POPULAR PROTEST IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST (I): EGYPT VICTORIOUS?

Middle East/North Africa Report N°101 – 24 February 2011

International Crisis Group
WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is early days, and the true measure of what the Egyptian people have accomplished has yet to fully sink in. Some achievements are as clear as they are stunning. Over a period of less than three weeks, they challenged conventional chestnuts about Arab lethargy; transformed national politics; opened up the political space to new actors; massively reinforced protests throughout the region; and called into question fundamental pillars of the Middle East order. They did this without foreign help and, indeed, with much of the world timidly watching and waffling according to shifting daily predictions of their allies' fortunes. The challenge now is to translate street activism into inclusive, democratic institutional politics so that a popular protest that culminated in a military coup does not end there.

The backdrop to the uprising has a familiar ring. Egypt suffered from decades of authoritarian rule, a lifeless political environment virtually monopolised by the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP); widespread corruption, cronyism and glaring inequities; and a pattern of abuse at the hands of unaccountable security forces. For years, agitation against the regime spread and, without any credible mechanism to express or channel public discontent, increasingly took the shape of protest movements and labour unrest.

What, ultimately, made the difference? While the fraudulent November 2010 legislative elections persuaded many of the need for extra-institutional action, the January 2011 toppling of Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali persuaded them it could succeed. Accumulated resentment against a sclerotic, ageing regime that, far from serving a national purpose, ended up serving only itself reached a tipping point. The increasingly likely prospect of another Mubarak presidency after the September 2011 election (either the incumbent himself or his son, Gamal) removed any faith that this process of decay would soon stop.

The story of what actually transpired between 25 January and 11 February remains to be told. This account is incomplete. Field work was done principally in Cairo, which became the epicentre of the uprising but was not a microcosm of the nation. Regime deliberations and actions took place behind closed doors and remain shrouded in secrecy. The drama is not near its final act. A military council is in control. The new government bears a striking resemblance to the old. Strikes continue. Protesters show persistent ability to mobilise hundreds of thousands.

There already are important lessons, nonetheless, as Egypt moves from the heady days of upheaval to the job of designing a different polity. Post-Mubarak Egypt largely will be shaped by features that characterised the uprising:

- This was a popular revolt. But its denouement was a military coup, and the duality that marked Hosni Mubarak's undoing persists to this day. The tug of war between a hierarchical, stability-obsessed institution keen to protect its interests and the spontaneous and largely unorganised popular movement will play out on a number of fronts – among them: who will govern during the interim period and with what competencies; who controls the constitution-writing exercise and how comprehensive will it be; who decides on the rules for the next elections and when they will be held; and how much will the political environment change and open up before then?
- The military played a central, decisive and ambivalent role. It was worried about instability and not eager to see political developments dictated by protesting crowds. It also was determined to protect its popular credibility and no less substantial business and institutional interests. At some point it concluded the only way to reconcile these competing considerations was to step in. That ambiguity is at play today: the soldiers who rule by decree, without parliamentary oversight or genuine opposition input, are the same who worked closely with the former president; they appear to have no interest in remaining directly in charge, preferring to exit the stage as soon as they can and revert to the background where they can enjoy their privileges without incurring popular resentment when disappointment inevitably sets in; and yet they want to control the pace and scope of change.

- The opposition's principal assets could become liabilities as the transition unfolds. It lacked an identifiable leader or representatives and mostly coalesced around the straightforward demand to get rid of Mubarak. During the protests, this meant it could bridge social, religious, ideological and generational divides, bringing together a wide array along the economic spectrum, as well as young activists and the more traditional opposition, notably the Muslim Brotherhood. Its principal inspiration was moral and ethical, not programmatic, a protest against a regime synonymous with rapaciousness and shame. The regime's traditional tools could not dent the protesters' momentum: it could not peel off some opposition parties and exploit divisions, since they were not the motors of the movement; concessions short of Mubarak's removal failed to meet the minimum threshold; and repression only further validated the protesters' perception of the regime and consolidated international sympathy for them.

  As the process moves from the street to the corridors of power, these strengths could become burdensome. Opposition rivalries are likely to re-emerge, as are conflicts of interest between various social groups; the absence of either empowered representatives or an agreed, positive agenda will harm effectiveness; the main form of leverage – street protests – is a diminishing asset. A key question is whether the movement will find ways to institutionalise its presence and pressure.

- Throughout these events public opinion frequently wavered. Many expressed distaste for the regime but also concern about instability and disorder wrought by the protests. Many reportedly deemed Mubarak's concessions sufficient and his wish for dignified departure understandable but were alarmed at violence by regime thugs. The most widespread aspiration was for a return to normality and resumption of regular economic life given instability's huge costs. At times, that translated into hope protests would end; at others, into the wish the regime would cease violent, provocative measures. This ambivalence will impact the coming period. Although many Egyptians will fear normalisation, in the sense of maintaining the principal pillars of Mubarak's regime, many more are likely to crave a different normalisation: ensuring order, security and jobs. The challenge will be to combine functioning, stable institutions with a genuine process of political and socio-economic transformation.

- Western commentators split into camps: those who saw Muslim Brotherhood fingerprints all over the uprising and those who saw it as a triumph of a young, Western-educated generation that had discarded Islamist and anti-American outlooks. Both interpretations are off the mark. Modern communication played a role, particularly in the early stages, as did mainly young, energised members of the middle classes. The Brotherhood initially watched uneasily, fearful of the crackdown that would follow involvement in a failed revolt. But it soon shifted, in reaction to pressure from its younger, more cosmopolitan members in Tahrir Square and the protests' surprising strength. Once it committed to battle, it may well have decided there could be no turning back: Mubarak had to be brought down or retaliation would be merciless. The role of Islamist activists grew as the confrontation became more violent and as one moved away from Cairo; in the Delta in particular, their deep roots and the secular opposition's relative weakness gave them a leading part.

- Here too are lessons. The Brotherhood will not push quickly or forcefully; it is far more sober and prudent than that, prefers to invest in the longer-term and almost certainly does not enjoy anywhere near majority support. But its message will resonate widely and be well served by superior organisation, particularly compared to the state of secular parties. As its political involvement deepens, it also will have to contend with tensions the uprising exacerbated: between generations; between traditional hierarchical structures and modern forms of mobilisation; between a more conservative and a more reformist outlook; between Cairo, urban and rural areas.

- The West neither expected these events nor, at least at the outset, hoped for them. Mubarak had been a loyal ally; the speed with which it celebrated his fall as a triumph of democracy was slightly anomalous if not unseemly. The more important point is that it apparently had little say over events, as illustrated by the rhetorical catch-up in which it engaged. Egyptians were not in the mood for outside advice during the uprising and are unlikely to care for it now. The most important contribution was stern warnings against violence. Now, Western powers can help by providing economic assistance, avoiding attempts to micromanage the transition, select favourites or react too negatively to a more assertive, independent foreign policy. Egypt's new rulers will be more receptive to public opinion, which is less submissive to Western demands; that is the price to pay for the democratic polity which the U.S. and Europe claim they wish to see.

With these dynamics in mind, several core principles might help steer the transition:

- If the military is to overcome scepticism of its willingness to truly change the nature of the regime, it will need either to share power with representative civilian forces by creating a new interim, representative authority or ensure decisions are made transparently after broad consultation, perhaps with a transitional advisory council.

- Some immediate measures could help reassure the civilian political forces: lifting the state of emergency; releasing prisoners detained under its provisions; and respecting basic rights, including freedom of speech, association and assembly, including the rights of independent trade unions.
- Independent, credible bodies might be set up to investigate charges of corruption and other malfeasance against ex-regime officials. Investigations must be thorough, but non-politicised to avoid score-settling. There will need to be guarantees of fair judicial process. Independent and credible criminal investigations also could be held to probe abuse by all security forces, together with a comprehensive security sector review to promote professionalism.
- The democratic movement would be well served by continued coordination and consensus around the most important of its positive and strategic political demands. This could be helped by forming an inclusive and diverse body tasked with prioritising these demands and pressing them on the military authorities.

One need only look at what already is happening in Yemen, Bahrain or Libya to appreciate the degree to which success can inspire. But disenchantment can be contagious too. Mubarak's ouster was a huge step. What follows will be just as fateful. Whether they asked for it or not, all eyes once again will be on the Egyptian people.

Cairo/Brussels, 24 February 2011

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I. THE UPRISING

A. ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND

For many observers, one of the more difficult questions has been not so much why Egyptians rose up now, but why it has taken so long. The background to the recent events has been familiar for some time. The urban poor have long lamented rising prices, low wages and the widening gulf between them and the rich, who increasingly have fled the clogged and dirty urban streets for gated communities. Farmers likewise complained that they have been unable to earn a living and that politically connected prominent families have been retaking land granted to those working it since the 1952 revolution. Egyptians of all political and economic stripes have complained about the marriage of business and political power, about an unaccountable and often brutal internal security apparatus and corruption that has robbed the country of its wealth and its people of both their dignity and freedom.

On occasion, anger has given rise to political activism, albeit highly circumscribed in scope and effect. The initial focus was on regional issues. Thousands marched in support of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, again in 2002 to protest Israel's military operations in the West Bank and Gaza and again to protest the 2003 Iraq War, in demonstrations that showed many Egyptians' frustration with their government's perceived alignment with the U.S. and Israel and introduced a new generation of activists to street protests.[1] Street activism against the 2005 constitutional amendments and elections, particularly by the Kifaya ("Enough") umbrella group that grew out of the 2000 and 2003 protests, broke the taboo against publicly calling for President Hosni Mubarak's resignation.[2] Labour activism has been growing as well, notably work stoppages – and spectacularly in the form of violent clashes in the industrial Nile Delta town of Mahalla al-Kubra on 6-7 April 2008 in response to rising food prices and heavy-handed police tactics to prevent strikes.[3]

Other groups coalesced – such as "We Are All Khaled Said"[4] – though their presence, at least until January 2011, has been more virtual than real. By the end of 2010, organised political protests had apparently reached a dead end.[5] They continued, but the largest attracted hundreds of people, usually far outnumbered by riot police.[6]

But if the background is relatively clear, the precise trigger point for the successful uprising is far less so. Several precipitating factors appear to have played a critical part.

[1] In 2003, protesters massed in Tahrir Square and marched toward the U.S. and British embassies, tearing down pictures of President Mubarak along the way – a development that a long-time Egypt observer present at the protest called "unprecedented". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 10 February 2011.

[2] For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, *Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy*, 4 October 2005.

[3] The 6 April Youth Movement – one of the first groups of online activists to call for protests in January 2011 – was created in response to Mahalla textile workers' plans to strike on 6 April 2008. This same lethal combination of economic inequity, protest and heavy-handed police response rocked Mahalla al-Kubra in 2011. See Joel Beinin, "The militancy of Mahalla al-Kubra", *Middle East Report Online*, 29 September 2007; Joel Beinin and Hossam El-Hamalawy, "Strikes in Egypt spread from center of gravity", *Middle East Report Online*, 9 May 2007; and Joel Beinin, "The Underbelly of Egypt's Neoliberal Agenda", *Middle East Report Online*, 5 April 2008.

[4] The group was formed in June 2010 to protest the death of a 28-year-old Alexandrian man, allegedly at the hands of police, on 6 June. It circulated online petitions and organised peaceful demonstrations in Cairo and Alexandria. Its founder, Wael Ghoneim, was detained on 27 January 2011 and held for twelve days; upon his release, he galvanised protesters after appearing on a popular television talk show. That interview, on the private Egyptian television channel Dream TV, can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjimpQPQDuU.

[5] Kifaya, which led the 2005-2006 protests, had almost completely disintegrated, riven by internal divisions and fatigue. See Crisis Group Report, *Reforming Egypt*, op. cit.

[6] Crisis Group observations, Egyptian cities, 2005-2011. An Egyptian official based in the Middle East put interior ministry personnel at 1.5 million (not including informers), 300,000 of whom in Al-Amn al-Markazi (Central Security), the riot police. "The illiteracy rate among these forces [Amn al-Markazi] is high, by design; loyalty is the first criterion", he said. Crisis Group interview, 31 January 2011.

The November 2010 elections were one.[7] The widely reported rigging, thuggery and subsequent boycotts of the election resulted in a parliament in effect without an opposition. Commenting on the 25 January protest and the subsequent "Friday of Anger" that turned out hundreds of thousands of people, an Egyptian diplomat observed:

> The situation could have been contained if the past months hadn't been so badly mismanaged. When you force the opposition – all the opposition – onto the streets, that's where they will act. The elections showed an enormous regression, not progress. They seemed to definitively close the door on any opening of the system and prepared the ground for Gamal to succeed his father. But Egypt isn't Syria [where in 2000 Bashar Assad took over from his father Hafez]. Mubarak and his advisers didn't understand this. They never imagined the people could turn against them.[8]

The rigged elections came in the context of an impending succession and a long, agonising *fin de règne* by a president who, after 29 years in office, had drifted away from managing the daily affairs of an increasingly sclerotic state apparatus. The indications of retrenchment, for Egyptians, were unmistakeable and further fuelled speculation that Mubarak intended to bequeath the presidency to his son.

The explosion outside the Church of Two Saints in Alexandria just after the clock struck midnight on this past New Year's Eve, which killed 23 people and injured dozens more, arguably was another contributing event. Thousands rioted in the capital and in Alexandria in the days that followed. Much of the anger was directed at the interior minister and domestic security services – "Fire the Interior Minister", one sign read[9] – who were blamed for not adequately protecting churches despite specific online threats from Islamist militants.[10] Quiet had scarcely returned when, on 11 January, an off-duty policeman shot six Egyptian Christians, killing 71-year-old Fathi Mosaad Eid Ghattas, on a train near the southern town of Salamut. Protesters clashed with police there and in the capital in the following days. In Cairo, for the first time in years, the protesters outnumbered and were briefly able to overpower the riot police, breaching the interior ministry's façade of invulnerability.

In the mind of many, however, Tunisia was the real turning point.[11] The mixture of anger and activism took a different shape as news came of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's hasty departure for Saudi Arabia on the night of 14 January, after weeks of protests throughout the country. Egyptians did not need Tunisians to learn how to protest; what those events told them was not that protests were possible but that they could succeed and that state institutions were weaker than they appeared. Over the next days, many appeared newly empowered, asking themselves why the same scenario could not occur in their country.[12] Between 15 and 19 January, at least seven people attempted suicide by setting themselves on fire, in apparent imitation of Mohammed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor whose 17 December self-immolation sparked the protests that toppled Ben Ali.[13] There also are indications that young Tunisian and Egyptian activists, along with others from Arab countries, had been sharing information and advice for some time.[14]

As these developments occurred, the government evinced concern but did not move to head off what was to come.[15]

B. TAKING TO THE STREETS

Activists, by contrast, saw their opening. Those online, including from the 6 April Youth and We Are All Khaled Said groups, started a page on the social networking site

[7] Commenting on the elections in December 2010, an Egyptian diplomat said, "the regime is on the defensive and has a major, fateful issue on the horizon [succession]. If you had the choice, on that fateful day, of having 80 per cent support in parliament or 100 per cent, what would you do?" Crisis Group interview, December 2010.

[8] Crisis Group interview, Egyptian diplomat, January 2011.

[9] Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 3 January 2011.

[10] See "Copts accuse authorities of laxity", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 1 January 2011; on the threats, see Maggie Michael, "Anti-Christian drumbeat loud before Egypt attack", Associated Press, 4 January 2011.

[11] "The parliamentary elections spilt the gasoline, Tunisia lit the match". Crisis Group interview, former Egyptian diplomat, Cairo, 12 February 2011.

[12] Crisis Group interviews, grocers, taxi drivers, merchants, waiters, bank employees, Cairo, 15-20 January 2011. Public opinion on the question was divided. A woman said, "we are 80 million. Why can we not do what they have done in Tunisia?" Others were more sceptical: "We've all had enough. But Egyptians are very good and very patient, more than they need to be. And many people think, 'If the police take me, how will my family survive?'"

[13] "Another Egyptian tries to set himself alight", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 19 January 2011. One, Ahmad Hashim al-Sayid, a 25-year-old unemployed resident of Alexandria, succeeded. "Egyptian dies after setting himself on fire", Associated Press, 18 January 2011.

[14] A protester ticked off specific tactics he had learned, via internet, from the protests in Tunisia: spray-painting the windows of security vehicles and sticking a rag in their exhaust pipes to disable them; and applying vinegar to a scarf to counter the effects of tear gas. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 3 February 2011

[15] The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) reportedly recommended "avoiding issuing any statements, or taking any measures, that could upset citizens or add to existing pressures in the near term". "Egypt government scurries to contain political fallout from Tunisia uprising", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 16 January 2011.

Facebook to call for a mass protest to mark 25 January, the national Police Day holiday. An organiser commented that the protest was originally intended to be limited and symbolically mark the day, but in the ferment of the moment, four demands were added:[16] the resignation of Habib Al-Adli, then interior minister;[17] a fair minimum wage; the end of the Emergency Law;[18] and a two-term limit on the presidency.[19] Within days, more than 80,000 Facebook users said they would participate across the country. Explaining her decision, a young woman said, "if we still have honour and want to live with dignity in this land, we have to go down [into the streets] on 25 January. We'll go down and demand our fundamental rights. I will not set myself on fire. If the security forces want to set me on fire, let them do it!"[20]

The Muslim Brotherhood – which, though banned under the old regime, has long been Egypt's largest and best-organised opposition group – also took part. Reflecting tensions in its ranks that have pervaded the movement for some time,[21] younger activists took the lead, with the established leadership ultimately concurring – subject, it said, to strict conditions such as preservation of property and the use of strictly peaceful methods.[22] As a result, the Brotherhood chose a middle path, dispatching a small number of mainly young activists to demonstrations in Cairo and elsewhere. Like the rest of the traditional political spectrum, it found itself playing catch-up with the young leaders' energy and momentum.

The numbers on 25 January took all by surprise.[23] Protesters gathered in many spots around Cairo to complicate efforts to control them. They misled the police by announcing then quickly changing locations, alerting participants to new sites via Twitter, text message and mobile phone.[24] The result was unprecedented: for the first time in most protesters' memory, they outnumbered police. Even more shocking, in some places no police were in sight, as protesters paused before apartment buildings and called on those watching to join. Many did.[25] Tens of thousands demonstrated across Cairo,[26] eventually braving tear gas, water cannons and police batons to converge in Tahrir Square, a symbolically important[27] downtown site. Thousands reportedly demonstrated in Alexandria; crowds also turned out in the southern city of Aswan, the Nile Delta town of Mansura and the Sinai.[28] The demonstrations were largely peaceful but in Suez, touched off a days-long battle, as crowds denouncing the death of two young men threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at police and the main fire station.[29]

[16] Facebook "event" page, since removed, accessed by Crisis Group 24 January 2011.

[17] Habib Al-Adli was appointed interior minister in 1997. During his tenure, the ministry budget grew to almost $2 billion a year, and he became one of the most powerful and feared men in the country.

[18] The Emergency Law (162 of 1958) has been in place almost continuously since 1967, and continuously since the assassination of President Anwar Al-Sadat in 1981. Human rights groups have repeatedly charged that it has been used to crack down on peaceful political dissent.

[19] Article 77 of the constitution reads: "The term of the presidency shall be six Gregorian years starting from the date of the announcement of the result of the plebiscite. The President of the Republic may be re-elected for other successive terms".

[20] Asmaa Mahfouz, video recorded 18 January 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjIgMdsEuk.

[21] See Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, *Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?*, 18 June 2008. Crisis Group has spoken with a number of young former Muslim Brotherhood activists who, frustrated with their leaders' cautious and gradualist approach, have left the movement. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, June 2007-October 2010.

[22] The Brotherhood "supports any group that … is seeking change in Egypt". "MB group's youths to participate and respect group's regulations", Ikhwanweb, 23 January 2011, www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=27910.

[23] The day after the mass protests, a surprisingly candid Egyptian official asked: "What's the difference between Iran and Egypt? In Iran, the regime still has a significant number of supporters. In Egypt, there's nothing. There is no balance any longer between who is with and who is against the regime. Everyone wants a change". Crisis Group interview, 31 January 2011.

[24] Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 25 January 2011; Crisis Group telephone interviews, protesters, Cairo, 25 January 2011.

[25] Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 25 January 2011.

[26] A video of a street corner in downtown Cairo that day can be found at "Day of rage demonstration 25 January", YouTube, 25 January 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-wZpF6P7sQ.

[27] What is today Tahrir Square was off-limits to Egyptians during the British occupation, when it was the site of British barracks. In 1949, after British forces left, King Farouk raised the Egyptian flag, abolished the name "Isma'iliyya Square" (after the nineteenth century khedive known for his affection for Europe) and renamed it Tahrir ("Liberation") Square. In 1955, Gamal Abdel Nasser's revolutionary regime turned the square into a military parade ground, making it a space of state propaganda and, in reaction, of protest. In 1972, it was occupied during student demonstrations pressing Sadat to take a tougher stance against Israel, and in 2003, it was briefly occupied during protests against the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Khaled Fahmy, a historian, concludes: "Don't underestimate the importance of the government's inability to take back Tahrir. It's the core of the city, connecting parliament, the presidential palace, the cabinet. As people here see it, when you take the square, you take the city. If you think of it as just a protest site, you don't get why it's so important and so damaging to the government's credibility. Taking the square is akin to taking parliament in other places". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 6 February 2011.

[28] "Live Updates: Opposition groups protest on Police Day", *Ahram Online*, 25 January 2011, http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/4773.aspx.

[29] Two days after the protests started, a journalist reported, "the whole city is fire and smoke". Crisis Group telephone interview, journalist, 27 January 2011.

Social-networking sites buzzed with plans for larger protests on 28 January, to be named "Friday of Anger". Around midnight, the internet was cut. Just before dawn, mobile-phone networks went down. The apparent purpose was to complicate coordination between protesters,[30] but with people congregating in mosques for Friday prayers, the need for high-technology tools was diminished. Besides, shutting down remote communication systems may have given people additional incentives to congregate and interact in the real world.

Organised political movements joined in. Unlike three days earlier, the Muslim Brotherhood announced it fully backed the protests;[31] according to one of its leaders, it chose to focus on Cairo, where it dispatched tens of thousands of activists.[32] Nobel Peace Prize winner and former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohammed ElBaradei – who had been touted as a possible presidential contender and had pushed a constitutional reform agenda in 2010 – returned to Egypt on 27 January.[33] But the main story, again, was on the streets. Across the country, hundreds of thousands defied the police, whose attempts to disperse them eventually collapsed. In the capital, hundreds of thousands poured out of their neighbourhoods and streamed toward Tahrir Square. The crowds frequently returned to their standard refrain – "The people want the overthrow of the regime" – as well as other chants that evinced a non-partisan tone: "Not for ElBaradei or the Brotherhood, but because Egypt is tired".[34]

For many, the protests were both an expression of long-held grievances and unprecedentedly empowering. Crisis Group spoke with participants from many parts of the city, both elite and poor, who shared heady and often moving stories of battling their way through tear gas, plastic pellets, batons and water cannons, some travelling upwards of 10km on foot to the city centre.[35] As much confrontation and brutality as there was that day,[36] so too was there confusion, particularly for the police, who were caught off-guard and eventually overwhelmed:[37]

> The security guys were terrified. I faced off with a riot policeman, both of us screaming and pleading with each other, him yelling "Don't approach!" and me yelling, "Don't shoot!" He clearly didn't want to. I saw another officer holding a tear gas gun who said to the guy next to him, "I can't do this, this is wrong", and then ran behind a security vehicle and gave the gun to someone else.[38]

Another protester summed up the sense of empowerment that came over the marchers: "We saw them retreat in front of us as we marched to the square. It was an amazing feeling, them retreating, us marching forward. We won, they lost, and we both knew it".[39]

[30] Some protesters say the strategy backfired. "When I woke up Friday morning, and there was no net or mobile phone coverage, that's when I got really mad", one said. "I thought, 'Really? You're going to put my back against the wall like that? You're going to cut me off from the world? No'". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 28 January 2011. The protesters that day took up the internet outage as a rallying call: chants of "Cut the net, you'll still wind up in Saudi" were heard in Giza, on the west bank of the Nile. Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 28 January 2011.

[31] On Thursday night, the Muslim Brotherhood stated: "The movement of the Egyptian people that began 25 January and which has been peaceful … and civilised, must continue against corruption, oppression and injustice until its legitimate demands for reform are met". It added that the government's charges that the Brotherhood was behind the unrest were "an obvious attempt … to beg the American administration to stand beside it". "Media Release: The opinion of the Brotherhood", Muslim Brotherhood, 26 January 2011.

[32] Crisis Group interview, February 2011.

[33] ElBaradei suspended his membership on Crisis Group's Board of Trustees concurrent with return to Egypt. Upon his arrival he said, "this is a critical time in the life of Egypt and I have come to participate with the Egyptian people …. The regime has not been listening …. If people, in particular young people, if they want me to lead the transition, I will not let them down. My priority right now … is to see a new regime and to see a new Egypt through peaceful transition. I advise the government to listen to the people and not to use violence. There's no going back". Quoted in *The Guardian*, 27 January 2011.

[34] The standard refrain of the protesters was in literary Arabic – not the normal colloquial Egyptian dialect – and was borrowed from Tunisia. During the initial planning and earlier protests, the standard refrain had been "Bread of Freedom, Dignity of Humanity", indicating that at early stages, socio-economic justice and a more diffuse sense of liberty were what had galvanised the protesters. Once they settled on toppling the regime, that became the unifying theme for the diverse groups. Crisis Group interview, Hossam Bahgat, human rights activist, Cairo, 14 February 2011.

[35] Crisis Group interviews, protesters, Cairo, 28-31 January 2011.

[36] The police mostly used non-lethal measures in an attempt to control the crowds, though they fired tear gas into enclosed buildings and the Tahrir Square metro station, while refusing to let people flee, and fired live ammunition when defending police stations, prisons and the interior ministry. As the battle dragged on, protesters threw Molotov cocktails, torched police vehicles and beat police, though in some cases other protesters extinguished the flames in the trucks and tried to rescue the officers. Crisis Group observations and interviews, wounded protesters, Cairo, 28 January 2011.

[37] In one incident, visibly uncomfortable riot police watched protesters pause for evening prayers, after which the two sides began shouting at each other and negotiating. The police gave up and joined the protesters walking toward Tahrir Square. When the protester and police were stopped by the next line of police, the first police rejoined their colleagues and again turned on the protesters. Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 28 January 2011.

[38] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 7 February 2011.

[39] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 7 February 2011.

Battles around the city and country continued into the night. Some of the fiercest were in Suez and the towns and small cities of the Nile Delta, where tens of thousands clashed with police and with thugs dispatched by the NDP; witnesses commented on the heavy presence of Muslim Brothers.[40] Many police stations nationwide and, according to witnesses, all in Alexandria, were ablaze.[41] Observers reported sporadic looting across Cairo and Alexandria that night, but most violence in the capital was directed at the police and symbols of the ruling NDP.[42] By night's end, the capital was littered with burnt-out police vehicles, and the offices of the NDP and police stations across the country were smouldering.

When Mubarak appeared on state television[43] on 29 January to address the country for the first time since the uprising had begun four days earlier, he announced the dismissal of his cabinet and a speeding of reform to help the poor and encourage democracy. Later that day, Ahmed Ezz – Egypt's leading steel magnate, NDP secretary for organisational affairs and lightning-rod for opposition criticism – resigned from the party.[44] Mubarak swore in intelligence chief Omar Suleiman as his vice president (ending a decade of speculation that he was grooming his son Gamal to take his place),[45] appointed his new prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq, and, the following day, named the remainder of the new government – a "government without businessmen", as the leading government daily, *Al-Ahram*, trumpeted on its front page.[46] Dropping the business elite from the cabinet and Al-Adli from the interior ministry removed two of the most hated facets of the regime, but Mubarak's tone as he made these shifts – the way he firmly promised not to be "lax or tolerant" in dealing with threats to public order – only further enraged the opposition.

For the protesters who had by then poured into Tahrir Square, Mubarak's concessions mattered little, since he had failed to address their primary demand: that he resign. What was important is that they had held their ground. After interior ministry forces withdrew, protesters remained overnight. The occupation of Tahrir Square had begun. With the civilian police and gendarmerie routed, tanks rolled into the cities late that night, and the military became the country's effective authority. It was given a hero's welcome, and by and large soldiers would continue to be treated as such for the duration of the crisis – even when the army's motivations were unclear and its actions ambiguous.

As the army deployed, the interior ministry pulled its forces from official duty in the streets,[47] and fear took hold. The regime was waving the spectre of chaos[48] and making clear that normal life would not return so long as the protests continued. A police officer said he was given an automatic rifle and told, "it's every man for himself".[49] The army deployed to guard sensitive locations, but in insufficient numbers to enforce law and order. Some high-profile shops and government offices were attacked, although most violence was directed at NDP offices and

[40] Witnesses described fierce fighting in the Nile Delta cities of Damanhur and Mansura, traditional Brotherhood strongholds, for example. They said the majority of protesters in both were unaffiliated young people, but that Muslim Brotherhood youth turned out in force and that young men who unsuccessfully fought the protesters confessed to having been sent by the NDP. In Mansura, protesters stormed the local headquarters of the interior ministry's domestic intelligence agency (State Security Investigations). Crisis Group telephone interviews, 20 February 2011.

[41] Crisis Group telephone interviews, witnesses, Cairo and Alexandria, 29-30 January 2011.

[42] There was, of course, collateral damage. In Tahrir Square, protesters stopped other demonstrators from looting the Egyptian Museum, and, after an explosion at the adjacent national NDP headquarters threatened to spread flames to the museum, helped soldiers from the Republican Guard, which answers directly to the president, to contain the blaze. Their job was complicated by the fact that protesters had torched fire trucks and the nearest fire station after the trucks' hoses were turned against them. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 28 January 2011.

[43] Egyptian state television broadcast, 29 January 2011, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsIBw199b5Q.

[44] Ezz, known as the "*ragul al-hadid*" (the man of steel), for many Egyptians symbolised the alliance between big business and political power and was widely viewed as Gamal Mubarak's enforcer in the party. As such, he was an easy target for the opposition, who dubbed the 2010 parliament, with its near-total lack of an opposition, the "Ahmed Ezz parliament". On 3 February, Egypt's general prosecutor froze his assets, as well as former Interior Minister Habib Al-Adli's. Both men have since been detained – as have former Housing Minister Ahmed Mughrabi and former Tourism Minister Zuhair Garana – and other former officials have seen their assets frozen and been banned from travel. *Al-Ahram*, 18 February 2011.

[45] The regime would only say this explicitly several days later, when Omar Suleiman gave an interview on 3 February.

[46] *Al-Ahram*, 1 February 2011.

[47] Media reports at the time suggested that the civilian police were pulled hours before the army deployed, but in fact the withdrawal was piecemeal and chaotic. In some instances, police and soldiers jointly detained and assaulted protesters. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 28-29 January 2011.

[48] This was a theme to which the government would return many times over the succeeding days. On 6 February, Suleiman said to ABC news (U.S.), "we don't want chaos in our country. If President Mubarak will say 'I am leaving now', who will take over? In the constitution, that means the [parliament] speaker will take over. I think with this atmosphere that means the other people who have their own agenda will make instability in our country". www.newsmax.com/TheWire/Omar-Suleiman-hosni-mubarak/2011/02/06/id/385132. Mubarak said, "If I resign today, there will be chaos". *Globe and Mail*, 3 February 2011.

[49] Crisis Group telephone interview, police officer, Cairo, 30 January 2011.

police stations.[50] Across residential neighbourhoods, instances of violence were uneven but fear was uniform.[51] In Alexandria, a shopkeeper pleaded, "we need a government. We don't want Mubarak, but we need police who know the neighbourhood. The army doesn't know the neighbourhood. We don't want the same police, but we need police!"[52] Prisons too were targeted.[53]

After a harrowing night, communities organised to ensure the peace. Local committees armed with sticks, knives, clubs and the occasional firearm banded together – with what a writer described as "almost comical seriousness"[54] – to protect their neighbourhoods.[55] Participants waxed eloquent about the local solidarity that blossomed under adversity, although the motives of those who staffed the checkpoints differed: "Some wanted to be a policeman for the day, others got to be revolutionaries, and still others just wanted to protect their property".[56] Police were off the streets for two days before they began to return, but even when they did, shops remained closed, as did banks, and supplies ran low.[57]

The way the regime handled the first days of the crisis was indicative of how it would handle the rest: a stick-and-carrot approach that coupled violent repression, both official and unofficial, with limited concessions in an attempt to peel off parts of the opposition. While at times it seemed that it might recover its footing, ultimately neither tactic was successful. Although the regime stopped short of massive, murderous repression, it nonetheless engaged in indiscriminate violence, exacting a punishing cost in terms of domestic and international opinion. Seemingly fearful they would be taken as weakness, Mubarak was slow to make concessions,[58] seeking instead to project an image of unflappable stability. But patently out of tune with the public mood, he came across as arrogant and disdainful.

The grudging, limited and piecemeal way in which carrots were offered undermined their intended purpose. While the protest leaders and many others were intent on toppling him and took partial concessions as encouragement to press further, a broader segment of those who turned out might have been swayed had a contrite president offered a substantial package earlier. A former Egyptian diplomat commented:

> He did it as if it were a gesture as opposed to his responsibility. He didn't own up to mistakes and put forward a case that things could change. He was neither convincing nor credible and didn't offer anything substantive until it was far too late to matter. He might have been scared of the slippery slope he would create offering concessions, but ironically he was the one who created it by being so parsimonious and resentful when he offered them.[59]

The protesters' actions and the regime's response determined the course of subsequent events in another way as well – both during and beyond the revolt itself. Mubarak, in his last years, strengthened the interior ministry and the NDP, at the relative expense of the military.[60] Of the three,

[50] The landmark Arcadia Mall and the Carrefour supermarket were attacked and burned, for example. In Alexandria, local residents pleaded with soldiers for help, only to be told they did not have the numbers. Elsewhere, men – with arms that victims speculated were looted from police stations – called for residents of expensive villas to bring down their possessions and threatened to "come up and get them". Crisis Group telephone interview, witness, Cairo, 29 January 2011. Threats notwithstanding, a resident of Cairo's wealthy Zamalek neighbourhood said, "it never degenerated into class warfare. If people from a poor neighbourhood had decided to invade en masse, our little defence committees would have been useless". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 February 2011.

[51] Many contend the looting of the first nights was part of a government strategy to create chaos and terrify the people into supporting the police and the government – a theory to which even some Egyptian officials interviewed by Crisis Group subscribed. Neighbourhood watch groups told stories of looters caught with police identification, or who confessed, when caught by neighbourhood watches and turned over to the military, that they had been paid to wreak havoc. Crisis Group interviews, neighbourhood watch volunteers, Cairo, 29-31 January 2011.

[52] Crisis Group telephone interview, Alexandria, 30 January 2011.

[53] While information is still limited, human rights workers suggest violence occurred in at least three of Egypt's 24 official prisons. In some instances, inmates themselves rose up; in others, wardens reportedly urged prisoners to flee, apparently in an attempt to stir insecurity; in at least one case – Wadi Natroun Prison – guards abandoned their posts, leaving prisoners in their cells for days without food or water. Crisis Group interview, human rights worker, Cairo, 18 February 2011. There are widespread claims, yet to be verified, that at least one prison was besieged to free imprisoned Islamists. Residents of the working class Cairo neighbourhood of Shubra said that families had attacked police stations in order to free detained relatives and that police had responded with live ammunition. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, 19 February 2011.

[54] Issandr El Amrani, "Why Cairo, Why Tunis?", *London Review of Books*, February 2011.

[55] Coverage was somewhat spotty, in keeping with the anarchic nature of events, but most neighbourhoods had at least some. In the elite neighbourhood of Zamalek, coverage was particularly intense, with a checkpoint nearly every 100 metres. A local resident joked that "the weapon of choice here is the golf club". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 4 February 2011.

[56] Crisis Group interview, lawyer, Cairo, 5 February 2011.

[57] Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 29-31 January 2011.

[58] Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution referred to Mubarak as "a guy who takes his victories not from doing things, but from avoiding doing things". Quoted in *The New York Times*, 6 February 2011.

[59] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 13 February 2011.

[60] Egypt's 2010 military budget was $4.56 billion. "Defence Budget Egypt", "Sentinel Security Assessment", *Jane's*, www.

the operations and role of the last are the most opaque; the first two, by contrast, were omnipresent as mechanisms through which the regime projected its power throughout the country.[61] But with the internal security forces beaten, their vehicles and buildings torched, and the minister sacked and vilified,[62] the ministry suffered a grave blow. So too did the NDP, whose headquarters and offices were burned by protesters and whose top leadership resigned.[63] As the revolt escalated, the internal balances within the regime weakened, and the army was the only pillar left with not just a decent reputation, but an intact institutional structure as well.

C. HUNKERING DOWN

The momentum would see-saw many times over the next days. A successful "million man march"[64] on 1 February injected life into the protests, as did the military's declaration, the preceding day, that it supported the protesters' "legitimate demands" and would not use force against the people.[65] But that came to an abrupt end on Wednesday, 2 February, when pro-Mubarak demonstrators hit the streets. In the morning, a crowd numbering in the thousands converged on the square.[66] At the outset, it resembled its opposition counterpart, with men, women and children chatting, chanting, holding signs and displaying pictures. A pro-Mubarak protester explained that it had taken a few days for the president's partisans to organise themselves and assemble, given their opponents' head start.[67]

Others representing the same camp, however, organised quicker and with belligerent intent. Thugs (familiar to Egyptians as the "*baltagiyya*")[68] seen at elections, protests, and on other occasions when the regime preferred the pretence of unofficial violence pushed their way into the square, attacking demonstrators with fists, rocks, sticks, pipes, knives, machetes, brass knuckles and tear gas canisters. When some regime opponents fought back indiscriminately, a wider array of pro-Mubarak activists were

janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-North-Africa/Defence-budget-Egypt.html. This dwarfs spending on internal security, which in 2010 amounted to $1.49 billion. "Egypt's interior ministry requests bigger budget to fight strikes and protests", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 27 April 2009. But spending on internal security has been growing at a faster rate, percentage-wise, than spending on the military: Egypt increased military spending by $572 million and spending on internal security by $323 million in 2008. "Defence Budget Egypt", op. cit. Egyptian military analyst Abdallah al-Senawi said, "in the last six years, people who were close to the army witnessed a silent uproar within the military over the rise of Gamal [Mubarak] and like-minded businessmen, as they were imposing a hegemony over banking, industry and even the media …. The army also perceived Al-Adli as the minister responsible for cracking down on opponents and paving the way for Gamal to succeed his father". Quoted in Ahmed Zaki Osman, "Powerhouse and powerbrokers: A profile of Egypt's military", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 16 February 2011.

[61] On the local level, the NDP worked through a mixture of incentives and threats, offering proximity to power and patronage in return for political loyalty. The party's local representatives were often heads of prominent local families or leading businessmen. As the party of government, its representatives were able to lavish not just money but also political spoils on their clients. They also spent money on local enforcers. Crisis Group observations and interviews, voters, NDP and opposition parliamentary candidates, November 2010.

[62] Al-Adli would be banned from travelling and his assets frozen on 3 February. Reuters, 3 February 2011. On 18 February, he was detained on charges of money laundering. *Al-Ahram*, 19 February 2011.

[63] The NDP already had sustained a blow during the November 2010 elections, when party discipline broke down, leading to violence between rival party candidates in various districts. An Egyptian analyst commented: "The NDP let the tribes fight it out, and whoever won was anointed the NDP representative. It was tantamount to a recognition that the party label meant nothing". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2011.

[64] Numbers were impossible to gauge accurately, but conservative media estimates put those in Cairo and Alexandria at hundreds of thousands each, with tens of thousands demonstrating elsewhere across the country.

[65] Egyptian military spokesman Ismail Etman's address to the nation, state television, Cairo, 31 January 2011. The military apparently blessed those celebrations, distributing leaflets encouraging people to exercise their "right to express [their] opinions and demands in a civilised manner … while safeguarding the security and peace of the country and the citizens", and filming protesters cheering the soldiers and chanting "the people want the overthrow of the regime".

[66] The media reported a small pro-Mubarak demonstration the previous evening. BBC, 2 February 2011.

[67] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 4 February 2011.

[68] The catch-all category can include nearly everyone who participates in extra-legal but regime-sanctioned violence or intimidation, including plainclothes members of the security forces, their hired auxiliaries and released prisoners. A protester on his way to the square claimed he saw the thugs being organised: "One of them asked the organiser, 'Where is Maspiro?' [the Nile-side neighbourhood that houses the information and foreign affairs ministries]. He didn't know Cairo at all. The organiser replied, 'Just get on the trucks, we will take you there'". The protester also reported seeing camels on Suzuki trucks brought in from Giza, from where the idle (and angry) workers in the tourist sector had been bussed. An Italian journalist reported he found himself uncomfortably close to the camels and horses as they passed through the army ranks. He had no such luck: a bystander spat on him. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, February 2011. Labour Minister Aisha Abdel-Hadi seemed to confirm accusations that members of the regime-affiliated umbrella trade union were among the thugs. Asked by a journalist about "Egypt's workers" beating up "Egypt's youth", she replied, "they deserve it. Do you like what they're doing to us?", "I know one of them, Mr Prime Minister", *Al-Ahram*, 9 February 2011.

drawn into the melee.[69] Inside Tahrir Square, the protesters were far more numerous and held their own as the battle raged through the night into the following day.[70] The army had let the thugs pass unmolested into the square, raising suspicions it was more on Mubarak's side than its public posture indicated; however, the next day, soldiers separated the sides and henceforth for the most part kept pro-regime elements from the square.[71] Elsewhere in the city, Mubarak supporters controlled the streets, marching aggressively, smashing windows and, over the coming days, attacking foreigners and journalists.[72]

Lamenting the turn the demonstrations had taken, protesters were fearful of being dragged into a cycle of violence that would undermine their cause, diminish their numbers and shift the contest in the regime's favour.[73] The numbers indeed did wane during the fighting, as only those willing to possibly risk their lives showed up. At least fifteen died and hundreds were injured in Tahrir Square alone,[74] lending the cause more martyrs and deepening the crowd's commitment.[75] In the days to come, a protester said, the wounded "wore their bandages proudly, like medals in their war of liberation".[76]

Outside the square, however, the atmosphere was turning against the protesters, as exhaustion, a missed month's salary, and fear took their toll. On 1 February, the evening before the thuggish assaults, Mubarak gave his second and most successful speech of the crisis. He declared he would not run again in the September 2011 elections and would meet demands for reform – including amendments to two articles of the constitution[77] – in the intervening period. He also pulled at the nation's heartstrings when he expressed his desire to die on the soil of his homeland.[78] The speech temporarily arrested the protesters' momentum, as no small number around the country now believed that while Mubarak had made mistakes, he was also making concessions and would, in any case, step down in a matter of months.[79]

At the same time, the media stepped up its campaign against the protesters. State television initially had tried to minimise or ignore the protests – by emphasising the government's concessions and focusing on the violence and looting – but when foreign governments began to condemn the regime for its conduct, the regime sought to turn the situation to its advantage. It portrayed the protests as products of dangerous foreign meddling and the protesters as agents of radical Islam, Israel or the West. In an interview with state television, Omar Suleiman implied that protests were instigated by outsiders.[80]

[69] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 5 February 2011.
[70] Secular protesters appreciated the organisation of their Muslim Brotherhood counterparts. "They were very useful. They would call up reinforcements because they were getting tired standing watch, and they were good at organising 'stone factories' to create stores of ammunition and improvising barricades. This is what I was doing. But the people at the frontlines of the fighting were from the Ultras and the White Knights". Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 17 February 2011. The Ultras and the White Knights are loosely organised gangs of young hooligans attached to Egypt's two leading football clubs, Al-Ahli and Zamalek, and routinely clash with riot police after matches. Youths who appeared to be from the Ultras and the White Knights were also at the frontline of fighting with the police on the "Day of Rage". Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 28 January 2011.
[71] By the time the army began to prevent movement of pro-Mubarak activists into the square, opposition demonstrators had set up their own security checks, in cooperation with the army. Nearly a week after the worst of the clashes subsided, stone piles were still spread around the square, ready for use in the event of attack. Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 8 February 2011.
[72] Crisis Group witnessed an early pro-Mubarak march a short distance from Tahrir Square. The fast-moving crowd was composed almost entirely of young men between twenty and 40, with sparse signs (bearing slogans such as "They Betrayed the Homeland") and pictures of Mubarak. A number had sticks. Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 2 February 2011.
[73] "I sat home and cried", said one protester, a sentiment echoed by others. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, February 2011.
[74] Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Féderation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme researchers collected data from the field hospital in Tahrir Square. Crisis Group email correspondence, human-rights worker, 8 February 2011.
[75] Numerous – and large – pictures of those killed were scattered throughout the square. "People didn't die for the sake of changing two articles in the constitution". Crisis Group interview, protest leader, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[76] Crisis Group interview, protester, 5 February 2011.
[77] Namely Articles 76 and 77 which set out the nomination process for the president and duration of his term, respectively.
[78] Egyptian state television broadcast, 1 February 2011, available, with simultaneous English translation, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Qh09gzV3dA. A retiree, echoing a common view, said, "no political leader is perfect. Has Obama never made mistakes? Did Bush never make mistakes? But it's inconceivable for someone to come from abroad and insult the president of the republic. What right have they?" A protester said, "I am going to keep going to the square, but to be honest, his speech affected me. It's an Egyptian thing. When you die, they open your father's grave and your corpse is laid where his was. It's a very powerful image for Egyptians". Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, 2-3 February 2011.
[79] Crisis Group telephone interviews, Mubarak supporters, Cairo, 2 February 2011.
[80] Interview with Omar Suleiman, state television broadcast, 3 February 2011. He said that among "honourable" elements there were "other elements that had particular agendas that might be connected with foreign agendas or particular internal goals". Their goal, he claimed, was to "create the greatest amount of instability and spread chaos among Egypt's youth". He added

Viewers were subsequently told that the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas was leading demonstrations in Tahrir Square;[81] a woman appeared on Mehwar, an Egyptian television station, to claim she had been trained by the U.S. and Israel in Qatar to create chaos in Egypt;[82] a man called a talk show in tears, saying that foreigners were preventing protesters from leaving the square;[83] *Al-Ahram* juxtaposed the U.S., Iranian and Israeli flags, describing a widespread "conspiracy" to destabilise Egypt.[84] Rumours spread that the only reason protests were so large was that "foreign agents" were handing out food and money.[85]

The official campaign had ugly knock-on effects. It unleashed a wave of xenophobia and, with Cairenes angry and suspicious, hostility toward virtually anyone who seemed out of place. A hotel worker in one breath sympathised with the protesters' objectives and in the next characterised the protests as a foreign plot.[86] Egyptians attacked fellow Egyptians on the street on suspicion they were foreign agents[87] and told tales of an invasion in progress.[88] Foreign and Egyptian journalists were attacked by ordinary citizens and detained across the city. Their eventual accounts painted a picture of a repressive government and a country in the throes of mob violence.[89]

The violence further polarised a public that was increasingly exhausted. The regime had its partisans and was supported by those who had benefited in one way or another from the status quo; others, having gained precious little over his three decades of rule, nevertheless considered Mubarak an honourable man and the prospect of a precipitous overthrow frightening.[90] But more numerous were those who had not slept in a week, who were finding it increasingly difficult to find basic supplies as shops remained closed, who had not received their monthly salaries, who viewed Mubarak's concessions as victory enough and who were becoming increasingly weary – and wary – of the unrest, regardless of its provenance.[91] Standing in front of a shattered window, brandishing a stick to defend his property against further attacks by the pro-Mubarak mob, a shop owner wasn't interested in the identity of the attackers or in assigning blame: he just wanted the violence to stop.[92] For him and many others, Egypt could better bear eight more months of Mubarak than of chaos.

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that anyone who called for the president's departure did not belong to the Egyptian people. *Al-Ahram*, 3 February 2011.

[81] State television broadcast, 3 February 2011.

[82] She turned out to be a journalist for the newspaper *24 Hours* and was suspended for the faked interview. Abdel-Rahman Hussein, "Analysis: Tahrir Square a key to Egypt's future", *The Daily News Egypt*, 8 February 2011.

[83] The video is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=8slRy1JhLT8.

[84] 2 February 2011. A doorman said, "of course we are mad at foreigners. They are interfering in our affairs. Did you see what Khamenei said? Obama too and the rest. You would be angry too if Obama tried to tell your country what to do". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 4 February 2011.

[85] A protester said, "I had people – more than one – come up to me and ask me where they could get free KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken]". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 6 February 2011.

[86] Crisis Group interview, food service workers, Cairo, 3 February 2011. When the news anchor claimed a Molotov cocktail had been thrown by the "partisans of ElBaradei", one shouted "Criminals! Traitors!" and waved his shoe at the screen.

[87] An accountant claimed to have rescued two Egyptian girls "who looked foreign" from a crowd; he and other bystanders put themselves between the mob and the girls and put them in a taxi. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 4 February 2011. Crisis Group witnessed a crowd in a predominantly Christian neighbourhood confront a bearded man and veiled woman and demand to search their bags, apparently looking for a bomb; when they found only bread, they accused the couple of having bought supplies for the protesters in the square. During the melee, people in the crowd repeatedly accused the couple – who spoke Arabic with an Egyptian accent – of being "Afghans". Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 4 February 2010.

[88] A shop owner claimed that four Iranians, among many more who were stirring up trouble, had been arrested in front of his shop the previous evening. Asked how so many Iranians had been able to infiltrate Egypt, he replied: "Iranian diaspora groups have been here for a long time". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 4 February 2011. A protest leader related how she had argued with a taxi driver who claimed that French agents had killed Egyptians in the Manial neighbourhood. "As if the French want to repeat Napoleon's invasion!" Crisis Group interview, Cairo, February 2011.

[89] See, inter alia, Maram Mazen, "'You will be lynched', says Egyptian policeman: first person", Bloomberg, 4 February 2011; Hazem Zohny, "Reporter's firsthand account of violent mob mentality", *Ahram Online*, 8 February 2011; Souad Mekhennet and Nicholas Kulish, "2 detained reporters saw police's methods", *The New York Times*, 4 February 2011; Louise Sarant, "Foreign residents become tense amid rising xenophobia in Egypt", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 6 February 2011; ABC reporter Christiane Amanpour was intimidated and her car attacked, "Good Morning America", 3 February 2011; CNN reporter Anderson Cooper was beaten in the 2 February attacks, left Egypt and launched an unusually blunt broadside against the government, available at http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/world/2011/02/07/ac.kth.egyptian.deception.cnn.html.

[90] Crisis Group interviews, residents of a lower-middle class neighbourhood, Cairo, 2-4 February 2011. One said, "he is like our father. Would you do this to your father, kick him out of the house?"

[91] Crisis Group observations and interviews, grocers, restaurant workers, retirees, cleaners, Cairo, 29 January-4 February 2011. One said, "they lied to us in '67 and '73, and he hasn't done anything for us, but we have to make a deal with the devil". Others ticked off aspects of life indefinitely on hold such as getting treatment for a toothache.

[92] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 3 February 2011.

Ultimately, this tactic, too, backfired. The protesters held the square, at the cost of more victims, which increased their resolve. The attacks on foreigners galvanised the international media and brought yet more attention to the uprising in general and to the abuses of their colleagues in particular, leading to pressure from the U.S. and Europe.[93] The sight of Egyptians killing Egyptians horrified many. The new prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq, and then Mubarak himself were obliged to promise that those responsible for the attacks would be punished.[94] The prime minister's apology, covered in state media, pried open the space for more honest – if still not neutral – coverage of events; Suleiman and Mubarak gave interviews to the ABC (U.S.) network to do international damage control. The next day, Shafiq went further and promised that the square would not be cleared by force, and a smiling Defence Minister Muhammad Hussein Tantawi visited the troops there.

Security seemingly assured, the number of protesters again swelled, and the square became, in the eyes of many there, the kind of community that the protesters wanted Egypt to become: unified across religious, factional and class lines; cooperative; free; festive; and relatively safe. A protester commented: "There is a collective logic that has clicked here. People are on the same wavelength, united behind a single demand: bringing down the regime".[95] The mood was light despite the enormity of the stakes, with poetry, art and other performances, and perhaps most important of all, humour.[96]

While the crowd, indeed, was quite diverse, a disinterested assessment of its composition is complicated not only by the fact that attendance was protean – over the course both of any given day and of the three weeks – but also because the assessments themselves became something of a Rorschach test: people found in the mass of protesters what they wanted; the conclusion that crowds were a microcosm of Egyptian society was itself a political statement.[97]

The regime and protesters settled into an uneasy and unstable détente and over the next days, the momentum repeatedly shifting as both groped for a strategy to break the deadlock. The regime continued to offer piecemeal concessions that swayed few protesters.[98] In part, the issue revolved around which would be the legitimate forum and who would be legitimate partners in attempts to resolve the crisis. Officials asked for negotiations, but at first insisted on an end to the unrest; protesters were not averse to discussions in principle but posed as a pre-condition the president's resignation and the end to violence against them and rejected calls to leave the square. When the talks began, the regime selected its interlocutors, a move that most in Tahrir Square rejected and characterised as precisely the sort of manipulation that their revolution intended to end.[99] The struggle had become a test of wills, each side banking on its superior resiliency and seeking to play on its opponent's apparent weaknesses.

Attempts to broker a deal took various forms. On 3 February, a committee of "wise men" – composed of 24 newspaper editors, intellectuals, former diplomats, Egypt's richest businessman and other prominent figures[100] – released a blueprint for getting out the impasse.[101] Some of the

[93] Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemned the regime supporters' attacks, saying, "freedom of expression and freedom of the press are pillars of an open and inclusive society. The Egyptian government must demonstrate its willingness to ensure journalists' ability to report on these events to the people of Egypt and to the world". Agence France-Presse, 3 February 2011.
[94] Shafiq called the violence "a fatal error": "Egypt Unrest: PM apologises for Tahrir Square violence", BBC, 3 February 2011. Mubarak made the pledge on 10 February 2011, his final speech before resigning. It is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=l931zZcUbWU.
[95] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 February 2011.
[96] Participants competed with each other for the unofficial honour of the uprising's funniest homemade sign. Among favourites: "Go, because my arm is getting tired"; (perched on a donkey's head) "Photos with the president (with apologies to the donkey)"; and "The only vacuum we fear is the one between your ears". Crisis Group observations, Cairo, February 2011.
[97] An Egyptian sociologist summed up: "People have an ideological investment in this being a holistic struggle; that tends to blind their analysis". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 February 2011.
[98] On 5 February, the NDP's six-member politburo – including Gamal Mubarak – resigned and was replaced. Hossam Badrawi, a relatively independent figure within the party, was named secretary general. *Al-Arabiyya*, 5 February 2011. Badrawi resigned on 11 February, the day Mubarak stepped down.
[99] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, 8 February 2011.
[100] The "wise men" include, inter alia, prominent businessmen (such as Naguib Sawiris), political activists (such as Amr Hamzawy) and former well-known members of the diplomatic corps (such as Nabil Fahmi and Gamil Mattar, who also is a newspaper editor). For the full list of names, see Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa= view&id=42510&prog=zgp.
[101] Its provisions included: (1) That Mubarak delegate to Suleiman "the responsibilities of managing the transitional period … that will be completed by the end of the president's current term [in September 2011]; (2) That the vice president dissolve parliament and prepare a council of jurists to prepare the necessary constitutional amendments; (3) That he form a "government of experts and independent figures that are accepted by the public" during the transitional period; (4) That he end rule by the Emergency Law and "create specific mechanisms to hold accountable those responsible for attacks on the people … and for unprecedented intimidation of the public", including those in "state institutions who contributed to exposing the nation … to the effects of this absence of security"; and (5) That he ensure the safety of the youth who have joined protests, and protect

"wise men" – a term that displeased at least several of those so dubbed[102] – also spoke with protesters in the square about possibly representing them.[103] Separately, Nobel-Prize-winning chemist Ahmed Zewail stepped forward to offer ideas, as did ElBaradei, though both lacked a real popular base given their long residency outside the country.[104] Protesters mooted names to shepherd the transition process, among them Zewail, ElBaradei, opposition politician and journalist Hamdeen Sabbahi and Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa.[105] Nevertheless, despite the plethora of names circulating, most in the square refused to pledge support for any and were concerned about losing the momentum gained from their protests. One offered a tongue-in-cheek appraisal that reflected a widely-held view:

> Many names have been mentioned as presidential candidates but we don't support any of them. Maybe it would be better if we picked someone in this square – like that guy over there, wearing a T-shirt and playing football.[106]

At the regime's initiative, discussions between the government and several handpicked groups briefly got underway on 6 February. The move seemed to signal its recognition that violence had failed.[107] It sought to split the opposition, inviting a variety of groups including the NPD, the official opposition (including the Wafd, Tagammu and two smaller parties, the Democratic Generation Party and the Democratic Unionist Party), independent figures, six self-appointed representatives of the protesters and the Muslim Brotherhood.[108] The six came with no mandate – most protesters refused talks until Mubarak resigned.[109] Many in the room had little credibility outside it, since formal opposition parties have few supporters. Of the traditional opposition, the officially banned Brotherhood enjoyed the most credibility, and the regime's decision to initiate a dialogue with it was thus the most telling.

According to a participant, the very fact that the regime "was sitting and talking to – instead of beating up – its opposition, including the youth in the square and the Brotherhood", was itself significant.[110] But those in the square – including the Brotherhood youth – did not see it that way.[111] When Omar Suleiman issued a statement adumbrating the points on which the two sides purportedly had agreed,[112] the protesters in the square, including the

them from prosecution, persecution, and violation of their rights. Finally, the committee praised the "responsible, patriotic role of the military" and affirmed its support for the protesting youth. The statement was published in *Al-Shorouq* on 3 February 2011. The translation used here is from ibid.

[102] "Whoever said we were wise?" Crisis Group interview, committee member, Cairo, 6 February 2011.

[103] A member of the committee told Crisis Group that representatives of six or seven groups, "from ElBaradei to the Brotherhood", approached the "wise men' to represent their concerns to the regime. "They told us that they think that we are honest and independent and that we will faithfully convey their demands". The committee member added that the protesters seemed to appreciate their experience as negotiators and wanted insulation between themselves and the regime. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 February 2010.

[104] "ElBaradei would be alright. But we really want someone from the people", a protester said typically. "Where has ElBaradei been all these years?", one asked, adding, "we need someone from here, who understands the conditions we live in". A sanitation worker was harsher: "ElBaradei has lived outside so long that his Arabic doesn't sound natural anymore". Crisis Group interviews, protester, Cairo, February 2011.

[105] Crisis Group interviews, protesters, Cairo, 30 January-1 February 2011. When Moussa joined the protesters in Tahrir Square on 4 February, some in the crowd began chanting, "we want you as president", but Moussa, on his Twitter account, said he was in Tahrir to "ask people to calm down and start the conversation". In an indication of possible future intentions, he announced his resignation as Secretary General of the Arab League on 11 February 2011.

[106] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 31 January 2011.

[107] In his 3 February interview with ABC, Suleiman said "we will not use any violence against the protesters. We will ask them to go home, but we will not push them to go home", http://abcnews.go.com/International/egypt-abc-news-christiane-amanpour-exclusive-interview-vice/story?id=12836594&page=2.

[108] *Al-Ahram*, 7 February 2011. For a description of who was around the table, see Samer Shehata, "Dialogue of the Deaf", Middle East Channel/Foreign Policy, 8 February 2011, www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/08/dialogue_of_the_deaf. On 7 February, six "youths" from the square – who specified that they were present only in their personal capacities – met Suleiman to inform him that the results of the previous day's session were unsatisfactory, and they would continue their protests. *Al-Ahram*, 7 February 2011.

[109] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, Cairo, 7 February 2011.

[110] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2010.

[111] Brotherhood activists within the square – like their group's senior leadership – took pains to portray themselves as part of the Egyptian mainstream – free of narrow sectarian designs. One said, "we don't want anyone to be afraid of the fall of the regime. All Egypt – Christians, Muslims – are together against Mubarak. Look around! This isn't the Muslim Brotherhood. This is the Egyptian people". Another added: "I have a message to the West: You have many interests in the region. Please don't lose them for supporting one dictator. Please don't believe this is a problem created by the Brotherhood. We are here as Christians and Muslims. We are here together. But power seeks to divide the people to rule". Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, 31 January-1 February 2011.

[112] Following the meeting, Suleiman put out a statement asserting that the parties had agreed on the following points: Mubarak would not stand again; there would be a peaceful transfer of power according to the constitution; Articles 76 and 77 of the constitution would be amended, as would others as needed to transfer power peacefully; legislative changes required by these constitutional amendments would be passed; legal decisions on

young Brotherhood activists, condemned any putative agreement as irrelevant.[113] In consequence, so too did the Brotherhood leadership.[114]

While the concessions Suleiman offered might have satisfied many protesters had they been offered earlier and earnestly, by this point, few were listening. For the vast majority, it was the response to the meeting, not the meeting itself, that was the real story of the day, indicating how much Egypt had changed in two weeks. The ability to loudly reject what at other moments might have been a significant government compromise indicated that the balance of power was shifting, and it was the opposition that, in the words of a sympathetic journalist, was "setting the political agenda".[115] The failure of the session hardened both sides; that day, Suleiman posed the choice before the country in stark terms – dialogue or coup – while the protesters made their first moves to establish the Coalition of the 25 January Revolution, an early attempt to cobble together a body to coordinate protests and speak for the demonstrators.[116] It was increasingly clear that a resolution would not involve a brokered arrangement so much as unilateral steps by the protesters on the one hand and regime elements on the other.

At the street level, once the protesters had defended Tahrir Square, they began to be trapped within it, their momentum seemingly stalled. Some considered the nascent sense of normalcy a positive development that could attenuate the growing anger and resentment of the broader population. A former activist from the reformist Wafd Party, who herself had participated in early protests, commented that the "biggest contribution we can make right now to the protesters is to get life back to normal. Now, everything is paralysed. People are resentful and angry. Going back to work will make the protests more sustainable, not less".[117] But for others, "sustainable" protests were a significant danger; as time went on, their impact would lessen, some demonstrators might peel off, and other Egyptians could resent indefinite interference with their daily lives and massive disturbance in their sources of income.

D. "THE PEOPLE, AT LAST, HAVE OVERTHROWN THE REGIME"

For many, Tahrir Square successfully defended, had become a trap. A protest organiser commented:

> If we remain confined to Tahrir, we will be besieged and splintered. If we can escalate back to how it was on 28 January, there's no way in hell anyone can split us. Ever since the *baltagiyya* attacked, we have become known as the "Tahrir people". Instead of the Egyptian revolution, people started talking about Tahrir Square. If we can't break that mentality, we are finished.[118]

Protesters' plans for how to get out involved increased media work, which was facilitated by the 7 February release and immediate celebrity of Google executive Wael Ghoneim, who gave the protests a sympathetic and recognisable face, particularly for the middle classes from which many of the revolt's organisers were drawn. Protest leaders started thinking about forming popular committees to educate the broader public and sell products cheaply in neighbourhoods in an effort to build rapport with those who – angered by the loss in income, believing Mubarak had conceded on key points and not understanding why his stepping down now or in eight months should make such a difference – they felt had begun to turn against them.[119]

Most importantly, however, they planned to escalate their protests, in the form of strikes, joint actions with other

appeals from the parliamentary elections would be implemented; corruption would be investigated, as would the chaos during the uprising; and the importance of returning security and stability. To carry out these commitments, the following steps were envisioned: forming a committee to study constitutional amendments and necessary legislative changes; opening an office to receive complaints about political detainees and release them immediately; removing press constraints; delegating a monitoring and legal mechanism to investigate corruption and loss of control; ending the state of emergency in accordance with security conditions and the end of the current security threat. All were said to agree on refusing foreign intervention, in all forms, in Egyptian affairs. A national follow up committee was to be established to ensure implementation of what had been agreed. *Al-Shorouq*, 6 February 2011.

[113] *The New York Times* quoted a protester who – despite the fact that the session had addressed some of the protesters' demands – deprecated its results: "All these attempts at putting people to sleep by responding to very marginal demands is just a tactic to gain time …. As soon as people leave the square, he will take his revenge on all of them", 6 February 2011.

[114] "When the Muslim Brotherhood participated in the round of dialogue, it never meant to abandon the revolution … but rather sought to accelerate the achievement of its demands through the rapid and peaceful transfer of power". "Muslim Brotherhood Press Release on the Sixteenth Day of the Blessed People's Rebellion", Muslim Brotherhood, 9 February 2011. ElBaradei described the protesters and the Brotherhood as "the only credible opposition. If the young people support and the Brotherhood subscribes, you will have unity, and there won't be splits within opposition. 90 per cent of Egyptians will rally behind whatever they agree on". Crisis Group interview, 8 February 2011.

[115] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 8 February 2011.

[116] *Al-Ahram*, 8 February.

[117] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 6 February 2011.

[118] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, 7 February 2011.

[119] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, 7 February 2011.

political and labour groups and civil disobedience.[120] They were successful. As the numbers swelled inside the square following Ghoneim's release, demonstrations spread outside it as well. Protest marches came from Cairo University and Nasr City and went out to parliament, several ministries and, on 10 and then 11 February, the day that Mubarak stepped down, Egyptian television and the presidential palace. Thousands of workers joined wildcat strikes in parts of the country that previously had been relatively untouched by the protest movement.[121]

As a sign the pendulum was swinging, the system itself began to crack. The state media – after having scathingly criticised the protesters for days – changed its coverage. Anchors struggled to reconcile the accusations against the protesters with the fact that regime officials had pronounced them "honourable"; protesters who directly refuted the government's line began to appear, as did somewhat more accurate protest coverage. Scholars from the venerable Islamic university Al-Azhar, whose prestige had been tarnished by government appointment of top officials and influence over its curriculum, were among the first to peel away and join the protests.[122] Workers pressed their unions' regime-backed leaders and in some cases, pressured them to resign.[123] The new culture minister, Gaber Asfour, resigned days after his appointment.[124] Every new protest, government retreat or crack in the system made protesters more aware of their power. After listening to a caller denounce Mubarak on a radio show, an activist said, "listen to that. The revolution is already here".[125] With confidence about the direction, another concluded:

> You have to not understand Egypt to think that these are small things. How much of a difference two weeks have made. The government is losing ground. Only the people in the square can dismantle the protests. The government has tried and failed.[126]

Mubarak's final speech on 10 February indicated either how out of touch he had become or how stubborn he remained. He announced he would transfer at least some powers to his vice president – the primary component of the deal the "wise men" had put forward a week earlier and he had rejected – and that he intended to reform six and possibly more articles of the constitution.[127] But his offer to step back, if not down, was buried and unclearly stated, toward the end of a rambling speech that was somehow both apologetic and defiant. The public's frustration was particularly sharp, since expectations had been raised during the afternoon by the pronouncements of a variety of figures that the protesters' demands would be met that evening.

Hopes also had been raised earlier in the day, when the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces – a body that had met only twice before, during Egypt's 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel, and which would normally be, but in this case was not, chaired by the president[128] – issued "Communiqué Number 1", endorsing "the people's legitimate demands".[129] It was an ambiguous announcement – it could as easily have meant the army was guaranteeing imple-

[120] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, 7 February 2011.
[121] For many strikers, economic concerns – not the president's resignation – topped their demands. Egyptian unions are tightly controlled by the government; only three are independent. Public electricity, communications, sanitation, railways, bus and oil sectors all saw wildcat strikes, beginning from 7 February; some workers also demanded resignation of regime-backed bosses. State-owned companies had strikes as well. Doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and others joined in. Crisis Group interview, labour organiser, Cairo, 11 February 2011.
[122] They became more numerous as the days went on. One man, remarking on an Al-Azhar sheikh's protest sign, pointedly asked him, "Where were you all these years, O sheikh?" Crisis Group observations, 30 January-1 February 2011.
[123] The deputy head of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation was forced to resign. Journalists at two state papers, *Al-Ahram* and *Rose Al-Youssef* – pressed their leadership to stand down, with partial success. Crisis Group interview, labour leader, Cairo, 10 February 2010.
[124] *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 10 February 2011.
[125] Crisis Group interview, 9 February 2011.
[126] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[127] The six are the same that are undergoing revision today. They include Article 76 (defining the nomination process for presidential candidates and the structure of the presidential election commission); Article 77 (setting out the duration and number of presidential terms); Article 88 (eliminating judicial supervision of elections); Article 93 (determining that parliament alone can rule on the eligibility of its members); and Article 189 (relating to proposals for constitutional amendments and their ratification). The opposition has demanded that Article 179 (providing for the transfer of civilians to military courts) be abolished. See Reuters, 10 February 2011; also Nathan Brown, Michelle Dunn and Amr Hamzawy, "Egypt's Controversial Constitutional Amendments", Carnegie Endowment Paper, 23 March 2007.
[128] A website produced by the information ministry before the upheaval defined the council as including eighteen members, "under the chairmanship of the president of the republic, who doubles as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces". When it met in February 2011, Mubarak and Suleiman were not present. The membership, at least as it stood before the uprising, can be found at www.sis.gov.eg/En/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=1136. The body more familiar to Egypt-watchers is the National Security Council, that in addition to military officials, also includes the irrigation, interior and defence ministers and the head of intelligence. The defence minister now chairs the Supreme Council.
[129] English translations of the Supreme Council's communiqués since 10 February can be found at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/02/10/world/middleeast/20110210-egypt-supreme-council.html?ref=middleeast.

mentation of Mubarak's promises as his imminent removal – but to many who wanted to believe the end was near, the latter interpretation was the more logical.

In the end, the military was the arbiter of Mubarak's fate. The chants at the enormous protests the day after his speech called for it to put an end to the nation's ordeal as Tunisia's army had done. Exactly what transpired over those final days – within the military, between the military and the president, between the military and the elite Republican Guard that answered directly to him, and between Cairo and the capitals of the world – remains unclear. But to the great credit of the people and the military, the bloodshed that some had feared never materialised, and at 18:00 on 11 February, Omar Suleiman issued a brief statement that Mubarak had given up his post and transferred his powers to the military. In the ecstatic celebrations in and around Tahrir Square, a variation on the standard refrain of the previous three weeks took hold: "The people, at last, overthrew the regime".

The period since Mubarak resigned has been one of great uncertainty and also great optimism. Regime opposition has been transformed into a democracy movement. Egypt is now ruled by largely unknown generals who issue oracular decrees via the state media, text messages and, after 17 February, Facebook.[130] Parliament has been dissolved, pending legal and constitutional reforms and fresh elections, and the Supreme Council has arrogated to itself the right to issue decrees with the force of law.[131] The constitution has been suspended, pending a referendum on reforms now being considered by a council of jurists working on a tight deadline.[132]

Prime Minister Shafiq's government, appointed by Mubarak on 31 January and initially left in place, was reshuffled on 22 February,[133] though its ministers continue to have only limited decision-making powers, and many political activists remain unsatisfied.[134] Some workers have continued to press for better pay and the replacement of their union leaders[135] despite calls to return to work, but for the most part and for the time being, Egyptians seem willing to give the military the benefit of the doubt.

This is likely in no small measure due to the lack of alternatives, but also to the hope the protesters invested in the military, the promises it has made and the respect it repeatedly conveyed for the people's "legitimate demands".[136] The opposition cheered the military's salute to "the martyrs" who fell in the uprising. Likewise, the military's commitments to "human freedom, the rule of law, support for the value of equality, pluralistic democracy, social justice, and the uprooting of corruption" as "the bases for the legitimacy of any system of governance that will lead the country in the coming period"[137] has reassured many, as have promises to eventually lift the state of emergency, not to pursue those who participated in the protests[138] and

[130] The opening of the military's Facebook page was widely covered on Egypt's official broadcast media.
[131] Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Communiqué no. 3, 12 February 2011.
[132] The head of that eight-member panel tasked with amending the constitution in ten days, Tariq Al-Bishri, is a widely respected former judge who began as a secular leftist and became a leading "moderate Islamist" thinker. He is joined by a former parliamentarian from the Muslim Brotherhood, Sobhi Saleh, who was jailed for three days during the protests, a Christian judge from the Supreme Constitutional Court and assistants to the former justice minister who helped draft the amendments they are now tasked with revising.
[133] On 22 February, the military rulers swore in eleven new cabinet members, including, for the first time in decades, independents and (former) opposition figures. Yehya Abdel-Aziz Al-Gamal, a constitutional law professor, an associate of El-Baradei's, and a "wise man", became deputy prime minister. Mounir Fakhry Abdel-Nour, the secretary general of the reformist Wafd Party, became tourism minister. Abdel-Nour is also a Coptic Christian. Gouda Abdel-Khaliq, an economist from the Tagammu Party, became social solidarity minister. The new members include many deemed competent.
[134] For example, the appointment of the treasurer of the Egyptian Federation of Trade Unions (ETUF), the official umbrella trade union, as labour minister infuriated labour rights activists, who a night before had believed that their preferred candidate had been selected. The new cabinet likewise did not appear to please young protesters, who professed indifference to the rest of the names so long as Shafiq remained prime minister. Crisis Group interviews, activist and former Brotherhood member, Cairo, 22 February 2011. Shafiq, who, like Mubarak, had risen through the air force, was one of the former president's most trusted advisers. According to a political analyst with close NDP ties, Mubarak had once called him "my third son". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, May 2010. He also is perceived as a man who can be counted on to preserve the military's interests. The Brotherhood leadership likewise was dismissive of the reshuffle, pointing out that the key ministries remained unchanged. Essam Al-Arian, a senior member, said, "it pretends it includes real opposition but in reality this new government puts Egypt under the tutelage of the West …. "The main defence, justice, interior and foreign ministries remain unchanged, signalling Egypt's politics remain in the hands of Mubarak and his cronies". Quoted in Reuters, 22 February 2011.
[135] Leftist activist and journalist Hossam El Hamalawy's blog, www.arabawy.org, is a good source for breaking news on labour activism, as is the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services, www.ctuws.org.
[136] This was first done in a state television address on 31 January 2011.
[137] Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Communiqué no. 4, 13 February 2011.
[138] "The Armed Forces emphasise there will be no legal pursuit of the honourable people who rejected corruption and demanded reform, and warns against touching the security and safety of the nation and the people". Communiqué no. 3, op. cit.

to transfer power to a democratically-elected government in six months, or after elections are held.

Signs of strain are already showing in the honeymoon. The military has balanced its commitments against firm calls for the affairs of the country to return to normal. In particular, it has evinced steadily more concern about strikes, although it has stopped short of banning them.[139]

II. DEFINING THE NEW LANDSCAPE

Much uncertainty surrounds the character of the new political order. In particular, little is known of the workings, outlook and designs of the military, Egypt's most powerful institution but also its most opaque and impenetrable. What is clear, however, is that the core dynamics that determined the end of Mubarak's reign will be critical in structuring the post-Mubarak political landscape.

A. THE JUXTAPOSITION OF A POPULAR REVOLT AND A MILITARY COUP

Since Mubarak's fall, observers, mostly foreign, have debated whether it can best be described as a popular revolt (or even a revolution) or a military coup. Events of the coming months will answer that question with more clarity. For the moment, it seems to have been both. As described above, two related albeit separate processes occurred in parallel virtually from the outset: on the one hand, sustained street protests, later joined by labour strikes, that continued unabated with remarkable courage in the face of regime violence and attempts to co-opt some of the opposition; on the other hand, intra-regime bargaining among elements of the civilian and military leadership that culminated in Mubarak's ouster and the army's adoption of the protesters demands as regime doctrine.

For several reasons, the denouement of the uprising's first act involved neither outright success by the protesters nor a negotiated agreement between them and the regime. Prominent among these was the discrepancy between the balance of power in the putative negotiating room (where the regime felt it had the upper hand) and on the street (where the opposition set the agenda). As a result, regime attempts to broker a deal with certain opposition elements rapidly gave rise to renewed activism on the part of protesters wary of strategies designed to abort their efforts. The absence of a clearly recognised leader on the opposition's side (see below), the focus on a single, non-negotiable demand (Mubarak's ouster) and the conviction among protesters that once the protests died down, they would lack any leverage likewise limited the ability to find a negotiated settlement.

To be sure, the protests ultimately forced the military to topple Mubarak, and it in turn has pledged to carry out the protesters' aspirations. Still, those who now hold power were not chosen by those who poured into the streets – current, broad support for the military and the widespread belief that "the military and the people are one" notwith-

[139] On 18 February, the Supreme Council released a statement that read: "It has been noted that: 1. Some groups, prioritising their own demands, have organised [work] stoppages and protests that paralyse [various] interests and inhibit the speed of production, creating difficult economic conditions that lead to the deterioration of the country's economy. 2. Some elements have prevented state workers from carrying out their labour, thereby burdening the work flow and leading to the paralysis of production and consequent loses …. Therefore, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces emphasises: 1. The understanding for the demands of the groups in question on the part of the entire Council, which has delegated relevant state bodies to study them and to work toward realising them at the appropriate time; 2. The necessity of honourable citizens taking up their responsibilities to the country and confronting any irresponsible elements; 3. The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces will not permit these illegitimate actions, which pose a grave danger to the nation, to continue. They will be confronted and legal procedures will be taken regarding them, to defend the security of the nation and its citizens". *Al-Ahram*, 18 February 2011. According to one report, the Supreme Council considered banning union and syndicate meetings to stop the strikes, but so far it has refrained from doing so. Reuters, 13 February 2011.

standing.[140] While there is little doubt the army would not have acted without the protests, once it deployed and its rivals within the regime were swept aside, what it ultimately carried out bears the hallmarks of a coup.[141]

To the extent the upheaval carried revolutionary potential, one could argue that potential was (for now) cut short. At this point, for the protesters to achieve their goals, the military must live up to its promises to oversee a genuine transition toward democracy, either of its own volition or under sustained popular pressure.[142] Neither is impossible, and neither is preordained. Many who filled the streets of Cairo on 18 February, some travelling hundreds of kilometres to do so, said they would protest every Friday until their demands were met. For now, the military's pronouncements have been reassuring. But the clash between two highly different political cultures – the secretive, close-knit, hierarchical world of the military and the more open, amorphous and non-hierarchical protest movement – and divergent interests is likely to produce more friction.

B. THE ARMY'S AMBIVALENT POSTURE

Throughout the protests, the army played a consistently ambiguous role, purportedly standing with the people while at the same time being an integral part of the regime they were confronting. It found itself almost literally on both sides of the barricades.

Cairenes cheered the tanks as they rolled into central Cairo the night of 28 January, and they have continued to cheer the soldiers since, exchanging smiles and embraces, proffering cigarettes, offering sweets, posing for photos and dressing their children in army fatigues when taking them to protests.[143] One of the few remaining untarnished national institutions, it benefited from being an army of conscripts that by and large reflected the country's social composition.[144] The protesters, in turn, played this up by embracing the soldiers dispatched to Tahrir Square. For some, this was a conscious strategy to bring the army more firmly to its side; for others, it was a sincere and spontaneous celebration of hope as well as the expression of longing for trustworthy, authoritative and competent institutions at a time when there seemed few.

The enthusiastic response culminated a long process by which the military's popularity has been carefully nurtured: promoting its valour as the institution that defends the country and, in the national narrative, defeated Israel in 1973; keeping it out of the dirty business of internal policing; cultivating opacity and discretion to avoid being seen as playing an overtly political role; and displaying an unusual level of professionalism by regional standards. The military, in short, for long had been promoted as the pride of the state.

At the same time, throughout Mubarak's three decades in power, and although it became a far less visible institution,[145] the president lavished attention and money on the military. This was partially in his nature – like all his predecessors and most of Egypt's provincial governors, he had risen through its ranks – but it was also shrewd politics for a man determined to stay in power. He carefully selected senior officers, by some reports choosing even who should be promoted to colonel.[146]

Ensuring that the military's business empire – the true size of which is unknown, as its budget, finances and profits are state secrets[147] – continued to operate unmolested was another means of ensuring loyalty. In addition to building power and water-treatment plants and baking bread for Egypt's poor,[148] the military, through the businesses it owns, produces electrical appliances, bottled water, olive oil, household pesticides and optical equipment. It runs

[140] Crisis Group spoke with dozens of protesters in Cairo between 28 January and 18 February who used the same formulation.
[141] A member of the "wise men" disagreed: "This was not a coup d'état. The revolution trusted the military and basically asked it to take over. Even ElBaradei asked them to step in and play a role. In a way, they were damned if they intervened and damned if they did not". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 12 February 2011.
[142] Whether and for how long protests can be sustained even as highly symbolic demands (departure of the presidents) are met remains unclear in both Tunisia and Egypt. Rulers appear to be banking on protest fatigue and on the wider population's aspiration to return to normality in the face of economic hardship. But protest leaders are aware of the challenge and in both cases have vowed they can remobilise. In Egypt, a "wise man" said, "don't underestimate either the protest leaders or society in general. If the process breaks down, you will hear from them again". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 12 February 2011.
[143] Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 28 January-6 February 2011.
[144] Several protesters used exactly the same formulation: "The military and the people are one". Crisis Group interviews, protesters, Cairo, 30 January-18 February 2011. Most said they opposed a military government, though opinion was divided on whether a transitional military government would be acceptable.
[145] A former Egyptian ambassador remembered: "In the days of Sadat, we used to see the officers in their uniforms and their special cars going to work every morning. No longer. It is a military in its barracks, far less visible". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, July 2010.
[146] Crisis Group interview, military analyst, Cairo, 20 February 2011.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Minister of Military Production Sayed Meshaal, recently said the military spent EGP 2 billion ($340 million) on the civilian sector, building, among others, trains, power plants, recycling plants, trash incinerators, water purification plants and fire trucks. It also operates bakeries in all governorates that each can bake 1 million loaves daily. Dalia Othman, "Q&A: Military production still prevalent in civil sector, says Sayed Meshaal", *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 16 September 2010.

hotels, nurseries and catering services.[149] Its patronage network and promotion pipeline extend still further. Having retired officers as partners or members of a private company's board of directors can smooth all variety of business transactions, as companies often run up against the need for military permits or approvals.[150] Much of Egypt's land is owned by the military.[151] Developers wishing to buy that land often find it easier to do so if they hire a construction company owned at least in part by a former officer.[152] By a conservative estimate, military-owned companies employ tens of thousands of people.[153]

The extent of the military's influence was not without critics, particularly within the business community.[154] But in Mubarak's last decade in power, public discussion – let alone criticism – of the military remained one of very few taboos.[155]

The uprising presented the institution with a difficult challenge. Soon after the army deployed, Mubarak removed the chief balances to its power within the regime – the interior minister and the business and private industrialist elites associated with his son, Gamal. In effect, from the moment tanks rolled into the cities late on the night of 28 January, the military became the ruler. The interior ministry, including its security forces, and the NDP had been the two branches most directly responsible for extending government control throughout the country; the blow they sustained that night, and the subsequent two-day virtual disappearance of police from the streets, left only the army and the people to keep order. The military was caught between its obligation to obey a respected commander-in-chief who had risen through its ranks; its duty to protect a population, masses of whom were determined to unseat that leader through peaceful protest; and the prospect of Egypt careening further into chaos and bloodshed.[156]

As seen, the army made clear early on that it would not turn its guns on the protesters, and during some of the more violent confrontations, it separated pro- and anti-regime demonstrators, then largely prevented the former elements from entering Tahrir Square. A demonstrator called the military "the last card the Egyptian people have. We don't have parties to represent us. The army is all we have".[157] Still, as the crisis continued, it did much of the work previously performed by the interior ministry. It policed the streets[158] but also detained and abused human rights activists and journalists. According to human rights workers, most of those detained between 28 January and 11 February were suspected of looting or caught up in street brawls, but many were protesters and activists. Since their release, they claim to have been beaten, whipped and subjected to electric shocks.[159] So far, however, these reports have not dented the military's image.

Overall, the military appears to have been guided by several principles: to protect stability, as well as its political and economic interests, and preserve its reputation. Its attitude toward Mubarak was symptomatic: although it was prepared to sacrifice the president if need be, it was keen to preserve the dignity of one of its own, and thus it preferred to hold on to that card until it became absolutely necessary to let it go. In the early days of the crisis, a well-informed Arab analyst said:

> When the military tells Mubarak his time is up, his time will be up. But that is their last card; once they deploy it, they have nothing more to give. They don't mind being seen as a trusted party between the regime and the protesters; with Mubarak gone, they will have to be on the frontlines, a posture with which they are not as comfortable.[160]

The ambivalence witnessed during the protests likely will be at play in the post-Mubarak setting as well. The military institution is part and parcel of the regime many expect it

[149] See Cam Simpson and Mariam Fam, "Egypt's army marches, fights, sells chickens", *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 17 February 2011.
[150] Crisis Group interviews, businessmen and military analysts, Cairo, June 2010-February 2011.
[151] Figures are not publicly available, but most desert land, ie, most of the country, is owned by the military.
[152] Crisis Group telephone interview, military analyst, 20 February 2011.
[153] El Nasr Co. for Services and Maintenance alone employs 7,750. "Egypt's army marches, fights, sells chickens", op. cit.
[154] During the uprising, a media executive commented: "Our real battle is with the army. It has occupied the country since 1952. We managed to get rid of the Israeli occupation in Sinai, but we are still occupied by our own [military]. Sadat found it easier to fight Israel than his own army, which is who his real battle was against. But in the last week, when the tanks rolled in, we've gone back to the 1970s. The army might have a good reputation with many, but that doesn't justify the tanks [on the streets]".Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 6 February 2011.
[155] For example, Facebook user Ahmed Hassan Bassiuni, appeared before a military court on 24 November for publishing public information about military conscription on the social networking site. "Egyptian Facebook user faces five years in jail for posts", Amnesty International, 26 November 2010.
[156] A member of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces said, "we found ourselves in the middle of a battle between the president and the people … [and found] the people's demands were legitimate". Dream TV broadcast, Cairo, 21 February 2011. The council made its first television appearance on that day.
[157] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 31 January 2011.
[158] Crisis Group witnessed many street brawls that military police broke up by detaining participants. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 2-5 February 2011.
[159] "Egyptian military urged to halt torture of detainees", Amnesty International, 17 February 2011.
[160] Crisis Group interview, January 2011.

to transform.[161] It could not have looked favourably upon a popular movement that toppled one of its own, and its wariness logically will persist as will efforts to ensure whatever changes occur do not affect its vital interests. Speaking soon after the president resigned, a prominent businessman reflected this duality:

> I consider this outcome a failure. It would have been better to send the army back to the barracks. That way, there wouldn't have been a risk that the military stays. I tell the members of the youth movement: I was here during the reign of Gamal Abdel Nasser [who participated in the 1952 Free Officers' coup and then remained in power], they weren't. In 1952, the coup happened, pledges were made and then they eliminated political parties and prolonged martial law. Let me be clear: I don't like armies. That said, I have to admit that the army has acted honourably so far. They did not push for a takeover. We'll have to wait and see.[162]

Following Mubarak's resignation, the military hailed the principles of the "25 January Revolution" – as it is nearly universally called in Egypt. State broadcast media reversed its coverage – one radio presenter called it "the greatest revolution the world has seen"[163] – and revolution became the regime's doctrine. But if the military calculated that it could replace Mubarak, make an example of unpopular ministers, revise a few articles of the constitution, take the wind out of the protests' sails and manage a transition to a limited democracy that would leave its own interests and position intact, it may face a bumpy ride. The crowds who turned out for a "Victory Day" and "Martyrs' Day" demonstration in Tahrir Square were possibly the largest yet. And while a celebratory atmosphere prevailed, and many said they supported the military and were optimistic about their future, some chanted slogans encouraging Defence Minister Mohammed Al-Tantawi to stand aside in favour of a civilian government.[164]

There will be a number of early tests, including how inclusive are the military's political consultations, what steps it takes to open the field to pluralistic, democratic elections and how it reacts to continued labour strife. In its 14 February communiqué, the military command warned against continued labour unrest; it also sent text-message appeals to citizens to return to work.[165] A leader of the protest movement described the relationship between the military and workers as:

> … the biggest flashpoint. The revolution established the sanctity of freedom, and any attempt to ban unions or stop the strikes forcibly would mark a possible return to the days of oppression. We will fight and violate the ban if it were to come. Should that provoke confrontations, it would tarnish the army's image. The army would either have to accept that its orders are violated or it will have to use violence.[166]

The challenge is all the more pressing and complex insofar as labour unrest escalated during Mubarak's last days and spread to military factories.[167]

Contrary to what some have feared, the military so far has evinced little appetite for direct rule. It has vowed to reform the legal and constitutional framework in time for elections within six months from mid-February (including the appointment of a committee to recommend constitutional amendments by 24 February, to be approved in a referendum within two months).[168] If anything, it appears to be in a rush to return to the background where it long has been, fearful of becoming the target of inevitable discontent and preferring to work in the shadows. That is understandable. It has no experience in governance and is

[161] A former U.S. official claimed with considerable worry that the first victims of the military's steps were not cronies of the old regime but the free-market reformers of Ahmed Nazif's government who were most likely to challenge its large economic assets. It is "vindictive payback by the military against those who have sought to undo what, over the years, it had acquired". Crisis Group interview, Washington, February 2011. There is a case to be made that the military seized the opportunity to safeguard its interest. The interior ministry and business elite had been the greatest counterbalances to the military's position at the regime's core. Some initial steps at the uprising's height – essentially removal of the business elite personified by the president's son and Ahmed Ezz and dismissal of the interior minister – both satisfied public opinion and benefited the military.

[162] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2011. A member of the "wise men" offered a positive assessment of the military so far. "To its credit is how it acted during the revolt and since. Its statements have been consistent with the people's aspirations, and it has pledged not to violate them. Their intentions appear to be sound and legitimate". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 12 February 2011.

[163] Radio Masr broadcast, Cairo, 17 February 2011.

[164] At the 18 February victory rally, several dozen protesters chanted: "O Tantawi, move along, move along", while others chanted "Civilian! Civilian!", although they remained a distinct minority. Crisis Group observations, Cairo, 18 February 2011.

[165] "The Supreme Council for the Armed Forces: We call on the citizens, and the professional syndicates, and the workers to pursue their roles, each in his place". Text message sent to mobile phone subscribers, received 16 February 2011.

[166] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2011.

[167] On 9 February 2011, labour protests occurred at military factories 63 and 360. The following day, when the Supreme Council issued its first statement, skirmishes erupted between soldiers and workers at two others, 45 and 54, reportedly after workers trying to strike learned that managers had pre-empted them by declaring the day "official leave". "Clashes in military factories", Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services, 10 February 2011.

[168] Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Communiqué no. 4, 13 February 2011.

now exposed to public criticism, its good relationship with the people at risk. Governing means apportioning scarce resources, and at this moment in particular it means doing so among people who consider they have been denied, in a brutal way, their rightful share for too long.

In the continuing strikes, friction is already apparent and, in the military's communiqués, its discomfort manifest. Precisely for this reason, the Supreme Council reshuffled the cabinet in order, as an observer with close ties to the military put it, to "take the pressure off".[169] It is uncertain whether the gambit will succeed. Naming a technocratic cabinet and including former opposition members certainly marks a departure from past practice. Yet many activists and intellectuals described the changes as "cosmetic" insofar as the military council will continue to set the terms of the transition that the cabinet will be charged with implementing.

If the military seems uneasy holding the reins, in other words, it also seems hesitant about how to let them go. An informal adviser to the Supreme Council described it as "grappling with an unfamiliar and uncomfortable role, unsure about exactly what to do".[170] A former official put it differently:

> I am not sure the military truly understands the depth of the change that people are seeking. At times, they act as if they believe people merely want a course correction, to replace this person or that, to get rid of corruption. They don't understand that people want to fundamentally remake the political order. Only after you answer the question of whether the military understands the demands does it make sense to ask how many of them it can accept.[171]

Whether the product of self-interest or self-doubt, the rushed timetable and lack of broad consultation present a risk of another sort: that the new rulers will lead a transition that results in only minor political changes, not substantive long-term transformation. An Egyptian diplomat noted a paradox:

> The military's consultations so far have been far less open and transparent than those initiated by Omar Suleiman in the waning days of Mubarak's presidency. Dealing with the opposition, with protesters and with dissent is not in the military's culture. The tragedy of the current process is that it is in the hands of the institution least well equipped to conduct it.[172]

[169] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 22 February 2011.
[170] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2011.
[171] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 21 February 2011.
[172] Crisis Group interview, 17 February 2011.

C. A Diffuse, Diverse, Leaderless Protest Movement

One of the more striking features of the protest movement has been the absence of leaders, a specific program or a structure. For the most part, and certainly in Cairo, it was not led by political parties but conducted by decentralised networks that relied on diffuse methods of communication. Rather than inspired by a specific political agenda, it was fuelled by a more abstract feeling of fatigue and weariness vis-à-vis the state's predatory practices, corruption and arbitrariness and the absence of any sense of collective purpose.

Over the course of the uprising, these traits worked to the opposition's advantage. The internet and, even more so, Al-Jazeera became preferred channels of communication and, in some cases, mobilisation.[173] A protest leader commented: "No wonder the regime took Al-Jazeera off the air. It was the most important tool we had".[174] The organisers, she explained, sent the network the time and place of planned protests, which it then broadcast.

Whether by design or necessity, the demonstrators, aggressively pursued by the regime, never gave their adversaries a clear target. This was a lesson learned from years of state repression. As one protester with a long history of anti-regime activism said, "If the snake has a head it can be cut off".[175] There were no specific leaders to be arrested or offices that could be shuttered.[176] Whereas registered organisations are subject to legal restrictions that impose criminal penalties on "engaging in political or union activities",[177] the kind of activism that spread in January was decentralised, both in its making and unfolding.

The related questions of leadership and representation repeatedly came up but were never resolved. They flared in particular when the regime sought political discussions to

[173] It is difficult to assess the actual role internet activities played. See "Wired and shrewd, young Egyptians guide revolt", *The New York Times*, 9 February 2011; Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, "The secret rally that sparked an uprising", *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011. A media executive said, "Social media is huge here because the state media is so discredited; in that sense, the state created the tool of its own demise". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 5 February 2011.
[174] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[175] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[176] Police and military police tried nonetheless. On 3 February, they attacked the offices of the Hisham Mubarak Centre for Legal Assistance, a human rights group, detaining 24 Egyptian and international human rights activists and four members of the 6 April Youth Group that helped plan the 25 January protests.
[177] Law 84/2002. For a human-rights perspective on the law, see "Egypt: Margins of Repression: State Limits on Nongovernmental Organisation Activism", Human Rights Watch, 3 July 2005.

find a way out of the impasse on 6 February.[178] Several groups attended but were hamstrung by their lack of credibility as well as that of would-be intermediaries and by the protesters' wider inability to agree on representatives – or even on whether they wanted representatives. When talks began, it soon became apparent that the opposition members had no mandate, and they quickly collapsed. The committee of "wise men" began without claiming to represent anyone;[179] certain protest groups subsequently asked it to serve as an intermediary, but the request was a non-starter. Not only was there no consensus behind it, but the "wise men" themselves were divided on it. The protest movement set its own agenda.[180]

Some protesters explicitly rejected the notion of representation. In early February, a protest leader complained:

> The question "who represents you" really gets on my nerves. It's being pushed by the regime as a means of control. The media picked it up, and now even some of our own young people are starting to believe it. They want us to divide, to fight among ourselves about who is going to put forward what nice ideas and then sit down and negotiate the points one by one. We reject that. This is a spontaneous action. Some took the initiative, that had ripple effects, and those had domino effects. The whole point is that it's hard to control! The regime has failed to control us and now they are asking us, in effect, to do its work for them …. They are offering to negotiate with us according to the rules of the current game. But our whole goal is to change the rules of the game! They are trying to drag us into the same political process that we have suffered from for 30 years. They are treating this like it is a demonstration, not as an uprising. They need us to get our "representation" so they can get on with their political process, with business as usual.[181]

Likewise, the lack of a substantive political agenda enabled the protesters to maintain unity on a few specific requests, leaving unanswered a host of questions about what would come after.[182] At the head of the protesters' list was the demand that Mubarak step down, "in hours or days, not weeks or months".[183] In addition to its enormous symbolic and emotional import, its clarity and apparent simplicity made it a compelling rallying cry. With the protesters utterly lacking trust in a regime that they claim repeatedly had broken its promises, the president's resignation became a precondition and, in the short term, the sole barometer of success.[184] As a protest leader said, "if we force out Mubarak, it means we are the most powerful. If we don't, it means they are. Both sides understand this, which is why both sides are fighting so hard over it".[185]

Moreover, because the chief demand was about what the protesters did not want – Mubarak – as opposed to what they did, it bridged social and ideological divides. Imprecision was a strength that helped the movement spread. Western commentators focused on the potential "contagion" effect across national borders, but the more relevant and important process first occurred within Egypt, between constituencies and social classes. As in Tunisia, protest could sustain itself and withstand pressure mainly because it surmounted natural divisions. Those who came out were a diverse crowd, economically, religiously, politically and age-wise.[186] The largest demonstrations were

[178] A member of the "wise men" commented; "These aren't negotiations, but rather a series of dialogues happening in parallel. There are a lot of people talking to one group, lots of groups talking to the government, some groups talking to each other". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 6 February 2011.

[179] "From the beginning our agenda wasn't to represent anyone. We were trying to bring the government closer to the demonstrators' demands. When we put forward our proposals on 28 January [essentially involving a devolution of power to Vice President Suleiman], the government rejected them; by the time it was prepared to accept them, the protesters had asserted their authority, and it was not acceptable to them". Crisis Group interview, committee member, 6 February 2011.

[180] Speaking of the protesters, a committee member said, "They are educated, smart, know what they want. Even at our first meeting with them, they wanted responses to specific requests for help and didn't want to talk about other things. At the second and third meetings, they were totally in control. You could see the evolution in their self-confidence". Crisis Group interview, 13 February 2011.

[181] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 February 2011.

[182] A banner in Tahrir Square listed "the people's demands" as follows: 1) Mubarak's resignation; 2) repeal of the Emergency Law; 3) a new constitution; 4) a transitional government made up of people independent from the ruling party; 5) dissolution of parliament; 6) a special court to try those responsible for killing the "martyrs of the revolution"; 7) a special court to try cases of corruption. Crisis Group observation, Cairo, 1 February 2011. These are essentially the demands that the "Coalition of Youths of the Wrath Revolution" – one of the myriad groups formed to speak on behalf of (some) protesters – put forward at a press conference on 6 February. Copy of statement on file with Crisis Group.

[183] Crisis Group interview, Ghad party member and National Association for Change Spokesman Wael Nawara, Cairo, 3 February 2011. An activist commented: "How stupid is this regime! The only demand we all agree on is number one: that Mubarak go. As for the rest, there are difference of nuances and priority even if there is a broad consensus. If they just gave in on number one, they would throw the whole revolution off-balance". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 8 February 2011.

[184] Crisis Group interview, Mohamed ElBaradei, Cairo, 8 February 2011.

[185] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 7 February 2011.

[186] There were many children among the protesters. Each night, as the evening drew on in Tahrir Square, they could be heard

in Cairo and Alexandria, but large crowds turned up across the Nile Delta, in Assyut and Minya, in Ismailiya and Suez and in north Sinai (Rafah and Al Arish). Protesters came to the capital from as far away as Aswan, near the southern border,[187] but in lesser numbers also from further afield.[188] National in character, and only weeks after sectarian riots threatened to tear society's fabric, demonstrations transcended religious differences.[189]

An important consequence was that well-worn regime tactics – dividing the notoriously squabbling opposition parties; playing on the fear of Islamism; seeking to siphon off some opposition members by offering piecemeal concessions short of the president's resignation – failed. Repressive measures boomeranged, bolstering the unity and resolve of mainly non-violent protesters insofar as they validated perceptions of an arrogant, brutal regime.

Two weeks after Mubarak's resignation, the political field is simultaneously consolidating and fragmenting. The Coordinating Committee of the Revolutionary Masses – which is composed of eight groups, some of which themselves are coalitions of smaller groups[190] – is the consensus coordinator of practical concerns, such as calling a demonstration.[191] At the same time, the number of parties, both actual and putative, is multiplying.[192] As one democracy leader pointed out, "there no such thing as a 'youth' political ideology. Youth came together to achieve specific goals, but once you get into serious transition mode, they will have to make choices, and right and left will go their own ways".[193]

What accounted for the opposition's strength during the uprising could prove more costly for the democracy movement today. The lack of leadership, absence of a clear, constructive and strategic democratic agenda, as well as the essentially negative and personality-focused nature of the demand – that Mubarak leave – provided the opposition with staying power while the focus was on the president's departure. But it risks leaving the democracy movement in a vulnerable state now that political bargaining has begun. There is no one voice strong enough to force the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to engage with it. Rivalries that were kept under wraps when the goal was clear-cut and essentially non-political likely will come to the surface. Regime attempts to divide and conquer could have a better chance to succeed.

The protesters' principal strength during the demonstrations – their resilience – by its very nature is a depleting asset, making it difficult to repeatedly push a military that seems intent on doing the minimum necessary.[194] As the situation reverts to normalcy and Egyptians, having declared victory, try to go back to their daily business, it will become harder to mobilise a united constituency in the event the military backtracks.

Many activists chafe at the criticism that their movement is in disarray or that it has failed to crystallise a common, detailed platform. It is illogical, they say, to fault them for not already having the representative structures, with clear, detailed platforms, that their revolution aims to create.[195] A pro-democracy activist explained:

> On 25 January, there was practically no political space in Egypt. In less than a month, it has exploded. There is a whole new political class, with new activists, with people contemplating careers in politics, with many thousands of new political citizens.[196]

At this moment of ferment, activists say, there is no choice but to work within extant structures – as imperfect as they are – to create momentum for enfranchising a citizenry and creating a new democratic polity that someday will be more broadly representative than today's plethora

calling to reassure parents, begging to be allowed to stay later and lying about their whereabouts. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, February 2011.

[187] Crisis Group interviews, protesters, Cairo, 31 January-1 February 2011.

[188] Crisis Group spoke with a Madison Avenue advertising executive who flew back to participate in the protests. "Victory Friday" attracted Egyptians from the Gulf and other places. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, February 2011.

[189] In Tahrir Square on 31 January, a man gave his coat to a Muslim Brotherhood member to use as a prayer rug on the pavement, afterwards opening his shirt to show a golden cross necklace. After praying, the Brotherhood member explained: "All Egypt hates Mubarak. Egyptians of all kinds, from all factions. I'm with the Brotherhood, but I have no problem with Christians. We don't have problems with people of any faith – Christian, Jews – or people from any country or culture. You saw what this man, a Christian, did for me. We are brothers; we are Egyptians. It's not about religion; it's not about culture. It's about getting rid of this regime". Another protester added: "Mubarak is responsible for all these sectarian problems. He wants to sow division among people". Crisis Group observations and interviews, protesters, Cairo, 31 January 2011.

[190] *Al-Shorouk*, 18 February 2011.

[191] Crisis Group interview, political science professor, Cairo, 21 February 2011.

[192] "I hear about a new one almost every day". Crisis Group interview, journalist, Cairo, 22 February 2011.

[193] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 22 February 2011.

[194] In an indication of incipient tensions, some opposition groups called for another "million-man" march on 22 February to demand a change in government, but not all protesters were happy at the prospect. One waved his hands and said, "no more, no more! Our economy has been ruined. Do you know how much it costs every time a million people turn out?" Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 18 February 2011.

[195] Crisis Group interviews, protest leaders, Cairo, 22 February 2011.

[196] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 22 February 2011.

of groups. Under this view, neither a big-tent coalition nor the development of elaborate party structures is realistic for now.

At its core, the main challenge for the democracy movement today is about finding new modes of political action to import the force of popular mobilisation into institutions. If, as a protest leader noted, the old regime failed by mistaking a revolution for a simple demonstration, the opposition should take care not to confuse what can be done from the outside with what needs to be done on the inside. Building a new political order will require working through institutions and with a positive, clear political agenda, which will be more challenging.

D. A VOLATILE PUBLIC OPINION

Over the uprising's eighteen days, both the regime and protesters sought to gain the support of the wider public. Indeed, while much of the media's focus was on Tahrir Square, sentiments expressed there did not necessarily reflect the views of other Cairo residents, let alone of inhabitants of other parts of the country. Crisis Group was not in a position to assess opinions nationwide; those interviewed were nowhere near a scientific sample.

Still, certain tentative conclusions can be reached. Perhaps the most widespread feeling expressed was a desire that Egypt recover a sense of normality and that regular economic life should resume. At times, that translated into hope that the protests would end; at others, it expressed itself as the wish that the regime cease resorting to violent, destabilising measures. This was reflected in what one of the "wise men' described as "mood swings": they turned against the government when it first pulled the police from the streets. After the 1 February speech in which Mubarak agreed to some concessions, vowed not to run and expressed the desire simply to die in Egypt, sympathies shifted. The deployment of thugs against the protesters moved things in the other direction again, as did Wael Ghoneim's emotional recounting of his twelve-day detention.[197]

All groups and classes turned out to protest, but not all were evenly represented. The call issued by the uprising's leadership – which was mainly drawn from the middle classes – was heeded by virtually the entire economic spectrum, with the exception of those on the extremes: the very poor and the very wealthy, whose privileges were tied to the regime. Members of the lower economic classes played a vital role on the frontlines of the 28 January battle with the police, but as the confrontation dragged on, many who depended on daily wages returned to work, leaving the middle and upper middle classes disproportionately represented in Tahrir Square. In the final days, however, with security assured and workers joining in, scarcely anyone stood back. Among Copts, too, there was support, though anxiety over the role of the Muslim Brotherhood stirred doubts among no small number.[198]

Preliminary evidence suggests that this was primarily an urban revolt. Most of the unrest appears to have taken place in Egypt's cities and towns. There seems to have been less affection for the protests in the countryside. Egyptians interviewed along the Nile Delta highway between Cairo and Alexandria on 1 February, the day after Mubarak announced he would step down in September, were almost entirely sympathetic to him. Repeating lines often heard on state TV, a driver from Damanhur said, "he's an honourable man; he looks after the interests of the people". Interviewees recalled 30 years of "service to the nation", cited his role as air force commander in the 1973 war and praised him for keeping Egypt out of other conflicts.

Nearly all claimed to want "reform" but said the president was the kind of strong leader who could implement it. Some declared protesters had been "bought by foreigners" and cursed ElBaradei. Outside a workshop near Damanhur, a man said, "if ElBaradei comes here, we will arrest him and put him on trial".[199] In the Sinai, indifference toward upheaval in the Nile Valley seemed to prevail. A Bedouin leader said, "the Bedouin see this as not being their fight. Personally I think what Mubarak offered is enough, that now there should be peace".[200]

Protesters acknowledged that, at least for some period of time, they did not enjoy public favour. As documented above, the regime skilfully portrayed the demonstrations as engineered from outside and attempts to bleed Egypt's economy; with the advantage of a powerful state media,

[197] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, February 2011.

[198] Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, 3-6 February 2011.

[199] Crisis Group interviews, Nile Delta, 1 February 2011. Two men who divide their time between small villages in the eastern Delta province of Al-Sharqiya and Cairo, where they work as doormen, reported that "nothing had happened" in their villages in the previous week. Crisis Group interviews, Cairo, 31 January 2011.

[200] This did not stop them from taking advantage of the upheaval. Bedouin attacked the police station in Shaykh Zuwayd (near the Gaza border) with rocket-propelled grenades on 26 January, and on 29 January reportedly burned the State Security headquarters in Rafah to the ground. A leader said that the Bedouin were very pleased with the 28 January disappearance of security forces from the interior of Sinai: "We feel very free. There are no police anywhere, and there have been no problems. It is very quiet". He added that Bedouin did not want the police to return and had told the interior ministry they "could not guarantee their safety". Crisis Group telephone interview, Bedouin, north Sinai, 3 February 2011.

for a while it enjoyed the upper hand. Protesters took the opposite tack: tying their protests tightly to the state, even as they distinguished it from the regime. Along with the slogan, "Get out!", they sang the national anthem, waved flags and chanted: "Hold your head high, you are Egyptian". A protester said, "it has reinforced my Egyptian identity. Today, I would volunteer for the army to fight. Before 25 January, no".[201] Other activists adopted a different tack: they banked on the public's passivity and overall apathy. In the words of one:

> There are very few die-hard Mubarak supporters. There are many people who are tired, scared and bitter about their lives, but they aren't politically active. They are not in the streets. The silent majority is one of the two cards that the government has – the army being the other – but it is not in a position to use either.[202]

More than that, protesters banked on the public's presumed malleability: "It will accept and side with whichever side prevails in this test of wills".[203]

That could be harder to do in the coming period. Should disagreements surface between the military-led regime and the opposition, the public might turn against the latter. The frustration of ordinary citizens is mutable; early in the protests it was directed toward the protesters; later many just wanted to be finished with what had become an ordeal. In the future, many will crave stability and security, even if it means putting some protest demands aside. Attempts to jumpstart a new movement could well trigger hostility, especially in light of the economic losses of the past weeks and the longer-term hit suffered by tourism.[204] This again highlights the importance for the opposition to find more institutionalised ways to maintain pressure on the new rulers.

E. THE QUESTION OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Uppermost on the minds of Western policymakers and analysts has been what role the Muslim Brotherhood played during the revolts and likely will play in the future. As with much else, a proper assessment requires additional research; Crisis Group plans to return to these issues in further depth, but some preliminary observations are in order.[205]

- The Brotherhood was not at the vanguard of the protest movement and has not dominated the opposition. Organisation was essentially the affair of a young generation – well educated, well informed and well connected – that eschews any particular ideological outlook and is suspicious of traditional organisations.
- As the Brotherhood leadership considered its stance toward the 25 January protests, several considerations appeared paramount. It risked crushing repression if it participated and the uprising failed;[206] it risked being left behind if the revolt succeeded without them;[207] and it risked jeopardising the uprising by participating too heavily, potentially alienating those who had little sympathy for the Brothers, while allowing the government to cast the revolt as Islamist. As a result, it opted for a cautious approach. It neither called on members to attend the demonstrations nor instructed them not to do so.[208] It displayed sensitivity to the charge, encouraged by state media, that it was behind the protests and pushing them for partisan gain. It tried to head off a backlash, both locally and internationally. Senior Brotherhood leader Muhammad Mursi, two days after the first protests, said, "We are not pushing this move-

[201] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 19 February 2011.
[202] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, Cairo, 6 February 2011.
[203] Crisis Group interview, activist, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[204] A government report estimate the cost of the uprising so far at 10 billion Egyptian pounds ($1.7 billion). *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 17 February 2011. Almost four weeks into the revolt, twenty airlines had cancelled flights to Cairo due to lack of demand and striking airport workers. Reuters, 19 February 2011. After the 18 February victory rally, an attendee said the downside of continuing mobilisation is that it paints the country as unstable, "a killer for the tourist sector and investment in general". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 18 February.

[205] For background on the Muslim Brothers, see Crisis Group Briefing N°13, *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 April 2004; and Report, *Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood*, op. cit. These described the ambiguous relationship between the Brothers and the regime, a form of co-existence that to some degree "has served the interests of both …. The Egyptian state refuses to accord it the legal status either of a political party or an association; formally, the Society exists outside the law. At the same time, the state tolerates it, and the Egyptian press reports its activities …. Thus the Society exists in a legal limbo, a sitting duck for repression, its wings regularly clipped, but never fully disabled". *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit., pp. 15, 9-10. They also noted the suspicion that "insofar as the Society makes its mission to 'Islamise' society its first priority, it would be willing to compromise on demands for political reform in exchange for government support of its social policies". *Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood*, op. cit., p. 20, n. 125.
[206] A Muslim Brotherhood member claimed they were summoned by the security services prior to 25 January and warned that "to participate is to cross a red line". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, February 2011.
[207] According to a member, the leadership did not wish to repeat the mistake committed on 6 April 2008, when they sat out the general strike. Crisis Group interview, Cairo, February 2011.
[208] Ibid.

ment, but we are moving with it. We don't wish to lead it, but we want to be part of it".[209]

- To the extent Brotherhood members were involved early on, they were younger activists, who had built ties at university and during previous protests with secular opposition members and human rights activists and were connected to them via the internet and Facebook. Prodded by some former Brotherhood members – many of whom had left in disagreement both with the leadership's conservative ideological outlook and authoritarian internal structure[210] – this young generation was more eager to participate on 25 January. Muslim Brothers confirm that a number of young members did so, spontaneously or after having consulted with the leadership.[211]
- The leadership altered its position only after it witnessed both the scope of the demonstrations – thus the potential for an uprising – and the repressive response of the police. By 28 January, it had chosen to throw its weight into the battle. A Hamas member with close ties to the Brotherhood said, "once they decided to fight, there was no turning back. The leadership knows that if the regime prevails, the repression will be unforgiving. They have crossed the Rubicon. They have to go all the way".[212]
- There appears to be a significant difference between Brotherhood participation in Tahrir Square and elsewhere, though this warrants further research. One cannot generalise Cairo dynamics to the whole country; the capital – specifically, Tahrir Square – became the epicentre, largely due to its symbolic value and media coverage.[213] But protests also erupted in Alexandria, the Delta and other areas where the opposition's social and political outlook differed. In Tahrir Square, Brothers played a relatively secondary role that grew as the confrontation became tenser. A protester who remained through much of the fighting said, "I didn't like how aggressive the Brotherhood was, but I have to admit that they were more organised and ardent and their efforts were very important in protecting the square".[214] Their participation dropped less than that of other groups, a fact the regime sought to exploit by painting the protests as Islamist.[215] In the Brotherhood's Delta stronghold, it reportedly was more present from the outset.[216]

  The profile of Brotherhood activists differed based on geography as well. Tahrir was the domain of the young, less receptive to hierarchical authority, and they drew closer to their counterparts in other groups over the course of the protests.[217] This is significant, because the square set the pace and to this day appears to be

[209] "Violent protests escalate outside Egypt's capital", Associated Press, 27 January 2011.

[210] On these tensions, see Crisis Group Report, *Egypt's Muslim Brothers*, op. cit., pp. 18-20.

[211] Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, February 2011.

[212] Crisis Group interview, 4 February 2011. An analyst who follows the Brotherhood said, "the 28th marked the transition from a strategy of reform to a revolutionary-type insurgency. The point of no-return had been reached. In the event the old order was restored, repression would have been extreme, and the Brothers clearly realised that it was then all or nothing. In a way, the Brothers became accidental revolutionaries". Crisis Group interview, Patrick Haenni, 13 February 2011.

[213] Television was not only a mobilising tool but also a central actor in how the uprising unfolded. With cameras broadcasting the square's image around the world 24 hours a day, the lens at times seemed to reduce the uprising to that site. Protests around the country never stopped, but once Tahrir Square became the centre of attention, a Cairo organiser felt energy of organisers elsewhere lag, as television made it appear the real fight was in Cairo. Crisis Group interview, 7 February 2011.

[214] Crisis Group interview, protester, Cairo, 5 February 2011. He told of how he was drafted into an impromptu lesson, organised by the Brotherhood, in how to use a sling-shot. "In that moment, you're a sheep that just goes along with what you're told, but when I was pushed toward the front lines, I looked at the guy next to me, and we were both like, 'let's get out of here'. An organiser started yelling at us and accused us of being cowards and warned us that the other side was going to come and slaughter us, but that just seemed so patently ridiculous to me. We were so much more numerous, there's no way they could have overrun us. I thought we should be trying to calm things, not escalate". Another protester said the fighters were disproportionately Brotherhood men, and women wearing the typically religious observant headscarf mobilised the ranks. The day after the fighting started, he said, the number of protesters dropped precipitously, but Brotherhood attendance was not down as much.

[215] One of the "wise men" expressed concern regarding the Brothers' greater determination and sense of mobilisation, evidenced, he said, by their growing proportion among demonstrators. "I asked one of the young protesters how much of the crowd in Tahrir square was Muslim Brotherhood on the first day. He said 20-25 per cent. I said how many on the last day, still in the square after the celebrations. He said 50 per cent. If you have 1,000 disorganised people and 100 organised people, who will win?" Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 14 February 2011.

[216] Crisis Group interview, Muslim Brotherhood member, Cairo, February 2011.

[217] In Patrick Haenni's words, they are "young, democrats, nationalists and connected. Theirs is a 'religion lite'". Crisis Group interview, 12 February 2011. A leftist activist noted, with envy and anxiety, that the Brotherhood in Cairo "mingled with the other activists. They were open and accepting of others". Elsewhere, he said, "the Brotherhood doesn't have much in common with other people and are considerably less enlightened. But they knew that if they sent a bunch of guys with long beards to the square, they would've scared everyone else away". Crisis Group telephone interview, 13 February 2011.

the heart of the democracy movement. But they represent, in outlook and profile, only a segment of the Brotherhood nationwide. Elsewhere, and particularly in the Delta, membership is more conservative and mobilisation was along more conventional patterns, through the traditional leadership. One of the "wise men" commented: "The Muslim Brotherhood is indeed stronger in rural areas outside Cairo. But it's also the case that the secular youth outside Cairo is far less organised. So it's not just that one side is stronger. It's that the other side is weaker".[218]

- Whether in Tahrir Square or outside, the Brotherhood deemphasised religious discourse and focused instead on issues of democracy and social justice, avoiding controversy over its outlook. During the protests, the leadership said:

  There are those who falsely say that we want to establish a religious state, such as exists in Iran. We have repeatedly affirmed that we are not seeking authority, the presidency, or a majority in parliament, but rather are seeking comprehensive reform in the political, economic, social, scientific, educational, media, and other aspects of life …. We seek a civil state and an Islamic democracy, where the people are the source of authority and sovereignty …. The blessed revolution … is one of all the Egyptian people and is not driven by any party, group, or faction.[219]

As the transition unfolds, these tensions and fault lines undoubtedly will play out – between an older and younger generation of Brothers; between traditional hierarchical structures and modern forms of mobilisation; between a more conservative and a more reformist outlook;[220] between Cairo, urban and rural areas. As described above, the leadership was forced to bend to the will of Tahrir Square protesters – Brotherhood members included – and walk out of the talks with Vice President Suleiman. A protest leader in Tahrir Square reported that following the announcement that the leadership would join talks with government, he approached young Brotherhood activists in the square, concerned that their seniors would cut a separate deal. "You don't have to worry about us", he claimed they replied. "We will leave the Brotherhood before we leave the square". [221]

More generally, the Brotherhood has long been divided between the view that it should focus on expanding its social and cultural presence and the view that it ought to privilege political action in an effort aimed at changing state policies.[222] The uprising and ensuing changes may tilt the balance toward the latter. The Brotherhood has said that it will not field a candidate for president, but it has indicated it will establish a political party, to be called "Justice and Freedom Party", which could broaden its base by allowing sympathisers to vote for it without joining the movement.[223] The Islamist political field is likely to grow more crowded. Some observers speculate the Brotherhood might lose votes to other Islamic parties – including those that emerge out of its own ranks – since "everything is being reframed in the post-Mubarak period, including Islamist politics".[224] Indeed, it faces competition from the Wasat Party, formed by erstwhile members who broke off to pursue a more liberal agenda.[225]

Some Egyptian observers, anxious about the role the Brotherhood might play in the post-Mubarak period, claim to discern an emerging, implicit understanding between the military and the Brotherhood pursuant to which the former would allow the latter more space in return for it neither challenging the military's privileges nor pushing radically democratic demands. Proponents of this argument point to the composition of the eight-member constitutional amendment committee, which is led by an intellectual with ties to the Brotherhood and includes a former Brotherhood parliamentarian, as well as to the military's willingness to allow Sheikh Yusef Qaradawi, a preacher aligned with the Brotherhood, to return to his native Egypt and give the Friday-prayer sermon before hundreds of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square on 18 February.[226]

[218] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 12 February 2011.
[219] "Muslim Brotherhood press release", op. cit.
[220] "The Muslim Brotherhood clearly have evolved over time …. They have espoused principles such as rotation of power, rule of law and democratic governance …. The challenge now is for the Society to clarify its positions and resolve remaining internal differences over such issues as the role of Sharia in public life [including on citizenship and equal rights for non-Muslims] and organisational democracy". Crisis Group Report, *Egypt's Muslim Brothers*, op. cit., p. 19.
[221] Crisis Group interview, protest leader, Cairo, 7 February 2011.
[222] For a discussion, see Crisis Group Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
[223] "Press release on the proclamation of the name of the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood", Muslim Brotherhood, 21 February 2011. The Brotherhood said it would seek to register the party by the end of February and that Supreme Guide Mohammed Al-Badia and the Guidance Council, the Brotherhood's executive body, was finalising its program. Membership would be open to all Egyptians, it said.
[224] Crisis Group interview, journalist and "wise man" Hani Shakrallah, Cairo, 22 February 2011.
[225] The party's platform can be found at www.alwasatparty.com/htmltonuke.php?filnavn=files/Ar-program.htm.
[226] Qaradawi has lived abroad for most of the last 50 years, after being imprisoned four times for his association with the Brotherhood under King Farouk and President Abdel Nasser.

F. THE WEST'S PERIPHERAL ROLE

From day one of the uprising, Egypt's traditional Western allies, chief among them the U.S., were engaged in a delicate balancing act. Unsure of the outcome, fearful of breaking ties with a long-time, loyal ally, cognisant of mounting concern among its other regional partners regarding Washington's fickle support,[227] and wishing to show solidarity with popular aspirations, U.S. pronouncements appeared to zigzag daily.[228] In the span of three weeks, officials successively described the regime as stable, called for reform and then dialogue between regime and opposition, evoked the necessity of an orderly transition and finally cheered the protest movement's triumph.[229] This might have been the inevitable consequence of addressing different domestic and international constituencies and of adapting to an ever-shifting Egyptian reality, but it gave the impression of indecisiveness. European governments for the most part echoed Washington's evolving pronouncements.

The most telling aspect of all was that, to a large extent, neither the U.S. nor Europe played a notable part in the drama despite the ties they had forged and aid they had delivered. Washington's message that any army violence would have serious consequences was an important exception,[230] but for day-to-day decisions by Egyptian actors, Western pronouncements do not appear to have made a significant difference – and, many would claim, the back and forth ultimately pleased neither the regime nor the protesters. Washington's largely negative image among Egyptians – which, in its final gasp, a regime that enjoyed decades of staunch support ironically sought to exploit by denouncing protesters as U.S. stooges – was an obstacle to any effective role.

That reality, too, is likely to spill over into the transitional phase. This does not mean that Western powers will have no influence on the process, but that modesty about their capacity to shape events is in order, as is awareness of the negative baggage they – and notably the U.S. – carry. A senior U.S. official acknowledged this:

> We have no illusions regarding our influence on how the military manages the transition, notwithstanding our substantial aid and connections. Nor do we have any illusions about how popular we are. At best, we can feed ideas and suggestions but without telling them what to do. The more it looks like it is not being dictated from Washington, the better it will be. We ought to be clear on principles, but not express preferences on any particular model of transition lest we be viewed as seeking to micromanage the process.[231]

Perhaps the most important message the West can send is at the level of broad principles (condemnation of regime violence; support for inclusive, democratic systems; free

[227] A U.S. official said, "We also have to deal with very nervous leaders across the region. They are nervous that U.S. actions might contribute to chaos in Egypt or elsewhere or shake confidence in long standing friendships. This is something we have to manage". Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, 1 February 2011. He added: "Israel is nervous, and understandably so. They say they want to put stability before reform. We tell them that is an unrealistic sequence".

[228] A U.S. official conceded that the discourse on political transition had "evolved over time". Ibid.

[229] Secretary Clinton shared her "assessment that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people". Reuters, 25 January 2011. A day later, she spoke of the Egyptian government's "important opportunity … to implement political, economic and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people", while also calling "on all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from violence" and supporting "the universal rights of the Egyptian people, including the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly". www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155388.htm. On 28 January, after Mubarak's speech announcing certain steps, President Obama called on him to "give meaning to those words" and for a "meaningful dialogue between the government and its citizens". www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/28/remarks-president-situation-egypt. On 30 January, Clinton declined to respond to a question about Egypt's stability and spoke of the need for the government "to take steps that will result in a peaceful, orderly transition to a democratic regime". www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155585.htm. On 1 February, Obama was more forceful, saying "an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now". www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/01/remarks-president-situation-egypt. A day later, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs added, "now means yesterday – because when we said now we meant yesterday". www.whitehouse/giv/the-press-office/2011/02/02/press-briefing-press-secretary-robert-gibbs/222011. Some confusion was created on 5 February when Frank Wisner, a former ambassador dispatched to meet with Mubarak, said "the president must stay in office in order to steer those changes through"; the administration sought to distance itself from the remarks, www.politico/com/politico44/perm/0211/mixed_message_170ef04c-4702-4a66-b98c-41843ef9cf2.html, though friends claim Wisner was reflecting what he had been told by U.S. officials. Crisis Group interviews, Washington DC, February 2011. On 10 February, Obama said, "this transition must immediately demonstrate irreversible political change" and called on the government to swiftly spell out the steps it would take to bring about "democracy and the representative government that the Egyptian people seek". www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/02/obama-egypt-must-put-forward-a-meaningful-plan-for-transition/71112/. The next day, after Mubarak had resigned, Obama said "The people of Egypt have spoken, their voices have been heard, and Egypt will never be the same". www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/11/remarks-president-egypt.

[230] Crisis Group interview, U.S. official, Washington, February 2011.

[231] Crisis Group interview, Washington, February 2011.

and fair elections; respect for human rights), rather than specific (and inevitably shifting) policy prescriptions. Economic assistance also will be critical to facilitate difficult transitions in countries experiencing, inter alia, high unemployment, endemic corruption, weak institutions, defective educational systems and a youth bulge. It also could take the opportunity to begin shifting its approach to political Islamism and, as part of its interaction with a full range of Egyptian actors, considering ways to deal with a constituency that inevitably will play an important role.

Finally, Western powers will need to adjust to what inevitably will become a more assertive, independent-minded Egyptian foreign policy. There are reasons not to anticipate a radical shift. Egypt will continue to depend on tourism and on U.S. military as well as economic assistance, and its military will remain attached to its strategic ties to Washington and to the Camp David accords with Israel. Still, some changes appear likely, if only because a more representative, accountable government would be more in tune with its people's views. Over time, Egypt will find it harder to maintain its posture toward Gaza; likely relations with Hamas will improve (particularly if the Muslim Brotherhood participates in political institutions) and criticism of Israeli policies will be accentuated.[232]

[232] See Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "In post-Mubarak Egypt, the rebirth of the Arab world", *The Washington Post*, 11 February 2011.

III. CONCLUSION: WHAT WAY FORWARD?

A. FOR EGYPT…

"Transition" has become something of a mantra, yet it is unclear exactly what Egypt is transitioning to or how it will get there. The term has been used to imply everything from undefined reforms, to Mubarak's resignation and designation of a successor, to far-reaching changes in the political order. Designing that order will involve internal bargaining among the many actors who brought about this change as well as those who resisted it.

There are as many paths to democracy as countries that have attempted to navigate a transition. In Egypt, two models have attracted adherents.[233] Much of the democracy movement leans toward a power-sharing in which an interim authority, composed of civilian and military representatives, would manage the country's affairs and plan its future.[234] This would entail the appointment of a consensual body to replace the Supreme Military Council as the entity running the country.[235]

[233] The classic treatment of the two models described there is Yossi Shain and Juan J. Lintz, "The Role of Interim Governments", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, pp. 73-79.

[234] Not everyone in the democracy movement is happy with this prospect, as the interim authority would be appointed by the military. In the words of one activist, "you'd be solving one problem by creating another". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 22 February 2011.

[235] Mohamed ElBaradei's initial plan calls for a three-person presidential council and a transitional government of national unity. "The presidential council should include a representative of the military, embodying the sharing of power needed to ensure continuity and stability during this critical transition". *The New York Times*, 10 February 2011. A forum of eleven Egyptian human rights organisations called "on the supreme council to quickly release a timetable for the transfer of power to a civilian body to manage the transition phase to a civil, democratic state that respects human rights, in cooperation with the armed forces, and with the participation of civil society, which can monitor the implementation of the roadmap". Statement by the Forum of Independent Human Rights Organisations, 12 February 2011. Yet another proposal was jointly put forward by the National Assembly for Change (itself a coalition of groups under ElBaradei's umbrella), The People's Parliament and The Front Supporting the Revolution. It asked the Supreme Council to transfer power to "new constitutional institutions" at the head of which would be a five-person presidential council (whose members subsequently would not be eligible to be candidates for president) and form a transitional government (the members of which also would not be permitted to be candidates) to oversee important changes, including ending the state of emergency; amending legislation that limits freedom of parties, unions and associations; changing election laws; and forming a constituent

Such a body would have a mix of executive and legislative power and compensate for lack of electoral legitimacy by incorporating a broad spectrum of views and interests: protesters, traditional opposition groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, members of the old regime[236] and the military, in addition to often neglected voices such as those of women and Copts.[237] It would have the authority to appoint and dismiss the cabinet, issue decrees and set the rules governing the transformation of the political order. It would decide such matters as how long until elections, the rules for their conduct, the nature of the body to be elected and its remit. It would decide how to tackle constitutional reform and many other issues on the democracy movement's list. Power-sharing would allow broader, stronger, more credible civilian participation in setting the rules of how the political order will be shaped. [238]

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, while playing its cards close to its chest, has suggested it sees the process unfolding differently, according to what one might call a caretaker model: that a government appointed by the Council would remain in place to manage day-to-day administration until elections – first parliamentary, then presidential – are held, purportedly within six months.[239]

The nature of the caretaker arrangement itself would be ambiguous, insofar as the government's remit would remain unclear and its authority circumscribed by the Supreme Council.[240] In effect, the military seems to have embraced the Mubarak/Suleiman plan for an incremental process of limited change in the absence of a constitutional framework,[241] albeit without the two former leaders.

The caretaker model also has its benefits. It would reassure those who were scared by the furious pace of events over recent weeks. Mubarak might have manipulated the chaos card, but anxiety over the loss of central control is broadly based. Many celebrated the night he relinquished his position, but many did not, worried about the uncertainty it created. A Cairo cleaner related that, when Mubarak resigned, people in his neighbourhood – unlike in Tahrir Square – "were crying, worried, and scared. God created the world in six days, and now they want to remake it in one".[242] The army, for the generals no less than their public, is the party of order; as many see it, if the state does not stand strong, and the social order is not carefully managed, the country could fall into the kind of chaos that gripped it when police were withdrawn on 28 January.

Regardless of whether the power-sharing or caretaker model ultimately is chosen – and all indications so far are that it is to be the latter – transitional authorities face a set of critical questions and challenges.

1. The need for broad participation

Assuming the Supreme Council maintains its current approach, it will be important that it broaden its consultations and act in as transparent a way possible. Even though many credible figures were appointed to the constitutional committee, the manner of the appointments raised questions about the Supreme Council, which named the committee without prior discussion with popular representatives. This unfortunate precedent has been corrected in recent days, as consultations for the new government were wider; recently, the military has met with democracy activists,

assembly to draft a new constitution. The transition would last a year, ending with a referendum on the new constitution and new presidential, parliamentary and local elections. *Al-Ahram*, 20 February.

[236] Although the impulse to exclude representatives of the old regime would be understandable, it could undermine the process.

[237] To minimise the risk of politicisation of the interim authority, it could be agreed that anyone who serves on it would pledge not to stand for office in the next elections. Peru, following the resignation of President Fujimori in 2000, formed a "Dialogue Table" of respected figures who met once a week to discuss legislation that was then approved by the National Congress. Its members agreed not to contest the subsequent elections.

[238] There is some historical evidence that rapid movement under such a power-sharing formula has advantages. An adviser to former Peruvian Interim President Paniagua – who led the country out of the Fujimori period in cooperation with a "Dialogue Table" in a transition process considered among the most successful – offered a lesson from his experience: "Move quickly. We thought the spring would last for years. As it turns out, it only lasted a few months. We should have been bolder in opening days. That's the only time when there is the possibility of reframing the conversation". Crisis Group telephone interview, 16 February 2011. He gave an example of the attempt to redesign the legal framework for the media, which had a corrupt reputation. Paniagua decided the fight was not worth taking on during the transition and would be better left for a "normal government". "The problem", he concluded, "is that normal governments don't do anything".

[239] On 13 February, the Supreme Council announced: "The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces shall temporarily administer the affairs of the country for a period of six months or until People's Assembly, Shura Council and Presidential elections are held". Most interpreted this to mean that elections would be held in six months, though other interpretations are possible. Ahmed Shafiq announced the sequencing of elections on 19 February. Egyptian State TV, 19 February 2011.

[240] A sceptical lawyer dubbed the caretaker government an attempt to "retain a bureaucracy in the absence of a functioning state". Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 10 February 2011.

[241] See Nathan Brown's commentary on the Supreme Council's apparently limited intentions. "Egypt's Constitutional Ghosts", *Foreign Affairs*, 15 February 2011; and "The Struggle to Define the Egyptian Revolution", 17 February 2011, at http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/17/the_struggle_to_define_the_egyptian_revolution.

[242] Crisis Group interview, 12 February 2011.

intellectuals and journalists, and it is said to be planning future meetings with political parties and other groups.[243]

The military may wish to appoint a standing advisory committee that, even if not endowed with formal decision-making authority rising to the level of power-sharing, would provide transparency and expertise for important decisions. Doing so would move the conversation from Tahrir Square to a round-table, or, as one "wise man" was quoted as saying, it at least would build a bridge between them.[244] Reforms – constitutional and governmental – should be transparent, accessible to the citizenry and open to procedural or substantive change based on broad consultation.

2. Timing of elections

Because of the systematic dismantlement of anything but the loyal and largely token opposition under Mubarak's rule and the consequent disarray of the political field, many in the democratic movement would prefer more than the six months the military seems to have set before elections are held. Political society, they say, needs to be reconstructed, particularly its party structure, given the narrowing of political expertise and power to a one-party patronage system underpinned by a constitution oriented largely toward the executive. That could take time, which is why there is fear that parliamentary elections held in anything less than a year would simply consecrate a variation on the status quo. The more participatory the transition, the more it could be drawn-out, as more people would feel a sense of representation.

In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood today is the only organised opposition group, a fact that worries some secular Egyptians.[245] As some see it, a quick parliamentary election could benefit both the Brotherhood and those enmeshed in local patronage networks – formerly NDP connected – who could reassert themselves in another guise.[246] The drawbacks of a rapid election could be partially offset by narrowly defining the mandate and limiting the duration of the initially empanelled bodies, as described below.

3. The scope and sequence of constitutional reforms

Among the issues dividing the political class is how and when to revise the constitution. The question today is whether it should be radically rewritten before the next elections, or rather whether immediate changes should be limited, focusing only on those articles affecting the fairness of the electoral process and relegating more substantial changes to later. As many among the civilian political forces see it,[247] electing a president under the 1971 constitution – even if stripped of its six most abusive articles, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has pledged – risks "empowering another autocrat".[248] They also fear this sequencing would make substantial reform – on the need for which there is near consensus – considerably less likely, since any newly elected representatives could have a stake in maintaining their new institution, not in radically revising it.[249] Those with such qualms argue for

[243] Crisis Group interview, human rights lawyer, Cairo, 22 February 2011.
[244] Crisis Group interview, human rights lawyer, Cairo, 22 February 2011.
[245] "The Brotherhood and Mubarak benefited from each other. Mubarak's stability depended on the phobia of the Brotherhood, and the Brotherhood benefited since Mubarak's dismantlement of the opposition meant that politics were effectively relegated to the religious field. Now we need to buy time". Crisis Group interview, political science professor, Cairo, 16 February 2011.
[246] "The NDP was full of opportunists who latched onto the state party. Those same people will be opportunists and latch on in the new dispensation". Crisis Group interview, analyst, Cairo, February 2011. That said, the longer the period prior to elections, the more important it becomes to establish a broadly inclusive and representative pre-electoral governing structure.

[247] The Council of Revolutionary Youth has called for a new constitution, as have a coalition of civil-society groups. "Statement by the Forum of Independent Human Rights Organisations | Long Live the Egyptian Popular Revolution … Roadmap for a Nation of Rights and the Rule of Law", Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, 12 February 2011, www.eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2011/02/12/1097.
[248] Crisis Group interview, human rights attorney, Cairo, 12 February 2011. He added: "Mubarak was nobody when he came into power, and at that point, he didn't even have all of the amendments that everyone is up in arms about today. It's the rest of the constitution that is the problem. By the powers vested in him by the constitution, it was inevitable that he would become an autocrat. It could happen again, which is why we need more radical change before presidential elections". Constitutional scholar Nathan Brown said that even a revised constitution would "be supremely presidential, and many authoritarian features written deeply into the Egyptian constitutional and legal systems would remain". He described the constitution: "The result was a document that promised a little bit to everybody – but everything to the president. The constitution contained guarantees for individual freedoms, democratic procedures, and judicial independence. It made nods toward socialism and Islam. But for every commitment, there was also a trap door; for every liberty, there was a loophole that ultimately did little to rein in the power of the president or the country's determined security apparatus". "Egypt's Constitutional Ghosts", op. cit. That said, he pointed out that even if the changes were limited to these six articles, the resulting political order would differ significantly from the old. It would entail cleaner elections and open the field for presidential candidates. "The 1971 constitution would work much differently if there is no single dominant regime political party and if there is true pluralism in the parliament".
[249] "Nobody will want to tear up the rulebook of a game they had just won". Crisis Group interview, Egyptian analyst, 18 February 2011.

a longer transition to allow for a more radical constitutional revision, even replacing the presidential system with a parliamentary one before elections.

Given the military's apparent determination to conduct a quick transition, it likely will not be realistic to achieve wholesale revisions, which take time and are by definition controversial. A possible alternative would be to adopt a more modest view of short-term constitutional reform, then electing an interim parliament specifically charged with debating and proposing a new constitution.[250] After completion of its work, the body would be dissolved and new elections held. An activist who supports this concept argued that electing a body to look at constitutional reform – as opposed to reform via commission – would allow "for a participatory process of creating a new social contract, not just drafting a document that would be sold to people in a referendum".[251]

4. Immediate steps

Notwithstanding the precise transitional route, the authorities could act quickly to reassure protesters by addressing key demands. The military has sent positive signals, but they have yet to be accompanied by specific measures, even those on which there is widespread agreement. These include lifting the state of emergency; releasing prisoners detained under its provisions; and ending arbitrary arrests. The Supreme Council should also strongly reaffirm basic rights, including freedom of speech and assembly, including the rights of independent trade unions. Protesters have demanded accountability for corruption and post-25 January violence; to investigate allegations and reduce the risk of politicisation, the government may wish to appoint independent commissions.[252] Even in that case, there are risks in moving too fast before a fair judicial process can be set up. More broadly, a comprehensive, credible and independent review of the state's security sector, with an eye to establishing an apolitical and professional body, would help restore confidence in its agencies.

B. … AND FOR THE REGION

Even before the dust had settled on Egypt's dramatic transformation, protests of varying size had spread to Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco and Iraq. Drawing conclusions about these political movements is premature and imprudent; few had predicted what unfolded in Tunisia or Egypt. Still, it is difficult to ignore the impact Ben Ali's and Mubarak's falls already have had on regional politics. People feel a new sense of empowerment, and opposition movements have been galvanised, convinced both that they can succeed and that their regimes are far more fragile than previously thought. As one Middle East analyst put it, "the principal strength of most Middle Eastern regimes has been that their people have no idea how weak they are".[253]

There are broad similarities, too, among regional regimes. Many of the characteristics that formed the backdrop to the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings exist throughout the region: ineffective political representation; lack of accountability and transparency; arbitrary security measures; rampant corruption; staggering inequalities; the privatisation by members of the elite of public goods; state disdain for ordinary citizens; and the renunciation of any national purpose on the regional scene. For the most part, these regimes have become accustomed to relatively passive societies that in turn have made them complacent, lethargic and ill-equipped to deal with a popular reawakening.[254]

But dissimilarities also must be taken into account. A key feature of the Tunisian and Egyptian cases – arguably the tipping point in both – was that contestation bridged divides and mobilised diverse social, political and generational constituencies. As a former Lebanese minister, Ghassan

[250] Under such a scenario, the elected body would be what authors from the Comparative Constitutions Project called a "constitution-forming body". A number of types are prominent: (1) constituent assemblies – formed with a single issue mandate, to write the new constitution, and dissolved upon its promulgation; (2) constituent legislating assemblies – formed to draft and promulgate a new constitution but which transform into legislatures after promulgation, without new elections; (3) legislative assemblies – where the constitution is drafted and promulgated by a fully-empowered national legislature; and (4) executive bodies – where the constitution is drafted and adopted by an appointed body, not an elected assembly. Ginsburg, Elkins and Blount, "Does the Process of Constitution-Making Matter?", *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, vol. 5 (2009), pp. 204-205.

[251] Crisis Group interview, Cairo, 10 February 2011.

[252] "Comparative study of 'anti-corruption commissions' demonstrates how routinely procedures of investigation have been instrumentalised by private or political interests to become a form of corruption by other means. Indeed, the longer term effort to build an open and productive economic culture can be set back by misguided anti-corruption prosecution". David Kennedy, "An Agenda for Transition in Egypt", unpublished manuscript on file with Crisis Group. Paniagua's former adviser commented on the importance of pursuing such investigations: "The nostalgia for dictators is immense, especially when people realise how messy democracy is". The next period will be rough, as the troubles created and repressed under Mubarak come out. An investigation of corruption, violence and other abuses could go far in calming sentiment, as in Peru. "The verdict against Fujimori was crucial in puncturing the myth of the effective, reliable leader". Crisis Group interview, Crisis Group telephone interview, 16 February 2011.

[253] Crisis Group interview, February 2011.

[254] See Peter Harling, "Remettre les pendules à l'heure au Moyen Orient", *Le Monde*, 4 February 2011.

Salamé, said, these "insurgencies today have an essentially moral, ethical dimension".[255] They are expressions of revulsion against forms of governance that defy justification. In other words, they are based on widely shared sentiments that regime concessions cannot easily address and repression exacerbates.

In Tunisia, the aspiration took the form of a simple call – "dégage"; in Egypt it became "*irhal*"; both essentially mean "clear off". Equally striking was regime incapacity to mobilise loyal constituencies or institutions. Neither most security forces, the party nor important elements of society were willing to fight back. A Tunisian protest leader said, "Ben Ali was like a general going to battle who looks behind and wonders where all the troops went".[256] An Egyptian diplomat echoed: "Over the last several years in particular, Mubarak's regime had hollowed out and alienated even those who had been its stalwart supporters".[257]

The broad consensus that characterised the Tunisian and Egyptian examples does not exist everywhere else; regimes could try to exploit and manipulate sectarian and ethnic divisions, seeking to divide and marginalise protesters. Likewise, the failure to activate loyalists might not be as easily duplicated. Some may be able to rely on security apparatuses that – due perhaps to ethnic or religious divisions – would vigorously resist any regime change that could threaten their very existence.

What is more, while activists throughout the region might draw inspiration from the Tunisian or Egyptian experiences, regimes are learning lessons as well. And they are learning in very different ways. Several have made announcements designed to pre-empt or placate protesters. Yemen's president said he would not stand for another term, nor would his son; Iraqi prime minister Nouri al Maliki said he would not seek a third term; Jordan's King Abdullah fired his government and reached out to the Islamist opposition;[258] Algeria said it would soon lift its nineteen-year-old emergency law; and Syria began allowing its citizens to use Facebook and YouTube. Others (and, in some instances the same) violently repressed protesters, perhaps under the belief that Ben Ali's and Mubarak's fates were sealed when they failed to crack down. In Bahrain and especially Libya, security forces fired on demonstrators, who nevertheless have been displaying remarkable resolve despite brutal and bloody repression.

The fate of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings will be important, as well. As seen in Egypt, public opinion can shift rapidly, in unpredictable and often contradictory ways.[259] Should Egypt experience a difficult, painful or unstable phase, or the socio-economic grievances that fuelled much discontent remain unaddressed, many in the region could take a second – far less favourable – look at what just occurred. Disillusionment, too, can be infectious.

For now, there is much in which Egyptians can take pride, and in that sense their example is serving as an inspiration to others. With the interior ministry broken and its feared security service in disarray, the worst implementer of state repression, torture and humiliation has been pushed aside. Political space has been pried open to a degree unprecedented in the lifetimes of those who took to the streets. This is arguably their greatest accomplishment, even more than Mubarak's removal. Talking with Egyptians, one could watch, in real time, as they were empowered and an awareness of their own agency took root. The exhilaration of this historic moment will not soon be forgotten.

Cairo/Brussels, 24 February 2011

[255] Ghassan Salamé, "Les raisons des révoltes arabes", *Le Monde*, 7 February 2011.
[256] Crisis Group interview, Tunis, February 2011.
[257] Crisis Group interview, 17 February 2011.
[258] Jordanian security forces distributed water and juice during demonstrations in Amman on 21 January that were organised in response to events in Tunisia. Crisis Group interviews, Amman, 23-27 January 2011.
[259] Similar swift fluctuations in popular perceptions were witnessed in Iraq after the U.S. occupation. Crisis Group observations, Baghdad, 2003-2004.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF EGYPT

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

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Crisis Group's international headquarters are in Brussels, with major advocacy offices in Washington DC (where it is based as a legal entity) and New York, a smaller one in London and liaison presences in Moscow and Beijing. The organisation currently operates nine regional offices (in Bishkek, Bogotá, Dakar, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Nairobi, Pristina and Tbilisi) and has local field representation in fourteen additional locations (Baku, Bangkok, Beirut, Bujumbura, Damascus, Dili, Jerusalem, Kabul, Kathmandu, Kinshasa, Port-au-Prince, Pretoria, Sarajevo and Seoul). Crisis Group currently covers some 60 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Russia (North Caucasus), Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Egypt, Gulf States, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela.

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Arab-Israeli Conflict

Ruling Palestine I: Gaza Under Hamas, Middle East Report N°73, 19 March 2008 (also available in Arabic).

Lebanon: Hizbollah's Weapons Turn Inward, Middle East Briefing N°23, 15 May 2008 (also available in Arabic).

The New Lebanese Equation: The Christians' Central Role, Middle East Report N°78, 15 July 2008 (also available in French).

Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model?, Middle East Report N°79, 17 July 2008 (also available in Arabic).

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Egypt's Muslim Brothers: Confrontation or Integration?, Middle East/North Africa Report N°76, 18 June 2008 (also available in Arabic).

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Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, *Jordan and Lebanon*, Middle East Report N°77, 10 July 2008 (also available in Arabic).

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Turkey and Iraqi Kurds: Conflict or Cooperation?, Middle East Report N°81, 13 November 2008 (also available in Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish).

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