

REGIME FAILURES AND OPPOSITION CONSOLIDATION IN THE OVERTHROW OF HOSNI MUBARAK

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On February 11, 2011 following eighteen days of protest in Tahrir Square, Liberation Square in Egypt, President Mubarak was forced from office after thirty years as president. While the whirlwind of media, social and traditional, reported events in real time, providing an indication that it was those eighteen days that forced his ouster, the downfall of Hosni Mubarak has much deeper roots. My research investigates those roots, the deep-seated causes of the overthrow of a dictator. By examining the failures of the regime, particularly those of the past decade, and addressing those failures within the context of authoritarian consolidation and decay, and by applying them to the case study of Egypt, I have shown that although he appeared perpetually entrenched the Egyptian president was in fact vulnerable.

This study draws not only from the scholarly research that evaluates consolidation and collapse of authoritarian regimes; I have also relied on magazines, newspapers, and popular journals. In addition, I have cited reports from international organizations such as *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch*. Finally, since social media played a pivotal role in consolidation of the opposition and the organization of the Tahrir protests, I have examined journalists' reports of blogs, Facebook, and other pertinent social media, in order to provide more depth and reliability to this research.

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DEDICATION

“The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge.” Stephen Hawking.

This thesis is dedicated to all of the brave men and women throughout Egypt and the Middle East who, against brutal authoritarian regimes, have fought so courageously for self-determination. Your devotion to take on such injustice is inspiring. To Palestinians who suffer under Israeli apartheid and occupation sustained by United States’ complicity, it is my devout wish that one day an Arab Spring finds its way to you. I look forward to a time when enough citizens of the United States will overcome their ignorance, to see through the illusion that is perpetuated in Washington D.C. in regards to the West Bank and Gaza and Tel Aviv, and that the suffering of Palestinians, those refugees forced from their homes and those living as prisoners on their own land, will be alleviated with universal recognition of a free and independent Palestine.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROOTS OF AUTHORITARIAN CONSOLIDATION AND DECAY AS APPLIED TO HOSNI MUBARAK'S EGYPT

For eighteen days in January and February of 2011 Tahrir Square, Liberation Square in Cairo was stuffed with Egyptians from all walks of life. Young and web connected unemployed college students put out a call that resonated around the troubled nation. Laborers left unemployment lines. Fathers and mothers supported their sons and daughters who inspired the summons. Many middle class Egyptians found the nerve to join protests maybe for the first time in their lives. Judges who had already been rumbling in their courts supported it. Civil Society in all flavors emptied into Tahrir. The Brotherhood hesitated, but pushed by their youth came to the table as well. Mubarak's secret police made an early entrance and exit, as did his plainclothes thugs, some of them on bizarre and violent camel rides. Even the military was there, stoically biding its time.

Media nearly outnumbered protesters. Anderson Cooper joined *Al Jazeera*, the *BBC* and *NPR* and a host of world and Egyptian independents. Fed by streaming YouTube videos, they interviewed people like it was a tailgate filled parking lot at a NCAA College Football game. There was violence. There were deaths, but not a lot. Protesters swept up their messes and recycled their plastic water bottles. And by February 11 when President Mubarak toppled from his perch, everybody in the world was celebrating.

The problem was that nobody could believe it happened. Eighteen days? Less than three weeks and the Middle East's most steady strongman, the West's Maginot Line to Islamic fundamentalism had been exported to Sharm-el Sheikh. A U.S. "go to guy" for thirty years, Israel's only real legitimate Arab partner, a recipient of billions of dollars in first world aid, all sorts of attention from first world financial organizations, standing invitations to almost every first world capital, and in less than the time it takes to tour the pyramids, he's out of the picture.

Research Question

How was this possible? The answer to that question and the underlying premise of this study is that this revolution was not eighteen days long; it fermented for nearly two decades. It seemed so brief, so intense because we intimately experienced those final explosive three weeks together, online and via round the clock television coverage. However, by investigating the failures of the Mubarak regime, particularly those of the past decade, and addressing those failures within the context of an examination of authoritarian consolidation and decay, and by applying them to the case study of Egypt, I will show that although he appeared perpetually entrenched the Egyptian president was in fact vulnerable. I will document that it was in fact those underlying causes, which had simmered for so long that made possible a consolidated opposition and the final fireworks. The eighteen days in Tahrir was merely the grand finale. I will also, in the process of dealing with Mubarak and his fall from power in this the Facebook age, reflect on how the Egyptian study provides a warning to tyrannical regimes worldwide, as well as a glimmer of hope for those suffering under similar oppression.

In order for an authoritarian regime like Mubarak's to extend its control over the people, over the government, it must maintain a hold on the machinery of that government. For a long time the Egyptian president did just that. His phony democratic administration had all the labels of a democracy. The NDP, his phony democratic party, stifled real turnout and won all sorts of counterfeit elections. Black and white television styled state sponsored media announced a legitimacy that nobody paid attention to. His third world economy struggled as third world economies do. Secret police rounded up the troublemakers, slapped them around and tossed them into prison. Emergency rule made it all legal. And whenever President Mubarak needed more leverage, he just changed the constitution to suit his needs. It seemed almost natural that this process would continue on indefinitely.

The problem was this dictator was not just some sub-Saharan strongman or a Banana Republic president. Ties to Western loans and billions in military aid, his state signature on the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty, it all came with significant responsibility. It was due to these responsibilities, particularly those pushed by the Bush administration involving Israel and democratic institutional reforms that placed him in such a vulnerable position. Like always, he did as little as possible to placate U.S. demands and yet still earn Washington's acceptance. He tinkered around the edges with constitutional reforms that opened up organized opposition to leverage that break. He tried to close the door, stepped up state suppression, and rolled back reforms after the pressure to change cooled off. But the genie was out of the bottle. Opposition intensified and spread, as economic woes and the corruption of a third world banana republic reared its head.

Meanwhile, he forfeited a main staple of dictatorship survival worldwide. Mubarak allowed independent media to exercise limited freedoms. In order to gain the economic advantages of the Internet he loosened the noose on the World Wide Web. Both outlets, independent media and social networking, spurred on by *Al Jazeera* through satellite dishes sprouting on nearly every apartment complex from Cairo to Alexandria, and the growing presence of blogs and Facebook and YouTube provided effective routes to challenge the regime. In the end, the 21st century challenge was too great to hold back with 20th century authoritarian repression.

Tarek Masoud, assistant professor of public policy at Harvard University and a Carnegie Scholar looks back on “The Road to (and from) Liberation Square,” to make sense not only of the regime collapse, but also of the fact that so many scholars were taken by surprise. After acknowledging the influence of “large and growing corps of angry young people with no prospects,” and “repeated thwarting of the voters’ will” and “casually dispensed brutality” by the regime, Masoud confesses, “it is easy now to see why Egypt’s revolution had to happen, and why President Mubarak’s thirty year reign had to end in the spectacular manner in which it did. One might conclude that the revolution was not only inevitable, but over determined.” Masoud goes on to reprimand himself and fellow scholars for missing the signs, “... those of us who study the regime not only failed to predict the regime collapse, we actually saw it as an exemplar of something we called “durable authoritarianism”¹ ... a new breed of modern dictatorship that could weather the storms that normally topple such governments. He admits that not

¹ Tarek Masoud, “The Road To (and from) Liberation Square,” *Journal of Democracy* 23:3 (July 2011): 20,21.

all were caught off guard, "... practically every journalist who visited Egypt in the last few years seemed to mark the occasion by filing a piece warning of the regime's impending collapse. But we scholars of the country—none of us blind to the regime's failures and the people's misery—thought that we knew better."²

While Masoud's conclusion that revolution was in fact predictable would have been more notable had it made it prior to Tahrir, the truth remains that many journalists on assignment in Egypt over the past decade did foreshadow signs of this unraveling. Taken together with scholarly research on authoritarian regimes, which if applied to the failures of Mubarak highlight, while maybe not inevitable collapse, at least a very vulnerable government keen to be toppled. And this will not be the last authoritarian regime to fail in the Facebook age. A dictator who claims to be a democrat must offer his constituents some scraps of democracy to continue to legitimize such claims. Those institutions will become more and more difficult to control. The Internet provides an efficient way around suppression. International media says what it wants to say, and is transmitted by satellite wherever it wants to go. Soon, no authoritarian regime, if it allows an inch will be able to prevent the mile. The electricity will have to be turned all the way off, as in North Korea, or suppressed peoples will find a way to organize and successfully resist oppression.

Literature Review

In order to explore the rise and fall of an authoritarian regime, it must first be classified it as such. In an effort to do so, it must be classified by what it is not; it is not a

² Masoud, "To and From Liberation Square." 22.

democracy. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way distinguish democracy from full-scale authoritarianism. They note that modern democratic regimes must meet four minimum criteria. 1 – Elections of executives and legislatures are open, free, and fair. 2 – Virtually all adults possess the right to vote. 3 – Political rights and civil liberties, including freedom of press, association, and right to criticize the government are broadly protected. 4 – Elected authorities benefit from a real authority to govern.³ Dahl says it simpler; democracies are merely “...all regimes that hold elections in which the opposition has some chance of winning and taking office.”⁴ Guillermo O’Donnell however says it best, because within his definition he elevates the dignity and liberty due each citizen under the law.

O’Donnell’s *Why the Rule of Law Matters*, reveals the significance of a real foundation for democracy. Page one, paragraph one, sentence one, “The rule of law is among the essential pillars upon which any high quality democracy rests.”⁵ O’Donnell stresses the hollowness of constitutional “paper rights” which are worthless if they do not transfer into the lives of citizens of the republic. He identifies citizens as “agents” of democracy. They “...are not only the carriers of certain rights; they are the source and the justification of the very claim to rule upon which democratic polity relies when making binding decisions.”⁶ Citizenry, O’Donnell notes should never infer the status of subject. Nor should their quality of life exist at the behest of the good will of the government. “This individual, an agent and carrier of a bundle of civil and eventually also social

³ Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13.2 (2002).

⁴ Adam Przeworski and Michael Alvarez, “What Makes Democracies Endure?” *Journal of Democracy*, 7.1 (1996): 39.

⁵ Guillermo O’Donnell, “Why the Rule of Law Matters” *Journal of Democracy*, 15.4 (2004): 32.

⁶ O’Donnell, “Rule of Law,” 38.

rights, whether she is or is not a political citizen - has a legally grounded claim to be treated with full consideration and respect, and an equal basis with everyone else.”⁷ He notes further that this treatment must be based on laws that are clearly understood by the citizenry, and “enacted in ways that accord with democratic procedures.” In short all powers of the government flow from the people.

In an authoritarian regime power flows from the “person.” According to O’Donnell, even in those authoritarian systems that are highly institutionalized, somebody or some entity sits on top and delegates power that he doesn’t have the right to distribute. These illegitimate powers take the place of a genuine rule of law. Conversely within a democratic system, a valid judiciary that is elected by the people, or appointed by the people’s representatives insures the rule of law. “... It enacts and backs the rights attached to a democratic regime; and it holds all officials and institutions in the state...answerable to the law.”⁸ Furthermore, the legal system is closed. No one should be above or beyond its reach. Without such accountability, there exists the opportunity for individuals or groups to arbitrarily stifle human rights.⁹ It is within this void of accountability to the people, and to the law, that authoritarian regimes exert their power.

Most governments in the world however, are not authoritarian. Larry Diamond in 2001 identified 54% of world regimes as democratic; 13% fully authoritarian.¹⁰ This leaves an increasing number of governments residing within a “political gray zone...between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship.” Diamond notes, that

⁷ O’Donnell, “Rule of Law,” 38.

⁸ O’Donnell, “Rule of Law,” 37.

⁹ O’Donnell, “Rule of Law,” 37.

¹⁰ Larry Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13.2 (2002): 25-26.

virtually all of these hybrid regimes are deliberately pseudo democratic, in that the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks the reality of authoritarian domination.¹¹ Much of this dominance, as we shall see in Egypt's situation, stems from a lack of competition in the electoral arena. For a government to represent the people's will, or for it to fairly administer O'Donnell's "rule of law", opposition parties must be allowed to freely compete. An indicator as to whether or not that occurs comes from a tally of the breakdown of parliamentary parties and the percentage of the vote captured by the executive. Diamond admits, "the distinction between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism turns crucially on the freedom, fairness, inclusiveness, and meaningfulness of election."¹² A meaningful election should provide results in which oppositional representatives are found in the legislature in reasonable numbers. "In regimes where elections are largely an authoritarian façade, the ruling party wins almost all the seats..."¹³ This is matched by one-sided presidential election results. One clear sign of hegemony, as noted by Diamond, is when the president wins three-quarters or more of the popular vote. He identifies the extreme end of this lopsided executive continuum as defined by the presidents of Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, all "re-elected in the 1990's with well over 90% of the vote."¹⁴

Levitsky and Way provide a closer look at some of these non-democratic regimes residing in the "grey zone." They measure the route to power as well as the tactics used to retain authority. They also identify the "Achilles' heels" of such governments. The

¹¹ Diamond, "Hybrid Regimes," 24.

¹² Diamond, "Hybrid Regimes," 28.

¹³ Diamond, "Hybrid Regimes," 29-32.

¹⁴ Diamond, "Hybrid Regimes," 32.

difference between a competitive authoritarian regime and a fully dictatorial rule is the inability of the former to totally eliminate democratic machinery. While they are extremely adept at manipulating the rules, the regime is unable to eliminate or reduce democratic institutions to a mere façade.¹⁵ Instead it uses intimidation, bribery, outright banishment, or other more subtle means to reduce power. The problem for the regime is that while these oppositional entities are weakened and the democratic institutions badly flawed, they remain in tact. And since they are present they provide an opening for opponents to chip away (ever so slightly) at the power of the government. Cumulatively this can cause a significant dilemma for the regime.

Levitsky and Way identify four arenas through which "... opposition forces may periodically challenge, weaken, and occasionally even defeat autocratic incumbents." 1 - electoral arena; 2 - the legislature; 3 - the judiciary; and 4 – the media.¹⁶ Diamond touches on the significance of electoral and legislative institutions above. O'Donnell's evaluation of the rule of law highlights the impact of an independent judiciary. Levitsky and Ways' assessment of the media role in addressing inequities of an authoritarian regime, is telling. "In most full-blown autocracies, the media are entirely state-owned, heavily censored, or systematically repressed...journalists who provoke the ire of the government risk arrest, deportation, and even assassination."¹⁷ Linz and Stepan identify the influence of the media in the grey zone between post-totalitarian and authoritarian regimes as a "second culture." It may be "sufficiently powerful that even though the opposition leaders will be frequently imprisoned, they can generate substantial followings

¹⁵ Levitsky and Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism," 53.

¹⁶ Levitsky and Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism," 54.

¹⁷ Levitsky and Way, "Competitive Authoritarianism," 57.

and create enduring oppositional organizations in civil society.” At a moment of crisis it is this “cadre of democratic opposition based in civil society” that forms a democratic core of political opposition.”¹⁸

Within competitive authoritarian regimes as well, the noose is loose, and even more dangerous to regime survival. Independent media outlets are not only legal they’re often influential. Journalists, although continually harassed, can develop into legitimate opposition figures. The regime may be challenged from inside and outside the state. If the domestic outlets are not outright banned, the government may seek to buy them off or legislate them out of business.¹⁹ However, the growing power of the Internet and reach of international media, in addition to the rise of social networking, poses a problem not so easily stifled.

Authoritarian governments may exist for a long time alongside hobbled democratic institutions. As long as incumbents avoid egregious (and well publicized) rights abuses and do not openly steal elections, the contradictions inherent in competitive authoritarianism may be manageable.²⁰ President Mubarak “managed” quite comfortably for nearly thirty years. However, the existence of institutions noted above, served as a continual nuisance to the regime. “The presence of elections, legislature, courts and an independent media creates periodic opportunities for challenges by opposition forces.”²¹ If the government doesn’t suppress these forces, it runs the risk that they’ll turn out to be unmanageable. If they pull the plug on all institutions they risk international scorn.

¹⁸ Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 43.

¹⁹ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 57-58.

²⁰ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 53.

²¹ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 54.

Depending upon the demands of their international partners, as Egypt with the U.S. in regards to democratic institutions, this could serve nearly as dangerous to regime longevity, as the potential havoc reeked through leveraging the institutions themselves.

International recognition comes at a price and if significant enough to regime endurance it must at least be a consideration in domestic policy formation. Laurence Whitehead notes in his study of the complexity of foreign influence on transitioning dictatorial governments, to the particular pressures fostered by various U.S. administrations, and authoritarian regime reaction. He admits the situation is not nearly so simple as the rhetoric of the “Truman Doctrine” or Kennedy’s “Alliance for Progress” might indicate, and that in the end international weight plays a secondary function in regime decisions regarding liberalization. Regardless, its influence definitely impacts the regime.²² As authoritarian regimes come in various shades of grey, so too does the weight of foreign policy pressure on that government. Linz and Stepan identify three such influences. The first two, an outside military force that determines the actual downfall of the regime, and foreign subversion of the government, are not pertinent to this study. The third, as we shall see in regards to Hosni Mubarak’s relationship with the United States, had significant impact. Linz and Stepan refer to the outside empire influence as a *gate opening to democratic efforts*. The subordinate regime (Egypt), concerned primarily with “internal and geopolitical needs”, is pushed to “open a previously closed gate to democratization” by the second state (USA). Whether that movement begins a transition towards democratic consolidation, is determined not by the

²² Lawrence Whitehead, “International Aspects of Democratization,” in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, ed Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 4-5, 40.

foreign power but by the regime itself. However without initial foreign state action there would be no need for potentially consolidating or destructive domestic reaction.²³

Authoritarian Regime Consolidation

Those autocratic regimes that are best able to successfully balance limited freedoms with effective restriction for an extended period of time increase their chance of longevity with each year they stay in power. Order is key. Huntington stresses not the form of government, but the degree. He cites Madison's Federalist 51, "the great difficulty lies in this; you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it control itself."²⁴ The primary problem, Huntington notes, is not liberty, but "the creation of a legitimate public order." When a regime; democratic, authoritarian, or otherwise, achieves this primary directive, the possibilities of its continuation is increased by the very fact that it continues to endure. "The longer an organization...has been in existence, the higher the level of institutionalization. The older an organization is, the more likely it is to continue to exist through any specified future time period."²⁵ This has certainly proven true with many autocratic Arab governments of the Middle East; According to the CIA Fact book the following Middle Eastern regimes have been perpetuating rule within the same family or person each for over thirty years - Egypt -1981, Kuwait - 1977, Syria - 1971, Oman - 1970, Libya - 1969, Morocco - 1957, Jordan -1950.

²³ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, 73.

²⁴ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 7.

²⁵ Huntington, *Political Order*, 13.

Once an authoritarian regime secures order, it must sustain a formula if it is to insure continued success. Steven Heydemann lays out five key features as defining elements of authoritarian consolidation; 1 – Containing of civil society. 2 – Management of political contestation. 3 – Capturing the benefits of selective economic reforms. 4 – Controlling of new communication technologies. 5 – Diversifying international linkages.²⁶ He insists that the hallmark of success for an authoritarian regime is to “exploit rather than resist broad social, political, and economic trends both to blunt the challenges they might contain and to generate political resources that bolster regimes’ hold on power.” While the criteria of this 2007 study evaluate current Arab governments, they could equally apply to any authoritarian regime.²⁷

Heydemann cites the potential sway of civil society in organizing opposition to a despotic government, as well as the significance of curtailing that influence, as step one in upgrading the autocrat. Linz and Stepan define civil society as, “...that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests.”²⁸ Heydemann notes the recent success of Arab governments in adopting a range of complex strategies to reassert state control over burgeoning civil sectors. “Rather than shutting down civil society, by blending repression, regulation, cooptation, and appropriation of NGO functions by the state, authoritarian regimes erode the capacity of the organizations to challenge political authority.”²⁹ They (the regimes)

²⁶ Steven Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World,” *The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution* (2007): 5.

²⁷ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 5.

²⁸ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, 7.

²⁹ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 6.

“posture as supporters of civil society while preventing the emergence of autonomous civic life and insulating themselves from any meaningful public accountability.”³⁰ Linz and Stepan see the control of civil society as an absolute necessity to successful authoritarian consolidation. The great capacity of civil society to mobilize opposition to the military led bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in South America and in Eastern Europe was the vehicle of those “who wanted to act ‘as if they were free’,” those who rallied opposition and ultimately brought down the regime. In order for an autocrat to succeed he must successfully neutralize civil society at least to the point of reasonable co-existence.

Authoritarian political contestation is all about appearances. Linz and Stepan refer to the illusion of democratic institutions in an authoritarian regime, free elections as a sufficient condition of democracy, as “electoralist fallacy”.³¹ Heydemann admits that recent electoral reforms in the Arab world “permit increased levels of political contestation – and in this sense cannot be dismissed as meaningless”, yet he sees the practice as a manipulative and an effective double-edged sword. “Elections remain tightly managed and operate as substantially uneven playing fields that distort electoral outcomes to the benefit of the regimes.” The most significant advantage in the electoral field in recent times has been the manner “in which states and ruling parties in the Arab world have become virtually indistinguishable.”³² By providing the machinery of democratic institutions, the regime opens a route for the legislative branch to be selected through phony elections, without having to cede any power to the opposition within the

³⁰ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 9.

³¹ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, 4.

³² Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 11.

legislative arena. It looks legitimate; it is not. The executive who runs the state and the regime also ultimately manages the single party legislative branch...no questions asked. Mubarak's Egypt provided an excellent example of such a government.

A third factor for authoritarian consolidation deals with a regime's ability to capture the benefits of selective economic transformation. Recently through its structural reforms with the IMF and World Bank, Egypt has attempted to consolidate around this key point. However, as the record will show, instead of boosting consolidation the results have provided fuel for opposition fire. In the past few decades, as they have increased their activity in the global marketplace, many Arab autocracies have relied heavily on patronage networks as well as the privileged position of the military to concentrate wealth in the hands of the elite and well connected. Ideally, according to Heydemann, this selective process of economic liberalization should provide opportunity for government supporters to reinforce the base of the regime and "mitigate pressures for comprehensive economic and social reforms."³³ The problem in the Arab world, and progressively throughout the entire globe is that vast wealth inequity, which has grown as a result of globalization, has driven many into poverty and away from the regime that benefits from increased wealth. Instead of bolstering regime legitimacy with the people, this global economic transformation has often served to inspire social and economic instability that can serve to destabilize it.

A fourth factor cited by the Heydemann as a focus of increased consolidation revolves around the control of new technologies. The Arab Spring highlights mixed

³³ Heydemann, "Upgrading Authoritarianism," 13-14.

results for success of regimes in this field. “Without question, literate Arab citizens today are more connected to global media flows and have better access to information about their own countries and the world than any previous generation... from Morocco to Yemen urban skylines bristle with satellite dishes. Arab satellite channels compete for audiences with programming that routinely provokes dire rumblings from governments.”³⁴ Mobile phones, Internet, social networking, all provides new and improving outlets with which to challenge the authorities. To balance such pressures regimes continually develop new strategies to manage public access. “Governments now accept, however reluctantly, the spread of new communications and media technologies...they recognize the value of these technologies as steam valves; outlets that mitigate social pressures that might otherwise become politicized.”³⁵ At the same time they build up regulation, surveillance, oversight, and coercion in an attempt to limit the “autonomy and privacy of users.” Considering that Heydemann’s study surmised, “It is entirely likely that within the next year the use of text messages to mobilize participants in political rallies... will no longer be possible”³⁶ proved way off the mark in regards to Egypt and Tunisia, control of such new technologies seems increasingly complicated. This is a battle that autocratic regimes around the world, even eventually China, will have a difficult time in managing.

A final key to Heydemann’s authoritarian consolidation revolves around the diversification of international linkage. In an effort to steer away from the pressure of Western political, social and economic reform, regimes look increasingly to the East for

³⁴ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 19.

³⁵ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 21.

³⁶ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 22.

new alliances. China not only undercuts Western donors “whose funding requires borrowers to meet standards of accountability, transparency, and performance... it has gained visibility as a developmentally effective, politically stable non-democracy that holds out potentially important lessons...”³⁷ Levitsky and Way add that Western linkages of “cultural and media influence, elite networks, demonstration effects, and direct pressure from Western governments – appear to have raised the cost of authoritarian entrenchment”³⁸ encouraging dictatorial governments to turn East. China particularly, but Malaysia, Russia, and Singapore as well provide despots significant economic and political options that do not expose them to organized democratic opposition or dictate the morale high ground of partnership often imposed on by the West. With alternative options available, and in an effort to upgrade, authoritarian regimes have begun to diversify their holdings.

While Heydemann concentrates on the political, social, and economic means in defining authoritarian consolidation, it cannot be forgotten that in order to retain power a tyrannical regime must be willing and able to wield the sword on its own people. Lucan Way reminds, “The autocrats command over an extensive, cohesive, well-funded, and experienced coercive apparatus that can reliably harass opposition and put down protest is key to authoritarian stability.”³⁹ The regime is in power on account of its own accord. If it does not possess the will to coercively suppress the population in times of crisis, or if the mechanisms that it employs to do so are not up to the task, the walls will come tumbling down. Without a viable threat of force to insure compliance, all of the

³⁷ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 24, 25.

³⁸ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 60.

³⁹ Lucan Way, “The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions,” *Journal of Democracy*, 19.3 (2008).

manipulation, cooption, surveillance, and “electoralist fallacies” cannot tame a legitimate and vigorous opposition, willing to take to the streets.

Authoritarian Regime Decay

Until now this study has concentrated primarily on how autocratic systems consolidate power. O’Donnell and Schmitter document the processes in which they give it up. For whatever reason an authoritarian regime collapses, the interval of time between the previous system and the form of government that follows is the transition. According to O’Donnell and Schmitter, that transition begins “when authoritarian incumbents...begin to modify their own rules in the direction of providing more secure guarantees for the rights of individuals and groups.”⁴⁰ This transition is not hard and fast. Nor do political scientists agree on the moment of its conception. What is evident, regardless of timing, is that the transition cracks the underpinning of regime stability. In the process the regime begins to subject itself to the will of the opposition. That tear may be tiny and mended with concessions of limited liberalization, or it may shake the foundations of the entire system, and consequently cause rupture.

Eventually, if the regime does begin even minor modification of its own rules to provide guarantees for the rights of individuals, some form of liberalization will occur. O’Donnell and Schmitter define this liberalization as, “the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties.”⁴¹ Timing of the liberalization is significant for

⁴⁰ Guillermo O’Donnell and Phillippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 6.

⁴¹ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 7.

regime survival. “The most favorable time comes at periods of widely acknowledged success of the regime, including a high economic juncture.”⁴² In such cases the government works from a position of strength and may reconnect with those who are already hesitant to challenge its authority. Opposition groups are weakest at this juncture. Conversely the worst time to liberalize is out of desperation. Once opposition actors discover the courage to challenge the regime in public, and do not find their actions met with the same level of repression evident at the height of power, the floodgates may open. There is no particular sequencing of events, however weakness on the part of a government that has so effectively played the bully, will not go unnoticed.⁴³ Victims collectivize around opposition parties, media, and civil society and with one another through social networking. This collectivity contains a power potential difficult to suppress, manage, or even predict.

Nobody can predict just how far towards democracy an authoritarian transition will move once it begins a transition. The amount of power transferred to the people via liberalized democratic institutions will determine the extent (or not) to which the transition transforms the previous government. According to Diamond’s previous tally of non-democratic governments, more resided in “grey” hybrid category, than were defined as full authoritarian. Thus, a regime that was moving in a liberal direction, unless it was wholly dictatorial, resided within that grey area already. There is no guarantee how far this liberalization might go. Nor are there assurances of the degree of democracy achieved. If a change occurs, there is no reason that it cannot switch back. Transition is

⁴² O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 7.

⁴³ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 7.

fluid, and influenced by a host of issues at home and abroad.⁴⁴ One thing O'Donnell and Schmitter are adamant about, while there is an omnipresent threat of violence, a strike, protests and demonstrations, a transition to democracy not accompanied by full-scale violence, has the best chance of survival. "Where the *viva revoluionaria* is taken, or when violence becomes widespread and recurrent, the prospects of political democracy are drastically reduced."⁴⁵

Much of the jockeying for positional power, prior to and during transition, takes place at the upper reaches of the regime. Soft liners and hard liners, elites within and outside of the system vie for influence. However, two significant players politically separated from the party, own significant influence; civil society and the military. In order for an authoritarian regime to control rule of law, civil society must be managed. Either through repression, ideological manipulation, terror, torture, or legislative action the stretch of civil society is reduced directly as the power of the regime is increased. A dictatorial government cannot effectively promote its agenda, with a bunch of citizens running around in public organizing democratic grass roots coalitions. However, once the regime has moved in a direction, however so slightly towards the opposition, "a generalized mobilization is likely to occur, which we choose to describe as the 'resurrection of civil society.'⁴⁶ And then the floodgates open. A regime that has previously defined citizenship as "holding a passport, obeying national laws, cheering for the team, and occasionally voting in choreographed elections" better prepare for a release

⁴⁴ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 8-9.

⁴⁵ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 11.

⁴⁶ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 48.

of “people power.”⁴⁷ Like the transition itself, this empowerment, suppressed sometimes for generations, can take the entire process on a wild chaotic ride. That ride certainly, in Egypt’s case, led to Tahrir Square.

This emergence of civil society streams from all directions. Suppressed political associations may re-emerge. Religious groups already well organized, can shift easily into the newly opened political arena. Artists and intellectuals are some of the first to manifest public opposition, often before the transition has launched. Colleges and universities serve as hubs of activity. Young educated students, who have the most to gain from change, speak out. Human rights organizations, with ties inside and outside of the state raise their profile. Relatively privileged groups, industrialists, merchants, bankers, and landowners, depending on the depth of regime response, measure their risk and take their chances. However, according to O’Donnell and Schmitter, “... the greatest challenge to the regime is likely to come from the new or revived identities and capacity for collective action of the working class and low-ranking, often unionized employees.” Because of labor history, previous establishment response to labor, and membership’s lack of education, they are one of the last groups to board the train.⁴⁸ They have the potential to tip the balance in the streets. Linz and Stepan note that these unaffiliated citizens will “turn up in the streets in protest marches...express their opposition first to specific measures, support broader demands, and ultimately challenge the regime.”⁴⁹ Sufficiently inspired by those already committed to the cause, if and when these last two groups join in, the train picks up an enormous amount of steam. The potential power

⁴⁷ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 48.

⁴⁸ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 49 -52.

⁴⁹ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, 8.

unleashed by the resurrection of all of civil society has a lot to do with the initiation of transition, the transition itself, and consolidation of the new government. It is probably regime concern number one in regards to pressure emanating from outside the government.

Since an authoritarian regime by its very nature must rule through repression, the military and police force serve as key institutions within the government. Their role, (particularly the military) within this process is probably the single most pivotal of all groups as to the outcome of the ensuing transition. Their actions or inactions at key moments in the unfolding drama, often determine the final act, and who ends up on top.

Military commitment to the transition comes as a result of many factors. Certainly the relationship of the regime to the armed forces prior to transition is significant. A general often serves as authoritarian head of state. His political, social, and economic relationship with previous comrades comes into play. The economic situation of military personnel, particularly high ranking officers, is a factor. What threats do a regime change have not only to position, seniority, pension, and promotion, but also to the fringe benefits that play a role in the head of state's relationship with the officer corps? The military must gauge the impact that its actions will have on its reputation at home and abroad. Since coercion is a significant tool in applying authoritarian stability, and since there is no rule of law within an authoritarian regime to limit the brutality of that repression, the military's role in such activity affects their decision to get involved in the transition. They are more apt to stand by and allow civilian transition if as O'Donnell and Schmitter state, "they had less grounds for fearing revenge by civilian rulers, which would have affected their persons or their institutional

integrity.”⁵⁰ “When the armed forces neither have nor feel a responsibility for the policies of the regime, it is easier for them to take a hands off approach to the transition.” They can claim that their sole concern is their own institutional integrity and autonomy, as well as public order and national security.⁵¹ They have the luxury of walking the high road, while everybody else is down in the mud battling it out for influence and power.

And then there is the threat of coup. O’Donnell and Schmitter refer to it as the “Sword of Damocles” that hangs ominously over the entire transition process. Its implementation could stop the course of action immediately. It could reverse liberalization that would produce an administration even less democratic than the previous. It isn’t even necessarily the action of the coup, only the threat that matters. The number of military coups as a final political outcome in regime transitions has receded in recent years. However, the trump card that the military holds, and the final play of takeover serves to sober all sides in the conflict.⁵²

Authoritarian regimes place “all chips in” on stability. They are repressive by nature and survivors by necessity. They will do whatever it takes in order to preserve authority. That is how they attained power. If stability is threatened they will respond forcefully. If however they are forced to relinquish authority, the process by which that will occur during transition follows no particular path. O’Donnell and Schmitter summarize, “Transition towards democracy is by no means a linear or rational process. There is certainly too much uncertainty about capabilities and too much suspicion about

⁵⁰ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 28.

⁵¹ O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 28.

⁵² O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 23.

intentions for that.”⁵³ When the earth shakes under an authoritarian regime, the ensuing tsunami will go where it chooses.

Bottom line, in order to survive, an authoritarian regime must be able to maintain reasonable control of its citizenry. If it cannot do so; through propaganda and policy, coercion, manipulation, or economic enticement then its reign will be a short one. Results are the only thing that matter. If it is able to hold onto power, then the chances that it can continue to extend that rule through time increase substantially. Success begets success. The consolidation process however, is not the same for every regime. Some display real electoral support from the start. For party faithful, and those who benefit most from government policy, followers are well compensated. For those outside of the circle, the better their quality of life and future prospects the more apt they are to go along with the program. Tolerance of, and popularity of the regime will ebb and flow over time. It doesn't mean because the government is authoritarian, that it is necessarily feared or rejected by a majority of the people. However, in the end every dictator who aims to secure his position must be willing to fill the prisons. The military and police force have got to be on board.

Other factors lead to the strength of an authoritarian hold on power, and exert an influence on policy, as well as timing and depth of government coercion. A strong economy muffles dissent. A leveling distribution of wealth among the population, particularly in difficult economic times, helps to increase regime consolidation. If the borders hold, order is maintained in the street, and foreign powers are not successful in

⁵³ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions*, 72.

undermining the regime, its likelihood of survival increases. Continued success will be secured by its ability to “exploit rather than resist broad social, political, and economic trends” that may serve to consolidate opposition to the regime or provide an opportunity for the regime to increase its hold on power.⁵⁴ By the same token its failure to successfully exploit these trends may eventually lead to authoritarian decay and collapse.

Levitsky and Way identified four areas through which opposition forces periodically challenge, weaken, and occasionally defeat autocratic incumbents. 1 - electoral arena; 2 - the legislature; 3 - the judiciary; and 4 – the media.⁵⁵ Manipulation of these arenas also serves as central in Heydemann’s theory of regime consolidation. Furthermore, O’Donnell defines real citizenship through the acquisition of individual rights expressed within each of these quarters. And he and Schmitter document authoritarian regime failure, in large measure because of the regime’s inability to successfully manage each one. If unrestrained and given an opening at a crucial time, these four entities that solidify regime hold on power, may just as effectively provide an avenue to bring it down. The balancing act that an authoritarian government must manage between allowing enough freedom within these institutions to justify its existence, and satisfy its citizenry, and not so much that the same machinery serves to undermine government control is crucial to its existence.

Management of civil society and the media are key in extending regime control. They also serve as a necessity for consolidation in the undermining of that same authority. A huge amount of potential people power is locked up in civil society, often

⁵⁴ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 5.

⁵⁵ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 54.

ready and willing to go to battle to acquire its ends. The regime must be able to maintain co-existence with these organizations, either through manipulation, cooption, or coercion if it is able to successfully administer its own agenda and extend its rule. Civil society proves equally pivotal to opposition groups in the midst of regime collapse. The potential for rallying opposition at home and abroad, for organizing resistance of those already on board and inspiring others outside of the typical political circles may determine success or failure of the challenge to regime authority.

Media, domestic and international, traditional and social, also exerts a tremendous influence in the battle for government control. Again the regime must walk a tightrope. An independent media provides an outlet for opposition groups to blow off steam. Too free and an effective civil society has the pivotal tool that it needs for successful revolt. The increasing influence of international media and satellite news as well as the growing influence of Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and blogging provides a venue for a continual tug of war between government and opposition. Whether it be regime consolidation or decay, the significance of the role of civil society and the media cannot be underestimated.

Summary of Authoritarian Regime Decay when Applied to Egypt

The scholarly literature on consolidation and decay of authoritarian regimes when applied to the case study of Mubarak's Egypt forms the theoretical basis for this thesis. The reasons for collapse of the Mubarak government were varied, wide, and deep. They had been percolating for nearly two decades prior to January of 2011.

First of all, as the literature has shown, an authoritarian regime ultimately governs through coercion; not citizen rule. Regardless of its democratic claims, the Mubarak regime was authoritarian. Its institutions while providing the appearance of legitimacy in the guise of regular elections and constitutions and political parties, was fully illegitimate. The literature reveals that in using fake political institutions to justify rule, an authoritarian regime opens itself up to criticism, international and domestic, and possible collapse if and when these institutions are turned against it. I will show how this occurred in Egypt in 2005 when electoral reforms instituted by the government in order to provide a false sense of democracy, opened the door to opposition resistance. Reforms by the regime after 2005, although claiming to provide more freedoms to the people, continued to push totally non-democratic principles. Opposition saw this for what it was and leveraged the opening.

Electoral institutional levers are not just capitalized on by domestic opponents. The literature has shown that international players can and do play an instrumental *gate opening role* in the process of authoritarian decay. Linz and Stepan emphasize the significance of a superior outside influence on the smaller state. This study will show that the United States, particularly under the Bush administration, served this function by pushing Mubarak over and over, to go in directions that were ultimately fatal to his regime. He inched towards more democratic institutions in large measure because of U.S. pressure. He honored his requirements of the Arab-Israeli Peace Treaty due to the billions in U.S. aid. He joined United States' coalitions two times to subdue Saddam Hussein and stood by as sanctions of the first Iraq War wrought extensive Iraqi civilian

suffering, all due to Washington's influence. Each of these decisions to acquiesce to U.S. demands placed the regime in a more confrontational position with its own people.

In regards to poverty, wealth disparity and regime corruption, the literature has shown that the process of economic liberalization should provide opportunity for government supporters within an authoritarian regime to reinforce the base of that regime. Also, increasing standards of living and growing the middle class reduces pressures for comprehensive social reforms. However, just as reducing wealth disparity increases regime consolidation, growing that gap will increase the likelihood of its decay. I will document how in the Egyptian case, despite exploding state growth rates in the first decade of the 2000's and gold stars from the World Bank and IMF for that growth, the fruits of structural economic reform were reserved for the well connected. In Egypt under Mubarak the rich got richer and the poor suffered. Gamal Mubarak, next in line for the presidency, was most identified with the corruption that based this growing inequity. Consequently, opposition dissatisfaction with the current trend as well as increased regime vulnerability pointed less likely to regime succession and more in the direction of a Mubarak collapse.

Missteps by the regime also played a significant role in consolidating oppositional resistance to its rule. The literature has shown that in order to keep order within the state dictators must be willing to wield the sword on their own people. However, this repression can reach the point of critical mass where it becomes so oppressive that it actually serves better to consolidate the opposition. I will show how such state belligerency fostered opposition consolidation in Mubarak's Egypt. His reliance on emergency rule in filling the prisons with Egyptians from all walks of society provided as

O'Donnell notes a "collective identification" for political prisoners. In essence Mubarak's cruelty brought enemies of the state closer together. Groups that normally might never have joined forces found common cause through excessive regime brutality.

A large majority of the scholarly literature I have drawn on for this study cites the control of civil society and media as primary in authoritarian regime consolidation. It notes as well the significance each plays in regime decay, should the government lose control of these institutions. On the verge of the Arab Spring, of all authoritarian Middle East states, Egypt had the largest civil society and widest range of independent media outlets. Mubarak lost control of each and suffered the consequences.

By 2003 civil society in Egypt was moving further and further from the regime's sphere of influence. The Iraq War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the brutality of Mubarak's secret police had increased Egyptian enrollment in civil society and heightened the influence of those organizations. Groups had gotten progressively bolder and reached out to network with one another in order to confront the regime. The literature is clear, that once people find identification in such groups, and if these groups locate an avenue to press the regime successfully, a snowball effect can cause even more and bolder responses from civil society. I will show that this happened in Egypt. As the regime stepped up its repression, enrollment in Egyptian civil society swelled. Labor groups, the Brotherhood, Kefaya and a host of others, increasingly worked together in common cause to challenge the government.

The final puzzle piece that scholarly literature emphasizes as necessary to government longevity is victory in the tug of war between regime and opposition over

control of the message. Almost in unanimity, scholars cite the management of the media as pivotal to both regime and opposition consolidation. Whoever wins that battle gains a significant leg up in consolidation. I will show that Mubarak, in an attempt to gain the fruits of economic growth had been loosening his grip on the Internet and independent media sources for some time, thus providing an opening for social and traditional media to enhance the message of opposition groups. Simultaneously, *Al Jazeera* increased its influence inside of Egypt; it was highly critical of the regime. All sorts of smaller web based and satellite stations, as well as independent newspapers became increasingly emboldened in their criticism of the president. Add to that the rise of blogging, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, which the opposition dominated fully, and you were left with an authoritarian regime putting out an authoritarian message, without the ability to control the messenger. This free speech spigot, once it was turned on was very difficult to turn off and a major reason for the regime collapse in Egypt.

With authoritarian decay in play and many of the dominoes in place for a regime collapse in Egypt, the spark that led to Mubarak's demise came from across the desert in Tunisia. This study does not review the events of Tunisia or Tahrir or its aftermath. Those issues deserve further and full concentration. As for the future of Egypt, hard work is yet to be done if those individuals who so courageously took on the dictator will fashion a government that is truly "of the people." It may happen; it may not. The challenges are many. Regardless, for eighteen days, culminating on February 11, 2010, Egyptians of all segments of society pulled together and in common cause did what had to be done to rock the Kasbah.

Summary of Sources

Scholarly research on authoritarian consolidation and decay is extensive. I've looked to Levitsky and Way, Linz and Stepan, O'Donnell, Schmitter, Huntington, and Heydemann among others to provide an established base that recognizes the keys to authoritarian regime consolidation. These same scholars predict that a lack of attention by the regime to such necessities that form consolidation can and does lead to permanent government breakdown.

However, to leave this research solely in the hands of scholars ignores the insight gained from journalists who have the ability to adapt more easily to an event as fluid as the Arab Spring. Therefore, in my bibliography I have cited 32 separate entries from current media sources ranging from *BBC News*, to *Al Jazeera*, *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times*, that feature investigative stories which provide further depth into the collapse of the regime. Also, *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch* and the *Journal for Palestinian Studies* each supply documented research into results of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict which has played a pivotal role in Mubarak's thirty year rule. I have referred to several authors who have written books specifically about Egypt and the Middle East in order to gain a wider understanding of the region and the people. Finally, this study would not be complete without paying considerable attention to "new media," which was predominantly responsible for filling Tahrir Square in January of 2011. It was Facebook, You Tube, Twitter, blogs and emails that brought new blood to the fight, and even infiltrated such stodgy organizations as the Muslim Brotherhood. I have leaned on contemporary journalism to draw out these sources. Together, this eclectic mix has provided a keen insight into the regime's multilayered failures as well as

the emergence of a potent opposition consolidation, which fused to bring an end to the thirty-year rule of the Egyptian President.

Chapter Previews

While it may not be customary to initiate the study of regime collapse with a nod to a foreign power, particularly an ally, Egypt's relationship with the United States was an over-riding factor in the longevity and ultimate failure of the regime. On October 6, 1981 Vice President Mubarak was shot and President Sadat assassinated, in an Islamist response to the U.S. led Arab Israeli Peace Treaty; Mubarak inherited his presidency. This triangular relationship (Egypt, Israel, United States), which he also inherited, influenced nearly everything emitting from Cairo during his reign. Chapter two (International Influences) looks hard at this unique relationship between the United States and Egypt. It also assesses the impact of the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty.

Chapter three deals with the potential succession of Gamal Mubarak to the throne and his growing influence in the structurally adjusted economic policies of his father's regime, beginning with Paris Club reforms of 1991. Corruption at the elite levels of business and government, combined with growing inequality and abject poverty of so many Egyptian citizens had an enormous influence in the ultimate breach of the regime. At the fulcrum of these destructive politics of wealth, corruption, and succession was the relationship between Egypt's first father and second son.

Hosni Mubarak considered himself a president of a democratic republic. For thirty years the National Democratic Party administered the state through his hand. He was no democrat. The NDP was no democratic party. In fact, he governed as a brutal dictator with complete authority to silence all opposition. He played a game with

political institutions in order to offer the illusion of democratic rule to Western allies.

Chapter four cites the impact of emergency law and his phony political institutions that characterized his brand of “democracy.”

Finally, I will evaluate the substantial role of opposition consolidation in the collapse of the Mubarak regime. Particular attention will be paid to the function that civil society played in fostering resistance, as well as the unifying power of traditional and new media. The relationship between a vigorous international media and a vibrant social media anchored by Facebook and YouTube, Twitter, and blogs molded the opposition into a formidable force particularly within the youth. It is this relationship researched in Chapter five, an opposition guided by potent new weaponry of mass communication that has the potential to shake authoritarian regimes not only in the Arab world but also around the globe.

CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

On November 6, 2003 in Washington D.C., on the twentieth anniversary of The National Endowment for Democracy, President George W. Bush delivered a speech that called for democratization of the Arab World. In that speech President Bush, still basking in a “Mission Accomplished” glow, asked members of the United States Chamber of Commerce, “Are the peoples of the Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty? Are millions of men and women and children condemned by history or culture to live in despotism? Are they alone never to know freedom?” He answered to polite applause, “I for one do not believe it.” And then President Bush went on to call out the President of Egypt, “The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.”⁵⁶

No matter that the directive flew in the face of U.S. Policy for the previous 25 years or that the United States had supported tyrants all over the region, autocratic regimes, including that of Egypt’s, with no intention of initiating liberalization of any rule. President Mubarak got the message. And for the next two years, pushed by U.S. foreign policy he crept hesitantly towards limited “paper” reforms of the Egyptian electoral system. In the 2005 Egyptian mid terms the Muslim Brotherhood captured too

⁵⁶ “Remarks by George W. Bush at the Twentieth Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,” National Endowment for Democracy, 11/6/03.

many seats. In 2006 Hamas won a startling Parliamentary majority in Palestine. By then the Bush doctrine was foundering in Iraq and the “Baghdad Spring” was on life support. The process of pushing Middle Eastern autocracies to liberalize was no longer a reasonable U.S. priority.⁵⁷ President Mubarak went back to what he had been doing so well since 1981; balancing US foreign aid off of a pivotal relationship with Israel, criticizing both the U.S. and Israel, closing down opposition parties, amassing great wealth, and subjugating his own people.⁵⁸ The problem was the door had been cracked. A regime for 22 years, so adept at playing the bully had been coerced into showing weakness. These electoral reforms, however minor and short-lived, would play a significant result in the downfall of the president.

In this chapter I will address the significance of the dysfunctional relationship between the United States, Israel, and Egypt brought about by the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty. While in the short term the treaty brought stability to the region and billions of dollars in military aid to Egypt and to Israel, long-term implications of that relationship for Mubarak were much more destructive. I will document how the tight rope he walked in regards to an Arab Street that overwhelmingly sided with the Palestinians and against United States and Israeli actions in Gaza and in the West Bank, was an impossible balancing act to maintain. The brutality of Operation Cast Lead and U.S. sanctions and war with Iraq pushed Egyptian citizens to rally against first Israel and the United States and finally the regime itself. Finally, the impact of President Bush’s 2003 Freedom Agenda will be investigated in its relationship to instigating regime reform. While the

⁵⁷ Martin Asser, “Mubarak’s Quarter of a Century,” *BBC News*, October 13, 2006.

⁵⁸ Asser, “Mubarak’s Quarter of a Century.”

Egyptian president balanced competing interests of Egypt, Israel, and the United States for thirty years, in the end his luck just ran out. I will look at the impact that the collapse of this triangular relationship played in the ultimate downfall of his presidency.

On October 6, 1981 while attending a military parade to commemorate the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Islamic extremists assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. His role in the 1979 Arab-Israeli Peace Treaty had been unpopular throughout the Arab World, particularly with fundamentalists. Eight days after the assassination Vice President Mubarak, who was at Sadat's side and injured in the melee, took over the office of the presidency. He held it until February 11, 2011. In 1975 Sadat had appointed Mubarak as vice president because of his achievements as Air Force commander during the conflict with Israel.⁵⁹ President, and chairman of Egypt's only real practicing political party, the NDP (National Democratic Party), Mubarak would continue to be a strong ally of the Egyptian military and the West throughout his thirty-year tenure in office.

David Remnick describes Mubarak as much more guarded than Sadat. For his entire tenure, Remnick notes that Mubarak had no ideological ambition. He ruled both cautiously and brutally. In order to justify a war against religious radicals, he immediately instituted a state of emergency, which is still in place in Egypt today. "Over the years, tens of thousands of Islamists and other political opponents have passed through the jails, usually without trial or charge. In 2004, according to both Egyptian human-rights groups and international organizations like Human Rights Watch, torture

⁵⁹ Focus: Profile, "Profile Hosni Mubarak," *Al Jazeera English*, February 11, 2011.

was ‘widespread and systemic’.”⁶⁰ Mubarak was always ready to use maximum force to stop any domestic unrest. He also proved resilient to assassination attempts; six of them in his term as president.⁶¹ This was the steadiness that would fill Washington’s “unbridgeable gap” that had opened up in the region. An Islamic Revolution in Iran, Lebanon’s collapse into a civil war quagmire, serious troubles in Afghanistan and Pakistan, had placed the United States in “...a desperate need for stability in the Middle East. A supportive Egypt, according to Osman, as opposed to irksome Syria, hostile Iran and hesitant Saudi Arabia, became an important pillar of strength in the region.”⁶²

Mubarak’s Relationship with the United States

The fulcrum of this marriage of necessity, the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty, dominated Mubarak’s thirty years of foreign policy decision-making. Sadat never reaped full benefits of the accord. It was signed in March of 1979; by 1981 he was dead because of it. The legacy of that treaty fell to his successor and made Mubarak beholden to U.S. foreign policy decisions, instigating a relationship marked by thirty years of co-dependency.

Mubarak was looked upon on by the West as the Middle East strongman, the peacemaker; a secular president in a secular nation, in the midst of a fundamentalist region of the world. He gained rewards for fulfilling obligations. At the same time he sought to breakdown Egypt’s regional isolation and re-integrate with an Arab world that had abandoned Sadat. Following the peace treaty, it had been kicked out of the Arab

⁶⁰ David Remnick, “Going Nowhere,” *New Yorker*, July 12, 2004.

⁶¹ Asser, “Mubarak’s Quarter of a Century.”

⁶² Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 179.

League and the headquarters moved from Cairo to Tunisia. His most challenging undertaking was to achieve a formula whereby Egypt's contractual peace with Israel was adhered to close enough to bring in U.S. aid, yet simultaneously revive Egypt's traditional status in the Arab World. Shalaby notes, "That was indeed a formidable task. However with patience, perseverance and coherent policy, Egypt managed to establish such an equation."⁶³

Mubarak did it by supporting the Arab cause sufficiently to placate the Egyptian street and other regional regimes, without incurring U.S. wrath. He moved quickly in 1982 following the Sabra and Shatila massacres, and recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Israel, conditioned on Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. He patched up relations with the PLO by helping in their evacuation from Tripoli. As a signal to broader Arab commitments, Egypt supported Iraq in its decade long war with Iran. The Amman Arab summit in November of 1987 endorsed the resumption of diplomatic relations with Egypt and finally the return of the Arab League to its original seat in Cairo in May 1991.⁶⁴

Meanwhile he fulfilled U.S. requests. Sometimes as with the Iran Iraq War, Arab goals matched those of the United States. The U.S. urged Mubarak to support Saddam Hussein and in October of 1983 used him to secretly (and illegally) transfer Howitzers, Huey helicopters, and bombs to Baghdad through Middle Eastern proxies, Egypt being a main source. The regime further suggested that the U.S. provide it new M-60 tanks to replace used Soviet T-62's, which it would in turn sell to Iraq.⁶⁵ Actually the Egyptian president nurtured the Saddam relationship as a means to rejoin the Arab community

⁶³ El-Sayed Amin Shalaby, "Egypt's Foreign Policy 1952 -1992: some personal reflections," *Security Dialogue*, 23 (1992).

⁶⁴ Shalaby, "Egypt's Foreign Policy."

⁶⁵ Murray Waas and Craig Unger, "In the Loop: Bush's Secret Mission," *New Yorker*, November 2, 1992, 70-71.

until Iraq's 1991 invasion of Kuwait. Mubarak tried to convince him to withdraw. When he did not, Egypt joined the US-led coalition to drive the Iraqis back to Baghdad. The IMF and World Bank rewarded him handsomely with debt forgiveness later that year at the Paris Club.

Bi-lateral Egyptian U.S. foreign policy during the Mubarak presidency constituted a complicated dance for both the United States and Egypt. Mubarak balanced an anti American Egyptian public opinion, one that after September 11, 2001 grew substantially more intense, with U.S. demands, which further inflamed that street. The U.S. played the need for Mideast stability, of which they saw Mubarak's authoritarian regime as their best bet, off of a growing insistence that authoritative Arab regimes liberalize. The events of 911 and the zealotry of the Bush "Freedom Agenda" complicated the relationship, as the U.S. took aim at all Middle East regimes, Egypt included. Governments that until then had gone about their despotic ways without much U.S. interference would now hear all about democracy.

After 911 Egypt and United States foreign policy goals moved not only in contradictory directions on many issues, but also in conflict with their own national agendas. Egyptian citizens increasingly confronted U.S. actions, chiefly in regards to Palestine and Iraq. Mubarak took billions in foreign aid, supported U.S. policy in theory, yet often led in the anti-American street chorus. Meanwhile liberalization and reform replaced stability as the buzzwords coming out of D.C. The Bush administration began pushing Mubarak to liberalize, which would ultimately lead to instability of a regime that it depended upon to remain entrenched in power. At the center of the merry-go-round was Israel, which had become more active in its settlement infiltration into the West Bank, and following the Hamas' electoral victory in 2006 had stepped up its repression in

Gaza. The Arab community was angry. It was becoming more vocal in challenging Israel's brutality in the occupied territories, the United States full support of Israel, and in Egypt, and Mubarak's refusal to take on either state. There was no way, particularly in an environment of emboldened Islamic street protests that the three-way relationship would remain static.

The 1978 Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel, signed by President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, which laid the framework for the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty was supposed to open a new era of Middle East peace. Instead it "... was regarded by millions as a 'sell-out' that betrayed the millions who died in Sinai' and represented a 'national humiliation and disgrace'."⁶⁶ While not all Egyptians agreed, the outrage was loud and wide from people who mattered throughout the region. Nasserites and Nationalists and the Brotherhood "... found it untenable to embrace a peace treaty with the Jews." Ahmed Bahaa El-Din, ex-editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*, described his 'shock, disbelief, and pain' watching Sadat's embrace of Israeli leaders at Jerusalem's Ben Gurion Airport. "Nizar Kabbani, the Arab world's most famous poet over the last five decades, lamented the fall of Egypt, the Arab world's 'land of dignity', after 'the Great Nasser' in the hands of a 'slave' (Sadat)."⁶⁷

But that was Sadat's problem, not Mubarak's. When he came to power, the treaty with all of its baggage and blessings was already set. Through the years Mubarak became adept at plucking just what he needed from the agreement, as did the United States and Israel. The U.S. got its Arab anchor, somebody to rely on during times of crisis. In addition to continued U.S. economic and military aid (\$123 billion, plus loan

⁶⁶ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 89-90.

⁶⁷ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 90.

guarantees and \$3.1 billion a year through 2017⁶⁸) Israel finally had an Arab ally, albeit a frosty one as time moved on. Mubarak got money, lots of it, nearly \$70 billion between 1975 and the present.⁶⁹ In addition Washington promised Cairo it would underwrite the modernization of Egypt's armed forces, which included training as well. Initiated in 1981, the large-scale "Bright-Star" military exercises take place every two years. The 1999 maneuver involved 66,000 military personnel from 11 countries (the U.S., France, Britain, and Egypt included).⁷⁰ As for the future, funding is increasing; the current stipend of \$2.2 billion annually (second internationally only to Israel) has in effect institutionalized; moving from an incentive for Egypt to maintain good relations with Israel, "into a vested bureaucratic and legislative interest."⁷¹

None of the three states has upheld its end of the bargain in regards to the spirit of Middle East peace; still the U.S. keeps writing the checks. Eldar observes, that under Mubarak, "Egypt has framed the peace with Israel in its narrowest possible interpretation...it has assiduously amassed the fruits of peace, primarily U.S. aid on a large scale. But it has refused to see diplomatic and cultural relations with Israel as a fruit of peace."⁷² From the beginning, Mubarak was skeptical of the treaty. In 1984 King Hassan of Morocco revealed the Egyptian president told him that it was empty of substance since, "Cairo had obtained from it what it could."⁷³ Since then, Eldar sees no personal investment on the part of the president. Mubarak did not commit to an

⁶⁸ Shirl McArthur, "A Conservative Estimate of Total Direct Aid to Israel," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, (November 2008).

⁶⁹ Jeremy Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," *CRS Congressional Research Service*, RL33003, June 19, 2007.

⁷⁰ Frisch, "Guns and Butter".

⁷¹ Steven A. Cook. "The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 91.

⁷² Dan Eldar, "Egypt and Israel: A Reversible Peace," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. X, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 57-65.

⁷³ Baizhu Chen, Yi Feng, Cyrus Masroori, Collective Action in the Middle East," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 33, no. 3 (August 1996): 323-339.

intellectual struggle for peace. He did nothing to transform public opinion and lead it any kind of a positive direction. He has, “effectively boycotted Israel... since assuming power in 1981, he has never paid an official visit... except to attend the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin.” All bi-lateral ties were frozen between the two states. No tourism. No commerce. No industry. Mubarak added nothing to the treaty beyond the military requirements and rewards of the document.⁷⁴

Still, \$70 billion from 1975 to 2009, \$2.2 billion in annual institutionalized foreign payments, status with the West, U.S. military training, and special treatment from the IMF and World Bank, that doesn't come without strings. Barry Rubin describes Mubarak as a calculating head of state, one who managed and manipulated the United States while only giving it a minimum of what it wanted.⁷⁵ He knew just how far he could go without ruffling Washington feathers. He was adept at playing to the crowd at home, critical of Israel regarding its role in Palestine and Lebanon. His rhetoric served the Palestinian cause, his actions not so much. He was at times, when he had to be, also critical of the United States. Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq Mubarak came out “publicly expressing misgivings at U.S. policy in the region, when he said...that a possible U.S. war on Iraq would only inflame an already tense situation.”⁷⁶ Yet when called upon to close the Rafah border crossing into Gaza, he kept his mouth shut and followed orders.

⁷⁴ Eldar “A Reversible Peace,” 57-65.

⁷⁵ Barry Rubin, “The Future of Egypt,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 3 (June 2006).

⁷⁶ Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid, “The Impact of 9/11 on the Middle East,” *Middle East Policy*, vol. 9, No. 4, (December 2002): 76.

Edward S. Walker Jr., who served as U.S. Ambassador in Israel (1997 to 1999) and Egypt (1994 to 1997), identified Mubarak's actions as more of an appeasement to U.S. demands than outright manipulation. The Egyptian economy, military assistance, long-term relationship was extremely important to Mubarak and to the military, too much to risk a divorce. In fact in 2006 Walker predicted, "I think we are going to see a continuation of this kind of pulling and tugging with the United States, frustration on both sides with each other's behavior, but a marriage which neither can afford, at this point in history, to break, because we both gain from that marriage."⁷⁷ Kamel adds, that Egypt would "do its best to toe the U.S. line, except when U.S. wishes are seen as jeopardizing regime survival. For this reason, advice from some quarters in the United States about the human-rights situation in Egypt or an unpopular military action against Iraq would simply be ignored by the Egyptian government."⁷⁸

Mubarak's Relationship with Israel

Israel, on the other hand, was not so easy to ignore. While Israel has honored its treaty obligations with Egypt, it has undermined the opportunity for a lasting Middle East peace, in large measure due to its treatment of the Palestinians. Its actions, and United States support of those actions, has become an increasing focal point of Arab protests throughout the region, thus complicating Egypt's role with the treaty. A majority of the Arab world was unhappy with the treaty from the beginning. It provided legitimacy to Israeli state claims, yet did little to limit its aggressiveness in the region. Mubarak, being a direct benefactor of that agreement, had to deal with each and every Israeli

⁷⁷ Edward Walker Jr., "The Future of Egypt," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 3 (June 2006).

⁷⁸ Kamel Al-Sayyid, "The Impact of 9/11," 76.

transgression. Since the U.S. Congress habitually acquiesced to Israel, that usually left Mubarak on his own. Often he played both sides of the fence, privately deferring to Israeli action at behest of the United States, while in Cairo publicly joining in the anti-Israeli chorus.

That balancing act got more intricate as the Bush Freedom Agenda expanded after 9/11. Student demonstrations in Cairo, at Ain-Shams and Al-Azhar universities, joined Arab regional protests in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Freeman reports that it didn't help in the West Bank that the Israeli government refused to trade land for peace; that it sits on the verge of achieving a level of colonization of Palestinian Arab land that will make anything resembling a state physically impossible. As time passes it looks more and more as if the best that can be hoped for is a West Bank "...where some Arabs will have limited rights, but most will live in a archipelago of checkpoint-ringed ghettos."⁷⁹ Then came the Hamas parliamentary victory in 2006, followed by the Israeli siege and 2008 invasion of Gaza. The labeling of Hamas as a "terrorist organization" by the West inspired a U.S.-Israeli rejection of the 2006 vote, "even though the elections were universally judged to be free and fair."⁸⁰ An invasion of a terrorist state was justified in Israeli eyes; and given a green light by the Bush Administration. While encroaching settlement activity and construction of the separation wall in the West Bank, served to nourish a steady drumbeat of opposition to Israel, incursions into Gaza were explosive and fueled by images of civilian deaths and blatant destruction.

⁷⁹ Chas W. Freeman Jr., "U.S.-Arab Relations: Forks in the Way Forward," *Middle East Peace Policy*, vol. 16, iss. 4 (Winter 2009): 70.

⁸⁰ Freeman, "Forks in the Way Forward," 69.

None of the authoritarian regimes in the region, Mubarak's included, wished success for the Islamist government of Gaza. The regime's nagging worry was a lawless Gaza threatening the internal stability of Egypt. For Hamas, a faction of the Muslim Brotherhood, to join forces with Egyptian Islamists and turn the peace treaty into something more unmanageable than it had already become, was Mubarak's greatest fear.⁸¹ Hamas steadfastly refused to acknowledge Israel's right to exist, thus denying the validity of the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty. Its military wing instigated random acts of violence against Israel, in contrast with the Palestinian Authority's West Bank insistence on a negotiated settlement to the conflict. After Hamas' electoral victory in 2006, followed by a split with Fatah in 2007, and its takeover of state affairs of Gaza's 1.5 million people, Israel came down hard, initially by closing Gaza to the outside and aggressively invading it in Operation Cast Lead (OCL) in December of 2008.

Operation Cast Lead (December 2007)

In June of 2007 Mubarak joined with Israel to squeeze the "terrorists" by permanently closing the Rafah border. The closing of Rafah, Gaza's only avenue to the outside world, added to the crisis and was inspired most international observers agreed, "in light of the regime's alliance with the United States."⁸² This intensifying alliance was not lost on Egyptian citizens. Reaction in the streets lumped Mubarak and his authoritarian Arab League partners, the United States, and Israel all into the same anti-Palestinian basket. Mouin Rabbani in evaluating the situation, "In the case of Operation Cast Lead there was the Egyptian role, and (Egypt's) clear willingness to cooperate in the

⁸¹ Mubarak's Balancing Act," *The Jerusalem Report*, February 2, 2009, 13.

⁸² Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 183.

siege against Gaza. But I think the fact of the cooperation per se is less important than the states' loss of credibility with their publics as a result"; not just for Egypt, but all of the Arab powers that cooperated or looked the other way.⁸³

Israel's invasion of Gaza brought Arab anger to a crescendo. "On 27 December, the first day of the war more than 85 Israeli war planes dropped more than 100 tons of targeted explosives, rockets and 'intelligent bombs' on an area less than 140 square kilometers. The devastation was dramatic. More than 250 people died on the first day of the war and by 18 January 2009, when Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire, more than 1,200 Palestinians were dead."⁸⁴ Thirteen Israeli's were killed in the twenty-two days, including three civilians.⁸⁵ *The Journal of Palestine Studies* final report highlights the excessive use of force used by the IDF. Final Palestinian casualties: 1417 dead. 4,336 wounded. Homes destroyed: 6,400. Gazans left homeless: 100,000. Number of children orphaned 2,000 – 2,200. Hospitals or clinics destroyed or severely damaged: 34. Schools destroyed or severely damaged: 214. Number of cattle, sheep and goats killed: 35,700. Number of chickens killed: over 1 million. Tons of rubble to be removed: 600,000. Total property damage estimated at nearly \$2 billion.⁸⁶ The destruction would remain permanent, since the invasion was followed by a reinstatement of the blockade.

The *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* in its 72-page report in the winter of 2009 was highly critical of the United States and Israel, in exposing OCL

⁸³ Rabbani, M., "Israel's Assault on Gaza: A Transformational Moment? An Interview with Azmi Bishara." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (April 1, 2009): 42-43.

⁸⁴ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 184.

⁸⁵ "Amnesty details Gaza 'war crimes,'" *BBC News*, July 2, 2009.

⁸⁶ "Damage to Palestinian People and Property during Operation Cast Lead," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Spring 2009): 210-212.

violations of international law. “Israel's capacity to trample international humanitarian law in its current state is a function of two factors: its overwhelming military superiority as against any combination of its neighbors; and the cocoon of impunity in which it has been enwrapped—largely due to the diplomatic cover provided it by the United States.”⁸⁷ In March 2009, *Human Rights Watch* addressed Israeli war crimes in its 71-page report, “Rain of Fire, Israel’s Unlawful Use of White Phosphorus in Gaza.” The testimony exposes the reckless use of the highly incendiary munitions, white phosphorus employed by the IDF to kill Palestinian civilians. On July 1, 2009 *Amnesty International* added to the chorus with its release of a 117-page report, “Operation ‘Cast-Lead’: Twenty-two days of Death and Destruction.”

BBC News used the *Amnesty* report to highlight disturbing questions that even now remain unanswered. Why were children that were playing on roofs and medical staff who were attending to the wounded, killed by “highly accurate missiles” whose operators had detailed views of their targets? Why did Israeli forces, “frequently obstruct access to medical care...” forcing the increase loss of civilian life? Why were women and children, who posed no threat to the troops, “shot at close range as they were fleeing their homes in search of shelter?” Why was the IDF using civilians, including children as human shields, forcing them to stay in homes that Israeli troops were using as military positions, and “to inspect sites suspected of being booby trapped?”⁸⁸ Israel as of yet has refused to answer any of the allegations posed by *Denver International Journal of Law*, *Journal of Palestine*, *Human Rights Watch* or *Amnesty International*.

⁸⁷ George Bisharat, “Israel’s Invasion,” *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, (2009).

⁸⁸ “Amnesty details Gaza, *BBC News*.”

“Operation Cast Lead” was fatal to Mubarak’s Palestine “Balancing Act.” He found himself exposed, having met with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni on the eve of the invasion. Their highly publicized handshake was widely interpreted as providing approval, as many speculated that Mubarak was complicit in the effort to destroy Hamas.⁸⁹ Egyptian reaction to the invasion was explosive. Citizens flooded into the streets to denounce Israel, Mubarak, and the United States. 50,000 protesters pushed back anti-riot police in Alexandria. Transportation hubs in Cairo were forced to close down. Civil Society organized solidarity convoys to Gaza and demanded opening of the Rafah crossing. University students, teachers, journalists, members of the Muslim Brotherhood, public and private sector workers, initiated strikes and riots to challenge the actions of the regime. Consolidation of the opposition fueled by Israeli aggression along with U.S. and Egyptian complicity, had institutionalized in the population.⁹⁰

Zogby Poll (What Arabs Think)

In 2009 James Zogby, founder and president of the Washington D.C. based Arab American institute and senior advisor to the polling firm Zogby International, compiled an intensive survey throughout the Arab World that asked questions linking Palestine, Israel, the United States and regional Arab regimes together as part of an in-depth study of Arab public opinion. The polling of three major regions of the Arab world: Morocco and Egypt from Africa; Lebanon and Jordan from the Levant; and Saudi Arabia and the UAE from the Gulf, addressed the issues that neither U.S. foreign policy nor Arab regimes, and certainly not Israel, had bothered to consider before setting in motion

⁸⁹ "Mubarak's Balancing Act," *The Jerusalem Report*, 13.

⁹⁰ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 185.

policies so significant to the region. The results are striking, and reinforce Arab regime, U.S., and Israeli policy disregard for Arab citizen opinion regarding issues of peace in the Middle East.

The survey takes on two entrenched myths about the Arab World. The first myth is that Arab thought is all the same, the second that there is no common Arab thought. To grasp a more productive understanding of the Arab World and to recognize the diversity that exists in the region, Zogby examined citizen responses to the question, “What do you most want the world to know about your country.”⁹¹ Answers were in stark contradiction to a U.S. Middle East policy that often treats Arab states as a single monolith.

Egyptians focused in equal proportions on four characteristics: that they are a tolerant people (for example, “our religion guarantees equity and tolerance.” “we are not fanatics”); the safety, security, and stability of Egypt (“there is no place for terrorism in our country.”); Egypt’s central role in the Arab World (“we are the main defense for the Palestinians.”); and of course, Egypt’s history and tourism industry (“we are the oldest civilization in the world, everyone should come and visit,” “we are the land of the pharaohs”).⁹²

The second myth that Zogby addresses, that the region is so complicated that it can’t be described as a cohesive world, was shattered by answers to the question; “Which of the following is your most important identity?” The aggregate responses were nearly evenly divided among “country of origin” (35 percent), “Arab” (32 percent), and “religion” (32 percent). “The truth is that Arabs, like most people, live in a complex world with multiple pulls on their self-determination.”⁹³

⁹¹ James Zogby, *Arab Voices; What They are Saying to us and Why it Matters*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 67.

⁹² Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 67.

⁹³ Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 74.

The significance of these revelations provides an insight into the mindset of Egyptians on the eve of the overthrow of President Mubarak. It also highlights the magnitude of the Palestinian and Iraqi issues. As to the question, “How important is the Palestinian issue to you?” 97 percent of Egyptians said that it was “Important.” Even more telling was the follow-up response to that question, “Why is the Palestinian issue important to you?” Although ‘religious reasons’ and the sense that ‘Palestinians are victims’ generate strong responses, the sense that ‘Palestinians are Arabs like me’ was the number-one reason given as to why this issue was so vital in every country but Jordan (where most respondents *are* Palestinian).⁹⁴ Similar results came from the question, “How important is the Iraqi issue to you?” where 96 percent of Egyptians noted “Important.” The follow up “why?” was again based on a shared sense of tragedy. Zogby summarizes, “For most Arabs, then, the Iraq and Palestine problems are more than just conflicts occurring within their region; they are tragedies that have befallen ‘people like me’ – people with whom Arabs share a common language, religion, and identity. To ignore the interrelatedness of the Arab World or...deny that the world exists is not only intellectual folly; it’s also an open invitation to bad policy and failed initiatives.”⁹⁵

Palestine matters to Egyptians, to Arabs. Peace in the Middle East matters to Egyptians, to Arabs. And they are pretty sure what is to blame for continued failure to achieve adequate results. When provided seven choices to the question, “Of the following, what do you believe is the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East?” 54 percent of Egyptian respondents chose the “Israeli-Palestinian

⁹⁴ Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 78.

⁹⁵ Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 80.

conflict”, while 37 percent identified “U.S. interference.”⁹⁶ Again Zogby, “In the face of the continued denial of Palestinian rights, the fissures from conflict run deep throughout the Arab World. Many Arabs living thousands of miles from Palestine – and far from any immediate Israeli threat – claim the Palestinians’ story as their own.”⁹⁷ And yet U.S. foreign policy, Israeli military actions, and Egyptian regime decisions have refused to consider the situation with the gravity that it deserves. It is no wonder that Mideast peace policies have failed miserably for the past thirty years. Neither was it surprising at the growing resentment in Egypt to a Mubarak, Israeli, U.S. alliance, which had long ago abandoned the wishes of the Egyptian people and worked to undermine a lasting peace.

United States and Iraq – Impact on Mubarak

United States clashes with Iraq caused problems for Mubarak as well. In fact, U.S. relations with Saddam Hussein posed a continual dilemma, in that U.S. policy pushed for Mubarak’s consent, which further eroded Egyptian confidence in his role as a broker for Arab human rights. Beginning with his decision to join the coalition to force Saddam back to Baghdad in 1991, the next fifteen years, often pitted Egyptian people against their president when it came to Iraq, or at least against U.S. policy which was becoming increasingly entwined with that of the regime’s. Osman writes, “Most Egyptians perceived the United States-led sanctions program against Iraq following the 1991 Gulf War as ‘cruelty against our brothers’ and a deliberate attempt to weaken Iraq, ‘a pan-Arab nationalist power’.”⁹⁸ Even though, Mubarak had joined in the coalition, his actions were generally perceived as defending Arab (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) interests.

⁹⁶ Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 167.

⁹⁷ Zogby, *Arab Voices*, 166.

⁹⁸ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 182.

Post war sanctions carried no such caveat, were increasingly targeted at Iraqi civilians, and were met with wide disapproval on the Arab street. In the second Gulf War it was even more difficult for Mubarak to separate from U.S. interests, though Egypt did not engage in direct action. According to Wiki Leaks, prior to “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, Mubarak warned President Bush that an invasion would produce “A thousand Bin Laden’s.” He counseled Vice President Cheney three or four times that it was unwise to remove Saddam Hussein that in doing so would only “open the door for Iran.”⁹⁹ The Bush administration paid no heed and Mubarak was left having to defend his relationship with the United States without supporting the U.S. invasion. That was a tight rope to walk.

The problem was that Egyptian citizens were “full in” with the Iraqi people. They did not support Saddam, however they felt for Iraqi civilians who had already suffered tremendously under the sanctions. They already distrusted Bush’s support for Israel. An invasion of choice in Iraq would rock the streets. In response Mubarak kept up his U.S. criticism and pulled war support, his policy actually “following” public opinion as opposed to “leading it”. However, as Benantar notes, “for Egypt, as well as for other U.S. Arab allies, the relationship with Washington was and is more important than Arab solidarity.” American troops were provided air space and access to the Suez Canal. Mubarak’s “minimal solidarity” with the Iraqi people resulted from a “minimal solidarity” with the U.S. and an ear to the street.¹⁰⁰ When huge anti U.S. protests hit the

⁹⁹ Christopher Hope, “Wiki Leaks: Hosni Mubarak told not to topple Saddam Hussein,” *The Telegraph*, February 9, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Abdenmour Benantar. “Egypt and the War on Iraq; Implications for Domestic Politics,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, 24, no. 1 (April 2007): 227-247.

streets on March 20 and 21, 2003 official Egyptian policy was slow to adjust. Even had it moved quickly, the balancing act of simultaneously attacking and supporting the invasion was impossible to keep up. The war was causing anti U.S. demonstrations all over the globe. Benantar, “The war created a consensus in Egyptian politics. Opposition parties, professional unions, religious institutions, civil society, and public opinion, firmly disapproved of the war, expressed solidarity with the Iraqi people, and denounced the double-standards policy practiced by the U.S. towards Iraq and Israel.”¹⁰¹ Mubarak’s lack of creditability was exposed.

In order to placate the growing resentment, Mubarak opened some doors that would prove difficult to close. On February 27, 2003 for the first time in recent Egyptian history the government allowed a huge demonstration to proceed in Cairo Stadium. 150,000 people attended the rally, largely dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. All sorts of opposition coalitions, political parties, unions and civil societies joined in condemnation of U.S.-Israeli hegemony, called on Arab unity against the possible war, and urged a boycott of all U.S., Israeli, and British products. It demanded the Egyptian government stop receiving U.S. aid and to provide support to the Palestinians. Opposition leaders also called on Egypt to close off the Suez to U.S. warships and shut down Egyptian air space to U.S. military jets. In March immediately after the invasion, thousands of protesters with no affiliation to any political group broke through security barriers and filled Tahrir Square – the first time since the Bread riots of 1977. Organized by young people, using modern means of communication; email and cell phones, the

¹⁰¹ Benantar, “Implications for Domestic Politics,” 227-247.

spontaneous demonstrations continued similar protests that had supported the Palestinian Intifada.¹⁰²

To this end an awkward and alliance was initiated. In a number of the protests the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior not only allowed rallies, even organized them. The same security forces that had been used to violently quell anti-government demonstrations were now encouraging dissent.¹⁰³ It could not hold. The Mubarak regime was directly tied into the issues being attacked in the demonstrations. Israel, U.S., Iraq all of it found Mubarak at the fulcrum. And demonstrations became more and more anti-regime oriented, until security went back to locking them down. However, like the electoral reforms instigated by the announcement of Bush's Freedom Agenda in D.C. in September of 03, the success of organized regime challenges could not be rolled back and dis-remembered.

Embryonic street politics and organization learned from the War protests continued through Iraqi occupation and moved deftly into anti U.S. Israeli protests of the invasions in Lebanon and Gaza, leading ultimately in 2011 back to Tahrir Square. National opposition movements found a great deal in common with competing groups, and formed anti-Mubarak alliances. The protest movement Kefaya (Enough) arose out of the war demonstrations, and pushed openly and aggressively into previously uncharted waters – challenging with open debate the unthinkable topic of presidential succession.¹⁰⁴ Mubarak could not control the fall out of a treaty and a war that drew him close with

¹⁰² Benantar, "Implications for Domestic Politics," 227-247.

¹⁰³ Benantar, "Implications for Domestic Politics," 227-247.

¹⁰⁴ Lars Berger, "The Missing Link? US Policy and the International Dimensions of Failed Democratic Transitions in the Arab World, vol. 59, iss. 1 (March 2011): 38-55.

Israel and closer with the United States. The actions of the Bush administration, and a belligerent Israel were too much of a load for the Egyptian president to successfully manage.

Osman writes, “Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt was dynamic and revolutionary. It grabbed the political landscape of the region via a thunderous coup that abolished monarchism; transformed the country’s socio-economic fabric...and triggered the regional tsunami of Arab Nationalism.” Egyptian culture entered into an era of intoxicating artistic ambiance...literature, films, plays, and launched an episode of Egyptian and Arab confidence. “Nasser’s ambition, energy, and intelligence were indispensable to Egypt’s self –invention in the 1950’s and 1960’.”¹⁰⁵ Anwar Sadat too led Egypt through a sea of change. He won a short-lived war with Israel in 1973. He broke with the Soviet Union to make an ally of the United States. He launched free market capitalist reforms drawing Egypt into the West. Absent the larger than life persona of Nasser, he walked where no Egyptian had gone before, and even if the Peace Treaty angered many, the initiative that Sadat showed to launch it took great courage. “Hosni Mubarak’s Egypt, Osman reveals, has been a very different story. The man possesses neither Nasser’s grandeur nor Sadat’s appeal. A leading Egyptian publication once described Mubarak as severely lacking in the leadership department but excelling in executing tasks and delivering policies.”¹⁰⁶ He was a bean counter; a clever, manipulative bureaucrat, who balanced United States demands with Egyptian needs, off of a treaty with Israel, until it could no longer successfully be maintained.

¹⁰⁵ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 164 -165.

¹⁰⁶ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 165.

Following Sadat's assassination a quiet steady influence was required in Egypt. They got it with Mubarak. He provided the tranquilizer to relieve the pain of assassination. He completed the military transition of the presidency. He honored the treaty, acquiesced to U.S. demands, and played a reserved role as Egypt's head of state for thirty years. The military got fat. The elite filled their bank accounts. In an era that longed for Arab leadership, with Israeli belligerency increasing and U.S. foreign policy unchallenged, as aging Arab authoritarian governments found themselves increasingly out of touch with younger and more educated populations, the regime of Hosni Mubarak ossified. Meanwhile Egypt's influence in the Arab world vanished.

In 2006 Rubin asked, "What is the Egyptian role on Iraq? Virtually nothing. What is the Egyptian position in Iran? It's of no real importance. What is the Egyptian position in having any real influence on Syria, on Lebanon...with Saudi Arabia, and even on the Palestinians?"¹⁰⁷ The 2009 Jerusalem report writes, that the conflict in Gaza, as well as an inability to influence United States policy, or curb Israeli aggression, "...has reaffirmed what many in Egypt and across the Middle East have know for sometime – that Egypt, once the powerhouse of the Arab world, is impotent in the face of regional crisis."¹⁰⁸ The land of Pharaohs, which for so long led the Arab world, was no longer of consequence in things that mattered. "In what has become of Nasser's Egypt, past sentiments are just that. Egypt sacrificed thousands of men in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948-49, 1956, 1967 and 1973 in the name of Arab nationalism and a free Palestine state,

¹⁰⁷ Rubin, "The Future of Egypt."

¹⁰⁸ "Mubarak's Balancing Act." *The Jerusalem Report*, 13.

yet today it is desperately fending off claims of incompetence and even collusion.”¹⁰⁹
Iraq. Lebanon. The West Bank. Gaza. Operation Cast Lead was the final straw.
Egyptians, who saw Palestine and Iraq as “important,” those who cared because
Palestinians “are Arabs like me,” could no longer step aside and watch their government,
serve as an accomplice to murder. “Opposition groups in Egypt from the outlawed
Muslim Brotherhood to the nationalist left – have reacted to the Gaza crisis with anger
and dismay, laying the blame at Egypt’s alliance with Washington for the country’s
inability to deal effectively with Israeli policies in the region.”¹¹⁰

In the end Mubarak made Egypt just another tool of Washington foreign policy.
He took his payoffs. He followed orders. He was compliant and useful to the United
States, until he couldn’t continue the balancing act any longer. It’s a tribute to him that
he was able to last as long as he did. To maintain the situation thirty years, in one of the
most politically charged environments in the world was no easy task. In November of
2003 when President Bush launched his Freedom Agenda, when he leveraged Mubarak
to “lead the way towards to democracy in the Middle East,” to reform his autocratic
system, and to liberalize the Egyptian government so that all could have access, Mubarak
opened the doors not only to democrats and liberals, but to Mahdi Akef as well.

On December 29, 2008 in the midst of the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, Mahdi Akef
inspired a Cairo demonstration, a protest sanctioned by the very regime that it attacked.
He rallied the crowd with the confidence of Gamel Abdel Nasser, “It’s needless to say
that the Zionist enemy, which is occupying Palestine, the Arab and Islamic land,

¹⁰⁹ "Mubarak's Balancing Act." *The Jerusalem Report*, 13.

¹¹⁰ "Mubarak's Balancing Act." *The Jerusalem Report*, 13.

wouldn't have been able to conduct these horrific criminal massacres without scandalous international complicity, humiliating silence, shameful impotence and disgraceful Arab collaboration."¹¹¹ Mohammed Mahdi Akef was the supreme leader of the Muslim Brotherhood at the time. The rhetoric of George Bush could not simultaneously stand alongside that of Mohammed Mahdi Akef and not claim the presidency of an authoritarian dictator with the power to shut down free speech.

Chapter Conclusion

“Men make their own history,” Karl Marx wrote, “but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but rather under circumstances found, given, and transmitted...”¹¹² When President Bush in 2003 called for the “great and proud nation of Egypt” to lead the way to democracy, he couldn't possibly have foreseen the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. For Bush, democracy was a term of convenience. It was good for Egypt, because Mubarak was in the fold, not for Hamas, an avowed and elected “terrorist” organization. Israel was no doubt a democratic rock, in large measure due to the dollars that flowed from the coffers of AIPAC. And Iraq needed to be force-fed the “Bill of Rights” through invasion. Washington didn't have a clue as to the position it forced Mubarak to take in 2003, or it wouldn't have called for his reform. His stability was much too vital to U.S. interests and Israeli permanence, to be sacrificed to a “convenient democracy.” In the fall of 2009 Hanna wrote, “Despite its diminished status and influence, Egypt remains central to current U.S. efforts to revitalize the Middle East peace process, enhance counterterrorism

¹¹¹ "Mubarak's Balancing Act." *The Jerusalem Report*, 13.

¹¹² Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” reprinted in Robert Tucker, ed, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 595.

and intelligence cooperation, and address concerns over the Iranian nuclear problem.”¹¹³

If the neo-conservatives who had trumpeted Bush’s Freedom Agenda, initiated Operation Iraqi Freedom, and had written the words for the president to read on November 6, 2003 could’ve predicted the events of Tahrir Square eight years later, they never would have pursued Mubarak. The cost was much too rich.

Once the “Baghdad Spring” wilted, after the Egyptian president had reformed his “un-reformable” electoral system, and Israel had invaded Lebanon and Gaza again, the fatal process had been set in motion. By hesitantly moving to modify a political system that would empower people like Mohammed Mahdi Akef, those who equated Mubarak to a “shameful, impotent, and disgraceful Arab collaborator,” he knew the risks. And that is why he resisted so intently. However, the president of Egypt had a role to play, an obligation to fulfill, and the American president was on a mission. There was a very good chance that Hosni Mubarak knew exactly where that mission was going to take his presidency. As Karl Marx suggested, he did not go where he pleased, but he surely knew where he was headed.

¹¹³ Michael Whaid Hanna, “The son also rises: Egypt’s looming succession struggle,” *World Policy Journal*, 26.3 (Fall 2009).

CHAPTER III

SUCCESSION, CORRUPTION, AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

“A tourist in Cairo spots three photographs on the wall of a restaurant: one of Nasser, another of Sadat, and the third of Hosni Mubarak. He asks the owner who the first man is, and the owner tells him it's the man who overthrew the Egyptian monarchy and served as the country's president. "Who's the second man?" the tourist wants to know. "That's Anwar Sadat, our next president," comes the reply. "He made peace with Israel but was assassinated in 1981." Next the tourist wants to know who the third man is. "Him?" says the restaurant owner. "That's my business partner's father" - A popular joke in Egypt¹⁴

On May 4, 2011 “my business partner’s father” turned 83 years old. As 2010 came to a close, before the masses descended on Tahrir Square, the son was looking more and more as heir apparent to the father’s presidency. That was a problem for a lot of Egyptians. Gamal Mubarak, the president’s oldest son, had been groomed for the top job for some time. He had already played a significant role in the neo classical structural reforms of the Egyptian economy. Consequently, his bank account was well padded. His financial ties with the West were deep, his Egyptian business associates well entrenched in economic matters of state. And since 2000 Gamal had been working his way up the ladder of the National Democratic Party.

Not everybody celebrated Junior’s rise to the top. Egypt was not Syria. It was not a kingdom; it was not Morocco, not Saudi Arabia, not Jordan. Egypt was a Democratic Republic, albeit without the democracy, and many Egyptians didn’t take kindly to the legacy of Abdel Gamal Nasser being handed off like royalty. Elaaser wrote in 2009, “Mubarak has been polishing his son Gamal to be his successor, a mockery of

¹⁴ Marcus Baram, “How the Mubarak Family Made its Billions,” *Huffington Post*, February 11, 2011.

Egyptian Republicanism and democracy. Egyptians are enraged that they appear ready to follow the path of Syria, in which a president, who came to power in a military coup, installed his own son as a successor.” If Gamal took power, many feared not only a prolongation of his father’s policies to enrich the elite and stifle reform, but a continued route towards a police state like “Syria or Tunisia, with a security force infrastructure numbering nearly two million.”¹¹⁵ Not only that, with Gamal just 48 years old, another Mubarak “president for life” could provide the regime a six decade rule; it truly would be a return to the days of the Pharaohs. The uproar over Gamal’s increasing likelihood in that transition focused not only on succession, but reminded citizens of his role in the corruption and inequity that had progressively come to represent the Egyptian economy.

In this chapter I will document Gamal Mubarak’s rise to political power and his increasingly significant role in the country’s economy from the mid 1990’s onward. I will also assess his father’s efforts to place him in line for succession to the presidency and how that resonated on the Egyptian street. Corruption at the local and national levels of the Egyptian economy, often with the nod of the Mubarak clan, will be compared with Egypt’s celebrated partnership with the World Bank and IMF. While the United States nurtured close political and economic ties with Egypt, its refusal to use those levers to help stifle widespread corruption will be addressed, as will a huge Egyptian military influence on the economy. And finally, I will explore the gap between rich and poor and how desperation on the streets, led not only to horrific decisions of impoverished organ donors, but also consolidated a restive and growing lower class that would eventually trade regime stability for the possibility of a job and a loaf of bread.

¹¹⁵ Aladdin Elaasar, “Is Egypt Stable,” *Middle East Quarterly*, 16.3 (Summer 2009).

Gamal Mubarak

Unlike Nasser or Sadat or his father, Gamal's lack of any connection to the Egyptian armed forces was an obvious hole in the resume, however not his most significant. Hanna writes, "He (Gamal) is a patrician from the most entitled of Egyptian families, with limited interaction with his country's least advantaged...it is therefore impossible for him to fall back on the humble roots that Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sadat, and his father each employed to establish bona tides as an ibn al-balad ('son of the country')." ¹¹⁶ And that is what the three before him, particularly Nasser, did so well. They were Egyptians, not capitalists, not communists, not politicians. Not even soldiers. Their rhetoric, if not their political choices, put Egypt always first. Osman describes Gamal as coming across as "detached, elitist, condescending – and westernized." ¹¹⁷ In a 2009 interview with *Middle East Quarterly*, he named Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher as "the leaders you most consider your models?" ¹¹⁸ Margaret Thatcher? In Egypt? His feel for the Egyptian "fellah", the man that Nasser so honored, was fully absent from Gamal Mubarak's resume.

Gamal grew up in the 1970's and 1980's in a family of privilege. His life experience was vastly different from that of his contemporaries, or even his father. He encountered none the challenges that most Egyptians face in terms of education, accommodation, health care, the job market, dealing with the country's administrative system or with the security apparatus... ¹¹⁹ He was the product of an elite education at St.

¹¹⁶ Hanna, "Son Also Rises."

¹¹⁷ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 140.

¹¹⁸ "Gamal Mubarak: 'We Need Audacious Leaders,'" *Middle East Quarterly*, 16.1 (Winter 2009).

¹¹⁹ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 139.

George's College, the Cairo prep school where English is the standard primary language of instruction (French is #2). At 18 he enrolled at American University in Cairo where he earned his BA and MBA. From there it was onto investment banking in Cairo and six years in London at The Bank of America. He came back to Cairo to advise his father the president, and founded his own private equity fund, MedInvest Associates.¹²⁰ Along the way he got very rich, and cultivated an abundance of elite Western business contacts. This was no man of the people, no "son of the country."

While Gamal worked his way through the Egyptian business sector, Dad took care of political training. In 2000 he began his ascension within the NDP, when the president appointed him General Secretariat of the Party. Two years later he took over as head of a new Policy Secretariat. At the time Tahrir Square filled in January 2011, he held those positions, in addition to one of three assistant secretary-general positions, plus a place on the Higher Policies Council, a way station for recruiting academicians and priming them for future Cabinet Posts.¹²¹ Maybe his most pivotal task was his role on the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, one of the country's leading think tanks. He gathered around him successful businessmen, economists and public relations professionals, who served as his power center within the party. The group was Western educated, young, and global. Osman describes them as, representing an impressive façade for the 'new thinking' that Gamal Mubarak was promoting. Their message of the 2000's was "all about development, national growth rates, GDP per capita, "the economic tiger on the Nile." In less than ten years, they had formed a mesh between

¹²⁰ Hanna, "Son Also Rises."

¹²¹ Jason Brownlee, "A New Generation of Autocracy in Egypt," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 14.1 (Fall/Winter 2007).

regime and Egyptian business and financial tycoons that positioned Gamal as the unrivaled strongman in the party, second only to his father.¹²²

Despite the ominous signs, talk of succession was off the table. The Mubarak's steadfastly denied the notion of hereditary transfer of power. As early as 2000 the president attempted to squelch speculation during an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El Paris*, "We are not a monarchy, this is the Republic of Egypt and I cannot be compared to other countries in the region, we cannot decide on the succession according to our whims, because it is the constitution that determines it." However, actions by both men, as well as political moves by the NDP served to say otherwise. Article 76 put forth by Mubarak and ratified by the NDP in 2005, provided Gamal an electoral stepping-stone to the presidency. The article set nearly impossible conditions for independent candidates to run and for opposition parties to get candidates to join in the presidential race. Succession would come only from within the party. And the party was fully invested in the Mubarak's. In August of 2010 when President Mubarak, at the age of 82, was chosen by the party to run again in 2011, NDP Information Secretary Ali El-Din Helal revealed, "We can't force President Mubarak to run in the next presidential election, the decision is up to him depending on his circumstances and his view (for the future). If he decides to run, then we will support him 100 percent, if he decides against it, then Gamal Mubarak would be a suitable candidate."¹²³ Hamdy Hassan, spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc echoed the words of many in the opposition and on the streets when he told *Daily News Egypt*, "The NDP dares to [ignore]

¹²² Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 135-136.

¹²³ Heba Fahmy, "Safwat El-Sherif: NDP Nominates Incumbent Mubarak for President," *thedailynewsEgypt.com*, August 27, 2010.

the people's will by forging the elections like it always does, all democratic countries respect the will of their people, but this is a dictatorship that respects nothing."¹²⁴

Political Corruption Throughout Egypt

It wasn't "succession only" that stirred so many in the Egyptian opposition against the president's first born. Gamal was a symbol of the corruption and enormous gap between rich and poor that had engulfed Egypt's economy for the past two decades. A handoff to Mubarak the younger would not only announce a mockery of the electoral system, but also insure that the economic failures of inequity and fraud would continue. According to Marcus Baram, "Over the past twenty years Mubarak, his family and his close circle of advisers have enriched themselves through partnerships in powerful Egyptian companies, profiting from their political power."¹²⁵ *Corruption in Egypt: The Black Cloud is not Disappearing*, an investigative report compiled in 2006 by Kefaya, a coalition of opposition groups, wrote that through Mubarak's two sons, Gamal and Alaa, the family controls a network of companies that earn concessions from foreign companies that do business in Egypt. The report notes that the Mubarak's have amassed their fortune not through stealing, but by getting a piece of any business that wants to operate in Egypt. Sometimes it comes via a 5 percent to 20 percent commission to enter the field, at other times through partnership required by constitutional law. Elaasar adds that Egyptian law requires foreign businesses to give local partners a 51 percent stake in their Egyptian operations. The local partners usually go through the family or powerful people

¹²⁴ Fahmy, "Safwat El-Sherif."

¹²⁵ Baram, "Mubarak Family Billions."

in the ruling party.¹²⁶ Egypt under Mubarak functioned like a Vito Andolini Corleone family enterprise.

And this was not just at the national level. *The Jerusalem Post* notes, “a nationwide survey conducted in mid-2009 by the Cairo-based Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies found that 47 percent of small and medium businesses in Egypt are forced to offer government clerks cash bribes in order to obtain business licenses and must continually bribe them in order to avoid fines.”¹²⁷ Freedom House adds, that investors frequently complained that red tape and bureaucratic inertia made bribery essential to doing business. At every level some form of influence (wasta) was required to get things done, from moving paperwork, to finding a job, to purchasing a seat in Parliament. “Corruption in Egypt is all pervasive.”¹²⁸

The final numbers, at least in regards to the royal family, are astounding. Reports have Mubarak’s net worth somewhere between \$5 billion and \$70 billion (closer to five). The family owns properties around the world from London to New York City to Beverly Hills. In addition to homes in Sharm al-Sheik, a six-story mansion in the Knightsbridge section of London, a luxury home in Paris and several in Cairo, Mubarak owns two yachts and a private jet. The regime and the family have institutionalized graft and corruption, from the apex to the base of the pyramid, at the same time according to a recent Congressional Research Service report, half of all Egyptian men don’t have a job,

¹²⁶ Baram, “Mubarak Family Billions.”

¹²⁷ David Miller, “Alarming Corruption Rates in Egypt,” *The Jerusalem Post*, (July 29, 2010).

¹²⁸ “Freedom House Country Report: Egypt 2007,” *Freedom House*, (2007).

90 percent of females remain jobless two years after graduating college, and 44 percent of Egyptians live on less than two dollars a day.¹²⁹

It doesn't have to be that way. The Republic of Egypt has enormous economic potential. It is positioned at a crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It has ties with the West and with the Middle East, and receives special privileges from the United States, IMF and World Bank. It stands at peace with Israel. It produces 100 percent of the energy that it needs. It exports the rest. It has the bounty of the Nile at its disposal and controls a dependable and lucrative foreign currency industry via the Suez Canal. For tourism Egypt is as no otherworld destination, which adds more foreign currency. And few states bring home more dollars and Euros and dirhams in the form of remittances. As long as the state can provide stability within its borders, and not be ravaged by corruption the coffers should fill up. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector is increasing its productivity and getting closer to self-sufficiency. Industries include textiles, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, construction, and cement. And before the Tahrir Revolution, Egypt was drawing more and more interest from Western business.¹³⁰ The macroeconomics version of Egypt's economy has been improving since the reforms of the mid nineties.

The 1991 Paris Club talks served as a watershed for Mubarak and for the Egyptian economy, particularly the macro portion of it. With the end of the Cold War, the United States longed to reduce Egypt's dependency on foreign aid, and pushed for economic liberalization through the increase of private investment, foreign and domestic.

¹²⁹ Baram, "Mubarak Family Billions."

¹³⁰ "Egypt Economy," *CIA 2010 The World Fact book*.

The new strategy produced several trade agreements between the U.S. and Egypt, as well as the U.S.-Egypt Partnership and the Presidents' Council.¹³¹ First though Egypt's massive debt needed restructuring. Mubarak's support of the United States in the first Gulf War was well rewarded by Western "friends" at Paris. World Bank incentives of \$19 billion in debt reduction got the ball rolling. And although structural reforms came hesitantly, once they got moving, they came in droves. By 2004 Egypt was the poster child for the IMF and World Bank. In 2006 the World Bank ranked it number one out of 155 countries in the area of trade policy reforms.¹³² In 2007 the World Bank in its *Doing Business Report* again ranked it as the world's top reformer. And in a 2008 report by the IMF touted Egypt's foreign exchange market, reduction of income tax rates, a huge amount of privatization particularly in the banking sector, a modernizing of the insurance sector and capital markets, and streamlining of business regulations and custom clearances. The final numbers were impressive; a growth rate of 7.5 percent from 2005 to 2008, 2.4 million jobs added from 2004 to 2007. Exports also rose sharply, along with record receipts from its four most reliable sources; gas and oil, workers' remittances, Suez Canal receipts, and tourism revenues.¹³³

Egypt's Growing Wealth Disparity

All of these numbers and all of this promise matters for naught if average citizens do not benefit from state wealth. Personal and regime corruption, as well as the intensity of structural adjustment, negated so many of Egypt's numerous improvements for those

¹³¹Bessma Momani, "Promoting Economic Liberalization in Egypt: From U.S. Foreign Aid to Trade and Investment," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 7, No. 3 (September 2003).

¹³²Freedom House, "Egypt Country Report."

¹³³Klaus Enders, "Reforms Trigger Economic Growth," *International Monetary Fund*, (2/13/08).

on the street. *The Guardian* reported in 2009, “Since 1991, the year Egypt yoked itself to an IMF structural adjustment program and embarked on a series of wide-ranging economic reforms, the country has been something of a poster child for neoliberal economists who point to its remarkable levels of annual GDP growth as proof that “Washington consensus” blueprints for the developing world can work.”¹³⁴ 1991, 1996, 2004 waves of neoliberal reform spurred relaxed price controls, reduced subsidies, opening of trade and a massive shift to privatization. In 2004 a new cabinet slashed the top income tax rate from 42 percent to 20 percent, leaving multimillionaires paying exactly the same proportion of their income as those on an annual salary of less than \$800. In 2008 trade zones were incorporated to spur foreign investment to a whopping \$13 billion. GDP clocked consistently at 7 percent through the last half of the first decade of the 00’s. The IMF, the World Bank, and USA have taken their bows. “In 2009 the global business community applauded Mubarak’s rule as ‘bold’, ‘impressive’, and ‘prudent’.”¹³⁵

Out on the streets people were in pain. It’s telling that in 2009, at the same time that the IMF was handing out gold stars to Egypt and Gamal was getting pats on the back from the party, Elaasar declared, “The Egyptian economy is in trouble.”¹³⁶ He reported that unemployment hovered at 20 percent; twice the government’s reported estimate. Underemployment was “epidemic.” According to Transparency International, Egypt ranked at the bottom tier of Arab states for perceived corruption. The inflation rate continued to rise. The increasing pressure on the unemployed, poor and elderly

¹³⁴ Jack Shenker, “And the rich got richer,” *Guardian.co.uk*, (November 8, 2009).

¹³⁵ Shenker, “rich got richer.”

¹³⁶ Elaasar, “Is Egypt Stable?”

instigated food riots in April of 2008 as the annual rise in food prices topped 20 percent.¹³⁷

Meanwhile the gap between rich and poor increased tremendously. Osman writes that more than 40 percent of the country's wealth is controlled by the richest 5 percent of the population. The top ten corporations on the Egyptian stock exchange, that reflect over 45 percent of the market's total capitalization, are under the jurisdiction of less than twenty families. Nearly 40 percent of the country's credit goes to Egypt's thirty largest private companies.¹³⁸ Those well connected to IMF reform, to Gamal and Associates, to the NDP do just fine. Hawthorne adds, "it's true that the current economic team has done a very good job on the macro level and that certain people are benefiting very much from the policies, but there is definitely a growing sense of a widening gap between haves and have not's..." and many middle class Egyptians who speak of intensifying frustrations with their declining standard of living and quality of life. She notes, that an "economic boom that seems to benefit mostly people associated with Gamal Mubarak and his affiliates" surrounds this shrinking middle class¹³⁹

Through all of these "bold" and "impressive" moves, Egypt's poor have suffered tremendously. Foreign investment has concentrated on sectors like finance and gas that create few jobs. While natural resources have been sourced out to "well connected" foreign investors at subsidized rates, the cost of staples like bread and cooking oil have skyrocketed. In fact when structural adjustment began back in the mid 90's Egyptians

¹³⁷ Elaasar, "Is Egypt Stable?"

¹³⁸ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 115.

¹³⁹ Amy Hawthorne, "The Future of Egypt," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 3 (June 2006).

living on less than \$2 day stood at 20 percent; in 2010 that figure rose to 44 percent. In the past decade when growth was strongest and Egyptian GDP was consistently registering a 7.5 percent annual increase, absolute poverty climbed from 16.7 percent to 20 percent. And the minimum wage has been stuck on \$2.45 per hour for an eternity. “Norm Chomsky called neo liberalism “capitalism with the gloves off; its hard looking at this jumble of statistics, to discern anything but a shameless hit-and-run job perpetrated by a tiny band of Egypt’s business elite.”¹⁴⁰

The problem is that many of the same structural adjustments encouraged by the IMF and World Bank, those economic liberalization policies pushed by capital to tighten Egypt’s belt, have devastated Egypt’s Middle class. It’s gone. The Mubarak era has brought it to its end.¹⁴¹ Privatization, one of structural adjustments favorite tools, Elad-Altman admits, “does not create many more new businesses; it creates a very small number of huge businesses, and a concentration of economic power...” In order for Egypt to survive these structural reforms, Altman admits that it has to do a better job of letting the wealth filter “much wider and much lower than so far.” Currently it is only “sons of the rich people (and) big monopolies” that feel the advantages. Until reforms benefit the individual peasant or the individual small business initiative, in the small town, the situation will remain precarious.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Meera Selva, “Egypt slides into danger,” *Guardian.co.uk*, (November 6, 2007) also Shenker discusses this point in depth in, “Rich got richer.”

¹⁴¹ Ayellet Yehiav, “The Future of Egypt,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 3 (June 2006).

¹⁴² Israel Elad-Altman, “The Future of Egypt,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 3 (June 2006).

There is very little indication that things will soon improve. Elaasar, “Annual growth rate is not enough to absorb new entrants in the labor market.” According to the U.N. International Labor Organization, in order to halve the \$1-a-day working poverty by 2015, GDP would have to grow at 4-5 percent per year, and to halve the \$2-a-day working poverty by 2015; it must grow by 8-10 percent per year. Egypt’s growth rate for 2009 was closer to 3 percent and projected to go lower in 2010. Another problem is education. According to Egyptian trade minister Ahmad Guwaili, the education system is not adequately preparing students for the current labor market. Those who are ready often leave the country for opportunity abroad. Complicating matters is the fact that the system isn’t big enough for the huge influx of young people that is currently engulfing it. 37 percent of the population is below fifteen-years-old. 58 percent is younger than twenty-five. One fourth of young men and 59 percent of young women are unemployed. Ninety percent of the unemployed are between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.¹⁴³ While the IMF and World Bank claim macro victory the micro situation on the street approaches desperation.

The most gruesome indicator as to the depths of Egyptian poverty reveals a thriving black market in the sale of human organs, whereby the poor have been turned into “spare parts for the rich.” Cultural and religious complexities, an Egyptian legal system that doesn’t recognize brain death, in addition to lax punishment for physicians, all contribute to the barbaric practice; but the fact of the matter is that abject poverty has driven this market. A social worker from one of Cairo’s poorest slums reported in 2007

¹⁴³ Elaasar, “Is Egypt Stable?”

“kidneys and livers were the ‘currency of choice, fetching around \$7,500 per piece.’”¹⁴⁴ Egypt is one of a half dozen countries identified by the World Health Organization as organ trafficking hot spots. While trouble areas like China, Pakistan, and the Philippines have outlawed organ sales and barred foreigners from undergoing transplants to stop “transplant tourism,” Egypt continues to ignore the problem.¹⁴⁵ Paris and Nour reveal, “The sobering reality of the commercialization of organs is one of the consequences of the context of transplants in Egypt, in which a large underclass is heavily relied upon to supply organs for those who can afford to purchase them.”¹⁴⁶

Egypt’s Military Inc.

A final factor that contributes mightily to economic corruption is the unique role of the Egyptian military in the Egyptian economy. Robert Springborg, a specialist in Egyptian military affairs, notes that after the Israeli Wars of the 60’s and 70’s and the ensuing peace agreement a huge Egyptian military found that it had no useful purpose. Rather than ending conscription, or releasing a surplus of unemployed young men back into a stagnant economy, it turned itself from a “fighting force into a hiring force” and transitioned into a corporation of sorts. Springborg writes that the Egyptian armed forces has branched out into all sorts of economic arenas; car assembly, clothing, pots and pans, construction of roads, highways, bridges, kitchen appliances, foodstuffs, even plastic bottles for gas. It is a major industrial player in the country; and a semi secret one at that. The fact that it is involved isn’t hidden, but just how deep it goes, is. Nobody

¹⁴⁴ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 131.

¹⁴⁵ John Keyser, “Egypt’s Poor sell their Organs for a Steep Price,” *Huffington Post*, (March 17, 2009).

¹⁴⁶ Wayne Paris, and Nour Bakr, "Organ transplantation in Egypt," *Progress in Transplantation*, 20, no. 3 (September 2010): 274-278.

really knows. Estimates range as high as 30 percent to 40 percent of Egypt's SOE.¹⁴⁷ And if nobody is sure of the numbers, then it is certain that corruption and waste are equally hidden.

The history of Military Inc. reflects a colossal and expanding waste of tax dollars. Initiated in 1979, as a part of the Administration of National Service Projects, its early development coincided with signing of the Arab Israeli Peace Treaty. President Mubarak has been in charge for the duration. Frisch reports, "By 1994, the organization ran 16 factories, employing 75,000 workers, with 40 percent of its production geared to the civilian market in the form of agricultural machines, fodder, cables, medications, pumps, and ovens." Since then it has continued to grow. It has reaped huge profits by using soldiers as cheap labor. It's also reached deep into the real estate market. By 1994 the armed forces had profited over one billion Egyptian pounds from land development deals in the Suez alone. That revenue base will continue to expand, with its secured involvement in the new land reclamation and urban resettlement projects in the northern Sinai and western desert. A final cash flow comes via the army's role smuggling through the two free trade zones under its control in Suez and Port Said.¹⁴⁸

Military projects, investments, and labor contracts in Egypt were for all intents and purposes closed to criticism. The elimination of waste and corruption under some form of civic scrutiny could yield higher efficiency, increased revenue for public goods, and a wage base for the civilian workforce. For a state so dependent on IMF and World Bank structural reforms, and for those organizations that allegedly thrive on transparency

¹⁴⁷ "The Friday Podcast: Egypt's Military Inc.," *Planet Money*, (February 4, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ Hillel Frisch, "Guns and Butter in the Egyptian Army," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 5, No. 2, (June 2001).

of state owned enterprises, the fact that the Egyptian military is up to its elbows in the SOE sector is highly hypocritical. Minus any accountability it certainly isn't economically efficient. And it doesn't benefit the rank and file. This semi-secret monopoly of valuable Egyptian resources, serves as another reason for those struggling to buy bread and worrying about their children's' future, or even allowing the desperate thought of an organ sale to cross their mind, to be enraged with the entire system.

Adam K. Webb writes, "The world has turned into a 20:80 society. The top 20 percent have gained from globalization's winner-take-all dynamics. The bottom 80 percent have stayed put or lost out economically...global distributive justice (the chasm between rich and poor...global North and South) is probably the most insurmountable problem in our time."¹⁴⁹ This gulf need not extend from the West to third world. Within nations, poor and rich, halves prosper at the expense of the needy. Egypt lies at the heart of the global South. It represents the displaced 80 percent. However, within that autocratic society, the well connected have acquired much. The Mubarak's have flourished. Their bank accounts are fat. Their possessions are many. Gamal and associates have benefited tremendously from IMF reforms. As has the president and his party. The military regime, through its cooption of the private industrial sector and lack of transparency has gained incredible economic advantage. Meanwhile Egypt's poor grovel for food, and contemplate the unimaginable.

¹⁴⁹ Adam K. Webb, "The Calm Before the Storm? Revolutionary Pressures and Global Governance," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 27 no. 1 (2006): 80,84.

United States' Influence on Egyptian Economy

As the regime has lined its pockets, the “Global North” has served as an accomplice. IMF structural adjustments and corresponding reduction of social safety nets, have served to increase the hardship of those on the street. Meanwhile, by wasting opportunities to nourish real economic and political reform in Egypt, the United States has actually has encouraged continued corruption. As the recipient of the second largest amount of U.S. international aid over the past twenty-five years, Egypt should be somewhat beholden to U.S. influence. That influence has often been counterproductive. The Clinton Administration’s dealings via the private sector bi-lateral “President’s Council” and the actions of George Bush’ MEPI illustrate the shortsighted approach of the United States to Egypt’s ongoing economic predicament.

In 1994, Vice President Al Gore was placed in charge of the U.S.-Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth, a proposal aimed to foster American private investment in Egypt, by bringing together 15 Egyptian and 15 American corporate representatives to promote American private sector initiatives and economic liberalization in Egypt. According to Momani, “The Council became an important policymaking forum on economic issues affecting both countries.” Many heavyweights were included; from the U.S. - Lucent, Motorola, Citibank and General Electric; from Egypt – Nile Clothing, The Egyptian British Bank, and the Ezz Group. The coalition had a chance to provide real reform; however not with the partnership coming out of Egypt. The chair for the Egyptian President’s Council? Gamal Mubarak.¹⁵⁰ It wasn’t just within

¹⁵⁰ Momani, “MERIA Promoting Liberalization.”

the President's Council that he leveled influence. Berger writes, "When the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, which many of Gamal Mubarak's closest associates continue to dominate, became a recipient of National Endowment for Democracy funds from 1993 to 2002 – U.S. democracy assistance ended up supporting...the heir apparent to Egypt's authoritarian ruler."¹⁵¹ Instead of promoting a new way, U.S. initiatives merely served to further stabilize inequalities fostered by the regime.

George Bush's choice to put Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) under the leadership of Deputy-Assistant Secretary of State Liz Cheney, daughter of Vice-President Dick Cheney and into the hands of the U.S. State Departments' Near East Bureau meant that 70 percent of all grants went directly to Arab governments, with only 17.5 percent reserved to Arab civil society. Again, the U.S. had a lever to help reduce regime corruption that it chose not to use. According to Berger as it turned out, "in the words of one friend in the White House, the typical aid recipient in the Middle East (through the MEPI) is the son of an ambassador, with a German mother, who happens to run an NGO."¹⁵² Meanwhile Brownlee reveals, "Gamal enjoys an audience with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Egypt and even during a May 2006 trip to the United States, the White House."¹⁵³ While the United States claimed to be promoting democratic and economic reform to the advantage of the Egyptian people, an ignorance of regime corruption and obsession with regime stability only made things worse. In the end it was just another example of the rich helping the rich to get richer.

¹⁵¹ Berger, "The Missing Link?"

¹⁵² Berger, "The Missing Link?"

¹⁵³ Brownlee, "A New Generation."

Chapter Conclusion

Poor people are not stupid; often they are preoccupied with staying alive. Desperate people, particularly those who are struggling to feed their families, will do desperate things to put food on the table. They are much more apt to challenge the system when their kids go hungry. It happened before in Egypt with the Bread riots of 1977. On January 18-19 of that year, hundreds of thousands of mostly poor Egyptians went to the streets to protest the end of state subsidies for basic food items. In an effort to secure World Bank and IMF loans, Anwar Sadat promised liberalizing reforms that not only closed down subsidies for basic food items, but also flour, cooking oil, and economic human rights. At the behest of the World Bank, pay hikes and bonuses for public sector employees were also ended. People of all ages, enraged and frightened, took to the streets. 800 Egyptians were killed in two days. The army was sent in to restore order. State cuts were cancelled. For the time being the issue of structural adjustments had been placed on a back burner¹⁵⁴.

Times again have turned desperate. Once more the poor have been made unwilling recipients of structural reform. Again, they recognized the writing on the wall. They knew that President Mubarak was old and out of touch. They saw the future of a wealthy capitalist son and a monarchial takeover as a perpetuation of their misery. Already irate with regime support of Israel, and wary of the increasing brutality of emergency rule, as well as the worthlessness of phony political institutions, they had had enough. It's not as though they were satisfied with their plight. For so long they just

¹⁵⁴ "Current Protests in Egypt recall Bread riots of 1977," *International Business Times* (January 27, 2011).

didn't have any options. In Tahrir Square in January of 2011 alternatives made themselves available. The future, at least for the time being, showed promise. Organized and angry and desperate, they acted out of necessity. Many joined as a means to acquire a loaf of bread

CHAPTER IV

ROLE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: ELECTORAL REFORMS AND EMERGENCY LAW

In the three decades of rule under Hosni Mubarak, middle and lower class Egyptians found themselves in more and more dire circumstances. Pseudo electoral institutions, suppressed by an endless extension of emergency law, enforced by a powerful security apparatus, kept opposition in check. All routes for Egyptians citizens to challenge the course of their government were stifled. In the meantime Egyptians got poorer, hungrier, and more desperate. Their rights and too often their neighbors vanished within the bureaucracy and prisons of a police state. A significant factor was that electoral institutions were not written into the constitution in order to guide Egypt by consent of the governed; they were there for the regime to consolidate power. Consequently, people found no legitimate recourse within their government. Emergency law on the other hand, was an institution that did fulfill its purpose. The regime used it effectively in order to stifle opponents and to make sure that the tools of government were not available for opposition groups to effectively challenge the state. Throughout Mubarak's thirty-year reign the constitution was continually revised by the regime to strengthen its hand at the expense of the people.

In this chapter I will show how Egypt's constitutionally endowed electoral institutions (particularly those stemming from the reforms of 2005 and 2007) proved not only useless for real change, but also served as a platform to further repress the citizenry.

I will also document how thirty years of emergency rule provided the regime the tools needed to stifle civil society and political and grassroots movements that sought to address the inequities brought about by these institutions. For ordinary Egyptians under Mubarak's rule a genuine reform could never be realized through the institutions of government. Real relief would have to come from outside of the system.

Egypt prior to February 2011 was not a military dictatorship per se, as the president ruled as a civilian. However, Mubarak, as well as his two predecessors (Sadat and Nasser), was a product of the Egyptian armed forces. The security apparatus, along with the legislative and judicial processes, in particular an emergency law that has been in effect for all but three years since 1952, served to limit human rights and dictate the political landscape. The National Democratic Party, of which the president was chairman, controlled the legislative agenda and made necessary constitutional adjustments. Under Mubarak, Sadat, and Nasser the state was a one party, autocratic system. The constitutionally protected institutions of government were manipulated not in the interest of the Egyptian people, but to extend rule of the regime.¹⁵⁵ Brownlee notes that early in Mubarak's tenure, "it was still possible to envision a halting and labored march towards democracy: two steps forward, one step back. Yet instead of using institutions as a springboard for pluralism, the ruling party has erected them as barriers to competition." What developed was an entity similar to Iran's Council of Guardians. Instead of relinquishing power to the millions of Egyptian citizens who they purported to defend, the elite factions of the NDP led by the president, manipulated the

¹⁵⁵ "Countries at the Crossroads 2007 – Country Report Egypt," *Freedom House*.

institutions of government, using them to repress or co-opt any rising reform movements.¹⁵⁶

It wasn't always so. In comparison with the end of the Sadat administration, Mubarak actually came across as somewhat open. Osman notes that he dropped many of Sadat's pretensions. "The gist of his speeches, his choice of words, the way he described himself and his vision for the country's future suggested a man who was concerned less with his legacy or with how he was viewed as a leader and more with his capacity to deliver."¹⁵⁷ That delivery in a third world sense was adequate. Sights for Egypt were not set too high. U.S. aid flowed. The Gang of Four¹⁵⁸ (remittances, Suez, oil, and travel) brought in necessary foreign revenue, and international turbulence was pretty much limited to rhetorical dealings with Israel. Things got complicated in the nineties. Finally, America's response to September 11 placed pressures on Mubarak that were ultimately impossible for him to manage. Two specific events, each instigated by the West, unsettled the system; the Paris Club reforms of 1991 and Bush's 2003 Freedom Agenda. In addition, an inflexible relationship with an increasingly hostile domestic Islamist movement expanded the reach of the police state, a reach that would not be limited to the repression of that movement only. Mubarak's response to these pressures brought the regime into recurrent conflict with the Egyptian people. With electoral institutions serving no bona fide reform purpose, opposition parties and civil society organized around an increasingly liberal, international, and new media to consolidate resistance to the regime.

¹⁵⁶ Brownlee, "A New Generation," 82.

¹⁵⁷ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Waterbury, John, *Exposed to Innumerable Delusions*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY., (1993) 81.

Through the 1980's Mubarak was able to resist structural economic reform as pushed by the IMF. He was cautious in pulling social safety nets that might threaten Egyptian standards of living, and subsequently regime stability. The fall of oil prices in the mid eighties however brought a large drop in remittances from the hundreds of thousands of Egyptian migrant workers in the Gulf. Foreign investment fell, as did revenue from the Suez Canal. Egypt was in desperate financial shape. Mubarak's support of the U.S. in the first Gulf War, led to an invitation to the Paris Club talks of 1991. Considering the circumstances, IMF debt forgiveness was too appealing for Egypt to pass on. However, corresponding reforms touted as a step on the road to economic liberalization, posed a steep price. Safety nets took the hit; welfare services, pensions, and subsidies faded.¹⁵⁹ Gamal Mubarak and associates institutionalized the new economy in the 2000's. People's living standards suffered. Opposition coalesced more and more around economic issues. Meanwhile, the United States pushed democracy in the Middle East as a way to "drain the swamp" of radical Islam. The U.S. invasion of Iraq, and President Bush's aggressive pro democracy agenda, with Mubarak at the forefront, pressed the Egyptian president into choices that would bring him into increasing confrontation with growing opposition movements. Regime rigidity in regards to each of these crisis pushed it further from the people, as it became dependent for survival on electoral manipulation, emergency law, and an active and progressively more brutal security apparatus.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 167.

¹⁶⁰ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 166.

It wasn't "Egypt only" where electoral institutions failed Arab people. Cook writes that even with the promotion of civil society, economic development, and the influence of sanctions, political reform escapes the Arab world because, "none of them addresses the real obstacles to change in the region; flawed institutions." Contrary to popular wisdom, the Arab world, Egypt included, is loaded with electoral institutions. The problem is not with their number, but of their nature. None were established to give citizens a voice or to insure their rights; rather to serve as a stabilizing force of authoritarian regimes. Cook notes, "Arab political institutions tend to restrict political participation, limit individual freedom, and vest overwhelming power in the executive branch of the government."¹⁶¹ Mubarak's Egypt was the perfect example of hollow reforms within an unresponsive government.

United States' Influence on Mubarak's Political Reforms

So, in 2003 when President Bush came calling for Mubarak to propose substantial electoral changes and again at the Address on the State of the Union in February of 2005, the Egyptian president, while hesitant to make adjustments, could actually do so without risk to the regime; or so he thought. If your institutions don't allow real access, just adding more of them should not pose a problem. Actually neither the United States nor Mubarak was looking for real reform, anyway. Brownlee writes, "Bush showed his constituents the Iraq War had spurred regional democratization; Mubarak went along while appeasing his local critics with another liberalization charade."¹⁶² The United States could claim that its democratization agenda was bearing fruit, and Mubarak would

¹⁶¹ Steven Cook, "The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, iss. 2 (March/April 2005): 91.

¹⁶² Brownlee, "A New Generation," 83.

serve as a beneficiary; in terms of World Bank and IMF loans, continued U.S. military aid, and standing in the West as the democratic stalwart against Islam. However, in between the reforms of 2005 and those of 2007, the democratic roof, spurred on by chaos in Iraq, a Hamas electoral victory in Palestine, and domestic unrest in Egypt, caved in on both presidents.

Daniel Consolatore writes, “Hosni Mubarak was *almost* elected president of Egypt in September of 2005.” By official count he took nearly 85% of the vote. Runner up Ayman Nour of the al-Ghad (“Tomorrow”) Party, who would soon be in prison on trumped up government charges, won 8%. Noman Gamaa of al Walfd (“Delegation”) Party tallied 3%. The most prolific opposition party, the Muslim Brotherhood was prohibited from even fielding a candidate. According to Consolatore, it wasn’t that the president was ever in danger of not getting the most votes, the problem, even if it was the first ever presidential election in which Egyptian voters had a choice, “Mubarak was only ‘almost’ elected because the balloting didn’t quite amount to a legitimate contest.”¹⁶³

The election, which President Bush would refer to as “an important step toward holding fully free and fair competitive multiparty elections,” was anything but free or fair. In order to register, candidates had to clear a dizzying array of institutional hurdles. Challengers needed approval of 65 members of parliament in order to run. The problem for the opposition was that of the 454 parliamentary seats, ten were by presidential appointment and 402 from the NDP membership. That left a maximum of 32

¹⁶³ Daniel Consolatore, “Living with Democracy in Egypt,” *The Humanist*, (November 2005): 7, 8.

representatives free to support whoever they wanted to.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile the state used its security apparatus and media monopoly to prevent those who did qualify, from running a genuine race. The campaign itself was three weeks long, which provided full advantage to the well-funded NDP, since many Egyptians had no knowledge of those in the opposition, and those in the opposition had no funding, time, or freedom to educate “the electorate.” The coup de grace for illegitimacy was Mubarak’s refusal to allow any outside monitoring of the vote, even when the request came from President Bush. A tiny state appointed Presidential Election Commission waited until voting actually commenced before announcing independent Egyptian monitors would be permitted. Those groups reported harassment and beatings of monitors, opposition party activists, even voters, by security forces loyal to Mubarak. An influential blogger, Baheyya, noted that the entire process was so ridden with “irregularities, manipulations, and outright fraud that it more resembled a ‘presidential election spectacle’ than an election.”¹⁶⁵

Case Study of Ayman Nour

The case of Ayman Nour, runner up in the presidential election, is illustrative of Mubarak’s brazen contempt for the rule of law. In January of 2005, Nour founder of the small al-Ghad Party that at that time held six seats in the 454 member Egyptian parliament was arrested on suspicion of forging official documents. The forgery charge, which by all accounts was fabricated by SSI forces, stemmed from signed documents used in the establishment of al-Ghad. Ayman Nour however, was neither a criminal nor

¹⁶⁴ Maha Azzam, “Breaking the Fear Barrier,” *The World Today*, vol. 6, iss. 8 (Aug/Sept 2005): 39.

¹⁶⁵ Consolare, *Living with Democracy*, 8.

even a radical. BBC News described him as “a soft spoken, eloquent lawyer.”¹⁶⁶ The Washington Post said he was “far from a revolutionary.” Nour himself, in founding al-Ghad in October of 2004 announced, “We love and appreciate President Mubarak, but we love this nation as well and would like to develop it like other countries.”¹⁶⁷ His legislative agenda, while unable to bring about any real change, placed him in the crosshairs of the regime. In his two terms in parliament he investigated everything from bread prices to torture. He questioned the ascendancy of Gamal Mubarak. He relentlessly pushed for multi-candidate presidential elections, and announced that he would run if and when the opportunity made itself available.

In March of 2005, a week after Mubarak made it official that such an election would take place, Nour declared his candidacy from jail. Pressure on the regime from the Bush administration precipitated Nour’s release so that he could run in the presidential election, however harassment by state security cost him and his party in parliament. After finishing a distant runner-up in the rigged executive election, regime forces worked to push him out of the “legislative branch” as well. Brownlee alludes that his “dubious defeat” in the early rounds of the November parliamentary election “supported suspicions that Nour was the victim of an organized government campaign.”¹⁶⁸ To top it all off on Christmas Eve of 2005 a regime friendly judge convicted Nour on the orchestrated forgery charges and he was sentenced to five years hard labor. So much for Mubarak’s 2005 “year of reform.”

¹⁶⁶ “Middle East Profile: Ayman Nour, “BBC NEWS”.

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Williams, “Egypt Holds Candidate Despite Vow of Return,” *Washington Post*.

¹⁶⁸ Brownlee, “A New Generation,” 74.

Case Study of Saad Eddin Ibrahim

The story of Saad Eddin Ibrahim echoes that of Nour's. A professor of political sociology at the American University of Cairo and Chairman of the Ibn Khaldun Center, Ibrahim was arrested in 2000 along with 27 associates at the Center and charged with conspiring to bribe a state official, receiving foreign funding illegally, and tarnishing Egypt's image abroad. On May 21, 2001 Dr. Ibrahim was found guilty and sentenced to seven years hard labor in prison. His co-defendants were also found guilty and sentenced from one to five years. His first two trials were held in special state security courts reserved for terrorists and drug traffickers. He was denied due process and prevented from presenting testimony.

The 64-year-old Ibrahim had spent his life working for human rights. The Ibn Khaldun Center that he chaired was a vehicle to, "encourage cleaner elections, wider political participation by women, and better understanding between Egypt's Muslim majority and Coptic Christian minority, earning him an international reputation."¹⁶⁹ However in 2000 he also wrote an article "*al-Gumlukia: The Contribution of Arabs to Politics in the 21st Century*," in which according to Ibrahim, he "blew the whistle on the scheme of grooming sons to follow their fathers", not just in Egypt, but also all over the Arab world. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, each had twenty-year dictators preparing their sons for succession. "And I coined a new term, a hybrid form of governance, which is in name a republican but in essence a monarchy (*Gumlukia*)."¹⁶⁹ The article was released in the morning. By midnight the very same day Ibrahim was arrested and the Center shut

¹⁶⁹ "Justice served in Egypt," *The New York Times*, March 19, 2003.

down. He was detained for two months, indicted, tried and convicted in a secret court. He was sentenced to seven years and served three, suffering several mini strokes during incarceration. Pressure from the Bush administration and several human rights organizations, as well as the launching of a new Washington project precipitated his release from prison and self-imposed exile on March 19, 2003.¹⁷⁰

The New York Times reported on his release, “Intellectually Saad Eddin Ibrahim has always been one of Egypt’s freest men. Now, after three years, three trials and 14 months of health-shattering imprisonment, Dr. Ibrahim, the country’s most prominent democracy and human rights advocate, is legally free.” The United States invaded Iraq on the following day.¹⁷¹

This is certainly not what the president of the United States had in mind for the president of Egypt. Much of the problem was Washington’s doing. Conflicting messages to Middle Eastern autocrats were the norm following 911. A lot of them had to do with how the War on Iraq, the War on Terror, and the War on Hamas was going “outside of Egypt.” Bush wanted stability. Bush wanted democracy. He demanded free elections, but he didn’t want the Muslim Brotherhood to win. Support of Israel, Islamaphobia, the exportation of democracy and support of autocratic Arab rulers anchored his Middle East foreign policy. The mix was an awkward one. His proclamation at the February 3, 2005 State of the Union address, “And the great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in the Middle East, can now

¹⁷⁰ “Egyptian Human Rights Activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim Defies Threats, Arrests to Challenge U.S.-Backed Mubarak Government,” *Democracy Now*, October 10, 2007.

¹⁷¹ Justice served in Egypt,” *The New York Times*.

show the way toward democracy in the Middle East,”¹⁷² mimicked word for word his challenge to Mubarak issued two years earlier at the twentieth anniversary for the National Endowment of Democracy.

Mubarak’s 2005 Reforms

Mubarak appeared to respond on February 26, 2005. The president, whose previous four six-year terms in office had been approved through uncontested referenda, proposed amending Egypt’s constitution Article 76 to allow multi-candidate presidential elections for the first time.¹⁷³ The May 2005 referendum, to validate those reforms however, was as fraudulent as the September election. The three opposition parties, who would supposedly benefit, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, boycotted the referendum, arguing that to participate would merely validate the NDP. The actual “yes” vote, according to Azzam, “was characterized by the usual low turnout, allegations of vote rigging, and acts of violence against the opposition...the farcical nature of the electoral process was highlighted by the *Wafd* newspaper which published photographs of two of its reporters casting ballots in six different Cairo polling stations unopposed and undetected.”¹⁷⁴

Things got more complicated for the NDP in the November 2005 Parliamentary elections. Turnout, like in the presidential election and spring referendum was under 25 percent. Violent attacks on opposition voters by “security forces and pro government thugs” increased. Polling stations in some Muslim Brotherhood and opposition

¹⁷² “President Bush’s State of the Union Address,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2005.

¹⁷³ Brownlee, “A New Generation,” 74.

¹⁷⁴ Azzam, “Fear Barrier,” 39.

strongholds were cordoned off, preventing voters from casting a ballot. One opposition supporter was killed and another wounded, when police fired on voters in a city north of Cairo.¹⁷⁵ Despite the hurdles the Brotherhood still won 88 seats. While the victories quintupled the organization's representation from the preceding 2000 election, plain clothed and NDP officials were able to limit the gains by targeting influential Brotherhood representatives. Head of the group's parliamentary bloc, Mohammed Morsi and anti-corruption champion Gamal Heshmet each lost their posts amid "state sponsored intervention."¹⁷⁶

In a way, the 88 seats actually served to lessen the pressure on Mubarak to institute further reform. The NDP still held a super majority in Parliament, so the opposition had no greater influence over legislation than before the election. From abroad however, particularly from Washington, the parliamentary victories gave the indication of a transforming presidency. Lee writes, "Mubarak has begun to notice the trace of permanence that democratic impulses carry. But rather than take that seriously, he has largely used skin-deep democratic reforms to buy time and to ease political tensions."¹⁷⁷ By placating the Bush administration, already on shaky ground in Iraq and struggling with an Iranian nuclear crisis, Mubarak was banking that Bush would not follow up his 2005 State of the Union request with further calls of reform. The Egyptian president guessed right, and in the next two years, minus U.S. pressure to democratize, he proceeded to crush any remnants of the "reform" movement of 2005.

¹⁷⁵ "Country Report Egypt," *Freedom House*.

¹⁷⁶ Brownlee, "A New Generation," 74.

¹⁷⁷ Eric Lee, "Confronting Cairo: Changing an Illusory Democracy," *Harvard International Review*, vol. 28, iss. 2, (Summer 2006).

Unfortunately for him, a door had been opened by a man who never opened doors; one that would be difficult to close completely. Consolatore as early as 2005, prophesized Mubarak's dilemma, as well as that of the United States in regards to Egypt, "...the genie may be out of the bottle and the world may have no option but to accept that the Egyptian people are bringing about their own regime change. And we all may have to make peace with their choice, whatever it is."¹⁷⁸

With Washington pre-occupied, Mubarak spent 2006 and 2007 rolling back the pseudo reforms of 2005. First he went after the new block in parliament. Dunne writes, "Authorities reacted to the Brotherhood's electoral strength by arresting hundreds of its members, attacking its sources of financing, postponing scheduled local elections, passing constitutional amendments that damaged human rights protections and banned the Brotherhood from forming a political party..."¹⁷⁹ In December of 2006 Mubarak proposed 34 amendments to the constitution. On March 26, 2007 after a one-week deliberation by parliament, all opposition groups boycotted the parliamentary vote on the amendments, and the package was put to a public referendum vote. Government critics charged that the original April date for referendum ratification was changed to keep the opposition from running a successful campaign against it.¹⁸⁰ Freedom House reported that official government estimates placed the approval vote at 75.9 percent of a referendum that was attended by between 23 and 27 percent of the electorate.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Consolatore, *Living with Democracy*, 10.

¹⁷⁹ Michele Dunne, "The Baby, the Bathwater, and the Freedom Agenda in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:1 (January 2009): 133.

¹⁸⁰ Nathan Brown and Michele Dunne, "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (March 23, 2007): 1.

¹⁸¹ "Country Report Egypt," *Freedom House*.

Independent monitoring groups however, put the turnout at no more than 10 percent.¹⁸²

Either way Mubarak had effectively manipulated the system once again. He was determined to close the door to reform and to the Brotherhood for good!

Mubarak's 2007 Reforms

The 2007 constitutional engineering package followed the same prescription as in 2005; superficial reform, framed by substantive core constitutional restrictions. This time though, it didn't much matter if the democratic veneer was thin. Mubarak, without Washington looking over his shoulder, was clear on his intentions. 1 – Exclude the Brotherhood from participation at the ballot box and in the legislative arena. 2 – Restrict any opposition role in the electoral process. 3 – Increase the power of the NDP in parliament. 4 – Pave the way for Gamal's succession to the throne. 5 - Strengthen emergency law by codifying many of its powers inside of the constitution.¹⁸³

International reaction to the referendum was swift. On the 34 articles, *Freedom House* warned, "they will further hinder political competition in a repressive environment." *Amnesty International* called it Egypt's "greatest erosion of human rights since 1981." *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, in a report released three days prior to the referendum vote, slammed the reforms as a continued example of the hypocrisy coming out of Cairo, "Taken together, the amendment and process by which they were passed constitutes an effort by the Egyptian regime to increase the appearance of greater balance." Its effort to uphold a "reform friendly image" and to escape

¹⁸² "Egypt Systematic Abuses in the Name of Security," *Amnesty International*, MDE 12/001/2007 (April 2006): 4.

¹⁸³ Brownlee, "A New Generation," 80, 81.

domestic opposition and international criticism, the report stated, was in vain, as the changes actually “limit real competition” and keeps “power concentrated in the hands of the executive branch and ruling party.” Many who lobbied for years for constitutional reform, “say the amendments infringe dangerously on human rights protections and close off possibilities for peaceful political activity, particularly by the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹⁸⁴

The process to insure suppression of the Brotherhood was reflective within the hypocrisy of the reforms. Article 5, which stipulated that the Egyptian political system is based on party pluralism, was changed to prohibit “any political activity or the establishment of any political parties within any religious frame of reference (marja’iyya) or on any religious basis or on the basis of gender or origin.” Goal number one accomplished - the Brotherhood was officially banned from organizing as a political party or from presenting a candidate for office. That would keep them out of parliament.

As for the presidency, an amendment to article 76 took care of that as well. The 2005 reforms had for the first time allowed for multi-candidate presidential elections. To nominate a candidate a political party needed 5 percent of the total number of seats in both chambers of parliament. The 2007 reform lowered that threshold to 3 percent. However, since nobody outside of the NDP could reach the threshold, it provided a limited ten-year exception to any party holding at least one seat in any of the chambers to run a candidate. If the 3 percent rule could not be reached, which since they were now illegal, left out the Brotherhood, an individual could run by gaining the support of 230

¹⁸⁴ Brown and Dunne, “Egypt’s Controversial Constitution,” 1.

members of parliament and municipal councils. The councils however, were also off limits to the Islamists. The 3 percent and ten-year exceptions were written in to play opposition parties against the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁸⁵ Even so, nobody in parliament outside of the NDP supported the changes. It looked as though Gamila Ismail, wife of Ayman Nour, was correct when she said in 2007 upon passage of the reforms, “there is no hope now. The amendment of the constitution is the termination of all the hope we had two years ago.”¹⁸⁶

Despite all of the electoral manipulation enshrined in the constitution by the 2007 reforms, its most pronounced influence was the institutionalization of emergency rule. Reza admits, “By embedding specific powers of emergency rule in the constitution, the government has made *de jure* what has been *de facto* for decades: emergency rule in Egypt is permanent.” With the core emergency powers permanently embedded into the constitution, Mubarak’s promised repeal of the 1958 Emergency law was now as simple as it was meaningless.¹⁸⁷

Egypt’s Emergency Law

Egypt’s 1958 Emergency Law authorized the president to declare a state of emergency “whenever public security or order are threatened.” The threat could come from any number of sources; “war, (or) a state threatening the eruption of war,” “internal disturbances,” “natural disasters,” or “the spread of an epidemic.” The level of threat

¹⁸⁵ Hamzawy, “Egypt’s Controversial Constitution,” 6, 8.

¹⁸⁶ Mark MacKinnon, “Egypt loses taste for Democratic Reform,” *International News*, (March 26, 2007): A-14.

¹⁸⁷ Sadiq Reza, “Endless Emergency: The Case of Egypt,” *New Criminal Law Review*, vol. 10 no. 4 (2007): 542.

would be determined by the president, as would the level of response. Upon a declaration of emergency the president according to law could “by an oral or written order,” legally proceed with a number of actions (summarized below); 1 – Restriction of any assembly, movement, or residence. This includes arrest and detention of “persons who are dangerous to public security.” 2 – Order the surveillance of any correspondence and supervise censorship of “any form of expression.” 3 – Determine the open hours of public shops. 4 – Confiscate any property or buildings. 5 – Withdraw the license of arms, ammunition, and explosives. 6 – Evict or isolate areas and regulate all means of transport. The Law also allowed authorization of State Security Courts to try violations of emergency orders and criminal offenses as referred by the president.¹⁸⁸

Emergency powers were implemented by Mubarak in 1981, following the assassination of Anwar Sadat and have been in place since. With the number of state security employees in the range of 500,000 these powers have served as the primary tool of citizen repression by the State Security Investigation (SSI) Services.

In April of 2006 *Amnesty International* released a 47-page report, “Egypt – Systematic abuses in the name of security” that documented numerous abuses by the state security officials and outlined the role of emergency law in such abuses, as well as the impact of the 2007 reforms. *Amnesty* cited, “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 40-year state of emergency and counter-terrorism campaign.” They identified powers, derived from emergency rule, granted to SSI

¹⁸⁸ Reza, “Endless Emergency,” 538.

officers as playing a key role in facilitating such abuses, particularly torture. The report specifically mentions particular instances of abuse as well as providing summaries of secret detentions, month long disappearances, and deaths due to torture. They record “commonly cited methods (of torture) have included electric shock, beatings, suspension in painful positions, solitary confinement, rape and threats of death, sexual abuse and attacks on relatives.” *Amnesty* estimates that in April of 2007 at least 18,000 people were being held without charge and – “are languishing in Egypt’s jails in degrading and inhumane conditions. Some have been held for more than a decade, including many whose release has been repeatedly ordered by courts.”¹⁸⁹

Mubarak’s reforms of 2007 codified into the constitution guidelines that had served as the foundation for his thirty-year rule by emergency law. In the process he instituted in Egypt an extreme version of the U.S.A. Patriot Act. Amendments to Article 179 allowed for the president to refer any terrorist charge to any court he liked, and replace the use of a public prosecutor with that of a military court. Brown and Dunne write, “This practice – employed not only against violent Islamists but also against the more mainstream Muslim Brotherhood – is dubious on human rights ground because of the ruthless efficiency of the military courts. But it is also questionable on constitutional grounds.”¹⁹⁰ In addition, in trying any crime related to terrorism as a military offense, it allowed the prosecutor to bypass individual civil rights of protection against arbitrary arrest, warrantless search, and violation of privacy contained in Articles 41, 44, and 45 of the constitution. In the past, Egyptian security forces had been accused by human rights

¹⁸⁹ “Systematic Abuses,” *Amnesty International*, 3-4.

¹⁹⁰ Brown and Dunne, “Egypt’s Controversial Constitution,” 2.

organizations of violating basic civil liberties. Victims occasionally won in court. The amended articles curtailed any legal route of challenge to detentions deemed “terrorist” in nature by the police. It also enshrined into the constitution a temporary (if ongoing) state of emergency as a permanent part of Egypt’s political structure.¹⁹¹ A secret security force used to strengthen authoritarian rule was now completely sealed behind closed doors.

On the whole, the 2007 reforms were a violation of the human rights of all Egyptians. In particular they were a counter attack on the 88 seat Brotherhood victories in the Parliamentary elections of 2005. Persecution as well as prosecution of the Brotherhood was now constitutionally legal. Opposition had been served notice that pro democracy movements equaled terrorist activity, and was fair game for an SSI bolstered by new constitutional powers.

Chapter Conclusion

The reforms of 2005 and 2007 gutted most of the remaining civil rights and civil liberties left in the Egyptian constitution. Opposition groups that wished to reasonably challenge the injustice of their government were now lumped in with enemies of the state. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Parliament was formally curtailed, although it continued to function as an independent party. Under Mubarak, the country was set upon a course of continued structural adjustment, insuring the growth of wealth disparity. Succession of Gamal seemed increasingly imminent. Nobody could do much to change any of it. Constitutional reforms choked off all routes to change the system from within. Emergency law by 2007 was totally untethered; and now established as a part of the

¹⁹¹ Brown and Dunne, “Egypt’s Controversial Constitution,” 2.

constitution as well. The government took advantage and stepped up persecution of those not in agreement. As Egypt approached the second decade of the 21st century, the Mubarak regime had moved further from the people than ever before. Nothing within the system provided adequate recourse for Egyptian citizens to improve their lot. If change were to come, it would have to do so from outside of the system.

CHAPTER V

CONSOLIDATION OF THE OPPOSITION

The year 2003 was a game changer for organized opposition to Mubarak. The Iraq War and domestic and international pressures stemming from it, initiated opposition consolidation like Egypt had never before seen. By November of 2003, when President Bush called for Mubarak to lead the way to Middle East democracy, the situation was ripening for change. Egyptian civil society had been stressed to a breaking point; through legislation and repression the regime had continually frustrated its ability to provide relief to the populace from outside of the system. Opposition political parties had absolutely nowhere to go within the government. The Brotherhood, galvanized by strong organization in professional unions, was stifled on a national political stage. Young educated Egyptians had no future, no jobs. Prisons were filling up with Islamists, democrats, and Nasserists. In the midst of all of this, U.S. actions in Iraq were about to unravel into chaos and collateral damage.

The result was a consolidation of the opposition fueled by the repressive actions of the president. This mergence, when aided by the explosive growth of social media and satellite access of international television would prove too much for the regime to manage. President Mubarak would be grounded, by a merging array of previously competing interests, nourished by resistance to the very policies implemented to keep them at bay.

In this chapter I will examine how domestic hardships and unpopular international choices made by President Mubarak served to consolidate many in the opposition, and how political and police action taken to muzzle domestic resistance, actually served to increase it. While opposition was wide spread across a socio economic spectrum, particular groups and organizations served as catalysts for the rest. Young people, liberals, Islamists, judges, and labor provided the greatest surge of discontent. Kefaya and the Muslim Brotherhood, among others, played key organizational roles. I will explore the impact of the above organizations as well as that of international and new media, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which served as an efficient and inspirational means of communication and organization in bringing together various opposition groups.

Berger explains the coalescing influence that the Iraqi invasion galvanized. The regime tried to balance anger on the Egyptian street in response to the U.S. intervention and substantial civilian casualties with its thirty years of support for Washington. Opposition movements benefited from the fact that Cairo initially felt it necessary to allow and even co-opt large scale demonstrations against the war. As a member of al-Wafd, Egypt's near dormant liberal opposition party, explained, "It would have been a real shame to see massive rallies in the U.S. and Britain and not in Egypt."¹⁹² In the end it was large demonstrations, with and without regime support, which "initiated the beginning of an increasing association between regional crises and national affairs in the public's mind."¹⁹³ This same scenario would play out again in the Israeli 2009 invasion (Operation Cast Lead) of Gaza. Also, as had happened during the 1977 bread riots (this

¹⁹² Shahin, G. "A Harmonious Protest", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 628, March 6, 2003.

¹⁹³ Berger, "The Missing Link."

time ignited by new media), groups formally unaffiliated or even at odds with one another became active working together in staging previously unthinkable demonstrations of public protest. These protests often crossed the line from an anti U.S. and anti Israeli tone to anti Mubarak. The regime had no way to control them. Consequently they were eventually outlawed.¹⁹⁴

Civil Society's Influence on Egypt's Revolution

Role of Kefaya (Egyptian Movement for Change)

In the midst of these newfound alliances, a diverse and daring organization took root. Tarek Masoud identifies the beginnings of the Mubarak regime's final act in the 2004 founding of Kefaya¹⁹⁵ (Enough!). Its official title "Egyptian Movement for Change," "deftly encapsulated the national mood – gathered political activists and thinkers from the across the spectrum to declare that Egyptians were fed up with the Mubarak regime and would not stand for Gamal's inheritance of the presidency."¹⁹⁶ Berger adds, "The audacity of the Kefaya movement in breaking the taboo on public debate about presidential succession was as remarkable as the diversity of its support base, which included members of the Nasserist Karama and the Islamist al Wasat party, under the initial leadership of the leftist Christian George Ishak."¹⁹⁷ The party's creativity was striking as well. Its very first demonstration on December 12, 2004, was

¹⁹⁴ Berger, "The Missing Link."

¹⁹⁵ *Kefaya* is also spelled *Kifaya*– I will use the former unless noted in a quotation.

¹⁹⁶ Tarek Masoud, "The Road to (and from) Liberation Square," *Journal of Democracy* vol. 22, no. 3 (July 2011).

¹⁹⁷ Berger, "The Missing Link."

held in total silence. Over their mouths protestors taped yellow stickers with Kefaya, “Enough”, written in red.¹⁹⁸

George Ishak, a retired high school teacher and Coptic Christian, cited a 2003 *iftar* meal where twenty-three activists got the movement up and running. The initial gathering expanded into diverse and wide-ranging councils. “Marxists, Nasserites, liberals, Islamists...they were all in the meetings. We agreed that our country is in miserable condition and that the regime is despotic. But after that, we had some difficult discussions...” With such a big tent, and passions so high, the process to agree on a mission was painstaking. Ishak recalls, “Every week we tried to come up with part of a statement that was acceptable to all of us. Those first seven months were very hard.”¹⁹⁹

Although the internal debates created a fractious organization that would eventually collapse, Kefaya made two great contributions to Mubarak’s ultimate overthrow. One, it broke the taboo against public criticism of the regime. Even the Brotherhood had tiptoed around the president. Not Kefaya. They openly challenged Mubarak from the onset. Secondly, Kefaya served as a “training ground for and a gateway to political activism”²⁰⁰ for individuals who would lead protests and organize other more cohesive opposition groups. One such activist Ahmed Maher, a young civil engineer who founded the highly successful April 6th Youth Movement, joined Kefaya in 2005 and acknowledged it as “the mother of all protest movements in Egypt.”²⁰¹ In the end, Kefaya, Robin Wright reveals, inspired a host of offshoots: “Youth for Change.

¹⁹⁸ Robin Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, (New York: Penguin, 2008), 117.

¹⁹⁹ Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, 116.

²⁰⁰ Masoud, “Road to Liberation Square.”

²⁰¹ Masoud, “Road to Liberation Square.”

Journalists for Change. Teachers for Change. Doctors for Change. Artists for Change. And several others for change. But Kefaya itself remained something of a shell and loose umbrella.”²⁰²

In breaking new ground in such a bold way, Kefaya’s founding statement needed to provide the inclusiveness that such a vast organization could embrace. After a full eight months of wrangling, a *Declaration to the Nation*, along with the organization’s mission was complete. Over 300 prominent Egyptians, including a senior Brotherhood official who had served two times in parliament, signed the page long declaration. It addressed two distinct issues. Section one lambasted the “the odious assault” on Iraq, the “Zionist devastation” of the Palestinians, and American designs “to recast the fate of the Arab region.” The second part dealt with the route to democracy for Egypt. All of it called for mass political efforts to “ward off this peril to the survival of the Arab people.”²⁰³ In 2004 Kefaya took to the streets, described by Wright as “the pioneers for a new type of movement, adding energy to stale Egyptian politics and spurring others into action.”²⁰⁴

George Ishak’s recollection was more personal. “We had to start a political revival on the streets. I loved this idea. *I needed to go to the streets. We all needed to go to the streets.* Before, talking about change was like talking to a comatose person, because the Egyptian people were basically dead.” According to Ishak, his fellow citizens needed a wake up call. “They hadn’t talked about political issues, real issues, in more than fifty years, since the days before the republic. All they cared about was how to

²⁰²Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, 118.

²⁰³“Kefaya: Egyptian Reform Party,” <http://www.harakamasria.org>.

²⁰⁴Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, 115.

feed their babies...” That changed significantly with the street protests. And Ishak, on behalf of Kefaya, took a measure of the credit. “We opened the doors,” he said. “The barrier of fear no longer seemed so high anymore.”²⁰⁵

The roots of Kefaya harken back to the 1970’s. A majority of its founders were leftists (Nasserists and Marxists) as well as Islamists who were leaders of past student movements. While there was bitter disagreement on many issues, foreign policy positions served as a bridge. Sadat’s Camp David Accords, in fact any normalization with Israel was opposed long ago by the young student leaders. Three decades later, belligerent actions by Israel and the United States, provided a unifying base for many of the same activists, now in their fifties. Despite its concern with the foreign policy was significant, Kefaya was plain as to who was at the top of their “most wanted list.” Manar Shorbagy writes, “Although Kefaya made clear that foreign domination and political despotism are two faces of the same coin, it’s approach right from the beginning was that addressing the latter is the key to resisting the former.”²⁰⁶ Consensus emerged among the group that challenging the Mubarak regime was paramount, and that political freedoms were key to effective resistance of occupation both in Palestine and Iraq. It was this “rightful emphasis” by Kefaya on the domestic political transformation that highlighted the relationship between the two issues, and also provided grounding in the decision to place the target on Mubarak.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, 115-117.

²⁰⁶ Manar Shorbagy, “The Egyptian movement for Change – Kefaya: Redefining Politics in Egypt,” *Public Culture* 19:1 (2007): 187.

²⁰⁷ Shorbagy, “Movement for Change,” 184, 187.

For two years Kefaya wielded significant clout. Between December 2004 and May 2006, both local and international media closely followed the movement. Mubarak feared its influence enough to call it out on a number of occasions. In one year (2004 to 2005) Egypt witnessed more oppositional demonstrations, rallies, and the organization of nonviolent protest than it had seen in the previous 25 years combined.²⁰⁸ By early 2007 Kefaya's founding statement had been signed by 1800 members. According to Brownlee, "Before the rise of Kifaya and its offshoots, the image of contestation in Egypt shared by a majority of scholars and large sections of Egyptian society was that Mubarak has subdued Egypt's Islamists, leftists, and human rights community to the point where little domestic impetus for reform remains."²⁰⁹ Kefaya shattered that aura. The enticement, particularly to the young and inexperienced, of the confrontational organization was revolutionary. Its ability to push other opposition groups, such as the Brotherhood, to action and to inspire offshoots was equally groundbreaking.

Even as it spawned new movements, Kefaya's direct influence on the regime waned. Challenging emergency law landed many members in prison. The remainder found cooperation in the following phase of resistance insurmountable. The tent was just too big. After Mubarak was re-elected in 2005, an election that it boycotted, "Enough" as related to the re-election of the president was no longer "enough" to sustain the organization. Unlike the Brotherhood, other than resisting the regime, Kefaya had no real concrete goals. It had no parliamentary or presidential plan of action. It ran no candidates for election. Internal divisions widened. Ultimately, Wright notes,

²⁰⁸ Rahib El-Mahdi, "Enough! Egypt's Quest for Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 42, no. 8 (August 2009): 1014, 1018.

²⁰⁹ Jason Brownlee, "The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt," *Journal of Democracy*, 13:4 (2002): 11.

“Kefayawas unable to take the critical step from a protest movement to a political alternative or even a strong lobbying group...”²¹⁰ Its rallies shrunk substantially after 2008. Still, there can be no doubt that Kefaya inspired challenge and emboldened young people to take on the regime in new and energetic ways, that eventually found their way to Tahrir Square.

Role of the Muslim Brotherhood

While Kefaya served as a flash of inspiration for resistance, the Muslim Brotherhood²¹¹ has provided a well-grounded drumbeat of opposition to the Egyptian government for decades. Charles Sennott writes, “According to Egyptian analysts and many young leaders of the revolution, it was the Muslim Brotherhood that quietly sustained the real fires of protest until they engulfed Egypt in all out revolution...”²¹² Although late in joining the Tahrir revolution their presence prior to and during was necessary to its ultimate success. It was the staying power of the Brotherhood, when nobody else could muster the will or had the numbers to challenge the regime, which kept alive the hope that Mubarak was in fact “touchable.” Add to fact that the organization is intertwined at so many levels within Egyptian society, from the poorest of the poor to professional societies through out the nation, if it were indeed a mass movement of Egyptians who brought down Mubarak, the Brotherhood had to have been involved.

Founded in Egypt in 1928, as an alternative reform movement focused on bridging the gap between traditional religious thought and Egypt’s march to

²¹⁰ Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, 118.

²¹¹ The Muslim Brotherhood is referred to as *al-Ikhwan* in Arabic.

²¹² Charles Sennott, “The Brotherhood’s role in Egypt’s revolution-Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Part One,” *GlobalPost* 19:36 (February 21, 2011).

modernization, it also served as an effective anti-Imperialist vehicle. Osman writes, by “voicing the rights and grievances of Egypt’s disenfranchised classes and advocating the establishment of a religious state and the imposition of sharia law” the Brotherhood got involved in the political movements that led the struggle for independence against British occupation.²¹³ Since then it has grown into a worldwide movement that promotes Islam through charity work, grass-roots activism, and electoral politics.²¹⁴ It is today, the world’s oldest, largest, and most influential Islamist organization.²¹⁵

The Brotherhood has long been a lightning rod for controversy. Although many in the West associate the organization with terror, it has been officially non-violent for the past forty years. Politically, the association makes no secret of the fact that they long for a Muslim state inside of Egypt, yet they were pragmatic enough to realize under Mubarak that was impossible. They adapted and unlike Kefaya gained limited influence within the system. Internationally, while claiming no political agenda, they have inspired similar organizations to take root in other Arab nations. Their goals are simple; their persistence is impressive. Leiken reveals that the Brotherhood from its beginnings, “has sought to fuse religious revival with a resistance of foreign domination through the exaltation of Islam.” This unique political and religious mix distanced itself from other Arab opposition movements by combining Islamic ideology with modern grass-roots political activism. Their strength has stemmed from their ability to successfully shape society through “tarbiyay” (preaching and educating), “focusing on changing the outlook

²¹³ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 82.

²¹⁴ Aryn Baker and Abigail Hauslohner/Kafir Shubin, “What’s So Scary About Egypt’s Islamists,” *Time Magazine* (November 29, 2010).

²¹⁵ Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood,” *Foreign Affairs* 86:2 (March 2007).

of individuals, then families, and finally societies.”²¹⁶

Their mix of Islam and politics has placed the Brotherhood in the awkward position of being “condemned by both conventional opinion in the West and radical opinion in the Middle East.” In America, commentators have called the Brothers “radical Islamists” and “deeply hostile to the United States.”²¹⁷ Western politicians have regularly pointed to the group as a reminder of the growing influence of extremism within the region. Al Qaeda’s Ayman al-Zawahiri “sneers at them for ‘luring thousands of young Muslim men into lines for elections...instead of into the lines of jihad.’”²¹⁸ Mubarak meanwhile was able to use Western fear of the group, to leverage his position of subjugation of all religious organizations. Ibrahim Issa, former editor of the influential Egyptian newspaper *al-Dustour* accused Mubarak of using the Brotherhood as a scarecrow. Mubarak says, “Its me or the jihadists.” It was, Issa admits, his best route to staying in power.²¹⁹

The influence of the organization’s reach is due in large measure to its participation at all levels of society. Larbi Sadiki notes, “The Muslim Brotherhood is not some kind of clerical temple of wisdom – it has doctors, engineers, lawyers, merchants, business people, teachers, the army and police force... all of Egypt is represented in its power base...it is undoubtedly both the most organized and most influential political group inside of Egypt.”²²⁰ Because of this wide range, the organization was able to take advantage of the opportunity to expand considerably in the 1980’s, during President

²¹⁶ Leiken and Brooke, “Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.”

²¹⁷ Leiken and Brooke, “Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.”

²¹⁸ Leiken and Brooke, “Moderate Muslim Brotherhood.”

²¹⁹ Baker and Hauslohner/Kافر Shibin, “Scary Egypt Islamists.”

²²⁰ Ahmed Shihab Eldin, “The Stream: Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood,” Aljazeera.net (June 20, 2011).

Sadat's economic courtship of the West. Osman writes, "At a time when the socio-economic consequences of *al-infitah* (open door policy) were eroding the regime's legitimacy, the Brotherhood was positioning itself to the majority of Egyptians as 'the provider' a role the regime was incapable of fulfilling."²²¹ Via a highly efficient social service infrastructure, they supplied a range of provisions targeted at the needy. Islamic hospitals, food-distribution centers in poor neighborhoods, welfare benefits and transportation solutions, as well as housing for out-of-town students, they "developed a matrix of social services that the Egyptian government, crushed by macro-economic burdens was unable to provide."²²² That role, even wider today, has above all else integrated their organization into Egyptian society.

In the 1990's the Brotherhood augmented the social service network with increasing influence in Egypt's civic organizations. Slates of Islamist candidates and allies swept elections in all major professional unions as they extended their influence to the Lawyers', the Journalists', the Doctors' and Engineers' Syndicates. "Amani Qandil, Egypt's leading sociologist of professional associations, observes that the Muslim Brothers' successful performance in the associations is due to their superior organizational and 'get-out-the-vote' skills and transparent management of the syndicates finances."²²³ It was this same "superior organization" that as Egypt's lone legitimate (and illegal under Mubarak) opposition party propelled them to a 20 per cent share of the 2005 Parliamentary elections. And it is this wide grassroots base that makes it impossible to

²²¹ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 84. Hisham Al-Awadi also discusses this point in depth in *A Struggle over Al-Shariaa* (in The Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 2009).

²²² Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 84.

²²³ Amani Qandil, "al-Tayar al-islami dakhil jam'at al-masalih fi misr" (The Islamist Trend in Egyptian Interest Groups), *Qadaya fikriyya* (October 1989): 162–68. Mona El-Ghobashy also discusses the subject in depth in "The Metamorphasi of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 380.

believe that Mubarak could have been overthrown without their efforts.

While the key to the Brothers' longevity has been group discipline, the events of Tahrir have tested that cohesiveness. For the first time in their history the younger generation has posed a significant challenge to the old guard. Eldin writes, "The Brotherhood's youth may still be part of the organization, but they are first and foremost part of a generation that... interacts with a wide range of individuals and groups through the Internet and social media as well as books and satellite television."²²⁴ They have Facebook and Twitter accounts. They watch YouTube and they blog. They have been exposed to leftist, liberal, and Islamic thinkers around the world. And they have their own ideas. As early as 2009 young Ikhwan members were collaborating with secular opposition groups in defiance of the Mubarak regime, while at the same time challenging the canon of the old (Brotherhood) guard. They've become increasingly vocal in their expectations of coveting leadership positions. When the opportunity came about to join with secular forces in Tahrir Square, the youth wing of the Brotherhood went to the web and then to the streets. Mona El-Tahawy observes, "Younger Muslim brothers and sisters are questioning the older regime. It's almost like a microcosm of what is happening in Egyptian society at large. You see the leaders (of the Brotherhood) as old out of touch men – much like the Mubarak regime is old and out of touch. The youth are making demands and expecting to be heard."²²⁵

Young and old, over the long term and in the 18 days of revolution, the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak was pivotal. Its bottom to top immersion within Egyptian society, and its history of resistance to the regime, served for

²²⁴ Shihab Eldin, "The Stream: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *Al Jazeera.net*.

²²⁵ "The Brothers," *Frontline* on PBS.

many in Egypt who look to the Brotherhood for guidance, to legitimize the unfolding events of January of 2011. This was not their revolution; it wasn't on their well-planned agenda. And they were late to the table. Still, their presence in the end was critical to success. The role of the youth fused conservatives and liberals in common cause, and forced the older generation to allow the younger to take the lead. Glain summarizes, "It was the participation of the Brotherhood's young cadres that lent critical mass to the demonstrations that toppled Mubarak. Conspicuously absent in the confrontation was the Ikhwan's conservative wing, now a static player in a profoundly ecumenical movement radiating across the Arab world."²²⁶

For experienced organizations like Kefaya and the Brotherhood, regime brutality and repression was expected. For others who were new to the challenge, gauging the rules for participation under Mubarak was not a simple task. Maaty writes, that in the run up to revolution "the state was increasingly restricting the already limited space available for civil society." Greater smear campaigns in state media, increased interference by the Ministry of Solidarity, funding restrictions, lawsuits against human rights organizations, and a growing number of state-endorsed NGOs were promulgated to sap opposition strength.²²⁷ Citizens fought back. Despite regime pressure, they became more vocal online and in the streets, and actually widened the influence of civil society. Osman wrote in 2010, "The country is...experiencing a revival in the role of (and respect for) civil society. While the Islamic movement's (and the Church's) social infrastructures continue to be the country's most widespread and effective social

²²⁶ Stephen Glain, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Transition," *The Nation* (February 18, 2011).

²²⁷ Amira Maaty, "Civil Society a force in Egypt's democratization," *Democracy Digest at National Endowment for Democracy* (April 29, 2011).

networks, private groups are active today in trying to supplement the government's ailing public social services." He cites the rise of private universities and business associations, chambers of commerce, consumer protection groups and a multitude of independent press and television channels across Egypt, all since 2000.²²⁸

That's not to say that Egyptian civil society was wholly effective in challenging the regime. The West tends to provide an overabundance of faith in civil society. As a weapon of choice in Eastern Europe and Russia, the work done there by NGOs served a crucial function in ending the Cold War. Until recently however, there was little evidence that an equally powerful impact was playing out in the Arab world. Cook writes, "Although many Arab countries are already awash in civic organizations (according to one study conducted in the late 1990's, Egypt alone boasts some 19,000 of them), these countries remain oppressive." While they may provide much-needed social services, such as education, medical care and legal representation, many of the groups involved, including those affiliated with radical Islamist movements are often undemocratic. Others have proven to merely be regime tools.²²⁹

Mubarak was particularly adept at such manipulation. Gershman and Allen assert that the autocratic regimes of the Middle East have "almost perfected" the harsh reality of authoritarian rule by "permitting a degree of political space for relatively tame or managed NGOs while consistently...harassing genuinely independent or assertive groups." They cite Mubarak (along with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez) as particularly well

²²⁸ Osman, *Egypt on the Brink*, 220.

²²⁹ Steven A. Cook, "The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs* 84:2 (March 2005).

versed in the creation of pseudo-NGOs, in an attempt to confuse the public and international opinion.²³⁰

Egypt was also “perhaps the most blatant” autocracy at forcing restrictions on foreign funding of domestic NGOs. Such constraints are normally posed in xenophobic terms. “In this respect, authoritarian regimes gain a double advantage, forcing technical restrictions on NGOs while undermining them politically by suggesting they represent alien interests.”²³¹ By backing these organizations into a Western corner, Mubarak was able to take advantage of an anti-American sentiment in the pro-democracy camp. Cook writes, “Put simply, many local activists refuse to work with Americans. Washington policies toward the region from the Iraq war and the war on terrorism to its support for Israel—are so unpopular that Arab activists cannot embrace the United States.” If they do they lose community creditability.²³²

Probably the most effective instrument the Egyptian president wielded over Egyptian civil society was merely locking the doors. Egypt Law 84/2002 permitted the supervising ministry to close any organization at any time should officials deem that it is “threatening national unity” or “violating public order.”²³³

Role of the Labor Movement

In response to regime repression, civil society adjusted. Some organizations, like Kefaya, broke the rules and paid dearly. Others, the Brotherhood included, worked the

²³⁰ Carl Gershman and Michael Allen, “The Assault on Democracy Assistance,” *Journal of Democracy* 17.2 (2006): 38.

²³¹ Gershman and Allen, “Assault on Democracy,” 41.

²³² Cook, “Promote Arab Reform.”

²³³ Gershman and Allen, “Assault on Democracy,” 42.

system and lived to fight another day. Many took to the web and outmaneuvered authorities. A growing number skirted the democracy promotion agenda altogether and addressed societal change in non-conventional ways. Amr Hamzawy identified this re-organization, which included focusing on a socioeconomic platform, as extremely effective. In 2009 he reported, “You look at a place like Morocco, Algeria, or Egypt, and only in the last two years, you see an unprecedented rise in labor sit-ins, in labor strikes, in bread-and-butter motivated demonstrations and protest activities.”²³⁴ This new dynamism, which included addressing issues of salary, wages, health care, and social security, opened up a sphere “outside of conventional politics...spaces which are structured and organized around daily local and, in fact political issues.” The participants in that sphere speak a different organizational language and go about achieving their goals in non-traditional ways. They are however, according to Hamzawy, “... liberal in the sense of accepting pluralism and acting based on an understanding of pluralism and a commitment to pluralism.” They’ve just taken a fresh path, one working within the socio-economic arena, to get there.²³⁵

The numbers of organized Egyptian labor protests prior to and after 2009 bare out Hamzawy’s argument. “According to a report presented at a symposium hosted by the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* in February 2010, there have been more than 3000 labor protests by Egyptian workers since 2004”²³⁶, a figure that dwarfed Egyptian political protests in both scale and consequence in the same period. The years 2009 and 2010 were marked by mass national strikes, nation-wide sit-ins, and labor

²³⁴ Amr Hamzawy, “Getting to Pluralism: Political Actors in the Arab World,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (September 16, 2009).

²³⁵ Hamzawy, “Getting to Pluralism.”

²³⁶ Mark Engler, “Organizing the Egyptian Rebellion,” *Dissent Magazine* (February 9, 2011).

protests often in the same locations that spawned the 2011 Tahrir rebellion. Rural movements too, inspired uprisings against the government's efforts to evict small farmers from their lands.²³⁷ Joel Benin, refers to Egypt's recent labor activism as "...the largest social movement in the Arab world since World War II."²³⁸ This massive increase in labor unrest did not arise isolated from the rest of Egyptian civil society. To the contrary, various factions embraced labor groups. The most significant association formed from a partnership with Egyptian youth. Ahmed Maher, who chaired the April 6 Youth Movement, which organized the highly successful 2008 national general strike, was himself spurred into action by the exploits of Kefaya. The national general strike in turn incited the organization of independent public sector unions, which later fostered the growth of an Independent Trade Union Federation.²³⁹ This web of interdependency, mutual inspiration and overlap, occurred at all reaches of civil society. Labor however, in terms of numbers of participants and frequency of protests was the most productive participant.

Civil society groups of all shapes and sizes stood in the crosshairs of the state security apparatus. For factions that followed a more traditional route to resistance, leadership had to be ever mindful of just how far it pushed Emergency Law. Large labor protests provided anonymous protection. Smaller numbers meant a greater vulnerability. Opposition members in small groups had to be vigilant of the consequences that their actions incurred. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, upon release from prison in 2003, after serving three years for questioning Gamal's budding presidential bid, wrote, "those of us who

²³⁷ Engler, "Organizing Rebellion."

²³⁸ Engler, "Organizing Rebellion."

²³⁹ Engler, "Organizing Rebellion."

have made a public and systematic commitment to free societies have an obligation to reach out to... people who are interested in democracy. We need to make them partners in the cause of liberty and self-government... in this project, civil society is crucial.” He went on to define civil society as “a free space within which people can assemble, work together, express themselves, organize, and pursue shared interests in an open and peaceful manner.” For Ibrahim, the size of that space was not set, nor was the level of freedom that governed it. “It may shrink to the dimensions of a tiny prison cell, as it did in my case for a while. But even while I was locked in that cell, I felt freer than my oppressors, and that is what gave me strength...”²⁴⁰

This kind of courage from a broken but eloquent 73-year-old professor resonated with people. Egyptian citizens fed off one another’s resolve, and congregated in increasing numbers on the outskirts of the institutions of government. It did take time; the road to revolution did not happen overnight. Events of the Arab Spring had been simmering in Arab civil society for a while. Maaty writes, “Collectively over the years these groups shared the discourse on political reform and raised public awareness on key issues. They helped break the long-held culture of fear of political participation”²⁴¹ and prepared the people for the protests that would come. A willingness to transfer demands linked to democratic ideals into the economic arena strengthened their communal hand. Meanwhile groups like Kefaya and the Brotherhood reached out and provided organizational inspiration. Young people took to the web and to the streets. By increasing the repression of these very associations and others like them, and by further

²⁴⁰ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Reviving Middle Eastern Liberalism,” *Journal of Democracy* 14.4 (2003).

²⁴¹ Maaty, “Civil Society a Force.”

limiting the right of the people to assemble, ultimately by packing the prisons to intimidate involvement, Mubarak amplified the power of civil society. He also made himself a “common cause” target for many groups who might otherwise never have found convergence.

Traditional Media’s Influence on Egypt’s Revolution

The impetus that filled Tahrir Square in January was born of the Egyptian youth. The tools they used were new media; they worked online and at computer cafes, on laptops, cell phones, and learned from news streaming into satellite dishes that covered the rooftops of apartments from Cairo to Alexandria. While there is little argument that their role was pivotal to the eighteen days in January, Egyptian youth were also essential in the resistance movement that had been growing since Kefaya took to the streets in 2004. Central to this youthful online success was the growing presence of an independent Egyptian and international media, which keyed in not only to the abuses of the regime, but also to the actions of those who were willing to challenge it. The two groups, bloggers and traditional journalists, fed off one another, providing bloggers “journalists to validate their posts” and journalists, “dynamic news stories to write about.” The two often worked in tandem. Social media acted as a watchdog of state controlled media, alerting international outlets to growing opposition movements. They also provided the raw images that stirred people around the globe. International media distributed the scenes and reports plucked off of You Tube and “boomeranged” them back into the countries concerned. Also, in an effort to get closer to the action, mainstream sources incorporated direct links to social media outlets, in essence providing

opposition groups a portal to the world.²⁴² The two groups (traditional and new media) had common cause in the outcome. Both suffered from harassment, arrest, and eventually imprisonment by state security.

At the height of Mubarak's political "liberalization" in September of 2005, the numbers of newspapers in Egypt, most of them independent had soared to over 500. Self-censorship of state media didn't extend into the expanding independent market, which operated under increasingly loose restrictions. Television was even more influential and less controlled. The advent of pan Arab satellite television in the 1990's had had an extensive impact on news and entertainment throughout the entire Middle East particularly in a place like Egypt, which "portrayed itself as the leader of the Arab world in all aspects of modern life, including the media." By 2005 a surge in privately owned satellite stations had joined an ever increasingly critical Al Jazeera and had significantly reduced influence of state run television.²⁴³

Al-Jazeera provided groundwork for the aggressive approach that would foster the Arab Spring. In the late 1990's the information environment of the Arab world transformed, as satellite television opened up a sphere for political communication and broke the ability of the state to control the flow of information. This new public space was able to unify Arab discourse on a number of concerns from issues in Palestine and Iraq to political reform inside of the state. Lynch notes, "Al Jazeera in particular became a source of common knowledge in Arab political life, setting the agenda and galvanizing anger over offenses to Arab issues and ideals. It also fueled political protest

²⁴² Simon Cottle, "Media and the Arab uprisings of 2011," *Journalism*, vol. 12, no. 5, (July 2011).

²⁴³ "The Media in Egypt," BBC News.co.uk (9/2/05).

movements...” broke through domestic censorship, and provided limited protection from regime repression.²⁴⁴ Arabs could now follow global events without learning foreign languages or needing intermediaries to explain them. It brought the Arab world into the global information network with in-depth coverage of world events and analysis. The result was an education of the masses and increase in Arab political and global sophistication.²⁴⁵ Souks, cafes, and living rooms echoed with the Al Jazeera slant on Middle East issues long before the rise of the Arab Spring. And that viewpoint, at least in Egypt’s case, was seldom favorable to President Mubarak.

In 2007 state machinery began to go after journalists. That year Mubarak oversaw the sentencing of four Egyptian newspaper editors for defaming he and Gamal. Ibrahim Issa the most outspoken of the group said of the verdict, "Press freedom means the freedom to criticize the president. It's time for the president to come down from the status of pharaoh to that of a human being."²⁴⁶ While Issa was eventually pardoned, at least seven journalists in 2007, were sentenced to up to two years in prison on charges ranging from misquoting the justice minister to spreading rumors about the president. In February an Al-Jazeera journalist who had been sentenced to six months over a film that highlighted torture in Egyptian police stations had her sentence reduced.²⁴⁷ Independent media outlets, in particular Al-Jazeera, were pushing state news television into the realm of obsolete. Mubarak was pushing back.

²⁴⁴ Marc Lynch, “After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian State”, *Reflections* 302.

²⁴⁵ Stuart Schaar, “Revolutionary Challenges in Tunisia on and Egypt: Generations in Conflict,” vol. 13:3 (Summer 2011)

²⁴⁶ Ian Black, “Egyptian editors jailed for Defaming Mubarak,” BBC News.co.uk, (9/14/07).

²⁴⁷ “Ibrahim Issa Pardoned by Mubarak,” menassat.com, (10/6/08).

Social Networking and New Media Influence on Egypt's Revolution

About this time a final puzzle piece that would ultimately usher in revolution was beginning to emerge. The same BBC September 2007 story that reported the newspaper editor verdicts, announced just below the list of targeted journalists, “Several bloggers have also been prosecuted in high-profile cases that have been damaging to Egypt's image abroad.” The last paragraph dealt with rumors about Mr. Mubarak’s health, the issue that had originally sent some of the editors to jail. It concluded, “Egyptians remain fascinated by the question of who - and what - will follow him. Recently more than 2,000 people joined a discussion group on Facebook, the social networking website, to ponder the question.”²⁴⁸ It was an ominous foreshadowing of so much more to come.

Actually the president was aware of the dangers posed by social networking and had been using Emergency Law in an attempt to stifle it. In 2006 *Time Magazine* interviewed several students who had been detained, beaten, held without charges, and sexually assaulted by police for blogging about the government. In a note smuggled out of jail and posted by his wife on the couple’s blog Abdel Fatah, a 24-year-old activist revealed, “Today it hit me. I am really in prison. I’m not sure how I feel.” A month earlier he knew. “For a core group of activists, which is growing, there is absolutely no fear anymore. I mean, there is of course fear when the moment happens, but its not the fear that makes you stay at home.” Fatah was one of more than 300 activists – at least six

²⁴⁸ Black, “Editors Jailed”.

of them bloggers – who in the spring of 2006 had been detained and beaten for 15 days, with the option of perpetual renewal under Emergency Law.²⁴⁹

In 2007 Cairo-based *Human Rights Watch* researcher Elijah Zarwan noted that the regime's attitude towards the Internet was "schizophrenic." On the one hand it embraced technology for economic gain, yet was becoming increasingly suspicious of internal dissent posted online. Also in 2007, *The Guardian* reported, "Hosni Mubarak's regime initially ignored the political writings of bloggers, but in the last years his state security forces have changed their attitude. Imprisonment and torture are not uncommon for politically active Egyptians, especially if they are members of the banned Muslim Brotherhood."²⁵⁰

The Brotherhood's entrance into blogging took root in response to the mass arrest of Al-Azhar students and Muslim Brothers by the SSI in 2007. They created a website and a number of blogs which tied family members to imprisoned activists, thru writings "about the personal toll of a missing father, husband, or brother and the conditions in the prisons themselves."²⁵¹ The blog style was anything but "conservative Islam." It relied on video clips, interviews, and photographs to uncover government abuse, mimicking the liberal sites that were already circling the Web. Lerner writes, "This similarity suggest that a learning process is taking place among Egyptian activists of all stripes regarding best practices for online dissent."²⁵² The "learning process" was instrumental to the

²⁴⁹ Lindsay Wise, "Why Egypt is Cracking Down on Bloggers," *Time Magazine*, (June 1, 2006).

²⁵⁰ Antony Lowenstein, "Blogging Against Mubarak," *Guardian.co.uk*, (6/11/07).

²⁵¹ Lowenstein, "Blogging Against Mubarak".

²⁵² Melissa Lerner, "Connecting the Actual with the Virtual: The Internet and Social Movement Theory in the Muslim World – The Cases of Iran and Egypt, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30:4 (December 2010): 569.

revolution's success. Blogging provided a way for Egyptians, the young, elite, and well educated at first, but later "all stripes" to find solidarity. And that solidarity was key. Social Networking, blogging and You Tube increased the efficiency among anti-Mubarak groups of working together to get the job done.

In 1999 easy-to-use blog software became free of charge online. The numbers of blogs increased and the power of social networking took off. At first it was a tool of the wealthy and well educated. In 2001 only 0.86 percent of the Egyptian populace, or 600,000 individuals out of a population of 68 million, were connected to the Internet. By 2008 that number, according to CIA reports, had grown to eight million.²⁵³ By 2011, Facebook alone had over 21 million Arab users, more than the estimated total number of newspaper readers in the region. Both Egypt and Tunisia were particularly well represented.²⁵⁴ Egyptian bloggers soared from 40 in 2004 to an estimated 160,000 by 2008.²⁵⁵ And cell phones, 60 million in a nation of 85 million Egyptians made texting an absolutely critical tool in communication and the mobilization of street protests. By 2010, despite Egypt's poverty more than one in five people was an Internet user.²⁵⁶

To some extent the Internet café phenomenon has helped poor and middle class Arabs overcome online barriers and in certain cases even provided training in Internet use. Wheeler suggests, "access to the Internet cafes could parallel access to newspapers

²⁵³ Deborah L. Wheeler, "Blessings and Curses: Women and the Internet Revolution in the Arab World," in *Women and Media in the Middle East: Power through Self Expression*, ed. Naomi Sakr, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004, 139-140.

²⁵⁴ Fadi Salem and Racha Mourtada, "*Arab Social Media Report*," Dubai: Dubai School of Government (January 2011).

²⁵⁵ "10 Worst Countries to be a Blogger," Special Report, Committee to Protect Journalists, (April 30, 2009).

²⁵⁶ Robin Wright, *Rock the Casbah* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 27.

in coffee houses during the late nineteenth century.”²⁵⁷ With access, Arab views about their state, their rights, and their role in world matured. Social networking provided the opportunity not just to read about these issues, but also interact and post their own thoughts. With café access strong in deprived neighborhoods, poor people joined privileged and more educated youthful elites online. Their learning curve soared. According to Schaar, “Spreading the word of revolt to urban slums and mobilizing youth for mass demonstrations for the first time became possible through texting, tweets, and postings in Arabic on social media sites and mobile phones.”²⁵⁸

Once they overcame the barriers of access, social networking provided young people who had increasingly lost hope in their future, a way to push back. Prior to the Internet, why try? The brutality and overwhelming presence of the security police stifled any potentially successful resistance to the status quo. The power of one against such repression was futile. That changed with the end of isolation, through online access. Schaar writes, “The power of numbers – tens and even hundreds of thousands of hits on the same sites and resulting massive crowds that turned out to demonstrate – allowed internet users...to break the bonds of fear that had held multitudes of people prisoners of conformity and intimidation.”²⁵⁹

Shared suffering brought people together. You Tube videos provided Egyptians something new and shocking. Graphic images of brutal interrogations taken by security police began to make the rounds on-line. Prisons were filling up with activists. While

²⁵⁷ Wheeler, “Blessings and Curses,” 141.

²⁵⁸ Stuart Schaar, “Revolutionary Challenges in Tunisia and Egypt: Generations in Conflict, *New Politics* 13.3 (Summer 2011) 19-26.

²⁵⁹ Schaar, “Revolutionary Challenges,” 19-26.

they disappeared, their stories and sometimes their actual words, as with the case of Abdel Fatah, continued to circulate. The imprisonment of Abdel Kareem in 2007 was one of many such arrests. A Muslim Brother taken with scores of others, imprisoned, and beaten because of harsh criticism of the president, Kareem was defended online by supporters who established the “Free Kareem” campaign, complete with blog and website.²⁶⁰ The Brotherhood provided space and access for family members to console one another. Other non-Islamist blogs linked to Kareem’s story as well. Young Egyptians tapped the Internet in order to cope. It didn’t hurt that Mubarak after reversing his reforms of 2005 increased the brutality of his rule. Bloggers were now blogging about rape and torture and imprisonment; *their own* rape and torture! Newspaper editors were covering free speech issues, which had sent *them* to jail! Numbers of those being violated throughout society grew. Finally people had found a way to connect. And while the influence of that connection is not easy to specifically measure, its impact was extensive. Lynch writes, “It is difficult to imagine that such a rapid, massive transformation in the nature of political communications could not matter in substantive ways.”²⁶¹

Besides providing relief, social networking proved instrumental at organizing counter attacks to the regime. Three events at three times in the struggle, exemplify the power of online organization that opposition movements tapped into; Kefaya’s early years of resistance in 2004-06, the general strike in 2008 that fused labor and the April 6 youth movement, and the brutal beating death of Khaled Said in Alexandria by police in

²⁶⁰ Lerner, “Connecting Actual with Virtual,” 567.

²⁶¹ Lynch, “Online Challenges to the State.”

June of 2010 which I cover later in this chapter. Each of these events led not only to cascading information with international media outlets, but also inspired further organization within Egypt society and more online and street opposition resistance to the regime.

Kefaya's early success in challenging Mubarak was due in large measure to its bold strokes at going straight to the streets without permission. That impact was aided by the use of information technology, particularly the Internet. Although it maintained its own website, Kefaya's early methods of outreach came from linking with nonconformist bloggers. Its message was appealing to those who already had the ear of politically in-tune domestics as well as the international media. These bloggers spread the word and bolstered attendance at Kefaya's protests. Once established, the Kefaya website allowed members and sympathizers to post anonymous complaints about the government. It also used emails, text messages, web advertisements and outreach to bloggers to help rally people to scheduled events.²⁶² Lerner surmises, "This interactive format invited users to engage with likeminded individuals and foster a sense of online community and networking." It also translated to increased attendance at protests. Ultimately, between the web and the street, Kefaya was able to inspire individuals to move past anonymous online participation.²⁶³ "At least temporarily, Lerner writes, the grassroots movement was able to cleverly use popular forms of online communication as a way to propagate its message of reform and demands for peaceful democratization."²⁶⁴ In 2006 Mubarak

²⁶² Nadia Oweidat et al, *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative*, Santa Monica, CA; RAND Corporation, 2008, 22.

²⁶³ Lerner, "Connecting Actual with Virtual," 568.

²⁶⁴ Lerner, "Connecting Actual with Virtual," 568.

began imprisoning Kefaya members for extended periods of time for violation of Emergency Law, a tactic the organization never really recovered from.

Case Study of April 6 Movement

One of the revolution's best examples of organizing through social networking brought labor and Egyptian youth together in the 2008 April 6 Movement. Ahmad Maher, a young civil engineer, 28 years old at the time, was the force behind the organization. He had been active in Kefaya and the El Ghad Party. However each found itself curtailed by police. In 2006 he turned out to support an influential judges strike, was arrested and detained for two months. In 2007 he went back to the street to support labor protests that were also stifled.²⁶⁵ With the regime successful at restraining street protests, in 2008 Maher took to Facebook. He launched the April 6 Movement. Named for the date of the national textile strike that it was organizing for, 74,000 users signed up immediately. The huge influx of online participants swelled numbers in the street. The protest grew into a national general strike, and launched the April 6 Movement, which became an influential source of inspiration and organization for further resistance.

For two years the movement blended Internet activism with the more important strategy of drawing scared Egyptians out of their isolation. Maher studied the Solidarity movement in Poland that brought communism to heel in the 1980's as well as the Yugoslavian youth movement that helped to topple President Slobodan Milosevic.²⁶⁶ As with Serbia, April 6 became a hub for youth activists. It organized illegal demonstrations, small and large, over everything from rising food prices to Mubarak's

²⁶⁵ Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 28-29.

²⁶⁶ Jeffery Fleishman, "No rest for an Egypt revolutionary," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 2011.

eightieth birthday. The sight turned to Myspace, Flickr, and Twitter to gather young opposition groups to protest and disperse, and to challenge police; it also provided strategies at how to avoid arrest. It encouraged video of street confrontations and chronicled the events on YouTube. Mainstream media inside and outside of Egypt would often pick up the posted video. While the United States government never grasped the real power of movements like April 6, a Wiki-Leaks post recalling a US Embassy cable in 2009 described April 6 as “outside the mainstream of opposition politicians and activists,” Mubarak saw the threat. During Maher’s second detention, secret police tortured him in an effort to force him to reveal a Facebook password. Upon release he posted photos of the cuts, welts, and bruises suffered from the beatings.²⁶⁷

Case Study of the Death of Khaled Said

Eventually police brutality, exposed by online photos and video, and circulated through social media backfired on the regime. The vicious beating death of Khaled Said in Alexandria by police in June of 2010 inspired protest from June all the way through February in Tahrir. Khaled, a 28-year-old Egyptian business man was pulled from an Internet café by two plainclothes police, who witnesses said took him to the lobby of a nearby residential building and beat him to death. Apparently, Khaled had a cell phone video that he was about to post online, which revealed police involvement in the sale of illegal drugs. Wright reports, “They banged his head against an iron door, marble stairs, and a concrete wall. Despite Said’s pleas to stop – “I am dying,” he cried, according to an eyewitness from the Internet café – the police continued until a yellow liquid oozed

²⁶⁷ Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 30.

from his mouth.”²⁶⁸ An initial investigation by the prosecutor’s office concluded that Said had died of asphyxiation caused by ingesting a packet of drugs. A second state investigation backed up the “death by drug overdose” conclusion. However when gruesome photos of Said, reportedly taken in the morgue, circulated online, nine witnesses came forward to confirm the beating.²⁶⁹

The photos of Khaled revealed a face battered to a bloody pulp. His skull was fractured; his jaw badly askew. His nose was broken and front teeth were missing. Blood spattered across his face and seeped from the back of his head. The online circulation of the photos horrified Egyptians. His death ignited protests in Cairo and Alexandria. Demands for justice spread rapidly on blogs and social networking sites all over the web.²⁷⁰ Google Executive, Wael Ghonim, who himself was detained and beaten in the eighteen days of revolution, embraced Said’s story with an anonymous Facebook Page, “We are all Khaled Said.” The page quickly became the most popular dissident website in Egypt. By mid June 130,000 had joined. By February the number had grown to 430,000.²⁷¹ From the beginning, the site called on Egyptians to defy martial law and rally to the streets in memory of Khaled. Cairo and Alexandria featured weekly protests throughout the summer of 2010 and intermittently through the fall. People responded, often in large numbers. Many carried posters of Khaled. Some featured the young good-looking and smiling Egyptian in a gray hooded sweatshirt, others a mangled bloodied

²⁶⁸ Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 30.

²⁶⁹ “Egypt: Prosecute Police in Beating Death: Multiple Witnesses and Graphic Photos Belie Police Narrative,” *Human Rights Watch*, June 24, 2010.

²⁷⁰ Kristen Chick, “Beating death of Egyptian businessman Khalid Said spotlights police brutality,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 6/18/10).

²⁷¹ Jennifer Preston, “Movement Began with Outrage and a Facebook Page that Gave it an Outlet,” *New York Times*, January 6, 2011.

face on slab in the morgue. The momentum generated by the protests continued into the winter. By January, the Internet was buzzing with bloggers waiting for their marching orders. Young people religiously tuned to “We are all Khaled Said” and “April 6 Movement” as well as dozens of other similar Facebook sites and blogs. Eventually on January 25, 2011, they converged en masse on Tahrir Square.²⁷²

Chapter Conclusion

While it was images of Egyptian youth that *Al Jazeera* and *CNN* flashed around the world, so many others who also had been abused by the regime followed to Tahrir. Facebook merely consolidated the final phase of opposition that formulated revolution. A core of resistance had been growing for some time, even before Kefaya handed out yellow tape and sent its eclectic mix into the streets. Laborers were desperate for wages to buy bread. The Brotherhood had finally ceased to accommodate and joined the fray. People on the fringe of battle found safety in numbers both on the street and on the web. The poor, the dispossessed, the unemployed, the hungry, many young and many old, some online and some not, people with means and those with nothing joined in common cause. Egyptians had had their fill of the brutality and the corruption. The crowd that formed on January 25 and would grow steadily for eighteen days was wide and deep and ready for change. They had reached consensus. All of them agreed on one thing at least; when it came to President Hosni Mubarak – all of them had had enough!

²⁷² Wright, *Rock the Casbah*, 31.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The breakdown of Hosni Mubarak's authoritarian regime crashed into the Arab Spring of 2011 in tidal wave proportions. Although the eighteen day drama in Tahrir and the events that will continue to cascade from that confrontation are completely unpredictable and not the focus of this study, the causes that laid the groundwork for opposition mobilization, as well as its degree of success was foreseeable.

President Hosni Mubarak is gone for various reasons. Something as earthshaking never happens due to one cause. The regime was tired, at the end of a long thirty-year run; the Egyptian population was growing weary of its rule. The certainty of its continued longevity was threatened by an aging and increasingly out of touch president. Although his son waited in the wings, the transition to a new autocrat within the same system was being met with growing disapproval throughout the state.

For the past two decades economic and political decisions of the Egyptian government had isolated itself from a large majority of the Egyptian people. Heydemann reveals that a significant tool at the disposal of the regime lies with its ability to capture the benefits of selective economic transformation. Ideally, according to Heydemann, the process of economic liberalization, which Mubarak had bought into from the Paris Club onward, reinforces the base of the regime and "mitigate(s) pressures for comprehensive

and social reforms.”²⁷³ He further cites authoritarian consolidation to be bolstered by its ability “to exploit rather than resist broad social, political, and economic trends.”²⁷⁴ Not only was Egypt trending into the negative economically by 2010, the man most associated with the wealth disparity that resulted from those failures was the president’s son. Corruption and an exploding gap between rich and poor linked directly to Gamal, was working to undermine not only the current government, but also any opportunity of family succession. While the regime consolidated gains at the elite level, the middle class shrunk and an escalating number of people fell into abject poverty. Army officers and high-ranking government officials, many associated with Gamal, lived in luxury while 44 percent of Egyptians existed on less than \$2 a day. Young college students graduated to systemic unemployment. Inspired by World Bank structural reforms the patronage system flowed for the well connected, while the numbers of those on the outside grew proportionally to new and dangerous levels. The poor had been suffering for a while, and as succession grew more possible, all they saw was continued economic disparity. And they didn’t want it.

Levitsky and Way argue that authoritarian regime consolidation relies in good measure on the government’s ability to manipulate the electoral machinery through which it claims legitimacy.²⁷⁵ As long as it able to manufacture elections, as well as the institutions that govern those elections, and maintains control of the final results, the system works. The problem is that those democratic institutional levers, while necessary for illusionary democracy, have the potential at some point to be turned against the

²⁷³ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 13,14.

²⁷⁴ Heydemann, “Upgrading Authoritarianism,” 5.

²⁷⁵ Levitsky and Way, “Competitive Authoritarianism,” 53.

regime. A dictator, who makes no pretenses towards any form of self-government, never has to worry about the system turning on him. However, within a growing grey arena of despotic hybrid and competitive authoritarian governments, in which Mubarak chose to reside, the possibility for the system to be turned on the regime is always present. Add to that mix, what Linz and Stepan refer to as the “Gate Opening” influence of an outside empire²⁷⁶, as with the United States’ relationship to Egypt, and you have significant potential for outside manipulation of democratic levers within an non-democratic regime. Those institutional levers put in place “for show only” present the potential to do real damage.

The Bush Freedom Agenda, fresh and fiery upon initial successes in Iraq, pushed hard for Mubarak to open up the door to electoral reform. He didn’t want to. Washington probably would not have wanted it either had it realized what it was setting in motion. However, in 2003 at the National Endowment for Democracy, and later in his 2005 State of the Union Address, using nearly identical language to bully the bully, George Bush called on the Egypt to “lead the way to democracy.” Mubarak acquiesced. The Brotherhood piled up big numbers (20 percent) in the 2005 parliamentary elections, and the veneer of invulnerability began to strip away from the regime. It did not matter that those 2005 reforms were retracted soon after, and that counter reforms were even more draconian, the damage had already been done. The door had been opened. Mubarak would never be able to fully close it again.

²⁷⁶ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, 73.

Besides pushing electoral reform, United States actions in Iraq and its cozy relationship with Israel also put the regime in jeopardy. The wars placed Mubarak in an increasingly awkward position of having to please his Western allies as well as placate anti U.S. opposition in the streets. It was a formidable challenge. People linked unpopular foreign interference with the autocratic ways of the regime. They blamed both. Widespread street protests following the 2003 Iraqi invasion, oddly enough sanctioned by the regime, rocked with anti U.S. and anti Israeli chants, added Mubarak to the condemnation chorus. Welcomed by foreign diplomats as an example of “free speech,” the regime closed off the streets when they realized they could not control the message. Opposition seeds however, were being planted.

One place in its thirty-year run, where the government never failed to consolidate was in its coercive actions regarding Egyptian civil society, particularly in regards to the Muslim Brotherhood. Way reminds that in order to achieve and maintain authoritarian stability, the autocrat *must* employ, “...an extensive, cohesive, well-funded, and experienced coercive apparatus that can reliably harass opposition and put down protest.”²⁷⁷ Mubarak’s secret police carried out a brutal emergency rule, complete with institutionalized repression, imprisonment, and torture. These actions, while in the short term strengthened the hand of the regime, served in the long run to more thoroughly consolidate the opposition. Forced to the edge with nowhere to turn but to one another, Egyptian citizens began to do just that, and in the process became increasingly bolder in organizing and in asserting their rights. The regime, overwhelmed with challenges to its authority, had to pick and choose its battles, leaving some acts of defiance unpunished;

²⁷⁷ Way, “Color Revolutions,” 63.

consequently certain citizen rights, those that the regime chose to ignore, multiplied.

O'Donnell responds, "If these rights don't immediately threaten the regime they tend to accumulate and become institutionalized."²⁷⁸ This forecast proved true for Egypt. Social networking sites, civil society, the Muslim Brotherhood, and an expanding independent media provided outlets for the accumulation of regime challenges to coalesce. It didn't hurt that Mubarak after reversing his reforms of 2005, increased the brutality of his rule. Numbers of those being violated grew. And they found a way to connect. O'Donnell notes further that the punishment of mutual violations "are astonishingly successful in provoking or reviving collective identifications and actions; they in turn, help forge broad identifications which embody the explosion of a highly re-politicized and angry society."²⁷⁹ Groups came together with common purpose. And as they did, they gained strength in growing numbers. The regime was powerless to control "everything" and signs of weakness of those 2005 reforms lingered.

Civil society in Egypt flexed its muscle and wedged the opening. Heydemann identifies the control of civil society as key feature in authoritarian consolidation.²⁸⁰ Linz and Stepan maintain the management of civil society as an absolute necessity for regime survival.²⁸¹ Whitehead and Way and Levitsky also highlight the significance of the emergence of civil society in leveraging the break. O'Donnell and Schmitter signal that an inability to manage those groups coalescing around regime mistakes, the formation of civil society in common cause to challenge dictatorship is absolute key in ultimately

²⁷⁸ O'Donnell, "Transitions from Authoritarian rule," 7.

²⁷⁹ O'Donnell, "Transitions from Authoritarian rule," 49.

²⁸⁰ Heydemann, "Upgrading Authoritarianism," 5.

²⁸¹ Linz and Stepan, *Democratic Transition*, t

bringing down the regime.²⁸² In Egypt civil society swarmed the government early and often. Inspired by organizations like Kefaya and the April 6th Youth Movement, all sorts of Egyptians found a way to organize. Dying political associations revived. Religious groups shifted their attention from mosques and churches into the political arena. The Brotherhood, increasingly persecuted by Mubarak's secret police, fought back the best way they knew how, by becoming even more organized. College students, laborers, the evaporating middle class all found identification in various civil organizations that often had strong opinions concerning the regime.

Finally, as O'Donnell notes, "once the government signals that it is lowering the cost for engaging in collective action and is permitting some contestation on issues previously declared off limits..." a situation encouraged in Egypt by the protests to the Iraq War and Israeli incursions into Gaza, trouble follows.²⁸³ The numbers of critics who could not realistically all be jailed, multiplied by the thousands; the floodgates opened. Groups previously hiding in the shadows rushed to be involved in the transition. Activists, who normally might conflict with one another, were increasingly sharing prison cells in which they found common cause. Islamists and communists and democrats, along with journalists and even judges were sentenced to indefensible prison terms. Desperate and organized and out of work, labor massed in the streets. Young people woke up and engaged the system. About the only place Mubarak succeeded in stifling dissent was in the legislature where one party rule dominated all policy making.

The final puzzle piece to Mubarak's downfall emerged from his inability to contain the message. Levitsky, Way, O'Donnell, Schmitter, Heydemann, Linz and

²⁸² O'Donnell and Schmitter, "Transitions," 49 -52.

²⁸³ O'Donnell, *Transitions from Authoritarian rule* (49, 51)

Stepan all cite the control of the media as an absolute necessity in authoritarian consolidation. And here Mubarak failed miserably. State media, which nobody paid attention to anyhow, was powerless to frame the message. Meanwhile international and domestic media sources became more emboldened. Al Jazeera exercised its international and regional presence. And then there was Facebook. In the midst of so many regime missteps the future finally caught up with President Mubarak. In a race to gain the technological edge the opposition won. And it won big. The dictator who encouraged economic globalization alongside statewide repression knew he needed control of the new global media to do both. His regime pushed for surveillance, oversight, and coercion to limit the unifying power of social networking to opposition groups. Meanwhile email evolved into blogging. Text messaging gained the added transmission tool of Twitter. Social networking via Facebook and You Tube and cell phone cameras was too much to control.

Then in December a man set himself on fire in Tunisia. Oppositional forces, at home and abroad, seized the new media and applied it to consolidate their resistance. They took on the tyrant with a blitzkrieg vengeance.

... and the walls came tumbling down.

President Mubarak will not be the last to fall. Globalization of the media, of economics, and geo political policy making swirled together in a shrinking world, will make it increasingly difficult for authoritarian states to successfully consolidate in the Arab world and beyond. Iron Curtains and Great Walls cannot hold back the World Wide Web or McDonalds much longer. The controlling nature of autocrats needs the fruits of increasing technology to grow their economy, update their police state, and to

preserve order. The growth of that technology however, cannot be isolated for “regime only” purposes. Innovation cuts both ways. Wherever there is repression, opposition will persist. More thoroughly connected to the world than ever before, it will become progressively difficult for dictators to thrive and at the same time isolate their citizenry from one another and from the outside world. The result will be an increase in the numbers and veracity of “Arab Spring” resistance movements all over the globe.

Fareed Zakaria summarizes the new challenge for tyrants within this dynamic new world, while at the same time addressing the end of the rule of President Hosni Mubarak. “Dictatorships, he writes, find it difficult to handle change because the structure of power they have set up cannot respond to the new, dynamic demands coming from their people. So it was in Tunisia; so it was in Egypt. Youth unemployment and food prices might have been the immediate causes, but the underlying trend was a growing, restive population, stirred up by new economic winds, connected to a wider world.”²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Fareed Zakaria, “How Democracy Can Work in the Middle East,” *Time Magazine*, February 3, 2011.

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