

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague**

**Faculty of Economics and Management**

**Department of Humanities**



**Bachelor Thesis**

**Political Economy and Social Movements: 2011 Egyptian  
Revolution**

**Mark LABIB**

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# CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

## BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Bc. Mark Labib, BA

Business Administration

Thesis title

**Political Economy and Social Movements: 2011 Egyptian Revolution**

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### **Objectives of thesis**

The thesis examines the connections between social movements and political economy using the example of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. A political economy approach to social movements raises various significant questions, including what material interests drive people to participate in such movements, what resources are available to movements, what economic models and ideas are implicit and explicit in their goals and demands, and the longer term consequences of such movements for economic policy.

The thesis aims to explore these questions through the example of the 2011 Egyptian revolution in a specific locality. It aims to identify the implicit and explicit economic motivations and goals of participants, as well as how they used economic resources and power to achieve those goals. It further aims to explore the wider economic context in which the events took place, and their longer term economic consequences.

### **Methodology**

The research will use a qualitative case study approach, focusing on social movement participants in a specific Egyptian locality, and drawing on exploratory interviews, primary sources (in the form of leaflets, speeches and social media posts), and autoethnography (in the form of personal experiences and family narratives). It will further draw on the analysis of secondary literature and economic reporting to provide economic context.

**The proposed extent of the thesis**

30-40 pages

**Keywords**

Egyptian Revolution, Arab Spring, Political Economy, Social Movements, Economic Motivations, Resource Mobilization

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**Recommended information sources**

- ALEXANDER, Anne & BASSIOUNY, Mostafa (2014). Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: Workers and the Egyptian Revolution. London: Zed Books.
- BEININ, Joel & VAIREL, Frédéric (eds.) (2013) Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
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- STANLEY, Jason and GOODWIN, Jeff. (2013). 'Political Economy and Social Movements', in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements, London: Wiley Blackwell.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled " Political Economy and Social Movements: 2011 Egyptian Revolution " by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 13.03.2026

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## **Political Economy and Social Movements: 2011 Egyptian Revolution**

### **Abstract**

This research investigates the socioeconomic and political drivers of the 2011 Egyptian uprising, challenging the narrative that the revolution was a purely spontaneous political event. By applying a multifaceted framework categorized into the "Four Pillars" of Economic Conditions, Political Structures, Social Mobilization, and International Influence the study examines how a decade of neoliberal "shallow" growth and systemic exclusion created a revolutionary tinderbox.

The methodology employs a triangulation approach, synthesizing macroeconomic indicators with original qualitative data derived from a "state-insider" semi-structured interview with an active-duty military officer and the visual analysis of revolutionary artifacts (banners and slogans).

The findings reveal that the uprising was primarily catalyzed by an "inflationary squeeze" and a crisis of "waithood", where a disenfranchised youth bulge was structurally excluded from the formal economy. The research demonstrates that the movement's success was contingent upon a sophisticated "repertoire of contention" that bridged digital coordination with the physical weight of the industrial labor movement. Furthermore, the analysis of primary testimony and Tahrir Square banners confirms that the demand for "Bread" was a concrete requirement for wage reform and the dismantling of the "Businessmen's Government."

Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the 2011 revolution represented a reclamation of material dignity, proving that social mobilization in the MENA region is inextricably linked to the failure of the state's social contract and the extractive nature of its political economy.

**Keywords:** Egyptian Revolution, Arab Spring, Political Economy, Social Movements, Economic Motivations, Resource Mobilization

## Politická ekonomie a sociální hnutí: Egyptská revoluce 2011

### Abstrakt

Tento výzkum zkoumá socioekonomické a politické faktory egyptského povstání v roce 2011 a zpochybňuje narativ, podle něhož byla revoluce čistě spontánní politickou událostí. S využitím mnohostranného rámce rozděleného do „čtyř pilířů“ (ekonomické podmínky, politické struktury, sociální mobilizace a mezinárodní vliv) studie zkoumá, jak desetiletí neoliberálního „mělkého“ růstu a systémového vyloučení vytvořilo revoluční „soudek prachu“.

Metodologie využívá přístup triangulace, v němž syntetizuje makroekonomické ukazatele s původními kvalitativními daty získanými z polostrukturovaného rozhovoru s „vnitřním aktérem státu“ aktivním armádním důstojníkem a vizuální analýzy revolučních artefaktů (transparentů a sloganů).

Zjištění ukazují, že povstání bylo primárně katalyzováno „inflačním tlakem“ a krizí „waithood“ (prodlouženého dospívání), kdy byla znevýhodněná početná mladá populace strukturálně vyloučena z formální ekonomiky. Výzkum dokazuje, že úspěch hnutí závisel na sofistikovaném „repertoáru odporu“, který propojil digitální koordinaci s fyzickou silou průmyslového dělnického hnutí. Analýza primárních svědectví a transparentů z náměstí Tahrír dále potvrzuje, že požadavek na „chléb“ byl konkrétním požadavkem na mzdovou reformu a rozbití „vlády podnikatelů“.

Tato diplomová práce vyvozuje, že revoluce v roce 2011 představovala znovuzískání materiální důstojnosti, a dokazuje, že sociální mobilizace v regionu MENA (Blízký východ a severní Afrika) je neoddělitelně spjata se selháním společenské smlouvy ze strany státu a kořistnickou povahou jeho politické ekonomie.

**Klíčová slova:** Egyptská revoluce, Arabské jaro, Politická ekonomie, Sociální hnutí, Ekonomické motivace, Mobilizace zdrojů

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 The Social and Economic Background of the Uprising**

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution is often discussed as a sudden political explosion, but the groundwork for the uprising was laid years earlier through a growing gap between state policy and the daily lives of citizens. In the decade leading up to the protest, the Egyptian government followed a path of neoliberal economic reform, which included privatizing state companies and reducing subsidies. While these changes were praised by international organizations for increasing GDP, they created what (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014) describe as an "inflationary squeeze" for the average family. This means that while the economy looked good on paper, the price of basic goods like food and fuel rose much faster than the average person's wages.

In a specific setting like Egypt, this economic pressure was felt most clearly by the youth. For my generation, the political economy of the state was not a matter of statistics, but a matter of "waithood." This term, used by (Dhillon and Tarik 2009) to describe a generation in the Middle East, refers to the long period where young people are stuck in a stage of life where they cannot find a job, cannot afford to get married, and cannot become independent adults. In our neighborhood, the sight of university graduates sitting for hours in local cafes became a symbol of this stagnation.

These material conditions raise important questions about how people react when they feel the "Political Structure" no longer serves their "Economic Interest. (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) suggest that social movements are often rooted in these kinds of material interests, where people mobilize because their basic needs and future prospects are at risk. In Egypt, the rising cost of living and the lack of jobs created a quiet tension that would eventually lead to the events of January 2011. This thesis examines that tension, looking at how daily economic struggle turned into a mass movement for change.

## 1.2 Research Objectives and the Conceptual Pillars

The main goal of this thesis is to examine how economic grievances and political structures interacted to create a social movement in Egyptian Revolution. To do this, I have organized my research into four "pillars." These pillars help break down the complex events of 2011 into manageable parts that we can analyze using both theory and personal experience.

### 1.2.1 The Four Pillars of the Uprising

1. **Economic Conditions:** This pillar focuses on the "material" side of the revolution. As (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) point out, social movements are often driven by the material interests of the participants. I will look at how high unemployment and the rising cost of goods created a base of frustration among the youth.
2. **Political Structures:** Here, I will investigate the "daily life under repression" mentioned in my abstract. This involves looking at how the state used its power to control the economy and the people, and how these structures eventually failed to stop the movement.
3. **Social Mobilization:** This pillar explores how the "unhappy individuals" I saw in the local cafes became an organized force. I will look at the "resources" both digital and physical that people used to communicate and stay in the streets.
4. **International Influence:** Finally, I will consider how events outside of Egypt influenced the local movement. This includes the "contagion effect" from other Arab countries and the global economic shifts that made life harder for people in Egypt.

### 1.2.2 Objective of the Case Study

By using these four pillars to study Egyptian revolution, I aim to show that the revolution was not just a national political event, but a collection of local stories about people trying to reclaim their economic dignity. My objective is to identify the specific economic goals of the participants and to understand how they used their limited resources to challenge a powerful political system.

## 2 Objectives and Methodology

### 2.1 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the intersection between economic grievances and political mobilization during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. While many accounts focus on political liberty, this study aims to highlight the "material interests" that (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) argue are fundamental to social movements. Specifically, the research seeks to:

- Identify how the "inflationary squeeze" (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014) affected the youth in a localized context.
- Analyze the ways in which existing political structures (Heydemann 2007) failed to address youth unemployment and "waithood."
- Determine the specific economic demands that were expressed through local mobilization efforts.

### 2.2 Methodology

The research uses a qualitative case study approach, focusing on social movement participants within a specific Egyptian locality. This method is chosen because it allows for an in depth exploration of the "how" and "why" behind collective action. The data collection is divided into three main components:

1. **Exploratory Interviews and Primary Sources:** I will utilize conversations with participants to identify their explicit and implicit economic goals, alongside an analysis of banners, speeches, and social media posts from 2011.
2. **Autoethnography:** I draw on personal experiences and family narratives. This provides a "thick description" of the revolution's atmosphere, turning personal memory into academic data.
3. **Secondary Literature:** I will analyze economic reporting and existing scholarship to provide the necessary macro-economic context for my four pillars.

### 3 Literature Review

#### 3.1 Political Economy Approaches

This section of my framework state what is political economy and how it is linked to social movement theories while applying the lens on EGYPT 2011 period.

##### 3.1.1 Conceptualizing and Defining Political Economy

At its most fundamental level, political economy analysis is the study of how economic structures such as markets, class relations, and the distribution of resources interact with political power and institutions. It rejects the idea that "the economy" and "politics" exist in separate bubbles. (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) Instead, it argues that every economic decision (like setting the price of bread) is a political choice, and every political system (like an autocracy) is built on an economic foundation. (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014)

In the 1970s and 1980s, social movement research was heavily influenced by these materialist roots, focusing on how the expansion of global capitalism impacted local protest. However, as the field moved toward studying "culture" and "identity," some scholars noted a "strange disappearance of capitalism" in the study of social movements. Scholars such as (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) have called for a return to this perspective, arguing that we cannot understand why people revolt without looking at their material interests

##### 3.1.2 Power, Resources, and Capitalist Crises

Following the framework of Stanley & Goodwin (2013, pp. 382–385) political economy perspectives in social movement theory focus on four key elements: resources, power, solidarities, and opportunities.

- **Resources:** This element looks at the material assets necessary for a movement. In a political economy context, this involves who owns the means of production and how wealth is used either to maintain state order or to fund and sustain resistance.
- **Power:** Analysis here centers on "extractive institutions" and "crony capitalism" Heydemann (2007, pp. 21–25). When the state and economy are controlled by a narrow group of elites, resources are diverted into private hands. For social

movements, this creates a clear "target" for mobilization; the struggle is not against abstract poverty, but against the specific political-economic structures that cause it.

- **Solidarities:** Political economy emphasizes how economic class creates bonds between people. When a generation faces the same "inflationary squeeze" or "waithood," their shared economic position transforms individual frustration into a collective identity. These shared material interests provide the social "glue" that keeps a movement together during a crisis.
- **Opportunities:** A central theme in this literature is that capitalism is inherently unstable. Periodic "capitalist crises" such as sudden inflation or market crashes, act as "fuel" for unrest. When the economic system fails to provide basic stability, it creates a "crack" or a political opportunity for a social movement to challenge the state's legitimacy.

### 3.1.3 Class, Inequality

To understand the "why" of mobilization, many theorists draw on Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives. These theories link rising inequality and "proletarianization" (the process of workers becoming less secure and more dependent on low-wage labor) to the inevitability of revolt. When a state follows a path of aggressive economic liberalization (neoliberalism), it often makes the working class and the youth less secure. This creates what scholars call collective grievances. It is not just that people are unhappy; it is that they are unhappy together because they share the same economic class and the same lack of a future. In this view, "class position" is a primary driver of mobilization. If you are a graduate stuck in "waithood," your economic class defines your political destiny. (Hetland and Goodwin 2013) ,the neo-Marxist approach emphasizes that inequality is not just about income, but about dignity. When neoliberal reforms prioritize market efficiency over the 'social contract,' it erodes the relationship between the citizen and the state. This is particularly relevant for the youth, whose 'class position' is defined by an inability to enter the formal economy. This structural exclusion transforms individual frustration into a collective identity, making the 'street' the primary site of political negotiation.

### 3.1.4 Relevance to the Egyptian Case: Austerity and Cronyism

When applying these political economy theories to the Egyptian context, two specific factors stand out: the long-term impact of neoliberal austerity and the rise of crony capitalism.

#### 3.1.4.1 The Failure of IMF-Backed Reforms

Starting in the early 1990s and accelerating under the Nazif government (2004–2011), Egypt implemented a series of reforms encouraged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These policies were designed to "liberalize" the economy through privatization, the reduction of corporate taxes, and the cutting of state subsidies.

As (Khan 2012) from the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) documents, while these reforms succeeded in raising Egypt's GDP growth to a peak of roughly 7% in 2008, the benefits were highly concentrated. For the average Egyptian, the most visible result of these "reforms" was the erosion of the social safety net. When the state reduced its role as a provider of jobs and subsidies, it broke the long-standing "social contract." This created the "inflationary squeeze" mentioned earlier, where the cost of living particularly food and fuel far outpaced the growth in household income.

#### 3.1.4.2 Crony Capitalism and Market Capture

A second critical factor in Egypt's political economy was the specific *way* privatization occurred. Rather than creating a competitive free market, the state-led reforms created what scholars call "Crony Capitalism" (Heydemann 2007). In this system, state-owned assets were often sold at low prices to a small group of businessmen with close ties to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP).

This "capture" of the market had two devastating consequences for social stability:

1. **Monopolization:** These "cronies" controlled key sectors like steel and telecommunications, preventing small businesses from growing and stifling job creation for university graduates.

2. **Perceived Injustice:** For the youth in local neighborhoods, the sight of a few billionaires growing wealthier while the public infrastructure crumbled was a constant reminder of corruption.

As (Stanley and Goodwin 2013) argue, this type of "extractive" political economy does more than just cause poverty; it provides a clear, identifiable target for a social movement. In 2011, the anger wasn't just directed at "the economy" in general, but at the specific alliance between political power and business wealth that had excluded most of the population.

### **3.1.5 The Interdependency of Political Economy and Social Movements**

The relationship between the political economy and social movements is bidirectional and foundational. While political economy describes the structural constraints the distribution of wealth, the nature of the market, and the state's role in the economy social movement theory describes the agency used to challenge or reinforce those structures. To understand collective action, one must analyze how economic "macro-structures" are translated into "micro-mobilizations."

#### **3.1.5.1 Economic Structure as a "Political Opportunity"**

In traditional Social Movement Theory, a Political Opportunity Structure (POS) refers to the openness or closure of a political system to challenge. From a political economy perspective, these "opportunities" are often created by Capitalist Crises Stanley & Goodwin, (2013,p. 382–385).

- When an economic system undergoes a sudden shock (e.g., rapid inflation, a market crash, or the withdrawal of state subsidies), it destabilizes the ruling elite's ability to maintain social control.
- This economic instability creates "cracks" in the state's legitimacy, lowering the perceived risk for actors to engage in contention. Thus, a shift in the political economy acts as a structural trigger that transforms latent grievance into an active political window McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly,(2001,p.43–45).

### 3.1.5.2 Resource Mobilization and Material Assets

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) posits that movements require tangible assets to survive. A political economy approach adds depth to this by analyzing the ownership of the means of mobilization.

- The distribution of resources within a society determines which groups can afford to protest. In systems where the state monopolizes economic assets, movements are forced to innovate through "low-cost" digital resources or horizontal networks McCarthy & Zald,(1977,p. 1212–1241).
- Conversely, when a movement gains the support of labor unions or economic "outsider" elites, it gains the material weight necessary to sustain long-term defiance. Here, the political economy dictates the survival capacity of the social movement Hetland & Goodwin,(2013,p. 85–88).

### 3.1.5.3 Class Position and Collective Identity

While some social movement theorists focus on "identity politics," a political economy synthesis argues that class position is the primary driver of collective identity.

- Shared economic exclusion (e.g., precarious labor or systemic unemployment) creates what is known as Material Solidarity.
- When individuals share the same "lived experience" of an economic squeeze, their individual frustrations merge into a collective "Diagnostic Frame" (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* 2018). In this theoretical framework, the economy provides the content of the movement's identity, while the social movement provides the narrative that turns that identity into a weapon against the status quo.

### 3.1.5.4 The Reciprocal Effect: Movements as Economic Actors

Finally, the relationship is reciprocal. While the political economy shapes the movement, the movement can fundamentally alter the political economy.

- Through Repertoires of Contention such as strikes, boycotts, and the occupation of economic hubs, social movements can force a "renegotiation" of the social contract.

- Successful mobilization often leads to a redistribution of resources or a shift in state policy (e.g., new labor laws or the reversal of austerity measures), proving that social agency is a vital force in the evolution of economic systems (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014).

## 3.2 Social Movement Theory

This section will go through social movement as theory, explaining definition, key frameworks and classifications of social movements, also addresses the link between violence and social movement and role of digital activism.

### 3.2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Social Movements

Before analyzing the Egyptian case, it is essential to define what constitutes a "social movement." According to (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* 2018), social movements are "collectivities that seek to challenge or defend existing institutional and/or cultural systems of authority." Unlike political parties, they operate primarily outside of formal channels, utilizing "repertoires of contention" such as protests, strikes, and civil disobedience to make their demands heard.

A social movement is not just a one-time riot; it is a sustained effort. In the context of Egypt, this means looking past the 18 days in Tahrir Square and recognizing the years of labor strikes and "hidden contestation" that preceded it (Beinin and Vairel 2013).

### 3.2.2 Key Theoretical Frameworks

Social movement literature offers three primary lenses to understand how collective action emerges:

- **(a) Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT):** McCarthy & Zald (1977), argue that grievances are a constant in society; therefore, mobilization only occurs when a group acquires the necessary resources to organize. These resources include "moral resources" (legitimacy), "social-organizational resources" (networks), and "human resources" (labor and leadership).
- **(b) Political Opportunity Structure (POS):** Championed by McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly (2001, p.43–45), this lens focuses on the external political environment. It

suggests that movements are most successful when the state's capacity for repression decreases or when "cracks" appear in the elite power structure, providing a window for challenge.

- **(c) Framing Processes:** As (Snow and Benford., "Ideology, Resonance, and Participant Mobilization" 1988) explain, mobilization requires a shared narrative. Activists must perform "Diagnostic Framing" (identifying the problem), "Prognostic Framing" (offering a solution), and "Motivational Framing" (a call to action). This transforms individual frustration into a collective identity.

### 3.2.3 Typologies and Classifications of Social Movements

To move from theory to analysis, it is necessary to categorize the diverse forms that collective action takes. Social movements are rarely monolithic; they vary based on their scope of change, their organizational structure, and their tactical approach to power.

#### 3.2.3.1 Classification by Scope and Depth of Change

Following the foundational typology of David Aberle, movements are categorized by *who* they want to change and *how much* change they demand.

- **Reformative Movements:** These seek specific, limited changes within the existing political or economic framework. They do not aim to overthrow the state but to "improve" it through legislation or policy shifts.
- **Revolutionary Movements:** These demand a fundamental rejection of the current system. They seek a total transformation of social, political, and economic values. In a political economy context, these movements aim to dismantle the "extractive institutions" and replace them with entirely new structures of power McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, (2001,p. 43–45).

#### 3.2.3.2 Classification by Organizational Structure: Formal vs. Informal

The degree of "organization" is a primary point of debate in Social Movement Theory, especially in the digital age.

- **Social Movement Organizations (SMOs):** These are formal, professionalized groups with a clear hierarchy and membership (e.g., labor unions or NGOs). They

rely on Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) to manage funds and long-term strategy McCarthy & Zald,(1977,p. 1212–1241).

- **Decentralized/Rhizomatic Movements:** These are "leaderless" or "horizontal" movements that lack a central headquarters. They rely on "networks" rather than hierarchies. This is where the "Logic of Connective Action" (Segeberg 2012) becomes relevant, as horizontal networks allow for rapid mobilization without the vulnerability of a single point of failure.

### 3.2.3.3 New Social Movements (NSM) vs. Materialist Movements

- **Materialist/Class-Based Movements:** These are rooted in the political economy. Their primary grievances are "Bread-and-Butter" issues: wages, subsidies, and the distribution of wealth. They are driven by the "class position" of the participants Hetland & Goodwin,(2013,p. 85–88).
- **New Social Movements (NSMs):** These focus on "post-materialist" values such as identity, human rights, and lifestyle. However, as Stanley & Goodwin,(2013,p. 382–385) point out, in developing economies, the line between NSMs and materialist movements is often blurred; a demand for "Dignity" is often inseparable from a demand for "Economic Justice."

### 3.2.3.4 Spontaneous vs. Sustained Contention

Finally, movements are categorized by their duration and consistency.

- **Fads or Riots:** These are short-term, high-intensity outbursts of anger. While they may have clear economic triggers, they lack the "social organizational resources" required to become a sustained movement (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements 2018).
- **Sustained Contentious Politics:** These are long-term campaigns of resistance. They utilize a "Repertoire of Contention" over months or years, effectively "wearing down" the state's capacity for repression. In the Egyptian context, this would involve looking at the decade of labor strikes that preceded the 2011 explosion (Beinin and Vairel 2013).

### **3.2.4 Violence and Social Movements**

The relationship between violence and social movements is a central tension in contentious politics, involving both the state's use of coercion and the movement's strategic response. Theoretically, the intersection of violence and collective action is defined by a "backfire" mechanism: when a regime utilizes lethal or brutal force against a population, it risks transforming a localized grievance into a generalized uprising.

#### **3.2.4.1 Strategic Non-violence and the Logic of Defection**

A primary theoretical debate centers on the strategic utility of non-violent repertoires versus violent resistance. Chenoweth & Stephan,(2011,p. 7–12) argue that non-violent movements are statistically more resilient because they facilitate "broad-based participation." By allowing diverse social classes including the elderly and the middle class to participate with lower perceived risks, the movement increases its moral authority. When the state responds to such movements with violence, it creates a "Security Dilemma." If the repression is perceived as disproportionate, it can lead to "regime defection," where the military or bureaucracy refuses to continue enforcing the state's will. In this sense, the state's own violence becomes the movement's greatest asset for delegitimization, as the cost of loyalty for state agents becomes higher than the cost of joining the opposition McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly,(2001,p. 160–165).

#### **3.2.4.2 Moral Shocks as a Mobilization Catalyst**

The catalyst for the transition from passive frustration to active resistance is often a "Moral Shock." As theorized by Jasper,(1997,p. 106–110), a moral shock is an event so visceral that it overrides an individual's fear of repression, forcing them to move from a "bystander" position to an active participant. These shocks act as "biographical triggers" that simplify complex political-economic grievances into a single, undeniable image of injustice.

### **3.2.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Digital Activism and Social Media**

The role of digital tools is no longer seen merely as a communication medium, but as a fundamental shift in how movements are structured. Scholars move beyond "technological

determinism" the idea that technology itself causes revolution to examine how digital affordances alter the repertoire of contention.

- **The Logic of Connective Action:** Traditional social movement theory McCarthy & Zald (1977) relied on "collective action," which required formal organizations like unions or political parties to manage resources and mobilize people. However, Segerberg (2012, p. 739-768) argue that digital media has introduced a "logic of connective action." This theory suggests that personalized content sharing across media networks allows for "leaderless" coordination. This significantly reduces the transaction costs of organizing, allowing individuals to join a movement without the need for a central headquarters or formal membership.
- **Networked Public Spheres and the "Space of Autonomy":** Castells (2012,p.1-20) suggests that modern movements create a "space of autonomy" by merging physical public spaces (like city squares) with digital networks. In this theoretical framework, social media acts as a bridge that overcomes state-controlled information monopolies. By broadcasting grievances directly, movements create "networks of outrage and hope" that can trigger sudden, massive mobilization by bypassing the traditional "gatekeepers" of information.
- **Information Cascades and Reduced Perceived Risk:** Digital activism theory also emphasizes the "contagion effect" or the diffusion of protest. Tufekci (2017, p. 48-60) explains that social media creates "information cascades." When individuals see others participating in high-risk activism via real-time updates, it lowers their own "perceived risk." This digital visibility acts as a signal that the regime's capacity for repression is being successfully challenged, which facilitates a "bystander-to-participant" transition
- **Altering the Repertoire of Contention:** Scholars like Howard & Hussain (2013,p. 35-45) and Ketchley (2017,p. 22-25) argue that while digital tools do not cause the underlying grievances, they dramatically change the speed and scale of the "repertoire of contention." Digital tools allow for rapid-fire tactical shifts that traditional authoritarian structures are often too slow to counteract, effectively "breaking" the state's monopoly on the narrative of stability.

### **3.3 The Arab Spring and MENA Mobilization**

This section of the framework will address the regional context during 2011, suggesting that the MENA region was filled with social movements at the time and how that affected the Egyptian Revolution.

#### **3.3.1 Regional Context and the "Exemplar Effect"**

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution cannot be understood in isolation; it was a central chapter in the broader "Arab Spring." Egypt's revolution was part of the 2011 Arab Spring, which saw mass uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and protests in Syria and beyond. These events catalyzed each other through shared grievances and exemplar effect. This regional phenomenon was characterized by a "contagion effect," where the overthrow of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia provided a "proof of concept" for Egyptian activists. As (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* 2018) might suggest, Tunisia provided the "prognostic framing" it showed that a long-standing dictator could indeed be toppled by peaceful mass mobilization. This regional spark transformed the "wretchedness" and economic frustration in Egypt into an immediate political opportunity.

#### **3.3.2 Dispelling the "Passive MENA" Myth**

For decades, much of Western political science portrayed the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as "politically passive" or "exceptionally" resistant to democratization. However, scholars like (Beinin and Vairel 2013) argue that this was a myth. They demonstrate that the region was actually "rich with social and political mobilizations" long before 2011.

The reason these movements seemed "invisible" to the outside world was the intense state repression. Activists did not always use large marches; instead, they built networks through:

- **Professional Syndicates:** Organizations for lawyers, doctors, and engineers.
- **Human Rights NGOs:** Which documented state abuses.
- **Informal Networks:** Such as the local cafes and religious groups mentioned in my Four Pillars.

### 3.3.2.1 Kefaya (2004) and the Breaking of Fear

This underscores that by 2011 Egyptian civil society had years of hidden contestation (strikes in 2008, Kefaya in 2004, etc.) which fed into the uprising. Note that before Kefaya, public criticism of Hosni Mubarak was a red line that few dared to cross. The movement's primary slogan, "*La lil-Tawrit*" (No to Succession), was a direct challenge to the plan for Gamal Mubarak to inherit the presidency.

As (Beinin and Vairel 2013) note, Kefaya's significance was not in its size it remained a relatively small group of intellectuals but in its psychological impact. By taking to the streets and chanting directly against the head of state, they broke the "barrier of fear." They proved that the regime's security apparatus was not omnipotent, effectively "rehearsing" the type of bold, confrontational protest that would define Tahrir Square seven years later.

### 3.3.2.2 The 2008 Mahalla Strikes and "Ahwa" (Cafe) as a Subversive Space

The "hidden contestation" of the 2000s relied on a synergy between informal physical spaces and emerging digital tools. The local cafe (*ahwa*) served as a critical node for what (Bayat 2013) calls "street politics," providing a safe space for the "waithood" generation to transform individual economic frustration into a collective consciousness.

These physical networks merged with digital activism during the 2008 Mahalla al-Kubra strikes. As (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014) argue, this event synthesized labor grievances with youth organizing. Using the *ahwa* as a base and Facebook as an amplifier, the April 6 Youth Movement successfully bridged the gap between the working class and urban youth. This convergence established the organizational blueprint of "physical trust + digital coordination" that would eventually facilitate the 2011 uprising.

## 3.4 Previous Studies on Egypt's Revolution

To ground this thesis in the existing academic debate, it is necessary to examine how previous scholars have interpreted the mechanics of the 2011 uprising. These studies provide empirical evidence that supports my four pillars specifically the tension between economic grievances and political mobilization.

### 3.4.1 The Labor Paradox:

While the 2011 revolution is often viewed as a "youth" or "middle-class" event, (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014) argue that the industrial working class provided the essential foundation for the uprising. Their work, *Bread, Freedom, Social Justice*, documents thousands of workers strike in the decade preceding 2011, noting that bread subsidies and stagnant factory wages were not just economic complaints but central political issues.

However, they identify a "labor paradox." Despite the high levels of strike activity, official Egyptian unions remained largely isolated from the revolutionary leadership. They poignantly observe that **“trade unionism as [a] model... was not able to reconnect the severed... souls of the revolutionary process”** (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014). This suggests that while labor grievances fueled the fire of discontent, the movement lacked a formal union structure to lead it, leaving the "street" and informal networks like the *ahwa* to fill the leadership vacuum.

### 3.4.2 Narrative and National Identity:

Beyond the organizational mechanics of mobilization, scholars such as (Bayat 2013) and (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014) emphasize the "why" of the uprising, specifically the cognitive frames used to recruit participants. These researchers argue that the 2011 slogans were not merely demands for abstract policy changes, but a sophisticated reclamation of national identity.

According to Alexander & Bassiouny (2014,p. 28–31), by utilizing themes of "dignity" (*Karama*) and "social justice," the movement successfully connected the 2011 struggle to the historical memory of Egypt's 1952 revolutionary heritage. This scholarly perspective suggests that such framing was essential for bridging the gap between different social classes. As Bayat (2013,p. 202–207) observes, this process transformed the "Economic Pillar" (the literal need for bread) into a moral demand for the state to honor its social contract with its citizens. In this literature, the "crony" elite are portrayed not just as poor managers of the economy, but as betrayers of the nation's foundational promises

### 3.4.3 Quantitative Context: Poverty and Unemployment

Finally, while much of the literature is qualitative, (Abdelrahman 2015) provides the necessary quantitative "backbone" to the pre-2011 era. Her work quantifies the economic trends such as the skyrocketing unemployment among university-educated youth and the deepening poverty rates in rural and urban outskirts that created the "inflationary squeeze." This research proves that the grievances were not just perceived; they were measurable. In the following chapters, I will supplement these scholarly findings with primary data from the **World Bank** and the **IMF** to show exactly how these macro-economic trends were felt at the local level.

## **4 Practical Part**

This section of the framework will address the methodology used along with the socioeconomic context of Egypt in 2011 and how inflation squeezed the people in Egypt until the break point. More over states the "Waithood" and the political repression the people in Egypt faced.

### **4.1 Methodology and Primary Data Sources**

To identify the economic objectives of the 2011 participants and the mechanisms used to challenge the state, this research employs a **triangulation method**. This approach synthesizes original first-hand testimony with an analysis of physical and digital artifacts produced during the 18 day uprising. By cross-referencing these distinct data streams, the study avoids a singular narrative and provides a more comprehensive view of the revolution's "Bread" and "Dignity" pillars.

#### **4.1.1 Participant Profile: Semi-Structured Interview**

The core qualitative evidence for this study is an original semi-structured interview conducted for this research with an active-duty military officer who served during the 2011 uprising. This "State-Insider" perspective is utilized to offer a counter-narrative to the standard protester-centric accounts prevalent in existing literature.

Rather than treating the state apparatus as a monolithic block, this interview is used to analyze the internal military perception of the "Businessmen's Government," the tactical challenges of the security vacuum, and the strategic reality behind the "One Hand" narrative. By integrating this primary account, the research evaluates how the state's own institutions perceived the erosion of the regime's legitimacy. All thematic findings and direct quotes from this testimony are analyzed in detail in Section 4.4: Transcript Analysis.

#### **4.1.2 Artifact Analysis: banners and Slogans**

This research further examines the movement's "repertoire of contention" through the analysis of the visual messaging and public banners displayed during the uprising. Rather than focusing on ephemeral materials, the study analyzes the large-scale signage and hand-

painted banners that defined the visual landscape of Tahrir Square in early 2011, as we will see later through the practical part.

when treating those banners as the movement's public declaration of intent, the research identifies the specific material goals of the protesters. Rather than viewing the demand for "Bread" as a vague symbol, this analysis looks at how slogans on these banners translated into concrete economic requirements such as the explicit calls for a national minimum wage and the redistribution of national wealth. This provides empirical proof that the movement was rooted in calculated economic grievances that were physically "written into" the revolutionary space. (Ketchley 2017)

### Digital Ethnography: Social Media and Information Warfare

To understand the "Digital Mechanism," the research evaluates how Facebook and Twitter were used to broadcast state violence to trigger an "emotional shock" in the public (Howard and Hussain 2013). The study analyzes these posts as primary resources that dismantled the regime's "aura of invincibility" through satire and memes, proving how limited digital resources were used to defeat the state's expensive propaganda machine.



Figure 1 shows how Egyptians used facebook to connect with each other and share information daily about what is happening during revolution.

## 4.2 The Socioeconomic and Political Tinderbox (Pre-2011)

The 2011 uprising was the culmination of a decade long disconnection between the state's macroeconomic indicators and the microeconomic survival of its citizens.

While the government projected an image of a modernizing, liberalizing economy, the structural reality was a "revolutionary tinderbox" characterized by extreme inequality and systemic exclusion.

### 4.2.1 The GDP Illusion: "Shallow" Growth and the Elite

During the late 2000s, Egypt's macroeconomic profile appeared robust on paper, yet this stability was fundamentally deceptive.

- **The Growth Rate:** Egypt's GDP grew at a moderate and consistent rate of **5% to 7% annually**. This was largely the result of the "Nazif Cabinet's" liberalizing reforms, which sought to attract foreign direct investment. (World Bank, April 2018 Update 2018)
- **The "Shallow" Growth Model:** As (Khan 2012) notes for the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), this growth was "shallow." It was concentrated in capital-intensive sectors such as telecommunications, energy, and construction that failed to generate widespread employment.
- **The Businessmen's Government:** Findings from primary source interviews suggest that the public viewed this era as the reign of the "Businessmen's Government." Economic policy was perceived as a tool for a political elite to facilitate monopolies, most notably in the iron industry. This created a system where wealth was siphoned upward, leaving the growth "insufficient to keep pace with population growth" (Khan 2012).

### 4.2.2 Inflation and the "Scissors Effect"

The lived experience of the Egyptian middle and working class in the lead-up to 2011 was defined by a brutal "inflationary squeeze." This economic pressure acted

as a primary catalyst for the mobilization of the urban poor and the struggling middle class.



*Figure 2* the banners shows how Egyptians got enough of the existing regime and they want to put an end to it.

- **The CPI Spike:** By 2010, annual consumer price inflation (CPI) reached approximately **12%** (Khan 2012). However, as noted by the (World Bank, Egypt: More Jobs, Better Jobs - A Priority for Egypt 2014), this aggregate number hid a more painful reality: food price spikes frequently hit the mid-teens. This disparity made basic subsistence a daily struggle, particularly for the 40% of Egyptians living near or below the poverty line (Khan 2012).
- **The Scissors Effect:** This created a "scissors effect" where the rising cost of living (rent, bread, oil) outpaced stagnant real wages. This pressure was compounded by state mismanagement of public funds, a theme that emerged strongly in the primary data regarding the safety of pension funds and multi-generational anxiety.
- **Historical Precursors:** The fragility of the social contract was exposed during the 2008 Mahalla bread riots. These served as a crucial precursor, proving that the state's failure to provide affordable "Aish" (bread) could trigger mass defiance and industrial strikes (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014).

#### **4.2.3 Demographics and the Crisis of "Waithood"**

The most volatile element of the pre-2011 "tinderbox" was the "youth bulge" a demographic phenomenon that Egypt's rigid, elite-focused economy proved unable to absorb. This structural failure created a massive class of educated yet economically disenfranchised citizens.

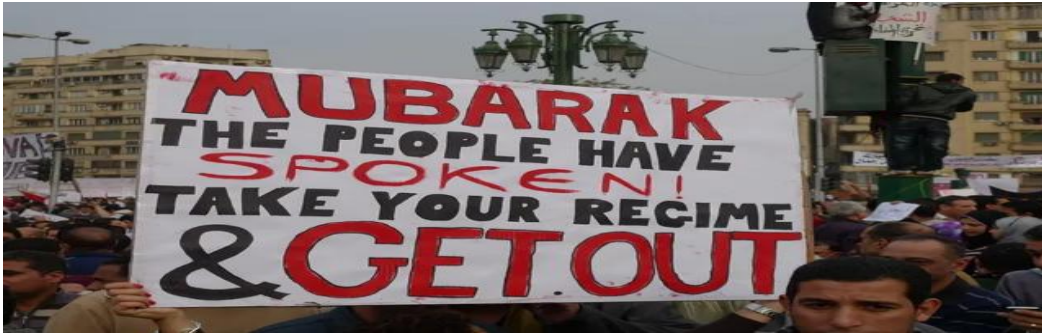
- **The Labor Expansion:** By 2010, the Egyptian labor force was expanding by approximately **1.8 million persons annually** (World Bank, Egypt: More Jobs, Better Jobs - A Priority for Egypt 2014). This rapid growth overwhelmed the state's capacity to create meaningful private-sector jobs, as the existing "shallow" growth model favored capital-intensive industries over labor-intensive ones (Khan 2012).
- **Unemployment Disparity:** While the official, aggregate unemployment rate hovered around **10%**, the (World Bank, Egypt: More Jobs, Better Jobs - A Priority for Egypt 2014) clarifies a much more dangerous disparity: youth unemployment was drastically higher, reaching **20–25%**.

**The Human Cost of "Waithood":** Structural exclusion forced graduates into the informal sector or chronic underemployment. This fueled the "waithood" crisis a prolonged state of social adolescence where economic barriers prevented young adults from marrying or attaining independence (Dhillon and Tarik 2009). The emotional gravity of this stagnation, often described as "love stories cut short by poverty," turned a demographic asset into a revolutionary force.

#### 4.2.4 Political Context: Repression as a Barrier

The economic exclusion of the late 2000s was not merely a market failure; it was actively maintained by a rigid political structure that offered no avenue for institutional reform or peaceful grievance redress.

- **The Emergency Law (1967):** For over 40 years, the Egyptian state operated under an Emergency Law that granted security forces nearly unlimited authority Freedom House (2010, p. 215–218). This created a culture of "absolute power" and state-sanctioned violence, personified by the death of Khaled Said, which became a tipping point for public tolerance (Ketchley 2017).
- **The Legitimacy Gap:** By 2010, the regime's political legitimacy had effectively vanished. The 2010 parliament elections were widely dismissed as a "fake show" for the international community, as the ruling party secured a statistically impossible majority through fraud Freedom House (2010, p. 215–218).



*Figure 3* shows a banner raised during the Egyptian revolution expressing what people wanted.

- **The Succession Crisis:** This political rigidity was compounded by the looming threat of the "Succession" (the inheritance of power by Gamal Mubarak). The Primary Source Transcript (2011) notes that this created a sense of "total closure" in the system. When the economic "squeeze" became unbearable, the lack of democratic outlets ensured that revolutionary mobilization was the only remaining option for the public (Ketchley 2017).



*Figure 4* shows a banner against the political repression people faced in Egypt.

#### **4.2.5 The Transition: From Structural Grievance to Collective Action**

While the socioeconomic and political conditions described in the previous sections created a volatile environment a "tinderbox" of systemic exclusion, "waithood," and state predation the existence of grievance alone does not explain the sudden collapse of a thirty-year autocracy. As (Ketchley 2017) notes, structural pressures provide the potential for revolution, but they do not guarantee its execution.

To understand the 2011 uprising, one must move beyond the "why" and examine the "how." This requires a shift in focus from the macroeconomic decay to the micro-mechanisms of mobilization the specific tactical, digital, and psychological maneuvers that allowed a fragmented population to bridge the gap between private suffering and public defiance. The following sections analyze how the Egyptian people utilized a specialized "repertoire of contention" to transform latent anger into a coordinated assault on the state's monopoly on power (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* 2018).

### **4.3 The Mechanics of the 2011 Uprising**

This section will go through the outburst of the revolution, how digital coordination, Exemplar effect and Repertoires of Contention helped the people of Egypt to start their revolution, also shows how they expressed themselves by slogans and banners that meant much more than just the words said.

The Egyptian revolution was a sophisticated exercise in Resource Mobilization. It functioned as a multi-layered mechanism where digital coordination, physical bravery, and strategic framing converged to create a "tipping point" that the state's traditional tools of repression could no longer contain.

#### **4.3.1 The Outbreak: Digital Coordination and the "Exemplar Effect"**

The movement was ignited by a powerful synergy of internal symbols of state brutality and external proofs of revolutionary concept, allowing a fragmented public to overcome a centralized security apparatus.

- **The Digital Catalyst:** Activists utilized the image of Khaled Said to transform private grief into collective public outrage. This was a tactical mechanism to bypass state-run media and mobilize for the "Day of Rage" on January 25, 2011. Choosing this date was a strategic attempt to subvert "Police Day," turning a traditional day of state celebration into a day of state interrogation. Howard, et al. (2013,p. 35–48).



Figure 5 shows a banner showing the importance of facebook in the revolution.

- **The Exemplar Effect:** The revolution in Tunisia provided a "proof of concept." This mechanism lowered the "perceived risk" for Egyptian protesters; witnessing the flight of Ben Ali allowed the Egyptian public to realize that the authoritarian state was not an immutable force (Ketchley 2017). As the primary data will later illustrate, this realization was essential in dismantling the psychological "Barrier of Fear" used by the regime.
- **Breaking the Information Monopoly:** Digital tools allowed for what (Howard and Hussain 2013) describe as "horizontal" communication. While the state controlled the "vertical" flow of information through traditional TV and newspapers, activists utilized Facebook and Twitter to broadcast state violence in real-time. This created an "emotional shock" mechanism that forced even the apolitical "silent majority" to confront the reality of police brutality and engage with the movement.

#### 4.3.2 The Tactical Mechanism:

The 2011 movement succeeded not through a single strategy, but by merging diverse "repertoires of contention" from across the socioeconomic spectrum, creating a pressure the state could not isolate or ignore.

- **A Unified Front:** The movement engineered a "coalition of the fed-up," successfully merging tech-literate secular youth with traditional industrial labor groups. This was a critical survival mechanism; while the youth provided digital

visibility and international narrative, the labor movement provided the physical muscle and institutional weight required to challenge a police state (Ketchley 2017).

- **The Labor Engine:** By early February 2011, the mechanism of mobilization shifted from simple protest to systemic paralysis. Mass strikes involving over 300,000 workers in the Suez Canal, textile mills, and transportation sectors targeted the state's economic "vital organs" (Alexander and Bassiouny 2014). This tactical shift made the continued rule of Mubarak economically impossible and served as the primary catalyst forcing the military to reconsider its institutional support for the regime.
- **Psychological Satire:** Beyond physical strikes, the movement used a psychological repertoire to dismantle authority. Memes and political satire acted as a dual-purpose mechanism: de-escalating fear for the public while escalating the loss of dignity for the state. This led to a disintegration of the regime's control even over its own state run media reporters. Tufekci,(2017,p. 48–60)

#### 4.3.3 Framing and Slogans:

The movement utilized strategic framing to bridge the deep-seated gaps between social classes, ensuring that diverse grievances were funneled into a single, cohesive banner that the state could not easily divide.

- **Bread, Freedom, Social Justice:** This slogan functioned as a "Diagnostic Frame." By prioritizing "**Bread**" at the very start of the chant, the movement signaled that economic dignity was the fundamental prerequisite for political liberty (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* 2018). This was a crucial tactical bridge that allowed middle-class "keyboard activists" to

align their civil rights goals with the immediate survival needs of the urban poor, who were the hardest hit by the prevailing "inflationary squeeze".



Figure 6 shows a banner with the demands of the revolution.

- **The "One Hand" Tactical Alliance:** The slogan "*El gesh we el shaab ed wahda*" (The Army and the People are One Hand) served as a sophisticated psychological mechanism. As explored later in the primary interview findings, this framing was used to neutralize the military's potential for violence by casting them as "protectors" of the people's goals rather than agents of the regime.



Figure 7 shows how the military soldiers providing safety for the people during revolution.

- **Security Coordination and the Vacuum:** This relationship was a practical reality. During the 18-day occupation, the military provided security channels that allowed protesters to bypass the police. However, as the "Barrier of Fear" collapsed, the movement faced the unintended consequence of a "Security Vacuum," where the transition toward democracy was occasionally misinterpreted as a total absence of rules. (Ketchley 2017)

#### 4.4 Transcript Analysis: The Military-Insider Perspective

The following findings are derived from an in-depth, semi-structured interview conducted for this study with an active-duty military participant. This "state-from-within" view is vital for understanding how economic desperation and strategic mobilization successfully dismantled the state's historical grip on power. The testimony provides a unique lens into how the regime's own security apparatus perceived the collapse of the status quo.

##### 4.4.1 Economic Conditions:

The participant identified the "Street's" goals not as a spontaneous outburst, but as a direct consequence of the extractive nature of the Mubarak regime's economic policies.

- **The Binary Choice of Underemployment:** A recurring theme in the testimony was the systematic exclusion of university graduates from the formal economy. The interviewee emphasized that youth faced a stagnant choice: idling in local cafes (*ahwa*) or accepting extreme underemployment. He noted that seeing graduates working as taxi drivers or supermarket cashiers despite their degrees was a major source of societal resentment.
- **The "Businessmen's Government":** My analysis of the participant's testimony suggests the state was viewed by its own agents as a vehicle for a narrow elite class. He specifically pointed to the facilitation of monopolies in the iron industry as a grievance. Most notably, the participant revealed that the government was perceived to be siphoning money from pension funds to cover state deficits calling it The "Businessmen's Government", an action that triggered a "multi-generational panic" bridging the gap between the youth and the elderly.
- **The Emotional Toll of "Waithood":** The participant provided a human dimension to the sociological concept of "waithood." He described it as a tragedy where "love

stories were being cut short by poverty," as the economic barriers to marriage and housing became insurmountable for the average young man.



*Figure 8* shows a banner held by a kid stating his demands in the revolution.

#### 4.4.2 Political Structures:

The testimony explains how the movement challenged a system designed to be impenetrable through fear and legal exceptionalism.

- **"I Am the Law":** The participant observed that the political system was underpinned by the 1967 Emergency Law, which granted police absolute authority. He recalled that officers frequently operated under the mantra, "I am the law, I can do what I want," using the threat of random arrests to maintain a constant atmosphere of fear.
- **Vanishing Legitimacy:** By 2010, the participant noted that public trust had reached a breaking point. He described the 2010 parliament elections as a "fake show" for the international community. This was compounded by the looming "Succession" of Gamal Mubarak, which signaled to both the public and the military that reform from within the existing system was impossible.

#### 4.4.3 Social Mobilization:

The uprising triggered a psychological shift that the participant witnessed firsthand, transforming the military from a state instrument into a revolutionary resource.

- **Breaking the Barrier of Fear:** The interviewee observed a sudden flood of memes and political satire. In his view, this digital defiance was a primary tool in stripping the regime of its "aura of invincibility" and breaking the psychological grip of the security state.
- **The Tactical Alliance:** According to the participant, the slogan "*El gesh we el shaab ed wahda*" (The Army and the People are One Hand) was a deliberate and successful tactical maneuver. By framing the military as "protectors," the movement isolated the police and successfully prevented a total, violent military crackdown.
- **The Chaos of Liberty:** However, the participant also highlighted a darker side to the transition. He observed that some individuals misinterpreted the collapse of the old order as a total absence of rules. This "I am the law now" sentiment created a dangerous security vacuum that threatened the social fabric during the 18-day occupation.

#### 4.4.4 International Influence and the Security Vacuum

The final stage of the uprising was defined by a collapse of traditional security and a shift in the international narrative.

- **The Security Vacuum:** As the police withdrew, a massive vacuum was created. The participant observed that while international media support was initially a helpful resource for the movement, it eventually shifted toward what he characterized as "unrealistic demands" from external parties that did not account for local stability or the complexity of the transition.
- **Military Restoration:** In light of the rising civil unrest and the threat of state collapse, the participant argued from his perspective that the military's intervention to restore order became "absolutely necessary." This view provides a critical insight into the military's self-perception as the final guarantor of the Egyptian state's survival.

## **5 Results and Discussion**

### **5.1 Objective 1: The Localized Impact of the "Inflationary Squeeze"**

The data confirms a direct correlation between macroeconomic instability and the mobilization of the Egyptian youth. While the headline consumer price index reached 12%, food price inflation specifically for essential staples like bread and oil exceeded 18% in the months leading up to the 2011 uprising (World Bank, Egypt: More Jobs, Better Jobs - A Priority for Egypt 2014) (Khan 2012).

The primary interview with the military participant reveals that this "squeeze" was a critical factor in the regime's loss of control. The testimony describes a "multi-generational panic" caused by the state siphoning money from pension funds to cover deficits. This created a "scissors effect" where rising costs outpaced stagnant wages, making the "Bread" pillar of the revolutionary slogan a literal demand for subsistence and the restoration of a functional social contract.

### **5.2 Objective 2: Political Failure, Unemployment, and "Waithood"**

The study demonstrates that the "Businessmen's Government" utilized the 1967 Emergency Law to protect capital-intensive monopolies, such as the iron industry, which failed to generate widespread employment. This structural failure resulted in a youth unemployment rate of 20–25%. (World Bank, Egypt: More Jobs, Better Jobs - A Priority for Egypt 2014)

The military-insider testimony validates the human cost of this failure, describing a generation of university graduates trapped in "waithood" a state of social adolescence where the inability to secure formal income prevented marriage. The participant noted that "love stories were being cut short by poverty," a sentiment shared in local cafes that served as nodes for disenfranchised graduates. This indicates that the uprising was a demand for structural inclusion in the economy rather than a purely ideological political shift.

### **5.3 Objective 3: Specific Economic Demands in Local Mobilization**

The analysis of banners and visual messaging identifies the specific material goals that defined the "repertoire of contention". The research found that protesters used the

revolutionary space to "write" their economic requirements directly into the public sphere using banners and slogans.

banners analysis reveals that a core demand was ballanced and less wage gap to counter the "shallow" growth of the Nazif cabinet. Furthermore, banners explicitly targeted the "Businessmen's Government," calling for the redistribution of wealth and an end to the monopolies that siphoned wealth upward. The primary interview confirms that even state agents perceived the government as a vehicle for a narrow elite class. By displaying these demands on large scale, hand painted banners, the movement translated "Bread" into a concrete policy agenda that sought to dismantle the regime's crony capitalist framework.

## **6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Synthesis of the Research Argument**

This thesis has investigated the 2011 Egyptian Revolution not as a spontaneous political event, but as the culmination of a decade-long disconnection between macroeconomic growth and microeconomic survival. By applying the Four Pillars framework which is Economic Conditions, Political Structures, Social Mobilization, and International Influence. the research demonstrates that the uprising was a systematic reclamation of the social contract. The study suggests that the state's transition to a "shallow" growth model under the Businessmen's Government created a revolutionary tinderbox that only required a tactical "trigger" to ignite.

### **6.2 The Socioeconomic Catalyst: Inflation and Waithood**

The research successfully identified the "inflationary squeeze" as the primary driver of multi-generational dissent. Macroeconomic data from the World Bank (2014), supported by primary interview testimony, reveals that food price spikes and the siphoning of pension funds created a "scissors effect" that threatened the survival of both the youth and the elderly.

The study analyzed the crisis of "waithood" as a structural failure of the Egyptian state. The focus on capital intensive industries, such as the iron monopoly, failed to absorb the "youth bulge," leaving a generation of graduates in a state of social adolescence. The primary data illustrated the human cost of this stagnation, where "love stories were cut short by poverty," transforming local cafes into incubators for collective resentment.

### **6.3 Mechanics of Contention: Digital, Labor, and the Military**

A central argument of this thesis is that the revolution succeeded by bridging the gap between digital coordination and physical muscle.

- The Digital Mechanism: Activists used social media to bypass the state's information monopoly, utilizing "emotional shocks" (like the Khaled Said case) and satire to dismantle the regime's "aura of invincibility."
- The Labor Engine: The research confirms that while youth initiated the movement, the entry of 300,000 industrial workers in February 2011 provided the economic leverage necessary to paralyze the state.
- The Tactical Alliance: Through the analysis of banners and the "One Hand" slogan, the study indicates that the movement strategically framed the military as "protectors." This maneuver, corroborated by the "state-insider" interview, neutralized the military's potential for violence and isolated the police apparatus.

#### **6.4 The Materiality of the Slogans**

The analysis of visual artifacts confirms that the demand for "Bread" was a concrete policy requirement. The movement utilized Tahrir Square as a public ledger to "write" its demands for a more reasonable wage gap and the redistribution of national wealth. This evidence refutes the narrative that the revolution was purely ideological; it was a movement rooted in the demand for material dignity and the dismantling of a crony capitalist system that served a narrow elite.

#### **6.5 Final Statement**

The 2011 uprising represents the collapse of a regime that prioritized elite-led neoliberal reforms over the fundamental survival of its citizens. The transition from private suffering to public defiance was made possible by a sophisticated "repertoire of contention" that utilized every available resource from Facebook to industrial strikes. This research concludes that any future stability in Egypt, or the wider MENA region, is contingent upon addressing the deep-seated structural exclusion and the "inflationary squeeze" that continue to define the lives of the disenfranchised majority.

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## 8 List of pictures, tables, graphs and abbreviations

### 8.1 List of pictures

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## 9 Appendix

### **Primary Source Transcript:**

**Interviewer Profile:** Active-Duty Military Personnel (2011)

**Methodology:** Semi-structured Qualitative Interview

### **Pillar I: Economic Conditions (The "Squeeze" & Waithood)**

**Q: How did you perceive the economic state of the youth and middle class leading up to 2011? A:** Unemployment was a systemic crisis. I saw it within my own circles; university degrees no longer guaranteed a future. Graduates faced a binary choice: stagnate in the local cafes (*ahwa*) or accepting extreme underemployment in low-wage jobs working as supermarket cashiers or driving taxis despite being overqualified. For the middle class, necessities became luxuries.

**Q: You mentioned a "gap" in the economy. Can you elaborate? A:** On paper, the macro-economy looked successful, but the wealth never reached the street. We called it the "**Businessmen's Government**" because the state was run by an elite class that facilitated monopolies in sectors like the iron industry. There was a massive wage gap a senior official might earn ten times what a standard employee made. This corruption even touched the elderly; the government was siphoning money from pension funds to cover state deficits, causing panic about the future. For the youth, "waithood" was literal economic barriers meant they couldn't marry or start families. Love stories were being cut short by poverty.

### **Pillar II: Political Structures (The Barrier of Repression)**

**Q: What specific political structures acted as the "spark" for the movement? A:** The **Emergency Law** was the primary instrument of repression. It gave the police unlimited authority, which was frequently abused for personal vendettas rather than national security. You would hear officers say, "I am the law, I can do what I want." Random arrests were a daily reality.

**Q: Did the public view the regime as legitimate? A:** By 2010, legitimacy had vanished. The parliament elections that year were a "fake show" for the world. People were exhausted by 30 years of the same rule and the looming threat of the "Succession" (Gamal

Mubarak). When the revolution began, the demands were legitimate and shared by everyone, regardless of background.

### **Pillar III: Social Mobilization (The "One Hand" Narrative)**

**Q: How did the atmosphere change once the "Barrier of Fear" was broken? A:** It was a psychological shift. Suddenly, memes and political satire flooded the media. Even state reporters began to speak with a new level of freedom. However, there was a chaotic side to this mobilization. Some individuals, having lived under repression for so long, misunderstood democracy as a total lack of rules, leading to the dangerous sentiment of "I am the law now."

**Q: What was the relationship between the protesters and the military? A:** When the military deployed, there was a sense of joy. The protesters saw us as protectors of their legitimate goals, not as the "enemy" like the police. This was captured in the slogan "*El gesh we el shaab ed wahda*" (The Army and the People are One Hand). We provided hotlines for security, which was a crucial point in maintaining the revolution's peaceful nature.

### **Pillar IV: International Influence & External Factors**

**Q: Did you see evidence of international influence during the events? A:** Initially, international media support forced the government to yield to demands, such as cabinet reshuffles. However, later in the timeline, we perceived external parties attempting to destabilize the state by pushing unrealistic demands. This led to a security vacuum and terrorist operations that forced the police to withdraw entirely, making the military's role in restoring order absolutely necessary.