THE LOGIC OF REVOLT

Populist Discourse in Tahrir Square

By

David McKeever

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Lea Sgier

Budapest, Hungary
(2012)

Abstract

Research into the role of discourse in revolutions could provide more nuanced insights into the social processes and causal mechanisms comparative studies have unearthed in revolutions. This study attempts to explain one revolution at this level of analysis, the Egyptian revolution of January and February 2011. Relying on concepts from Laclau's discourse theory the paper seeks to explain the processes internal to revolution. The thesis explores the logical process by which protesters demands came to have an effect. Through analysis of the origins of the revolution, its violence and the regime's tactics the study concludes that protesters demands formed a discourse of populism centred on the logical construction of a symbolic people. These findings call into question the role of the military as a primary explanatory factor.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor Lea Sgier for help with this project in addition to helping me sort out many other disordered thoughts. Eszter Timár is also deserving of special mention. I am also grateful to the very helpful CEU librarians. I owe a debt of gratitude to the following people for support in preparing this document: Mum and Dad, Anna Kononenko and Kevin Adamson.

Contents

Introduction

Contemporary students of revolution are watching the Arab world where people have been in revolt since early 2011. Egypt is the most densely populated of the countries in the region (Atiyah, 1955: 9-11). What happens there has implications for the whole region. The Tahrir revolution is therefore central to the current wave of unrest and a nuanced understanding of it is of prime importance to social science. This is what I provide in this thesis. Something occurred that caused Arab populations to rebel. In one sense the causes of these revolutions are no mystery. To borrow a metaphor from Brinton (1965), revolution has an anatomy that social scientists have already thoroughly dissected.

We know that revolutions by definition feature collective action and regime change. Traditionally there have been three approaches to the study of revolution. Some scholars focus on human beings, others on the crowd, others still on institutions. These approaches have been fruitful up until a point and have taught us much about the causes and outcomes of revolutions. However, the most sophisticated of these studies have failed to explain new breeds of revolution that appeared in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Iran in 1979, Eastern Europe in 1989 and the current wave of unrest in the Arab world are problematic because they are either (1) non-violent, (2) top-down or (3) centre on non-structural factors such as identity or ideology which structuralist approaches are not equipped to deal with. Arjomand's work on Iran can be taken as exemplary of the problems identity in particular poses. His monograph recounts tales of feminists and homosexuals who supported Khomeini's nationalist, religious revolution. For Arjomand this is an indicator of either irrationality or of anomie (Arjomand, 1988 :110). This is an explanation I cannot accept. The message I took in my reading of Olson's *Logic of collective action*

(1971) is that when revolution appears to be irrational the fault is not with the researched but with the researcher. We need to work harder to explain actor's rationale.

To avoid such unacceptable conclusions my thesis explains what happened *inside* the Egyptian uprising. We need to look past individuals, groups and institutions to something more minute. This has been the conclusion of Tilly and his collaborators (McAdam et al, 2000) whose idea of 'contentious politics' based on claim-making is the most sophisticated and convincing explanation of collective violence, including revolutions, social science has. Their project falls short on explaining how it is that claims come to have an effect, in our case, revolution. Rather, they frustratingly hide these explanations behind obscure catch-all phrases such as 'dynamic social processes'.

I propose as a remedy to the current malaise of revolution studies the reconceptualisation of revolution as a species of populism. There is a marked proximity between Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism (2005a) and the contentious politics programme. From Laclau's perspective we are able to analyse claims, or 'demands' in Laclau's language, and explain directly and in detail the dynamic social process by which demands come to have an effect. In the current hegemonic language of social science we may call this process 'preference aggregation and transmission' or something of the like. My work surpasses any such explanation because it explains exactly *how* preferences aggregate and transmit. When we look inside the uprising at the articulation of demands we realise that revolution, as with populism, is a logical process of identity construction.

There are two caveats I must introduce before we proceed. First, my work in this thesis is theoretical and conceptual. My thesis aims at an entirely new way of thinking revolutions. I demonstrate this through sustained study of the Egyptian revolution. Due to space, time and other constraints my case

study is far from systematic enough to be definitive or exhaustive. Therefore I settle for a conceptually sophisticated and plausible theory of revolt. My explanation of Egypt must be considered either speculative or provisional. Second, as my study focuses exclusively on Egypt I cannot speak directly to the above-mentioned revolutions. I can, however, speculate that my findings will hold to some degree in other cases. We will need to chalk this up to future research for the time being.

My research question is; how did protester's demands come to have an effect? I argue that there is a certain logic, the logic of equivalence, to uprising. While I argue that we cannot at the current juncture predict this logic we can spot it as it unfolds and adequately explain it. More specifically, I argue that the logic is the discursive construction of 'the people' from varied demands. Explanation of the people's identity will entail a 'thick description', as opposed to a 'simple' one, of its constituent elements, structure and limits.

Laclau's theory of populism presupposes a broader theory of discourse articulation. I begin with discussion of these theories and the methods employed in this study. The second chapter contains my literature review and concludes my theoretical discussion of revolution. The analysis follows the story of the revolution as I understand it to be a logical process. In chapter three I assess the revolution's conditions of possibility and demands. This is the longest chapter of analysis as it lays the groundwork for the theoretical explanations to follow. In the fourth chapter I rely on Kalyvas' (2006) theory of indiscriminate violence to explain the moment of collective action. Finally in chapter five I examine the constitution of the people by their Other.

I

Theories and Methods

The theory of discourse is everything for understanding revolution. I argue in this thesis that revolution *is* populism. As we will see in the coming pages, populism is as much a *discursive tactic* as an ideology. I do not deny that populism is an ideology; that is a quite separate debate. Laclau's theory of populism (2005a) holds that any examples of populist ideology we could offer can be subsumed under a broader umbrella of 'protest discourses' he calls populism. This chapter explains the theory of discourse informing my conception of revolution and the methods I employ in analysis. I discuss first the concept of discourse and the analytical tools Laclau developed with Mouffe (1985). Then I introduce the concept of logic as basic unit of explanation. Discussion of Laclau's theory of populism that is central to my argument follows. The chapter concludes with discussion of my data and the practicalities of this study.

Analytical Tools

In my experience students of social science arrive at theories of discourse for one of two reasons. Some argue with Taylor that the rigours of traditional social science data and methods place too great a restriction on our capacity to explain (Taylor, 1971: 8,9). Others, myself included, argue with Laclau for a restriction of the epistemological scope of social science (Laclau, 1990: 3). We are suspicious of predictions based on assumptions about human nature, behaviour or rational. In place of these assumptions we argue that people, history and society are in essence contingent, or unpredictable. These arguments would lead to a reduction of research from explanation to description were it not for the introduction, or more accurately; reconceptualisation, of a level of discourse at which to analyse politics. 'Discourse' is the logical conclusion to Taylor's and Laclau's argument. I will deal here only

with Laclau's theory of discourse as it is what informs my analysis.

Laclau's discourse theory arose from developments in poststructuralist linguistics but furnishes us with the tools for political analysis. Within linguistics, post-structuralism was a re-appraisal of Saussure's theory of the arbitrariness of the signifier: that there is no connection between signifier (the word) and signified (the meaning of the word) (Saussure, 1956: 65-69). All this tells us is that the allocation of meaning to words depends upon the whims of the speaker. Post-structuralist linguistics goes further. The achievement of this school was the demonstration that there is no relation between phonemes, i.e. the components (phonetic syllables) of words and signified. From this perspective it is clear that the allocation of meaning does not depend on the whims of the speaker but on some broader structure. Post-structuralists, arguably arbitrarily, call this factor 'discourse' (Laclau, 1993: 422,423). Discourse is therefore a structure similar to 'class' or 'institutions' we can use to explain social phenomena.

Before delving into the specificities of Laclau's political theories we need to pause over the logic of the signifier as this holds the keys to the extent of the discourse theory explanatory potential. At this level of discourse one would expect our analysis to focus on linguistic matters. This is not the case for two reasons. (1) We are social scientists, not linguists. (2) The logic of the signifier captures the material world. If discourse is the force which enables understanding in communication it is also our access to the material world as researchers. As our units of analysis are only ever indicators they are necessarily signifiers. For this reason the material world can therefore legitimately be read *as if* it were structured linguistically (Laclau & Mouffe: 1990: 103,104; Howarth, 2009: 312). If there is a limit to what can be studied through the prism of discourse theory it is the limit of what can be signified, a limit I am certain does not exist. So when I analyse the revolution in Egypt at the level of discourse I am analysing the material world.

This level of analysis is what Laclau calls the 'discursive surface of inscription'. As discourse provides us with a level of analysis we need to theorise discourse itself and our object of analysis. For example, the idea of discourse has in large part been taken to facilitate the study of ideology and studies in this vein have worked with a theoretical conception of ideology in addition to a theory of discourse. My argument in this thesis is that in a revolutionary situation the surface of inscription can be read as one example of populism as discussed in *On Populist Reason* (Laclau, 2005a). Revolution *is* populism.

Populism is a concept that normally carries pejorative connotations. Laclau's main task in his study of populism is to disassociate the concept from these connotations in order to arrive at a more useful understanding. His point of departure is that even in social science settings the signifier is deployed in order to denote apparently unrelated political tactics such as Peronism, Stalinism or Thatcherism. By investigating the commonalities and variance between these and other instances of populism he develops a bare-bones understanding of what populist tactics are. What remains constant across these cases is the discursive construction of the signifier 'the people' (Laclau, 2005a: 93,94). I am in agreement with Laclau that populism is a viable political tactic. At least in the case of Egypt I am convinced that the revolutionary discourse is populist in this sense, which is not a denigration of the uprising, just an observation[1].

[1] I recognise that my central claim; revolution *is* populism, may be inflammatory. Readers still confused by Laclau's designation of what we might otherwise call 'protest discourses' as populism could consider his perspective as an Argentine national. 'Populism' has a radically different meaning in Latin American politics to European. In Latin America the signifier 'populist' has undoubtedly been central to all discourse since at least 1943. From Argentina to Brazil to Bolivia to Venezuela it matters very much whether or not a politician can claim to be populist. The specificities of European populism have been addressed by Mouffe with Laclau's analysis. She argued that parties across Europe including the Vlaams Blok and FPÖ are (a) populist in Laclau's sense and (b) a threat to democracy (Mouffe, 2005: 70). Her argument is not a critique of Laclau but evidence that the devil is in the detail. The idea is that the discourses of European and Latin American populist parties are structurally similar but radically different at the level of demand. To fully understand populism we need to simultaneously account for the structure and tactics which Laclau can explain to us and to the words and actions; demands, of political actors. My analysis adds a third dimension to Laclau and Mouffe's dialogue by introducing the Egyptian revolutionary discourse into the typology of populist articulations. Put differently; revolution really is populism, we don't know what direction the Egyptian people will choose to move in yet, but their revolution is populist.

The basic unit of analysis in the study of populism is 'the demand' (Laclau, 2005a: 72). Our focus on demands is a function of discourse theory that oversteps methodological individualism. In studies of collective action, such as revolution, theorists have been divided over whether our object of analysis is the group or the individual. This makes no sense in discourse theory terms as studying 'individuals' presupposes that people have some essential identity we can know about (Laclau, 2005b: 35). As we saw above, discourse theory argues that humans are contingent and unpredictable beings. This makes people's identities fluid and reactionary and their study necessitates empirical analysis of what people say and do. It is for this reason that in this study we will be analysing demands.

Laclau distinguishes two types of demand: democratic and popular. As with populism, these words (which are no more than signifiers) must be thought of independently to any prior meaning they may have had. Their deployment here makes sense only within Laclau's discourse, and mine. Democratic demands are those that have a recognised means of expression and can potentially be fulfilled. Take a simple, almost stupid example. If somebody demands a new bus route from a residential area to an industrial area by submitting a request to local authorities and the request is granted, this would be a democratic demand. A popular demand, however, is the opposite. If the same demand has no legitimate means of expression, the act of its expression would be in some way anti-system. This is what we call a popular demand (Laclau, 2005a: 72,73).

Laclau provides us with a further three concepts with which to construct (or deconstruct) populist demands: empty signifiers, hegemony and rhetoric (Laclau, 2005a: 68). Empty signifiers are words with no meaning. They are the object of such fierce political competition that they resist unique definition (Laclau, 1996: 36-46; 2005:69). The classic example of this phenomenon is democracy, a term figuring in most political platforms but often having divergent meanings attached to it. As most, if

not all, political actors structure their discourse around the idea of democracy it appears from the discourse theory perspective that this idea can never be fully claimed for any discourse. This is what is meant by 'empty signifier'[2]. In our case, the populist discourse is symbolised by the empty signifier 'the people' (Laclau, 2005a: 162).

Within one society hegemony is a complete articulation which has either appropriated or excluded all antagonistic signifiers (Laclau, 2005a: 70; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 136). Think of it as the dominance of one discourse that silences all dissent. It is an ideal-type concept because resistance always occurs so is consequently unobtainable but still relevant to any methodological discussion as it is the ostensible goal of all discursive operations. It is more relevant to studies such as mine for two reasons. (1) The study of revolt tends to focus on authoritarian regimes. These are the closest thing to hegemonic discourses in existence. (2) The possibility of popular demands in Laclau's sense presupposes some degree of discursive dominance that can be challenged.

Rhetoric is defined by Laclau as the process of substitution by which meanings are constructed (Laclau, 2005a: 71,72). This idea is the logic of metaphor – metaphor is the substitution of one signifier for another. Metaphor, and hence rhetoric, therefore captures all language and all discourse. I think when Laclau wrote that we need to understand rhetoric in order to deconstruct popular demands it was for this reason shorthand for the breadth of symbolic functions specifically political language can perform. This has been the focus of his work prior to *On Populist Reason* (2005). If I were to explain each of the analytical tools this could cover I would easily lose at least one chapter to merely repeating Laclau. To

[2] N.B. Despite the definition I have offered "An empty signifier is a word without meaning" 'Empty' here is not to be confused with 'meaningless'. This definition could be reformulated as "An empty signifier is a signifier without a signified" which is more accurate. The definition I do give was a stylistic choice made to avoid an 8 word sentence featuring the word 'signifier' 3 times, almost half of the words in the sentence, that would not be very good pedagogy. For a signifier to be 'empty' rather than just meaningless it must be a structural impossibility for its meaning to be fixed. It is not at all accurate to say that democracy is not empty because it is 'over-determined', that it has too much meaning, It is empty precisely *because* it has too much meaning. It is the object of such competition (or 'antagonism') that it is structurally impossible to symbolise (or to 'suture') (Laclau, 1996: 37). This is why 'the people' is empty.

Table 1: Rhetorical Devices

Articulation	The process of discourse creation by connecting symbols.
Discourse	A chain of symbols.
Dislocation	A structural crisis which threatens existing identities by enabling the formation of new ones.
Empty Signifier	A symbol which resists definition due to competition.
Floating Signifier	A symbol which remains to be articulated or cannot be articulated. Its presence will pose a threat to existing discourses.
Hegemony	A complete articulation which has either appropriated or excluded all antagonistic signifiers.
Imaginary	A myth which has achieved hegemony in one sphere. It is the limit of all symbolisations. Examples include the Enlightenment or communist society.
Logic of Difference	A connection between elements in discourse. It has no impact on the identity of elements connected.
Logic of Equivalence	Assimilates possibly unrelated symbols into a discourse by stressing their similarities.
Myth	One of a set of competing articulations which is beyond normal discursive operations. The symbols which comprise discourses are mythical.

Adapted From Laclau 1990: 3-89, Norval 2000a: 326-346 and Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 93-145.

avoid this I have compiled definitions of the rhetorical devices used in this study in table 1. This table is important and will serve as a glossary of key phrases in my analysis. One idea from this table that requires special attention is the idea of 'logic', which I will now explain.

Logic of Equivalence

Discourse theory explanations boil down to the logical connections between elements in discourse. We call these connections 'logic' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; 133). The output of the discourse research programme has armed us with a respectable arsenal of logics for explanation (Glynos and Howarth, 2008: 137-152). The crucial logic in my study is the 'logic of equivalence' as this is what we find in the populist formation (Laclau, 2005a: 129-132).

From Wittgenstein we learn that the logic of discourse is relational. This is best explained through Wittgenstein's concept 'language game' by emphasising the impossibility of a private language (Norval, 2006: 249,250). The example Wittgenstein offers is 'father'. Fatherhood only makes sense to

us insofar as we are confident of what ‘mother’, ‘daughter’, and ‘son’ are (Wittgenstein, 1992: 94,96). Social phenomena are discursively constituted and can only be understood through their relation to other elements in discourses.

In discourse theory this idea is denoted by the ‘logic of equivalence’. The logic of equivalence stresses the convergence of elements in an articulation based on a certain sameness they are said to posses (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 127). This logic has a dichotomising effect and is frequently present on contentious political terrain as it seeks to reduce the prominence of differences (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 131,132; Glynos and Howarth, 2008: 143). In our case of populist discourse the logic of equivalence is highly important as it connects demands which function as floating signifiers. This has a dichotomising effect as it reduces the differences between demands thereby heightening their opposition to the authority unable or unwilling to satisfy them.

The idea of logic captures two levels of explanation. The demonstration of elusive connections between elements in contingent articulations resonates with Geertz’ idea ‘thick description’ he explains with a simple example; a boy rapidly closing and opening his eye. This event could be interpreted in a number of ways; as a blink, an uncontrollable twitch, a wink... the list is infinite. If it is a wink is it solicitous, conspiratorial or something else? Observation here tells us little. A meaningful description of this event would be far from ‘simple’ (Geertz, 1994: 214,215). The idea of logic certainly captures thick description and in this study the demonstration of the identity of the populist signifier ‘the people’ will be a worthwhile endeavour in itself. Beyond anthropological explanations, logic facilitates something closer to traditional social science explanation. To make this point we should consider the relation of Laclau to another of his intellectual predecessors, Foucault.

Foucault's teaching has led Laclau to make statements about the importance of liberating "our concept of discourse from its restrictive meaning as speech and writing" (Laclau, 1990: 90). This idea has its roots in Foucault's awareness of the relations between power, discourse and knowledge (e.g. Foucault, 1961: 602), that discourse *does* things, and his observation that discourses do not conceal their meaning (Foucault, 1972: 115). The purpose of analysis is not therefore to decipher meanings but to locate the effects of discourse.

When we argue with Laclau and Foucault that we are explaining the effects of discourse this is the explanation of a social process, what people do with their words. In this thesis the explanation will be of what the populist articulation achieved. Logic facilitates this explanation as it is how discourses are articulated. Articulation produces discourses logically.

Populism/Revolution

We now have all the ideas necessary to understand Laclau's theory of populism. The populist articulation is symbolised by an empty signifier we would recognise as 'the people'. Figure 1 offers a parsimonious representation of this fragile articulation and will guide the analysis of demands in Tahrir. As this graphic illustrates, the most straightforward way to conceive of the populist articulation is one in which the demands are simultaneously dispersed horizontally amongst those at the bottom of society and directed vertically towards those at the top.

What must interest us immediately is the red space central to the figure containing the demands. This is the political space of populism. Laclau describes what occurs in this space as the discursive construction of a *plebs* who claim to be a *populus*. In other words 'the people' are a numerically restricted group which claims to be the whole of society. The populist articulation crystallises when the claim to be a *populus* becomes broadly credible. This movement from *plebs* to *populus* is governed by

popular demands and the logic of equivalence. Popular demands congregate in the political space of populism as they cannot be satisfied and have no other home. They come to function as floating signifiers for this reason (Laclau, 2005a: 131,132). Their presence is a menace to the existing discursive order. Their aggregation is what constitutes the people. This occurs when logics of equivalence are secured.

The demands are unique but they share the common structure of floating signifier. Take a small scale example of a populist articulation consisting of three demands. One demand is the one we considered earlier of the bus route. Another demand is for greater social security. The third demand is for an end to a war the state happens to be engaged in. These three demands go unsatisfied and consequently become popular demands or floating signifiers. At some point the demanders realise that while their demands are unique in content they have one thing in common; their only means of satisfaction is the removal of the system which is deaf to these demands. This is the logic of equivalence. In a viable populist articulation this will be repeated many times over. The logic of equivalence is represented by the outer limits of the red space in figure 1 which reflects the shape of the articulation; it is a direct challenge to the establishment.

Figure 1: Populist Articulation

This construction is far from assured though. It is likely that even if a populist articulation manages to occur it will be highly tenable due to the prominence of heterogeneity within its ranks. If a populist formation encapsulates enough demands to be significant some demands will resist equivocation. Laclau calls these ‘heterogeneous demands’ (Laclau, 2005a:

140). Constant conversation occurs within the articulation and this is the primary reason why populism has been difficult for social scientists to define and in a political context has frequently been denigrated. For example, Le Bon's (1960) study of the French revolution concluded that the crowd was irrational on this basis. It appears to the analyst as a rabble or direction-less movement. This is not the case. It is only the case that a populist formation will appropriate every available anti-system demand; it is a magnet for floating signifiers. Some of these will inevitably contradict each other.

Laclau's emphasis on heterogeneity stems from his critique of modernity, particularly Marxism, which tended to view political actors as homogeneous identities. With Marx the obvious example is the working class which was understood as an objectively given social agent. For our purposes it heightens the depth of our 'thick descriptions' by drawing attention to the full array of demands. The presence of heterogeneity is not an indicator of irrationality but is the reality of contingency and what happens when lots of people talk to each other. From the post-modernist position it is what we expect to find in situations of collective action.

Data, Practicalities and Validity

We have seen that discourse analysis is anything but the study of text and talk in any narrow sense. Nonetheless my main data body is composed of newspapers. Newspapers were primarily treated as a record of demands. They served a supplementary function as primary documents informing my narrative although that was as much informed by secondary sources; academic journals from history, anthropology and social science. Anthropological accounts gave me something of a headache. In the end I decided that they should be classed as secondary sources as they already contain interpretation. This in itself should contribute to the overall validity of my analysis as existing interpretations can constrain mine within acceptable limits (Donnelly & Norton: 2011, 16,17).

Of all the Arab Spring revolutions the Egyptian case was selected because English is an official language and there are a number of daily and monthly papers published in Cairo. Of these *Al-Ahram Weekly* (a daily Arabic and weekly English publication) and *The Egyptian Gazette* (a daily English publication) have been analysed as they are readily archived online. There were two relevant editions of *Al-Ahram Weekly*, I excluded the first as there was little of import contained. As the *Egyptian Gazette* is a daily there was much more choice. To arrive at a workable data body given my constraints I reduced my data cyclically. I first limited myself to editions of the *Gazette* published on the 25th, 26th and 28th of January and the 3rd, 4th, 11th and 12th of February. These dates include reports of key events (the start of protests, the battle of the camel and Mubarak's resignation) plus every Friday in the revolution, as protesters adopted Fridays as the 'symbolic day' of the revolution. From there I excluded from both newspapers irrelevant stories; sports, business, international and irrelevant local news. This left me fifteen Egyptian news articles.

While Egypt was an authoritarian state during the period under analysis, their press was ostensibly 'free' (Rutherford, 2008: 1,2; Vatikiotis, 1991: 485,486). 'Freedom of the press' meant the same in Mubarak's Egypt as it does in the west; capitalist owned press. We are dealing here with interests and editorial lines which could, in theory, have impacted on the information I have collected. The possible (probable?) concentration of media in the hands of the regime is no more a threat to validity than the concentration of media in the hands of one or two monopolistic 'media moguls' studies of the west would come up against. As we will see in chapter three, big business was a good friend of Mr Mubarak. *Al-Ahram* had traditionally taken a pro-regime position (Singerman, 2009: 132). I have no way of knowing whether the owners of the *Gazette* were particularly close to the regime. I err on the side of caution and corroborate all claims made in my analysis. In an ideal world I would have been in Tahrir gathering ethnographic notes or at least could have gone after the fact and conducted extensive

interviews. Neither were possible so I ‘make do’ with newspapers as the best available source.

To augment and corroborate my information on demands I then engaged in opportunistic sampling and dipped into the international press as a backup data body. The final chapter of this thesis analyses Mubarak’s discursive tactics as the BBC and Guardian transcribed them. In total I analysed twenty seven articles. This limited number was a severe constraint on my analysis. Ultimately I need to recognise that the empirical value of my analysis is limited and contains a degree of speculation. All news sources have been collected from the internet. In the text of the thesis I refer to them with the name of the source and a letter (e.g. Al-Ahram [A]). These correspond to alphabetised entries in the reference list. Finally, I accessed demographic statistics on the websites of the World Bank, IMF, Freedom House and Transparency International. These are also referenced.

In the broadest sense of validity my thesis adheres to the standard set for qualitative research by Clive Seal, that it should be fully replicable (Seale, 1999: 41). I have not concealed any aspect of my method. I have been transparent with my data which is fully referenced and appendixed. It is all easily accessible online. Where relevant I have presented extensive quotes from my data.

My method of analysis is qualitative and interpretive. The closest thing to an accepted standard for interpretive quality criteria in social science is the standard set down by Maxwell (2002). Maxwell demands that studies provide basic descriptive accuracy; see my discussion of data immediately above, ‘interpretive validity’ and ‘theoretical validity’. In Maxwell’s sense of the term ‘interpretive validity’ we mean the extent to which the researched would accept my interpretation, how fair it is. With Farr I argue that my object of analysis, revolution, is as much an actor’s concept as an analyst’s (Farr, 1982: 689). This principle underpins my conceptualisation in the following chapter; its accuracy in my case

should be evident in the analysis. The validity issue here 'hits' regarding my central claim that revolution *is* populism. I have no way of knowing, but think it is safe to assume plenty of Egyptian revolutionaries would at least need convincing of my argument. In support of my position I argue with Geertz that for my thick description to surpass simple description, to explain, I must observe something not evident to my subjects (Geertz, 1994: 223,224). The best evidence that can be provided in support of my validity is the careful and meticulous work which follows.

Finally, Maxwell's 'theoretical validity' at bottom refers to the accuracy of explanations. The thrust of my explanation is of the logic of the uprising. It depends on two layers of theory, the dangers of which are fully discussed and accounted for in chapter four.

II

Resistance or Revolt?

If my work in the previous chapter was successful then my central claim; revolution *is* populism, should now appear almost as tautology. The two concepts are so similar it is hopefully obvious that Laclau's theory can be applied to revolution. From here I need to argue for the analysis of revolution from this perspective. This task involves 'running after many rabbits' as I'm told the French say (or 'killing many birds with one stone' as my countrymen say). Through review of relevant literature I offer answers to two questions in this chapter: (1) How can populism explain revolution specifically, in other words, how can we distinguish revolution from close concepts? (2) Why is this explanation superior to conventional explanations? The two questions are inseparable. This chapter therefore fully develops what I will call the poststructuralist theory of revolution.

Revolution has many close concepts; my point of departure is to analytically separate revolution from resistance. There are two reasons for this. First, resistance is a central concept in poststructuralist thought, for Foucault it was the other face of power (Foucault, 1994: 329). Second, it is an idiosyncrasy of the literature on the Egyptian revolution that convinced me to pursue a formulation of revolution distinguished from resistance. Due to the non-violent character of the uprising these studies have treated the event as much as a case of resistance even though it resulted in a "rapid transformation of class and social structures from bottom to top" to employ Skocpol's memorable definition. I will now present the commonalities and variance across major approaches to these concepts.

Collective Action

I will begin with the commonalities. It is to the merit of Mancur Olson (1982) that any discussion of resistance or revolution must begin with a discussion of collective action. In both situations multiple agents act in concert to achieve a common goal. As any protester can attest to, this is a hugely difficult feat to pull off. This is what Olson has called the collective action problem.

Olson's argument is three-fold. Collective action requires (1) selective incentives or (2) coercion. In absence of either collective action is (3) irrational (Olson, 1982: 34,35). In that case the task of social science is to explain why or how the action could occur. Given the spontaneity of most revolutions and much resistance this is a serious challenge. I am certain, however, that it is one we can address in abstraction.

At the level of group or individual we ought not to be surprised that demonstrating a selective incentive structure is difficult in large scale mobilisations. To do so convincingly would require demonstrating effective leadership, coordination or similar external factors. Our focus on demands eases this burden. At the level of demand it appears that most, if not all, collective action employs selective incentives. This is easy to demonstrate with concrete examples. Scott's ethnographic work on Malayan resistance, for example, found that resisters were driven underground by unique complaints; tithes, rents, acquisitions etc. (Scott, 1985: xvi). This list should sound familiar, it is largely identical to that, recorded by Lefebvre (1947), of the demands the third estate individually committed to writing on the king's request for *Cahiers de Doléances* in 1789 (:34,36; 71,74). The point is that what may appear as a preference for regime change at the level of group or individual is probably at the level of demand much more heterogeneous but each demand can only be satisfied through regime change. My research suggests that the demand for regime change is largely the reserve of the happy few at the top, an

indicator of heterogeneity in itself.

Both resistance and revolution feature large scale collective action which can be easily explained at the level of the demand. I am more interested in variance than commonalities as my task is separation of the two concepts. In this spirit I will now turn to various formulations which appear in the literature.

People, Crowds and Institutions

The earliest causal theories of revolution appeared in the 20th century. Huntington's work and Tilly's earlier work placed revolution well within the grounds of political science. Huntington sought to provide a definition of the concept distinct from coup d'état. For Huntington the sufficient but not necessary conditions for a revolution were a rapid, fundamental and violent domestic change in (1) dominant values and myths of the society, (2) institutions (3) social structures (4) government leadership and (5) policy (Huntington, 1968: 264). His analysis is a classic example of crowds vs. institutions. The emphasis on societal, particularly regime, change forces the researcher to view revolution as a dependent variable which can only be studied and identified ex-post. Although subsequent theorists were to offer refined definitions of revolution this basic restriction on the social scientific usage of revolution was widely accepted for the remainder of the 20th century.

Tilly (1978) dealt with revolutions in *From Mobilisation to Revolution*. Perhaps his crowning achievement from this period was his development of the concept 'multiple sovereignty'. This is present in all revolutions and is therefore one important distinction between a revolution and a non-revolution. Multiple, or split, sovereignty is when more than one body can be considered a viable contender for sovereign within geographical boundaries that had previously demarcated one nation state. A viable contender for sovereign has the requisite administrative capacities, monopoly on violence and level of popular support to effectively govern a nation state. Under multiple sovereignty at

least two viable contenders will be engaged in [normally violent] struggle to form the governing body (Tilly, 1978: 141). Tilly arrived at the concept of split sovereignty by looking beyond crowds to individuals and studying behaviour in revolutions (Tilly, 1978: 8,9). From this perspective there is little that distinguishes revolution from civil war. The most important contemporary advocate of this concept is Kalyvas who champions split sovereignty *because* it is inseparable from civil war. He argues that all revolutions are a breed of civil war (Kalyvas, 2006: 19). This is an argument I can accept as it works both ways. When, as poststructuralists, we start to look inside the revolution and view it from the bottom up, this forces us to look closely at people and their demands. From this perspective civil war starts to look very much like a revolution rather than the other way round.

Split sovereignty does not provide grounds for separating resistance from revolt. Consider the actions of the Red Guards in revolutionary Petrograd. Between February and October 1917 a situation of dual power existed in Russia - Trotsky used the phrase split sovereignty to describe this - in which executive authority resided with the provisional government but an effective monopoly of violence was held by the Soviets (Figes, 1996: 421) Groups of workers in the Vyborg district took up arms and assumed policing duties, even refusing to disarm when the provisional government attempted to send in its own militias (Figes, 1996: 370). Tilly's analytical model, despite having been developed specifically to deal with revolution, cannot classify these actions either way. All we can be sure of is that we have a situation of split sovereignty unless we make recourse to agency and factor in the worker's aim of defending the revolution.

The causal theory of revolution was further refined by Skocpol in *States and Social Revolutions* (1979). In the first chapter Skocpol proposes to define a revolution as a rapid transformation of society from bottom to top which radically overhauls existing class structures. This definition clearly delineates

revolution. Her emphasis on transformation from the bottom highlights the *social* aspect of revolutions which is helpful because it allows the analyst to separate revolt from coup d'état. A takeover of the state by only one social group is not a revolution, this rules out military coups in addition to peasant or bourgeois revolutions.

Despite this her analysis was anything but social and focused entirely on institutions. Skocpol identified three domestic structural preconditions for the emergence of a revolutionary situation which can be triggered by a number of contingent catalysts. Skocpol's model suggests that (1) revolution is more likely in pre-capitalist societies with a highly organised agrarian social hierarchy. Moreover, the (2) exclusion of privileged classes from government is understood to aggravate potentially revolutionary circumstances. Finally, the (3) level of independence of a state's bureaucratic mechanisms is said to be a key factor as, depending on who has access to it, it can be used decisively to make or break a government. When these conditions are in place Skocpol has argued that economic pressure from abroad, conflict with foreign states or unpredictable factors such as drought or famine can trigger the revolutionary situation. This model has had a profound effect on the study of revolutions and has been of tremendous value to students looking to understand and explain revolutions.

Just like Tilly, Skocpol is unable to distinguish revolution from resistance. Take an example from a non-revolutionary scenario. A nationalist army, the UPA, was founded in the forest surrounding Volhynia, northern Ukraine in 1943 (Snyder, 2003: 217,218). From the forest they conducted a guerrilla campaign against the German occupiers and for a while they succeeded in establishing Ukrainian independence (:218). According to Skocpol's analysis the success of the campaign against the occupation would permit the classification of this event as a revolution, a revolution cut short, but a

revolution nonetheless. Skocpol is therefore able to absorb resistance only as a factor within revolution. Her focus on the state prohibits critical reflection on the characteristics and tactics of resistance.

Each of these models has its merits and shortcomings. I learn from each accordingly. My analysis and model will look to all of these authors at various stages. We can draw two preliminary conclusions. (1) While there is some debate as to what counts as 'revolution' the one point of consensus is that the event itself has been treated as an outcome variable. This stems from the centrality of regime change in definitions of revolution. If we treat revolution as an outcome it means that without a solid model for prediction we can only identify a revolution post-hoc. (2) None of this brings us closer to a separation from resistance. Each of the formulations discussed immediately above are unable to make the distinction.

From Institutions to Identities

As with any good piece of scholarship history has done to Skocpol what it can to make life difficult. In the same year she published her seminal work a revolution occurred in Iran which was indisputably ideological and therefore problematic for her model. Ten years later a chain of 'domino-revolutions' occurred in Eastern Europe (with one exception) featuring little violence and conducted from the top-down. The challenge for students of revolution today is to explain these. Tilly (2003, 2005), his colleagues (McAdam et al, 2000) and Goldstone (2009) have been working at this. Between them these authors have proposed alternatives to institution, group and individual based explanations and also to causal accounts of revolution. These studies have created the territory on which we can start to think seriously about the role of identity in revolution. I view their work as the first step toward a poststructuralist approach. It is not perfect and we must go beyond it, but these authors still have a lot to teach us.

As I mentioned in the introduction, immediately prior to his death Tilly was once again at the cutting edge of social scientific research, which is very approximately where we are in the present juncture. In *Dynamics of Contention* (2000) Tilly and his colleagues began to stake out an approach to collective action based not on institutions, groups or individuals *per se* but on the interaction between individuals. Tilly, McAdam and Tarrow were the first scholars to look *inside* the crowd and to notice that when people gather 'something' happens. They call this 'something' a 'dynamic social process' (McAdam et al, 2000: 27). They developed the concept 'contentious politics' to capture all instances of collective violence.

Contentious politics is when people make claims of one another and of the state (McAdam et al, 2000: 5). It is from this interaction that violence arises. With regard to revolutions specifically, their first case in that book is France in 1789, their explanation was intended to overcome the inability of institution, group or individual based explanations to contend with non-structural factors. To that extent they were successful. 'Contentious politics' is a concept I find very helpful, my readers have no doubt noticed that throughout this essay I have been discussing revolution in Tilly's language. It should be immediately apparent that there is a marked proximity between this position and Laclau's. From the discourse theory perspective our explanation would be of the interactions between elements in a discourse, this is not a million miles away from what Tilly was up to. The difference is that discourse theory can explain interaction in terms of logic. Tilly has only noticed a correlation between interactions and violence, there is no direct connection between claim making and violence. Logic allows us to explain directly and in detail what happens inside the uprising.

In *Identities, Boundaries and Social Ties* (2005) Tilly correctly argued that 'collective identities' are central to explaining collective violence including in revolutions. This follows from his idea about

claim-making; we need to know who is making claims. His attempt to operationalise the category in *The Politics of Collective Violence* (2003), however, mistakenly treated identity as an either absent or present variable with a determinate structure. To have established the link between identities and revolutions is a vital advance but we must go further. Laclau's logics of critical explanation are, I believe, the best tools we have for understanding contingent and indeterminate social phenomena such as identities. As we have seen, within Laclau's framework the identity central to revolution is that of 'the people', its identity is fluid, composed of demands and requires thick description.

Tilly then advocated re-thinking previously dominant accounts of causality in revolutions. Revolutions have a start, middle and end. In this sense treating them as an outcome variable is not entirely accurate. It is sobering to bear in mind that historians have been making this argument for at least twenty years. Hobsbawm pointed out that history has known revolutions which lasted for days ('les trois glorieuses', 'ten days that shook the world'), months ('February', 'October'), years (1789-99) and in some cases decades when events have been interrupted by 'restorations' or 'counter revolutions' (Hobsbawm, 1987: 9). Tilly proposed conceiving revolutions as 'social processes' composed of sets of 'causal mechanisms' instead. By 'causal mechanism' Tilly understands a class of events which changes relations between elements and 'process' as frequently occurring sequences or combinations of these mechanisms (Tilly, 2005: 28).

The implications of these abstract ideas are illuminated by Goldstone's (2009) theory of the 'revolutionary process' which he developed through comparisons of six revolutions. The process contains twelve mechanisms, the first four which he calls 'the revolutionary suite', concern us directly as the remainder follow regime change. These are (1) elite defection and formation of opposition, (2) polarisation and coalition building, (3) mass mobilisation and (4) regime change. This list could easily

be added to. Anybody familiar with Brinton's (1965) classic *Anatomy of Revolution* or the work of Skocpol would instinctively argue for the separation of intellectuals from elite and the addition of 'economic crisis' and 'military defection' mechanisms.

Goldstone's four stages plus the three I have asserted are perfectly compatible with poststructuralist thinking about causality. Derrida taught that the "origins are unoriginal" which seems pertinent in the case of revolution. So rather than expend energy searching for causes I propose to consider these causal mechanisms as 'conditions of possibility' for the revolution which contribute cumulatively to its constitution.

Within poststructuralism, the one case of regime change which has received most attention has been the end of apartheid which Howarth and especially Norval (1994; 1996; 2009) have written on extensively. They deploy the Gramscian concept *organic crisis* to explain this event. From this perspective the regime change appears as a crisis of hegemony in which new social identities fatally challenge the existing discursive order. Importantly for us, Howarth and Norval explain the emergent discourse in terms of the logic of difference[3]. The new identities came to function as floating signifiers which cannot be accounted for within the hegemonic apartheid discourse but each fully retain their own particularity rather than presenting a united front. The differences within the challenge to apartheid paved the way for a transition to democracy as democracies require the organisation of society along the logic of difference. If we think of the revolution as a pre-democratic movement we would expect the political terrain to be dominated by the logic of difference in this way. My recourse to Laclau's theory of populism, however, draws our attention to the divisive logic of equivalence.

[3] I did not discuss this logic in the previous chapter as it is superfluous to my research. In short, the logic of difference is what we expect to find in democracies as discourses which respect difference do not engender conflict.

There has only been one attempt at an analysis of revolutionary discourse which interestingly explained the formation in terms of the logic of equivalence. In her essay *The Mexican revolutionary mystique* (2000) Burgos argued that the Mexican revolution succeeded because the uprising divided the political space into the hierarchical binary opposition **oppressor**/oppressed in which various social identities were linked under the banner of oppressed by the logic of equivalence. The effect of this discourse was a dislocation of the existing political imaginary which enabled new forms of political expression. Disappointingly Burgos does not engage with existing literature on revolution, her emphasis on the diversity of the equivalent identities is offered as a response to the Marxist theory of a unified revolutionary agent, the working class. I think even in the year 2000 this argument was blasé at best. I struggle to think of any contemporary advocates of Marxist theories of revolution.

Regardless, Burgos essay is remarkable because she anticipated important elements of Laclau's thesis on populism and linked them to revolution. Moreover the binary division of political terrain suggests the inaccuracy of characterising a revolution as an organic crisis. In its stead I retain Tilly's concept split sovereignty. The direct import of a concept from positivist social science is entirely justified. This is exactly what Norval and Howarth do when they import Gramsci's idea organic crisis. This is the recognition of the conditions of our own discursivity[4].

So what do we have? My poststructuralist model is as follows. The revolution is a situation of split sovereignty between the *ancien régime* and 'the people'. It has seven conditions of possibility. It is a

[4] One further justification for my appropriation of split sovereignty occurs to me. Foucault, before his death was developing a theory of politics as war. He inverted Von Clausewitz' famous maxim so that it read "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (Foucault, 1972: 114). This idea is central to Laclau's discourse theory (Norval, 2000: 313). At first appearance it is a complicated theory to grasp. For Von Clausewitz the goal of politics was consolidation or expansion of the state, it is not intuitive that this is a continuation of war. I think Foucault was being more elementary than this, although this is only my interpretation. I think Foucault's point is that politics is structured as a conflict. This is obvious in the case of democratic politics which pits parties in opposition. This argument can be pushed in a number of directions. Laclau incorporates this idea by arguing that antagonism is productive in that all discursive phenomena result from struggle. For this reason I think Tilly's idea has a particular resonance with Laclau and there is a natural theoretical affinity; we already have the tools in discourse theory to analyse binary conflict. Moreover, this aside is offered as further support for my position regarding the separation, or lack thereof, of revolution and civil war.

process rather than an outcome. I define revolution as the process by which the demand for regime change comes to symbolise the people. This is the logic of revolt in a nutshell.

As for resistance, there is little reason to denigrate its status conceptually. The multiplicity of social processes which appear when viewing the revolution in terms of its conditions of possibility are too exhaustive to capture any of the examples of resistance I have cited above. Each social process could be considered an act of resistance; it is the accumulation of these which enables the analyst to separate the concept of revolt. Taking resistance as my point of departure in addition to linking my conception of revolution to populism has given my conceptualisation a ‘bottom-up’ approach which is focused on the uprising rather than institutions.

III

The Demands

In the last chapter I introduced my concept ‘conditions of possibility’, borrowed from the jargon employed by Foucault, and defended its use against social scientists seeking causes. The present chapter analyses the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the revolution in Egypt. I will look to the defection of elites and intellectuals as well as to the economic crisis. My aim for this chapter is to show that these conditions comprise a multiplicity of unique demands. I place particular emphasis on the presence of what Laclau calls ‘heterogeneous elements’ within the populist articulation. In Tahrir, the Muslim Brotherhood performed this role.

We Are All Khaleed Said

Already in the emerging academic literature it is becoming fashionable to trace the ‘spark’ that lit the metaphorical flame of Egyptian revolution to a very tangible fire in neighbouring Tunisia. The events of the Arab Spring all have a common source in the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi (Norval, 2011; Beaumont, 2011; Goldstone 2011[a], [b]). Bouazizi, a Tunisian fruit seller died shortly after setting himself alight in protest. His protest anticipated the wider protests that toppled the Tunisian dictator Ben Ali.

The revolutionary significance of the act strikes me now in Budapest. If we argue with McAdam et al (2000), or as Tarrow (2011) did last year at the CEU, that revolutionaries always look to earlier uprisings for symbols there is an obvious parallel from European history; that of Jan Palach in Prague 1968. Attempts to appropriate the symbol of the Tunisian uprising for the Egyptian uprising were the first thing I noticed in my research. Some were extreme attempts such as copy-cat fires (Egyptian

Gazette [B]), others less extreme such as the slogan chanted by protesters "The Tunisian solution is the best" (Egyptian Gazette [E]).

I am not the first discourse theorist to have picked up on the importance of Bouazizi for Egypt. Norval (2011) argued recently that the earliest indications of the revolutionary articulation involved Egyptian appropriation of the symbol of the Tunisian uprising. Writing about a Facebook campaign established and maintained by Google executive Wael Ghonim, 'We Are All Khaleed Said', Norval argues that two deaths were symbolised in the early revolutionary discourse; that of Bouazizi and the Egyptian Khaleed Said.

Khaleed Said, a medical student from Alexandria, was in late 2010 brutalised and murdered by local police. Photographs of his disfigured face following the attack were circulated online. Ghonim created the Facebook campaign to promote awareness of the tragedy and to foster protest. The primary demand of 'We Are All Khaleed Said' was an end to police brutality (Al-Ahram [A]; Lim, 2012: 241). The campaign fostered protest in exactly the same way as Bouazizi had. It is in this sense that we can detect the appropriation of Bouazizi for the revolutionary discourse – Bouazizi was also Khaleed Said. By transforming the death of Said into Egypt's 'Bouazizi moment' it became possible to contemplate that demands could be directed at the regime in the same way as they had in Tunisia (Norval, 2011: 222, 223). As in any authoritarian regime, the Egyptian imaginary precluded the possibility of dissent. So when Bouazizi's protest forced its way into Egyptian political discourse this triggered a dislocation enabling new forms of expression[5].

[5] The dislocation was of a revolutionary magnitude in that it shook not only the ideology of Mubarak but a political imaginary sedimented from the 1952 revolution (Norval, 2011: 222). Egypt has seen three political successions since the revolution of 1952. Nasser gave way to Sadat who in turn handed the reins of power to Mubarak. The first transition marked the movement away from a socialist planned-economy towards a liberal market system which was deepened by Mubarak (Hopwood, 1982: 185,186). Each leader has maintained police rule and the notorious 'emergency law' establishing it since 1967 (Rutherford, 2008: 1). Political discourse has been that of despotism and the cult of personality, an Egyptian Pharaohism.

In societies such as this, of one party systems and fraudulent elections, those who are excluded from the field of the political are

We can say therefore Bouazizi's death was *sine qua non* for the emergence of the revolutionary situation. This point is not only supported by discourse theory but also by sociological and historical accounts. Skocpol's thesis discussed previously that revolutions are enabled by a number of domestic factors which are in the last instance triggered by contingent or international factors would permit us to classify Bouazizi's protest as an international trigger. The primacy of the international context seems even further supported in a historical context. Adamson & Rapport (2012) have argued recently that the events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Morocco and so forth seem to lend credence to a point students of revolution have suspected for a while; that revolutions contain a contagion effect. The discussion of Said and Bouazizi suggests my next line of inquiry, the role of Ghonim and the wider defection of the intellectuals.

The Defection of the Elites and the Intellectuals

Egypt in 2011 had among the lowest political rights and civil liberties ratings in the world (Freedom House 2011). The regime was widely perceived to be fully corrupt (Transparency International 2010). These sad facts reflect the demands intellectuals and elites brought to the square. Consider first Wael Ghonim, the founder of the 'We are all Khaleed Said' website just discussed. The website was founded anonymously and Ghonim was largely unknown to the Egyptian population. Its primary demand was an end to police brutality (Al-Ahram [E]). His campaign along with other online movements, in particular the #jan25th movement on Twitter and April 6 movement (Egyptian Gazette [A]), was implicated in the organisation of what is now recognised as the first day of protest in the revolution. On the 14th of January 2011 he sent out an invitation via Facebook to all of the group's 300,000 members

precisely those who are symbolised through the revolution – the people. Political repression and economic hardship are the main continuities of Egyptian lives. This situation is not puzzling or novel to political science. It is the textbook definition of authoritarianism (Linz, 2000: 58-61). This is the discursive order dislocated by the Said/Bouazizi moment. It would take a fully historical discourse analysis to state with confidence whether this order satisfies Laclau & Mouffe's criteria for myth or imaginary (see table 1), I classify it as the latter as under the emergency law political expression in general was outlawed. Any opposition therefore would count as clandestine resistance rather than open contestation suggesting that the historical myth was sedimented.

to protest in Tahrir square on the 25th (Al-Ahram [F]). Ghonim attended the protests personally (BBC, February 9th 2011). On the 27th of January he was taken into custody and detained by the Mubarak regime. This was their first mistake – kidnapping an executive of Google, one of the world's largest and most powerful corporations. The second mistake was to admit it. On the 5th of January a minor opposition figure, Mostafa Al-Nagar, made the claim that Ghonim was both the man behind 'We are all Khaleed Said' and in custody. This triggered international pressure in particular from Google and from Amnesty International for Ghonim's release (Amnesty International, 2011). The third and fatal mistake came on February the 7th when they did release him after eleven days of detention (Al-Ahram [E]; New York Times, 2011, February 8). That night Ghonim appeared on Egyptian television and demanded not just an end to police brutality – a demand we can assume would be dearer to him at this point, but also regime change. On his release he stated;

> "We will not abandon our demand and that is the departure of the regime." (USA Today, 2011)

Something happened between the dates of January 27th and February 7th to trigger this change which I will address in the following chapter. For now we must be content with a number of other aspects of this story.

Ghonim's story provides examples of numerous factors I have called the conditions of possibility. We have in this a first example of the alignment of an intellectual with the revolution. I will provide further examples momentarily. Through the detention and release of Ghonim we have mass publication and polarisation of the protest, another of my conditions. Ghonim went from being unknown in Egypt apart from online (only 30% of Egyptians had access to the internet in 2011, a further 64% of that number were concentrated in Cairo (Lim, 2012: 235) to being on prime time television, the number one source of media for the bulk of the Egyptian populace.

Ghonim was far from the only influential critic of the regime. Often those who air their grievances the loudest are those at the top of the social hierarchy. McAdam's theory of biographical availability provides a parsimonious explanation of this. There are a number of simple barriers to participation in collective action which restrict the access of the majority of any society. These include free time, child caring duties, income and so forth (McAdam, 1986: 70). It is simply much easier for the elites to attend protests than it is for most people. The notable faces to gather in Tahrir square on the 25th included former presidential candidate Mohammed ElBaradei and Nobel Peace Prize winner Ayman Nur (Al-Ahram [B]). We must count presidential candidates and Nobel Peace Prize winners among the ranks of the elite. The demands these individuals went on record with included such complaints as reconsideration of earlier constitutional reforms and the release of all political prisoners. Particularly the freedom of Michael Nabil, a well known blogger under detention was often demanded (Goytisolo, 2011: 383). As with Ghonim, ElBaradei's demands were transformed into the call for regime change. This change of tactic came on the 4th of February (Egyptian Gazette, [F]).

We also know that intellectuals from the arts were among the few demanding regime change from the offset. On the 25th a statement carrying the signatures of 100 writers and artists was released called "Resolution to this Crisis and the Immediate Departure of President Mubarak" (Al-Ahram [C]). Film director and activist Amr Salama was among those drawn to the square by the Said campaign. He noted in an interview with Al-Ahram that his primary demand was an end to police brutality but in addition to this he added

> "Hot topics such as corruption, sexual harassment and abuse, gender issues and above all fear of the powerful and the oppressor in whatever guise. These are some of the concerns and challenges which motivated us to take to the streets..." (Quoted in Al-Ahram Weekly[A])

We have a proliferation of demands emanating from two important sections of the Egyptian population, the elite and the intellectuals, which are ultimately frustrated. They refused to disappear and lingered

instead in the square: they became popular demands.

The Economic Crisis

In 2011 the Egyptian economy was not in great shape. We need to bear in mind that the backdrop to the Tahrir revolt was global economic downturn. Large sections of the population were no strangers to hardship. More than a quarter of the Egyptian youth were unemployed (World Bank 2010) and consumer price inflation sat well over 10% (International Monetary Fund 2010). The 'crisis' in the Egyptian economy, however, was not one of stagnation or recession. The economy had been growing at an average of 4.5% p.a. since 2007 (Mishrif, 2012: 4). The real crisis was of distribution, the demands of the poorest in Egypt were intimately tied up with the anti-corruption demands of the intellectuals and elites (Egyptian Gazette [C]; [D]). There was in 2011 plenty of money in Egypt. It was concentrated disproportionately in the hands of the regime and big business, an alliance English economists, perhaps hypocritically, have been calling 'unholy' (Mishrif, 2012: 1; Malik and Awadallah, 2011: 5).

The anthropologist Juan Goytisolo who recorded the earliest days of the revolution noted that on the 25th the population of Tahrir Square was composed of an eclectic mix of unemployed graduates (and postgraduates) from the affluent districts of Cairo whose primary demand was for employment and also some very hungry people from the poorest barrios of the city. This last group, Goytisolo informs us, live without drains, water or electricity, let alone employment (Goytisolo, 2011: 382). Tahrir was host to workers organised into ad-hoc unions as the state controlled trade unions refused to support the uprising (Guardian, Feb 10, 2011). Public transport workers and iron and steel workers contributed to the population of the square. Their representatives issued two demands: a liveable wage and democracy (Guardian, Feb 9, 2011).

This was not a revolution of the workers, the peasants, the bourgeoisie or anybody else; it was a truly

social revolution in Skocpol's sense. Goldstone (2011b: 459) has argued that this is a necessary precondition for the success of the revolution and moreover it supports my recourse to Laclau's theory of populism. It would seem already before any meaningful equivalences had been established that the gathering in the square had a populist flavour. We are well on our way to a thick description of the people. The next aspect of the people's identity to be accounted for is its heterogeneity.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood has gained significant media attention in the west since the Arab Spring began. This is due to the unfortunate fear that given democratic rights Arab people may choose to establish states based on Koranic law. The Muslim Brotherhood is the largest organisation, with branches across the Arab world and in Europe, to explicitly aim at this ideal (Ehrenfeld, 2011:70). The brethren were represented within Tahrir square although they were at all times an uneasy presence. An explanation of the unease which surrounded their presence in the square requires a brief venture into their history.

Three aspects of brotherhood activities demand attention. The first is their philanthropy. Charity has most likely been the association's saving grace. Throughout their history the brethren have provided extensive social welfare services across Egypt so efficiently that they have remedied the short comings of, and in some cases entirely replaced, the state's welfare provision (Harris, 1964: 177). The second is their record of terrorism. The brotherhood has been actively involved in terror at least since the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 when it acquired arms and military training. Possibly they have been militarised longer. In 1945 a member of the brotherhood rank and file was convicted for the assassination of the then Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir Pasha (Rinehart, 2009: 962). They have at various times attempted to incite civil war and repeatedly attempted to assassinate Nasser (Rinehart, 2009: 964).

A third aspect of the brotherhood's history emerged during their underground years. This was the indication that the organisation was partially deliberative or anarchic evident in the repeated splintering of the group which gave birth to multiple and diverse (though short lived) opposition movements. These brotherhood offshoots have been truly diverse including secular and socialist groups (Wickham, 2011: 209-211). Until now the Brethren have been an underground organisation and consequently we just don't know who they are. Time will tell and the real test will be to see what the brotherhood does in a democratic Egypt.

This divergence into brotherhood history is necessary to explain their role in the revolution. The brethren were in the unenviable position of having the most to gain from regime change and the most to lose if the uprising failed. As they were the only known opposition group in Egypt they would have been the first victims of reprisals. For this reason the membership was forbidden from protesting in the earliest days of the revolt (Wickham, 2011: 212). By late January it was clear that the protests were peaceful. The leadership of the brotherhood seem to have thought there was a chance of success so they ordered the youth wing of the brotherhood to support the protest (Wickham, 2011: 212). They were restricted to merely supporting the existing demands in the square, which were diverse as we have seen, rather than articulating their own specific demands (Wickham, 2011: 213). I will argue in the next chapter that the events of February 2nd changed the demands of the people into the demand for regime change. The demands of the Brethren support this claim as starting on the 4th their Supreme Guide, Badie, began repeated calls for regime change (Egyptian Gazette, F; G)

Partly as a result of their silence prior to the 4th, of which some sections of the wider protest were suspicious, and partly due to the history of the organisation, the brotherhood were kept spatially separate within the square. They were welcomed into the protest but the mass of protesters failed to

accept their presence in any meaningful way and there was no interaction between the two groups. The brotherhood were undeniably a heterogeneous element in Laclau's sense, their demands failing to fully express their particularity and to be fully equated with the wider populist discourse.

At this stage we have what we can call a pre-populist movement. We have an array of demands from elites, intellectuals, students, workers. In addition we have truly heterogeneous demands within the articulation – the Muslim Brotherhood. These are destined for frustration. The Mubarak regime has no mechanism for facilitating dissent so the demands cannot be satisfied. As these demands cannot be satisfied they become popular demands and serve as floating signifiers; their presence is a threat to the status quo. The protest fits the description of a *plebs* which claims to be a *populus*. The claim constitutes split sovereignty; through the production of the empty signifier 'the people' it divides the political terrain. The protest is literally a *claimant* to sovereignty, a pretender. This claim only becomes credible when enough demands are connected by logics of equivalence. The protest does not yet reflect the logic of figure 1; the demands are dispersed horizontally at the bottom of society and directed vertically to the top but there is no uniting logic. The next chapter demonstrates the logic of the articulation.

IV

The Battle of the Camel

As I noted in the previous chapter, something occurred during the course of the protest which transformed the multiplicity of demands into the call for regime change. In fact, this is a simplification. In the populist formation demands become linked by logics of equivalence but each retains its particularity. So what we have in the square is not a simple transformation but an amplification of the demands. The extension of equivalences is what produces the empty signifier 'the people' so their identification is key to thick description. I argue this occurred on the 2nd of February. On that day forces allied with the regime (although not openly linked) attacked the protestors. This attack has become known as 'the battle of the camel'. I argue that this resort to violence explains the proliferation of logics of equivalence.

My goal in this chapter is to demonstrate this proliferation of logics of equivalence. There are two ways to do this. (1) Based on extensive empirical research we could make speculative claims about the logic of the articulation. As I have stressed at each point of my thesis, the empirical value of my research is limited due to many constraints. We need to think here about what 'logic of equivalence' means in this scenario. I have argued at length already that in the course of uprising, protestors come to realise that their particular demands share something in common. This is the logic of equivalence. In the previous chapter I demonstrated the heterogeneity of demands which eventually coalesced around the demand for regime change. This is the logic of equivalence. So I have already given some limited examples which suggest this proliferation. In fact, I would argue that it is limited to only demonstrate the proliferation empirically. This is because the logic of equivalence is itself theoretical. When we present empirical evidence in this case it is a speculation that the logic of equivalence captures this evidence.

This leads me to the second possible way to demonstrate their proliferation. (2) We can make *informed* speculation which is itself theory-driven. As our object of analysis, logic of equivalence, is theoretical our explanation of it must be theoretical. Laclau cannot fully explain the proliferation to us as it is entirely context-bound, he never wrote about Tahrir. He has a theory of the structure of discourse, it is my job as the analyst to match it to the context. In Tahrir this proliferation can be usefully explained by Kalyvas' (2006) theory of indiscriminate violence[6].

There are two moments in the Tahrir story which could possibly explain the crystallisation of the populist articulation. Jennifer Ann Bremer (2011) has penned a series of papers trying to explain collective action in Egypt. She traces the moment of collective action to the disappearance of the police on January the 28th. While her work is important and helpful I argue against her that it is the later events of February 2nd which accurately explain collective action. I begin by outlining Kalyvas' theory before going on to present the events of January 28th and February 2nd. I conclude by explaining these events within the frameworks of Kalyvas' theory and Laclau's (2005) theory of populism.

The Logic of Violence

Kalyvas' thesis is that violence is not irrational but follows a certain logic. His scope is restricted to situations of split sovereignty, as in Tahrir. The ultimate aim of violence under split sovereignty is control of territory (Kalyvas, 2006: 28). Control of territory is understood to be a function of control of people. This is because the control is uni-dimensional; to control territory does not imply any control over people while control over people does result in a control over their territory (Kalyvas, 2006: 203).

Political actors in a situation of split sovereignty have two available forms of violence; selective and

[6] I earlier stressed post-structuralist opposition to prediction based on assumption. How hypocritical to now turn to Kalyvas, a well known rational choice theorist, I can hear my readers say. (1) I do not make any predictions here but explain history theoretically. (2) The order of preferences we encounter in Kalyvas' theory hardly constitutes an assumption about rationality. It is more than reasonable to accept that somebody in a life or death situation will prefer to continue living unless they are a martyr.

indiscriminate. Selective violence is preferable as it is more effective and offers a greater guarantee of control. Selective violence, however, is impossibly expensive. The cost of selective violence is information (Kalyvas, 2006: 146,147). The information problem has numerous dimensions. The principle problem is that of perceptions. For selective violence to occur civilians must perceive the act as based on perfect information, the victim must be the known perpetrator of a crime and the resort to violence justified. If civilians suspect that the violent actor did not possess full information prior to the act they will react as though the violence had been indiscriminate. There are further, lesser problems of political actors acquiring information and of researchers attempting to demonstrate the possession of information (that is equivalent to the issue of demonstrating motivations) (Kalyvas, 2006: 174-176).

Indiscriminate violence is less expensive but less successful. For the reasons just enumerated basically all violence is indiscriminate at any level of analysis. Indiscriminate violence can act as a deterrent or a display of strength. It generates resentment and perverse incentives. This is because the [perceived] lack of information signals an inability to protect. Moreover it perpetuates the information problem as the victims of violence are all potential collaborators and informants. On top of this it will likely perpetuate the perception of an information problem as innocent civilians are liable to be victims (Kalyvas, 2006: 151-153).

Within this theory we have two levels of rationality to account for. First we have the position of claimants to sovereignty, in our case the *ancien régime* and the uprising. If it appears rational for either to resort to violence the endeavour will necessarily collapse into indiscriminate violence. As we will see the regime chose this route on two occasions. As Tilly has argued, an *ancien régime* facing the revolutionary masses has either the option of reform or repression with successful repression being the quickest and most effective route to assuring the interests of the regime (Tilly, 2003: 170-176). In the

situation of indiscriminate violence, which for the uprising and the population *en masse* is a life or death situation, rational actors will have a preference for survival. Any other preference order will be that of a martyr. So when the *ancien régime* signals the inability to protect through indiscriminate violence rational actors will affiliate with the uprising.

The Disappearance of the Police

The first occasion we can consider a signal of inability to protect is the disappearance of the police on the 28th of January. The city of Cairo awoke on this morning to reports that all of the police had abandoned the city and inmates had escaped from prisons. There were reports and rumours on the day of escaped convicts looting and generally misbehaving (BBC, January 29th 2011; Reuters, January 29th 2011). Eventually the military were to fill the vacuum created by the absence of the police. Before they did local communities took over security functions (Al-Ahram D). Bremer's (2011) research has documented the spontaneous formation of local community organisations across Cairo to fulfil policing duties such as protecting local businesses. She argues on this basis that the mysterious defection of the police was the spur encouraging residents of Cairo to act in unison.

The Battle of the Camel

Another occasion which could signal the failure of the regime to protect its citizens is the event now known as the battle of the camel. The battle came hot on the heels of an emotional speech from Mubarak the previous evening. He claimed he knew no other homeland and offered to resign in September on condition that he was allowed to live out the remainder of his life and eventually be buried in Egypt (Guardian February 2nd 2011b). This speech possibly did move many people in Tahrir and may even have quelled some revolutionary fervour. The next morning, however, armed thugs riding atop camels entered the square and attacked the protesters. The attack was brutal, over 600 people were injured before the protesters managed without the help of (the missing) police or military

to barricade the square. The result of the attacks was a renewed claim of solidarity amongst the protesters and a swelling of the ranks (Guardian February 2nd 2011a; Reuters, February 2nd 2011). After this point the concentration of protesters in the square grew steadily and the demands for regime change were reiterated until Mubarak's eventual resignation on the 11th of February.

Explanations

To begin with, Bremer's explanation that collective action was a spontaneous response to the disappearance of the police should be suspect to anybody even vaguely familiar with revolutionary history. This is a common feature of many revolutions. On the first day of violence in the French revolution, the 12th of July 1789, two days before the fall of the Bastille the police disappeared. Violence was small scale, contained and unarmed and still the police defected. Some joined the crowds as their interests were aligned, others abandoned Paris fearful they would be recognised and associated with the *ancien régime* (Lefebvre, 1947: 110,111). We have already noted how workers in the Vyborg district of Petrograd, of their own accord, expelled the police in revolutionary Russia. Police disappear in revolutions, there is little mystery about it.

In a more profound sense than this I disagree with Bremer's explanation. Bremer's argument can be reformulated as; self-defence is the cause of collective action. It is a basic principle of revolution studies that revolt requires something more extraordinary. When Gurr asked "Why do men rebel?" Bremer's answer was among the first to be ruled out. People all over the world are oppressed and defenceless every day but they do not revolt (Gurr, 1970: 1). My argument is not that Bremer does not rely on the language of Laclau or Kalyvas but that she misses the point entirely. There is nothing about the events of January 28th that suggests the regime revealed itself as the obvious obstacle to the demands of the people. For these reasons I dismiss Bremer's explanation of collective action and seek my own.

My argument is as follows. What happens when women and men revolt is their various demands coalesce into the demand for regime change. This is the logic of equivalence. In Tahrir this happened on the 2nd of February during the battle of the camel. We have an aggregation and transmission of preferences or demands. Tilly and his collaborators would call this a dynamic social process. Laclau allows us to see that process is the logic of equivalence, the realisation that heterogeneous demands can only be satisfied by regime change. In the case of Tahrir, Kalyvas allows us to see why it is that Egyptians had this realisation.

The revolution is a situation of split sovereignty in which the two claimants are the *ancien régime* and the uprising. When thugs attacked protesters it does not matter whether or not they are in the employ of the regime. On dichotomous terrain it can only be perceived as the failure of the regime to protect civilians. Non-martyrs affiliate with the other, which is what happened. The protesters multiplied in numbers in a way that no number of Facebook campaigns or tweets could have achieved (Egyptian Gazette [H]; [I]). What it took was an obvious show of either malice or incompetence from the regime to force those who sought survival to take to the square. Egyptians realised that Mubarak had to go because they are not martyrs.

This explanation relies on the accuracy of the concept split sovereignty. It is on this basis that we can argue that people will affiliate with the uprising as the regime offers no protection. Normally dictatorships are not in the business of protecting their citizens. The terrain is such under split sovereignty that citizens will have at least one possible source of protection, if they do not take advantage of it they are martyrs. This is not to say that this explains at all the protesters motivations. Many people probably did join for other reasons. It explains, however, the logic of equivalence.

The demands, or claims, become linked by the logic of equivalence when the regime, through violence, reveals itself as the main obstacle to demand satisfaction. From this perspective we can discern the detail of that 'dynamic social process' that would not appear without Laclau's tools. Protesters realise their demands can only be satisfied through regime change so that one demand (regime change) 'stands for all'. This final point appears to the analyst as the emergence of the empty signifier 'the people' onto the discursive terrain. The articulation here fully reflects figure 1. The demands are dispersed horizontally among those at the bottom of society, connected by logics of equivalence and directed vertically to those at the top. This is the conclusion to be drawn from analysis of February the 2nd. At the level of discourse, demands aggregate and transmit *logically*.

V

The Crisis of the Ancien Régime

The contents of this chapter could very well be filed under ‘tying up loose-ends’. My argument in this chapter is straightforward, perhaps obvious, but necessary to accurately answer my research question. I argue here that the logic of revolt is irresistible and all implicated political actors attempted, successfully or otherwise, to claim their place within the populist formation. As the thesis traces of the process of the revolution I deal here with the regime’s final curtain, their crisis. There are two key actors in this part of the story; Mr Mubarak and the military.

By demonstrating the limits of signification, who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’, we can see the effects of discourse. We know from Derrida the identity of any signifier, the people included, is always differential; it is constituted by its Other. This is obvious; there is no revolution without the *ancien régime*. However, by demonstrating that the regime was the people’s Other we can be sure of split sovereignty and of the people. Discussion of the relations between the regime, the military and the people, which are perhaps not ground breaking social scientific debates, are necessary to complete my argument.

Mubarak as ‘Other’

In chapter three we saw that dislocation enabled new forms of expression. In the context of this imaginary which grew from myths surrounding the 1952 revolution it is clear that these were, in fact, expression as such. Even in Egypt’s recent history there have been anti-system protests. The date January 25th in recent years became synonymous in Egyptian discourse with protest so frequently were demonstrations held on this date. These protests, however, either met repression or were flatly ignored

(Lim, 2012: 235-241).

The difference in 2011 is that on dislocated terrain the regime was forced to respond. The demands directed their way remained present as floating signifiers so contained the possibility of scuppering their hegemonic project. These demands could not fall on deaf ears. The regime had to find a way of appropriating them which would neutralise the threat.

Mubarak only had one possible course of action which was to articulate the demands as reforms within his discourse. On three separate occasions he addressed the nation, itself a significant act on two levels. First, this is an implicit acknowledgement of the claim of *plebs* to *populus*. Moreover, his reaction, previously unknown in Egyptian politics is the first indicator of a crisis. By the very fact of negotiation alone we can see that the demands functioned as floating signifiers and that at the level of discourse Mubarak was on the defensive.

Mubarak began his speech on the first of February by acknowledging the right of Egyptians to protest, in reality a right denied to them by the emergency law (Rutherford, 2008: 1).

> "The country is passing through difficult times and tough experiences which began with noble youths and citizens who practise their rights to peaceful demonstrations and protests, expressing their concerns and aspirations..." (Guardian, February 2nd 2011)

This legitimation paved the way for the attempt to appropriate the demands. He continues to announce the first reform he was to offer the crowd. Importantly it is presented as the enactment of demands:

> "Dear brothers and citizens, I took the initiative of forming a new government with new priorities and duties that respond to the demand of our youth and their mission." (Guardian, February 2nd 2011b)

This speech was given a day before the moment of collective action discussed in the previous chapter. That means it pre-empted the emergence of the signifier 'the people'. Despite this Mubarak seems to have perceived the threat;

> "I direct my speech today directly to the people, its Muslims and Christians, old and young, peasants and workers, and all Egyptian men and women in the countryside and city over the whole country." (Guardian, February 2nd 2011b)

I interpret this as the result of dislocation. The populist articulation was not at this point complete but the threat posed by the presence of floating signifiers, demands, was so serious that Mubarak could perceive it and frame his response in the language of populism. Mubarak gave one public address in the aftermath of the battle of the camel, the moment when the signifier 'the people' crystallised. With the signifier 'the people' up for grabs Mubarak made every attempt to position himself within the populist articulation.

> "First and foremost, I am telling you that the blood of your martyrs and injured will not go in vain. I assure you that I will not relent in harshly punishing those responsible. I will hold those who persecuted our youth accountable with the maximum deterrent sentences. I tell the families of those innocent victims that I suffered plenty for them, as much as they did. My heart was in pain because of what happened to them, as much as it pained their hearts." (BBC February 10th 2011)

> "All Egyptians are in one trench now, and it is on us to continue the national dialogue which we have started, with a team spirit, not one of division, and far from disagreement and infighting so that we can get Egypt past its current crisis, and to restore trust in our economy, and tranquillity and peace to our citizens, and return the Egyptian street to its normal everyday life." (BBC February 10th 2011)

The logic of revolt is irresistible. Mubarak is attempting an articulation between himself and the people which would, if successful, neutralise the threat posed to his discourse. He positions himself with the protest claiming to be as much a victim of the violence. If we think about this it is ludicrous. After February 2nd the signifier 'the people' was synonymous with regime change! Laclau argues in the first chapter of *Emancipation(s)* with regard to his own discourse that political discourses do not need to be coherent they only need to be accepted (Laclau, 1996: 2). Mubarak's discourse did not become accepted, he is now the stuff of history. On the basis of this failure to associate with the people, in addition to my argument in the previous chapter about the logic of equivalence, we can identify Mubarak as the people's Other, an important addition to our thick description of their identity and a strong indication that we have split sovereignty in Cairo.

The Military

The crisis came to a head when the demands of the military ostensibly became that of regime change. Until the final hour the military had remained neutral in events consenting to no more than maintaining peace on the streets. The task of deciphering the events of that final hour is unfortunately hopelessly speculative. For all we know Mubarak's decision to resign may well have been entirely his own.

We know for certain that on February 11th Mubarak handed power to the armed forces. This inaugurated the government of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). On the 11th the SCAF declared it would guarantee a peaceful transfer to democracy, to hand power to civilian government within six months and to lift the emergency law (Hashim, 2011: 116,117).

There is a consensus in the literature that the military's decision not to oppose the revolution caused the regime to crumble. Hashim argues the military's reluctance to save the regime was the prime factor in the collapse of the regime (Hashim, 2011: 116). Nepstadt draws the same conclusion even hypothesising that without military support no non-violent revolution can succeed (Nepstadt, 2011: 488). Goldstone's analysis concludes that the decisive factor was a cross-class coalition in protest but that the coalition would have been ineffective without the inclusion of the military (Goldstone, 2011b: 459).

I maintain that it is an error to make the military responsible for the revolution. This is because if we count the demands of the military along with the broader populist/revolutionary demands what we would realise is that the military becomes located within the populist formation; it becomes the people. The movement from *plebs* to *populus* is important here as we realise that in collective action the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It would be in error to argue that the military were more effective than the uprising because (1) they *are* the uprising and (2) the military would be as ineffective without

the people as the people would be without the military. I cannot say whether the military ‘caused’ regime change. I can say that if they did it is because they were with the people.

Conclusion

> "One does not dictate to those who risk their lives facing a power. Is one right to revolt, or not? Let us leave the question open. People do revolt; that is a fact. And that is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it." (Foucault, 1994: 452)

I began this study by asking how demands in Tahrir came to have an effect. The answer is that demands became linked by the logic of equivalence when the regime revealed itself as the obstacle to demand satisfaction. I argued that the processes internal to uprising are inherently logical, centred on the discursive creation of a symbolic 'people'. The first two chapters of my thesis articulated the lessons of the most important studies of revolt with discourse theory. In the third chapter I began to really answer this question by turning to the case of Tahrir. I demonstrated that demands emanated from various sectors including but not restricted to the elites, intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, students, the working classes and religious organisations. In the fourth chapter I added a further layer of theory to my explanation in order to demonstrate the logic of revolt. Demands become linked by a logic of equivalence when protesters realise they all need regime change. At this point the demands became constitutive of the people. In the fifth chapter I concluded my analysis by delineating the limits of signification. I accept the military may have been a constituent element in the identity of the people but that Mubarak, despite his efforts, was the people's Other.

In addition to the 'how' question I asked there is a 'what' question and a 'why' question lurking in the background. I have an answer to the 'what' but not to the 'why'. The 'what' question is; what is the effect of demands? This question was excluded because the evidence for my answer is so scattered throughout my analysis that I cannot answer it directly, it can only come now as an afterthought. The effect of demands is the revolution. I have shown that the revolution has seven conditions of possibility. These are constituted by demands. The best example is the most contentious one; the economic

demands. That there was an economic crisis in Egypt is only because there were popular demands. The situation had been dire for some time, it only reached 'crisis point' when people realised the regime had to go (the logic of equivalence). Moreover, the revolution is a situation of split sovereignty. This is also constituted by demands. We have seen that the empty signifier 'the people' is constituted by demands which are linked by a logic of equivalence. We have also seen that the people are as much constituted by their Other and it is by virtue of the demands that Mubarak became the people's Other. The identities of both claimants to sovereignty are the product of discourse. The revolution is therefore the effect of demands.

This claim sounds banal but it is exactly the desire to exclude demands that motivated the structuralist theories of revolt from Huntington to Skocpol. Their work was motivated by the desire to remove 'voluntarism' and consequently they excluded the words and actions of people from their analysis. This thesis has in a roundabout way shown that the revolution, in Egypt, is nothing but demands. I am in agreement with the structuralists that revolution is not voluntarist. Revolutions are not conspiracies, they 'emerge', they are not 'made'. My argument is that the revolutionary/populist discourse is only composed of demands. Any discourse is quite outside of the ability of any vanguard or guerrilla cell to manipulate, that would be science fiction.

The 'why' question is; why did the revolt succeed? I have no answer to this. It may be that we cannot know this in the case of Egypt until more information comes to light. It may be that we can explain the collapse of regimes at the level of discourse through comparative analysis. The Arab Spring provides us with the necessary cases and control cases for such a study. Perhaps a comparison (if it is possible to 'compare discourses') of Tunisia and Egypt with Libya (and possibly Syria) could tell us what happens on revolutionary discursive terrain to ensure the revolution succeeds. This will need to be left to future

research.

The final aspect of this study I would like to draw attention to is that from which I started, my focus on the demands. At bottom this is what distinguishes my analysis from institution centric studies such as Skocpol's. By asserting the importance of the words and actions of political actors my study teaches us to reflect upon what the revolution is and what it was for. There is a tendency in the west to view the events of the Arab Spring through the lens of the liberal, even from within the left. That is to view it as the movement for regime change, to topple the dictator. This study has shown that regime change was categorically a secondary demand, a means to an end, and that end cannot be described succinctly. It requires a thick description. I imagine that each reader will elevate his or her own preferred demand as representative of the revolution. The revolt strikes me as a forceful reminder of class in politics although one demand that is conspicuous by its absence from my analysis is the demand for gender equality. Its absence may be an error on my part, as I am sure the people's identity probably did reflect gender struggles, more likely I think this is a comment on the media I took for data. In future studies I will learn from this and will pay attention to gender in revolt.

Whichever issue is primary is a matter of debate, but one which is important for people in Egypt. Revolutionary states face many real and pressing dangers in the aftermath of regime change; surely Terror is paramount, perhaps second only to civil war or counter-revolution. This debate must contribute to the aversion of these dangers. This debate is what is lost when we view revolution as an outcome variable, a view that can only draw attention to regime change. My insistence on abandoning this view may have seemed pedantic or esoteric earlier but I hope that by now the gravity of this position is clear.

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