

Egypt in a Time of Revolution

This book considers the diverse forms of mass mobilization and contentious politics that emerged during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and its aftermath. Drawing on a catalog of more than 8,000 protest events, as well as interviews, video footage and still photographs, Neil Ketchley provides the first systematic account of how Egyptians banded together to overthrow Hosni Mubarak, and how old regime forces engineered a return to authoritarian rule. Eschewing top-down, structuralist, and culturalist explanations, the author shows that the causes and consequences of Mubarak's ousting can only be understood by paying close attention to the evolving dynamics of contentious politics witnessed in Egypt since 2011. Setting these events within a larger social and political context, Ketchley sheds new light on the trajectories and legacies of the Arab Spring, as well as recurring patterns of contentious collective action found in the Middle East and beyond.

Neil Ketchley is Lecturer in Middle East Politics at King's College London. He was a Hulme Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Brasenose College, University of Oxford, from 2014–2016. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the London School of Economics.

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Contentious Politics and the Arab Spring

NEIL KETCHLEY

King's College London



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For Lamiaa, Isobel, and Imogen

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Preface and Acknowledgments

On 25 January 2011, several thousand Egyptians outmaneuvered Interior Ministry-controlled police to reach Midan al-Tahrir in downtown Cairo, setting the scene for eighteen days of rambunctious mass protests against the regime of Hosni Mubarak. When I arrived in Egypt in May 2011, Mubarak had already left Cairo for self-imposed exile in Sharm El-Sheikh, but his security state remained intact. Meanwhile, Egyptians, many of whom hoped to deepen the gains of the Revolution, continued to stage daily protests across the country. With Midan al-Tahrir intermittently occupied and labor protests breaking out across the country, other parties and movements demobilized, choosing to pursue their claims through the ballot box. *Egypt in a Time of Revolution* tells that story: how Egyptians banded together against authoritarianism, how the revolutionary coalition that ousted Mubarak divided in the years that followed, and how elements within Mubarak's state conspired to defeat further challenges from below.

I never planned to write a book about contemporary Egyptian politics. I left Damascus for Cairo in the revolutionary spring of 2011 to begin researching three cases of "Islamist" mobilization in the interwar era. It did not initially occur to me to make the events of January–February 2011 the focus of my research. The Egyptian National Archives had other ideas. And so, while the authorities mulled over my application for a reader's pass, I began to collect newspapers and write down my conversations with protestors. This book is the result. To John Sidel, I owe a profound debt. His generosity, intellectual range, and guidance have all contributed immensely to this project, even as it evolved into a study of the diverse forms of contentious politics that I came to witness first-hand in Egypt. And if the title of the book recalls Benedict Anderson's (2006

[1972]) classic study of the Indonesian Revolution, it is thanks to the influence of John ‘Ibn Anderson’ Sidel, who has pushed me to think and to read comparatively, to the extent that it now seems only natural to locate this key episode from the Arab Spring beside other instances of mass mobilization and contentious politics found in Southeast Asia and beyond. Similarly, John Chalcraft was an essential source of help and guidance. He convinced me, in the autumn of 2013, to focus on Egypt and more contemporaneous street-level mobilization, thereby freeing me from my guilt about abandoning the interwar period.

Eitan Alimi, Morten S. Andersen, Walter Armbrust, Mark Beissinger, Dina Bishara, John Breuilly, Steven Brooke, Killian Clarke, Randall Collins, Brecht De Smet, Sarah ElMasry, Youssef El Chazli, Sarah ElMasry, Hannah ElSisi, Fawaz Gerges, Jeroen Gunning, Heather Hamill, Navid Hassanpour, Sune Haugbølle, Amy Austin Holmes, Ali Kadivar, Walid Kazziha, Laleh Khalili, George Lawson, Yasmine Laveille, Gauthier Marchais, Kevin Mazur, Nawal Mustafa, Patrick Präg, Lucie Ryzova, Atef Said, Hannah Scott Deuchar, Lamiaa Shehata, Kathryn Stapley, Richard Stewart, Andrea Teti, Felix Tropf, Elizabeth Trott, and Victor Willi gave feedback, suggestions, and encouragement on various aspects of the project. At Oxford, Michael Biggs was a superlative collaborator and mentor. It was Michael who first encouraged me to compile an event catalogue in the dark days of 2013 – and he has been a crucial source of advice and friendship ever since. Christopher Barrie and Michael Farquhar improved the manuscript immeasurably with their smart comments and salutary criticism. So too, Sidney Tarrow was unfailingly generous with his sage advice and critical feedback. At Cambridge, Lew Batemen, Robert Dreesen, Brianda Reyes, and Neil Ryan oversaw the journey from manuscript to publication. Llinos Edwards and Hannah Scott Deucher proofread various chapter drafts, and AElfwine Mischler oversaw the indexing.

I thank also my informants, several of whom read chapter drafts and offered detailed feedback and comments on the project. These brave and creative men and women, young Muslim Brothers and Muslim Sisters, lifelong activists and accidental revolutionaries, are the protagonists of this book, and I can only hope that they recognize themselves and their exploits in its pages. I am particularly grateful to Belal, Youssef, Esraa, and Abdullah for introducing me to members of the anti-coup movement, and to Muhammad for facilitating interviews with Tamarrod’s leadership.

Preface and Acknowledgments

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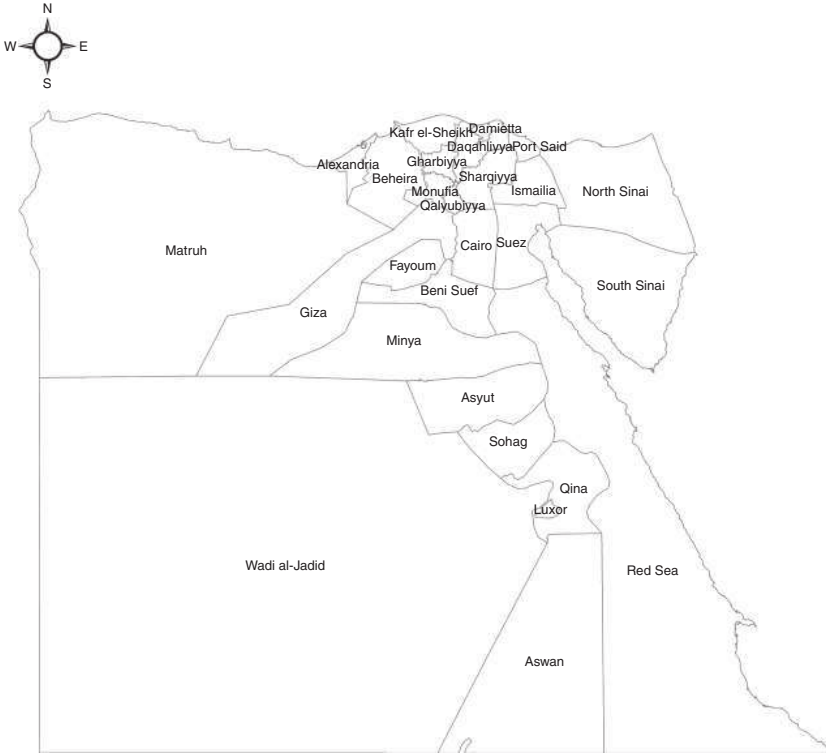
The book began life as a doctoral dissertation written in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The research was funded by a Doctoral Training Centre Studentship from the Economic and Social Research Council. Janet Ketchley made all things possible. Paul Ketchley housed our small family while I wrote up my dissertation. Before I embarked on my doctoral studies, Richard and Judith Stewart supported me during a year spent studying Arabic at Damascus University in 2009. That study was also made possible by a Captain F. G. Boot language scholarship from the Culters' Guild. In 2010, the LSE Government Department paid for me to complete an intensive Arabic language summer school at Institut français du Proche-Orient (IFPO) Aleppo, while a Study Abroad Studentship from the Leverhulme Trust allowed me to spend the 2010–2011 academic year at IFPO in Damascus for language training and further study. The Leverhulme Trust also supported an eight-month Visiting Research Fellowship in the Department of Political Science at the American University in Cairo from May to December 2011. The book draws on data collected during fieldwork supported by the John Fell OUP Fund and the Project on Middle East Political Science. Sarah ElMasry and Christopher Barrie provided invaluable research assistance. The manuscript was completed while I was a Hulme Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Brasenose College, University of Oxford.

Chapter 3 was published as an article in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Ketchley 2014a). I gratefully acknowledge the managing editor David Akins and the anonymous reviewers for their comments. The manuscript has also benefited from comments and feedback received at the annual conferences of the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Association, the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, and the Middle East Studies Association, as well as at workshops and seminars held at the LSE and the University of Oxford.

This book was borne from my shared life and adventures with Lamiaa Shehata and Isobel Shehata-Ketchley. It is to them, and to my late sister Imogen Ketchley, that I dedicate all of the best ideas and none of the shortcomings.

A Note on Transliteration

I have used a simplified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* transliteration system when rendering Arabic words into the Latin alphabet. Diacritics are used for the Arabic letters ‘ayn (‘) and hamza (’), as well as the long vowels alif (ā), wāw (ū), and ya’ (ī). When quoting chants or songs, I follow the Egyptian pronunciation and use g (gīm) instead of j (jīm) and ’ (hamza) for q (qāf). Likewise, I give “el” rather than “al” for the definite article and elide short and long vowels where appropriate. I also use Anglicized variants of places and names, which are spelt according to convention.



Map of Egypt with 2011 Governorate Boundaries.

*Nasā'ih minna lil-yunāniyīn: Tubtak fi idak, kimamtak 'ala wishak,
khamirtak fi gibak wa illi yi'ūlak al-maglis al-'askarī hayehmi al-thawra,
'atta'u.*

Advice from us to the Greeks: keep your stone in your hand, your scarf on
your face and yeast in your pocket, and kill anyone who tells you that the
military will protect the revolution.

Egyptian activist during Greek anti-austerity protests, 12 Feb. 2012