



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Egyptian Revolution: The End of Hosni Mubarak's  
Thirty Year Authoritarian Rule**

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**ABSTRACT**

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*This paper attempts to examine the events of Egyptian revolution and resultantly the removal of long-term authoritarian ruler Hosni Mubarak. It also highlights the role of the youth of Egypt to change the regime to bring democracy in the country. Moreover, this paper highlights the causes which led the Egyptians to come out of their houses to dethrone Hosni Mubarak. The excessive use of power by the governmental authorities to curb the protesters is also the part of this research. This research also throws light on the role played by the military and other law enforcement agencies during this revolution. It also explores how the social media was used during these protests and how it helped to spread the news of the events of these protests. Along with Hosni Mubarak, this paper slightly describes the earlier authoritarians of Egypt. It also explores that what tactics were used by the authoritarian rulers to prolong their rules.*

**Introduction**

The Egyptians, suppressed by the long-term authoritarian rulers, put off the cloak of silence by initiating protests on the pattern of triumphed Tunisians on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (Sharp, 2013). Youth of the country, which was in favor of democracy, dispensed the awareness among masses through social networks like that of Facebook and Twitter to bring change. Mass protests were promised on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January which was a challenge to state authority and power (Amnesty

International, 2011). The government ordered to block the city centers, squares, bridges and other gathering points. Internet, social media and mobile phone service was also shut down by the authorities. All these governmental attempts proved fruitless. A huge gathering of people broke the barriers in Cairo city and reached at Tahrir Square in front of the Presidential house and state TV centre.

President Hosni Mubarak dismissed his regime and ordered army to tackle the protests as police vacated. When army saw the increasing general rebellion, it stepped in on 11<sup>th</sup> of February and President Hosni Mubarak resigned from office (Hassan, 2011). Dictatorial governments usually depend upon the use of power against their rival groups. This suppression is almost used by the military power. The elite class of the country probably uses military as their perfect agent to prolong their rule. A number of undemocratic governments survived just with the help of military power. A plenty of military dictatorships appeared by dethroning both democratic and dictatorial rulers. Dictatorial governments continue because of the oppression of inhabitants and in such a situation military does not act as elite agent but operates for own interests.

In the case of Egypt, it was approximately ruled by the civil or military authoritarians. General Muhammad Nagib declared Egypt as a republic and himself the 1<sup>st</sup> President of that republic following the 1952 revolution. Soon after it, Gamal Abdel Nasser forced him to resign from the post and put him under house arrest. Gamal Abdel Nasser ruled the country from 1956 to 1970. After his death in 1970, he was succeeded by Anwar Sadat who ruled Egypt till 1981. Anwar Sadat was assassinated by an Islamic extremist in October 1981 and was succeeded by Hosni Mubarak through a referendum in which he was the unopposed candidate. President Hosni Mubarak prolonged his rule through different tools. He also took the resort of so-called elections but the people were not given the right to choose their ruler in reality. To prolong the rule, he had to take the resort of law enforcement agencies to use the excessive powers to curb the people who use to raise their voice against the ruler. Continuous state of emergency had become the routine matter in Egypt. The interior ministry had been given the excessive powers to curb the fundamental human rights of Egyptians. This situation led the commons against the government. The removal of Tunisian President Zein El Abidin bin Ali by the protesters showed a path to Egyptians and they followed that way.

Opposition leaders started to systematize the countrywide protests to convert the 25<sup>th</sup> of the January “National Police Day” into protests day after the successful revolt in Tunisia (Sharp, 2013). The youth of country, which was in favor of democracy dispensed the awareness among masses through social networks like that of Facebook and Twitter to bring change. According to Egyptian rules, protests were illegal in Egypt without the pre-approval of the authorities.

All the protesters were to meet in Tahrir Square but to avoid the confrontation with police; they designed small gatherings at different points and especially near mosques in Cairo. From these different points they started to march towards their main point; Tahrir Square. A number of men, women and children participated in the march and it grew rapidly with the passage of time. It was seemed that the fear of authoritarian regime had vanished from the hearts of public. Mass protests were promised on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> of the January which was a challenge to state authority and power (Amnesty International, 2011). The government ordered to block the city centers, squares, bridges and other gathering points. Internet, social media and mobile phone service was also shut down by the authorities. These all governmental attempts proved fruitless. A huge gathering of people broke the barriers in Cairo city, reached at Tahrir Square and demonstrated against authoritarian government. It was a popular surge without certain leadership. Government enforced curfew quickly but people ignored it widely.

President Hosni Mubarak dismissed his regime and ordered army to tackle the protests as police vacated. The protesters destroyed all the symbols of oppression as that of police stations throughout the country. They were being blamed as backed by the foreign intelligence agencies and funded by them. Not only the protesters but the media reporters both national and international were being blamed as foreign secret agents. They were being attacked by pro-government actors. The Egyptian government officials rejected the criticism by international community for the crackdowns and declared it as interference in Egypt’s internal affairs. Omar Suleiman, the newly appointed vice President of Egypt stated that the foreign interference in Egypt’s internal matters will not be accepted (Robinson, 2011).

Government ordered the internet suppliers to cut the international links on 27<sup>th</sup> January’s night (British Council, 2013). Due to this, internet access to Egyptians was severed. Authorities ordered

the mobile phone companies to cut the services in some areas on 28<sup>th</sup> January (al-Anani, 2012). Government used all the mobile phone networks to send the messages to Egyptians in the favor of government (Bishara, 2013). All these governmental attempts went useless. Central Cairo was being controlled by the anti-government demonstrators. Tahrir Square once more turned into the centre of commemoration, demonstrations, singing, preparing the next steps and discussing the current developments. It was estimated that about 3 lack workers struck on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Leaders of these strikes reached in Tahrir Square in front of the Presidential house and state TV centre. When army saw the increasing general rebellion, it stepped in on 11 February and President Hosni Mubarak resigned from office (Hassan, 2011).

Egyptians got the triumph but on high cost especially those who lost their loved ones. According to the reports of Health Ministry about 840 people were killed and 6,000 wounded (Congressional Research, 2014).

The ousting of President Hosni Mubarak was a heavy priced. According to the basic information of Ministry of health which it received from the hospitals associated with ministry, about 384 people were died and about 6467 were wounded during the uprising (Paciello, 2011). On April 4, the ministry of health counted the hospitals under police, military and private ones and the number of killed persons reached to 846 (Sharp, 2013). It was the official record while the human rights activists and some others believe that the number of killed ones was higher that the ministry told. Different organizations of human rights published their individual lists of killed persons. The data of all such organizations differ to each other.

#### **Causes of the Egyptian Revolution**

A lot of reasons can be described as the bases of Egyptian Revolution but the most important ones were increasing level of poverty and disparity, unemployment and widespread corruption, police violence and the absence of political and civil rights and the continuous state of emergency.

#### **Poverty**

While the Egyptian economy had developed since the 1980s, yet the capital was not spread. Two or less than two US dollars per day is the worldwide established poverty line. About 32 million Egyptians were living near or below the poverty line in 2009 (Tetin & Gervasio, 2011). Most of the Egyptians used to rely upon the subsidies

given by the government on bread and cooking oil for survival. The government had the program of privatization of many departments which means that a huge number of workers in state owned industries had lost additional benefits. The wages of the majority workers was much lowest due to the increasing inflation.

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment was persistently growing as a lot of youngsters including graduates were inflowing the labor market. The number of educated young people was higher than the jobs were created. The food crisis and ultimately its high prices in 2008 stroked the poor Egyptians as a major part of their income goes to food purchasing (Congressional Research, 2014). The shortage of reasonable housing was another important problem of Egyptians as they had to live in rambling and most of the times unsafe casual settlements. According to the official records of 2008, about 12.2 million Egyptians were living in informal settlements and about half of that numbers were in Greater Cairo (Hassan, 2011).

### **Corruption**

Along with poverty and unemployment, corruption was also a major issue of the Egyptian society. Wealth was only under the control of ruling elite and it was the minority, not majority, getting advantage of open economy. Bribes and other types of corruption discernible transactions from least to the biggest especially in the matters dealing with government departments. When government stopped to provide subsidies on food grains under the banner of servicing the national debt, then President Hosni Mubarak's family and close relatives and friends siphoned off billions of dollars in their personal bank accounts throughout the world. The ruling NDP was a powerful so-called political party consists of leading businessmen of the country. They collected billion dollars by applying their domination in the concerned sectors. The corruption index of Transparency International of 2010 positioned Egypt at 3.1 ranking as 98<sup>th</sup> out of 178 states (Paciello, 2011).

### **Police Brutality, Continuous State of Emergency and Violation of Human Rights**

Basically the 25<sup>th</sup> of the January Revolutions was initially started against the brutality of police. The day was being observed by the authorities as the Egypt's Police Day but Egyptians observed it as protest day. The interior Ministry of Egypt was given the oppressive powers by the emergency legislation. Omnipresent State Security

Investigation and the Central Security Forces having about 325,000 policemen were the main tools of the above mentioned Ministry to oppress the people (Sharp, 2013). The emergency and other controlled laws of Egypt gave the absolute powers to forces through which they could arrest and confine the citizens without any pre-approval of court. Under these laws the security forces had the authority to abandon the constitutional rights of people, permission for the establishment of the special and military courts, restrict the political activities of the opposition and to contain the protests. Under these emergency laws police and other security forces violated the human right bitterly. These laws introduced the shadow justice system and it evaded the original judicial system and decreased the protection approved in Egyptian law.

The interior Ministry kept hundreds of thousands citizens behind the bars without any allegation or trial scene for years by using the emergency powers even in disobedience of frequent court orders for liberate. The widespread use of administrative confinement encompassed society and exaggerated Egypt citizens in every aspect of life. The main targets of these laws were the political antagonists the critics of government, advocates of human rights, religious minority members and journalists and bloggers.

Hosni Mubarak promised to abandon the state of emergency during his election campaign of 2005. The government made conditional this promise with the initiation of a new anti-terrorism act after Mubarak's success. The same year government renewed emergency for additional two years. In March 2007 the Article 179 of the Egyptian Constitution was amended by a so-called referendum to introduce the new anti-terrorism law (Workshop Report, 2011). Under the new amendment, the security forces were free from the constitutional restrictions to uninformed arrest and custody to counter the terrorism. Security forces were given the free hand to search the houses of citizens without search warrants and to tap telephone calls of anyone. Egyptian President was given the permanent authority to refer any case to any court of his own choice by bypassing the ordinary courts.

Through a Presidential order in May 2010 the Emergency Law was renewed but restricted to only terrorism and drug-trafficking and it was specified that Article 3(1) and Article 3(5) will be applied only (Ghanem, 2014). It was the Article 3(1) that had given power to security forces over the years to the administrative custody of citizens

for a long time. Through this Article the authorities had the power to limit the freedom of people's assembly or association, movement or residence, detain suspects or those who may be danger for public security and allocate any person to execute these tasks. The government could exercise this all through a simple oral or written order.

The anger was already ripping in people against the continuous police cruelties and the absence of any hope for justice in such cases, on June 6, 2010 the killing of Khalid Mohammed Said, a 28 year Alexandrian young man, paved it the way to come out (Amnesty International, 2011). People of Alexandria and Cairo came on roads and street to protest to demand justice for "the martyr of the state of emergency" (Shehata, 2012). This incident proved as a plus point for the opponents of autocratic government and the movement was named as "We are all Khalid Said" (Shehata, 2012).

### **Continuous Demand for Democracy and Change**

It was not the sudden demand of change instead a continuous process. Unrest was sparkling in country from a long period. Every public demonstration of opposition penetrated the heavy cover of despotism but the governmental response was ruthless. It was the time when the political opposition was reviving in country. The protests which were started from 2002 demanded the close harmony with Iraqis and Palestinians, to stop the police cruelties and to bring the constitutional reforms. A huge protest was held in Egypt in 2002 to exhibit the support of 2<sup>nd</sup> Palestinian intifada (Bishara, 2013). The same year hundreds of thousands Egyptian protesters held protest in Tahrir Square of Cairo to show their hate against the US-led war in Iraq. The opposition groups made an alliance to hold protests throughout the country against Hosni Mubarak's attempt to avail chance of another Presidential term.

The important protests for the constitutional reforms and to end the state of emergency in Egypt were held in Cairo in 2006 and 2007. The participants of these protests were arrested, thrashed, beaten and ill-treated by the security forces. Rigging in 2006 election and attack on judiciary annoyed the public along with the judges and it took the masses to streets to countenance the police (al-Anani, 2012). The same year about 25,000 workers of textile mills went on strike to demand the increase in wages. This strike became successful and a number of other institutions' workers and employees followed the same method. The El Mahalla Plant of textile was captured by the

workers in October 2007 to pay them promised bonus (Robinson, 2011).

The workers of El Mahalla appealed on April 6, 2008 for a countrywide strike to articulate their aggravation at the absence of political and economic growth in Egypt (British Council, 2013). A number of people throughout the country answered their appeal. The Interior Ministry of Egypt threatened the people not to participate in protests due to the reason some people remained inside of their homes. The participants of the protests had to face the arrests and prosecutions. An emergency court gave sentence to twenty-two persons in 2008 as declaring them involved in aggressive protests in El Mahalla (Teti & Gervasio, 2011). These strikes and protests proved as the base of 25 January Revolution. The protesters again filled the streets in 2009 to demand the political and economic developments in country (al-Anani, 2012). A number of protesters were arrested and prosecuted.

With the growing public protests and the breaking of fear, political opposition groups of Egypt got the strength. Muslim Brotherhood was the largest political opposite group having more than a half million members. It was also banned like that of other political groups but it strengthened its deep roots among public by professional network of charity and associations. Despite the ban, it participated in some elections and got a considerable support. The group of secular liberals and the socialists groups were growing rapidly (British Council, 2013).

#### **Tunisian President Zein El Abidine Bin Ali's Overthrow**

Tunisian uprising and consequently dethrone of Tunisian President Zein El Abidine Bin Ali proved as the final cause for the 25<sup>th</sup> January Revolution of Egypt (Hassan, 2011). It encouraged and developed confidence among the political opponents of Mubarak regime, huge number of unemployed young men and women and workers and the victims of government despotism to do something. After a long and bloody protest of about four weeks, the government of President Al-Abidine was collapsed on January 14, 2011 (Paciello, 2011). It resulted in the outburst of celebration and hope throughout the region. It was an obvious message for the Egyptians to come out of state of fear.



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