

Chapter 7

The State and Social Movement in Egypt: Phases of Contentious Activism

Housam Darwisheh

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Abstract

This paper examines the complex relationships between the state and social movements that emerged during the last decade of Mubarak's rule and in the period after he was toppled in February 2011. In addressing how social movements in Egypt operated in various political environments, the paper focuses on the *political opportunity structures* and *organizational issues* within the social movements and their transformation in the last decade.

**Keywords: Egypt, Social Movement, Political Opportunity, Organization, Protest, and
Activism**

Introduction

Much of current academic research and discussion on the Arab Spring and its aftermath has prioritized the study of the roles of the militaries and/or social movements in determining the trajectories and outcomes of the original uprisings. While the military-focused approach appears to reflect a return to the “resilient authoritarianism” literature on the Arab world, the mass-politics approach emphasizes how social movements actually mattered in shaping the trajectories and outcomes of the Arab Spring. However, one crucial theme that seems to be missing from focused treatment in the academic literature is the relation not only between the militaries and the regimes but also between the state and the mass social movements that overthrew the pre-2011 regimes. In fact, as this paper argues, the latter relationship influenced the opening and closing of political opportunity structures for both regime and social movement.

Hence, this paper examines the complex relationships between the state and social movements that emerged in the last decade of Mubarak’s rule and after he was toppled in February 2011. The paper addresses how social movements in Egypt operated in various political environments and focuses on the *political opportunity structures* and *organizational issues* within the social movements that were being transformed over the last decade in Egypt. In seeking to understand why Egypt’s 2011 “revolution” failed to force real institutional change in political power, I would be asking several critical questions. How did politics under long authoritarian rule shape the course of mass politics during the period of political opening ushered in by Mubarak’s overthrow? What major factors related to the power and interventions of the state, on the one hand, and the actions and directions of post-Mubarak social movements, on the other, would explain the multiple transformations of contentious politics? In particular, how did a mass social movement that was

united under authoritarian rule become fragmented following the fall of Mubarak that had initially created an open political environment in 2011 and 2012?

Social Movement Mobilization and Organization

In January 25 2011, Egypt experienced a massive protest movement with strong collective resistance that emerged and evolved from a variety of organizations and groups. The sociopolitical environment of the previous decade allowed for the emergence of new ways of exercising bottom-up politics and encouraged anti-regime actors to use their resources to form new social movements. How and why were these various groups able to succeed in staging a mass uprising against the Mubarak regime in 2011? Theoretically, the question can be addressed in several ways. First, there is the perspective of “political opportunity structure.” Social movements operate within an environment or an opportunity structure that delimits the scope that actors had to mobilize and organize social movement. This structural approach defines the opportunities and constraints that people face and explains the political outcomes that collective action can produce when certain opportunities allow popular grievances to be expressed as rebellion against a regime.

The political opportunity structure in Egypt was variously opened in the last decade of Mubarak’s rule. Crucially, opportunities arose when the sociopolitical structures, including state institutions and frameworks of rules, were weakened and could not firmly enforce the power of the regime. In such circumstances, people were able to quickly seize opportunities to throw off structural constraints and develop new methods of challenging and changing dominant power structures.

Another, more general, theoretical approach is represented by “rational choice theory” which fundamentally argues that people can rationally determine “what is in their best interest” and decide

on actions to attain that (Homans 1961; Cook 1978; Blau 1964; Coleman 1973 & 1990). Here, people would embark on a cost-benefit analysis even or especially when they undertake a normally hazardous undertaking such as rebellion. In rebelling, they would have determined that they stood to gain, in different ways, more than they would lose (Allingham 2006). By late 2010, and once the uprisings began, large segments of Arab people were committed to mobilizing against their regimes because the costs of not doing so meant continued suffering from severe economic and political conditions exacerbated by the recession that began in the West in 2008. Moreover, regimes that feared revolts due to adverse economic condition pushed more people towards rebellion by being more repressive but less effective in curtailing street protests. No doubt, some element of “rational choice” was present in the rebellions that ensued in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. But fundamentally the momentum of rising opposition and emboldened rebellion would have borne a lot of people along the path of overthrowing the status quo.

Of the two approaches, the structural perspective seems to be more instructive in the Egyptian case. It can more readily take into account many complexities of Egyptian politics beyond individual calculations of personal gains and losses. The structural perspective, for example, can highlight two broad but critical factors that impacted on power structures in the contemporary Middle East, namely, globalization as a complex socioeconomic process, and technological advancement that intensified connectivity (Khondker 2011). Together these shaped the structures within which Arab people lived under authoritarian rule and eventually discovered the opportunities to rebel against it. Globalization, in the form of the flows of population, ideas and ideologies, for example, and technological advancement in the form of newly acquired and utilized social media (e.g., Twitter) gave rise to opportunities for disaffected masses to organize, mobilize and challenge existing structures and institutions of power (Howard and Muzammil 2011). In asking why social movements had recently

proliferated over the world, Paul Mason (2012) concluded that the explanation lay in three big social changes: (1) the demographics of revolts; (2) technology and (3) human behavior itself. These three factors were very relevant to the Egyptian case. For Mason, the demographics of revolts refer to the interplay between three sections of society, namely, young graduates with no future, the urban poor and slum dwellers, and the organized working class. Mason also notes that technological changes, such as the spread and availability of the Internet, social media, and new technologies, including smart phones, led to significant transformation of the patterns of human behavior, particularly the development of a new model of human freedom that he termed “networked individualism”. For Mason, new technology “allows activists to assemble fast and zap the enemy, without any greater commitment to each other than doing this” (ibid., 139).

These factors facilitated the mediation of communication – connecting people via platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and so on – in the spaces that had been severely restricted by pre-2011 regimes. And by connecting anonymously and realizing that they were sharing the same grievances, people were able to speak their mind and break the wall of fear. In Tunisia, the first site of the uprisings, the new connectivity allowed the self-immolation of Muhammad Bouziz to be rapidly translated from being a local issue into national, regional and then transnational waves of protests against other authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. In this matter, the ideas of a “collective action diffusion process” may be instructive in focusing attention on external elements that influence contentious action (Patel and Bunce 2012). For instance, the April 6 Movement founder and strategist, Ahmed Maher, whose aim was to expand labor protests into a broader popular pro-democracy movement, claimed to have long been preparing for the “2011 Revolution” by drawing on the experiences of non-violent dissident movements that mobilized against the Slobodan Milosevic regime in Serbia against and launched the ‘Orange Revolution’ in Ukraine.

The diffusion of processes begun elsewhere could combine with regional circumstances, such as when Arab people took inspiration from the first uprising in Tunisia to “spread” uprisings against other regimes. Hence, changing opportunity structures in one country could profoundly impact similar structures in neighboring countries but result in *different outcomes*: presently, Egypt is undergoing a process of authoritarian reinstitution that has resulted in a much more repressive police state in contrast to Tunisia’s largely peaceful and smooth transition following its 2011 revolution.

The structural perspective offers better answers to “why people rebel” by focusing on *changing* environments and structures, popular perceptions of their own empowerment vis-à-vis weakened institutions, and intra-elite conflicts that in Egypt involved new actors, like Mubarak’s son Gamal and his associates, who endangered the entrenched networks of the old elite in the ruling National Democratic Party. From that perspective, it is feasible to consider new methods of mobilization, ideological representations, the presence of allies such as the Islamists and the media within and outside the regime. As this paper shows, these elements are necessary for social movements but are not sufficient for its ultimate success.

Another crucial aspect of a social movement is how it is organized and structured. As this paper demonstrates, certain political environments and structures necessitate certain compositional features such as the level of organization, the degree of centralization, or the extent of institutionalized coordination. Whereas professional organization, for example, can improve decision-making and action, it can also lead the movement’s founders to become more remote from their grassroots and lose their support. Once it loses its grassroots foundation, a social movement tends to be indistinguishable from any political party or interest group, shedding its main claim to legitimacy as a representative of wide segments of people. Conversely, the paper suggests, the decentralization of a social movement in a newly open political environment may hamper its ability

to remain coherent, perform effectively and deliver results. In Egypt, for definite structural and ideological reasons, the social movement ceased to represent a grassroots movement whose ideals encouraged a large segment of the Egyptian people to join its fight against the Mubarak regime.

The Rise of Egypt's New Social Movements

The political structure under which social movements operated in Egypt from early 2000 was not as oppressive and exclusive as it was in the 1990s. Back then, the regime's fight with militant Islamists meant the death of street politics and undermined civil society activism (Kienle 1998). After September 11, 2001, the USA applied pressure on Mubarak to democratize through demands to free imprisoned dissidents and reform the electoral process (Dalacoura 2005). Mubarak himself conceived of limited electoral reform in order to block the Muslim Brotherhood from competition and groom his son Gamal for presidential succession (Brownlee 2007; Stacher 2008).

As the political environment began to be opened variously in the last decade of Mubarak's rule, it provided social movements with sources of mobilization and loosened their external constraints. The emergence of political opportunity and organizational dynamics was facilitated by three main factors, namely:

(1) The rise of "street/grassroots" based political dissent represented in the horizontally coordinated, leaderless political action that was conducted by a variety of social forces. This provided non-institutionalized space, the street and the Internet, within which public sentiments against the regime policy were expressed. As Asef Bayat reminds us, the street played an important role "in such monumental political changes as the French Revolution, nineteenth-century labor movements, anticolonial struggles, the anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States, the

“velvet revolutions” in Eastern Europe, and, perhaps, the current global antiwar movement. The street, in this sense, is the chief locus of politics for ordinary people, those who are structurally absent from the institutional positions of power—the unemployed, casual workers, migrants, people of the underworld, and housewives.” (Bayat 2010: 211). Born in the street, so to speak, protests matured into a major source of pressure, affecting the structure and strategy of social movements and weakening the capacity of the state to curb them.

(2) The decline in ideological and political polarization between Egypt’s opposition forces, which had an important impact on the relationship between the regime and the opposition. In particular, the regime found it increasingly difficult to maintain its alarmist rhetoric about an Islamist takeover. This development could be attributed to the rise of Islamist democrats who were inclined to build bridges with the secular and liberal opposition and proved their commitment to democracy with constant endeavors to make inroads into the state and civil society institutions through electoral processes (Wickham 2002). The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) originally entered the system to change it “from within”. In time, the MB was changed by its experience to the extent of stressing the importance of democratic rule and transparency. Thus arose the Islamist centrist Wasat Party that was launched in 1996 by a number of former Muslim Brothers who broke away in protest at the MB’s rigid leadership style (Shahin 2007; Abdelrahman 2009). They were joined by activists from other political and ideological backgrounds and together they built coalitions within a broader opposition and presented social movement with new political opportunities. Moreover, activists could thereby reach out to influential allies such as the young Muslim Brothers (Lynch 2007) who were willing to work with non-Islamists as they faced intensifying security clampdown on its cards following the MB’s performance in the 2005 elections that garnered its members about 20 percent representation in parliament. In 2010, the Mubarak regime systematically excluded opposition forces

from contesting parliamentary elections but that only served to consolidate the anti-regime momentum. The regime's exclusionary policies provided social movement activists with a clearly identified opponent and a shared collective identity. Fed up with the only president they had ever known, the activists channeled the growing discontent of social movements against Mubarak and his cabal.

Unlike the established, organized and ideological oppositional forces, both militant (Jihadists) and reformist Islamist (MB), that characterized the opposition, the Mubarak regime faced a decentralized, cross-ideological and non-institutional societal opposition. This opposition created new means of activism to combat the heavy-handed security measures and overturn authoritarian rule. In light of expanding societal mobilization, opposition coordination was evident in the formation of committees that were able to organize mass rallies, conferences, and other gatherings that provided activists with shared experiences, platforms for negotiations and exchange of ideas. The cross-ideological nature of these committees and their decentralized leadership represented a chance to offset the inability to participate politically in formal state and civil society institutions. Thus, opposition activism did not have to be sanctioned by the regime.

(3) The final important factor was the decline in regime legitimacy due to uncertainties (Elassar 2009) related to Mubarak's age and health, intra-elite discord over the issue of presidential succession, increasing corruption, rigged violence-marred elections in 2005 and 2010, the alienation of the youth, economic exclusion practiced by Gamal's cronies, and the police brutality that was brazenly displayed by the murder of Khalid Said in June 2010. Moreover, the escalation of violence, war and intervention in the Arab region by the West exposed the shortcomings and limitation of corrupt authoritarian regimes and aggravated the socioeconomic grievances and frustration of the people who lost hope in the existing system.

This uncertain decade brought with it a sense of possibility for Egypt's pro-democracy activists who organized themselves anew and succeeded in attracting otherwise inactive youth to their movements. As Egyptians exhibited greater willingness to take to the streets to demand their rights, increased various social classes and groupings, including workers, judges, engineers, and doctors, launched many protests and strikes, created or led by cross-generational and ideological coalitions. Joel Beinin (2013) estimated that the last decade of Mubarak's rule saw more than three thousand labor protests. These labor protests later supplied the drive behind the emergence of the April 6 Movement in 2008 which played an important role in the events that led to January 25 Revolution.

Phases of Protest and Mobilization

Beginning in 2000, the political and organizational environment for social movement changed profoundly and social movement actors themselves took advantage of fresh opportunities to equip themselves with new forms of organization, activism and collective action. In other words, the interaction between the rising political opportunity structure and movements, effectively an interplay between structure and agency, marked a long process of changing state-society relations.

The ensuing popular mobilization went through four distinct phases. The first phase, from 2000 to 2003, saw popular mobilization focused primarily on external issues, in particular the Palestinian Uprising (*Intifadat al-Aqsa*) of 2000 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. These two events revived street politics in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. Millions of Arabs in Cairo, Amman and Rabat took to the streets to express their solidarity with the Palestinians. The return of street politics in 2000 came after a decade-long war between the regime and Islamist militants in the

1990s during which the regime held the upper hand when it suppressed anti-regime public gatherings and street protests. The war against the Islamists justified the regime's constant and violent intervention in the society, contained the opposition to economic liberalization and repressed non-violent political opponents, including the MB's members who had won elections in many professional syndicates in the early and mid-1990s (Wickham 2002; Brownlee 2002; Kienle 1998).

The regional dimension to street politics, however, made the regime less apprehensive of the tens of thousands of Egyptians who took to the street in solidarity with the Palestinians in 2000. The initial relative freedom of activism for the Palestinian cause permitted coordinated actions. The most important of these was the formation of the Egyptian Popular Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada (EPCSPI) in 2000 which laid down the model of organization and mobilization that later youth movements adopted. The EPCSPI was formed by activists of the 1970s' generation. Mostly activists from the Nasserist and Marxist student movements of the 1970s founded the committee which MB members subsequently joined.

The initial expressions of anger and protests against the killing of Palestinians came from the universities; thousands demonstrated in Alexandria, soon followed by their colleagues in Cairo and other cities of Egypt. The Intifada motivated the students to leave their campuses daily to demonstrate in the streets, burn Israeli flags and clash with security forces (Schemm 2011). A vocal resistance movement had formed which later carried out massive demonstrations against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Popular challenge to the Mubarak regime was renewed as its legitimacy was damaged by its deep relations with the USA, its effective loss of sovereign (foreign) policy-making and its failure to act as the leader of the Arab world.

The spontaneous anti-war movement recalled the student movement of the 1970s, particularly that which protested the defeat of 1967. But the protestors' willingness to defy security measures and confront the police was also a function of the high unemployment among Egyptian youth and their anger at many other socioeconomic problems (*International Crisis Group* 2003). Movement attention soon shifted from regional issues to domestic politics and the regime's socioeconomic policies. As the police's violent crackdown failed to dislodge protestors, more people were motivated to join the demonstrations. Moreover, the heightened youth activism initiated new forms of mobilization that bypassed regime-sanctioned channels of political participation, including the established opposition parties, associations and movements. Youth activists overcame the ideological divide that befell the opposition parties and the largely coopted professional associations whose main concern had been access to state resources. The reactivation of street politics was sustained by youth who, born during Mubarak's rule, were crucially unaware of or unconcerned by the historical ideological battles between Islamists and leftists (El-Hamalawy 2007). Consequently, youth activism was more unified and much more anti-Mubarak.

The second phase was marked by the creation of the grassroots Egyptian Movement for Change, known by its slogan "Enough!" or "Kifaya!" in Arabic, in 2004, a year before the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections. Kifaya brought a confrontational stance vis-à-vis Mubarak's refusal to relinquish his office and his plan to make his son his successor. Focusing entirely on domestic politics, Kifaya unveiled a manifesto of political and constitutional reform that went far beyond the demands of other political parties and the main opposition force, the Muslim Brotherhood.

Kifaya included different generations of youth, professional and worker activists. From their midst emerged distinct clusters of activists, among them the Youth for Change, Journalists for

Change, and Workers for Change. Notably, “while these groups had different agendas and worked in different areas, they shared a set of underlying principles which had at their core a call to end Mubarak’s rule and to establish a legal framework to ensure electoral democracy” (Abdelrahman 2015: 38). From their ranks, too, came most of the activists who would launch the April 6 Movement and the Mohamed Baradia campaign of 2010 (organized by the National Association for Change to demand constitutional reforms that would open up the presidential elections to more candidates). The youth-driven Kifaya was the first political initiative in Egypt to capitalize on the potential of social media and digital technology. For youth activists, email, text messages, online advertisements, blogs, and other Internet-based means of communication became tools of mobilization. For example, networks of bloggers publicized Kifaya’s demands and activities, documented and disseminated evidence of human rights abuses by the police.

Kifaya pushed to create the National Front for Change that would include the MB, and liberal and leftist opposition parties to challenge the ruling party in the parliamentary elections. Although animosity remained among those parties, the Front offered an opportunity and a site for bringing together different forces for the first time. Although Kifaya could not maintain its initial momentum, it had broken the taboo of direct opposition to the regime, deployed social media and internet technology for popular mobilization, and spurred Islamists, leftists, nationalists and liberals to build cross-ideological alliances.

The third phase came after 2005 elections, particularly from 2007 with new wave of labor strikes, sit-ins and worker protests to demand better wages and autonomy from the regime. Two huge and well-known strikes and protests were held in Mahalla al-Kubra city in December 2007 and in September 2007. In this phase of activism, almost every sector of the Egyptian economy was affected by strikes. Collective action in textiles, cement, iron and steel, transport, bread, and other

industries won minimum economic demands, an unprecedented demonstration of the effectiveness of strikes and protests for Egypt. In fact, the appeal of such protests was raised by the regime's greater responsiveness to demands made by workers than those expressed by elected representatives in Parliament!

Two important factors stopped the regime from suppressing those strikes as with force as it used to. First, headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif, the government had in 2004 earnestly adopted a program of neoliberal structural adjustment. The central planks of the program were an increasing privatization of public-sector enterprises, liberalization of rules for establishing businesses, and new liberalized import and export rules. In response, there was a large increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). Whereas FDI amounted to less than USD 2 billion a year in 2003/2004, post-2004 FDI reached more than USD 7 billion over the course of 2007. The World Bank dubbed Egypt 'the world's top reformer for 2007.' By selling public assets to FDI, surging revenues of the Suez Canal, and benefiting from higher oil prices, the regime's revenues had been amply increased. In other words, under weak institutions, mass demonstrations came to have an impact on political power. To maintain the high level of FDI, itself important to the politico-business elite, and avoid the adverse impacts of large and prolonged street protests on stock market valuations and firms' profitability, the regime eschewed outright repression of workers that could destabilize the investment environment.

Second, the worker protest movements bore similarities with Kifaya which made it difficult for the regime to quell. Their organization was mostly local, horizontal, independent, and decentralized with no unified leadership (Beinin and Duboc 2013). The labor protests encouraged youth activists to bridge socioeconomic demands and political issues. Thus, for example, the April 6 Movement manifested solidarity with the Al-Mahalla protest that was scheduled for April 6, 2008.

The April 6 Movement was initiated via Facebook with calls to people to stay at home on that day to support the labor protests and to protest against corruption, nepotism, torture and police brutality. In turn, the Movement gained in domestic and international visibility as the workers' actions triggered confrontations between police and workers (Salah Fahmi 2009).

The fourth stage roughly covered 2009–2010 when youth groups visibly played a role in supporting the campaign of Mohammed al-Baradai. These groups adopted different strategies by approaching and talking to people about socioeconomic and political issues. Groups such as *We Are All Khalid Said* were able to mobilize a large number of newly politicized youth. They introduced forms of mobilization that were not costly for young people and drew thousands of Egyptians to silent vigils over Said's murder (Lim 2012: 241).

These movements drew strength from two main sources. First, their membership was cross-ideological in character and focused on sociopolitical issues, not political programs or future visions. Second, these movements operated outside sanctioned organizations or banned political forces (MB) because they decided that institutional means of change were completely closed under Mubarak. Non-institutional movement activism, partly compelled by the closure of institutional space and tools, could overcome constraints external to institutionalized political activism, sustain activism and lessen the probability of compromise that dogged institutional politics.

The other feature of Egypt's protest movement in the last decade of Mubarak's rule was its loose organizational and decentralized structure. Although organization is regarded as being important for continuity of collective action, the enormous range of sociopolitical issues and crises and popular perceptions of an uncertain and weakening regime swelled protests and created opportunities for social movement actors to widen and deepen grassroots mobilization and collective

action. Spontaneity featured significantly in a lot of the activism and mass mobilization. Egypt in the last years of Mubarak's rule displayed conditions that, as David Snow and Dana Moss (2014) notes, are favorable to spontaneous collective action, namely, (1) non-hierarchical movements that adhere to democratic decision-making processes; (2) ambiguous situations in which actors "do not know what to do next"; (3) circumstances whereby priming and immediate experiences shape actors; and (4) spaces with special features that encourage movements and protest.

After Mubarak: The Challenge of Sustaining Social Movement

Mubarak's downfall set off celebrations among protestors across Egypt. Eighteen days of nationwide, united anti-regime opposition compelled the military to abandon Mubarak. His departure, however, ushered in a new chapter in social movement activism. But opportunities for collective action open and close as had been noted by Goodwin and Foran (1993). Leaderless, decentralized and cross-ideological coalitions were necessary under authoritarian rule. But after Mubarak's overthrow, they had to continue to work well to dismantle the old regime in order to progress towards further political opening and popular access to power. Or they would falter and yield to authoritarian reconstruction and the effective closure of participatory politics – as indeed happened.

In the event, the mass uprising of 2011, resulting from a grassroots movement, was unable to advance towards a political or social revolution. The movement did not have an organized force to lead a transition from authoritarian rule to a pluralistic system. Failing to create a revolutionary front to uproot Mubarak's 30-year networks of power, the movement could not prevent the old military-backed elites from re-reasserting themselves.

Here was where the role of state institutions and their relation to the society was to be critically seen: the military temporarily sided with the January 2011 “Revolution” but usurped executive authority in the name of protecting the revolution. In 2011, the military could return to govern Egypt because decades of centralized rule had detached the state and its institutions from any strong ideological identification with specific regimes. In effect, the state had separated the regime from the military such that the latter, regardless of its intention, could claim to serve national rather than solely regime interests. That separation allowed Mubarak’s quick overthrow when the state institutions, most importantly the army, abandoned him. In Tahrir Square, protestors embraced soldiers, chanting, “The People and the Army are One Hand.” In other words, the army, the strongest state institution, laid its own claim to the revolution by virtue of its desertion of Mubarak, and asserted itself as a partner and guide of the revolution.

Henceforth, institutions of the *ancien regime*, led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), dictated the course of the post-Mubarak “transition”. On February 13, 2011, SCAF dissolved Parliament and suspended the Constitution. Ironically, the SCAF could further intervene in post-Mubarak politics because of the trust that was placed in the military by the revolutionaries who did not want to take responsibility for guiding the post-Mubarak transition. For instance, when giving a talk at TED, Wael Ghonim, a young Google executive who helped to ignite the 2011 uprising, told his audience that he knew that the revolution was going to win because “we don’t understand politics, we do not play their dirty game, and we’re going to win because we do not have agenda” (TED March 2011).

If the revolutionaries had no wish to be seen to be desirous of power and lacked agenda, that only gave the army the upper hand to dictate ‘transition.’ The first issue that was widely debated was whether Egypt should undertake constitutional reform before or after parliamentary and presidential

elections. By pressing for early elections, the SCAF undermined efforts by the revolutionary forces to reach a consensus on the political rules of ‘transition.’ Constitutional amendments were quickly put to a referendum on March 19, 2011 which was approved by 77.2 per cent of the voters.

In this matter, the SCAF had even won over the Islamists who preferred elections first, and strongly campaigned for it, being confident of their capacity to win elections. Non-Islamist forces refused the SCAF’s “transition roadmap” but failed to mobilize the people against holding the referendum. The referendum underscored the strength of political parties such as the MB and the weakness and disorganization of the revolutionary forces. More importantly, the referendum – to which the non-Islamists fiercely objected – exacerbated an Islamist-non-Islamist political and ideological polarization that marked the loss of revolutionary unity. The divide within the protest movement that was weakening in its ability to lead further mass mobilization enabled the SCAF to issue additional constitutional declarations of 63 news articles to “protect the principles of the 2011 revolution.” The Islamists won the first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections. Non-Islamists performed poorly. Not only did they lack electoral experience, financial support and media coverage, they were unwilling to throw their collective weight behind specific candidates or political parties.

Unified collective action between Islamists and non-Islamists was further undermined by the so-called ‘Second Revolution’ or the Battle of Muhammad Mahmoud Street on November 19, 2011. Protestors gathering near Tahrir Square demanded justice for their relatives who were killed during the January 2011 revolution, the resignation of the government, reform of the interior ministry, and the transfer of power from the SCAF to a civilian president. The police and the military attacked the protestors who clashed with the security forces over five days. However, activists had lost the ability

to mount massive protests while the Islamists, mainly the MB, boycotted the protests and kept silent on the security assaults on the protestors.

In the run to the presidential elections, the revolutionaries were divided among liberal and revolutionary figures: Hamdin Sabahi (21 percent of the vote); Abdul Mun'im Abul Futuh (18 percent); the MB's Muhammad Morsi (25 percent of the vote); the old regime's Ahmed Shafiq (24 percent of the vote); and Amr Musa (11 percent of the vote). The collective votes gained by secular candidates outnumbered those won by the MB or the old regime alone. Had the presidential election been won by one secular candidate backed by the revolutionary forces, the 'transition' might have witnessed balanced power between the executive and the legislature that could have compelled the MB and the non-Islamist forces to negotiate and compromise.

The ascent of President Muhammad Morsi (in office from June 2012 to July 2013) tentatively marked a tripartite re-balancing of power – among the military (with its dominance over state institutions), the Muslim Brotherhood (with its well organized civil society institutions), and the broadly secular and liberal activists (with a residual ability to mobilize). Here, the revolutionaries, not having a clear agenda beyond wanting to establish a new political order with new forms of bottom-up politics, were ineffective in advancing revolutionary demands for change, freedom and social justice. In reality, only the MB competed against the military and state institutions (judiciary, police, and al-Azhar) for state power.

Moreover, the scope of competitive politics was narrowed to Parliament and the Presidency, institutions that had been contested even under Mubarak. There was no challenge to the substantive power of the *ancien regime* embedded in the military, bureaucracy, judiciary and the police. These institutions were united to preserve their interests and autonomy from the reforms that might be

made by Islamists and non-Islamists alike. The MB's rise through elections, which alienated other forces, strengthened the state institutions. Subsequent "rule of law", for example, was used by an unreformed conservative judiciary to prevent the trial of the old regime figures in special courts, and to constrain revolutionary change and political transition.

In the swift, SCAF-endorsed free-and-fair electoral competition-based democratic transition, the Islamists won all the elections. Their lopsided victories gave the Islamists had little incentive to compromise with weak, unorganized and divided non-Islamist forces. Soon, the MB became preoccupied with the procedural aspects of transition as opposed to the task of building political alliances at which their reformist leaders were masters under authoritarian rule. As the presence of entrenched state actors hampered the process of building new institutions in a pluralistic political environment, previous revolutionary unity and *élan* collapsed into distrust and enmity between Islamists and non-Islamists. The Egyptian uprising, failing to dismantle the *ancien regime*, permitted the so-called "deep state" to reassert itself to the point of winning non-Islamist support against the MB.

The Question of Social Movement Organizations (SMOs)

Historically, SMOs have crucially supplied organizations resources essential to the development, maintenance and success of movements (MacCarthy and Zald 1977). Organization provides leadership and strategy (Morris and Staggenborg 2007) which sustain movements during periods of low mobilization (Taylor 1989) caused by sociopolitical unrests or internal conflicts. Organization also raises media coverage of its actions which equip a movement with tools to attract new actors and legitimize its political leaders (Berry 1999). And organization aids collective identity

formation that is essential for maintaining unified action. As the above analysis shows, however, the importance of SMOs can be critically shaped by the contexts in which its social movement originates and operates.

The Egyptian uprising demonstrates how cross-ideological and decentralized structures of mobilization may paradoxically empower a social movement under authoritarianism only to weaken it in an open political environment. In hindsight, the social movement that ousted Mubarak needed different modes of organization from the spontaneous, horizontal, decentralized and leaderless networks empowered by popular anger and mass grievance. Without centralized leadership and well-defined strategies, no movement can guide its activists and supporters with effective divisions of responsibilities and common goals. Conversely, as the July 2013 coup against the MB government demonstrated, a unified military focused in its objectives could lead its key state allies to reassert themselves forcefully, thanks in part to the “political opportunity structure” first seized but then conceded by the opposition.

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