



Jadaliyya's Pedagogy Section is coming soon! Watch out! (nothing to click for)

by [Paul Amar](#)

Feb 01 2011

The "March of Millions" in Cairo marks the spectacular emergence of a new political society in Egypt. This uprising brings together a new coalition of forces, uniting reconfigured elements of the security state with prominent business people, internationalist leaders, and relatively new (or newly reconfigured) mass movements of youth, labor, women's and religious groups. President Hosni Mubarak lost his political power on Friday, 28 January. On that night the Egyptian military let Mubarak's ruling party headquarters burn down and ordered the police brigades attacking protesters to return to their barracks. When the evening call to prayer rang out and no one heeded Mubarak's curfew order, it was clear that the old president been reduced to a phantom authority. In order to



[Image from Lefteris Pitarakis / AP Photo]

understand where Egypt is going, and what shape democracy might take there, we need to set the extraordinarily successful popular mobilizations into their military, economic and social context. What other forces were behind this sudden fall of Mubarak from power? And how will this transitional military-centered government get along with this millions-strong protest movement?



Many international media commentators – and some academic and political analysts – are having a hard time understanding the complexity of forces driving and responding to these momentous events. This confusion is driven by the binary "good guys versus bad guys" lenses most use to view this uprising. Such perspectives obscure more than they illuminate. There are three prominent binary models out there and each one carries its own baggage: (1) *People versus Dictatorship*: This perspective leads to liberal naïveté and confusion about the active role of military and elites in this uprising. (2) *Seculars versus Islamists*: This model leads to a 1980s-style call for "stability" and Islamophobic fears about the containment of the supposedly extremist "Arab street." Or, (3) *Old Guard versus Frustrated Youth*: This lens imposes a 1960s-style romance on the protests but cannot begin to explain the structural and institutional dynamics driving the uprising, nor account for the key roles played by many 70-year-old Nasser-era figures.

To map out a more comprehensive view, it may be helpful to identify the moving parts within the military and police institutions of the security state and how clashes within and between these coercive institutions relate to shifting class hierarchies and capital formations. I will also weigh these factors in relation to the breadth of new non-religious social movements and the internationalist or humanitarian identity of certain figures emerging at the center of the new opposition coalition.

The sectarian rhetoric emanating from the (Kuwaiti) Bedouins appears to be a strategic move from a group that stands a lot to gain should they be able to alienate the Shi'a and consolidate the Bedouins and merchant Sunnis into a single political block.

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Western commentators, whether liberal, left or conservative, tend to see all forces of coercion in non-democratic states as the hammers of "dictatorship" or as expressions of the will of an authoritarian leader. But each police, military and security institution has its own history, culture, class-allegiances, and, often its own autonomous sources of revenue and support as well. It would take many books to lay this all out in detail; but let me make a brief attempt here. In Egypt the police forces (*al-shurta*) are run by the Interior Ministry which was very close to Mubarak and the Presidency and had become politically co-dependent on him. But police stations gained relative autonomy during the past decades. In certain police stations this autonomy took the form of the adoption of a militant ideology or moral mission; or some Vice Police stations have taken up drug running; or some ran protection rackets that squeezed local small businesses. The political dependability of the police, from a bottom-up perspective, is not high. Police grew to be quite self-interested and entrepreneurial on a station-by-station level. In the 1980s, the police faced the growth of "gangs," referred to in Egyptian Arabic as *baltagiya*. These street organizations had asserted self-rule over Cairo's many informal settlements and slums. Foreigners and the Egyptian bourgeoisie assumed the *baltagiya* to be Islamists but they were mostly utterly unideological. In the early 1990s the Interior Ministry decided "if you can't beat them, hire them." So the Interior Ministry and the Central Security Services started outsourcing coercion to these *baltagiya*, paying them well and training them to use sexualized brutality (from groping to rape) in order to punish and deter female protesters and male detainees, alike. During this period the Interior Ministry also turned the State Security Investigations (SSI) (*mabahith amn al-dawla*) into a monstrous threat, detaining and torturing masses of domestic political dissidents.

Autonomous from the Interior Ministry we have the Central Security Services (*Amn al-Markazi*). These are the black uniformed, helmeted men that the media refer to as "the police." Central Security was supposed to act as the private army of Mubarak. These are not revolutionary guards or morality brigades like the *basiji* who repressed the Green Movement protesters in Iran. By contrast, the Amn al-Markazi are low paid and non-ideological. Moreover, at crucial times, these Central Security brigades have risen up en masse against Mubarak, himself, to demand better wages and working conditions. Perhaps if it weren't for the sinister assistance of the brutal *baltagiya*, they would not be a very intimidating force. The look of unenthusiastic resignation in the eyes of Amn al-Markazi soldiers as they were kissed and lovingly disarmed by protesters has become one of the most iconic images, so far, of this revolution. The dispelling of Mubarak's authority could be marked to precisely that moment when protesters kissed the cheeks of Markazi officers who promptly vanished into puffs of tear gas, never to return.

The Armed Forces of the Arab Republic of Egypt are quite unrelated to the Markazi or police and see themselves as a distinct kind of state altogether. One could say that Egypt is still a "military dictatorship" (if one must use that term) since this is still the same regime that the Free Officers' Revolution installed in the 1950s. But the military has been marginalized since Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David Accords with Israel and the United States. Since 1977, the military has not been allowed to fight anyone. Instead, the generals have been given huge aid payoffs by the US. They have been granted concessions to run shopping malls in Egypt, develop gated cities in the desert and beach resorts on the coasts. And they are encouraged to sit around in cheap social clubs.

These buy-offs have shaped them into an incredibly organized interest group of nationalist businessmen. They are attracted to foreign investment; but their loyalties are economically and symbolically embedded in national territory. As we can see when examining any other case in the region (Pakistan, Iraq, the Gulf), US military-aid money does not buy loyalty to America; it just buys resentment. In recent years, the Egyptian military has felt collectively a growing sense of national duty, and has developed a sense of embittered shame for what it considers its "neutered masculinity." its sense that it was not standing up for the nation's people. The nationalistic Armed Forces want to restore their honor and they are disgusted by police corruption and *baltagiya* brutality. And it seems that the military, now as "national capitalists," have seen themselves as the blood rivals of the neoliberal "crony capitalists" associated with Hosni Mubarak's son Gamal who have privatized anything they can get their hands on and sold the country's assets off to China, the US, and Persian Gulf capital.

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Thus we can see why in the first stage of this revolution, on Friday 28 January, we saw a very quick “coup” of the military against the police and Central Security, and disappearance of Gamal Mubarak (the son) and of the detested Interior Minister Habib el-Adly. However the military is also split by some internal contradictions. Within the Armed Forces there are two elite sub-branches, the Presidential Guard and the Air Force. These remained closer to Mubarak while the broader military turned against him. This explains why you can had the contradictory display of the General Chief of the Armed Forces, Muhammad Tantawi, wading in among the protesters to show support on 30 January, while at the same time the chief of the Air Force was named Mubarak’s new Prime Minister and sent planes to strafe the same protesters. This also explains why the Presidential Guard protected the Radio/Television Building and fought against protesters on 28 January rather than siding with them.

The Vice President, Omar Soleiman, named on 29 January, was formerly the head of the Intelligence Services (*al-mukhabarat*). This is also a branch of the military (and not of the police). Intelligence is in charge of externally oriented secret operations, detentions and interrogations (and, thus, torture and renditions of non-Egyptians). Although since Soleiman’s *mukhabarat* did not detain and torture as many Egyptian dissidents in the domestic context, they are less hated than the *mubahith*. The Intelligence Services (*mukhabarat*) are in a particularly decisive position as a “swing vote.” As I understand it, the Intelligence Services loathed Gamal Mubarak and the “crony capitalist” faction, but are obsessed with stability and have long, intimate relationships with the CIA and the American military. The rise of the military, and within it, the Intelligence Services, explains why all of Gamal Mubarak’s business cronies were thrown out of the cabinet on Friday 28 January, and why Soleiman was made interim VP (and functions in fact as Acting President). This revolution or regime change would be complete at the moment when anti-Mubarak tendencies in the military consolidate their position and reassure the Intelligence Services and the Air Force that they can confidently open up to the new popular movements and those parties coalesced around opposition leader Elbaradei. This is what an optimistic reader might judge to be what Obama and Clinton describe as an “orderly transition.”

On Monday, 31 January, we saw Naguib Sawiris, perhaps Egypt’s richest businessman and the iconic leader of the developmentalist “nationalist capital” faction in Egypt, joining the protesters and demanding the exit of Mubarak. During the past decade, Sawiris and his allies had become threatened by Mubarak-and-son’s extreme neoliberalism and their favoring of Western, European and Chinese investors over national businessmen. Because their investments overlap with those of the military, these prominent Egyptian businessmen have interests literally embedded in the land, resources and development projects of the nation. They have become exasperated by the corruption of Mubarak’s inner circle.

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Paralleling the return of organized national(ist) capital associated with the military and ranged against the police (a process that also occurred during the struggle with British colonialism in the 1930s-50s) there has been a return of very powerful and vastly organized labor movements, principally among youth. 2009 and 2010 were marked by mass national strikes, nation-wide sit-ins, and visible labor protests often in the same locations that spawned this 2011 uprising. And the rural areas have been rising up against the government's efforts to evict small farmers from their lands, opposing the regime's attempts to re-create the vast landowner fiefdoms that defined the countryside during the Ottoman and British Colonial periods. In 2008 we saw the 100,000 strong April 6 Youth Movement emerge, leading a national general strike. And in 2008 and just in December 2010 we saw the first independent public sector unions emerge. Then just on 30 January 2011 clusters of unions from most major industrial towns gathered to form an Independent Trade Union Federation. These movements are organized by new leftist political parties that have no relation to the Muslim Brotherhood, nor are they connected to the past generation of Nasserism. They do not identify against Islam, of course, and do not make an issue of policing the secular-religious divide. Their interest in protecting national manufacturing and agricultural smallholdings, and in demanding public investment in national economic development dovetails with some of the interests of the new nationalist capital alliance.

Thus behind the scenes of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Facebook-driven protest waves, there are huge structural and economic forces and institutional realignments at work. Egypt's population is officially recorded at 81 million; but in reality goes well beyond 100 million since some parents do not register all their children to shield them from serving in the Amn Al-Markazi or army. With the burgeoning youth population now becoming well organized, these social and internet-coordinated movements are becoming very important. They can be grouped into three trends. One group of new movements are organized by and around international norms and organizations, and so may tend toward a secular, globalizing set of perspectives and discourses. A second group is organized through the very active and assertive legal culture and independent judicial institutions in Egypt. This strong legal culture is certainly not a "Western human rights" import. Lawyers, judges and millions of litigants – men and women, working-class, farmers, and elite – have kept alive the judicial system and have a long unbroken history of resisting authoritarianism and staking rights claims of all sorts. A third group of new social movements represents the intersection of internationalist NGOs, judicial-rights groups and the new leftist, feminist, rural and worker social movements. The latter group critiques the universalism of UN and NGO secular discourses, and draws upon the power of Egypt's legal and labor activism, but also has its own innovative strategies and solutions – many of which have been on prominent display on the streets this week.

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One final element to examine here is the critical, and often overlooked role that Egypt has played in United Nations and humanitarian organizations, and how this history is coming back to enliven domestic politics and offer legitimacy and leadership at this time. Muhammad ElBaradei, the former director of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency has emerged as the consensus choice of the United Democratic Front in Egypt, which is asking him to serve as interim president, and to preside over a national process of consensus building and constitution drafting. In the 2000s, ElBaradei bravely led the IAEA and was credited with confirming that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and that Iran was not developing a nuclear weapons program. He won the Nobel Prize for upholding international law against a new wave of wars of aggression and

for essentially stopping the momentum for war against Iran. He is no radical and not Egypt's Gandhi; but he is no pushover or puppet of the US, either. For much of the week, standing at his side at the protests has been Egyptian actor Khaled Abou Naga who has appeared in several Egyptian and US films and who serves as Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF. This may be much more a UN-humanitarian led revolution than a Muslim Brotherhood uprising. This is a very twenty-first century regime change – utterly local and international simultaneously.



It is a good time to remind ourselves that the first-ever United Nations military-humanitarian peacekeeping intervention, the UN Emergency Force, was created with the joint support of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and US President Dwight D. Eisenhower (both military men, of course) in 1960 to keep the peace in Gaza and to stop the former colonial powers and Israel from invading Egypt in order to retake the Suez Canal and resubordinate Egypt. Then in the 1990s, Egypt's Boutros Boutros-Ghali served as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Boutros-Ghali articulated new UN doctrines of state-building and militarized humanitarian intervention. But he got fired for making the mistake of insisting that international human rights and humanitarian law needed to be applied neutrally and universally, rather than only at the convenience of the Security Council powers. Yet Egypt's relationship to the UN continues. Notably, 'Aida Seif Ad-Dawla, one of the most articulate, brave and creative leaders of the new generation of Egyptian social movements and feminist NGOs, is a candidate for the high office of UN Rapporteur on Torture. Egyptians have a long history for investing in and supporting international law, humanitarian norms and human rights. Egyptian internationalism insists on the equal application of human rights principles and humanitarian laws of war even in the face of superpower pressure. In this context, ElBaradei's emergence as a leader makes perfect sense. Although this internationalist dimension of Egypt's "local" uprising is utterly ignored by most self-conscious liberal commentators who assume that international means "the West" and that Egypt's protesters are driven by the politics of the belly rather than matters of principle.



Mubarak is already out of power. The new cabinet is composed of chiefs of Intelligence, Air Force and the prison authority, as well as one International Labor Organization official. This group embodies a hard-core "stability coalition" that will work to bring together the interests of new military, national capital and labor, all the while reassuring the United States. Yes, this is a reshuffling of the cabinet, but one which reflects a very significant change in political direction. But none of it will count as a democratic transition until the vast new coalition of local social movements and internationalist Egyptians break into this circle and insist on setting the terms and agenda for transition.

I would bet that even the hard-line leaders of the new cabinet will be unable to resist plugging into the willpower of these popular uprisings, one-hundred million Egyptians strong.

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Why Egypt's Progressives Win

Feb 08 2011

58 comments for "Why Mubarak is Out "



enlightening and thought provoking I am so pleased you have weighed in on this topic

Edouard R Amar

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 07:09 PM



Really great to see you guys publishing such informative thoughtful work!

Shiva

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 10:38 PM



very useful, thanks.

is there any possible alignment of oppositional factions/forces that could support a revolutionary seizure of power from the current government?

also, based on the social/class/institutional alignments you discuss, what could happen this week, say, if masses of protesters try to seize the State TV building or the Presidential Palace?

mubarek is defiant, with US backing and coordination. what might happen now?

q

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 10:52 PM



Time: February 5, 2011 13:00 Union Square, NewYork. A demonstration for continued support of the Egyptian people After Egyptians went down to the roads in the day of rage to express the tragic situation that our beloved country has reached and as usual the security did not allow them to practice what is their right in expressing and strike security forces has fired tear gas and cold water to break up the strike. That strike made by thousands in scenes brought tears to the eyes

tut

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 10:57 PM



Thank you so much for this, Amar! I will need a lot more time to digest all the information you give us here, but the article is incredibly helpful to understand the mechanisms of the unrest of the past few days. I am going to share your article with all my friends!

rostop mesli

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 11:18 PM



Fantástica análise da situação no Egito. Muito obrigado, Paul, por esclarecer tão bem eventos tão complexos e importantes. É raro de se ler algo com tanta nuance hoje em dia!

Juan Marsiaj

wrote on February 01, 2011 at 11:48 PM



Thank you so much, this is the most helpful piece I've read about the uprising. I find it easier to rejoice in the events now that I see them in a more nuanced light.

N.R.

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 01:13 AM



As an American who left home to study abroad in France, I learned at an early age to question my assumptions and to gather information, as much information as possible, before forming opinions. I am now in my mid-40's and live in Rome, where I have perhaps become too complacent and sit too comfortably in my chair of "enlightened" middle age. Thank you Mr Amar for waking me up.

Thomas

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 01:40 AM



Thanks for this! After having just read yet another article stating that technology has given Egyptians a voice and is leading to democracy, it's so refreshing to read this insightful analysis of the diversity of players in Egypt who are contributing to

(and might potentially obstruct) political change.

Rachel Brickner

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 06:03 AM



Great analysis, 'beyond the bianries'! really blitzes conventional commentary/journalism by exposing the way it works. The history-to-today update on UN-based but US-independent internationalism is a real contribution - I've never seen that picked up before. The URL has gone round the 'school' here.

Terrell Carver

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 06:24 AM



Muito obrigada por esclarezer a complexidade da situacao. E a primeira vez que vejo uma argumentacaotao clara contra as dicotomias que geralmente aparezem na midia

Monica

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 09:55 AM



superb essay. it really brings out the capillaries of power in the Egyptian state. more, more. more on the gamal and the neo-liberal clique. who are they?

Vijay Prashad

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 11:08 AM



Well done Bravo! Biggest problem facing the middle East is Israel's support of the west--Egpt has to contend with greedy western countries to control the M.E. supplies. That is why Israel was created and funded. Even if Mubarack leaves--next president will be MOSSAD assassinated--just like Israel's stooge Mubarack as VP during Sadat--killed the President--lot's of leads also--to the assiassination of Nasser. CIA/MOSSAD/MI5-6 are very dangerous---no future anti-west Egphtian President will live long--Egpt is dealing with very mean greedy western forces--namely USA and side kick Israel. One suggestion for Arabs---side with Iran : ^/

George in Toronto

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 11:54 AM



FINALLY, a piece that clarifies all the police versus army dimensions that are obviously central but clearly not well understood!

Jillian Schwedler

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 12:05 PM



Brilliant, many thanks.

Thanks for this brilliant analysis in terms of local actors but what about external and foreign ones. Egypt is a major element in the geopolitics of world powers, especially Europe and the US, towards the region. Enlightening us on this dimension of the situation in egypt would complete the picture on how the situation evolves.

Hind Khoury

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 12:45 PM



USA is doing too little too late and always to join the winner. The only thing USA can say now is GET OUT MUBARAK otherwise USA lost all moral values and should never speak about democracy. Mubarak's Regime pays homeless thugs, criminals, policemen who are hungry a very little money to protect corruption in elections and harm educated patriot citizens as his last chance to maintain his severely shaken hold on power..He is truly a criminal and should be hanged now.. Mubarak' leaving Egypt is not enough anymore. The Most AMAZING video on the internet Egypt jan25 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThvBJMzmSZI> MUST SEE!!!Egypt Revolution 2011 Demonstrators Vs police Fighting <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBtYLBQPRGQ>

Dr Nawar

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 01:36 PM



Cool stuff, Amar, deep, deeply informed, so much beyond the simplified images in most mass-media. Thanks, I will pass on anything you write.

Oleg Koefoed

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 03:21 PM



Brilliant, pithy, what else can I say ...

Dr. Mona

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 04:20 PM



dear Amar. i am linking your article in Blogs i like to read. and forwarding to friends and family. well done.

beatrice

wrote on February 02, 2011 at 07:22 PM



Best analysis to date of the 21st Century's most significant revolution. Many thanks for sharing such high quality work.

john badgley

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 12:51 AM



Thanks for bringing such clarity and focus to this very important issue. I've forwarded the link far and wide.

Mike Ballard

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 01:29 AM



As an African and socialist from Kenya, I must say I was quite impressed by your lucid and incisive analysis of the Egyptian situation. Kudos!

Onyango Oloo

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 02:02 AM



Dear Paul, Many thanks, I concur with previous comments (at least those not using your analysis to distort it with a view to settling accounts with their perceived enemies). One thing though: clearly, you have written this piece with a view to countering usual Western "fast-food" analyses. Good, and thank you for that. Now what about the other pieces of the puzzle? What about the nationwide structured Muslim brotherhood? I agree with you that, thanks to the combination of grievances, and thanks to the chain of past and present key events (Algeria's war of 90s, 9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq, the current extreme-right regime in Israel...), religious movements cannot claim to take ownership of these beautiful and natural jasmine-flavoured "winds of change". Yet, isn't your (and my) inclination not to see (not to want?) an Islamic hijacking of the regime change, driving you halfway in your very detailed analysis? A number of essential actors have been examined, as well as their motivations... What about another monumental piece: an 80-year old movement which is soon to be legalised (and whose influence stretches anyway through all the institutions and groups you've mentioned)? And its satellites? My take is that it will take its share of the power puzzle... one proportionate to the vacuum of power, or to the degree of coheion/rivalries that will characterise the future, structured shape of this secular movement. My hope is that it wil not be enough to promote a rampant legalisation of religious authoritarianism, as has been seen elsewhere (women barred from exercising their rights or from performing their duties, street "lords" deciding what is right and what is wrong according to their reading of the Book - in other words: according to their self-perceived interests)...

As you can see my concern is not about international and regional relations: other countries, including Israel, will have to adjust to what the New Egypt will perceive as its national interests. What I am concerned about, is the possibility, for young and old Egyptians, to achieve their goals in a secular society. There should be no less than the following goal: that even in the slums of Cairo, or in villages of upper Egypt, there be a new sense of achievable goals, without interference from any criminal or religious maffia. AND that is only possible thanks to a fair and firm, non aligned, justice system. All these remarks, once again, are just of complementary nature, not contradicting your enlightening analysis. Merci and choukren, once again.

Michel Nouredine

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 07:14 AM



Brilhante ensaio que nos permite ver a complexidade da revolução egípcia, que se desenrola ante nossos olhos, sob o registro do espetáculo na mídia global. Obrigado ao Professor Amar por nos ajudar a entender o fascinante e dramático momento. No Brasil, agora fica claro como toda política externa é "ideológica" e "interessada", não apenas a do Governo Lula, mas, principalmente, a dos U.S.

Osmundo Pinho

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 09:38 AM



extremely helpful, thank you!

annie

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 10:48 AM

Thanks for providing detailed background information....All very helpful in our



trying to understand the implications for what's happening in Egypt and the region. It certainly serves as valuable replacement for the vacuum that is the 'color commentary'purporting to be 'analysis' ... being fed to the world by the airheads ..from the likes of Fox News and others these days.

E. J. Harder

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 03:23 PM



A truly outstanding piece. It fills in so much of the background and provides an extraordinarily succinct context for the events. I feel ten times more intelligent on the Egypt crisis than I did ten minutes ago. Thank you.

David

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 03:52 PM



Good play-by-play in-depth and factual analysis, though I would quibble that Mubarak's team is not off the field yet. The praetorian regime initiated by the Free Officers Movement will persist and various factions in the Army will coalesce, I believe, and your 'national capitalists' may have carried the day by ousting the crony crew with Mubarak's assent. In that case, a new alignment with much more of a democratic character could EVENTUALLY emerge, but I think Obama's jumping up and down calling for a transition just this minute and make it snappy is simply a sophomore self-defeating misreading of the situation.

daveinboca

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 04:22 PM



Dear Paul, Many thanks, I concur with previous comments (at least those not using your analysis to distort it with a view to settling accounts with their perceived enemies). One thing though: clearly, you have written this piece with a view to countering usual Western "fast-food" analyses. Good, and thank you for that. Now what about the other pieces of the puzzle? What about the nationwide structured Muslim brotherhood? I agree with you that, thanks to the combination of grievances, and thanks to the chain of past and present key events (Algeria's war of 90s, 9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq, the current extreme-right regime in Israel...), religious movements cannot claim to take ownership of these beautiful and natural jasmine-flavoured "winds of change". Yet, isn't your (and my) inclination not to see (not to want?) an Islamic hijacking of the regime change, driving you halfway in your very detailed analysis? A number of essential actors have been examined, as well as their motivations... What about another monumental piece: an 80-year old movement which is soon to be legalised (and whose influence stretches anyway through all the institutions and groups you've mentioned)? And its satellites? My take is that it will take its share of the power puzzle... one proportionate to the vacuum of power, or to the degree of coheion/rivalries that will characterise the future, structured shape of this secular movement. My hope is that it wil not be enough to promote a rampant legalisation of religious authoritarianism, as has been seen elsewhere (women barred from exercising their rights or from performing their duties, street "lords" deciding what is right and what is wrong according to their reading of the Book - in other words: according to their self-perceived interests)...

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Michel Nouredine

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 04:41 PM



Mubarak is out of power by defcto and on power by dejure.

Mr. Not

wrote on February 03, 2011 at 06:54 PM



Thank you for your cogent article which is the most enlightened perspective that I have read to date.

Yasmine Hassan

wrote on February 04, 2011 at 08:23 AM

Thanks, Amar. This really is must-reading.



C. Parker

wrote on February 04, 2011 at 12:49 PM



Thank you Amar. Your article brings forth the complexities of the Egyptian social and political situation beyond the classical binarism of secular/religious, East/West. You deftly connect the current events to the larger modern social and economic Egyptian history.

Amr

wrote on February 04, 2011 at 05:55 PM



Thank you. All these days I have started to follow Egypt's uprising I have been frustrated by all shallow analysis like those you criticize in your article.

I have searched for something like this to understand the dynamics of the revolution and the country in itself.

To me the story of the thugs are heartbreaking. Large income gaps and people left without any prospects what so ever will always turn violent.

Thank you for reminding me of that extreme social inequalities always are the roots to injustice and hence to violence. Thank you for helping me understand understand the background.

And thank you for sharing so much hope.

klara

wrote on February 04, 2011 at 09:56 PM



Thank you all for these fascinating, supportive and provocative comments. I hope to engage your questions in the next days. I will be appearing on television Saturday morning (Feb 5th) on Democracy Now, 11am-1pm EST, 8-10am PST, if you would like to learn more. View at www.democracynow.org

Paul Amar

wrote on February 04, 2011 at 10:39 PM



Very Powerful Stuff. Very enlightening. Thank You.

Marcia

wrote on February 05, 2011 at 12:42 AM



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VILyc-IPYnY>

ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION

wrote on February 05, 2011 at 11:11 AM



*an urdu translation of this article is here
http://issuu.com/ispakistan/docs/mubarakout_paulamar?viewMode=presentation&mode=embed*

riaz ahmed

wrote on February 05, 2011 at 12:57 PM



An old Berber saying goes like this: "There no field that does have a thorn." Amar's analysis may a thorn for many in the main steam media field but it is is a beautiful rose for all of those seeking deep understanding rather than sound bites.

A pleasure to read. Thank you.

AC

Amar Cherchar

wrote on February 05, 2011 at 10:13 PM



Thank you very much for a well-written and thoughtful article.

Hooman

wrote on February 06, 2011 at 12:10 AM

I have one question about what you wrote here: "Egyptians have a long history for



investing in and supporting international law, humanitarian norms and human rights."

I've never heard that anywhere, nor did I experience it there. At what point in history have Egyptians been at the forefront of human rights exactly?

db

wrote on February 06, 2011 at 05:00 PM



I've been waiting for an article like this one. Al-Jazeera is pretty good for news (and did publish this piece, actually) but by and large the Western media contains much rubbish and cliché. Thank you, Paul Amar!

Edwin Janzen

wrote on February 06, 2011 at 08:29 PM



Great analysis. Thanks.

Mike Gurstein

wrote on February 06, 2011 at 10:12 PM



Thanks for a brilliant analysis.

Loretta Callahan

wrote on February 07, 2011 at 12:33 AM



Mr. Amar, thank you for this enlightened and in-depth analysis. I only wish such scholarship could appear in the main stream media in the US (New York Times, LA Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.) And even more importantly, I hope that Mr. Obama and Mrs. Clinton will read it and digest it. I will fax it on to the White House and cross my fingers.

Nile El Wardani

wrote on February 07, 2011 at 02:31 AM



I first came across this article in a translation published in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ). I was impressed by the depth of analysis, providing much more than the frantic reports of "special correspondents" hastily dispatched into crisis zones. The only thing I thought was missing is the role Muslim Brotherhood is, will be, playing in Egyptian politics...

Red Baron

wrote on February 07, 2011 at 10:56 AM



I just read your article in the Frankfurter Allgemeine and felt really enlightened. Thank you for providing us with such a singular piece of background information. The other day, participating in a demonstration in Berlin in support of the Egyptian protesters, I read the caption "Human rights instead of Western Rights!". It made me feel deeply ashamed of the European (and US) manoeuvring in favour of the status quo. Is international politics turning the legitimate claims of the Egyptian people upside down?

Gerdien Jonker

wrote on February 07, 2011 at 12:51 PM



A soldier in Cairo kissing a civilian. Who has seen that in his lifetime? I have no words. Mubarak should see that. He will not believe his eyes. Thomas

Kohl

wrote on February 07, 2011 at 08:42 PM



It may interest you to have more information (besides Wikipedia) about Frank Wisner Sr, the father of the american diplomat currently in Egypt :

a) in the recent book of John Loftus

introduction to the OPC :

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/47963038/America-s-Nazi-Secret-Loftus-OPC-CIA>

apparitions of Frank G. Wisner Sr :

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/47870340/Frank-G-Wisner-Sr>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/48153091/Frank-G-Wisner-Sr-2>

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/48153091/Frank-G-Wisner-Sr-3>

b) in the book of Ian Johnson :

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/48154012/Frank-G-Wisner-Sr-Book-of-Ian-Johnson>

HERVE

wrote on February 11, 2011 at 02:55 PM



*Extremely illuminating. I just linked (and excerpted) at **Obsidian Wings**.*

Doctor Science

wrote on February 11, 2011 at 04:00 PM



very meticulously write....mubarak you really stink!!!

azhar

wrote on February 12, 2011 at 02:31 AM



Does anyone know anything about what groups specifically Amar's referring to when he writes about "...rural and worker social movements. The latter group critiques the universalism of UN and NGO secular discourses.."?

Sounds like distributism, in a way.

Susannah

wrote on February 12, 2011 at 01:52 PM



Thank you for this great analysis, very helpful!!

auntie

wrote on February 12, 2011 at 02:26 PM



Excellent. I think it's just about time to take labour and ownership issues out of the realm of economics and into the realm of morality.

Sylvia

wrote on February 12, 2011 at 06:11 PM



So glad I ragged about our American press and media in a public way on FaceBook, because a friend sent me your comprehensive article, setting forth the complexities in Egypt. Thank you for this informative article.

Donna Brenneis

wrote on February 12, 2011 at 06:34 PM



This is (or should be) going straight onto readings lists for Middle East Politics and Democratisation courses! You've done us all a real service: these are exactly the sorts of categories that should be introduced in the analysis (not just for Egypt).

Gerd Nonneman

wrote on February 13, 2011 at 01:05 PM



Thanks for the great summary of the questions not answered anywhere else! And thanks too to Juan Cole for his everyday best!

Dan Davenport MD

wrote on February 16, 2011 at 01:31 AM



Great analysis that is sorely missing in other publications. However, I found your analysis of the military a little wanting. There are two sets of groups in the military that exerted their influence on the event, but I'm not sure you describe them very well. You say the pro-Mubarak group is the air force and the presidential guard and then an unnamed other group. I think the split here is between older and younger officers. The older officers benefitted greatly from Mubarak's regime. They owed their careers to him personally and as such very loyal to him. On the other hand there were younger officers across the board who found Gamal and the other capitalists around him to be abhorrent and by moving against Mubarak they cut Gamal's power indefinitely. They guys were not able to acquire new wealth; they were blocked by Gamal and his cronies and toppling Mubarak assured that. They were also putting pressure on their seniors who in turned feared a mutiny if they did not act against Mubarak.

Also factual errors: 1- Tantawi is not the chief of staff of the armed forces but rather the

defense minister. 2- the air force was NOT strafing the population. They were merely flying over.

TB

wrote on February 17, 2011 at 08:59 AM

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