and used them for mobilization. According to al-Sayyid, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Kefaya Movement were the first ones to take advantage of them.⁴⁰

Another of the essential features that distinguished Mubarak from his predecessor was the great attention he paid to the language that he used. According to Galal Amin, Mubarak used more diplomatic language, avoiding statements that threatened to imprison opponents.⁴¹

An additional promising development occurred in February 1982, when President Mubarak organized a conference with leading economists in Egypt to discuss and find solutions to Egypt's economic problems of the time, where everyone was free to express their opinions.⁴²

Like Galal Amin, Nazih Ayubi says that some researchers have argued that the actual Mubarak era began with the May 1984 elections.⁴³ The new election law that came into force just before those elections supports this view. This law was based on proportional representation, and according to this law, no parties with less than 8% of the vote would have the right of representation in Parliament. Moreover, the votes of parties falling below this threshold were automatically added to those of the winning party.⁴⁴

Not surprisingly, in the May elections, while Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) took the lead with 72.9% of the vote, from among the opposing parties only

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 18

⁴¹ Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak*, p. 5.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ayubi, "Government and the State in Egypt Today," p. 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the right-wing liberal Wafd Party entered Parliament, having gained 15% of the vote. The Socialist Labor Party, the leftist Tagammu Party, and the Liberals' Party did not pass the threshold in the 1984 elections and thus did not take any seats in Parliament.⁴⁵ These elections clearly showed that the ruling party led by Mubarak was quite successful in controlling the elections and the opposition. On the other hand, it was unclear as to how Mubarak would design his economic policies during his reign. Nasser had begun his main economic arrangements after privatizing the Suez Canal four years after his military coup in 1952. His successor, Sadat, adopted the "open door" policy in 1974, making Nasser's closed economic order more liberal.⁴⁶

According to Ayubi, what is certain is that Mubarak truly consolidated his power in the 1984 elections. Ayubi also states that the Emergency Law that had been announced after the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 was also still in force at this time, and this also worked to strengthen Mubarak's authority.⁴⁷

Regarding the questions about economic policies, his announcement in 1982 in the conference with economists from all sides provided some clues. Mubarak asserted that the neo-liberal policies that had begun with Sadat's "*open door policy*" should be continued, and he further remarked that the aim of the conference was not only to provide economic proposals but also to prepare an action plan for the current economic situation in Egypt.⁴⁸ The General Secretary of the conference said that the liberalization process should continue, but at the same time consumption should be reduced and production should be increased. The opposition press took a stance against these decisions. According to Samer Soliman, left-wing economists such as

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Samer Soliman, *The Autumn of Dictatorship: Fiscal Crisis and Political Change in Egypt under Mubarak* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 36.

Fouad Morsi and Ramzi Zaki thought that the decisions made at the conference were wrong. They argued that this policy would increase consumerist tendencies, and as a result of this, Egypt would become an increasingly imports-based country.⁴⁹ As stated above, Egypt's revenue growth was mainly due to income from rentier sources and thus was very fragile. While the revenue growth might be very high one year, it could be zero the following year. As a solution, economists such as Morsi and Zaki proposed to increase national capitalism by reducing imports.⁵⁰ Samer Soliman, on the other hand, says that during the period when Mubarak came to power, Egypt was unexpectedly one of the highest-ranking in terms of government spending among the GDPs of third-world countries according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) records. This was also due to the increase in rentier income in that period. In addition, Egypt was the country with the highest GDP in non-tax state revenues among Tunisia, Israel, Iran, India, Indonesia, Argentina, and Kenya in 1981.⁵¹ The non-tax revenues came from a significant amount of foreign aid and also rentier income. Statistics show that Egypt was in turn affected by economic crises in the countries that it received aid from. With the decrease in foreign aid to Egypt, rentier income also decreased in parallel.⁵²

Tarek Osman also points out that in the mid-1980s there was a significant drop in revenues and foreign investment from the Suez Canal.⁵³ When the oil crisis of the mid-1980s was added to this situation, many Egyptians working in the Gulf countries became unemployed and returned home. As Hazem Kandil states, Mubarak resisted privatization for a while by relying on oil exports, revenues from

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Samer Soliman, *The Autumn of Dictatorship*, p. 41.

⁵² Ibid., p. 42.

⁵³ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, p. 182.

the Suez Canal, and the Egyptian workers remaining in oil-rich countries.⁵⁴ However, the drop in oil prices to \$12 a barrel in 1986 led to a 50% drop in oil exports, from \$2.26 billion to \$1.2 billion, and, following this, the customs duty of the Suez Canal fell rapidly as well.⁵⁵

This decline in revenue, Egypt's high foreign debt, and the economic crisis in general caused the state to declare bankruptcy in 1989; as a result, the Mubarak regime had to accept and implement the Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) prepared by the IMF in 1991.⁵⁶ With this "reform" package, there would be reductions in Egypt's appropriations, and even worse, state institutions had to be privatized. By June of 1999, 124 of 314 public enterprises had been sold.⁵⁷ Instead of solving Egypt's economic problems, the IMF's structural reforms led to even greater problems. For the first time in many years, Tarek Osman stresses, "Egypt had no dreams, no matter whether it is a national plan, a modernization plan, a vibrant liberal program, or great Arab nationalism."⁵⁸

In other words, the ERSAP was explained as "entail[ing] the privatisation of public sector enterprises, the liberalisation of trade and prices, introduction of flexible labour legislation and the removal of progressive social policies."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Hazem Kandil, "Why Did the Egyptian Middle-Class March to Tahrir Square?" *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012), p. 208.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 280.

⁵⁸ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, p. 182.

⁵⁹ Angela Joya, "The Egyptian Revolution: Crisis of Neoliberalism and the Potential for Democratic Politics," *Review of African Political Economy* 38, no. 129 (2011), p. 370.

According to Angela Joya, the privatization of state enterprises created a new economic elite in cooperation with the NDP, particularly involving Mubarak's son, Gamal Mubarak.⁶⁰ Hazem Kandil describes this new elite class as follows: "in terms of social origins, the new oligarchs belonged to the merchant and construction class, whose business was kicked off through state contracts and partnerships with foreign (mostly American) corporations."⁶¹ The Egyptian government's allocation of public resources to private enterprises led the economy to be monopolized under the control of certain groups encompassing many fields from iron, steel, and communications to the food sector.⁶² With the Nazif Cabinet, privatization continued to increase.⁶³ There was a serious disparity in the distribution of national resources, and with time, 7% of the population was able to control 60% of the land.⁶⁴

With public resources in the hands of this new elite and with the economy intertwined with the state, the country's future was left in the hands of a small group. Joya clearly points this out as follows:

The two decades of liberalisation increased collusion between businessmen and bureaucrats, increased the role of businessmen in policy making and turned the state into an active promoter of business interests. Increasingly, businessmen took charge of policy circles as the number of businessmen

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kandil, "Why Did the Egyptian Middle-Class March to Tahrir Square?" p. 207.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Nadia Ramsis Farah, *Egypt's Political Economy: Power Relations in Development* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), p. 81, accessed on July 21, 2019, <https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=WvjUP56XGOWC&printsec=frontcover&dq=nadine+ramsis+farah+egypt%27s+political+economy&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiw3O9mpfkAhVysIsKHVAxCKeQ6AEIMDAB#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

elected to Egypt's parliament increased from 8 in 1995 to 150 by 2005 elections.⁶⁵

These private sector elites were not only members of the NDP and Parliament; some of them were even ministers. For example, the transportation minister owned a private car company and the health minister owned the most prestigious hospital in Egypt.⁶⁶

At the same time, it is interesting that groups such as laborers, peasants, and white-collar workers, who suffered the most from these privatizations and economic policies, still supported the NDP. Farah says that as the concerns of public workers increased, the government used a "divide and rule" policy, recommending that public companies employ "temporary workers" to lower the expenses.⁶⁷ Workers were also forced to resign in response to some tactics such as creating delays in workers' wages or underpaying them.

The state also started the implementation of an early retirement policy, with which the state bribed workers to resign voluntarily. In order to prevent the possibility of the formation of any organizations among workers or any uprisings, the government provided increased salaries to high-ranking workers. This was to prevent the workers from forming unions. According to Farah, the second tactic that was employed was to form a group of shareholders from among high-ranking workers in order to keep them loyal to the regime's authority. Even if only small numbers of workers were involved, this tactic was quite useful to keep them divided. These people hence preferred to keep their relations with the state to protect their own interests.⁶⁸ This policy of the government also affected the opposition parties. The Wafd, the right-wing liberals' party, was already composed of elite businessmen,

⁶⁵ Joya, "The Egyptian Revolution: Crisis of Neoliberalism and the Potential for Democratic Politics," p. 370.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

who were able to establish close relations with the NDP in pursuit of their own interests. On the other hand, the leftist Tagammu Party, which sought the rights of workers and peasants, did not have the ability to fight the NDP. Moreover, the leftist party did not have much appeal among the people, which was naturally reflected in the elections.⁶⁹

These privatizations became more widespread in the country and the share of the private sector in the economy increased, but the privatization process made the new elite more dependent on the state for access to public resources.⁷⁰ Mitchell explains this privatization process as follows: “it was not a switch from state-run enterprise to a reborn private sector.” Rather, “it was a complicated adjustment of existing relations between public-sector business barons and their partners in the private sector.”⁷¹

In other words, Mubarak’s presidency was a period in which national wealth was seized by several private companies. Most of the population was at risk of hunger, national income per capita decreased to 2 dollars per day, unemployment increased, and job opportunities for young people were limited.⁷²

Mubarak’s early years may still be considered successful for a few reasons. First of all, when Mubarak came to power, he released all political prisoners and set out to create dialogue with them. This created hope for the democratization of Egypt.⁷³ Secondly, freedom of the press allowed for criticism of the regime’s policies, even

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁰ Joya, “The Egyptian Revolution,” p. 371.

⁷¹ Timothy Mitchell, “No Factories, No Problems: The Logic of Neo-liberalism in Egypt,” *Review of African Political Economy* 26, no. 82 (1999), p. 460.

⁷² Salwa Ismail, “A Private Estate Called Egypt,” *The Guardian*, February 6, 2011, accessed on June 20, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/06/private-estate-egypt-mubarak-cronies>.

⁷³ Al-Sayyid, “What Went Wrong,” p. 33.

if this was only a relative freedom. In reality, all of these democratic initiatives were intended to keep the opposition under control and to create a “loyal opposition.” Thirdly, the government’s efforts to encourage the use of computers and the Internet was a positive development. In the early years of Mubarak’s reign, the emphasis on democracy and democratization can be seen clearly. The new election law introduced the 8% threshold for entering Parliament just before the 1984 elections. Though this seemed to be an anti-democratic policy, it could also be asserted that the new law reflected the tendency of the Mubarak regime to democratize Egypt as it was legislating the first multi-party elections in the country. As a result of these so-called democratic policies, five parties participated in the elections in 1984 and a two-party parliament was formed after the elections.⁷⁴

As a result of cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the early days of the Mubarak period, Egypt received considerable economic aid from these countries. Egypt’s opposition to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq allowed aid to be received from the United States, the Gulf countries, and Europe. Furthermore, half of its foreign debt to those countries was erased in the post-war period. National income per capita increased in the first years, which was not an endless period because this economic growth depended on foreign aid and debt. Unfortunately, rapid population growth brought about rapid consumption. The new economic elite, which emerged as a result of Mubarak’s neo-liberal policies, was also growing with corruption. The fact that the resources were in the hands of the regime and its loyal elites prevented the equal distribution of wealth. The Egyptian people saw that their share in this wealth was gradually diminishing.

However, Asef Bayat says that with the 2000s, Egypt experienced a “cycle of opportunities” that can be called a turning point in its political life.⁷⁵ “Poor people,”

⁷⁴ Gökhan Bozbaş, *Mısır’da Toplum ve Siyaset: Devrimden Darbeye Giden Sürecin Yapısal Analizi* (İstanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 2018), p. 49.

⁷⁵ Asef Bayat, “Plebeians of the Arab Spring,” *Current Anthropology* 56, no. S11 (October 2015), p. 35, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/681523>.

who had previously generally preferred to remain silent, and students, who preferred to be non-political, began moving into activism in the 2000s and began to be heard.⁷⁶ Bayat says that this change came about with the popular committees for solidarity with the Palestinian and Iraqi people and later with the Kefaya Movement.⁷⁷ In the following chapters, these two movements will be discussed.

2.2. Effects of Second Palestinian Intifada in 2000

Although the causes of the Egyptian protests cannot be reduced to a single decade,⁷⁸ it would not be wrong to say that after 2000 Egypt witnessed crucial protests in its modern history and that these protests had a vital role in the path to the Tahrir Square uprisings of 2011. Egyptian activists themselves have expressed that the roots of their uprising should be sought in the Second Palestinian Intifada of September 2000.⁷⁹

The Second Intifada or Al-Aqsa Intifada occurred as a result of the failed Camp David negotiations. Ehud Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister, and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority Chairman, could not negotiate regarding the occupied territories, the status of Jerusalem, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The promise of the declaration of a Palestinian state thus seemed to disappear for the foreseeable future.⁸⁰ Indeed, the tension increased when Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Foreign Minister at that time, visited Jerusalem's Temple Mount, known to Muslims as Al-Haram al-Sharif, with the armed Israeli police and soldiers on September 28,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁹ Nadia Hijab, "The Rise of the Intifada Generation," *The Nation*, September 12, 2011, p. 2, retrieved on December 3, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/rise-intifada-generation/>.

⁸⁰ Sana Hussein, "Remembering the Second Intifada," *Middle East Monitor*, September 28, 2017, retrieved on December 21, 2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170928-remembering-the-second-intifada/>.

2000. This visit was problematic among Palestinians because this place is sacred for both Muslims and Jews. Palestinians saw this as an attempt to take sovereignty over a place holy for both religions, or as a sign that “under a Likud government, Al-Aqsa Mosque would remain under Israeli sovereignty.”⁸¹ This action thus generated feelings of distrust in an environment that was already troubled. While all of these developments caused the Second Palestinian Intifada, they also triggered a wave of protests in Cairo to support the Palestinian cause. Looking at Egypt’s history, it can be seen that there has always been a connection to the Palestinian issue. This was particularly inherited from Nasser’s years, because of his pan-Arab policy, and so it is not surprising to see protesters supporting Palestinians in Egypt.

Dina Sheta says that “the Palestinian Intifada and the invasion of Iraq by the USA in 2003 were crucial steps for mobilizing people in 2011.”⁸² After 2000, protests and divisions became more visible and audible, and a chain of demonstrations took place.⁸³ Nicola Pratt states that “the Second Intifada triggered perhaps the largest and most radical spontaneous demonstrations in the Arab world since the first Gulf War.”⁸⁴ Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Zvi Baron say that “with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in Israel in September 2000, the situation began to change with the start of the first wave of public protests.”⁸⁵ This was one of the turning points in Egypt’s contentious politics of the last decade. According to Gunning and Baron, there were two main contributions of the Second Palestinian Intifada to Egypt: “the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Hijab, “The Rise of the Intifada Generation.”

⁸³ El-Mahdi, “The Democracy Movement,” p. 87.

⁸⁴ Nicola Pratt, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), p. 170.

⁸⁵ Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Zvi Baron, *Why Occupy a Square? People, Protests, and Movements in the Egyptian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 37.

linking of activists across ideological divides, and the reclamation of the street as a space for public protest.”⁸⁶

One additional point that should be remembered is that these protests also overcame the fear of the demonstrators, who were living under the heavy repression of the state and its police force. As mentioned above, the Palestinian issue was not a new subject for Egyptian politics. Since the Nasser years, the Palestinian issue had already been on the agenda, both in political and societal contexts, like in other Arab states. However, this issue had a more widespread appeal in Egypt because of Egypt’s historically strong position as a former leader of the Arab world in the region. The critical point here is that although the Palestinian issue came to be politically off the agenda after the 1967 Six-Day War with Israel and the Camp David Agreement during the reign of Sadat, it did not lose its momentum on a societal level. Although there were some protests even before 2000, they became more sustained after that.⁸⁷ Pro-Intifada protests particularly flared up when a Palestinian child, Mohamed Al-Durrah, was killed by Israeli snipers. After that, Egyptian students abandoned their political apathy of the 1990s and began organizing street demonstrations all over the country. Moreover, these actions were a challenge to Egypt’s Emergency Law, which forbade street demonstrations.⁸⁸

As a result of the Second Intifada in 2000, the Popular Committee to Support the Intifada (PCSI) was established in Egypt to support the Palestinian uprising. Khalid Ali describes the establishment of the PCSI, *Lagna Sh’abia*, as the first “signpost” of the 2011 uprisings. Egyptians took to the streets and organized massive demonstrations against Israeli atrocities and Mubarak’s position towards the Palestinian issue. This committee and its subcommittees were established in

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Amira Howeidy, “A Chronology of Dissent,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, June 29, 2005, retrieved on December 25, 2018, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2005/748/eg10.htm>.

universities, cities, and neighborhoods. Members of the committees called for demonstrations, and they collected foods, clothing, and medicines for the Palestinian people.⁸⁹ These demonstrations and organizations showed the stance of the Egyptian people against both Israel and Mubarak and his regime's position on the issue.

As previously mentioned, in the "closed" political structures of authoritarian regimes, people can barely influence political, social, economic, or cultural decisions through the legislative instruments.⁹⁰ Likewise, in Egypt, the existing political structure did not permit Egyptians to express their ideas. Repression was felt everywhere, and opposition groups were naturally afraid of suffering the rage of the Mubarak regime. However, with the Second Intifada, Egyptian protests began to gain momentum. As Meyer and Whittier said, "the ideas, tactics, style, participants, and organizations of one movement often spill over its boundaries to affect other social movements."⁹¹ Although each protest wave may have had different aims, ideologies, and targets, these protests inevitably had a spillover effect on each other, and each protest gained experience from the others and strengthened networks among participants.

In the meantime, after 2000 and especially with the PCSI, Egyptian protesters created a space for their contentious politics. For the next generations, the Second Intifada became a reference point from which they could take strength. As Sadiki explains, "the Intifada assumed spiritual importance in the eyes of millions of Arabs, epitomizing hope that people-power resistance might one day enable disaffected Arabs to achieve their objectives of justice, equality, and emancipation."⁹² Even apolitical students were participating in protests on university campuses and asking

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *Social Movements and Protest*, p. 85.

⁹¹ David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social Movement Spill Over," *Social Problems* 41, no. 2 (1994), p. 277.

⁹² Larbi Sadiki, "Popular Uprisings and Arab Democratization," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 1 (2000), p. 83.

what was happening in Palestine. On October 4, 2000, many students, even high school students, participated in demonstrations and demanded justice for Palestinians. Fathi, a leftist student, said the following in an interview:

“They wanted to storm the gates and go out on the streets to express their anger; they wanted solutions to the injustice of the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, and they had had enough of hearing about a peace process that only seemed to result in the death of more Palestinians.”⁹³

The most massive demonstration organized by the PCSI was held on April 1, 2002, just after the occupation of Ramallah and Jenin by Israel, and approximately 100,000 protestors were in the streets.⁹⁴ The number of participants in the demonstrations was unpredictably high. It was possible to hear slogans like “Mubarak, you coward, you are the clients of Americans” and “the road to Jerusalem runs through Cairo.”⁹⁵ However, the Committee’s repertoires of actions were not limited just to protests or demonstrations. They were also organizing seminars and cultural events to spread new ideas among the people and inviting them to boycott Israeli products and those of its ally, the USA. Although the boycott campaign had little effect, it was instrumental and practical to mobilize the masses. From this viewpoint, it can be said that “the Intifada brought collective action back to the streets,”⁹⁶ and another important issue here is that the Intifada united many protestors from different political groups for the first time. There were socialists, Nasserists, members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and youth from universities and high schools. All together, they initiated the establishment of the PCSI. This is of crucial importance because, in the history of modern Egypt, it was the very first time that such disparate groups

⁹³ Fatemah Farag, “Echoes of Intifada,” *Al-Ahram Weekly*, October 11, 2000, retrieved on December 5, 2018, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2000/503/pal2.htm>.

⁹⁴ Abdelrahman, *Egypt’s Long Revolution*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Paul Schemm, “Sparks of Activist Spirit in Egypt,” *Middle East Report Online*, April 13, 2002, retrieved on December 28, 2018, <https://merip.org/2002/04/sparks-of-activist-spirit-in-egypt/>.

⁹⁶ El-Mahdi, “The Democracy Movement,” p. 94.

came together for a common purpose and worked with each other, shoulder to shoulder, for a common goal. This was a moment that shaped the tradition of protest in Egypt, creating a network and a collective memory throughout these demonstrations.

The PCSI also provided people with grounds to create networks and cooperation and offered “opportunities for self-education in negotiations, tactics, and means of overcoming ideological divisions in the interest of achieving shared aims.”⁹⁷ In addition, the PCSI enabled people to create new connections, “bringing previously unconnected groups or social networks into the same campaign.”⁹⁸

It is useful to remember what journalist Issandr El Amrani said, as quoted by Nadia Hijab: “the Palestinian cause contributed to the Egyptian movement by ‘creating a space for activism, which the regime tolerated so long as it was targeted towards Israel’.”⁹⁹

According to blogger and activist Hossam El-Hamalawy, from a presentation at the American University in Cairo in early June, “For the first time since 1977, after the intifada broke out, tens of thousands of Egyptians took to the streets in demonstrations that began in support of the Palestinians but soon gained an anti-regime dimension.”¹⁰⁰ It was possible to hear anti-Mubarak slogans such as “Mubarak and Sharon are the same men.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

⁹⁸ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 241.

⁹⁹ Hijab, “The Rise of the Intifada Generation,” p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Hossam El-Hamalawy, “Egypt’s Revolution Has Been Ten Years in the Making,” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2011, retrieved on December 24, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/02/egypt-revolution-mubarak-wall-of-fear>.

¹⁰¹ Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 139.

2.3. Anti-War Protests Against the Invasion of Iraq in 2003

On September 11, 2001, best known as 9/11, the world witnessed an attack that would change world politics both in the context of the international arena and Middle Eastern politics in particular. On that day, four passenger airplanes were hijacked by nineteen men, who were Islamist extremists. Afterwards, it was stated that they were al-Qaida militants based in Afghanistan. The attacks had been coordinated and prepared for several years and targeted significant places in the USA. Two airplanes targeted the World Trade Center, known as the Twin Towers, in New York. A third one aimed to crash into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US Department of Defense. It is thought that the fourth one was supposed to hit the White House, although that is not clear as it failed to achieve its purpose. According to reports, approximately 3000 people from 57 different countries, including the hijackers, were killed.¹⁰² After that, the international public began to frequently hear the USA's new discourse of the "war on terror." In the following days, the USA and the Bush administration invaded Afghanistan to destroy al-Qaida, led by Usama bin Laden and the Taliban government.

In 2002, the USA reoriented its position and started to focus more on Iraq. As Cleveland and Bunton say, "the Bush administration had shifted its focus from al-Qaida to Iraq as the most threatening source of anti-American terrorism."¹⁰³ However, there was no clear indication that Iraq was also behind the 9/11 attacks or supported al-Qaida. According to Najib Ghadban, a professor of politics at the University of Arkansas, the USA had already planned to invade Iraq before 2003.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Alan Taylor, "9/11: The Day of the Attacks", *The Atlantic*, September 8, 2011, retrieved on December 23, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/09/911-the-day-of-the-attacks/100143/>.

¹⁰³ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), p. 563.

¹⁰⁴ Najib Ghadban, "The War on Iraq: Justifications and Motives," *Al Jazeera*, August 10, 2003, retrieved on December 23, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2003/08/2008410151856461833.html>.

After the second Gulf War in 1991, US policy had aimed to remove Saddam Hussein from power because of his aggressive and anti-American policy.

To justify the invasion of Iraq, the USA and the Bush administration asserted two main reasons. The first claim was that Iraq had a massive amount of chemical and biological weapons that were being given to international terrorist organizations such as al-Qaida by Saddam's government.¹⁰⁵ As the other justification, the Bush administration claimed that "regime change was necessary for the benefit of the Iraqi people themselves."¹⁰⁶ On March 20, 2003, US and British troops entered Iraqi lands and launched "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

By 2002, the protests against Israel and the support for Palestinians had lost momentum. However, in the first months of 2003, a new wave of protests began to spread, and this time, the USA was at the core of the protests. On March 20, 2003, Tahrir Square witnessed a considerable demonstration comprising more than 40,000 people.¹⁰⁷ While previous protests were focused much more against Israel than Mubarak's regime, with the possibility of an invasion of Iraq the focus of the mobilization changed. Despite the discursive opposition of Mubarak to the invasion of Iraq, Egyptians knew that, in reality, the regime was doing nothing to prevent such an attack. On the contrary, the Mubarak regime allowed US warships to use the Suez Canal for the invasion of Iraq.¹⁰⁸ The regime's position towards this issue created a tremendous wave of public anger, and people spilled out onto the streets. However, this time, the protestors faced harsh police intervention. During the pro-

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 563.

¹⁰⁷ El-Mahdi, "The Democracy Movement," p. 95.

¹⁰⁸ Ian Black, "Egypt Accused over Crackdown on Protests," *The Guardian*, March 25, 2003, retrieved on December 12, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/25/iraq.ianblack>.

Intifada protests in 2000 and 2001, the Mubarak regime had acted with tolerance towards the protestors because their target was not directly him.

On the other hand, the storm had shifted in 2003. The protests moved from being anti-Israel to being anti-Mubarak because of his policies regarding the USA. As Maha Abdelrahman says, “the focus of the protest was no longer on nationalist concerns and external enemies but the Egyptian regime itself and its regional and domestic policies.”¹⁰⁹

The possibility of an invasion of Iraq made Egyptians worry about their Arab brothers. Leftists, Islamists, and secular Egyptian activists came together against a possible attack. As had happened in the pro-Intifada protests, different ideological groups were again united. Protesters with different political views planned to organize a conference on the imminent war. In December 2002, the Cairo Conference was held against imperialism and Zionism. In this conference, the “Cairo Declaration” was announced, and this had crucial importance for mobilizing people around the globe. Thanks to the Cairo Declaration, in February 2003, approximately 16 million protestors took to the streets around the world to protest the American invasion of Iraq.¹¹⁰

After the USA began its invasion of Iraq, thousands of demonstrators gathered in Cairo to protest the USA and its aggression. Not surprisingly, they faced violent police repression. According to the records of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the police used water cannons and beat many protestors; sometimes this beating and torture lasted for hours. According to information from

¹⁰⁹ Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution*, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

the OMCT, the police even beat a pregnant woman.¹¹¹ As the number of protestors increased, the use of police force as the state's response correspondingly increased.

Furthermore, on March 21, 2003, slogans started to turn from being anti-Israel and anti-war to being more explicitly anti-regime. This is a point worth expanding on. During the pro-Intifada protests, there was anti-Mubarak discourse, as well. However, that was not as dominant as the discourses against Israel. After the invasion of Iraq, slogans like "leave, leave Mubarak" became more common than before.¹¹²

According to Leupp, the most substantial demonstrations (apart from those in Baghdad) were held in Sana'a, Damascus, Cairo, Khartoum, Casablanca, Rabat, Manama, and Beirut. However, Egypt was particularly crucial for protestors because its capital had a population of 17 million people and it received \$2 billion in aid from the USA every year.¹¹³ It was thus believed that protests in Cairo were a deterrent and could mobilize more people in the Arab world. At the same time, the occupation of Iraq was protested in many places apart from the Arab countries. This was because there was a new understanding of the movement or the protests, and it had a focus on a shared responsibility against neo-liberalism and war. To summarize, it is appropriate to quote the words of el-Hamalawy in an interview with Tara Povey:

"We have to thank the Palestinian Intifada and the anti-war movements. The regime started talking rhetorically about Palestine, and people take the rhetoric seriously

¹¹¹ OMCT, "Egypt: Arrests, Torture And Threats Of Rape Against Anti-War Demonstrators," *World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)*, March 27, 2003, retrieved on December 24, 2018, <http://www.omct.org/urgent-campaigns/urgent-interventions/2003/03/d16229/>.

¹¹² Gary Leupp, "The Streets of Cairo," *Counterpunch*, March 25, 2003, retrieved on December 29, 2018, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2003/03/25/the-streets-of-cairo/>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

and go out in the streets, and then they get confronted with the reality that their regimes are like clients [to foreign forces].”¹¹⁴

2.4. Hezbollah-Israel War in 2006

Another critical matter regarding the increasing protests against Mubarak was his position against Hezbollah during the war with Israel in 2006. The tension began with the capturing and killing of at least eight Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah on the Lebanon-Israel border.¹¹⁵

Hezbollah is a group affiliated with the Shi’a branch of Islam and was established in 1982 just after the invasion of Lebanon by Israel, known as the First Lebanon War. Looking at the region, it is seen that after the 1980s, there was a tendency towards political Islam. The Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 had an impact on that. Another reason for this was the failure of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism had been in decline since the 1967 defeat, and with the collapse of Fatah’s politics with Israel, people directed their attention towards Hamas and other religious organizations or movements. Hezbollah is usually associated with Iran, and it is claimed that it receives aid from it. The main dispute in 2006 was linked to this issue. After the Iranian revolution, Shi’a Islam became more visible in the region and its discourse against the USA and Israel was attractive for people in the area regardless of their Islamic or political identity.

However, this situation created a danger for American-backed Sunni governments. They feared the loss of their legitimacy and the spread of Shi’a ideology in the region, and the changing dynamics of politics. Moreover, in 2006, many Sunni Arab states, including Egypt, criticized Hezbollah’s “unexpected, inappropriate and

¹¹⁴ Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 139.

¹¹⁵ Greg Myre and Steven Erlanger, “Israelis Enter Lebanon After Attacks,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2006, accessed on June 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/world/middleeast/13mideast.html>.

irresponsible acts.”¹¹⁶ Also, it was said that Hezbollah’s actions were “uncalculated adventures,” quite different from “legitimate resistance” to Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, after Israel’s attacks began against Beirut and Southern Lebanon, Egypt accused Hezbollah of acting without consulting with or gaining permission from the Lebanese government.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, according to political analyst Mohammed El Said Idris, “the Arab street will stand behind Hezbollah despite official attempts to slander Hezbollah and Islamic resistance by portraying them as having entered a losing battle with Israel and bringing a catastrophe on Lebanon.”¹¹⁹

There were many demonstrations organized by different groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Nasserists, and leftists, and apart from Cairo, many protests were also held in Alexandria, Asyut, and other cities.¹²⁰ The Egyptian Grand Mufti supported Hezbollah for its fight against Israel and said “we are all against what is going on Lebanon.”¹²¹ Furthermore, to show solidarity with Muslim and Arab brothers, many protests were particularly taking place after the Friday prayers. For example, on August 5, many protestors came together at the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo and

¹¹⁶ Jeremy M. Sharp, “Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict,” *Congressional Research Service - The Library of Congress*, August 14, 2006, p. 21, retrieved on December 31, 2018, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a488310.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ “Arab Street Rallies Behind Hezbollah,” *Al Jazeera*, August 1, 2006, retrieved on December 29, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2006/08/200849142219501402.html>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Andrew McGregor, “Support for Hezbollah in Egypt Threatens Mubarak’s Stability,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, September 7, 2006, retrieved on December 31, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/support-for-hezbollah-in-egypt-threatens-mubarak-stability/>.

¹²¹ David Rising, “Hezbollah’s Resistance Winning Arab Support,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 30, 2006, retrieved on January 2, 2019, <https://www.post-gazette.com/world/2006/07/30/Hezbollah-s-resistance-winning-Arab-support/stories/200607300233>.

prayed for Hezbollah's struggle against Israel.¹²² They shouted slogans like "God give victory to Hezbollah and inflict defeat on the Jews," according to Sheikh Eid Abdelhamid, the Al-Azhar cleric.¹²³ There were approximately 2000 participants, and they were carrying Hezbollah's flag and pictures of its leader, Nasrallah. As they began their protest, they faced massive police intervention.¹²⁴ They were shouting "Nasrallah, Nasrallah, the whole of Egypt is Hezbollah."¹²⁵ Mohammed Mehdi Akef, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest opposition group, indicated that "they were ready to send 10,000 fighters to Lebanon to fight against Israel alongside Hezbollah."¹²⁶

It can thus be inferred that Egyptian public opinion mostly sided with Hezbollah. People supported the struggle of Hezbollah and saw its leader, Nasrallah, as the leader of the Arab world. Nasrallah was mostly likened to Nasser, the hero of the Arab world in the 1960s, in terms of his struggle against Israel. Public opinion did not show any divisions among itself across different sects, and people were proud of having Hezbollah to fight against Israel while Sunni leaders mostly negotiated with Israel and the USA. It can be said that the events of the last decade, including the Lebanon-Israel War of 2006, inspired the creation of further "proto-revolutionary" movements like the Kefaya ("Enough!") and the April 6 Youth Movements.¹²⁷

¹²² "Al-Azhar Sermon Incites Protests," *Daily News Egypt*, August 5, 2006, retrieved on January 2, 2019, <https://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2006/08/05/al-azhar-sermon-incites-protests/>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "MB Leader Says Ready to Send Fighters to Lebanon," *Daily News Egypt*, August 5, 2006, retrieved on January 2, 2019, <https://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2006/08/04/mb-leader-says-ready-to-send-fighters-to-lebanon/>.

According to Shafeeq Ghabra, the best example of this is the story of Muhammad Adel. Muhammad Adel was one of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement, and his life as an activist began in 2005 with the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2009, after some disagreements, Adel announced that he was leaving the Brotherhood.¹²⁸ According to Adel, the Palestinian issue, what was happening in Gaza, and the fact that Israel had started a war with Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 had particularly important roles in changing the thinking of his generation. Adel stated that the Mubarak regime's attitude towards the problems of Arabs and the Palestinian issue led the protesters to take an anti-regime stance.¹²⁹

It is thus clear that events in both Palestine and Iraq—and the Mubarak regime's responses to those events—were influential in strengthening the culture of protest in Egypt in the first decade of the 21st century while simultaneously motivating protesters to criticize Mubarak. Mubarak's response to the Hezbollah-Israel War in 2006 was another dimension that made Egyptian people question the regime. The Egyptian people's stand against Israel and the regime's attitude were completely contrary to each other. All of these regional events made Egyptians ask themselves whether outside forces were the real danger, or the regime itself. Thus, these events all contributed to changes in the protests' direction and shifted them, together with public sentiment in general, from an anti-Israel and anti-USA viewpoint to being anti-Mubarak. Domestic events, however, were equally influential in this regard. The next chapter will highlight the same decade's most important trends in Egyptian domestic politics and protest movements.

¹²⁷ Khaled Elgindy, "Egypt, Israel, Palestine," *Brookings*, August 25, 2012, retrieved on December 28, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/egypt-israel-palestine/>.

¹²⁸ Shafeeq Ghabra, "The Egyptian Revolution: Causes and Dynamics," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, edited by Larbi Sadiki (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 202.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS, STATE REPRESSION, AND CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

3.1. The Origins of the Kefaya Movement

According to Manar Shorbagy, Kefaya's importance is rooted in:

its transformative potential as a large political force of a new type that is uniquely suited to the needs of the moment in Egypt. It is at once a cross-ideological force that has the potential, in the long run, of creating a new mainstream and, at the same time, a movement of a new kind that is creating a distinctive and promising form of politics for Egypt.¹³⁰

In the early 21st century, political life in Egypt was almost dead. Opposition parties were trapped, and they were prevented from communicating with the public. Strict laws overwhelmed the opposition parties, and their areas of activity were weakened day by day. At the same time, there were severe ideological differences among the opposition parties, and this made them unable to reach consensus on many crucial issues. In addition to their inability to find common ground, this situation created an atmosphere of mistrust among political parties, and this revealed the fact that Egypt needed a new political mechanism. Kefaya was established in this environment, and it became a new hope for Egyptian politics. The founders of Kefaya had been in politics since the late 1970s, and in this sense, they had political experience, desire, and a vision for a better future. The founding leaders of Kefaya were people who had tried to form a common ground for years to go beyond ideological differences. Kefaya was founded through their efforts and showed that a new political discourse

¹³⁰ Manar Shorbagy, "Understanding Kefaya: The New Politics in Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2007), p. 39.

was possible. Most of Kefaya's founding leaders came from the student movement of the 1970s. These founders were leftists (Nasserists and Marxists) as well as Islamists. Although these two groups had fundamentally different ideologies, they could come to a common opinion when the issue was foreign policy.¹³¹

In 1981, just a month before Anwar Sadat was assassinated, he imprisoned intellectuals and activists from all opposition political groups. This unfortunate circumstance created a chance for groups with different views to establish a dialogue. Furthermore, the relative political openness that came in the 1980s created a space for opposition movements and political competition. On the other hand, at the beginning of the 1990s, a severe Islamist-secular polarization was taking place, and also, for the first time in modern Egyptian history, the political elite expressed its concern about this issue and called on both sides to abandon their hostile attitudes.¹³² The regime continued to create opportunities for opposition groups in the 1990s and in 1993 organized a regime-sponsored national dialogue conference. However, this state-sponsored dialogue did not include any members of the Muslim Brotherhood or communists; only representatives of official opposition parties could participate in the dialogue.

The dialogue did not yield an agreement, and the informal opposition saw this as a failure of the older generation. This was one of the most important aims of the leaders who would oversee the establishment of the Kefaya Movement, to be established about ten years later. The shattered opposition had so far only strengthened the regime's power, and nothing else. This was precisely why everyone had to strive to find a common understanding of the common enemy.

A significant development took place in 1994 when the Committee on Coordination organized the National Dialogue among Professional Associations.¹³³ Islamist

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 44.

associations constituted most of the committee, but in a short period of time, activists and intellectuals with different political perspectives became involved, and all these participants discussed both secular and Islamist aspects of political freedoms and civil liberties.¹³⁴ For two years, the negotiations of these different political circles continued, and in 1996 an informal dialogue took place. The main issue discussed this time was democracy. According to Farid Zahran, one of the participants of the discussion, he said:

these events have allowed us to know each other better and extend bridges among ourselves and forge personal relationships. The decision to publish this dialogue was meant not just to highlight our newly found common grounds and clarify our differences but also as a way to involve more elements of our generation in this ongoing dialogue...none of us claim to present his/her ideological trend.¹³⁵

Towards the end of the 1990s, communications among these diverse groups continued, and they worked together to reach a consensus on vital issues. Foreign policy was a good starting point for creating agreement.

Since 2000, regional developments had contributed to the establishment of cooperation between different groups. The Palestinian Intifada and the US invasion of Iraq had developed the logic of joint action against the USA and Israel. During the month of Ramadan in 2003, the meetings of this group continued. The leaders of opposition groups would come together at *iftar* time to break the fast and they started to ask, “Where is Egypt going?”¹³⁶ Again at one of these *iftar* gatherings, participants from different groups prepared a joint draft for the next political movement. They worked for eight months on the blueprint for collective action. Later this draft declaration was opened for signatures. Leaders from different political groups signed the draft, and the number of signatories reached 300 in a short time. Thus, in September 2004, the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya)

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 46.

was established. Kefaya's founders included leaders from many groups, from extreme right to far left.

3.2. The Kefaya Movement: Growing Opposition, From Pro-Intifada and Anti-War to Anti-Mubarak Protests?

The Kefaya ("Enough!") Movement was established in 2004 as an opposition group against the Mubarak regime. It was set up as a broad national coalition movement to bring about a democratic transformation in Egypt, and its primary aim was to prevent the presidency from passing to Mubarak's son, Gamal.¹³⁷

According to Shafeeq Ghabra's interview with Abdullah Kamal, one of the key leaders of the NDP, it was said that one of the biggest mistakes the Mubarak regime made was the appointment of his son, Gamal, to the NDP's Policies Secretariat. Ghabra says that Gamal's seat in the NDP suggested the idea that he could become Egypt's future president.¹³⁸ In this atmosphere, it is quite understandable why Kefaya's main goal was to prevent any possibility of a hereditary presidency. In addition to this, Kefaya contributed to people's awareness of the Egyptian political system. In an interview with Ghabra, Ahmas Shabaan, a leader in the Kefaya Movement, said that:

In [Kefaya], we discovered that political parties were penetrated by the regime and by the security [apparatus] and that civil society was marginalized. To deal with this situation, we went to the street and found it to be the main variable of change.¹³⁹

As can be understood here, in this time period political activism in Egypt started to evolve into a more civilized, more democratic, and multifaceted structure, and not

¹³⁷ Shafeeq Ghabra, "The Egyptian Revolution," p. 200.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

through the mainstream political parties. This structure was frequently attributed to middle-class Egyptians.

The Kefaya Movement is quite crucial because it was the first time that different ideological groups came together under one symbolic roof against Mubarak's policies. Indeed, protests against regional developments, like pro-Intifada and anti-war activism, were moments in which Egyptians were faced with harsh police responses, especially during anti-war demonstrations for Iraq. As a result of this sharp police intervention in the protests against Israel and the USA, Egyptians came to understand that the real problem was the Mubarak regime.¹⁴⁰ Many people came together on December 12, 2004, and shouted anti-government slogans like "No to power inheritance," "Down with Hosni Mubarak," and "The Egyptian Movement for Change...Kefaya."¹⁴¹ The fundamental aim of Kefaya was constitutional reform and the dissolving of Mubarak's rule. The abolishment of the infamous Emergency Law was also among the purposes of the movement.

It is hard to say that the Kefaya Movement accomplished its aims. However, it is crucial to note that its significance does not merely lie in accomplishing or not accomplishing its goals. Its true relevance was to help create a protest culture in Egypt against Hosni Mubarak.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Egyptian leftists had established the PCSI, and this group organized protests against the Iraqi invasion by the USA as well.¹⁴² One of the largest demonstrations took place in 2003 in Tahrir Square. It can be inferred from this that the Kefaya Movement did not simply come out of nowhere.

¹⁴⁰ Gunning and Baron, *Why Occupy a Square*, p. 47.

¹⁴¹ "Kefaya: The Origins of Mubarak's Downfall," *Egypt Independent*, December 12, 2011, accessed on March 6, 2019, <https://www.egyptindependent.com/kefaya-origins-mubaraks-downfall/>.

¹⁴² Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 107.

The Kefaya Movement was a necessity for people to come together against the regime.

In spite of the Palestinian cause and the invasion of Iraq, the Mubarak regime, like many other Arab regimes, continued its alliance with the USA and Israel. This led people to think that the problem was not only Israel or the USA; the problem was the Arab regimes themselves, which did nothing even for the Palestinian cause. Although Gamal Mubarak denied claims that he would run for President in the upcoming election, Egyptians were not satisfied with that.¹⁴³ The Kefaya Movement thus organized demonstrations against both Mubarak's regime and his son. They were against the inheritance of presidential power. While this group could not achieve its immediate aims, such as the overthrowing of the Mubarak regime, it succeeded in something much more crucial, lifting a decades-long taboo. This is best explained by one of the founders of the Kefaya Movement: "We achieved three things: we broke the culture of fear, we obtained the right to demonstrate without a permit, and we obtained the right to criticize the president."¹⁴⁴ It can be inferred from this sentence that Kefaya was a turning point in the history of protest in Egypt. For years, people had lived under fear, especially with the pressure of the Emergency Law; it was hard for people to express their ideas against the regime's politics.

Moreover, although protest culture started to appear with pro-Intifada and anti-war demonstrations, the Kefaya Movement directly targeted the Mubarak regime, not its policies with the USA or Israel. It was the regime itself that should be overthrown for a better and brighter future. The Kefaya Movement certainly broke the psychological barrier of fear of the government and its politics for the first time. One of the Islamist activists, Ibrahim El Houdaiby, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, said that:

¹⁴³ Summer Said, "Mubarak to Name Vice President After September Elections," *Arab News*, June 16, 2005, accessed on March 8, 2019, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/268587>.

¹⁴⁴ Gunning and Baron, *Why Occupy a Square*, p. 50.

Kefaya succeeded in delegitimizing Gamal Mubarak completely. I think that it is imperative. They created a layer of people within the democracy movement and even within the Egyptian state that opposed him because he is incapable of leading the state... They succeeded in delegitimizing him, and they acted as a seed for bringing together different political movements... This is a revolution that has been waiting for thirty years, and I am full of hope that things will change... However, the first seed was Kefaya and the coalition of opposition groups, this is one of Kefaya's great successes.¹⁴⁵

In my own interview with an ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth member, he said the following:

the Kefaya were the first group go to the street and say 'no'. They have the Youth for Change branch and I was attending that. Youth of socialists and founders of the April 6 [Movement] were attending. And they led the act of attending [protests] on the street and saying clearly and loudly 'no for Mubarak'.¹⁴⁶

It can be said that the Kefaya Movement was a turning point in the history of social movements in Egypt. It was useful in reshaping the relations between the regime and the political opposition. Since its establishment in 2004, the movement aimed to organize all objectors throughout the country, especially those outside of the Parliament. The taboo of protesting in the streets was first destroyed with the Intifada and the anti-war demonstrations. However, with the Kefaya Movement, the taboo of criticizing Mubarak and his policies was broken, as well. Before Kefaya, it was hard to hear his name as a target of criticism because people were afraid that they would get into trouble. This was the first time that this atmosphere of fear and diffidence was broken and the regime and Mubarak himself were the direct targets of the criticisms of the Egyptian people. That was a real challenge against the Mubarak regime and its legitimacy. Therefore, by bringing together Nasserists, liberals, socialists, and Islamists, the Kefaya Movement took a step towards the downfall of Mubarak in 2011. After several protests following the establishment of the Kefaya Movement, there were some developments among other opposition groups, as well. Many groups utilizing the tools of the Kefaya Movement started to

¹⁴⁵ Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁶ Personal interview with ex-Muslim Brotherhood Youth member, April 16, 2019 (interviewee 3).

emerge, such as Doctors for Change, Journalists for Change, and Workers for Change.¹⁴⁷

What made the Kefaya Movement successful is reflected clearly in Asef Bayat's words. He says that "Overriding ideological lines, the Kefaya focused on popular mobilization rather than party politics; it brought the campaign to the streets rather than voicing it in institutions; and it centered on domestic issues instead of nationalist concerns."¹⁴⁸

In my interview with a member of the Revolutionary Socialists, he said that Kefaya had started in September 2004 and it was a crucially important movement: it was the very first anti-Mubarak movement. Of course, there were protest movements all the time talking about things like the Palestinian issue, imperialism, and anti-invasion, but Kefaya was talking about change and democracy for the very first time.¹⁴⁹

3.3. March 9 Group for Academic Freedom

Academic freedom means that academic communities including students, researchers, and academicians can carry out and participate in all kinds of educational activities without pressure or intervention from any person, institution, or state. In other words, academic freedom means protecting all members of the academy from political, religious, or any other ideological pressure both on campus and beyond. The definition of academic freedom of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights is as follows:

Members of the academic community, individually or collectively, are free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing. Academic

¹⁴⁷ Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 143.

¹⁴⁸ Asef Bayat, "Plebeians of the Arab Spring," p. 36.

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview with a member of the Revolutionary Socialists, April 20, 2019 (interviewee 4).

freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction. The enjoyment of academic freedom carries with it obligations, such as the duty to respect the academic freedom of others, to ensure the fair discussion of contrary views, and to treat all without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds... Also, the enjoyment of academic freedom requires the autonomy of institutions of higher education.”¹⁵⁰

Apart from international law, Egypt also has some domestic laws established for academic freedoms, like many other countries. More specifically, the Egyptian Constitution contains four relevant articles on education.

According to Articles 18, 19, 20, and 21: “Education is a right guaranteed by the State. It is obligatory in the primary stage. The State shall work to extend the obligation to other stages. The State shall supervise all branches of education and guarantee the independence of universities and scientific research centers, to link all this with the requirements of society and production” (Article 18). “Religious education shall be a principal subject in the courses of general education” (Article 19). “Education in the State: Educational institutions shall be free of charge in their various stages” (Article 20). “Combating illiteracy shall be a national duty for which all the people’s capacity shall be mobilized” (Article 21).¹⁵¹

In particular, Article 18 of the Constitution shows that the state guarantees the independence of universities. However, it is not practically possible to talk about the autonomy of universities in Egypt. Especially with the Universities Law, which was changed in 1994, Egyptian universities have faced many new problems.

¹⁵⁰ “Reading between the ‘Red Lines’: The Repression of Academic Freedom in Egyptian Universities,” *Human Rights Watch*, June 8, 2005, p. 9, accessed on May 1, 2019, https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CESCR_General_Comment_13_en.pdf.

¹⁵¹ “The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt,” *Refworld*, September 1971, accessed on May 1, 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=54917e9c4>.

Just before Mubarak's fall, Egyptian universities were a smaller reflection of Egypt as a whole. They reflected the country's political, social, and economic crises. Universities were insufficient in terms of research resources and offered a mediocre level of education. Moreover, one of the most critical problems of universities was their lack of academic freedom. The response of the regime to the criticisms of the quality of higher education institutions was to privatize universities instead of reforming them. More importantly, the government began to privatize some of the lessons at state universities. The Universities Law that was adopted in 1994 allowed new private universities to become widespread, and this contributed to a new social problem due to the income inequality in the country. While the children of upper-class families received quality education in private universities, millions of students in public universities lacked quality education. The same law increased the areas under government control in the universities. One of the most apparent examples of this is that the rector of the university elects the deans of the faculties.¹⁵² Political scientist Mustafa Kamel al-Sayyid, at Cairo University, points out that the appointment of deans in this way will be dangerous for universities:

It has been bad since [the system changed]. All rectors are appointed by the government and are usually NDP [President Mubarak's ruling party] members. Deans are appointed by the rector and therefore have the ambition of becoming rector. They would be unhappy with any action critical of the government. It is an unhealthy atmosphere. We feel deans are the eyes of the government. They do not restrict actions, but it creates a feeling of discomfort. The deans say things pleasing to the government. It reflects badly on an atmosphere of freethinking and debate.¹⁵³

The deans appointed by the rector have considerable power within the academy. They could attend classes, decide who would be visiting lecturers, and organize trips for research purposes. Beyond that, they could decide who would manage student communities and whether to establish or approve student clubs. This means that the

¹⁵² "Reading between the 'Red Lines'," p. 22.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

regime could directly be involved in what is going on within the university through the rector and the faculty deans.

Like other realms of the country, leading up to January 25, 2011, Egyptian universities were in a state of political discontent and activism in universities was growing. This was why 25 faculty members from different universities founded the March 9 Group for Academic Freedom.¹⁵⁴

This group was formed in 2003 after the US invasion of Iraq in response to the brutal control of the regime over academics, and the name of the group was not chosen at random. The group was inspired by an event at the University of Cairo in 1932, when the government dismissed Taha Hussein, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, to appease Egyptian clerics' anger over a book by Hussein.¹⁵⁵ In a short time, many academicians were involved in this group.

Political mobilization of Egyptian universities is not a new phenomenon. After the 1952 coup d'état, the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak regimes continually placed pressured on the academy. Nasser tried to impose the ideology of Arab nationalism onto universities and oversaw the infiltration of many secret police into the universities. Sadat went further as he tried to impose his policies on universities. His foreign policy differed from that of his predecessor, and his pro-USA policies and the development of relations with Israel disturbed leftist and Nasserist students in the universities. In this period, it was known that the left-wing and Nasserist students in the universities were relatively stable and constituted the biggest threat to Sadat's foreign policy. Within this framework, Sadat went one step further than his predecessor and tried to balance the leftist and Nasserist groups by supporting

¹⁵⁴ Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Islamist student groups in universities and different political views within the framework of his policy.

The presence of state security forces on campuses in the Mubarak period started to become permanent. These security forces, appointed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, were able to intervene directly in the elections of student communities, research trips, and guest lecturers' participation in classes.¹⁵⁶ The Mubarak era witnessed excessive use of force by security forces in universities. The police were not afraid to use live ammunition. Interventions in student activities in universities and the use of violence in political activities continued to increase.

The most obvious evidence of police violence may be from April 2002, when 118 students from the University of Alexandria were injured by security forces. The students had gathered to protest the visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell and the demonstrations were peaceful. However, security forces responded to this peaceful protest by using tear gas, plastic bullets, and batons.¹⁵⁷ In this atmosphere:

March 9 has opposed state security, government, and other ideological interventions into Egyptian university campuses, which stifle academic freedom. The movement has also been involved in strikes and protests by university faculty—both before and after the revolution—for better pay and pensions as well as for more significant investment in the higher education sector.¹⁵⁸

It cannot be said that the March 9 Movement directly influenced the uprising of January 25, but between 2001 and 2011 it created a serious and permanent opposition movement against the regime. Although March 9 was a small movement, its seriousness, continuity, and reliability made it very important. The movement

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁵⁷ "Reading between the 'Red Lines'," p. 40.

¹⁵⁸ Nicola Pratt, "Bringing the Revolution to Campus: An Interview with March 9 Activist Laila Soueif," *Jadaliyya*, May 10, 2012, accessed on May 2, 2019, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/25894/Bringing-the-Revolution-to-Campus-An-Interview-with-March-9-Activist-Laila-Soueif>.

also had an important role in raising awareness among university students. Members of the movement participated in the protests for the overthrow of Mubarak in Tahrir Square on January 25.¹⁵⁹

Academics, who had remained quiet for a long time regarding low salaries and police intervention at universities, no longer wanted to remain silent and participated in anti-government protests.

3.4. Judges' Uprising

In addition to academics, there were several other groups organized against the Mubarak regime; the judiciary was one of these significant associations. The Judge's Club was one of the groups affected by the Kefaya Movement and seeking change and reform in the judiciary and the political system, the upholding of the civil rights of all citizens, improvement of human rights, and the abolishment of the Emergency Law.¹⁶⁰ In 2005, political mobilization gained momentum with the "Judges' Uprising." In the broader political contestation against the regime, the Judges' Uprising did play an extraordinary role. It is known that there had been tension between the judiciary and the executive branches for years, but 2005 was a particularly challenging year because of the presidential elections. The Kefaya Movement, for example, was opposed to the 2005 presidential election, and more particularly opposed to Mubarak's rule and the possibility of power inheritance for his son Gamal.¹⁶¹

Several other groups besides Kefaya were opposed to the inheritance of the presidency. Under these circumstances, judges were worried about the upcoming

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 2.

¹⁶¹ "Kefaya: The Origins of Mubarak's Downfall," *Egypt Independent*, December 12, 2011, accessed on July 12, 2019, <https://www.egyptindependent.com/kefaya-origins-mubaraks-downfall/>.

election. They insisted that the election should be conducted in a pleasant atmosphere and they tried to place pressure on authorities for fair elections. In April 2005, the Judge' Club directly challenged state authority and announced that they would boycott the 2005 elections.¹⁶² They also demanded direct control over the elections and reforms that would improve the judicial system.¹⁶³ This uprising of judges helped to re-energize pro-democracy protests that had lapsed into silence for some time because of police violence. However, the contention between judges and the regime was not an issue unique to Mubarak's period. Since the Free Officers' coup in 1952, there had been a struggle for judicial independence between judges and regimes. These judges were finally able to come together as the Judges' Club and actively expressed opposition to the policies of the government for years.

On the other hand, it can be said that the judges were relatively more independent during the periods of the Sadat and Mubarak regimes than they had been in the Nasser period. In particular, the 1971 Constitution allowed the judiciary to be relatively more autonomous. However, in 1981, the infamous Emergency Law, which would affect the developments in Egypt for the next 30 years, was in sharp contrast to the independence of the judges in Egypt. In 2005, the judiciary threatened to not monitor the upcoming presidential elections if the regime did not guarantee the improvement of existing conditions and judicial independence. However, the result was just the opposite, and the judiciary took part in the polls. In the first, second, and third rounds of the elections, some judges, including the two vice-presidents of the Court of Cassation, Mahmoud Mekki and Hisham Bastawisi, made press statements about violations in the elections. It was claimed that the NDP and police had committed these violations and interventions.¹⁶⁴ These two senior judges then gave the following explanation:

¹⁶² Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak*, p. 141.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution*, p. 43.

We identified violations in a large number of electoral constituencies. We demanded the opening of an investigation into election fraud, intimidation, and assaults on judges who were supervising the elections. Unfortunately, a large number of those assaults were carried out by the very policemen who were charged with protecting us.¹⁶⁵

Not surprisingly, following this statement, the pro-government Supreme Judicial Council dismissed these two judges from their assignments for being involved in politics and inflicted disciplinary punishments. This judicial crisis was naturally reflected in the media. Traditionally, respect and sympathy for judges brought about political mobilization. The Kefaya Movement, Youth for Change, March 9, the Muslim Brotherhood youth, revolutionary socialists, and many other left-wing groups participated in protests organized by the Judges' Club in response to the punishments of Mekki and Bastawisi. This judges' crisis became a symbol of the brutality and unjustness of the Mubarak rule, and the event contributed to the spread of sentiments against Mubarak's undemocratic rule.

3.5. Labor Activism in Egypt

In Egypt, we can say that workers have a long political past. It is possible to further say that workers have repeatedly protested for workers' rights, democracy, and national liberation. On the other hand, according to a report by the Land Center for Human Rights, one of the NGOs operating in Egypt, there has been a steady increase in workers' strikes in Egypt from the mid-2000s, with 202 workers' revolts in 2005, 222 in 2006, and 614 in 2007 being recorded.¹⁶⁶ In other words, according to researchers, from 1998 to 2008, approximately 2 million Egyptian workers participated in 2,623 factory occupations, strikes, demonstrations, and various other protest movements. These protests also increasingly spread across the country and

¹⁶⁵ Mahmud Mekki and Hisham Bastawisi, "When Judges Are Beaten," *The Guardian*, May 10, 2006, accessed on March 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/may/10/comment.egypt>.

¹⁶⁶ Joel Beinin, "Neo-liberal Structural Adjustment, Political Demobilization, and Neo-authoritarianism in Egypt," in *The Arab State And Neo-Liberal Globalization the Restructuring of State Power in The Middle East*, edited by Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi (Berkshire: Ithaca Press), p. 37.

in the first months of 2009 more than 200 collective actions took place across Egypt, representing the most significant actions since the protests against the British occupation in World War II.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, according to Shafeeq Ghabra's study, "between 2005 and 2008, some 1.5 million Egyptians participated in protests against social conditions and government policies. Labour also became a factor in such protest. For example, after a state-owned factory was privatized, the new owner wanted to dismiss a large number of employees and did not want to give remaining workers certain rights and benefits. This led to labour protests."¹⁶⁸

Another critical issue in the social struggle in Egypt is the increasing number of women activists involved in the social conflicts of the 2000s. Women in Egypt already played vital roles in all groups, whether Islamist, leftist, or nationalist groups. In the 1990s, women with different political views began to join many NGOs. Muslim feminists have also fought for a better future of gender equality, democracy, justice, independence, and dignity. The labor movement also witnessed the increasing involvement of women in demonstrations and social issues. The best example of this is the fact that 3,000 women workers from a textile factory employing 27,000 workers, the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, located in Mahalla El-Kubra, went on strike in December of 2006 to demand a fair wage for all Egyptians.¹⁶⁹

The role of women in this strike in 2006 was of vital importance. Female textile workers were shouting slogans such as "We are here, where are the men?" The strike then spread to other sectors in a short period of time, from transportation to

¹⁶⁷ Joel Beinin, "Workers' Protest in Egypt: Neo-liberalism and Class Struggle in 21st Century," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural, and Political Protest* 8, no. 4 (November 2009), p. 449.

¹⁶⁸ Ghabra, "The Egyptian Revolution," p. 202.

¹⁶⁹ Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 145.

education and from the public sector to manufacturing.¹⁷⁰ The eventual involvement of over 20,000 workers in this strike represented a vitally important turning point in Egyptian workers' activism because this massive strike made a significant contribution to overcoming the fear of workers to participate in social protests.

Slogans became increasingly politicized in this process. Other than demanding a fair salary, activists also chanted slogans such as "We will not be ruled by the World Bank and imperialism," and they burned posters of Mubarak.

In September 2007, one of the most significant developments in Egypt was that the tax collectors of the Real Estate Tax Authority, a state agency, went on strike. The tax collectors began a strike and refused to collect any taxes on behalf of the government. They were angry about working conditions and salaries, because most Egyptians had to work two jobs to be able to meet their living expenses. Roughly 55,000 tax collectors organized work-stopping actions throughout the country. These tax collectors and their families continued their protest in Cairo for 11 days on Husayn Higazi Street. The protesters demanded a more equal and fair salary. Professionally organized strikes and sit-ins did not only bring the acceptance of salary claims, but also, for the first time since 1957, an independent labor union was established.¹⁷¹ In late 2007, independent tax collectors continued their actions. In April 2009, these independent tax collectors officially established the Independent Trade Union of Tax Collectors. This union was the first non-governmental labor union formed in Egypt in the last 50 years.

In an interview with Tara Povey, a leader of an independent union stated the following:

We had a strike in front of the finance ministry and front of the General Workers' Syndicate downtown. There were about 5,000 of us, and after the

¹⁷⁰ "Egypt: Women Workers Speak Out – 'Here Are the Women'," *MENA Solidarity Network*, accessed on April 21, 2019, <https://menasolidaritynetwork.com/egyptwomen-3/>.

¹⁷¹ Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Dynamics of Egypt's Elections," *MERIP* (September 2010), p. 8.

strike, we marched through the city of Cairo... We entered the Workers' Federation and this, I believe, was the first movement to start something rolling which created the first independent union. Our strike was very badly received by the [state-run] General Federation of Trade Unions, and they turned our water off and closed the mosque. However, for two days, we refused to leave, and we slept on the stairs of the General Union. We did not expect change to occur from within the state-run union because they have always opposed the workers. We wanted to change the whole system, all of it.¹⁷²

At the end of these struggles, the workers obtained their demands. Their salaries were raised by about 300%, but the main success of their actions went beyond that. The main achievement of these activities was the direct contact of the government with these independent union leaders without the mediation of pro-government trade unions. It is essential to mention the role of women here once again. During this process, female strike leaders and participants were of vital importance for the workers' movement. Women struggled to supply food and water for 10,000 activists during these events. Women were in the squares as well as men, and they did not leave the squares despite the exclusionary and condemnatory propaganda of the government directed at women. In an interview, a female strike leader explained:

The women slept in the streets for ten days. We did not leave . . . It was political, not just because [the male strikers] were our brothers and husbands. We supported them because we suffer under the same conditions as the men do, so it was not just for the men, it was for us as well. It was driven by our own will. Some of us are the heads of households, and the monthly income we get is not sufficient for a week.¹⁷³

In other words, it can be said that the women striking in Egypt helped to increase the presence of women in both the workers' movement and more generally in social movements. Women staying out on the streets late in the day is not very appropriate in Egyptian society, and it is not customary for women to stay in the squares and support men in their causes, even sleeping in the squares at night. All of these actions significantly contributed to changing the role of women, who had been excluded by the patterns attributed to women in society. In the coming period, in 2011, the world

¹⁷² Povey, *Social Movements in Egypt and Iran*, p. 146.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

would witness women from all walks of life in Egypt fighting for their causes in the streets.

As stated above, after textile workers started striking at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company (also known as the El-Ghazl factory) in Mahalla El-Kubra in 2006, the strike began to spread to all other sectors in the region. Workers in the same place formed a group a year later called “7th of December Movement-Workers for Change,” a reference to the strike of December 7, 2006. Moreover, they announced their movement and demands:

To All Egyptian Workers

Announcement from the December 7th Movement-Workers For Change

First: The December 7th Movement (Workers For Change) is purely a workers movement with the association of all honorable Egyptian workers in all variety of workplaces on Egyptian soil. The movement does not belong to political parties or holds any political or religious leanings. We grew out of the Ghazl Al Mahalla uprising on 7 December 2006.

The goal of the movement is the unification of the ranks of all Egyptian workers in all of the diverse workplaces so they can have political, economic and social weight, and have a prominent role in defining the direction of Egyptian politics in all aspects of political, economic and social life.¹⁷⁴

This brief quotation provides the backbone of the announcement. Another critical point clearly stated in the declaration was the decision to not recognize the state-affiliated trade unions and their representatives, because the workers believed that these representatives were involved in corruption and harmed workers' causes.

¹⁷⁴ Khawaga, “Statement from Ghazl el-Mahalla’s ‘7th of December Movement- Workers For Change’,” translated by Nour Abdel Salam, *libcom.org*, June 24, 2007, accessed on April 22, 2019, <https://libcom.org/news/statement-ghazl-el-mahallas-7th-december-movement-workers-change-24062007>.

Workers in other factories welcomed this announcement. Workers in Kafr al-Dawwar made a statement to show that they were in solidarity with El-Ghazl Mahalla El-Kubra workers, as follows:

We the textile workers of Kafr el-Dawwar declare our full solidarity with you, to achieve your just demands, which are the same as ours. We strongly denounce the security crackdown which prevented the (Mahalla) workers delegation from traveling to stage a sit-in at the General Federation of Trade Unions' HQ in Cairo...we the workers of Kafr el-Dawwar and you the workers of Mahalla are walking on the same path, and have one enemy. We support your movement because we have the same demands. Since the end of our strike in the first week of February, our Factory Union Committee has not moved to achieve our demands that instigated our strike. Our Factory Union Committee has harmed our interests ... We express our support for your demand to reform the salaries. We, just like you, await the end of April to see if the Minister of Labour will implement our demands in that regards or not. We do not put much hope on the Minister, though, as we have not seen any move by her or the Factory Union Committee. We will depend only on our selves to achieve our demands.¹⁷⁵

In addition to this, they clearly highlighted that they were ready to take any necessary actions if they decided to strike.¹⁷⁶ These are concrete examples of how quickly the labor movement in Egypt gained momentum. It can be said that these workers, who had the same demands, gained experience in these strikes and developed a spirit of solidarity. As people grew this spirit of solidarity, they became less afraid of making their voices heard in the squares, and this spread like a wave.

The following year, 2007, was a significant year in terms the increasing number of strikes. The reason for this increase was the government's 2007 amendments. For example, changes in Article 179 of the Constitution paved the way for the trial of civilians in military courts. Further amendments to this article paved the way for arrests and searches of individuals. In particular, changes to Article 88 reduced judicial control in the elections. On the other hand, the establishment of a political

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Kay, "Kafr el-Dawwar Workers Are in the Same Trench as Ghazl el-Mahalla," *libcom.org*, April 18, 2007, accessed on April 22, 2019, <http://libcom.org/library/kafr-el-dawwar-workers-are-same-trench-ghazl-el-mahalla>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

party by the Muslim Brotherhood was also banned with amendments to Article 5.¹⁷⁷ All of these control attempts increased the strikes.

Throughout 2007, the workers' movement reached a large number of people, and with this, their political demands increased as well. Activists worked to use all available resources in Egypt for a long time. They applied all kinds of tools, like strikes, demonstrations, signature campaigns, street demonstrations, and sit-ins.

On April 6, 2008, workers in Mahalla El-Kubra launched a nationwide campaign, demanding a fairer salary. Many residents of Mahalla responded to this call, and thousands of people took part in demonstrations. Not surprisingly, the police reacted very harshly to these demonstrations. Many workers were injured in police interventions, and two workers were even killed. However, this police violence did not disperse the protests; on the contrary, it increased the anger of protesters and intensified the demonstrations.

More importantly, these demonstrations would inspire the creation of a new protest movement, called the April 6 Youth Movement, which would be very important in the upcoming 2011 uprisings.¹⁷⁸ In March 2008, protesters formed a Facebook group to support the textile workers' strike of April 6 against low salaries and high food prices. This group lacked an ideological basis, and their first aim was to ensure that workers received better conditions. However, in a short time, it would turn into an anti-Mubarak group.¹⁷⁹ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In the present chapter, the internal developments in Egypt in the 2000s have been outlined. With the Kefaya Movement, established just before the 2005 presidential elections, anti-regime groups were gathered under a single roof in Egypt. What made

¹⁷⁷ Nathan J. Brown, Michele Dunne, and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 23, 2007, accessed on May 21, 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/egypt_constitution_webcommentary01.pdf.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Schwartz, "The Egyptian Uprising: The Mass Strike in the Time of Neoliberal Globalization," *New Labor Forum* 20, no. 3 (2011), p. 37.

¹⁷⁹ Ghabra, "The Egyptian Revolution," p. 202

Kefaya special was that it was not affiliated with any political party, it did not adopt a certain ideology, and it united groups with different political positions. The idea of change was spreading in society. Academics and judges did not remain silent about the pressure, injustice, and corruption of the regime; they organized signature campaigns to make their voices heard, published leaflets, and expressed anti-regime sentiments. Moreover, judges, under the auspices of the Judges' Club, said they would not oversee the 2005 elections if they were not held in a fair environment. Shortly thereafter, 2006, 2007, and especially 2008 were filled with workers' riots. Outrage at the low wages of workers, reactions to layoffs, and general support for workers began to increase as the April 6 Youth Movement organized its strike in Mahalla El-Kubra in 2008 and called on everyone to support the workers. All of this was serving to create new ties between anti-Mubarak people and increase their presence on the streets. This group was able to organize this strike through social media, particularly Facebook, and reach many users in a short time. Young people's participation in protest movements was also increasing.

This growth of both youth involvement and the role of social media in response to police brutality and state oppression are among the most important characteristics of the time period immediately preceding the January 25 uprising, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ARAB SPRING, SPREAD OF SOLIDARITY, AND HOPE AND OPPOSITION AGAINST THE MUBARAK REGIME

4.1. Police Brutality: “We Are All Khaled Said”

By January 25, 2011, the opposition of Egyptian society to Mubarak and his regime had already been increasing. Unemployment, inequality of income distribution, inflation, and the pressure and violence exerted by the regime against certain groups, especially the educated youth, were increasing day by day. State oppression was a long-standing situation in Egypt, but by 2011, this pressure and violence had become increasingly different.

In my interview with an April 6 Youth Movement member, he said that their goal was to combat the policies of the capitalist system, the spread of corruption and the rigging of the elections, and the police repression and torture inside prisons, as well. Anger had started to dominate the various sectors of Egyptian society and one person had set fire to himself in reaction to his living conditions; with the police suppression of demonstrations and the killing of demonstrators, the anger only increased. By this time, the slogans of demonstrators had changed to clearly demand the overthrow of the regime.¹⁸⁰ At this point, it is difficult—perhaps even impossible—to make comparisons about which factor had the most influence in moving people into action. It is better to evaluate all of these factors as working in

¹⁸⁰ Personal interview with one of the members of the April 6 Youth Movement, April 13, 2019 (interviewee 2).

unison together, as this chapter aims to do. It would be misguided to emphasize one factor above another because all of them represent a societal accumulation of anger.

As described in previous chapters, protest movements in Egypt had been faced with police violence by the state since the beginning of the 2000s. Thousands of Egyptians had supported the Intifada movement initiated by the Palestinians in 2001 and organized protests for this purpose. However, the Egyptian regime was trying to fix relations with Israel after the Camp David Agreement in 1978 and continued these efforts during the Mubarak period, as well. Thus, the regime wanted to avoid doing anything that would disturb Israel.

That is why the Mubarak regime responded to the pro-Intifada protests in 2001 with police intervention. Protests supporting the Second Intifada took place in many parts of the country. University students gathered on campuses and organized demonstrations, and the police responded to those demonstrations by arresting many people and using force.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the regime also tried to suppress the anti-war protests that took place in response to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. According to the OMCT, the police used water cannons to disperse crowds, beat protesters, and arrested many. There was no gender discrimination in this police violence; they even beat and wounded a pregnant woman.¹⁸² Detained women were threatened with rape. In Egypt, police violence knew no bounds. According to various sources, many people were taken into custody by the police and some were given electric shocks.¹⁸³ Footage of a prisoner being tortured in 2007 showed evidence of state violence that was neither the first nor the last. According to an Amnesty International report, “Torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention, and grossly unfair trials before emergency and military courts have all been key features of Egypt’s

¹⁸¹ Farag, “Echoes of Intifada.”

¹⁸² “Egypt: Arrests, Torture and Threats of Rape Against Anti-war Demonstrators,” *World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)*, March 27, 2003, accessed on June 28, 2019, <http://www.omct.org/urgent-campaigns/urgent-interventions/2003/03/d16229/>.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

40-year state of emergency and counter-terrorism campaign.”¹⁸⁴ In addition, according to a report issued by the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights in 2007, “Torture in Egypt is methodical and systematic.”¹⁸⁵

In the case of Khaled Said, on June 6, 2010, he was sitting in an Internet cafe in Alexandria when two policemen came in and asked him for money. Lawyer Muhammad Abdel Aziz explains the event: “On Sunday, Khaled was at cyber café at around 11:30 in the evening. Two policemen asked him for money and when he said he didn’t have [any], they beat him. As he was beaten up, his head hit a marble table and he started bleeding.”¹⁸⁶

Khaled Said was a 28-year-old Egyptian, and just before his death, he had released a video showing the two police engaged in illegal trading. As also described by Abdel Aziz, eyewitnesses said that the police came into the Internet cafe and asked for money, which Said did not give. Immediately afterwards, witnesses said, the police started beating Said and his cries were heard. Then the police put Said into a police car and took him away. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that Khaled Said was dead due to an overdose of pills.¹⁸⁷ However, witnesses insisted that he was beaten by the police. Photos of Said’s badly beaten face quickly spread across the Internet. Police officials then said that Khaled Said was wanted for theft and possession of weapons, but Egyptians did not believe it. He simply wanted people to see the corruption of the police, who were allegedly dealing drugs.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ “Egypt – Systematic Abuses in the Name of Security,” *Amnesty International*, April 11, 2007, accessed on June 28, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/64000/mde120012007en.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ John R. Bradley, *Inside Egypt: The Land of Pharaohs on the Brink of a Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 127.

¹⁸⁶ Issandr El Amrani, “The Murder of Khaled Said,” *The Arabist*, June 14, 2010, accessed on June 28, 2019, <https://arabist.net/blog/2010/6/14/the-murder-of-khaled-said.html>.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Ellen Baugh, “Beating Death of Young Egyptian Leads to Protests, Trial of Policemen,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, November 2010, accessed on June 28, 2019,

It was said that “Police violence and torture became a signature of the Mubarak regime.”¹⁸⁹ Police violence and torture were made all the easier with the “state of emergency” that had been in place for almost 30 years. Many people were arrested without questioning during that time and subjected to various tortures. Shortly after Khaled Said’s death, many Egyptians protested in Alexandria, calling for the prosecution of his murderers. Activists protested the Ministry of the Interior, which had turned into a “mafia,” and called on Interior Minister Habib al-Adly to resign.¹⁹⁰

Ottaway says that the number of people who followed the Khaled Said case via Facebook pages soon reached 190,000. After his death, many protests were organized in Cairo and Alexandria. The number of involved activists was almost 5,000.¹⁹¹

There are many more examples of police violence in Egypt, but the important point here is why Khaled Said, killed in 2010 by police violence and torture, caused such a reaction across the country. In my interview with a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood’s youth organization, he said the following:

Khaled Said [made it happen that] Egyptians came together. We are [thinking that] politicians always have been targeted by the regime. Or criminals are always tortured by the police and Egyptians think that if you are a criminal, it is okay. This was the mindset of most of the Egyptians. But this guy, Khaled Said, was an ordinary Egyptian. He was not a criminal; he was not a politician.

<https://www.wrmea.org/010-november/beating-death-of-young-egyptian-leads-to-protests-trial-of-policemen.html>.

¹⁸⁹ “Khaled Said: The Face that Launched a Revolution,” *Ahram Online*, June 6, 2012, accessed on June 28, 2019, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/43995/Egypt/Politics-/Khaled-Said-The-face-that-launched-a-revolution.aspx/>.

¹⁹⁰ Marwa Awad, “Egypt Protestors, Police Clash after Activist’s Death,” *Reuters*, June 13, 2010, accessed on June 28, 2010, <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE65C2ME20100613>.

¹⁹¹ David B. Ottaway, *The Arab World Upended: Revolution and Its Aftermath in Tunisia and Egypt* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2017), p. 121.

He was just a guy. So, it is not important whether you are a politician, criminal, or ordinary people; police do not care. Thus, this can touch everyone.¹⁹²

One of the members of the April 6 Youth Movement also talked about Khaled Said's murder by the police: "Khaled Said's photographs clearly showed that he was tortured. And this event spread rapidly among Egyptians. Everyone was trying to learn about him. People finally said, 'That is enough, we are not going to bear it anymore'."¹⁹³

Wael Ghonim was one of the Egyptians affected by what happened to Khaled Said. Ghonim was a senior executive at Google, and after seeing what had happened to Said, he could not remain silent. He decided to create a Facebook page, which he called "*Kullena Khaled Said*," meaning "We Are All Khaled Said." On this page, Ghonim wrote: "They killed Khaled today. If I do not act now, tomorrow they will kill me."¹⁹⁴ Ghonim also shared his experiences in a TED Talk, saying the following:

Like many [Egyptians], I was completely apolitical until 2009. At the time, when I logged into social media, I started seeing more and more Egyptians aspiring for political change in the country. It felt like I was not alone. In June 2010, the Internet changed my life forever. While browsing Facebook, I saw a photo, a terrifying photo of a tortured, dead body of a young Egyptian guy. His name was Khaled Said. Khaled was a 29-year-old Alexandrian who was killed by police. I saw myself in his picture. I thought 'I could be Khaled.' I could not sleep that night, and I decided to do something.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Personal interview with ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth member, April 16, 2019 (interviewee 3).

¹⁹³ Personal interview with one of the members of the April 6 Youth Movement, April 11, 2019 (interviewee 1).

¹⁹⁴ Jose Antonio Vargas, "Spring Awakening: How an Egyptian Revolution Began on Facebook," *New York Times*, February 17, 2012, accessed on June 29, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/books/review/how-an-egyptian-revolution-began-on-facebook.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Wael Ghonim, "Let's Design Social Media that Drives Real Change," *TED Talks*, February 4, 2016, accessed on June 29, 2019, https://www.ted.com/talks/wael_ghonim_let_s_design_social_media_that_drives_real_change?language=en.

Ghonim says that his Facebook page, which he set up anonymously, was followed by more than 100,000 people in just three days. According to Ghonim, the Facebook page was devoted to sharing what the Mubarak regime did not want the Egyptian people to know.¹⁹⁶

Khaled's death by police torture also led to major protests, with thousands of Egyptians gathering in the squares in both Cairo and Alexandria. Ironically, the police intervened with these protesters who had organized demonstrations to seek the rights of a young man killed by the police and demand the punishment of those responsible.¹⁹⁷ The police used tear gas, water cannons, and other forms of violence. Mubarak's biggest rival, Nobel Prize winner Mohamed El-Baradei, General Manager of the International Atomic Energy Agency, participated in the protests, as well.¹⁹⁸

The Facebook page created by Wael Ghonim was actively used by Egyptians who opposed the Mubarak regime until the major demonstrations on January 25, 2011. Ghonim says that the resignation of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled Tunisia for 23 years, as a result of the popular uprising there on January 14, had given him hope. He asked himself why the Egyptians should not do what the Tunisians did, and on January 14, he issued an invitation to all followers of the "We Are All Khaled Said" page to Tahrir Square to protest the regime on the official holiday of Police Day on January 25th.¹⁹⁹

It can thus be said that this Facebook page created by Ghonim played a very important role in putting people on the streets on January 25. His Facebook page enabled people who were criticizing the Mubarak administration to stay in touch

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ellen Baugh, "Beating Death of Young Egyptian Leads to Protests, Trial of Policemen."

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Wael Ghonim, "Let's Design Social Media that Drives Real Change," *TED Talks*.

and understand that they were not alone. It must be noted, though, that the Internet and social media were just tools to facilitate these protests. People had not suddenly become anti-regime in just the last two years. Those feelings were due to years of domestic, foreign, and economic policies. The role of social media in the process of revolution is important, but if we attribute all the events to social media, we ignore the decades of change, the labor of the people, and the losses of those who sacrificed many things for this cause.

4.2. 2010 Parliamentary Elections and the El-Baradei Campaign

Among the most important developments in the process leading to January 25, 2011, were the 2010 parliamentary and presidential elections. A very disturbing development in Egypt during this election period was the preparation for the nomination of Gamal Mubarak, son of Hosni Mubarak. The hanging of a photograph of Gamal Mubarak with the slogan “the hope of the poor” could be seen by the public as a psychological exercise preparing for Gamal’s candidacy.²⁰⁰ Even before that, though, Mubarak’s first aim for the upcoming parliamentary elections was to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood. In the first elections for Egypt’s Upper House, known as the Shura Council, the Muslim Brotherhood never took part. The Shura Council, which constitutes one-third of the 264-seat assembly, or 88 seats, was filled by the NDP.²⁰¹ On the other hand, Nobel Laureate El-Baradei, who announced his candidacy for the following year’s presidential election with the November 28 People’s Assembly elections, urged everyone to boycott the parliamentary elections.²⁰² He stated: “We will boycott the upcoming election because anyone

²⁰⁰ “New Poster Campaign Backs Gamal Mubarak for Egyptian Presidency,” *Haaretz*, August 22, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5103627>.

²⁰¹ Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*, p. 124.

²⁰² “ElBaradei Calls for Election Boycott Unless Govt Launches Reforms,” *France 24*, September 7, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20100907-elbaradei-civil-disobedience-government-launches-reforms-egypt>.

taking part will be acting against the will of the people.”²⁰³ He also stressed that they would sustain “[civil] disobedience as long as the government fails to agree to calls for change.”²⁰⁴

However, the Muslim Brotherhood did not respond positively to this call and announced that it would nominate 130 candidates.²⁰⁵ While this group had won 88 seats in the 2005 elections, it could not win a single seat in the elections of November 28, 2010. According to official figures, Mubarak’s party won 424 seats, while independent candidates who were close to the regime won 65, and all opposition parties won a combined total of 16 seats.²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, by not participating in the boycott campaign against the election, the Muslim Brotherhood made a serious mistake. The group not only legalized the existing political system in doing so, but also lost all of its seats in the Parliament. Meanwhile, it was disturbing to the opposition and the Egyptian people in general that the elections would not be held under international observation and that fairness would not be ensured. It was claimed that “this proud nation needs no international observation of its elections, which will proceed according to well-established laws and constitutional precepts.”²⁰⁷ Of course, Egypt’s 2005 fraudulent and violent elections were still fresh in the nation’s memory, which naturally left people skeptical about such guarantees. The Egyptian people’s belief in elections was gradually diminishing due to both past elections and the fact that some opposition parties had internal disagreements and some opposition groups called for a boycott of the elections.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ottoway, *The Arab World Upended*, p. 124.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁰⁷ Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, “Egypt’s Unobserved Elections,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 23, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/23/egypt-s-unobserved-elections/35ke>.

Lacking international observation, these elections would be monitored by civilian observers who had been training for elections since 2005. They pressured the government to give them access to votes and full access to the vote-counting process. However, in the first Shura Council elections, the government limited the involvement of these civilian observers in the process; they were only able to observe 11 hours of the process and were not allowed to witness the counting process.²⁰⁸ At the same time, as the elections approached, the pressure on the media, which had previously been relatively free during the Mubarak era, gradually increased. The regime did this in three ways.²⁰⁹ First of all, it was not allowed to discuss politics in the media or to share political information. Secondly, opposition groups were banned from using the media for communication and political mobilization. Finally, the regime suppressed those who resisted the regime's constraints and worked to tell the truth and criticize the regime.²¹⁰ However, despite all these efforts to silence the media and the regime's opponents, some research shows that as the election period approached, the sale of dissident newspapers increased significantly, while the sales of pro-regime newspapers conversely declined.²¹¹

One of the most important developments in this process since the establishment of the Kefaya Movement was that, perhaps for the first time, almost all opposition groups came together in support of El-Baradei's campaign.²¹² The Muslim

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Michele Dunne and Amr Hamzawy, "Media Freedom Restricted as Egyptian Parliamentary Elections Approach," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 25, 2010, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/10/25/media-freedom-restricted-as-egyptian-parliamentary-elections-approach/2ob6>.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Abdel Monem Said Aly, "State and Revolution in Egypt: The Paradox of Change and Politics," *Brandeis University Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Crown Essay 2*, January 2012, p. 3, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/ce/CE2.pdf>.

²¹² Gunning and Baron, *Why Occupy a Square*, p. 76.

Brotherhood, in spite of not participating in the boycott of the 2010 parliamentary elections, and many other groups, such as the Communist Party, the Ghad Party, and the Democratic Front Party, had come together.²¹³ In addition, academicians, intellectuals, young people, business leaders, and other individuals were also supporting this campaign. El-Baradei's demands were very much supported by everyone, from activists to ordinary people, which were the right to free and fair elections and the urgent abolition of the state's Emergency Law, which was the biggest obstacle to fair elections.²¹⁴

El-Baradei represented new hope for all anti-Mubarak groups. Perhaps for the first time in the Mubarak period, a serious rival had emerged against him, capable of reaching millions of people with the campaign that he initiated for change.²¹⁵ However, the Mubarak regime insisted on running the elections unjustly and ignored people's demands for change. This could be called the last chance for the survival of the Mubarak regime, because, leading up to January 25, people's anger and their demands for change were increasing in parallel. The fact that the Mubarak regime was also eliminating the Muslim Brotherhood, the biggest rival in Parliament, and all other opposition parties supported the idea that Mubarak was preparing his son Gamal for next year's presidential elections and trying to remove the obstacles in front of him.²¹⁶ According to Egyptian media reports, 10 people were killed by regime forces during the election process and 6001 Muslim Brotherhood members were arrested.²¹⁷

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 76.

²¹⁶ Wael Abdel Hamid, "Egypt's Parliamentary Elections — The Roots of a Democracy in Denial," *FairVote - Arab Spring Series*, January 18, 2011, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://www.fairvote.org/egypt-s-parliamentary-elections-the-roots-of-a-democracy-in-denial>.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

4.3. Effect of the Attack on the Coptic Church

The largest minority group in Egypt, the Coptic Orthodox Christians, have been victims of a political situation that has been changing over the last 40 years. While it cannot be said that the Copts had enjoyed a very equal position with Muslim Egyptians in previous periods, the religious and sectarian divisions in the country started to become more apparent with the promotion of Islam in the last 40 years. Historically, the Copts in Egypt can be said to have entered the country's political life in the early 1900s. Muslims and Copts fought together against the British colonizers.²¹⁸ With Nasser coming to power in 1952, pan-Arabism discourse became more dominant, especially in foreign policy, and Arab and Egyptian identity came to the forefront rather than religious identity. Of course, this does not apply to local politics, but it cannot be said that there was a polarizing discourse against the Copts. In the 1970s, however, the changing foreign policy since the Sadat period also affected domestic politics. Improving relations with Israel and the USA, unlike in the Nasser era, disturbed the leftist groups in the country. As a result, the pressure on left-wing groups increased, while Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood were allowed to act moderately without restrictions.²¹⁹ In the Mubarak period, the Coptic situation continued in the same way as in the Sadat period. In the 1990s, the regime waged war on Islamist militants because they began targeting state officials, foreign tourists, and the Copts. The fact that state security forces prevented a planned attack on the Copts in 1999 was also an important development. However, in 2000, the regime's inability to prevent anti-Christian violence sparked serious reactions and the greatest anti-Christian violence in the history of modern Egypt was witnessed.²²⁰ The Kefaya Movement was able to gather everyone against

²¹⁸ Khairi Abaza and Mark Nakhla, "The Copts and Their Political Implications in Egypt," *The Washington Institute*, October 25, 2005, accessed on August 16, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-copts-and-their-political-implications-in-egypt>.

²¹⁹ Jason Browlee, "Violence Against Copts in Egypt," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 14, 2013, p. 6, accessed on July 2, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/14/violence-against-copts-in-egypt-pub-53606>.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Mubarak under one symbolic roof and overcame the fear of protesting, as the anti-Mubarak Copts were also a part of the Kefaya Movement.

Another important factor in the process leading up to the January 25 uprisings was an attack against the Copts on New Year's Eve of 2010. Almost 25 people died and 97 were wounded in an attack by a radical Islamist terrorist group on a Coptic Church in Alexandria.²²¹ Archbishop Arweis, the highest-ranking Coptic cleric in Alexandria, said the government did not protect the Copts: "There were only three soldiers and an officer in front of the church. Why did they have so little security at such a sensitive time when there are so many threats coming from al-Qaida?"²²² After this incident, the Copts embraced the idea that the state was ignoring them. According to Gunning and Baron, this event also accelerated the sectarian problems in Egypt, but in spite of the tensions between the Muslims and Christians in the first place, protesters then turned together against Mubarak. Christians blamed the government for failing to protect them. This caused the regime, which had already lost its power in the eyes of many Egyptians, to completely lose its legitimacy in the eyes of the Coptic minority, representing 10% of the country's population.²²³ Slogans such as "Egyptians are one people" were encouraged in order to prevent sectarian conflicts. In order to support the Copts, Muslims were changing their profile photos on Facebook, as well as creating a shield in front of the church to prevent Christians from being attacked during their worship.

In the days following the brutal attack on Saints Church in Alexandria.... Solidarity between Muslims and Copts has seen an unprecedented peak. Millions of Egyptians changed their Facebook profile pictures to the image of a cross within a crescent-the symbol of an 'Egypt for all.' Around the city,

²²¹ Yasmine Saleh, "Suspected Suicide Bomber Kills 21 at Egypt Church," *Reuters*, January 1, 2011, accessed on July 2, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-church-blast/suspected-suicide-bomber-kills-21-at-egypt-church-idUSTRE6BU2VR20110101>.

²²² Associated Press, "Bomb Hits Egypt Church at New Year's Mass, 21 Dead," *Fox News*, January 1, 2011, accessed on July 1, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/bomb-hits-egypt-church-at-new-years-mass-21-dead>.

²²³ Gunning and Baron, *Why Occupy a Square*, p. 81.

banners went up calling for unity, and depicting mosques and churches, crosses and crescents, together as one.²²⁴

Groups such as the April 6 Youth Movement and We Are All Khaled Said also organized protests in support of the Copts.²²⁵ This played a role in increasing the anti-Mubarak protests and also increased the solidarity of all Egyptians against Mubarak, bridging religious differences. In other words, in the period before the uprisings of January 25, 2011, the attack against the Coptic Christians and its aftermath added a new dimension to the anti-Mubarak opposition and became one of the elements of the Egyptian revolution.

4.4. Effect of the Tunisian Revolution

Among these various factors, one of the most important triggers of the revolution in Egypt was certainly when Ben Ali resigned and left Tunisia in response to protests there. Mohamed Bouazizi, a young unemployed man in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bou Said, was working as a street vendor because he could not find a job after graduating from university.²²⁶ On December 17, 2010, this young man would trigger important events for both Tunisia and the entire region: he set himself on fire to protest the government's corruption and injustice.²²⁷

The reasons for the uprising in Tunisia were similar to the problems of the oppressed people under many other authoritarian Arab regimes, such as corruption, violence,

²²⁴ Yasmine El-Rashidi, "Egypt's Muslims Attend Coptic Christmas Mass, Serving as Human Shields," *Ahram Online*, January 7, 2011, accessed on July 2, 2019, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/3365.aspx>.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²²⁶ "How a Fruit Seller Caused Revolution in Tunisia," *CNN World*, January 16, 2011, accessed on August 8, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/01/16/tunisia.fruit.seller.bouazizi/index.html>.

²²⁷ Amor Boubakri, "Interpreting the Tunisian Revolution: Beyond Bou'azizi," in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, edited by Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 65.

unemployment, oppression, and indignity.²²⁸ Of course, every revolution and every uprising has its own characteristics and we need to evaluate events within their own frameworks, but this does not mean that we cannot outline some common features. In this context, it was not unexpected that what happened in Tunisia affected Egypt. First of all, both Arab countries had been governed undemocratically under authoritarian regimes for many years, and there was a serious unemployment problem in both countries, particularly among university graduates. The inequality in income distribution, the state pressure that was increasing from day to day, and the torture by the regime and its security forces became intolerable. Hafez Ghanem examined the slogans of the revolutionaries in his study and concluded that the revolutionaries shouted slogans of bread, freedom, social justice, and human dignity. This shows that revolutionaries had both economic and political demands. Bread and social justice symbolized economic demands, while freedom and human dignity symbolized political demands.²²⁹

All of these problems lead to different explosion points in different countries. In this case, however, the uprisings in Tunisia brought to mind the following question in Egypt: “Why can’t we do the same?”²³⁰ In a personal interview with an ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth member (interviewee 3), he also said that what happened in Tunisia gave Egyptians hope.²³¹

²²⁸ Babak Dehghanpisheh and Mandi Fahmy, “Egypt Protests: The Tunisia Effect,” *Daily Beast*, January 25, 2011, accessed on August 9, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/egypt-protests-the-tunisia-effect>.

²²⁹ Hafez Ghanem, *The Arab Spring Five Years Later: Toward Greater Inclusiveness* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p. 46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1657tv8>.

²³⁰ Personal interview with an independent activist, April 28, 2019 (interviewee 5).

²³¹ Personal interview with ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth member, April 16, 2019 (interviewee 3).

4.5. The Role of the Egyptian Youth

Various youth movements played a crucial role in Egypt's January 25 Revolution by calling on Egyptians to revolt against the Mubarak regime and organizing protests.²³² These youth movements had learned much from the political and organizational experiences of some of the opposition movements of the past, blending those experiences with new strategies and ideas and bringing a new dimension to the struggle against the Mubarak regime.²³³ In a sense, this can be described as an accumulation of knowledge and experience in the struggle against the regime. The most important tool for the youth movement was undoubtedly the new communication tools that came together with developing technology, like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, and so on. As mentioned in previous chapters, the use of computers and the Internet in Egypt was encouraged by the state and considered to be a sign of modernization. In her article, Noha Bakr emphasizes that the extent of the IT revolution in Egypt was unprecedented. She says that 20 million Egyptians, mostly young people, have access to the Internet. "By June 2009, there were 3211 IT companies in the country under the management of the new generation of youth who were at the forefront of the revolution. Additionally, there were 21 daily newspapers and 523 other forms of publications, as well as 700 Arab speaking TV channels, the majority of which broadcast ferocious political talk shows."²³⁴

These developments led the anti-Mubarak opposition movements away from classical political party lines and directed them towards alternative formations in Egypt, namely groups that were not institutional parties and did not adopt a single ideology. These were the anti-Mubarak formations, which consisted mainly of young people, in which Egyptians from all different groups could take part. In this

²³² Emad El-Din Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution: The Power of Mass Mobilization and the Spirit of Tahrir Square," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 3, no. 1 (2012), p. 54.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Noha Bakr, "The Egyptian Revolution," in *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, edited by Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld (Malta: Gutenberg Press, 2012), http://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/150394/.

sense, the Kefaya Movement is of particular importance as it was the first movement to openly react to the Mubarak regime. Most of the youth movements after Kefaya were established by activists involved in Kefaya, and they had learned a lot from that movement. For example, most of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement were Kefaya members. The founders of the group included Israa Abdel Fattah, Asma Mahfouz, Mohammed Adel, and Ahmed Maher, among others. Their Facebook page quickly reached many people and the number of followers exceeded 70,000.²³⁵ As David Wolman says, this group consisted of young people like Maher, who learned to protest corruption, oppression, and injustice through social media. As the Mubarak regime had promoted the use of computers and the Internet, groups like April 6 could reach even the most rural areas. Also, thanks to the presence of groups such as the April 6 Youth Movement in social media, people shared their problems with each other online, such as corruption, violence, torture, and unemployment. Importantly, in doing so, they realized that there were many other people like themselves. They became more conscious as they shared their experiences and ideas. Another point that Shahin stresses regarding the April 6 Youth Movement is that it is very important to understand how ideas spread across regions and affect different regions. Shahin states in his article that the April 6 Youth Movement did not choose the group's name randomly. This name refers to the date when Mahatma Gandhi finished his famous peaceful protest movement, the Salt March, in 1930.²³⁶ Shahin says that this choice of a name served as a sign that Gandhi's peaceful and nonviolent strategy was being adopted by the April 6 Youth Movement.²³⁷ At the same time, some of the founders of the April 6 Movement are known to have links with the youth movements of Serbia and Ukraine. For example, it is known that Mohammad Adel went to Serbia in 2009 to learn peaceful and

²³⁵ David Wolman, "Cairo Activists Use Facebook to Rattle Regime," *Wired*, October 20, 2008, accessed on July 3, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/2008/10/ff-facebookegypt/>.

²³⁶ Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution," p. 56.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

nonviolent tactics and received training there.²³⁸ Here it is necessary to emphasize how important networking is. Members of the April 6 Movement contacted and communicated with the youth movements of Serbia and other countries and then returned to Egypt to share what they had learned with their own movements and other groups. This helped to spread ideas transnationally and played a very important role in the Egyptian revolution. As Tarrow and McAdam points out,

Transnational activists do not simply appear in great numbers at the sites of international institutions or meetings; they must be brought together, organized and provided with common themes and forms of collective action. Finally, many of the key relationships in transnational contention start within the national arena.²³⁹

Maha Abdelrahman, on the other hand, considers these transnational movements to also be platforms for nationally oriented activist groups, where they can exchange ideas, develop themselves, and learn about the experiences of other groups through the Internet and other new means of communication.²⁴⁰ In particular, the second half of this observation is very valid for the April 6 Youth Movement. In my meeting with one of the members of the April 6 Youth Movement, he said they have ties with Serbia and with other movements that use nonviolent, peaceful methods. He also said that they tried to learn from others how to topple a dictator without violence. Thus, they communicated with other groups and learned from each other.²⁴¹

²³⁸ “April 6 Youth Movement,” *Frontline*, February 22, 2011, accessed on August 11, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/>.

²³⁹ Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam, “Scale Shift in Transnational Contention,” in *Transnational Protest & Global Activism*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), pp. 122-123.

²⁴⁰ Maha Abdelrahman, “The Transnational and the Local: Egyptian Activists and Transnational Protest Networks,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011), p. 413.

²⁴¹ Personal interview with one of the members of the 6 April Youth Movement, April 11, 2019 (interviewee 1).

At the same time, it is necessary to mention the position of the Muslim Brotherhood both before and during the revolution. As is known, the Muslim Brotherhood was the biggest, oldest, and most organized opposition group that could threaten the regime in Egypt. For this reason, the Muslim Brotherhood was regularly subjected to pressure from the regime. This pressure was usually in the form of arrests and imprisonment. These practices became increasingly violent in the last years of Mubarak's reign and prevented the Muslim Brotherhood from becoming an uncontrollable threat to the regime.²⁴² In this atmosphere, the Muslim Brotherhood was not among the groups that participated in organizing the January 25 revolution. Shahin states in his article that the group received very serious warnings from the state not to participate in the protests.²⁴³ The Muslim Brotherhood's youth branch pressured leaders to participate and support the protests, but the group's leaders were reluctant to confront the regime and they announced that they would not officially support the protests.²⁴⁴ In a personal interview with an independent activist, she said that the Muslim Brotherhood's youth branch went to the group's authorities to say that they needed to support the revolutionary movement, but they did not receive a positive response as the head of the Muslim Brotherhood said that they would not participate as an organization. This activist further said that the Muslim Brotherhood is a huge organization, with different administrative levels, and so the Youth Unit decided to go to different administrative levels saying that they should participate. As a result of these visits to representatives at different administrative levels, she said, they decided to participate, but decided to do so without openly saying "we are the Brotherhood."²⁴⁵ She also said that the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood, April 6 members, and leftists came together during the revolution and worked together to hold meetings about what should be done to attract more people. The number of the

²⁴² Shahin, "The Egyptian Revolution," p. 57.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁴⁴ Annette Ranko, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Its Quest for Hegemony in Egypt: State-Discourse and Islamist Counter-Discourse* (Hamburg: Springer VS, 2012), p. 171.

²⁴⁵ Personal interview with an independent activist, April 28, 2019 (interviewee 5).

youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood is huge due to its size as the oldest and largest opposition group. The connection of the Muslim Brotherhood's youth members to the revolutionary process was not like the April 6 Youth Movement or the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page, however. Before the revolution, it cannot be said that the Muslim Brotherhood youth played an active role in organizing protests. However, during the revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood youth's participation in the events and attempts to bring people out to the streets were very significant, as were their clashes with security forces.²⁴⁶ In particular, according to Ranko, in the famous "battle of the camels," youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood together with the Ultras (detailed in the next section) protected protesters from the violence of the security forces.²⁴⁷

Egyptian youth acting all together, regardless of different political and religious backgrounds, achieved a great revolution. Al-Amin says: "There is no doubt that the Egyptian youth played a critical role in initiating the protests. The April 6 Youth Movement and "We Are All Khaled Said" along with other youth-led organizations, including the youth branches of the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Baradei Campaign for Change, were at the forefront of the activities before and during the revolution."²⁴⁸

As a result of my interviews, I can say that one of the most important roles in the pre-revolutionary process belonged to the April 6 Youth Movement, the "We Are All Khaled Said" Facebook page, youth of the left, and the youth of the Muslim Brotherhood. These groups established social media platforms, with which many Egyptians who had suffered from increasing unemployment, corruption, torture, and injustice in recent years could follow the events and share their ideas. These

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Annette Ranko, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Its Quest for Hegemony in Egypt*, p. 172.

²⁴⁸ Esam Al-Amin, "Conditions and Consequences: Anatomy of Egypt's Revolution," *Pambazuka News*, February 24, 2011, accessed on August 14, 2019, <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/conditions-and-consequences-anatomy-egypts-revolution>.

platforms played an important role in the awareness of the Egyptians. Looking at the subsequent events, it is possible to say that the youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood were only involved in the revolution later. However, in spite of being “latecomers,” they played a very important role in the revolution process as they appealed to a very large audience and became an important actor of the revolution.

One of the important characteristics of the 2011 demonstrations and the mobilization occurring before that was the response of the wider population, and especially the mobilization of non-political groups. However, the networks that emerged in previous years also had a considerable impact. From my interviews, it was clear that people from the Muslim Brotherhood, the April 6 Youth Movement, and other people in Tahrir Square on January 25 knew each other from previous years. In this mixed network of activists from socialist, Muslim Brotherhood, Kefaya, April 6, and other groups, some were also independent activists not belonging to any group, but they all played a role. While different groups were present in the square, the existence of networks of people who worked with each other and trusted each other was even more important. One of my interviewees, Interviewee 4 acknowledged that the activist groups played a role, but the wider participation of people was significant and this made a difference from previous protests because they had demonstrations before but never to such an extent.²⁴⁹ Interviewee 4’s point here is quite important: networks are not only crucial for engaging people in protests and ensuring interpersonal coordination, but also very important in terms of spreading the culture of social movements.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Personal interview with a member of the Revolutionary Socialists, April 20, 2019 (interviewee 4).

²⁵⁰ Marc Dixon and Vincent J. Roscigno, “Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers,” in *Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics, and Outcomes*, edited by Doug McAdam and David A. Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 258.

4.6. Egyptian Ultras during the Revolution

The role of Egyptian football supporters is another point that must be studied and emphasized in this 18-day period of revolution. Egyptian football fans played a crucial role in the demolition of police barricades and rushed into the squares because they knew how to fight the police. The most successful of these football fan groups, or Ultras, was the Al-Ahly fan club, Al-Ahly having won the Africa Cup 6 times.²⁵¹ The Al-Ahly Sports Club was founded in 1907 by high school students in Egypt.²⁵² That was the time of British colonial rule, and the club was a place where anti-British nationalists could come together.

The contributions of the Al-Ahly Ultras group deserves more research. They were experienced in fighting with police and so they knew how to manage in the case of any police or security interventions. Also, being a sports fan means being connected to the country and its issues. As one of the founding members of Ultras Ahly, Ahmed Ghaffar made this clear in his interview: “Being an Ahly fan means you’re someone full of revolution and love for this country.”²⁵³

Consistent with Ghaffar’s statement, the fact that these football fans were in Tahrir Square stemmed from their being a part of Egyptian society. Seeing them as merely a group of sports followers can lead to misinterpretations because they were a socially conscious group of people from all walks of life, and usually young people. As the anti-Mubarak protests increased in the country, that trend naturally affected groups of sports fans, as well. Ghaffar says:

²⁵¹ Andrew McFadyen, “How Al Ahly’s Football Fans Defended Egypt’s Revolution,” *Channel 4*, July 16, 2012, accessed on August 4, 2019, <https://www.channel4.com/news/egypts-fotball-revolution>.

²⁵² Clive Gifford, “Al-Ahly: Egyptian Football Club,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, July 25, 2019, accessed on August 4, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Al-Ahly>.

²⁵³ McFadyen, “How Al Ahly’s Football Fans Defended Egypt’s Revolution.”

“We always say that our revolution started in 2007 not 2011. Most of the group was thinking freedom all the way. We went down to the streets to be part of the revolution as Egyptian citizens, not as Ultras.”²⁵⁴ Another Ultra says: “There is no competition in politics, so competition moved to the soccer pitch. We do what we have to do against the rules and regulations when we think they are wrong.”²⁵⁵ More than 7,000 supporters of Al-Ahly fought the police in Tahrir Square. In fact, members of two archrival teams, the Cairo team Al-Ahly and the Giza team Zamalek, acted together in this challenging process.²⁵⁶

On the other hand, Suzan Gibril states that there was always a problematic relationship between Ultras and security forces in Egypt. Gibril further points out that the Ultras were not one of the driving forces of the revolution in Egypt and that this group instead responded to the calls of social movements such as the April 6 Youth Movement and Kefaya, and protected the protesters against police violence in Tahrir Square.²⁵⁷ In addition, it remains controversial whether Ultras had political aims both before and during the revolution. Gibril says that both Al-Ahly and Zamalek Ultras shared posts on their Facebook pages stating that they did not have any political agenda.²⁵⁸ In addition to this, in my own interview with one of the activists who participated in the 2011 revolution in Egypt, the interviewee said:

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ James M. Dorsey, “Soccer Fans Play Key Role in Egyptian Protests,” *Bleacher Report*, January 26, 2011, accessed on August 4, 2019, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/585682-soccer-fans-play-key-role-in-egyptian-protests>.

²⁵⁶ James Montague, “How Al Ahly and Zamalek Buried Enmity to Topple Hosni Mubarak,” *The National*, April 23, 2011, accessed on August 4, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/sport/how-al-ahly-and-zamalek-buried-enmity-to-topple-hosni-murbarak-1.413035#full>.

²⁵⁷ Suzan Gibril, “Contentious Politics and Bottom-Up Mobilization in Revolutionary Egypt: The Case of Egyptian Football Supporters in Cairo,” in *Contentious Politics in the Middle East: Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism Beyond the Arab Uprisings*, edited by Fawaz A. Gerges (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 315.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 316.

“They are not a political group, they are just fans and they are very organized. They focus on their matches and group.”²⁵⁹

The purpose of this thesis is not to analyze the intentions of the Ultras, but with or without political intentions, it is certain that the group played a crucial role in the process of revolution and the overthrow of Mubarak. Interviewee 5 identifies herself as an independent, and she said that the Ultras played a very important role in the revolution.²⁶⁰ She specifically named the groups that played a role in the revolution as the youth branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, leftists, the April 6 Youth Movement, and Ultras. She also stressed that the biggest football team was Al-Ahly and that the Ultras of this group were very valuable in the revolution. She said that the Al-Ahly Ultras had a very vital role in entering Tahrir Square because they knew how to fight with security forces.²⁶¹ She further said:

They had an experience of dealing with the police on the ground, activists did not have it. When we have a clash, when the police throw out tear gases, I just collapsed. Why? Because I do not know what this is. Of course, we took some recommendations on what to do but at the end of the day I just collapsed like many people because we did not have experience, but the Ultras know. They clashed with the police in the matches all the time, so they know how to deal with the police... They were on the frontline all the time.²⁶²

She also stated that without the Ultras, it would have been almost impossible to enter Tahrir Square, and that would have meant that there would be no revolution, so their role was crucial. In conclusion, it can be said that regardless of whether the Ultras of Egypt like Al-Ahly and Zamalek had a political agenda, it was important that they were active in the revolution and fought for the people in Tahrir Square. They succeeded in breaking through the police barrier thanks to their prior experiences of clashing with the police for years, and this made it possible for protestors to occupy

²⁵⁹ Personal interview with an Egyptian independent activist, April 28, 2019 (interviewee 5).

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

Tahrir Square and bring about the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak after a 30-year reign.

4.7. The Role of Social Media: “Facebook Revolution?”

One of the most important factors both before and during the revolution was undoubtedly the new communication tools that come with developing technology. Social media is generally considered one of these most important tools, but a point made by Shahin should be emphasized in this regard. According to Shahin, traditional communication channels also played an important role in people’s awareness, helping them to see the weaknesses of the regime and overcome the fear barrier.²⁶³

With the establishment of some Arab and Egyptian satellite stations in the 1990s, alternative broadcasts emerged to compete against the regime-controlled media, and these channels spread news of the inadequacy and corruption of the regime to millions of people.²⁶⁴ Armando Salvatore further says that satellite television, especially Al Jazeera, is more homogenizing, although the Internet has recently been thought to have both a more “cohesive” and more “fragmenting” effect.²⁶⁵ Salvatore says that after the founding of Al Jazeera in 1996, the impact of this new channel should not be underestimated. With the launch of Al Jazeera, news channels began discussing issues such as the policies and corruption of Arab governments, normalizing the questioning of the validity of these regimes and making it widespread.²⁶⁶ At the same time, independent newspapers such as *al-Badil*, *al-*

²⁶³ Shahin, “The Egyptian Revolution,” p. 60.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Armando Salvatore, “A Public Sphere Revolution? Social Media versus Authoritarian Regimes,” in *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, edited by Larbi Sadiki (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 347.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Dustur, and *al-Misri Al-Yawm* started to be established and a link was forged between social media and dissident newspapers. Salvatore says: “practical mutual dependence emerged between the oppositional newspapers and the blogosphere,” and news coverage was published both in opposition newspapers and in blogs; thus, news on the corruption and violence of the regime was repeated and kept up to date, which in turn helped the news reach more people.²⁶⁷ Armando Salvatore makes a further point that is quite important in this regard. For Salvatore, the revolution was not only the revolution of the youth of Facebook; it was also a “street” revolution, and at the same time, it was an Al Jazeera revolution. Moreover, the roles of literature, movies, and TV serials were also important.²⁶⁸ For example, *The Yacoubian Building*, which was originally a novel and later adapted to film, was very important in revealing the increasing corruption of recent years.²⁶⁹ Thus, while highlighting one group—in this case, social media—it is important not to forget the other elements that have had an impact on the revolution. The point here is not to minimize the role of social media, but rather to emphasize that traditional communication channels and protest routes are equally important. Independent TV channels, newspapers, literature, movies, blogs, SMSs, sit-ins, shows, and strikes all have their own importance.

Another important point to be mentioned here is the growth of “citizen journalism” with these new avenues of communication.²⁷⁰ Web-focused activism began generating constant reports on regime violence, corruption, and many other issues, and Web activists documented the abuses of the regime. Thanks to citizen journalists and bloggers, a heavy flow of news was provided about the state’s policies, and information and news not available in the regime-controlled media was transmitted

²⁶⁷ Salvatore, “A Public Sphere Revolution?,” p. 348.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

to the Egyptians. According to some studies, there were 160,000 blogs in Egypt in 2008. The role of these blogs in creating public opinion and putting pressure on the regime cannot be underestimated.²⁷¹ For example, in 2005, when a woman who was harassed in Cairo reported the incident to the authorities, efforts were made by the authorities to cover it up and state that such situations did not occur. However, the sharing of images of the moment of harassment by some bloggers proved that it was really happening.²⁷² Of course, although mainstream media and newspapers were still viewed and read more often, interest in blogs and other sources was growing as well.

The role of social media in the Egyptian revolution is, of course, undeniable. The point here is to not reduce the victory to just one factor. Traditional media and new communication tools were both important tools that contributed to the revolution, and these existing tools were used especially skillfully by young people. Al-Amin says that young Egyptians transformed new technology into an exceptionally effective political tool to communicate with their peers, educate the public, organize events, and mobilize the masses.²⁷³ The ability to use this new technology to call people to participate in protests truly was an important skill. During my interview with a member of the April 6 Youth Movement, he said that the calls for protests were made through social media and that the young people responded. He added that the interactions among anti-Mubarak individuals had been increasing day by day and that the most important role in this process was played by the “We Are All Khaled Said” and the April 6 Youth Movement Facebook pages.²⁷⁴ In other words, it is emphasized again here that the contributions of social media to the uprising of

²⁷¹ Ikhwanweb, “Social Networking, Political Action and Its Real Impact in Egypt,” March 22, 2010, accessed on August 13, 2019, <https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=23809>.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Al-Amin, “Conditions and Consequences: Anatomy of Egypt’s Revolution.”

²⁷⁴ Personal interview with one of the members of the April 6 Youth Movement, April 13, 2019 (interviewee 2).

January 25 are undeniable. My interviews with these Egyptian activists made it clear that social media was an invaluable tool for spreading ideas to otherwise unpolitical people. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were all platforms for sharing discontent against the regime. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the Internet was shut down on January 28, 2011, by state authorities.²⁷⁵ In other words, the protesters did not have Internet all the time. Traditional means of communication were also effectively employed. Al Jazeera, for example, was crucial, and SMS messages were also used to organize meetings.²⁷⁶ Thus, in reviewing the many factors involved in the uprising of January 25th, it is true that social media and other modern ways of communication were important in mobilizing people, but it should also be remembered that these were tools for rather than reasons behind the protests. The reasons behind the protests included diverse factors such as reactions to increased police brutality, the unification of diverse groups in reaction to the attack on the Coptic Church, growing support for the demands of workers, and, of course, the events in Tunisia, among other factors. Social media and new technologies were tools that enabled people to share their views on all these issues, creating and strengthening networks that would eventually come together in Tahrir Square on January 25th.

²⁷⁵ Noam Cohen, "Egyptians Were Unplugged, and Uncowed," *New York Times*, February 20, 2011, accessed on July 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/business/media/21link.html>.

²⁷⁶ Personal interview with an Egyptian independent activist, April 28, 2019 (interviewee 5).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed to address the protests in Egypt during the last 10 years of the Mubarak period, leading to the uprising of January 25, 2011. In Chapter 1, a general framework of the policies of Mubarak's predecessor, Anwar Sadat, was provided, until the time of his assassination and his succession by Mubarak. In the first few years after Mubarak came to the presidency, there were promising developments in the country. First, many of the political prisoners arrested by Sadat were released and dialogue was sought with them. The Muslim Brotherhood, which had been under severe pressure during the Sadat period, was treated relatively more freely as a tactic to balance the leftist opposition. Again to a relative extent, the freedom of the press that was provided in the early days of the Mubarak period was considered by intellectuals as a positive initiative for the development of democratic values. At the same time, efforts to improve relations with Israel in particular brought aid to Egypt from the USA. The opposition to Kuwait's invasion by Iraq caused further aid to flow into Egypt from both the Gulf countries and the USA. Another important development was the expansion of the use of computers and the Internet, which the Mubarak regime saw as symbols of modernization. Even in rural areas, the use of computers and the Internet was encouraged, and campaigns were organized to facilitate this.

Economically speaking, another important development in Mubarak's early years was his first meeting with the leading economists of the country, aimed at improving the country's economic situation. However, the outcomes of the meeting disappointed many people. As a result of Mubarak's increasing liberal policies, many privatizations took place. This included the privatization of most of the state

institutions; as a result, inequality in income distribution began to grow. The resources of the country were increasingly divided among a new elite class, which cooperated with the regime. This class established good relations with the regime in order to access resources more easily and the country became a source of rent for the regime and this new class. Egypt, which was economically dependent on foreign aid and did not pay much attention to domestic production, requested that the IMF declare its bankruptcy in 1989 and as a result was forced to accept the conditions of the IMF.

One of the most important developments in the political sense was the 8% election threshold that Mubarak introduced to the Parliament just before the elections in 1984. This development, which could be seen as an obstacle to democracy, was actually seen as a positive development for Egyptian democracy at the time, because for the first time in the history of the country Egypt was entering a multi-party election. Therefore, rather than the election threshold, the main initial focus was the fact that five parties entered the elections. It was understood later, of course, that Mubarak's party, the National Democratic Party, had intended to dominate the political sphere. The Emergency Law, imposed in 1981 after Sadat's assassination and continually extended, also helped the Mubarak regime to suppress opposition parties as well as other opposition groups.

In the following chapters, the protest movements that began gaining momentum in the country in the 2000s were discussed. Approaching the new millennium, Egypt was already suffering from economic problems, while politically, the country had become increasingly authoritarian. Under the Emergency Law, people were prevented from protesting, and the regime tried to hinder everyone and everything that it saw as a threat, using its security forces for this goal and not hesitating to apply force in doing so. In 2000, with the Second Palestinian Intifada, Egypt experienced a new milestone in the history of its protest culture. While anti-Israeli protests arose in many parts of the country, people were simultaneously gaining significant experience in overcoming their fear of curfews and the ban on street demonstrations. In my interviews, I saw that the Second Palestinian Intifada was a very significant turning point for the Egyptian people. In all the interviews, I came

to the conclusion that many Egyptian activists developed their political identities after this specific event, deciding then to become activists. A similarly important breaking point was the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Mubarak regime's silence on this occupation would soon cause the anti-American protests to become anti-Mubarak. Egyptians realized that the real danger was the regime itself, which was cooperating with Israel and the USA. Another development that raised tensions against the Mubarak regime in Egypt in 2006 was Hezbollah's war with Israel. The regime made statements accusing Hezbollah of disturbing the peace. In response, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood made statements expressing solidarity with Hezbollah and claiming an ability to send 10,000 fighters in their support if necessary. The cooperation of the Mubarak regime with the Zionist state and its biggest supporter, the USA, rather than with the Islamic world, increased Egyptians' anger towards the regime.

Thus, it is clear that a wave of protests had already started to occur in Egypt as of the year 2000 and discontent against the regime had already started to evolve. Following the Second Palestinian Intifada, the invasion of Iraq by the USA and the Hezbollah-Israel War were other important regional developments. The Palestinian issue was already on the agenda of the Egyptian people and Egypt had always been one of the important defenders of the Palestinians, especially during the Nasser period, and so the Egyptian people were sensitive to this issue. This importance led the Egyptian people to organize many demonstrations to support the Palestinians and some groups were founded for this purpose, like the PCSI. As a result, networks among activists started to emerge. Activists were also in the streets to protest the US invasion of Iraq. These were important events in terms of raising awareness among people and helping them keep in touch with other protesters, as well. It was seen that most people in Tahrir Square on January 25, 2011, already knew each other from previous protests and had built a sense of trust among themselves.²⁷⁷ Thus, these networks of people that had grown throughout the previous decade, largely

²⁷⁷ Personal interview with a member of the Revolutionary Socialists, April 20, 2019 (interviewee 4).

shaped by public reaction to the regional events described in Chapter 2, were important in achieving revolution in 2011.

The decade preceding the events of January 25th also had another important characteristic, as has been described here. Although Egypt's history of protest culture cannot be reduced to a single decade, as Maha Abdelrahman correctly states,²⁷⁸ after 2000, Egypt witnessed a new kind of protest movement. Previously, opposition to Mubarak was limited to political parties and it is hard to say that the opposition was effectively united against the regime. What makes the last decade so important is the change in the struggle with the regime. With this new type of struggle, opposition to the Mubarak regime shifted from political parties to other movements and groups like the PCSI and Kefaya. In protests to support the Second Palestinian Intifada, Egyptian activists had an opportunity to get to know each other, and with the PCSI, different ideological groups came together to protest Israel. Subsequently, the Kefaya movement was the first activist group to explicitly say "no" to Mubarak.²⁷⁹ In addition to these changes, the protests since 2000 increased street politics in Egypt and allowed for the accumulation of knowledge among protesters. Different groups learned from each other and experienced many things during these protests. Some academics and judges were also important actors in increasing people's political awareness and courage to speak out against the regime. They stood against regime repression and organized petitions and sit-ins in the early 2000s. All of these actions against the Mubarak regime helped raise courage among the Egyptian people. Furthermore, these events show that a cycle of protest already existed in Egypt from 2000 onwards. When these developments are taken into consideration, it is possible to say that the Arab uprisings and specifically the Egyptian uprising should not be called an "Awakening," as this thesis has aimed to argue. This word implies a sudden event, but when we look at the country's internal developments, it is clear that Egypt already had active street politics and a protest

²⁷⁸ Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution*, p. 29.

²⁷⁹ Personal interview with ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth member, April 16, 2019 (interviewee 3).

culture that had been heavily shaped by events in the decade before the events of January 25th.

While the earliest years of the 2000s were shaped by reactions to regional events, domestic developments that took place just before the 2011 uprisings also had an impact on this process. In 2008, a group called for support for the workers' protests in Mahalla El-Kubra and called themselves the April 6 Youth Movement; they played a major role in mobilizing Egyptians in the 2011 protests. With this group in particular, the activities of mostly young people were transferred to the realm of social media and individuals opposed to the regime had an opportunity to communicate with each other on social media platforms, giving them the sense that they were not alone. However, as was stressed in the previous chapter, the effects of traditional means of communication should also not be ignored. In other words, social media tools were of course a very important factor, but during the uprisings, specifically on January 28, 2011, the regime left the whole country without Internet access, and this did not halt the course of events. The pre-revolutionary broadcasts of independent TV channels as well as newspapers also played a major role in calling attention to the regime's injustice, oppression, and violence.

There were many reasons for people to take to the streets, both on January 25th and in the decade that preceded it. Unemployment, unfair income distribution, police brutality, and corruption are just some of them. The important point here was that people—and young people in particular—could use the resources of developing technology skillfully to mobilize the public in response to all of these problems. The April 6 Youth Movement and the Facebook page “We Are All Khaled Said” enabled Egyptians to network and spread news of the corruption of the regime while sharing their experiences and problems with each other and bringing together all anti-Mubarak people. It should be stressed here that this process of networking and unifying Egyptians was successful enough to cross many traditional divisions in society. For example, as detailed in the previous chapter, the Coptic minority came to identify with other anti-regime voices following their sense of abandonment by the state after the attack on the Coptic Church on New Year's Eve. Women were also traditionally somewhat marginalized in Egyptian society, but the Mahalla El-

Kubra strike of 2006 was driven by women workers' demands for better conditions and helped firmly establish the public role of women within Egypt's protest culture. If these events in the decade before the uprising of January 25th had not already unified activists and created a sense of courage among diverse sectors of the population, it is doubtful that social media alone would ever have been able to have the dramatic effect that was seen in 2011. In other words, the events that took place in the decade before the uprising were critically important in shaping Egyptian protest culture and preparing the way for January 25th.

In conclusion, various groups established in Egypt in the decade before the uprisings created a space for political activists to act and also created vibrant networks among different groups. As Maha Abdelrahman observes, the establishment of these networks in Egypt provided the continuity of protest movements and generated space for activists to escape state control.²⁸⁰ Of course, this process did not occur suddenly. It was the result of many years of experience, mobilization, networking, and the integration of different groups into a more inclusive political culture. Like Kefaya and the April 6 Youth Movement, all groups benefited from the experience of previous ones and blended those past experiences with their own knowledge. In other words, the pro-democracy movement in Egypt was the result of long years of experience and knowledge. The process that took place in Egypt on January 25, 2011, which resulted in Mubarak's resignation, was a result of many factors and many protests that had been going on for years; it cannot be explained by any one single reason. Most importantly, this thesis has aimed to emphasize that the claims of "silent" and non-changeable people living quietly under authoritarian regimes do not conform to the Egyptian reality. Egypt was selected as a case study here due to its historical, geographical, and political importance in the Arab world, but more generally, the findings of this thesis highlight the importance of reviewing all uprisings of the "Arab Spring" on a case by case basis while recognizing that the events in any one country will have been uniquely shaped by that country's own long and complex interweaving of culture, history, and politics.

²⁸⁰ Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution*, p. 50.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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09 Nisan 2019

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Derya Göçer AKDER

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Gülfer OĞUR'un "How the last decade of Egypt affected Uprisings in 2011?" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 184-ODTÜ-2019 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız

Prof. Dr. Tülin GENÇÖZ

Başkan

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL

Üye

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR (4.)

Üye

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

Üye

Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK

Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you mention about yourself little bit? How did you become an activist?
2. Why you were in the protests in 2011? What was your aim?
3. When did you first go out? With whom?
4. What was your favourite slogan?
5. Who were your comrade?
6. Who were the main actors/ movements who participated in the Tahrir Square in 2011?
7. How do you feel about role of 6th April, MB, workers and other groups just before and during the uprising in Egypt?
8. In 2011, protests were sudden and unexpected thing. Do you believe that? – why?
9. During this time, there was protest waves in Tunisia and (also before in some European countries, such as Greece; do you think that they had influence on Egyptian activists? -- If yes, in what aspects? If no, why?
10. Did you have any connection with youth groups in other countries, for example Serbia?
11. What kind of tools you used in the protests to be able to organize the huge crowd?
12. Did you use social media? And how did you use it?
13. How do you feel about the term ‘Facebook Revolution’?
14. What did you see in the protests? The most surprising, annoying, liked or unusual things? Or do you remember any moment that you can’t haunt, or you are still under its effect?
15. If I say “Khaled Said”, what comes your mind first? What does he mean for you?
16. How do you feel about the last decade of Egypt in 2011? How this 10-years affected Egypt in 2011?
17. What about regional developments? How they affect the last decade of Egypt?

18. In light of the current situation in Egypt in terms of the human rights, economic and political, do you think a second 'Tahrir' uprising is likely to happen in the future? Yes? Clarify: demands, actors/movements/ and outcome. If no, why?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Bu tez 2010 yılında Tunus'ta başlayıp kısa sürede bölgedeki diğer ülkelere yayılan Arap Ayaklanmalarının 'Arap Uyanışı' olarak değerlendirilmesini doğru bulmuyor, bölgede bu süreçten önce de protesto hareketlerinin olduğunu ve bölgenin otoriter rejimler altında 'durağan' ve 'değişmez' olduğu görüşlerinin bölge ülkelerine uymadığını iddia ediyor. Bu bağlamda tez Mısır'ı bir vaka incelemesi olarak ele alıp, yaşanan ayaklanmaların birbirini etkilediğini fakat her bir ayaklanmayı doğuran sebeplerin her ülke bağlamında ayrı ayrı değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini savunuyor. Bu bağlamda tez, Mısır'ı bu sürecin bir parçası olarak görmekte fakat Mübarek'in devrilmesine giden bu protestoların kökeninin daha uzun bir süreç dayandığını, Mısır'da özellikle 2000'li yıllarla birlikte protesto hareketlerinin daha da ivme kazanmasıyla ilgili olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu çerçevede tezin esas araştırma konusu Mısır'ın son on yılının, 25 Ocak 2011 Ayaklanmasını ne şekilde etkilediği daha doğrusu devrim sürecine giden yolu nasıl hazırladığını ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Öte yandan, Mısır'ın tarihsel ve jeopolitik olarak Arap dünyasında öncü bir rol oynadığı bilinen bir gerçektir. Bu liderliğin Mısır'ın Muhammed Ali Paşa zamanındaki modernleşme hareketlerine bağlı olarak devlet mekanizmalarının göreceli de olsa bölgedeki diğer ülkelere göre daha iyi durumda olmasından kaynaklandığı söylenebilir. Ayrıca Mısır'ın özellikle Cemal Abdül Nasır döneminde Arap dünyasının lideri konumuna gelmesi, nüfusunun -özellikle genç nüfusunun fazla olması- ve coğrafi olarak geniş bir coğrafyaya da sahip olması Mısır'ı bir hayli önemli kılan nedenler arasındadır. Bu nedenler Mısır'ın vaka olarak seçilmesinde etkili olmuştur.

Tez nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılarak hazırlanmış olup, temel olarak İngilizce ve Türkçe birincil ve ikincil kaynaklar kullanılarak ortaya konmuştur. Bu bağlamda İngilizce ve Türkçe akademik kitaplar, dergi makaleleri, gazete makaleleri, gazete

haberleri ve bazı web sitelerinden kaynaklar kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca tez hem açıklayıcı hem de tartışmacı bir çalışmadır. Bunların yanı sıra, 25 Ocak 2011'de Mısır'da başlayan protestolarda yer almış beş aktivist ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. Bu görüşmeler tezin esas noktası olmasa da içeriden olaylara tanık olmuş ve bu süreçte aktif rol oynamış kişilerin tecrübeleriyle çalışmaya katkı sağlamışlardır. Aktivistlerden ilk ikisi 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi'nin üyeleri, üçüncü aktivist Müslüman Kardeşler Gençliğinin eski üyesi, dördüncüsü Devrimci Sosyalistler üyesi ve beşinci aktivist ise Bağımsızlar grubunun üyesidir.

2011'deki Mısır'daki ayaklanmalara bakıldığında, Mısır'daki göstericilerin Tunus'taki ayaklanmalardan etkilendiği iddia edilebilir. Bu dayanışma, umut ve değişim fikrinin Mısır'daki insanlar üzerinde etkisi elbette ki oldu, onları harekete geçirdi, çünkü demokrasiye, yolsuzluğa karşı mücadele etmek ve ekonomik kalkınmanın sağlanmasına yönelik ortak istekleri vardı. Ancak bunun öfke, değişim arzusu ve kolektif eylemlerin tek nedeni olduğunu söylemek çok doğru olmayacaktır. Mısırlı protestocular, sadece Tunus'ta olanlar sayesinde cesaretlendiği için sokağa çıkmadılar. Geçtiğimiz yıllarda günden güne büyüyen, daha etkili bir gündemleri vardı. Yıllardır biriken ve giderek artan bir rejim karşıtlığı vardı. Bu bağlamda, bu tez Mısır'daki belirli bir on yılın tarihsel bir analizini ve bunun ulusal, bölgesel ve uluslararası gelişmelerle ilişkilerini amaçlamaktadır. Olayların nedenlerini küreselleşmeye ya da neo-liberal politikalara indirmek yerine, bu tez olayları 2000'den beri Mısır'ın çekişmeli politikaları bağlamında incelemektedir. Bu çerçevede, tezin bölümleri 2000 yılından bu yana Mısır'daki bölgesel ve yerel gelişmelerin etkilerini analiz edilmektedir. Bunu yaparak, bu bölümler Mısırlı protestocuların bu bölgesel ve yerel olaylara nasıl cevap verdiğini, bu gelişmelerin neden kritik olduğunu anlamalarını sağlamaktadır. Birinci bölümde yani giriş kısmında, tezin amacı, argümanı ve yapısı ile literatür taraması verilmektedir. İkinci bölümde ise, ilk alt başlık olarak, Mübarek Dönemi'nin erken dönemleri hakkında bazı bilgiler sunulacaktır. Bundan sonra ise, bazı bölgesel olayların ana hatları çizilecek ve bunların Mısır halkı üzerindeki etkileri incelenecektir. Bu bölüm esas olarak İkinci Filistin Ayaklanması, Irak'ın işgali ve Hizbullah-İsrail Savaşı olmak üzere üç ana kısımdan oluşmaktadır. Bu olayların her biri ayrıntılı olarak ele alınacak ve Mısır protesto kültürü üzerindeki etkileri incelenecektir. Bu üç olayın

seçilmesindeki amaç ise, 2000 yılında İkinci Filistin Ayaklanması ve Irak'ın 2003 yılında Amerika Birleşik Devletleri tarafından işgali, Mısır'da İsrail ve ABD karşıtı gösterileri / protestoları arttırmış ve farklı ideolojik grupların bir araya gelmesini sağlayıp, birbirlerini daha iyi tanıma ve yeni ağlar kurma şansı vermiştir. Dahası, bu iki olayın sayıca oldukça kalabalık olması yani binlerce insanın bu gösterilere katılmış olması, gösterilerin ülke çapında ve bölgede oldukça sesini duyurmasını sağladı. Kahire ve Mısır'ın diğer pek çok şehrinde protesto dalgası yaşanıyordu. Bu iki protesto doğrudan Mübarek rejimine yönelik olmasa da günden güne daha fazla Mısırlı, Mübarek ve rejiminin bu olaylar karşısında izlediği politikaya öfke duyuyordu. Öte yandan, Hizbullah-İsrail Savaşı, Mısırlıları gerçek tehlikenin Mübarek ve rejim olduğunu anlamalarını sağladı. Üçüncü Bölümde ise, Mısır protesto hareketlerini etkileyen iç gelişmelere geçilecektir. Bu bölümün ilk kısmında Kefaya Hareketi ve kökenleri ele alınacaktır. Ayrıca, Mısırlı akademisyenlerin ve hakimlerin Mübarek rejimine karşı tutumları incelenecek ve işçi ayaklanmaları esas olarak ele alınacaktır. Tüm bu yaşananların 25 Ocak 2011 ayaklanmasındaki etkileri incelenecektir. Dördüncü bölümde ise, ayaklanmalara yaklaşan süreçte önemli rol oynayan daha güncel olaylar ele alınacaktır. Gün geçtikçe artan baskı, işkence ve adaletsizlik, insanları nihai bir kırılma noktasına getirdi. Khaled Said'in polis tarafından vahşice öldürülmesinin Mısır halkı üzerinde uyandırdığı etki bu bölümün ilk konusudur. Mısır'da polis şiddeti alışlagelmiş bir durum haline gelmiş olmasına rağmen, bu vakanın neden bu kadar etki yarattığı sorusu üzerinde durulacaktır. İkinci mesele olarak ise, 2010 yılında gerçekleşen parlamento seçimleri ve bu seçimlerde Mübarek rejimine en güçlü rakip olan El-Baradei ve özellikle gençlerin onu destekleyen kampanyalarının üzerinde durulacaktır. Öte yandan seçim sonuçlarının Mısırlılar üzerinde yarattığı hayal kırıklığı da ele alınacaktır. Bu bölümde incelenen bir diğer konu ise, Mısır'da 1 Ocak 2011'de Koptik Ortodoks Kilisesi'ne düzenlenen saldırıdır. Mısır'da Koptikler'in Müslüman Mısırlılar ile eşit olduğu genel olarak iddia edilemese de son yıllarda ülkede dinsel ayrışmanın arttığı görülmektedir. Bunun son örneğini de bu olay oluşturmuştur. Bu saldırı Mısır halkı üzerinde oldukça etkili olmuş, Mısırlılar olayı protesto etmiş ve rejimin ayrıştırıcı politikaları saldırılara sebep olarak gösterilmiştir. Bu bölümün diğer bir konusu ise Tunus Devrimi'nin Mısır

üzerine etkisidir. İki ülkenin rejimlerinin protesto edilmesinin sebepleri arasında ortak konular vardı ve bu kısımda bu konular ele alınmaktadır. Mısırlı gençlerin giderek artan aktivizmi ise bu bölümün diğer bir konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda bazı gençlik örgütleri ele alınmış ve devrime giden yolda ve devrim sürecinde gençlerin ne şekilde etki yarattığı üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu bölüm Mısırlı bazı taraftar gruplarının devrim sürecinde nasıl rol oynadıklarını açıklayan bir kısım da barındırmaktadır. Bölüm, sosyal medyanın devrime giden süreçte ve devrim sırasında oynadığı role değinmektedir. Sonuç bölümünde ise tezin genel bulguları ele alınmıştır.

Tezin birinci bölümüne baktığımızda, Hüsnü Mübarek'in selefi Enver Sedat'ın suikaste uğradığı zamana dek uyguladığı politikalarının kısa bir çerçevesi verilmektedir. Bunun hemen sonrasında ise Hüsnü Mübarek'in göreve geldiği 1981 yılının ilk on yılının politik ve ekonomik anlamda genel hatları verilmektedir. Mübarek döneminin son zamanları ülkede yolsuzluk, işsizlik, güvenlik güçlerinin şiddeti, muhalif grupların baskıya maruz kalması gibi sorunlar baş gösterse de aslında Mübarek'in ilk döneminin Mısır'ın demokratikleşmesi adına umut verici olduğu söylenebilir. Mübarek başkanlığa geldikten sonraki ilk birkaç yılda, ülkede umut verici gelişmeler yaşanmıştır. İlk olarak, tutuklu bulunan siyasi mahkumların çoğu serbest bırakılmış, bir anlamda siyasi mahkumların gönlü alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca Sedat döneminde ağır baskı altında olan muhalif gruplar, özellikle de Müslüman Kardeşler, -göreceli de olsa- Mübarek döneminde daha fazla hareket alanı bulmuştur.

Ekonomik olarak, Mübarek'in erken dönemlerindeki bir diğer önemli gelişme ise ülkenin ileri gelen ekonomistleriyle yaptığı, ülkenin ekonomik durumunu iyileştirmeyi amaçlayan toplantı olmuştur. Ancak, toplantının sonuçları birçok insanı hayal kırıklığına uğrattı. Alınan kararlar ekonomistlerin görüşlerinden çok rejimin görüşlerini yansıtıyordu. Toplantı sonucunda Enver Sedat döneminde başlayan özelleştirmelerin devam edilmesine karar verildi. Ekonomistler bu kararın üretim faaliyetlerini olumsuz etkileyeceğini ve bu sürecin tüketme eğilimini arttıracaklarını ifade ederek karşı çıkıyorlardı. İlerleyen zamanlarda, Mübarek'in artan liberal politikalarının bir sonucu olarak, birçok özelleştirme gerçekleşti. Sonuç

olarak, gelir dağılımındaki eşitsizlik artmaya başladı. Ülkenin kaynakları günden güne rejim ile iş birliği yapan yeni bir seçkin sınıf arasında bölündü. Bu sınıf ülke kaynaklarına erişebilmek için hükümetle iyi ilişkiler kurdu. Yerli üretime önem vermeyen Mısır turizm ve Süveyş Kanalı gelirleri ile Körfez ülkeleriyle iş birliği yaptığı sürece bu ülkelere gelen gelirlerle ekonomisini sürdürüyordu.

Siyasal anlamda en önemli gelişmelerden biri, Mübarek'in 1984'te Parlamento'ya getirdiği %8 seçim barajıydı. Demokrasinin önündeki bir engel olarak görülen bu gelişme aslında Mısır demokrasisi için olumlu bir gelişme olarak görülüyordu. Bu nedenle seçim barajı yerine ana partiler seçimlere girdi. Elbette daha sonra, Mübarek'in partisinin Ulusal Demokrat Parti'nin siyasi alana egemen olması amaçlandığı anlaşıldı. Sedat'ın suikastından sonra 1981'de uygulanan ve sürekli uzatılan Olağanüstü Hal Yasası, Mübarek rejiminin diğer muhalif grupların yanı sıra muhalif partileri bastırmasına da yardımcı oldu.

İlerleyen zamanlarda ise gelirdeki düşüş, Mısır'ın yüksek dış borcu ve genel olarak ekonomik kriz, devletin 1989'da iflasını ilan etmesine neden oldu. Sonuç olarak, Mübarek rejimi IMF tarafından 1991 yılında hazırlanan Ekonomik Reform ve Yapısal Uyum Programını (ERSAP) kabul etmek ve uygulamak zorunda kaldı. Bu "reform" paketi ile Mısır'ın ödeneklerinde azalmalar ve hatta daha da kötüsü devlet kurumlarında özelleştirmeler olacaktı. 1999 yılının haziran ayına kadar 314 kamu kuruluşundan 124'ü satıldı. Mısır'ın ekonomik sorunlarını çözmek yerine, IMF'nin yapısal reformları daha da büyük sorunlara yol açtı.

Bu özelleştirmeler ülkede giderek daha da yaygınlaştı ve özel sektörün ekonomideki payı giderek arttı, ancak özelleştirme süreci yeni elitleri kamu kaynaklarına erişim için devlete daha bağımlı hale getirdi. Başka bir deyişle, Mübarek'in cumhurbaşkanlığı, çeşitli özel şirketler tarafından ulusal servetin ele geçirildiği bir dönemdi. Nüfusun çoğu açlık riski altındaydı ve kişi başına düşen milli gelir günde 2 dolara geriledi. İşsizliğin günden güne artması sebebiyle gençler için iş olanakları oldukça sınırlı hale geldi.

Yine de Mübarek'in ilk yılları birkaç nedenden dolayı başarılı sayılabilir. Her şeyden önce, Mübarek iktidara geldiğinde, bütün siyasi mahkumları serbest bıraktı ve onlarla diyalog kurmaya başladı. Bu Mısır'ın demokratikleşmesi için umut yarattı. İkincisi, basın özgürlüğü, yalnızca göreceli bir özgürlük olsa bile, rejimin politikalarını eleştirdi. Gerçekte, tüm bu demokratik girişimler muhalefeti kontrol altında tutmaya ve “sadık bir muhalefet” yaratmaya yönelikti. Üçüncüsü, hükümetin bilgisayar ve İnternet kullanımını teşvik etme çabaları olumlu bir gelişme oldu. Mübarek saltanatının ilk yıllarında, demokrasi ve demokratikleşme vurgusu açıkça görülebilir. Yeni seçim yasası 1984 seçimlerinden hemen önce Meclise girme%8 barajını getirdi. Bu, anti-demokratik bir politika gibi görünse de yeni yasanın, Mübarek rejiminin ülkedeki ilk çok partili seçimleri yasalastırırken Mısır'ı demokratikleştirme eğilimini yansıttığı da iddia edilebilir. Bu sözde demokratik politikaların bir sonucu olarak, 1984'teki seçimlere beş parti katıldı ve seçimlerden sonra iki partili bir parlamento kuruldu.

Mısır, Mübarek döneminin ilk günlerinde Suudi Arabistan ve Kuveyt ile iş birliğinin bir sonucu olarak Mısır bu ülkelerden önemli miktarda ekonomik yardım aldı. Ayrıca, Mısır'ın Irak'ın Kuveyt'i işgaline karşı çıkması ABD, Körfez ülkeleri ve Avrupa'dan yardım almasına olanak sağladı. İlk dönemlerde kişi başına düşen milli gelir artsa da bu ekonomik büyümeden çok dış yardım ve borçlara bağlı olması nedeniyle uzun süren bir süreç olmadı. Mübarek'in neo-liberal politikalarının bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan yeni ekonomik seçkinler de yolsuzlukla büyüdü. Kaynakların rejimin ve sadık seçkinlerin elinde olması, servetin eşit dağılımını engelledi.

İlerleyen bölümlerde 2000'li yıllarla birlikte artan protesto hareketleri tartışılmıştır. 2000'li yıllara yaklaşırken, Mısır zaten ekonomik sorunlardan mustarip bir haldeydi ve siyasi olarak ülke giderek daha otoriter hale gelmişti. Olağanüstü Hal Yasası kapsamında, insanların protesto gösterileri engellenmişti. 2000 yılında, İkinci Filistinli İntifada ile Mısır, protesto kültürünün tarihinde yeni bir dönüm noktası yaşadı. İsrail karşıtı protestolar ülkenin birçok yerinde ortaya çıkarken, insanlar eş zamanlı olarak sokağa çıkma yasağı korkusunun üstesinden gelmede önemli bir deneyim kazanıyorlardı. Yaptığım görüşmelerde de İkinci Filistin Ayaklanmasının

Mısır halkı için çok önemli bir dönüm noktası olduğunu gördüm. Tüm görüşmelerde, birçok Mısırlı aktivistin bu özel etkinlikten sonra politik kimliklerini geliştirip daha sonra aktivistler haline geldiği sonucuna vardım. Benzer şekilde önemli bir kırılma noktası ABD'nin 2003'te Irak'a saldırmasıydı. Mübarek rejiminin bu işgal konusundaki sessizliği yakında Amerikan karşıtı protestoların Mübarek karşıtı olmasına neden olacaktı. Mısırlılar asıl tehlikenin, İsrail ve ABD ile iş birliği yapan rejimin kendisi olduğunu fark ettiler. 2006'da Mısır'da Mübarek rejimine gerginliği artıran bir diğer gelişme de Hizbullah'ın İsrail'le savaşıydı. Rejim Hizbullah'ı barışı rahatsız etmekle suçlayan açıklamalar yaptı. Buna karşılık, Müslüman Kardeşler 'in lideri, Hizbullah'la dayanışmayı ifade eden ve gerekli görüldüğü takdirde 10.000 savaşıçı gönderebileceklerini iddia eden açıklamalar yaptı. Mübarek rejiminin Siyonist devlet ve onun en büyük destekçisi olan ABD ile olan iş birliği, Mısırlıların rejime karşı öfkelerini artırdı.

Bu nedenle, 2000 yılından itibaren Mısır'da bir protesto dalgasının oluşmaya başladığı ve rejime karşı hoşnutsuzluğun çoktan gelişmeye başladığı açıktır. İkinci Filistin Ayaklanması'nın ardından ABD'nin Irak'ı ve Hizbullah-İsrail Savaşı'nı işgal etmesi diğer önemli bölgesel gelişmelerdi. Filistin meselesi zaten Mısır halkının gündemindeydi ve Mısır, özellikle Nasır döneminde Filistinlilerin her zaman önemli savunucularından biriydi ve bu nedenle Mısır halkı bu konuya duyarlıydı. Bu önem, Mısır halkını Filistinlileri desteklemek için birçok gösteri düzenlemeye sevk etti ve Filistinlileri desteklemek adına PCSI gibi bu amacı taşıyan bazı gruplar kuruldu. Sonuç olarak, aktivistler arasında ağlar ortaya çıkmaya başladı. ABD'nin Irak'ı işgal etmesini protesto etmek için eylemciler sokaklarda da yer aldı. 25 Ocak 2011 tarihinde Tahrir Meydanı'ndaki insanların çoğunun, önceki protestolardan zaten birbirlerini tanıdığı ve kendi aralarında bir güven duygusu geliştirdiği görülmüştür.

25 Ocak olaylarından önceki on yılın da burada açıklandığı gibi başka bir önemli özelliği vardı. Her ne kadar Mısır'ın protesto kültürü tarihi tek bir yıla indirgenemezse de Maha Abdulrahman'ın doğru bir şekilde belirttiği gibi, 2000'den sonra Mısır yeni bir protesto hareketine tanık oldu. Önceden, Mübarek'e muhalefet siyasi partilerle sınırlıydı ve muhalefetin rejime karşı etkili bir şekilde birleştiğini söylemek zor. Son on yılı bu kadar önemli yapan şey, rejim ile mücadeledeki

değişim. Bu yeni mücadele türü ile Mübarek rejimine muhalefet siyasi partilerden PCSI ve Kefaya gibi diğer hareketlere ve gruplara geçti. İkinci Filistin Ayaklanmasını destekleme protestolarında Mısırlı aktivistler birbirlerini tanıma fırsatı buldular ve PCSI ile İsrail'i protesto etmek için farklı ideolojik gruplar bir araya geldi.

Üçüncü Bölümde ise Kefaya Hareketi'nin doğuşundan ve Mısır protesto kültürüne olan katkısından, akademisyenlerin ve savcılar rejimin baskı ve adaletsiz politikaları karşısında giriştikleri mücadeleden ve ülkede yıllardır süregelen fakat son zamanlarda giderek artan işçi ayaklanmalarını ele alıyor.

İlk olarak, Kefaya Hareketi'nin Mısır'daki sosyal hareketler tarihinde bir dönüm noktası olduğu söylenebilir. 2004'teki kuruluşundan bu yana, hareket ülke genelinde özellikle partiler dışında bir muhalefet oluşturuyordu. Bu da farklı görüşlerden politik veya apolitik pek çok Mısırlının gruba katılmasına sebep oldu. Bununla birlikte, Kefaya Hareketi ile Mübarek ve politikalarını eleştirmeye cesaret edemeyen insanların korku tabusu bir parça da olsa kırıldı. Bu, korku ve çekingenlik atmosferinin kırıldığı ilk dönemdi ve rejimin ve Mübarek'in kendisi Mısır halkının eleştirilerinin doğrudan hedefleriydi. Mübarek rejimine ve meşruiyetine karşı gerçek bir meydan okumaydı. Bu nedenle, Nasırcıları, liberalleri, sosyalistleri ve İslamcıları bir araya getiren Kefaya Hareketi 2011'de Mübarek'in çöküşüne doğru bir adım attı.

Kefaya Hareketi'nin bir diğer önemi ise gelecek olan 2011 ayaklanmasında çok önemli rol alacak olan 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi olarak adlandırılan yeni bir protesto hareketinin yaratılmasına ilham verecek olmasıydı. Mart 2008'de bir grup Mısırlı genç tekstil işçilerinin 6 Nisan'daki grevlerini düşük maaşlara ve yüksek gıda fiyatlarına karşı desteklemek için bir Facebook grubu oluşturdular. Bu grup ideolojik bir temelden yoksundu ve ilk amacı işçilerin daha iyi koşullarda çalışabilmesini sağlamaktı. İşçileri desteklemek amacıyla kurulan bu grup kısa sürede Mübarek karşıtı Mısırlıların bir araya geldiği bir platform haline gelmişti.

Diğer bir deyişle, 2005 cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerinden hemen önce kurulan Kefaya Hareketi ile rejim karşıtı farklı gruplar Mısır'da tek bir çatı altında toplanma fırsatı buldu. Kefaya'yı özel yapan, herhangi bir siyasi partiye bağlı olmaması, belirli bir ideolojiyi benimsememesi ve farklı siyasi duruşlara sahip grupları birleştirmesiydi. Değişim fikri toplumda giderek yayılıyordu. Akademisyenler ve hakimler de rejimin baskısı, adaletsizliği ve yolsuzluğu konusunda sessiz kalmadılar; seslerini duyurmak için, broşürler yayınladılar ve rejim karşıtı duyguları ifade etmek için imza kampanyaları düzenlediler. Ayrıca, Hakimler Kulübünün üyesi hakimler, adil bir ortamda yapılmadıkları takdirde 2005 seçimlerini denetlemeyeceklerini dile getirdiler. Bundan kısa bir süre sonra 2006, 2007 ve özellikle 2008'de işçi isyanları doldu. Düşük maaşlara, kötü çalışma koşullarına, işten çıkarmalara duyulan tepkiler sonucu işçilerin greve gitme kararı ülkede yankı uyandırdı. Özellikle gençler arasında işçilere destek olma düşüncesi ve rejimin politikalarına duyulan öfke giderek artıyordu. Tüm bu protestolar, Mübarek karşıtı insanlar arasında yeni bağlar yaratmaya ve insanların sokaklardaki varlıklarını arttırmasına hizmet ediyordu. Bu grup, bu grevi sosyal medya yoluyla, özellikle de Facebook aracılığıyla organize edebildi ve kısa sürede birçok kullanıcıya ulaşabildi.

Yani denebilir ki 2000'den bu yana yapılan protestolar Mısır'da sokak gösterileri oldukça arttı ve bu sayede göstericiler arasında bilgi birikimi paylaşımı sağlandı. Farklı gruplar birbirlerinin tecrübelerinden çok şey öğrendi ve en önemli sonuçlarından belki de birisi ki bu farklı gruplar arasında birbirine karşı olan ön yargılar yıkıldı ya da azaldı. Öte yandan, bazı akademisyenler ve hakimler, halkın politik bilincini ve rejime karşı konuşma cesaretini arttırmada önemli aktörlerden olmuştur. 2000'lerin başında rejim baskısına karşı durmuşlar ve dilekçeler yazıp, imza kampanyaları düzenleyip, oturma eylemleri düzenlemişleridir. Mübarek rejimine karşı tüm bu eylemler Mısır halkı arasında cesaret yükseltmeye yardımcı olmuştur. Ayrıca, bu olaylar Mısır'da 2000 yılından itibaren zaten bir protesto döngüsü olduğunu gösteriyor. Bu gelişmeler göz önüne alındığında, Arap ayaklanmaları ve özellikle Mısır ayaklanmasının, bu tezin iddia ettiği gibi "Uyanış" olarak adlandırılmaması gerektiğini söylemek mümkündür. Bu kelime ani bir olaya işaret ediyor, ancak ülkenin iç gelişmelerine baktığımızda, Mısır'ın 25 Ocak olaylarından önceki on yıldaki olaylarla yoğun olarak şekillendirilmiş bir aktif

sokak politikasına ve protesto kültürüne sahip olduğu açıktır. 25 Ocak ayaklanmasından önceki on yıldaki bu olaylar, eylemcileri bir araya getirmediyse ve nüfusun farklı kesimleri arasında bir cesaret duygusu yaratsaydı, yalnızca sosyal medyanın tek başına görülen çarpıcı etkiyi yaratacağı şüphelidir. Başka bir deyişle, ayaklanmadan önceki on yılda gerçekleşen olaylar, Mısır protesto kültürünün şekillendirilmesinde ve 25 Ocak 2011 ayaklanmalarına hazırlık için kritik öneme sahipti.

Tezin dördüncü bölümünde ise giderek artan polis şiddetine örnek olarak Khaled Said'in öldürülmesi ele alınmıştır. Khaled Said'in sıradan bir genç vatandaş olması, herhangi bir politik aktivizminin olmaması onun Mısır'da bu kadar etki yaratmasının sebeplerindendir. Ayrıca Wael Ghonim'in sosyal medya aracılığıyla olayı duyurması ve tüm Mısırlıları polis şiddetine ve yolsuzluğuna karşı ses çıkarmaya davet etmesi, halkın birbiriyle iletişime geçmesine ve artık sessiz kalmamaları gerektiğini anlamalarını sağlamıştır. Öte yandan ülkede tansiyon yükselirken 2010 parlamento seçimlerinde cumhurbaşkanlığı için Hüsnü Mübarek'in oğlu Cemal Mübarek'in hazırlanıyor oluşu ülkede tansiyonu giderek arttırıyordu. Genç gruplar ise El Baradei'yi desteklemek için kampanyalar yürütüyordu. Seçim sonuçlarından duyulan rahatsızlık gelen ayaklanmalar için ayrıca bir zemin oluşturuyordu. Ayrıca, rejimin son yıllarda giderek artan ayrıştırmacı politikası ülkede yaşayan Koptikler'i hedef haline getiriyordu. Bunun son örneği 1 Ocak 2011'de gerçekleşen Koptik Kilise saldırısıydı. Bu Mısırlıların birbirine kenetlenmesini ve 'biz biriz' düşüncesinin yayılmasını sağladı. Koptikler için yapılan gösterilerde rejimin ayrıştırmacı politikası eleştiriliyordu. Öte yandan bu bölümde ele alınan bir diğer konuda Mısırlı gençlerin özellikle 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi'nin yeni iletişim araçlarını kullanarak devrime giden süreci nasıl yönettiğidir. Bu bölümde sosyal medyanın ve geleneksel iletişim araçlarının araç olarak nasıl kullanıldığına da değinilmektedir. Diğer bir önemli nokta da futbol taraftar gruplarının yıllardır güvenlik güçleriyle olan çatışma durumunun verdiği tecrübeyle devrim sürecinde nasıl önemli rol oynadığıdır.

Sonuç olarak, isyan öncesi on yıl içinde Mısır'da kurulan çeşitli gruplar, siyasi aktivistlerin harekete geçmesi için bir alan yarattı ve farklı gruplar arasında canlı

ağlar yarattı. Maha Abdelrahman'ın gözlemlediği gibi, bu ağların Mısır'da kurulması protesto hareketlerinin sürekliliğini sağladı ve aktivistlerin devlet kontrolünden kaçması için alan yarattı. Tabii ki, bu süreç aniden gerçekleşmedi. Uzun yıllara dayanan deneyim, mobilizasyon, ağ oluşturma ve farklı grupların daha kapsayıcı bir politik kültüre entegrasyonunun sağlanması tüm bu sürece dahildi. Kefaya ve 6 Nisan Gençlik Hareketi gibi, tüm gruplar önceki deneyimlerden yararlandı ve bu geçmiş deneyimleri kendi bilgileri ile birleştirdi. Başka bir deyişle, Mısır'daki demokrasi yanlısı hareket, uzun yılların deneyim ve bilgisinin sonucuydu. Mısır'da 25 Ocak 2011'de, Mübarek'in istifasıyla sonuçlanan bu süreç, birçok faktörün ve yıllardır süren protestoların bir sonucudur; yani tek bir sebeple açıklanamaz. En önemlisi, bu tez, otoriter rejimler altında sessizce yaşayan “sessiz” ve değişken olmayan kişilerin iddialarının Mısır gerçekliğine uymadığını vurgulamayı amaçlamıştır. Mısır, Arap dünyasındaki tarihsel, coğrafi ve politik önemi nedeniyle burada bir vaka çalışması olarak seçildi. Kısaca tez, Mısır'daki ayaklanmaları 2011 yılında Arap dünyasını etkileyen protesto hareketlerinin bir parçası olarak görmekte fakat her ülkenin kendi dinamikleri olduğunu, her ne kadar protesto sebepleri arasında ortak özellikler de olsa, her ülke bağlamının çok özel nitelikler taşıdığını ileri sürmektedir. Bu bağlamda tez, her ülkenin kendi içerisinde geçmişe dönük çalışmaları hakkettiğini aksi halde ülkelerin protesto geçmişinin görmezden gelineceğini iddia etmektedir.

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