



# Why Occupy a Square?: People, Protests and Movements in the Egyptian Revolution

*Jeroen Gunning, Ilan Zvi Baron*

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On 25 January 2011, tens of thousands of Egyptians came out on the streets to protest against emergency rule and police brutality. Eighteen days later, Mubarak, one of the longest sitting dictators in the region, had gone. How are we to make sense of these events? Was this a revolution, a revolutionary moment? How did the protests come about? How were they able to outmaneuver the police? Was this really a 'leaderless revolution,' as so many pundits claimed, or were the demonstrations an outgrowth of the protest networks that had developed over the past decade? Why did so many people with no history of activism participate? What role did economic and systemic crises play in creating the conditions for these protests to occur? Was this really a Facebook revolution?

*Why Occupy a Square?* is a dynamic exploration of the shape and timing of these extraordinary events, the players behind them, and the tactics and protest frames they developed. Drawing on social movement theory, it traces the interaction between protest cycles, regime responses and broader structural changes over the past decade. Using theories of urban politics, space and power, it reflects on the exceptional state of non-sovereign politics that developed during the occupation of Tahrir Square.

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