

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution

Written by Elizabeth Gutfreund-Walmsley

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The 2011 Egyptian Revolution

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“The slum-dwellers of Cairo did not join hand in hand, Muslim and Christian, and march to Tahrir and stay there for days because of social media [...] The revolutions in north Africa have been social, political and real – not virtual. [...] But the journalist, like the historian, has to look beyond the presented causes and come up with answers that may be at odds with the way participants understand the events.” (Mason: LSE online, 2012)

Mason highlights the importance of scrutinising the Egyptian revolution beyond information we are initially presented with. The actions that began on January 25th 2011, inspired by the seeming success of their Tunisian neighbours, was the start of an 18-day revolution that toppled a dictator of over thirty years. Hosni Mubarak and his regime could not have anticipated the hundreds of thousands of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo, nor could they have foreseen the millions that followed suit in major cities across Egypt. From Cairo to Alexandria, from Suez to Luxor, an uprising took place for eighteen days until Mubarak stepped down from power on February 11th 2011. Since his downfall Mubarak and senior members of his regime have been placed on trial for corruption and conspiring to kill protesters. The Presidential elections, not without their own controversy over eligible candidates, are due to take place in June 2012, around the same time as Mubarak is sentenced. During the eighteen-day revolution, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) remained faithful to the citizens of Egypt. Now, fifteen months later, being accused of sustaining the former regime, SCAF is the centre of hostility towards the state.

According to Haass (2011), “Egypt was ripe for revolution; dramatic change would have come at some point in the next few years, even absent the spark of Tunisia or the existence of social media.” (p.155) The revolution combines key political dimensions of all the uprisings in the ‘Arab Spring’; corruption, dictatorship, regime change, military power, censorship, human rights abuses, religious tensions and political oppression. These aspects amounted to Mubarak’s eventual downfall but examining the violence that occurred in Egypt has wider implications upon global society. According to Joya (2011) the uprisings in the Middle East, “[...] posed an important challenge to the way scholars have explained the dynamics of change in these societies.” (p.368) Egypt’s revolution is particularly compelling because of its relative success and the success of the action achieved primarily through non-violence. The timescale this essay will focus on is from January 25th-February 11th 2011 with some reference to the lead up to the protests and specific events that have occurred since.

The first half of this paper will explore Gurr’s theories on *Why Men Rebel?* (1970), including encounters with Arendt’s and Dunn’s concepts of revolution. Together these theorists provide comprehensive insight into the modernist thesis of rebellion, which help explain how and why the Egyptian Revolution occurred. Although the revolution encompasses a plethora of typology such as gender violence or religious violence, the violence (and non-violence) theories of revolution itself are particularly relevant for contemporary political violence studies. According to Gurr (1970), “A general explanation of political violence can become a guide to action [...] It can be used to evaluate, for political purposes, the “revolutionary potential” of specific nations, and to estimate the effects of various actions on that potential.” (pp. ix-x) As Gurr indicates, the ability to analyse revolutions is powerful in depicting the revolutionary potential of states. The currently volatile political context in the Middle East impacts the entire international community and although exploration in this paper is limited to examining Egypt, it enables the potential for assessing revolutionary violence as a whole.

The key theoretical debate will be divided into four parts. Firstly, an assessment of group conflicts to explain why

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rebellions occur and what constitutes a revolution. It is not possible to assess the Egyptian revolution without considering it within the context of the Arab Spring, particularly links with the Tunisian uprising. In the context of Egypt's political history, group conflict must be viewed on an increasingly broad scale and must be understood within an historical context. Secondly, examining Gurr's proposition of relative deprivation, this essay will explore how growing anger towards Mubarak's regime contributed to both an experienced and perceived relative deprivation for Egyptians. Thirdly, this essay will explore the relevance of symbolism, particularly of Tahrir Square. Fourthly, this section will examine the ideologies and utility of regimes in changing and maintaining political order. By exploring the lack of utility in violence, this paper aims to assess to what extent Gurr's revolution thesis is relevant to the Egyptian uprising.

The second part of this essay will place the revolution into a contemporary context. There are reasons for the international media coverage of Egypt's revolution that extend beyond it being an interesting news story. Egypt has long been a key ally to western governments and their interest in highlighting Mubarak's inadequacy and inability to provide for his citizens was negligible prior to January 25th. This essay will explore the role of the media in forcing Western allies to speak out and support the Egyptian plight. Furthermore, this paper will assess the relevance of the Arab Spring as an expression not only against corrupt regimes but also against inequality as a whole. When the entire world is able to see and hear what happens in other countries, this inevitably impacts upon our perceptions of human ability. If the goal of equality is challenged (as Gurr suggests) because of relative deprivation then it could be argued that in just eighteen days, Egypt reminded citizens around the world in relative states of oppression, that it is possible to challenge even the most deep-rooted regime through means of non-violent revolutionary action. This essay will explore the Occupy movement in relation to the Egyptian revolution. The timely reminder around the height of the global financial crisis although unique to Egypt, reminded political leaders worldwide that not only their allies, but they too were not immune from revolt.

Why Men Rebel: Group Conflict

Gurr (1970) defines revolutions (or internal wars) as, "Highly organized political violence with wide spread popular participation, designed to overthrow the regime or dissolve the state and accompanied by extensive violence." (p.11) In Egypt however, original protests were not highly organised nor popular or designed to dissolve the state, at least not initially. Although the exact causes of the initial rebellion are not unified, growing tensions over government inadequacy sparked a "Day of Revolt" attracting hundreds of thousands of protesters. The context of anger towards the state crossed socio-economic-political dimensions.

"[...] widespread and intense economic discontent, the result of a decaying seven-year cycle of boom and bust; interpersonal relative deprivation among the uprooted peasants who had migrated to the cities; and hostility toward an incompetent political regime among both mass and elite. [...] Both regime and dissident institutional support were low in scope; the most highly organized sector of Egyptian society were the bureaucracy and the military. (Gurr: 1970, p.346)

It is important to comprehend context as a defining feature of violence but in particular, to consider the historic context for revolutionary violence in Egypt. A reader could be forgiven for reading this extract from Gurr and thinking he was describing recent events; rather he outlines the conditions preceding the 1952 Egyptian revolution. As with all major political events, there is a temptation to see events in Egypt as isolated and new. Gibson (2011) outlines the prehistory to January 25th, "[...] includes years of labour struggle: the sit-ins, strikes and demonstrations of 2006; the almost daily workers' actions of 2007; and the massive strike of textile workers in Muhalla al-Kubra in 2008 [...]" (p.93) Although the 2011 revolution had unique aspects, the political context of the uprising was remarkably similar to historic Egyptian events. According to Rutherford (2008) the perception of Egypt prior to Mubarak was regionally much stronger; "[...] Nasser sought to advance Arab nationalism, which combined Egyptian nationalism, anti-colonialism, and aspirations for regional leadership." (p.21)

In the context of the Arab Spring, Egypt was the second country to experience mass protesting. In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in protest to corruption and harassment from Tunisian officials resulted in demonstrations throughout Tunisia. On January 14th 2011 President Ben Ali stepped down from the position he had

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held for 23 years. Some theorists connect the revolution in Egypt to Tunisia because of their similar time scales and outcomes. Dupont and Passy (2011) outline the three main theoretical stances to understand the protests:

"[...] political opportunity theory, which emphasizes the importance of political factors that constrain or facilitate the emergence and the development of protest; the resource mobilization approach stressing the importance of the organization of protest, [...] and finally framing theory, which states the necessity of a cognitive revolution or consciousness transformation to turn mere grievances into protest and claim-making." (p.448)

It could be suggested that there are more subtle analysis to make, for example the much smaller and better-educated population of Tunisia had different demands to their Egyptian counterparts. According to Taleb and Blyth (2011) "The riots in Tunisia and Egypt were initially attributed to rising commodity prices, not to stifling and unpopular dictatorships. [...] the focus is wrong even if the logic is comforting." (p.156) Furthermore, Egyptian state-owned media was not reporting the uprising in Tunisia significantly although al-Jazeera was (Hijjawi: 2011). The media perhaps indicated to Egyptians with wider access to news sources that the regime was anxious about Tunisia's success. Others have highlighted the importance of the 2010 "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook campaign that was set up in anger over the death of a young Egyptian man who was reportedly beaten to death by police officers. The campaign attracted hundreds of thousands of followers and was one of the first places to call for protests on January 25th. Joya (2011) outlines mounting tensions, "Since 2004, a whole host of other social protest groups have emerged in Egypt including Students for Change, Youth for Change, University Professors for Change, Workers for Change, Artists for Change, and the People's Campaign for Change." (p.369) For Gurr (1970):

"[...] political violence refers to all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime [...] The concept subsumes revolution, ordinarily defined as fundamental socio-political change accomplished through violence. It also included guerrilla wars, coups d'état, rebellions, and riots." (pp.3-4)

It could be argued then, that the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions are related because of their commonalities in socio-political dimensions but internally the revolution in Egypt had more variety of protest groups. Taleb and Blyth (2011) suggest, "What the world is witnessing in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya is simply what happens when highly constrained systems explode." (p.149) The widespread corruption throughout the region inevitably returns similar consequences for citizens in different states, suggesting revolutions can be interconnected ideologically but not necessarily geographically.

Gurr (1970) suggests political violence emerges when there is scope for such activity; "Men's resort to political violence is in part unreasoning, but does not occur without reason." (p.359) Arendt (1963) highlights this does not "[...] always occur where government is incapable of commanding authority and the respect that goes with it." (p.112) The London riots in 2011 are an example of a government that commands authority but where revolt still occurred. In Egypt however, the failure of state authority did play a part in the revolution. As Joya (2011) posits, "[...] the revolt brought to the streets millions of people from all walks of life, to make political, economic and social demands." (p.367) Political space in Egypt prior to January 25th was restricted and the protests reflected the anger of political repression as well as breaches of basic human rights. The groups that brought about the initial protests in Egypt are complex and disputed but the conditions of why the protests grew fit with Dunn's (1989) conditionality for revolution:

"What revolutions in fact are is political struggles of great intensity, initiated by political crises within particular historical societies and resolved, insofar as they are resolved, by the creation of a political capacity to confront the historical problems of these societies in ways that their pre-revolutionary regimes had proved wholly incapable of doing." (p.xvi)

The Pursuit of Happiness

"Necessity and violence, violence justified and glorified because it acts in the cause of necessity, necessity no longer either rebelled against in a supreme effort of liberation or accepted in pious resignation, but, on the contrary faithfully worshiped as the great all-coercing force which surely, in the words of Rousseau, will "force men to be free" [...]" (Arendt: 1963, p.111)

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As Arendt outlines, violent acts caused by necessity are generally held as valiant acts depending on who is responsible for the violence. Put simply, violent acts from those who seek freedom are seen as heroic because they pursue happiness. In the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, violence from the police was common-case and a reported 846 were killed and 6, 467 injured throughout the protests. (Fahmy: 2011, Daily News Egypt) This included fatal shots fired from the rooftops of the American University of Cairo directly at protesters in Tahrir Square but does not include those who suffered minor injuries caused by tear gas inhalation. There were also accounts of 'plain-clothed policemen' beating protesters, the release of prisoners from 11 of Egypt's 41 prisons to terrorise the unguarded streets and vehicles that were ordered purposely to run over protesters. (Fahmy: 2011)

The level of sustained violence throughout the 18 days does not correlate with the increasing number of protesters. In theory, protesters should have retreated, not grown in numbers. According to Arendt (1963), "[...] freedom can only come to those who have needs to be fulfilled [...]" (p.136) It could be argued that the pursuit of happiness in Egypt at the start of the revolution was further realised as violence increased. This can be seen in the build up to the revolution too; "[...] when popular protests started to hit the streets of Egypt as Hosni Mubarak's gang worked at rigging the 2005 parliamentary elections, the regime hit back [...] (with) militias of strong, trained, thugs. [...] women developed detent techniques [...] and carried right on protesting." (Soueif: 2011, p.230) Furthermore, the plethora of reasoning protesters gave for pursuing their goals, suggests deeply rooted motivation that outweighs potential dangers. Gurr argues:

"The revolutionary appeals potentially most effective in giving men normative justifications for political violence, and hence most likely to be accepted by the discontented, are those that provide explanations of the sources of relative deprivation, identify political targets for violence and stress symbols of group identification among the deprived." (Gurr: p.231)

Gurr's theory of relative deprivation suggests that there is a "[...] perceived discrepancy between value expectation and value capabilities [...]" and that these perceptions are related to preconditions of revolution. (p.37) It is not only the actuality of deprivation that can cause revolution but the perception of deprivation too. Marxist theory links to Gurr's conditions of perceived deprivation, outlining the need for the proletariat to rise against the bourgeoisie, those who own the means of production. Dunn (1989) writes, "The theory of revolutionary process in Marx's own thought was a sort of political rationalism. Its egalitarianism came from the shared exposure of the proletariat to the rationale of their social situation." (p.8) The disparity between rich and poor in Egypt is seen as one of the causes for the revolution. Goldstone (2011) argues, "Mubarak and his family reportedly built up a fortune of between \$40 billion and \$70 billion, and 39 officials and businessmen close to Mubarak's son Gamal are alleged to have made fortunes averaging more than \$1 billion each." (p.335) According to UNICEF's 2010 statistics, an estimated two million Egyptians live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day (UNICEF online). The disparity between the richest and poorest in Egypt became clearer as inflation and unemployment rose over the past decade. Davies (1962) explains his J-curve theory as an acceptable gap between reality and expectations. According to Davies, over time the gap for satisfaction between reality and expectations breaks down. He suggests, "A revolutionary state of mind requires the continued, even habitual but dynamic expectation of greater opportunity to satisfy basic needs [...]" (p.8). Davies J-curve may help to explain the built up dissatisfaction with the Egyptian regime over time. He attributes this effect beyond financial disparity pointing to the need for equal dignity and justice (p.8).

Arendt (1963) wrote, "Nothing we might say today, could be more obsolete than to attempt to liberate mankind from poverty by political means [...]" (p.110) Gurr, Arendt and Davies J-curve indicate that uprisings occur beyond the perception of financial inequality. Although an obvious method to measure inequality by, the pursuit of happiness in Egypt spanned across social and political classes suggesting Gurr's theory of relative deprivation is applicable when (as he intended it to be) it is applied beyond an analysis of financial deprivation.

Symbolism: Bread and Tahrir Square

"The subtleties of justification articulated by revolutionary leaders penetrate to many of their followers in a congeries of phrases, vague idea and symbols. The slogans which suffice to justify violence for most participants in strife may be derived from complex ideologies [...]. Slogans invested with recollection of grievance and violence can serve as

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well or better than ideology to justify political violence.” (Gurr: 1970, p.195-196)

As one of the most symbolic chants of the revolution indicates, the wide attraction of the uprising was not driven by financial deprivation alone but in the pursuit of “Aiesh, Horreya, Adala Egtemaeya”, (“Bread, Freedom and Social Justice”). When examining the history behind the chant, Ciezadlo (2011) discusses:

“[...] by March 2008 about a dozen people had died in Egypt’s bread lines [...] The public was outraged over these “bread martyrs”. [...] But this bizarrely symbolic decree came too late: on April 6, 2008, tens of thousand of students, unemployed Egyptians, and textile workers [...] staged a protest against unemployment, high food prices, and widespread police torture.”

Wider in meaning than in Gurr’s relative deprivation theory, bread symbolises inequality but also wider feelings of injustice. Gurr argues, “When men’s ideational systems prove inadequate to their purposes, and particularly when they become intensely and irremediable disconnected because goals are unattainable by old norms, they are susceptible to idea which justify different courses of action.” (p.194) The different course of action that Egyptians took on January 25th was unified by the slogan. As Ciezadlo (2011) highlights:

“The revolutions, of course, are about more than just bread. Middle Easterners want basic human rights, dignity, and a chance at a decent future – good jobs at liveable wages. But when a government puts those things out of reach for the majority of its citizens, using handouts or subsidies as a substitute for democratic or economic reforms, bread becomes a powerful symbol of all they cannot have.” (p.230)

As much as bread became the symbol of the unattainable, Tahrir (Liberation) Square became a symbol of potential. Prior to extensive urbanisation in Cairo, the square was the centre of the city and continually a site of protest since the British Colonial era. The square was the first symbol of change in Sadat’s presidency and remains a territory for protest during continued resistance in Egypt. Edkins (2004) argues, “Events that reveal the impossibility of entirely excluding the real from what we call social reality are what we call traumatic. Such events blur the distinctions between flesh and object, individual and community [...] and demonstrate their inseparability.” (p.267) In Tahrir, the values of present Egyptian society was challenged, revealing possibility for the future. According to Soueif (2011) this revelation was beyond the seeming impossibility of toppling a dictator: “One of the most noted aspects of behaviour in the streets and squares of the 18 days of the Egyptian revolution was the total absence of harassment. Women were suddenly free; free to walk alone, to talk to strangers, to cover or uncover, to smoke to laugh to cry to sleep.” (p.230) As Soueif suggests, the square became more than home to protesting; it became a symbol of freedom. Images filled the world’s media of Muslims and Christians protecting one another during prayer times, graffiti expressing anger towards the regime and photos of the army stood protecting protesters. The symbolic physical and ideological security the square provided is interconnected to the wider political landscape in Egypt. Religious tensions, censorship and corruption were not permitted in Tahrir; it was a microcosmic symbol for the potential of Egypt’s future. “The spatial centrality and historical significance of Midan al-Tahrir in Cairo enabled millions of Egyptians to come together as citizens who shared pressing grievances and demands [...]” (Ghannam: 2012, p.33)

Ideological Revolution

“Ideologies are “frameworks of consciousness” which provide men with an interpretation of the world for purposes of acting in it. [...] When men’s ideational systems prove inadequate to their purposes, [...] they are susceptible to new ideas which justify different courses of action.” (Gurr: 1970, p.194)

According to Gurr, ideology is a main driver in revolutionary action. Gurr argues that new ideological justifications, in particular for violence, “[...] are effective to the extent that they make sense to discontented people in terms of their specific deprivations.” (1970: p.202) Although Gurr raises a key argument informing the nature of changing ideology to maintain group support, Gurr suggests violence to maintain new ideologies is useful; “If intensely discontented, we are susceptible to new ideologies, and less complex beliefs, that assert the righteousness and usefulness of political violence.” (p.193). However, Goldstone (2011) suggests, “Sultanistic dictators appeal to no ideology and have no purpose other than maintaining their personal authority.” (p.331) Fukuyama (1992) reiterates this suggesting, “A

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dictator's legitimacy can spring from a variety of source: from personal loyalty on the part of a pampered army, to an elaborate ideology that justifies his right to rule." (p.43) In turn, challenging the regime's ideology is futile as it can only result in reiterating the regime's doctrine.

One example of cyclical ideological control can be seen in academic challenges to the regime in Egypt. Amin (2011) suggests, "Egyptian intellectuals are pained by the memory of the day when Egypt behaved and was treated rather like the mother hen of the rest of Arabs." (p.159) Milson (1973) posits that intellectuals:

"[...] continue to play the role of interpreters of government policy for the public by referring to the acceptable ideological framework and by re-interpreting [...] the scope of this activity is circumscribed and limited by the regime's position and by viewpoints which are considered national dogmas [and therefore] cannot be questioned [...]" (p.43)

It could therefore be argued that the utilities of ideological challenges to regimes are coerced by the regimes themselves. In turn the only 'framework of conscious' is that of the regime.

Gurr (1970) also proposes, "If violent conflict has been common in the history of a collectivity, traditions justifying subsequent violence are likely to develop." (p.230) Mamdani (2011) suggests, "The generation of Nasser and after had embraced violence as key to fundamental political and social change." (p.202) In turn, there was anticipation of violence during the 18-day revolution because as Gurr would argue, violence is part of Egyptian political history. Anderson (2011) posits the disappearance of police on the second day of revolt was, "[...] considered by many Egyptians a deliberate attempt to destabilize the country [...]" (p.325). The expectation of violence is not only violent itself, but according to Gurr, "The most fundamental human responses to the use of force is counterforce." (p.232) In the example of removing state protection from Egypt's streets, Mubarak's regime was presumably anticipating the 'human response' of anarchy. Understanding the behaviour and drive of protesters can only be considered within the ideological context of the regime as the initial source of discontent. Dunn (1989) argues that reflection upon strategies is important in understanding the behaviour of protesters and in turn the change that occurs:

"Revolution remains a highly rationalist as well as determinedly teleological category. If we edge away from analysing the rationality of the goals pursued, in the effort to identify patterns in the strategies used to pursue them, it will be an understanding of the behaviour of dissidents rather than the an understanding of the mechanics of revolution [...]" (p.244)

For Fukuyama (1992), "[...] ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals [...] or 'transforms' the individuals." (p.48) In turn, non-state actors were responsible for changing the ideological order in Egypt and were required to gain authenticity by collectively offering an alternative ideology for individuals, thus transforming them. Gurr (1970) suggests this is done by through the content of new doctrines, which when articulated by [...] the discontented also provide evidence about the intensity of men's justifications for violence." (p.231)

Ideological change is not equivocal with revolutionary success. Referring to more recent clashes with the SCAF Soueif (2011) describes, "The message is: everything you rose up against is here, is worse. Don't put your hopes in the revolution or parliament. We are the regime and we're back." (p.231) Although Gurr highlights the reasons ideological shifts occur are (broadly speaking) because of deprivation, he does not fully explore the change that occurs within uprising against regime ideologies. Alternatively, Arendt (1963) argues the extent of ideological change cannot be comprehended until after the event regardless of how we come to understand the actions of the revolutionary. She suggests:

"[...] only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression

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aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution.” (p.28)

The assessment of revolutionary theory highlight the 2011 Egyptian Revolution is a complex event, not only because the uprising is placed in the context of wider geographical revolts but also because the goals and changes that occurred are diverse. Furthermore, as Arendt emphasises, beginning to analyse the changes that have resulted from those 18 days is challenging because the revolution is on going. The second part of this essay will assess the unique qualities of the revolution and the contemporary political relevance of the events to date.

‘Occupy’ The World

“The peoples of Egypt and Tunisia have made their mark on the world stage [...] they have re-established the essence of popular democratic participation and elevated the issues of the politics of inclusion.” (Campbell: 2011, p.70)

Aside from toppling a dictatorship in 18 days and placing their leader on trial within months, Campbell highlights the global significance of the Arab Spring. The ‘domino effect’ of the uprisings forced former allies of the volatile states to break ties with their regional colleagues. Egypt’s international relations have constantly been linked to their domestic policy. Reviewing Nasser’s social policy Ginat (1997) suggests, “[...] domestic and foreign affairs were inextricably bound, the success of one depending on the success of the other.” (p.201) Stability in the region was of global interest, particularly economic stability of Egypt. Hanieh (2011) argues that financial aid, “[...] confirms a conscious intervention by Western governments into Egypt’s revolutionary process.” (p.248) It could also be argued that in line with neoliberal economic principles, Western governments are interdependent upon the success of Egypt’s economy, especially during the current global financial crisis. Soliman (2011) suggests, “[...] a regime can delay the political consequences of fiscal crises only so long. In the end, public will makes its wishes know.” (p.172) The Egyptian public will was greeted with mixed reactions from the international community but ultimately, condemnation of Mubarak and support for the protesters prevailed, especially after Internet was blocked on the second day of protests, overtly breaching freedom of speech. The removal of the Internet arguably sent an inescapable message to the international community that Mubarak was willing to suppress protesters.

Taleb and Blyth (2011) review the interconnected nature of modern states positing, “Both the recent financial crisis and the current political crisis in the Middle East are grounded in the rise of complexity, interdependence, and unpredictability.” (p.151) When considering Gurr’s notions of relative deprivation, it is possible to view citizens on a global scale. As previously suggested, technological advances and globalisation increased the ability to see disparity between rich and poor. Gurr (1970) suggests, “The development of dense, pervasive communications networks has quickened life throughout the world. [...] Exposure to more attractive modes of life and the consequent intensification of value expectations is facilitated by system-wide communication networks.” (p.223)

2011 accommodated over 50 countries in some form of revolution or political uprising and more than 350 cities across the globe experienced an Occupy movement (The Guardian, Occupy protests around the world: 2011). Skinner (2011) suggests:

“Inspired by the Arab Spring revolutions, protesters began camping in lower Manhattan to protest corporate greed and a resulting loss of financial wellbeing and opportunity for most of the population, as well as the loss of democratic representation by elected officials who are beholden to special interests.” (p.4)

Arguably, the perceived success of the revolution in Egypt inspired citizens worldwide to protest against their own deprivation. Symbols such as Tahrir Square (see Appendix) and the Anonymous masks were used to express increasing hostility towards state power. According to El Shimi (2012), “Leading up to the protests on 25 January 2012, a group of youth [...] started posting YouTube videos on their channel of themselves wearing these masks, spray painting the streets with graffiti, and delivering messages of protest against the SCAF.” (English Ahram online) Skinner (2011) also highlights common approaches of the protests and signs of solidarity between protesters were shared through media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook. The relevance of the Egyptian revolution goes beyond international economic relevance; the 18 days inspired hope for global citizens that from the Occupy movement that

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there could be ideological change.

#Jan25: The Role of Technology

The world's media was the platform for the Egyptian revolution. Anderson (2011) asserts, "The Egyptian Facebook campaigners are the modern incarnation of Arab nationalist networks whose broadsheets disseminated strategies for civil disobedience throughout the region in the years after World War I." (p.320) One unique aspect of the revolution is the role that al-Jazeera played; the network was responsible 24/7 coverage of the 18 days and in turn is partly responsible for broadening the international perspective. According to Plunkett and Halliday (2011), "The Qatar-based channel's acclaimed coverage of the Egyptian crisis has been referred to as the broadcaster's "CNN moment", doing for al-Jazeera English what the first Gulf war did for CNN, pushing it to the forefront of the public's consciousness." (p.286)

Warfare in the traditional sense of the term is connected with the development of communication and has changed the ways modern wars are fought. Giddens (1985) argues that the "[...] control of information [...]" along with "[...] centralised control over the means of violence [...]" is key to how modern states are organised. (p.222-228) Nation states cannot avoid the exposure contemporary media provides. As previously explored, social media played an important role in the speed of the protests however, as Mason (2012) argues, "Saying social media caused the revolutions of 2011 is like saying the printing press, or pamphlets caused the English Civil War. If you'd said that to the Levellers in Shoreditch at the time they'd have said: no, stupid, we're doing this because of God." (LSE online) Haass (2011) furthers this position proposing; "[...] social media are a significant factor, but their role has been exaggerated [...] like earlier technologies, social media are not decisive: they can be repressed by governments as well as employed by governments to motivate their supporters." (p.155) This position is reiterated by Gurr (1970) who argues, "Foreign propaganda broadcasts can incite the disconnected to violence as readily as propaganda tracts, Egyptian broadcasters have been held responsible for inciting anti-government riots in much of North Africa and the Middle East." (p.226)

Although analysis of technology is important in understanding the projection of the uprising in Egypt, it is vital that the significance of tools such as Facebook and Twitter are not over-emphasised. Most Egyptians do not have access to the Internet suggesting that its' role was particularly important in transmitting the Egyptian message internationally. With the eyes of the world watching the events unfold, the international community played witness to the atrocities Mubarak's regime committed and in turn political leaders were forced to break their alliance with the dictator.

Nonviolence

"We saw protesters chant "Selmiyya, selmiyya" — "We are peaceful" — again and again. We saw a military that would not fire bullets at the people they were sworn to protect. And we saw doctors and nurses rushing into the streets to care for those who were wounded, volunteers checking protesters to ensure that they were unarmed." (Obama: White House online, 11/02/2011)

Obama's speech after the fall of Mubarak pays tribute to the nonviolent nature of the Egyptian revolution. It is key to note: "Like the use of violence qua force by the state, specific acts of political violence can be good, bad, or neutral according to the viewpoint of the observer." (Gurr: 1970, p.4) Gurr (1970) however argues, "The trump card of revolutionaries is violence itself. Even if their coercive capacities are low relative to the regime, selective terrorism can be used to demonstrate the incapacity of the regime to defend its citizens." (p.355) Nepstad (2011) offers an explanation in that, "Although nonviolent revolutionary movements are qualitatively different from violent revolutions, they generally arise from the same conditions." (p.485) Furthermore, Anderson (2011) suggests: "[...] Egypt has a culture of deep communal bonds and trust, which manifested itself in the demonstrators' incredible discipline: their sustained nonviolence, their refusal to be provoked by thugs and saboteurs, their capacity to police themselves and coordinate their demands, and their ability to organize without any centralized leadership." (p.326)

Nonviolent revolutionary movements are not uncommon. Zunes (2011) argues that in recent years there has been a worldwide growth in the strategic use of nonviolent action and that in contrast to conventional political movements,

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non violent campaigns employ tactics outside of mainstream political process such as, “[...] strikes, boycotts, mass demonstrations, the popular contestation of public space, tax refusal, destruction of symbols of government authority [...] refusal to obey official orders [...] and the creation of alternative institutions for political legitimacy and social organization.” (p.396) Nepstad (2011) suggests, “If resisters had used violence, troops may have accepted the regime’s view that these were radical terrorists. But the fact that most civil resisters were nonviolent made it difficult to justify the use of force.” (p.490) Although nonviolence was not unique to the Egyptian uprising it was significant to the success of the revolution. Mishra (2011) goes so far as to suggest, “[...] the demonstrators praying unflinchingly on Kasr al-Nil as they are assaulted by water cannons have swiftly accumulated even more moral-spiritual power than the resolute satyagrahis of Mahatma Gandhi did [...]” (p.229)

It could be argued that nonviolence is increasingly significant in violent settings. One project that utilised the violence of the Egyptian was the Tahrir Cinema, a form of “film activism” that used open sourcing of videos of the uprising and screened the unedited footage during sit-ins after the 18-day revolution. The organisers stated, “[...] the archive we’ve built is not ours, it’s the Egyptian peoples; it was filmed by the Egyptian people, it’s their story and it’s our story but a lot of people haven’t seen it.” (Beena Project online: 2011) The symbolic setting of the square plays homage to the newfound freedom and in sharing protesters experiences highlights the unity of Egyptians. Mason (2012) explains, “Opposition movements are going way further than they ever did before to understand non-violence; to build in non-violence and non-hierarchy and it means they are having the same effect that asymmetric warfare has had on the military.” (Mason: LSE online, 2012) The contemporary relevance of nonviolence is that it strengthens revolutionary movements and weakens traditional forms of state violence. The increasing role that technology and social media plays in uniting common plights symbolises a new potential for success in uprisings and revolutions. As traditional geographical barriers are broken down, as too are ideological obstacles. Adhikari argues:

“[...] today it is increasingly apparent that nonviolent resistance has acquired critical mass as a preferred option in places where people are gasping for liberty. With the media, new and old, now a globally linked tool for persuading and organizing the changes of nonviolent revolution succeeding are way more than in Gandhi’s and King’s time.”(Adhikari: AP online, 2011)

To draw some conclusions, perhaps to date the 18-day revolution does not appear entirely successful to an outsider. Egyptians are still impoverished, the army still runs the country and corruption is still rife. However, as well as placing a dictator on trial and preparing to hold free-elections this year, the unique revolution continues to this day in the form of countless sit-ins and protests, raising questions and debates in Egypt’s new and much freer press. The reality of revolutions is that, “With freedom comes some unpredictable fluctuation. This is one of life’s packages: there is no freedom without noise – and no stability without volatility. (Taleb and Blyth: 2011, p.159) As Gurr outlines:

“The actual occurrence of political violence can have disparate effects on the potential for future violence, varying with the degree of dissident success and the kinds of regime response to it [...] dissidents may “succeed” through political violence in defending threatened values successfully or seizing new values [...]” (1970: p.351)

The future for Egypt as a result of those 18 days cannot yet be fully known but through a relatively nonviolent uprising, Egyptians succeeded in defending new values that opposed the brutality, nepotism and corruption of the Mubarak regime. Ajami (1995) comments on the potential future for Egypt: “The danger here is not that of sudden, cataclysmic upheaval, but the steady descent into deeper levels of pauperization, of the lapse of the country’s best into apathy and despair, of Egypt galling yet again through the trap door of its history of disappointment.” (p.21) Indeed, this is one potential for the future of Egypt.

World media placed Tahrir Square in people’s living rooms, providing citizens around the world with a sense of ‘global hope’ that no uprising before it had done. This essay has been unable to answer many questions that the revolution in Egypt poses; such as will peaceful protests remain the norm? How will the Occupy movement maintain momentum if the Egyptian revolution does not achieve it’s goals of social justice and freedom? Is Gurr right that violence is necessary for revolutionary success? These are unknowns because the 18-day uprising was only the beginning of reform in Egyptian society; 18 days cannot undo a lifetime of suppression and corruption.

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If in years to come the revolution does not reach the history books because of the success in providing Egyptians with social justice, the role of nonviolent protesting will become momentous achievements in contemporary revolutionary theory. Gene Sharp (2011) suggested that words are more powerful than weapons: "As soon as you choose to fight with violence you're choosing to fight against your opponents' best weapons and you have to be smarter than that [...] Psychological weapons, social weapons, economic weapons and political weapons [are] ultimately more powerful against oppression, tyranny and violence." (Gray: Telegraph online)

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