

# ‘I used to be afraid, now I am Egyptian’: The role of emotion in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Arab Spring

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*The 2011 Arab Spring was a watershed moment for the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. In Egypt, mass protests against President Hosni Mubarak’s repressive regime – which resulted in his downfall – were particularly concentrated around Tahrir Square. Much of the existing literature focuses on aspects such as technology and social media, pivotal in what is often termed the ‘Facebook Revolution’. This article offers an alternative and innovative perspective, focusing on the role and dynamics of emotions within the early amplification of protests in Tahrir Square, conceptualising their transformative function. This includes mobilisation, transforming individuals from passive to active, and binding, transforming individuals into collectives and connecting them to space via political performance, thus driving protests. Utilising academic articles, contemporary news reports, and other multimedia sources, including a documentary called ‘The Square’, this article seeks to address gaps in the existing literature and provides a basis for future emotion-centric studies of protest events in other countries in the MENA region.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Emotions pervade all social life; they shape and underpin every worldview, identity, experience, and action. What we feel is deeply connected to what we are. James Jasper posits that protests, which are public performances of opposition, are ‘inconceivable’ without emotions, as they are what give ‘ideas, ideologies, and identities’ the power to motivate; emotions are both constituted by and are constitutive of protest (Jasper, 1998; 2014; see also Coşkun, 2019, p. 1204). However, emotions can be slippery to categorise and predict in both formation and impact, especially in extraordinary and complex situations such as mass protests in authoritarian contexts, where populations and their emotions can be manipulated, misreported, and distorted by the regime. There have been various academic attempts to conceptualise and categorise emotions, for example through frameworks of ‘cementing and sanctioning’ (Flam, 2005, p. 19), ‘reciprocal and shared’ (Goodwin et al., 2001, p. 11), ‘emboldening and dispiriting’ (Pearlman, 2013, p. 388), ‘emotion families’ (Haidt, 2003), and as pairs of positive and negative ‘moral batteries’ (Jasper, 2014, p. 211). Despite their merits, these understandings tend to involve some measure of arbitrary compartmentalisation, attempting to use binaries to make sense of emotions which are inherently ephemeral, simultaneous, and sometimes incongruent (Solomon, 2018, p. 936). Therefore, this article will draw on various conceptual models as appropriate, focusing on general, discernible emotional *trends* and *processes* rather than individual, amorphous emotions.

This article will focus on the eighteen days of protests in Tahrir Square, Egypt, which began on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, demanding the end of leader Hosni Mubarak’s regime. These were part of the ‘Arab Spring’: mass protests which swept the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, unique in their ‘intensity and density’ (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, p. 7). Throughout his almost thirty years in power, Mubarak’s grip over Egypt became increasingly characterised by corruption and cronyism: by 2008, almost all the country’s wealth was concentrated in the hands of one per cent of the population (Lesch, 2012, p. 27). In tandem, economic decline, spiralling youth unemployment, extreme poverty,

and crumbling public services exacerbated social discontent and instability (Pearlman, 2013, pp. 410-412). Stringent limits on media, cultural, and public expression, rampant police brutality, and the rigged elections that took place in 2010, during which Mubarak's party won a purported ninety-six per cent of the vote, further contributed to a sense of fear, political malaise, and apathy. This deterioration of the social consensus set the stage for social mobilisation, but, first, an emotional trigger was needed (Lesch, 2012, p. 23).

The protests in Tahrir Square, demanding 'bread, dignity, and freedom' (*aish, karama, hurriya*), offer a fascinating microcosmic insight into the role and dynamics of emotion within social and mass movements (Lesh, 2012, p. 17). This article will examine and conceptualise the transformative role of emotions in protests. Two particular transformations are discussed: *mobilisation*, transforming individuals from passive to active, and *binding*, transforming individuals into collectives and connecting them to space via political performance, and thus driving protests. Emotions can also have dampening effects, causing demobilisation and decline. However, this article will concentrate on their amplifying role, as this emotional transformation and escalation were major aspects of what made the Arab Spring protests so unexpected and powerful, especially within the MENA region, where notions surrounding the inevitability and durability of authoritarianism, termed 'Arab Exceptionalism', endure (Korany and El-Mahdi, 2012, p. 7).

Prior to the cultural and emotional turn within social science research of the early 2000s, the analysis of the role of emotions in protest was largely overlooked. This was, in part, due to academic assumptions surrounding the incompatibility of rationality and emotion and the tendency to focus excessively upon rational choice, cost-benefit, structuralist, and organisational models championed by political process theorists such as Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam (Eyerman, 2005, p. 4; Goodwin et al., 2001, pp. 8-9). This neglect seems remarkable, given that emotions permeate and shape everything, especially decision-making and action, and that protests are highly emotional events (Jasper, 1998, p. 398). Since then, consensus has increased around the inseparability of cognition and emotion, the inadequacy of rationality-based theories alone in explaining protest dynamics, especially in authoritarian contexts, and the indispensability of emotional aspects within social movements and mobilisation (Benski and Langman, 2013, pp. 526-527; Pearlman, 2013, p. 389). This mounting scholarly attention has led to the more recent production of several emotion-centric analyses of the 2011 Arab Spring, for example, by Coşkun (2019), which focused on Tunisia and Egypt, and by Dornschneider (2020), which engaged in comparative analysis of 'hot' and 'cold' emotions in Morocco and Egypt. However, there remains a tendency, seen especially in the immediate aftermath, to place excessive emphasis on other aspects, particularly the role of technology and social media, as the driving force of mobilisation (see Tufekci and Wilson, 2012; Abdulla, 2011; Mansour, 2013). The Egyptian Arab Spring is often referred to as the 'Facebook Revolution', an essentialising parlance which overlooks other important elements within events, including emotions. Moreover, between the 28th of January and the 5th of February 2011, Mubarak's regime blocked internet access across Egypt, but during this time, the protests increased in size, making it clear that social media was not the only factor driving protests (Elshahed, 2011).

## MOBILISATION

One aspect of the transformative effect of emotions is in their capacity to mobilise individuals, transforming them from inaction to action. Around 20,000 people, though the exact figure is contested, converged in Tahrir Square on the 25th of January (Pearlman, 2013, p. 397). Wendy Pearlman (2013, p. 397) argues that this cannot be explained by organisational structures and pre-existing network ties alone due to the nature of Mubarak's coercive apparatus and the pervasion of State Security into many aspects of public life, including universities, government offices, mosques, and Internet cafes (Lesch, 2012, pp. 24-25). Prior to the 2011 uprising, Egyptians had essentially been

repressed into 'apathy and despair' by Mubarak's regime, experiencing 'dispiriting' and 'self-conscious' emotions, such as shame and fear, which generally constitute major barriers to social mobilisation (Pearlman, 2013, p. 396; Haidt, 2003; Gunning and Baron, 2013, p. 203). As Pearlman (2013, p. 391) argues, emotions are a 'powerful motivator of action'. Thus, if the protests were sparked, this was because a transformation in emotional dynamics took place.

'Moral shocks' are sudden, unexpected events which lead to cognitive and emotional processes that can encourage mobilisation (Jasper, 1998, p. 409). This is because 'moral shocks' trigger a rapid emergence of outrage and indignation, both of which are conceptualised by Pearlman (2013, p. 393) as 'emboldening emotions:' drivers of defiance. In Egypt, a graphic image of Khaleed Said, a twenty-eight-year-old middle-class man who was brutally beaten to death by police outside an Internet café and photographed post-mortem by a relative, acted as such a moral shock: his was 'the face that launched a revolution' (Preston, 2011, p. 1; Lesh, 2012, p. 37). A prominent activist, Ahmed Sidan, later identified the image as the first 'catalyst' of the uprising (Preston, 2011, p. 2). This violent death had parallels, in some regards, with the public self-immolation of fruit vendor Mohamad Bouazizi, which sparked initial protests in Tunisia, beginning on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 (Coşkun, 2019, p. 1204). Coşkun (2019, p. 1199) suggests that the emotions which arose due to this moral shock were themselves a catalyst, with indignation, outrage, and humiliation becoming activated into anger, exemplified in the designation of the initial demonstrations on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January as a 'Day of Rage' (Osman and Samei, 2012, p. 7). Jonathan Haidt (2003) identifies anger as a moral emotion: one which can be triggered even in 'disinterested elicitors' in response to an 'eliciting event'. Haidt argues that the eliciting event, which regards the actions of an 'other' rather than the self, can often be an 'unjustified insult', exemplified in the senseless murder of Khaleed Said. 'Revenge' is the course of action often taken to respond to the anger and redress perceived injustices, in this case, mass demonstrations against Mubarak's repressive regime (Haidt, 2003).

These 'moral shocks' need not quickly dissipate but can become encased in objects or spaces. For example, the Facebook page: 'We are all Khaleed Said', created by activist Wael Ghomin, served as an enduring, symbolic rallying point for the amplification and dissemination of emotions, demonstrating how emotions associated with this moral shock were harnessed and utilised by activists as an element of their online mobilisation campaigns (Osman and Samei, 2012, pp. 3-4; Jasper, 1998, p. 409). 'For the Sake of Khaleed, For the Sake of Egypt' (*Ashan Khaleed, Ashan Masr*) became a rallying cry - in online and offline spaces alike - and one which rhetorically bound the fate and repression of the individual with that of Egypt as a whole (Lesch, 2012, p. 37). Interestingly, despite considerable literature surrounding diffuse systems of political communication and innovative online tactics in mobilisation, including by Amr Osman and Marwa Abdel Samei (2012) and by Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson (2012), the emotional dimensions of social media networks remain comparatively under-analysed. It seems that it is precisely because this page and the associated image were so emotionally evocative, particularly of moral emotions, that they were resonant (Haidt, 2003).

Within the literature, moral shocks tend to delineate negative events, and mass mobilisation is often focused on negative emotions. However, the resignation of Tunisian leader Ben Ali on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, following mass protests, after twenty-three years in power, can be conceptualised as an example of a positive moral shock (Pearlman, 2013, p. 396). Ben Ali's resignation activated hope rather than outrage, transforming Egyptians from passive and apathetic to enraged and then to active and hopeful in their capacity to affect similar change within their own country. This eliciting event triggered hope in disinterested elicitors, modifying belief systems surrounding the possible success of replication and calling notions of Arab exceptionalism into question, at least in the minds of the Egyptian people (Haidt, 2003). As well as moral outrage and anger, Egyptian activists also consciously attempted to harness this emboldening hope to encourage mobilisation, with protesters in Tahrir

Square chanting ‘Tunisia is the Solution’ and utilising Tunisian slogans like the epigrammatic ‘leave’ (Weyland, 2012, p. 926, Pearlman, 2013, p. 397). Castells (2015, p. 96) argues that Egyptians were mobilised by a ‘spark of indignation and hope that was born in Tunisia’, a ‘moral battery’ of sorts, which indicated an emulative direction for action (Jasper, 2014, p. 211). The Egyptian people, who had previously felt powerless, suddenly felt ‘empowered’ by the hope which emerged due to the successful Tunisian example (Solomon, 2019, p. 947). Stephanie Dornschneider (2020, p. 7) argues that the Arab Spring protests were triggered by positive beliefs and inferences surrounding ‘hot’ emotions of hope, courage, solidarity, and pride, providing an alternative account to those focused solely upon ‘negative’ emotions, like anger and frustration. Pearlman (2013, p. 393) adopts an ambivalent view, suggesting positive and negative, indignation and hope, were deeply intertwined and to a powerful result. Pearlman further conceptualises a constellation of non-congruent emotions arising from the moral shocks, including remorse, pride, joy, embarrassment (that they, the Egyptians, were not the first to protest), and envy, all of which Pearlman (2013, pp. 396-397) argues contributed to emotional transformation and mobilisation. This demonstrates the importance of emotions within mobilisation and some of the complexity associated with understanding and conceptualising the emotional dynamics of protest: emotions feed into and emerge from one another and are rarely, if ever, singular (Coşkun, 2019, p. 1203).

Although questions surrounding the impact of emotions on protest decision-making are still underworked, they clearly have a large catalysing impact on the choice to protest, especially in high-risk, repressive, authoritarian contexts (Jasper, 2004, p. 7; Solomon, 2019, p. 946; Kuan, 2023, p. 309). Decision-making also evidently involves cognition; however, in Egypt, the decision to mobilise arguably seems to have been more emotional than cognitive in basis. Kurt Weyland (2012, p. 926) posits that Egyptians became ‘caught up in events’, leading to ‘optimistic impulses’ brought about by beliefs in the reproducibility of the Tunisian example, resulting in them taking cognitive shortcuts. Due to the robustness of the coercive apparatus and considerable risk of a violent regime response, evidenced by the extent of police repression and brutality in Egypt, not least that which was inflicted upon Khaleed Said, fully rational actors engaging in utilitarian and emotion-free cost-benefit analysis arguably *should* not have become mobilised. The reduced costs, which arguably *should* have preceded protest, in keeping with rational choice theory, were not present (Pearlman, 2013, p. 399). However, due to the aforementioned moral shocks, hot and emboldening emotions were heightened and gained an insuppressible momentum, and so tens of thousands of Egyptians converged in Tahrir Square, with signs including: ‘I would rather die in Tahrir than have you govern me and live in humiliation’ (Pearlman, 2013, p. 398; Dornschneider, 2020, p. 7). Evidently, protesters were cognisant and aware of the risk of violence, but strongly felt and emboldening emotions motivated them to act and increased, or transformed, their willingness to undertake risk and to mobilise in a repressive, potentially deadly context.

## BINDING AND DRIVING

The etymological root of ‘emotion’ means ‘to move’: people are moved by emotions, becoming transformed into emotional actors, and in turn, emotions ‘move’ protests (Coşkun, 2019, p. 1201). This moving or driving occurs through the transformation of identity and space by emotions via political performance. Charles Tripp (2013, p. 1) understands performances as staged events involving the ‘acting out’ of opposition in public spaces, which he conceptualises as ‘theatres’ of protest, placing emphasis upon the ontology and dramaturgy of political performance. However, despite the innovative and engaging nature of this conceptualisation, Tripp neglects to address the role and dynamics of emotion within this process, suggesting only that the Arab Spring brought a new mobilised public into being and that performances gave new meaning without explicitly focusing on how this meaning crystallised. Conversely, Ron Eyerman (2006, pp. 198-199) understands these ‘staged events’ as highly emotional, arguing that performance is how social movements communicate and

amplify their messages by engaging with and activating emotions, both inside and outside of their 'bounds'. Eyerman posits that for a 'successful performance', both the 'actors', within the bounds – those protesting in Tahrir Square – and the 'audience', outside of the bounds – those watching, both in-person and through the news and social media coverage – must be moved or transformed.

During these performances, individual emotions are externalised and transformed into collective emotions via conscious and unconscious circulation in political spaces or theatres. Importantly, despite tendencies within the literature to centre emotional analysis upon individual subjects, emotions are ultimately highly trans-subjective and contagious (Coşkun, 2019, pp. 1203, 1199). Prior to the circulation of emotions in Tahrir Square, regime coercion and repression meant that Egyptians did not tend to publicly externalise their emotions (Lesh, 2012, pp. 24-25). Therefore, the rapid mobilisation around common emotional rallying points, including the aforementioned moral shocks and the resulting emergence of collective emotions, were especially unexpected and thus were especially powerful, particularly in encouraging more people to participate in the protests (Pearlman, 2013, pp. 396-397). Teresa Kuan (2023, p. 319) describes these collectively felt emotions as 'affects': 'transpersonal forces which move or propel action'. She further conceptualises how emotions are both personal and interpersonal and, crucially, are interdependent with the historical and cultural context. One protester stated that in Tahrir Square, they all 'drew strength, courage, and resolve from each other', demonstrating the emboldening and self-amplifying effect of these collective emotions, which Efser Rana Coşkun (2019, p. 1205) argues were stronger and more powerful than a mere sum of their parts (Solomon, 2019, p. 942).

Coşkun (2019, p. 1207) posits that disparate groups of individuals experiencing the same emotions begin to feel for each other, as well as for themselves, and Eyerman (2006, p. 196) argues that protests create and strengthen emotional bonds and a sense of 'togetherness'. The 'I feel' becomes 'We feel', which is binding. Thus, collective emotions and emotional bonds work in tandem to temporarily transform disparate individual identity into collective identity through a process of 'collective effervescence' (Coşkun, 2019, p. 1204; Eyerman, 2006, p. 195). Eyerman (2006, p. 195) understands collective effervescence as a process of emotional transference where individual identities are temporarily transformed as groups form, leading to a charged collective energy and a sense of belonging. Jasper (2014, p. 209) implements his 'interaction ritual model' to suggest that this emotional transference occurs due to the intense 'emotional energy' created through face-to-face interactions during protests. He furthers that this identity transformation is due to the 'successful' fusion of 'reciprocal emotions', like solidarity and loyalty, felt for each other, with 'shared emotions', like hatred and anger at Mubarak's repressive and brutalising regime, felt collectively for something outside of their bounds (Jasper, 2014, p. 209). Similarly, Haidt (2003) argues that self-conscious emotions – including shame, embarrassment, and guilt – can become superseded by moral emotions, both 'other condemning' (like anger and disgust) and 'other praising' (like elevation and gratitude). These other-regarding emotions can bind those who feel them together: having a 'them' for the newly formed 'us' to rally against particularly bolstered collective identity formation, seen for example in the collective chants of 'Down with Mubarak' (The Square, 2014, 10:13). This demonstrates the transformative and binding capacity of less commonly analysed but still significant 'un-savoury' emotions, such as hate, which played an important role in Tahrir Square (Pearlman, 2013, p. 398; Goodwin et al., 2001, p. 11).

Jasper (2014, p. 209) posits that collective identity and a sense of solidarity often explain why individuals initially decide to participate in protests. However, in Egyptian society, which was highly repressed and atomised, collective identity only really formed during the protests and was subsequently emotionally transformative, demonstrating the value and importance of culturally specific analyses (Lesch, 2012, pp. 24-25). The quotation from a protestor: 'I used to be afraid, now I

am Egyptian', exemplifies this; the very 'being Egyptian', which was previously denied to people, became a motivating and empowering collective identity, one which led to emotional transformation, overcoming and superseding dispiriting fear, and giving rise to emboldening emotions, including pride and dignity (Gunning and Baron, 2013, p. 203; Pearlman, 2013, p. 388). Furthermore, in the documentary *The Square*, activist and protester Ahmed Hassan suggested that in Tahrir Square, everyone was united in this Egyptian identity, that 'there was no such thing as Christians and Muslims' and that they 'were all equal, reflections of each other' (The Square, 2014, 7:10, 5:47). Collective identity formation led to a 'multigenerational, multiclass solidarity', which crucially included the Urban Poor, temporarily sidestepping sectarian divides and binding people from different backgrounds to each other and their aims, transforming the protest movement to become something more cohesive, robust, and resilient (El-Naggar, 2011). Mohamed Elshahed (2011), an academic who visited Tahrir Square during the protests, suggests that 'the revolutionary spirit seemed to break down longstanding barriers'. This newly formed collective identity also allowed people to regain a sense of self-determination and positive meaning-making, exemplified in the quotation from a female protester at Tahrir Square who said: 'I am Egyptian again, not marginalised, not without value of dignity' (El Naggar, 2011). Emotions are, as Coşkun (2019, p. 1204) puts it, the 'glue of solidarity', and solidarity and collective identity are necessary for sustained protest participation, particularly in high-risk and repressive contexts. So therefore, it follows that emotions are essential for both the sparking and driving of protests (Pearlman, 2013, p. 398).

Ritual practices and symbols are aspects of political performance through which actors evoke, transform, and amplify activated emotions into action and which help to generate collective identity and strengthen emotional bonds (Eyerman, 2006, p. 196; Solomon, 2019, p. 944). An example of ritual practice in Tahrir Square was repeated clapping and the chanting of simple, powerful slogans, such as 'Freedom', and 'One Hand', which bolstered solidarity and effectively communicated and amplified the protesters' message and sense of purpose and togetherness (The Square, 2014, 5:56, 7:19). The Egyptian flag was utilised as a prominent symbol, a common rallying point, linked to emotions of pride and solidarity, and the newly revitalised collective Egyptian identity. Emotional narratives and rituals, particularly of martyrdom, were also evoked, including the slogan 'the blood of the martyrs will not be forgotten': protesters were bound in their grief and anger and further motivated to act by 'rituals of mourning and remembrance', including highly visually prominent and evocative candlelight vigils (CNN Wire Staff, 2011; Abaza, 2013). Notably, moral shocks associated with death and martyrdom were an enduring emotional rallying point throughout the protests: people were mobilised by their initial outrage and indignation, and these emotions were subsequently amplified and transformed in the collective, encouraging continued mobilisation and participation. Equally, humour was used as a device to bring people together and to overcome and downplay fear. This was exemplified through tongue-in-cheek slogans on handheld signs such as: 'Step Down Already, My Arms Hurt' and 'Thank You For Bringing Us Together, Now Leave' (Elshahed, 2011). In summation, symbols and rituals were utilised in the conscious circulation of emotions, allowing protesters to 'move' those within their bounds, transforming the emotions and identities of actors. Protesters also amplified their message in a highly visible and resonant manner to those bearing witness outside of their bounds, moving the audience and leading to further mobilisation, totalling an estimated two million people, and thus driving protest further (Castells, 2015, p. 56).

As well as being transformed in the presence of each other, protesters also transformed space via political performance. Eyerman (2006, pp. 193, 206) posits that political performance draws attention to space, 'opening' it up and breaking from everyday routine and thus moving perceptions and emotions. Solomon (2019, pp. 948-949) further suggests that space structures performances, and conversely, performances 'give meaning' to space. Elshahed (2011) identifies how Mubarak's systematic dismantling and depopulating of public spaces was linked to the atomisation of Egyptian society, limitation of public expression, and degradation of civic and national pride. Tahrir Square was likely

selected for its centrality, visibility, and symbolic significance: the word ‘Tahrir’ itself means ‘liberation’ (Elshahed, 2011). It was an ill-used ‘authoritarian space’, surrounded by government buildings, before being transformed into the occupied, highly visible and emotional centre of mass movement (Eyeran, 2006, p. 210; Castells, 2015, pp. 60-61). Tahrir Square was appropriated through physical occupation, which led to the emergence of a spontaneous community, described by Elshahed (2011) as the biggest instance of ‘community organising’ and ‘nation building’ in Egyptian history. This included soup kitchens, art, including poetry, comedy and concerts – notably by the famous Egyptian singer Ramy Essam – and the formation of ad-hoc security and watch groups; it came to be perceived as a space in which it was ‘safe’ to vocalise and amplify dissent (The Square, 2014; Elshahed, 2011).

Coşkun (2019, p. 1204) posits that Tahrir Square was transformed into a ‘mass emotional space’, where emotions ‘mutually’ circulated, interacted, and were transformed and amplified on mass, and where emotional attachments and collective identity were expressed and expanded upon. Ty Solomon (2019, p. 943) argues that these circulating emotions led to the formation of ‘atmospheres’ or ‘shared affective orientations’, which were powerful and transformative. Protesters in Tahrir Square said that being there was ‘exhilarating’ and that it ‘was like heaven’. This ‘carnavalesque and ‘welcoming’ atmosphere sustained mobilisation and participation and crucially led to a ‘personal sense of becoming:’ a transformation in both the emotions and identities of protesters (Solomon, 2019, p. 948; The Square, 2014). Thus, the identity of space was transformed by the protests and protesters, and vice versa. Protesters were transformed from fearful and disaffected subjects to angry and politically active Egyptians, and Tahrir Square was transformed from a centre of government municipality to a site of social action and ‘people-power’, recognised worldwide.

Overall, emotions played a transformative role in the 2011 protests in Tahrir Square, transforming individuals from passive to active and temporarily transforming individuals into collectives through political performance and, particularly the implementation and use of rituals and symbols. These transformations served to spark and sustain mobilisation and protest participation in the high-risk and coercive context of Mubarak’s regime, even after brutal security responses left thousands injured and arrested and dozens dead (Gunning and Baron, 2014, p. 204). Importantly, emotions were also binding. When they were activated, externalised, and expressed, for example, due to moral shocks, they connected people to each other and to the world around them, demonstrating the centrality of identity and spatiality to the understanding of emotions (Coşkun, 2019, p. 1198). Whilst this article has focused its attention upon the early amplifying transformations caused by emotions, it would be interesting to analyse the role of emotions in protest decline, particularly how people bound by collective identity become disparate again and the role of collective memory in narratives of protest: how (mis)constructions of the past impact upon protest dynamics (Eyeran, 2006, p. 195). Valuable future research could also include analysis of the intra-protest dynamics of emotions, including gendered aspects, how female and male emotions are coded, understood, and perceived differently, and generational aspects, including why the young are often the first to mobilise, drawing on themes of risk, both physical and socioeconomic, and experiences of indignity. It would also be salient to compare the role of emotions within different cultural contexts, including why similar emotions have different effects in different countries, drawing upon discourses surrounding the socio-culturally constructed and contingent nature of emotions, and particularly the uniqueness of protest in the MENA region.

Emotions create protests, and protests create emotions: emotions both transform and are transformed by protests, and this complexity is what makes analysis so significant and valuable. In fact, the inadequate analytical attention paid to the role of emotions in protest is arguably a significant factor in the failure of regional and international commentators to predict the 2011 Arab Spring and all that followed. Crucially, as Bahgat Korany and Rabab El-Mahdi (2012, p. 2) posit, Egypt is a representative

of the MENA region rather than being a unique example, so therefore this research area is highly relevant within the prediction of future instability. The protests in Tahrir Square offer a fascinating insight into the dynamics of emotions in protest, and particularly the enduring significance of their transformative role.

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