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## The Egyptian Revolution

*Noha Bakr*

### I. Introduction

The Arab world has been moving towards change in successive events since the beginning of 2011. This change resulted in successful and semi successful revolutions.<sup>1</sup> It started in Tunis, where dozens were left dead and President Ben Ali escaped with his family to Saudi Arabia. The events in Egypt, which began on 25 January 2011, came to an end on 11 February 2011 when President Mubarak stepped down. Regional bloody revolutions in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain have yet to see their results. The domino effect continues to be accompanied by serious unrest in Jordan, and Algeria.

In Egypt millions turned out in cities on 25<sup>th</sup> January, especially in Cairo's Tahrir Square. At first tensions were high between the police and protestors, with violence breaking out not only in Cairo but also in Suez and Alexandria. The government took a hard line, using riot-control tactics, and shutting down all forms of communication. By the 28<sup>th</sup>, however, the protests had resumed and the police had retreated. The security role was taken over by the military, leaving major gaps in the everyday security pattern. As pressure increased on Mubarak, the scale of the protests continued to grow, especially on organised Friday rallies.

This study will focus on the Egyptian revolution, the reasons behind it, its path and mechanisms, its uniqueness and immediate consequences, and finally the prospects of future scenarios.

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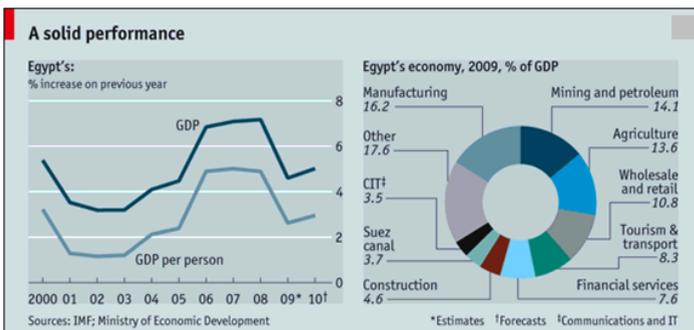
<sup>1</sup> Successful revolution is mentioned in the context of change of the ruler; whether or not the Egyptians aspiration for social justice will be fulfilled, and whether or not the transition to democracy will take place, and how smoothly, is still to be seen.

## II. Conditions in Egypt Prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution

Prior to discussing the direct and indirect reasons behind the Egyptian revolution, it is worth elaborating on the economic, social, and political circumstances of Egypt prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution.

### A. Economic Conditions in Egypt Prior to 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution

Prior to the revolution on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, the economy in Egypt as a whole was performing better than ever. GDP growth had shifted into a much higher gear, increasing from just below 5% in the mid-1990s to 7% in 2006-08. Egypt's share of world trade, which had been falling continuously for 40 years, started expanding as exports tripled in value. Foreign investment gushed in at record levels, notching up a cumulative total of \$46 billion between 2004 and 2009. Gross public debt in that period fell by nearly a third. The size of the country's foreign debt dropped below the value of its foreign reserves for the first time in decades, and debt servicing, a crushing burden in 1990, dwindled to a small fraction of the value of annual exports.



**Figure 4.1:** Performance of the Egyptian Economy Prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution.

Source: "Holding its Breath: A Special Report on Egypt", *The Economist* (17 July 2010): 8.

This brings us to one main obvious question: if the economy was showing such an improvement, why did the Egyptians revolt on the 25<sup>th</sup> January?

## **B. Social Conditions in Egypt Prior to 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution**

Prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution, Egypt was (and still is) characterised by its rapid population growth, with a population of 83 million that has been surviving on the fruits of development. The UNDP Human Development Report of 2010 claims that 23.5% of the population belongs to the age category of 18-29 years; while the Egyptian Government statistics of 2007 show that 28% of the population belongs to the age group of 15-29 years old. In other words, Egypt is characterised by its young population. The population is 90% Sunni Muslim, 9% Coptic Christian,<sup>2</sup> while ethnic and racial groups are divided among Nubians in Upper Egypt, Sinai Bedouins, and the Bedouin tribes of Western Egypt on the boarder with Libya. Religious, ethnic and racial minorities have their grievances and refrain from sharing in the fruits of development.

Serious efforts in the health sector have led to a decrease in the infant mortality rate and an increase in life expectancy reaching an average of 73 years. In the past 20 years illiteracy has dropped sharply; however, quantity doesn't reflect quality of education that enables competition in the labour market.

The IT revolution in Egypt has been unprecedented in range and scope. Twenty million Egyptians, mostly youth, have access to the internet. In many ways Egypt has been classified as one of the emerging powers in information technology, due to the

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<sup>2</sup> United States Central Intelligence Agency (2009, October 18). *World Factbook. Egypt*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

government investment in this economic area to attract major multinational investors such as Oracle and SAB for outsourcing and establishing call centers. By June 2009, there were 3211 IT companies in the country under the management of the new generation of youth who were at the forefront of the revolution. Additionally, there were 21 daily newspapers and 523 other forms of publications, as well as 700 Arab speaking TV channels, the majority of which broadcast ferocious political talk shows.

<b>Better lives</b>		
Egypt, social indicators		
	1990	2009
Population (m)	57.8	83.1
Labour force (m)	14.3	25.4
Fertility rate (births per woman)	5.2*	2.9†
Infant mortality (per 1,000 births)	78.5*	34.8†
Literacy (%)	57.0‡	72.0§
Electricity consumption (kwh per person)	644	1,460
Fixed telephone lines and mobile-phone contracts per 100 pop	2.8	79.1
Passenger cars per 1,000 pop	18.7	33.3**

\*1985-90 †2005-10 ‡1986 §2008 \*\*2006  
 Sources: Economist Intelligence Unit; ITU; UNESCO; UN Population Division; International Road Federation

**Figure 4.2:** Indicators of Developments in Egypt.

*Source: Holding its Breath: A Special Report on Egypt, The Economist (17 July 2010): 4*

This leads us to the inevitable question: if the social indicators showed such an improvement, and Egyptians enjoyed the freedom to be exposed to the internet and express their views in the press, media, and blogs, then why did the Egyptians revolt on the 25<sup>th</sup> January?

### **III. Political Conditions in Egypt Prior to 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution**

On the national level, the political mood in Egypt prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution was acidly cynical, and full of bitterness. President Hosni Mubarak was in command for 30 years. The sourness was fueled by the contrast between rising aspirations and enduring hardships.<sup>3</sup> There was a high sense of alienation among youth, to the extent that the youth posting groups on Facebook referred to Egypt in the following manner: “Egypt isn’t my mother, Egypt is my step mother.”

The constitution was amended in 2005 to be customised to serve the purpose of hereditary rule, and designed to disguise one-man rule, with centralised administration. Human rights abuses by the security sector has caught the public eye due to globalisation tools; and fraud in the 2005 legislative elections was followed by more severe fraud in elections of 2010. Egyptians expected the same to be manifested in the presidential elections of September 2011.

On the regional level, Egypt prior to the 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution has lost its regional power to other competitors in the region. Egypt, that has supported decolonisation movements and led pan-Arabism by soft and hard powers tools in the 60s and early 70s, has lost its position. The Arab world is no longer dominated by the Egyptian media, art, or expertise to lead development in the Arab world. Other powers such as Al Jazeera, the power of oil money, and religious movements have taken over the role of Egypt in the region.

On the African level, Egypt had no role whatsoever, as African countries perceived Egyptian leadership as arrogant and uncooperative. This has resulted in the Nile crisis and African Nile countries signing the Antibi Treaty to divide Nile water quotas,

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<sup>3</sup> In Egyptian old fairy tales, step mothers are portrayed as evil and abusive.

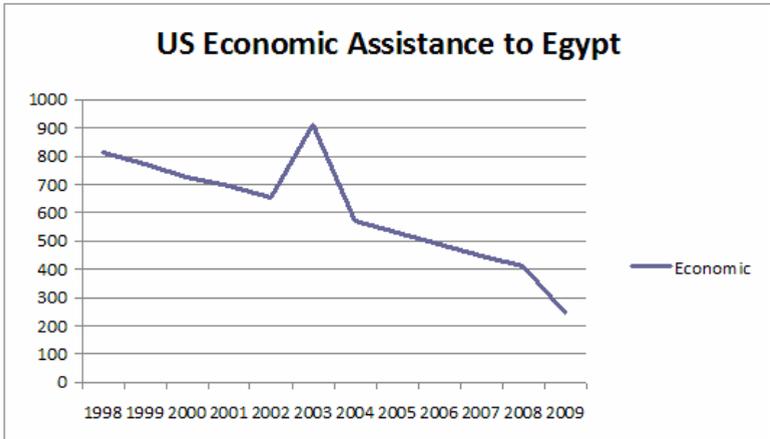
and rejecting that Egypt gets a permanent seat in the Security Council in case of its enlargement.

On the international level, Egypt remained a strong ally with the US. Egypt pioneered peace with Israel, encouraging Jordan to conclude its own peace deal and Palestinians to try to do so. Mubarak’s policy helped Israel to punish Hamas by keeping a grip over Gaza by closing Rafah borders, and destroying tunnels. Access to Egyptian airspace and to the Suez Canal has been guaranteed, in addition to cooperation in fighting terrorism. This resulted in Egypt receiving \$2 billion in assistance since the signing Camp David, which was divided between \$1.3 billion in military assistance and the remaining amount in economic assistance. This figure declined to \$1.55 billion in 2010 with spending on military assistance being maintained, while less was spent on economic assistance. America, for instance, paid handsomely for its prize, pouring in some \$60 billion of economic and military aid over the years, though the economic part of that is now shrinking.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>IMET</b>	<b>Total</b>
1948-1997	23,228.6	22,353.5	27.3	45,669.4
1998	815.0	1,300.0	1.0	2,116.0
1999	775.0	1,300.0	1.0	2,076.0
2000	727.3	1,300.0	1.0	2,028.3
2001	695.0	1,300.0	1.0	1,996.0
2002	655.0	1,300.0	1.0	1,956.0
2003	911.0	1,300.0	1.2	2,212.2
2004	571.6	1,292.3	1.4	1,865.3
2005	530.7	1,289.6	1.2	1,821.5
2006	490.0	1,287.0	1.2	1,778.2
2007	450.0	1,300.0	1.3	1,751.3
2008	411.6	1,289.4	1.2	1,702.2
2009	250.0	1,300.0	1.3	1,551.3
Total	30,570.8	37,911.8	41.1	68,523.7

**Figure 4.3: U.S. Foreign Assistance to Egypt (\$s in millions)**

*Source: Sharp, Jeremy M. (2011, September 21). Egypt in Transition. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>*

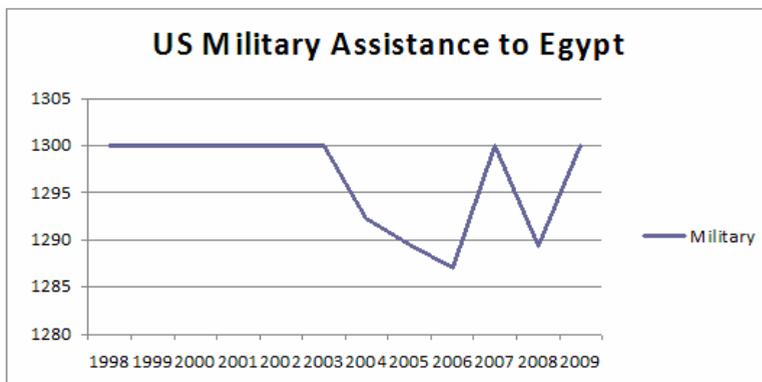


**Figure 4.4:** The Decline in Economic Assistance to Egypt  
*Source: Sharp, Jeremy M. (2011, September 21). Egypt in Transition. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>*

This leads us to the next evident question: did the political national, regional, and international conditions lead to the Egyptian revolution on the 25<sup>th</sup> January?

#### **IV. Reasons that led to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution**

Despite figures illustrating that economic and social conditions have improved in Egypt in recent years, the Egyptians nonetheless took to the streets calling for the end of Mubarak’s rule, and social justice.



**Figure 4.5:** Consistency of US Military Assistance to Egypt  
*Source: Sharp, Jeremy M. (2011, September 21). Egypt in Transition. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. Available at <http://www.fas.org/sfp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>*

### A. On the Economic Level

On the economic level, the figures illustrate development, but not balanced development. Overall, the GDP was a sign of improvement; however the gap between the rich and the poor was enormous. Prior to the revolution, the Egyptian economy grew, but this growth did not trickle down, as it only benefited the regime’s narrow social base. There were areas in Upper Egypt and Sinai that were completely deprived of the fruits of development leading to the marginalisation of large sectors of society. Unemployment reached 9.7%, which is concentrated mostly among young people with university degrees.<sup>4</sup> Corruption reached an extreme, with Egypt rated 80<sup>th</sup> in the world.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bakr, Noha, 2011: *Lack of Tolerances and the Arab Revolutions* (Lebanon: The Arab Net Work for Tolerance).

<sup>5</sup> Transparency International (2010). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2010*. Available at:

[http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2010](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010): 8–14.

## **B. On the Political Level**

On the national level, there were several political reasons that led to the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution. First, human rights abuse was highly manifested in confronting demonstrations, with the emergency law support. This was manifested with the demonstrations in the city of Mahalla in April 2008 and other individual incidents such as that of Emad el Kabir and Khaled Said, where the latter's death at the hands of the police served to fuel the revolution. Khaled Said was tortured by the police, prompting several Egyptian youth to adopt the defense of that case on the Internet.

Secondly, the lack of tolerance with minorities prompted a lot of Egyptian discontent. In Egypt, for example, violence against the monasteries of Christian Copts was left with no decisive action from the system. On New Year's Eve in 2011, the Church of Two Saints in Alexandria was the subject of a terrorist act which burned parts of the church. Twenty-three people died as a result of the attack, all of them Coptic Christians. Some 97 or more people were injured. This was the deadliest act of violence against Egypt's Christian minority in a decade, since the Kosheh massacre in 2000 had left 21 Coptic Christians dead. Coptic Egyptians were generally supportive of the Mubarak regime which acted as a barrier against Islamic fundamentalism in the country. However, the last few years witnessed a number of violent events against Copts including the failure of the regime not only to protect them, but also to address their grievances related to building churches and appointing public offices. The restoration of the churches was authorised with difficulty, and religious lessons in mosques were avoided. Discriminatory practices against the Bahais took place, in addition to the discontent among ethnic minorities, such as the Nubians and the Bedouins of Sinai.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nubians are a racial group living in Southern Egypt, and have their own unwritten language and have grievances because of forcing them to move to new less prosperous locations during the building of the High Dam in the fifties.

Third, the system insisted to pave the route to hereditary rule. A huge number of constitution articles were amended in 2005 to suit the November 2011 presidential elections' needs for former President Mubarak's son, thereby eliminating any chance of competition. Fourth, the results of the last Parliamentary election in the fall of 2010, which gave the NDP an unprecedented majority, were suspected of being fraudulent. Fifth, the mismanagement of the crisis, that started earlier when the regime failed to make the constitutional reforms of 2005-2007, and not opening the political system to absorb the youth and the new middle class. Furthermore, as the storms of the revolution started to gather, the regime failed not only to read the signs but also to define the situation and use the proper mechanisms to manage it. Mubarak's regime handled the revolutionaries with brutality- tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons were used. The termination of all means of communication and internet fuelled anger. The marginal changes initiated by the regime, such as dissolving parliament, agreeing to oversee a process of reform and Mubarak not running for reelection in September 2011, were not satisfactory, and the continuous delayed inadequate response of Mubarak and his regime led to severe widespread calls for Mubarak's resignation. On the night of February the 10<sup>th</sup>, Mubarak gave a speech which led many to believe that he would step down. Anger erupted when he only stated plans to delegate some of his power. By the next day, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011, he had resigned.

On the international level, Egypt's foreign policy has also been an important factor. Egyptians shared a deep sense of frustration owing to the loss of Egyptian regional power to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. The general public was frustrated at the way Egypt handled the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The ordinary layman perceived the Egyptian government to be a U.S. puppet, thus delegitimising it in the eyes of many which brought about a feeling of humiliation and frustration.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> One of the slogans chanted during the revolution was "Lift your head up you are an Egyptian", which intended to overcome the feeling of humiliation and to empower dignity among Egyptians.

### C. On the Social Level

On the social level there are several factors that led to the 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution, thereby accelerating its outcome. First, the demographics: an explosive mix of high population growth reaching 83 million, living in a congested 6% of geographic space in Egypt had its negative impact. A population characterised by young age, joblessness growth with rapid expansion of university education that has produced graduates with an inadequate level of quality education, leading to no hope in the future. In fact, two-thirds of Egyptians are under 30, and each year 700,000 new graduates compete for 200,000 new jobs.<sup>8</sup> A further social element is the discontent among racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. Nubians and Bedouins felt deprived from the fruits of development, alienated and not integrated in the Egyptian identity, and further neglected in their demands and aspiration. As for the Christians, they suffered the lack of responsiveness to their religious demands to build and restore churches, as well as setting the rules for Christians converting to Islam and vice versa.

The economic, political, and social reasons behind the revolution were expressed by serious signs of discontent prior to the revolution taking place. In 2004 there were about 266 acts of protest; and by 2008 they reached 630.<sup>9</sup> On one account, the daily protests in 2010 averaged 5 a day.<sup>10</sup> However, the government reacted arrogantly by using excessive force, and indulging in human rights abuse.

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<sup>8</sup> Green, Duncan (2011, 17 February). What caused the Revolution in Egypt? *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.guardian.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Al Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies, 2009: *The Arab Strategic Report 2009* (Cairo: Al Ahram Establishment): 365.

<sup>10</sup> Shuhieb, Abdel Qader, 2011: *The Last Hours of Mubarak* (Cairo: Akhbar Al Youm): 110.

## V. Elements that Distinguish the Egyptian Revolution

The Egyptian revolution is unique in many ways. Although inspired by the Tunisian revolution that took place slightly prior to it, still it differed to the Arab Spring or the previous Eastern European revolutions that took place post-Cold War.

The use of technology has highly characterised the Egyptian revolution. Social electronic media and traditional media like Al Jazeera have clearly played an important part. The impact of communicating and organising through Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube,<sup>11</sup> rather than any organisational function emphasised a new technique. Between 11<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, there were 34 million participants in the revolution on Facebook across 2313 pages, where 9815 participants got 461 thousands commentaries.<sup>12</sup> During the period between 10<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> February, 93 million tweets on the revolution were exchanged within Egypt, and between Egypt and the outside world.<sup>13</sup>

A further unique feature is the demographic aspect; a populace country with 83 million supported the revolution, with floods of demonstrators from different social and ideological backgrounds. Between 25<sup>th</sup> January and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011, 846 Egyptians were killed and a total of 6467 participants were wounded in the revolution.<sup>14</sup>

Comparing the Egyptian revolution, with that of Eastern Europe in the post-Cold War era, one may find significant differences. In the Eastern European countries the external factor was the engine, inspirer, and the basic funder; however in Egypt,

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<sup>11</sup> Green, Duncan, 2011, art.cit.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ghietas, Gamal (2011, March 8). Scientific Analysis of the Revolution through the Internet. *Al- Ahram Weekly* (3-9 March 2011). Available at: <http://www.weekly.ahram.org>.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Commission to Investigate the Facts of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution (19 April 2011): 6.

the internal economic, political, and social reasons were the main motives. The Egyptian revolution had no unified leadership to unite behind, no clear ideology, as it started seeking social justice, and escalated due to the poor management of the crisis from Mubarak's regime. The reaction of the international community to the Egyptian revolution differed from the reaction to the revolutions of Eastern Europe. The latter were welcomed by the West, and supported directly and strongly, as was their participation in the Partnership for Peace prepared by NATO, as an essential step for the political reform of these countries, in preparation for joining NATO. The same may not be said in the case of the Egyptian revolution. United States fumbled between backing up the pro-American dictator ally and the promotion of marauding forces aimed at reaching the values of democracy. The case has spread to some extent, with the U.S. Secretary of State not always taking a constant stand, at times appearing to be reluctant while at other times more encouraging.

As for the European Union, despite the mutual cooperation and security challenges it faces together with Egypt, such as illegal immigration and terrorism, it has hindered generous financial support that can help Egypt to stabilise in addition to adopting a policy of wait and see and observing the evolution of the revolution to see whether it will lead to a liberal democratic system.

Another unique and differing characteristic is the notion of "Selmya". The participants placed emphasis on the peaceful nature of the struggle, mainly comprised of a campaign of civil resistance, which featured a series of demonstrations, marches, acts of civil disobedience, and labour strikes. The discipline of remaining non-violent was instrumental in civil resistance. Protestors avoided violence in order not to provide government forces with the excuse they were looking for to clamp down on protesters and delegitimise them publicly. Young Egyptians had lots of experience from the Kefeya movement of 2004, the elections of 2005 and 2010, the 6<sup>th</sup> April movement of 2008 and the Khaled Said campaign of 2010. They learned from each

confrontation and adapted their tactics and strategies accordingly. They reached out to others such as Otpor in Serbia for training and guidance. The Serbs met with Egyptian groups and shared their own hard-won experience, as well as fundamental lessons of popular non-violent resistance.<sup>15</sup> Despite being predominantly peaceful in nature, the revolution experienced a few violent clashes between security forces and protestors. The campaign took place in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities across Egypt.

## **VI. Direct and Immediate Consequences of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution**

Any change in system, must have direct and immediate consequences. The Western media and press have described the revolutions in the Arab world as “the Arab Spring”. However, the Arab world climate is characterised as being bi-seasonal only; there is a winter and summer, with only sandstorms in between, as spring and autumn do not exist. In other words, to reach summer from winter there must be a sand storm phase.

### **A. On the Economic Level**

On the economic level, the cost was quite considerable, as freedom has a price. On the immediate level there were signs of confidence, as the banking sector opened its doors on Sunday 6 February only to find that public and corporate confidence remained high, with a strong net surplus of inflows, contrary to speculations that Egyptians would be rushing to the banks to withdraw their money. Contrary to some, the currency remained strong and only decreased slightly to 5.95 against the dollar, from

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<sup>15</sup> Meier, Patrick (2011, February 27). *Civil Resistance Tactics Used in Egypt's Revolution #Jan25*. Available at: <http://irevolution.net/2011/02/27/tactics-egypt-revolution-jan25/>.

5.85 prior to the events. In time however, Egypt's real GDP witnessed a sharp contraction in the third quarter 2010/11 (January- March 2011), registering -4.2 percent when compared to 5.4 percent in the corresponding quarter in 2009/2010. Investment and net exports of goods and services declined by 26 percent and 3.6 percent respectively in real terms, when compared to the third quarter of the previous year. According to the IMF estimates, the expected average growth rate of the whole year 2010/11 is one percent.<sup>16</sup>

Tourism revenues have decreased by 60% since June 2010 and official reserves went down by 22% since the end of 2010. The cost of subsidies has increased on the other hand, with public wages also rising by 25%, with an external financing gap of 12 billion. The tension and continuation of the revolution manifested itself in the presence of the demonstrators every Friday in Tahrir Square, leading to a near collapse of the Egyptian economy. Added to that are the strikes of the major public institutions, and continues secretarial limitless demands. Furthermore, regional events deprived the Egyptian economy of remittance of Egyptians living in Libya, Syria, and affected groups coming from Bahrain, Jordan and the Gulf in general.

It has been noted that a further deterioration of the economy will strengthen the Islamists, who are enriched by their financial resources and regional support of certain powers, allowing them to play the role of the state, and fulfill grass roots needs. The risk of the prolonged political transition period can highly affect the economy, and cause a significant deterioration in fragile macro economic balances. The worse scenario is a budget crisis, resulting in losing confidence in the Egyptian pound.

In October 2011 S & P announced a decrease in Egypt's long term foreign currency, downgrading the local currency sovereign debt rating to BB, with a negative outlook from BB and BB+

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<sup>16</sup> "Business Barometer", *The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies*, 27:1 (May 2011).

respectively. S & P affirmed Egypt's short term local currency debt rating at B.<sup>17</sup>

## **B. On the Political Level**

On the political level, the immediate impact of the revolution was highly felt. The process of demolishing the institutions and tools that served the authoritarian regime took place in the first month. This was manifested in Mubarak no longer holding the presidency position, a change in the executive system with cabinet reshuffled twice to meet lay man requests, the dissolving of parliament, the suspending of the constitution, following mechanisms of good governance in investigating files of political and financial corruption, and full respect to human rights and right of self expression. The process of construction of democratic institutions began in the second month of the revolution, in the form of a referendum on a short list constitution declaration, with legislative elections held in September, followed by presidential elections.

Ten month following the revolution, numerous Egyptian institutions were still in place. One way to look at what happened in Egypt in terms of the revolution is that it has not happened completely. A revolution needs a leader with a vision and a manual, which has not been the case in Egypt. The ability of the youth, later joined by different age groups who were inspired by different social classes and ideologies to accomplish what took place was extraordinary, but the evidence is not yet clear and its direction is uncertain.

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<sup>17</sup> "Sovereigns Rating List", *Standards & Poor's Rating Service*, (October 2011). Available at: <http://www.standardandpoors.com/ratings/sovereigns/ratings-list/en/us/?subSectorCode=39>.

While in transition, Egypt is facing a contradictory situation and needs to move fast to find a balanced, elected, legitimate government that can implement real reforms. However there is also a need to achieve some consensus about the fundamental principles that should underpin the new political system, and to enact laws to regulate elections and the formation of political parties. Finding a balance is a difficult task. Egypt in particular is teetering between authoritarianism and the diktats of the street.

Under pressure, the SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) and government are accused of trying to ban protests, of placing limits on foreign funding to civil society institutions, and of generating the idea that the new constitution must make the military the guarantor of Egyptian democracy, modeled on the Turkish constitution of 1960 that created a legacy from which Turkey is still trying to extricate itself painfully today.<sup>18</sup> This is confronted by resistance from the civil society and foreign funders, who wish to deal directly with civil society institutions overstepping bilateral agreements signed earlier in the Mubarak era. SCAF was seen as an attempt to step over sovereignty, making use of the critical time Egypt is going through, to interfere in state affairs under the disguise of promoting democracy.

The structure of political forces post the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution could be illustrated in five main forces: the political parties, the military, the former National Democratic ruling party, the protestors, and the silent majority. The first were the political parties. At the official election process opening on 18 September 2011, there were already 50 registered political parties, mainly divided into 2 categories: first, the real parties- with a clear agenda

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<sup>18</sup> Ottaway, Marina (2011, August 10). *Transitional Failure in Egypt and Tunisia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/08/10/transitional-failure-in-egypt-and-tunisia/4ma4>.

and profile, consisting of the Islamist, liberal, left, and center, which are each becoming highly fragmented; second, the category of political parties including those that are weak with the purpose of getting a particular individual elected.

Among such parties the observers focus on the Islamic ones that are also suffering from fragmentation. The Muslim Brothers are struggling to: first, maintain the cohesiveness of the group, which has been witnessing constant splits ever since last February; and second, compete with newly resurgent fundamental Islamic forces that adopt a radical line in presenting their comprehensive Islamic reform agendas, such as the Salafis and the Jamaa' Islameya. Islamist parties call themselves civil parties, and call for a civil state as the constitution prohibits the formation of political parties based on religion. The division between the Islamic and secular political parties continues to remain sharp, as was indicated in the constitutional principles drafted by the leading cleric at Al Azhar in August 2011. This has been widely accepted by Egypt's liberal and secular politicians. The document proposes that Egypt has an Islamic identity but is committed to a "civil and democratic state governed by law and the Constitution". The document also calls for respect of freedom of opinion, faith, and the guarantee of human rights. However, talks between Islamists and liberals aimed at reaching an agreement on a set of principles based on the Al Azhar draft, failed later in August. Islamist groups insist on the Constitution being drafted by Parliament, while liberals want an agreed-upon set of principles before elections are held to ensure that Islamists will not turn Egypt into a theocracy.

The second political force in Egypt is the military. Post the 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution, the military is the ruling force. The SCAF announced that this is a transitional period and promised that elections would be held within 6 months, which unfortunately did

not take place.<sup>19</sup> After initially declaring that elections would take place in June and then revising that to September, the SCAF again postponed parliamentary elections until November 2011 in order to give new political parties more time to organise themselves and campaign. The start of parliamentary elections is tentatively set on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011, which should run through January 2012. The Higher Electoral Commission, comprised of Egyptian judges, will oversee the elections process. Until the time of writing this paper, no conclusion was reached regarding the right of Egyptians living abroad to vote, and allowing foreign monitoring or observation to the election.

Elections will take place in three rounds separated by a period of 15 days. According to the law, approved in the previously mentioned March 2011 referendum, within six months of their election, the lower and upper houses of parliament are to elect a 100-member Constitutional Assembly that will be responsible for the drafting of a new Constitution. The Constitutional Assembly must produce its draft within six months, and a referendum must then be held within 15 days to approve or reject the new Constitution.

At the earliest stages the SCAF was viewed as the defender of the revolution, but as time passes there is tension about the role it is playing, and whether it is plotting to continue to rule at the expense of a civil state existence. While it is managing the transitional period with high sensitivity on the street, it is not leading the debate; neither is any civil power doing so.

A few months following the revolution and the overthrowing of Mubarak, the SCAF started confronting a credibility crisis. The protestors' view on the military, evident in their chants "The military and the revolution are one hand", indicating that the

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<sup>19</sup> Ottoway, Marina (2011, October 10). *The Emerging Political Spectrum in Egypt*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/10/10/emerging-political>.

military was the one who defended the revolution by refusing to fire on demonstrators, started to be highly criticised, and suspicion arose among civilians regarding their intentions.

The SCAF at early stages came under criticism for its tardiness and apparent reluctance in prosecuting Mubarak and former regime officials, especially those responsible for killing hundreds of peaceful protestors during the January revolts. Second, no tangible policies have materialised to address the country's chronic economic problems and miserable living conditions. Third, sluggishness in reforming the security sector and the latter's revived violent and humiliating treatment of accused/arrested civilians contribute to increasing mistrust in the SCAF's intent to take serious procedures towards a fundamental restructuring of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>20</sup> Fourth, many traditional secular forces, as well as new youth forces, suspect a coalition between the Islamic forces and the SCAF thereby implying a hidden intention of not handing the state to civil rule. Despite all the criticism the SCAF is confronting, the majority of the Egyptians believe that the military institution remains the only guarantor of a safe transition to an aspired democracy, due to continued fragmentation of political forces and their evident fragility.

On the foreign policy level, the SCAF and some Egyptian officials declared that Egypt is abiding to its international responsibilities and signed treaties with Israel. However, SCAF and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, in order to appeal to the street demands, have charted a somewhat more confrontational regional policy toward Israel. Nevertheless, Egyptian officials have abandoned the Mubarak regime's aggressive stance toward Hamas, a move that enabled the Egyptian mediators to reengage Palestinian factions in unity talks to broker a settlement, and conclude an exchange of Palestinian prisoners against the

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<sup>20</sup> Isaac, Sally Khalifa, 2011: "Six Months After the Egyptian Revolution. Prospects in the Struggle to Change the Unchanged", *Analysis 66*. Istituto Per Gli Studi Di Politica Internazionale (ISPI). Available at:

[http://www.ispionline.it/it/documents/Analysis\\_66\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ispionline.it/it/documents/Analysis_66_2011.pdf): 201.

kidnapped Israeli Gilad Shalit. This breakthrough also led Egypt and Hamas to reach a new border agreement at the Rafah crossing. Various media reports indicated that the Rafah border crossing would be completely open to Gazans.<sup>21</sup>

The third political force, on the Egyptian political scenery is the former ruling National Democratic Party, and the possibility of its revival. The party was officially disbanded in April 2011, after two attempts to give it credibility, however its members are not banned from political life. Talks are taking place about reactivating Nasser-era ‘Treason law’ to hinder previous NDP members from sharing in political life.<sup>22</sup> Former NDP members are branded by the term “felol”<sup>23</sup> among laymen. Felol are not out of the political scene and are trying to find legal as well as illegal methods to return.

The fourth political force is the protestors, who were the key elements in bringing Mubarak’s regime down. During the revolution, protestors from different segments and ideological backgrounds were united as one hand. Unfortunately, post the revolution and Mubarak stepping down, they became fragmented and even conflicting. Among these protestors are the activists of the April 6 Youth Movement, members of We are All Khaled Saeed, the Revolutionary Youth Council, Movement Supporting Mohamed el Baradei, and The National Association for Change, Karama. These groups are only a few examples of the many groups that exist based on religious, ethnic, and racial minorities demands, and grievances. The worst protest took place in October 2011, when Christians gathered in front of Capital state television, known as Masperro, and other locations in Egypt, to protest the burning of the church in Upper Egypt village of al Marinab. This resulted in confrontations with the military, external elements

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<sup>21</sup> Sharp, Jeremy M., 2011, art.cit.

<sup>22</sup> Ottoway, Marina (2011,October 10), art.cit.

<sup>23</sup> The word Felol in Arabic means from the past.

leading to a toll of 25 killed and around 300 injured.<sup>24</sup> This resulted in a credibility crisis in SCAF on the national and international level, with calls in the US to cut down military assistance amounting up to 1.3 billion annually.<sup>25</sup>

The fifth political force is the silent majority. The silent majority involves those who do not participate in demonstrations, do not share in political parties' activities, and are not former National Democratic Party members. Their main power is derived from the fact that they are the constituencies who cast their ballot, and based on this ballot the political system and candidates will be elected to shape the Egyptian future. The main objectives of the silent majority are stability and security. They share discontent but no fury against the Mubarak regime, and still have high hopes regarding the SCAF and transition to democracy. It is this silent majority that had constituted a big percentage of the turnout on the constitutional amendments,<sup>26</sup> with a 41% turnout of the eligible 45 million. This amounts to double the turnout during the previous regime. It is this silent majority who, after the revolution, elected the same persons previously appointed by former regimes in the Academic hierarchy of the different public universities across Egypt. Activists refer to this silent majority as "The Kanaba party", where the word Kanaba, which means sofa, is used quite ironically in the sense that although this silent majority had no role in the revolution, it nonetheless played a huge role in determining Egypt's future.

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<sup>24</sup> Tadros, Mariz (2011, October 13). *Egypt's Bloody Sunday*. Middle East Research and Information Project. Available at: <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero101311>.

<sup>25</sup> Ottoway, Marina (2011, October 10), art.cit.

<sup>26</sup> A referendum on a short list constitution declaration took place 2 months following the revolution.

### **C. On the Social Level**

The 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution was set to establish a new social contract, based on social justice, respect of all social segment rights, and democracy. Different sects of society shared in the revolution: men and women, youth and old, ethnic, racial and religious minorities. The developments post the revolution have allowed each minority group to express their grievances individually in demonstrations, sit in, and protesting form. The Christian protests during October have shocked the entire Egyptian nation, as well as the international community, increasing fears of extremism, poor military management of the crisis, and external conspiracy from regional and international sources.

On a gender level, women also fear that Islamists take over and replicate the example of Iran. Liberal women fear the imposition of restrictions on their dress code, freedom of activities, movement, and political gains. A further fear is that women were not represented in the committee that proposed the constitution amendments. Besides, the number of women in Cabinet decreased, and the female quota in parliament was cancelled.

Bedouins of Sinai have shown great discontent and fear of the former regime's continuation in the lack of development plans, and excessive security measures. They expressed this in peaceful, as well as aggressive demonstrations, and actions.

The level of security in general and the efficiency of the security system have decreased in urban as well as rural areas. During the revolution, 4000 police vehicles were destroyed, thereby affecting mobile security capacity. Several segments of society have control over weapons which were confiscated from police stations, and smuggled through tunnels from Gaza, or through the borders from Libya. Car thefts, thugs' criminal actions, and the looting of antiquities have increased immensely. Unfortunately, there are no clear statistics in order that comparisons may be drawn, but laymen feel the lack of security, and consequently suffer as a result of that fear.

## **VII. Prospects of Future Scenarios for Egypt post the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution**

The world had witnessed the Egyptian "Sylmya's" revolution led by its youth as proof to the world that change need not be accompanied by violence, as extremists believe. Factions of society from different ideological backgrounds stood hand in hand in seeking democracy, and denouncing tools and applications of lack of good governance that branded the previous regime. However, the main question that one would ask concerns the projected scenario and its effect on the national and regional level.

There are different scenarios projected for Egypt's future. These scenarios vary from extreme optimism to extreme pessimism. However, prior to the holding of elections and writing of the constitution, it is difficult to assess the relative strength of the different camps competing over Egypt's future. The first scenario is the birth and survival of the liberal trend in Egyptian politics that is youthful and capable, and will not accept to revert to the old regime policies that led to the abuse of human rights, social injustice, and autocratic rule. This liberal trend will create a coalition with the conservative Islamic trends, leading to an enriching diversity. The security system will be reformed to overcome the old regime drawbacks, while the international community will support these developments encouraging foreign investment and free trade agreements, allowing the Egyptian economy to revive itself once again.

A second scenario would be the consolidation of the Islamic trend in the country. While the Muslim Brothers have been legally recognised, establishing themselves as a new political party called the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), other Islamic parties have also been formed such as the Wasat party on the Left and the Gama'at Islamiyya, Jihad, and Salafis on the Right. To avoid being left behind, Sufi orders began to organise and position themselves along the new and expanded political spectrum. The foreign policy will have an Islamic approach that can either ally

with Islamic countries in the region, or move to the Turkish example.

The economy of the country will be determined in a manner associated to these scenarios, varying from a capitalist one to a purely socialist camp. The bleakest scenario is the fragmentation of Egypt, and the call of secession among marginalised ethnic groups, where the Christians Copts are agitated by the aggressive attacks on churches and hostility from extremist Muslim groups lacking state protection to seek secession in the Southern part of Egypt. The same applies to Sinai Bedouins, which could allow Israel the opportunity to impose its control over the Sinai Peninsula.

It is indeed an incredibly difficult task to predict the model Egypt will follow, be it the Iranian, or the Turkish, or the Pakistani model. The choice of any of these models will depend on the variables in the short run and the ability of the SCAF in the coming year to deal with the erupting political, economic, and social crises, in addition to the hope of the international community and regional power to support Egypt's transition into a democratic state. Egypt's foreign policy will be shaped irrespective of the choice of either of the above scenarios, which will undoubtedly have an impact on the region and the international community as a whole.

In the Arab world there is no spring. It is either winter or summer. What lies between are sandstorms. Summer however always follows the sandstorm, but one never knows how long the sandstorm will last, and how much it will affect the summer session. These issues will hopefully be addressed by the developments of the coming events, from the time of writing this article until the next Egyptian presidential elections in early 2013.