



Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation

Ashraf Khalil

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A definitive, absorbing account of the Egyptian revolution, written by a Cairo-based Egyptian-American reporter for Foreign Policy and The Times (London), who witnessed firsthand Mubarak's demise and the country's efforts to build a democracy

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In early 2011, the world's attention was riveted on Cairo, where after three decades of supremacy, Hosni Mubarak was driven from power. It was a revolution as swift as it was explosive. For eighteen days, anger, defiance, and resurgent national pride reigned in the streets---protestors of all ages struck back against police and state security, united toward the common goal of liberation.

But the revolution was more than a spontaneous uprising. It was the end result of years of mounting tension, brought on by a state that shamelessly abused its authority, rigging elections, silencing opposition, and violently attacking its citizens. When revolution bloomed in the region in January 2011, Egypt was a country whose patience had expired---with a people suddenly primed for liberation.

As a journalist based in Cairo, Ashraf Khalil was an eyewitness to the perfect storm that brought down Mubarak and his regime. Khalil was subjected to tear gas alongside protestors in Tahrir Square, barely escaped an enraged mob, and witnessed the day-to-day developments from the frontlines. From the halls of power to the back alleys of Cairo, he offers a one-of-a-kind look at a nation in the throes of an uprising.

Liberation Square is a revealing and dramatic look at the revolution that transformed the modern history of one of the world's oldest civilizations.

Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation Details

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From Reader Review Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation for online ebook

Karim Hamed says

good background on reasons for the revolution and accounting of why it failed ...

Casus•Belli says

Good book, hard to put down. The only thing is that I had a hard time visualizing the scene taking place. Not very descriptive and does much to open the imagination.

Jeffrey Franklin Barken says

This is a great overview of Mubarak's reign in Egypt, and the police state / apathetic human living conditions that ultimately made revolution necessary in 2011. The book then reports on the momentous daily battles for Tahrir Square in 2011. Despite the obviously uphill battle of achieving democracy in the Arab world, and some of the grotesque violence we've witnessed in more recent months, this book points out where Egyptians have reason to be proud of their struggle and offers a fair treatment of all the sides in the debate for democratization. Perhaps the most interesting point that the author raises occurs in the epilogue when he notes: "Then there's Israel, where the government is openly nervous about the loss of its long time 'peace partner' in Cairo. The fact that the country, which has long proclaimed itself 'the only democracy in the middle east' was so clearly unhappy with the potential emergence of a second democracy speaks volumes about just how twisted and backward the politics of the region have become."

Khalil is an astute political observer, and I liked his optimism for the creation of a pragmatic and free-thinking democratic state in Egypt, friendly to the West, and allied with Israel on more human grounds.

Manasvini says

More of journalistic style reporting of the revolution rather than a detailed historical analysis. Goes very fast, very interesting to read how different factions acted and how the protests and demonstrations played out.

Kathleen says

A very well-written first hand account of a journalist's experiences during the Egyptian revolution. Will definitely use this book when I teach social movements in the spring.

Fray Close says

Absolutely excellent. It's so readable and engaging, I couldn't put it down. For a huge story with a lot of history and tangents that could have been taken, I feel it hits the right balance between making the story accessible and informative. Love this book.

Alex says

Liberation Square reads like a collection of newspaper articles about the Egyptian Revolution stitched together into a full narrative. Which it is. The author, Ashraf Khalil, is an Egyptian-American journalist who draws on his experience reporting from Egypt.

Khalil does a good job providing context so foreign audiences can understand the events of January 25, 2011. He is aided by his hyphenated status (Egyptian-American), as in when he compares Mubarak's sudden ascension to the presidency to what it would be like in the U.S. if Dan Quayle took over the presidency, ruled for 30 bumbling years, and built statues around the country of himself. Yet Khalil also does not serve much of an improvement over Western journalists' understanding of the Arab Spring. Khalil speaks Arabic, but he was born and raised in the US, and his sources are primarily well-educated, English-speaking, or otherwise prominent (in the West) individuals like Mahmoud Salem (the blogger "Sandmonkey"). So he does not, for example, have much additional insight into the Muslim Brotherhood or Egypt's working class over the typical New York Times article.

Khalil does a good job overviewing the events in Egypt (overviewing the history of Egypt's protest movement rather than starting the story in 2010 like most sources), and he gives first hand, blow-by-blow accounts of much of the revolution. It can be very compelling.

Yet Khalil does not offer additional analysis: he offers the conventional storylines published by the press during the revolution, he can understandably only describe the rumors around high-level decisions (like the army's non-intervention) rather than settle them, and he does not provide extensive data or a deeper look at analysis like the role of social media in organizing the protests.

Publishing the book shortly after the revolution was probably a great decision business-wise and in helping a wider audience understand Egypt, yet it means the book already feels dated: the final chapters speculate on the Muslim Brotherhood's chances in upcoming elections, when readers desperately want to know how the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections in a landslide and then lost it in a coup/revolution within a year. I finished the book wishing I could have read the book Khalil would write today.

Amr says

Excellent re-telling of the Egyptian Revolution from the ground. Personal accounts of what happened in the 18 days from January 25th till Mubarak step down with background information on the country and the region.

Christina says

Subtitled “Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation”, Khalil provides his first-person insights into the 2011 Egyptian Revolution from his home base of Cairo where he serves as a journalist for an English-language paper in the country. Contrary to what was originally reported in the American news media, the revolution was more than a spontaneous uprising.

The problem was not just Hosni Mubarak but the way his reign turned Egypt into, according to Khalil, a country full of cynical people who believe nothing can change. But small events, particularly the murder of a young man who was seen as everyone’s son by the general public, helped contribute to years of mounting tension brought on by a state that shamelessly abused its authority rigging elections, silencing opposition, and violently attacking its citizens.

Introducing readers to these small events help to foster a better understanding of why the revolution occurred the way it did. Painting a bigger, clear picture of the country suddenly thrust into the spotlight in the American news media would certainly go a long way in helping readers understand the country Khalil is from and covers. In many ways, I felt like I was right there in Tahrir Square with Khalil as he interviewed the participants, as he was mobbed by pro-Mubark protestors.

I can appreciate this insight and wish it had been available as events were unfolding, but I can’t help think this isn’t a definitive account. It relies so much on seeing events as participant that the background as to how Mubark came into power, how he consolidated that power and created the Interior department that terrorized the Egyptian people is fairly glossed over. I found myself reaching the final page and wishing for a more detailed historical analysis, and I guess I will have to wait a few more years for that book to be published. This one, after all, was published in the same year as the revolution.

Max says

Broad overview of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. Journalistic accounts are often disappointing, so I wasn't expecting much of this book, but I was pleasantly surprised. Yes, the author paints in broad strokes and it's mostly anecdotal, but within that framework, this is one of the better books that I've read. The anecdotes were interesting and exciting, and the description of the revolution, from a journalist's perspective, was quite useful. I enjoyed this and felt like I learned a lot.

Americanenglishexper says

great. I also suggest The Last Pharaoh: Mubarak and the Uncertain Future of Egypt in the Obama Age
<http://www.amazon.com/Last-Pharaoh-Mu...>

Elda Mengisto says

I thought this was a solid book, filled with on-the-ground information and good interviews. I especially liked

how Khalil had the first few chapters involve context, to show it wasn't totally spontaneous.

Stefanie says

Technology and social media have altered so many activities, including the making and recording of history. Where it used to take some years to generate accounts of modern historical events, each of us can now 'live' historic moments in real time through blogs, Facebook, YouTube and other social media. The recent series of social and civic revolutions across the Middle East and northern African countries are excellent exemplars. Khalil, a journalist who has written for The Times, Foreign Policy and other English language publications, provides a near-history analysis of the Egyptian Revolution. He lives in Egypt and was present throughout the Egyptian revolution. His account draws upon multiple interviews, recollections of key events and recorded events during the revolutionary period. For those of us who watched the revolution unfold on television or the Internet, this becomes a fascinating account - partly because our memories actually click in and literally see the moment Khalil describes. What the book adds, however, is the broader context and the psyche of multiple participants - he adds the depth and contextual nuance often missing from the images we watched not so long ago. At some point, there will be more detailed historical analyses, and these will provide different and significant contributions to understanding why and how the revolution unfolded. For now, however, this type of journalistic reflection and analysis is valuable and also makes for a good read.

Mohamed says

A good coverage of the Egyptian Revolution from an eyewitness especially his discussion of the reason that lead to the explosion. However some events especially before the fall of Mubarak seem rushed and not fully covered.

Matthew says

If, as is sometimes said, journalism is the first draft of history, then this book is like a revised first draft of history. Most of the material comes from Khalil's personal experience, covering Egypt before, during, and after the revolution. The revision, I feel, does the reader a great favor. My memories of watching TV and checking Twitter during the Egyptian Revolution are spotty at best, but Khalil gives a more organized sense of what was going on.
