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'The People Want The Regime Brought Down': Popular Geopolitics and The 2011 Egyptian Revolution

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POPULAR GEOPOLITICS AND THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

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'THE PEOPLE WANT THE REGIME BROUGHT DOWN': POPULAR GEOPOLITICS AND THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

This thesis uses popular geopolitics in order to examine the eighteen days of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Popular outlets such as novels, films and cartoons have been identified by geopolitical scholars as legitimate sources through which to analyse political issues and define geopolitical identities. (ó'Tuathail & Dalby, 1998; Dodds, 2008; Sharp, 2000; Dittmer, 2007). In the case of Egypt, these sources carry particular importance, as past research indicates the power that Egyptian popular entertainment has on the formation of Egyptian national identity (Fahmy, 2011). Within the 2011 Egyptian revolution, popular culture sources largely contributed to the success of the revolution (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011; Macfarland, 2011).

This work uses examples of popular literature from the 2011 Egyptian revolution to explore not just the expressed emotions, articulated identities, agency and experience of the Egyptian population living it. The texts of Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi,* Tarek Shanin's *Al-Khan,* Nariman Youssef's diary of her experiences in the square and examples of the protesters' signs and poetry are examined through a detailed discourse analysis. The thesis begins with an introduction to how the four texts and popular cultural discourses shape and challenge the geographical imagination of Egypt prior to 2011. It shows how the texts construct the geopolitical identity of the Egyptian protester in Tahrir Square, and how the Egyptian protester also utilised the popular literature to construct their own identity. With reference to the different spaces of the revolution acknowledged in the texts, it contributes to the space and geography of the revolution. Reading these texts reveals the extent of the Egyptian protesters' grievances and their experience throughout the event. It provides a space for their voice and agency. This thesis argues the importance of focusing on popular geopolitics more regularly in analyses of major political events.

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STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: POPULAR GEOPOLITICS AND THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

This thesis examines the 2011 revolution in Egypt, which saw the Egyptian people demand the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak from power after thirty years, from a popular geopolitical perspective. Using *Taxi* (Al Khamissi, 2011), *Al-Khan* (Shanin, 2011), the diary of Nariman Youssef (2011) and an analysis of a selection of the signs and poetry laid in Tahrir Square (Khalil, 2011; TahrirDocuments, 2011), this thesis presents, via discourse analysis, a creative alternative geography of the revolution to that professed through the dominant geopolitical state scripts (Sharp, 2011). The 2011 Egyptian revolution was potentially the most important democratic movement in the history of the Arab world (Alexander, 2011), yet this is not simply an investigation of the factual and grand narrative of the event. Rather, through an analysis of the popular geopolitical sources, it presents a popular geopolitical imagination of the event, the expressed emotions, articulated identities and everyday experiences of the Egyptian population living it.

This research will examine the 2011 Egyptian revolution through popular geopolitics because the uprisings were governed by 'popular' participation. The protests started on the street, at cafe tables, within social media and popular literature circulating at the time (Macfarland, 2011). Popular geopolitics highlights how creative outlets such as novels, cartoons and films can be responsible for the spread of geopolitical narratives to the wider public (O'Tuathail & Dalby, 2008; Dodds, 2008). These texts have the power to write global spaces; to sustain or challenge the landscape of political environments through a voice and view which is articulated beyond the elite geopolitical script (Dittmer, 2005, 2007, 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Dodds 2007, 2008; Dunnett, 2009; Macfarlane & Hay, 2003; Power and Crampton, 2005; Sharp, 2000).Through such creative outlets and popular communications in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the protesters were able to forge a community and create a unity capable of overturning the Mubarak regime (Macfarland, 2011). Justification for this investigation comes from Fahmy (2011) as his similar study of the 1919 nationalist revolution in Egypt concludes that the rise of Egyptian nationalism was most significantly facilitated through Egyptian popular entertainment and culture. He argues that popular theatre, poetry, and recorded music had a far greater impact in shaping national identity for the Egyptians before the 1919 revolution than the print media or political pamphlets, mainly due to less than ten percent of Egyptians being literate at the time (Fahmy, 2011). Indeed, in the first quarter of the twentieth century:

'the institutionalisation of Egyptian popular entertainment would be the central component in defining how Egyptians perceived their identity' (Fahmy, 2011: 95).

Given the influence of the popular culture material in the 1919 revolution, it is highly likely that colloquial and popular sources hold a similar significant role in the shaping of the identity and geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Indeed, Alexander (2012) recognises that, in revolutionary environments, literary texts illustrate protesters' grievances with repression, corruption, the state and their social living conditions.

The use of such literary texts and popular geopolitical sources within this analysis provides a voice from the 2011 Egyptian revolution which can speak to and subvert the official state geographies of the event (Sharp, 1996). This line of enquiry follows the work of political and cultural geographers who have highlighted the subversive potential of literature, and how the relationship between literature and geography can help to comprehend the spatiality of social life (Brosseau, 2009; Daniels & Rycroft, 1993; Crang, 1998; Da Costa, 2003; Sharp, 1996). Academic thinking on this matter revolves primarily around a discussion of discourse, and the influence that representations provided through discourse can have on the constitution of identities, the establishment of social relations and an understanding of the landscape of a space (Campbell, 2009; Foucault, 1972). This case study will employ a discourse analysis of the popular geopolitical sources in order to establish how the discourses of popular geopolitics can claim their own public space and identity for the lay people that they represent.

Geopolitics focuses upon the representations and practices which formulate the spaces of world politics (Agnew, 1998). When examining any geographical event, it is imperative to understand that we are not encountering an objective reality of the event, but rather a representation of it (Alexander, 2012). This has vast implications on the understanding of space that results, as the influence of privilege and context in their formulation means that representations are always imbued with power and politics (Scott, 2009; O'Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). In the case of Egypt, this is especially significant, as the geopolitical narratives and represented identity of the country have, for thirty years, been governed by the authoritarian political system of Hosni Mubarak, his political allegiances with the US, and his foreign investment interests (Cook, 2011). As a result, whilst we have seen Egypt represented as a political and economic success within the Middle East, as a strategic partner of the US and heard of the domestic 'stability', there is scarce representation of the voice of the Egyptian population and their lived experience within Egypt (Cook, 2011). This project seeks to challenge this, as it explores not just how popular geopolitics can help us to represent the landscape and identity of a world space, but also how people themselves use popular sources in order to narrate their own version of the event at hand.

This research is an analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution from a popular geopolitical perspective, as garnered from the popular culture sources *Taxi* (Al Khamissi, 2011), *Al-Khan* (Shanin, 2011), Youssef's diary *Tahrir – eighteen days of grace* (Youssef, 2011) and a selection of the signs and poetry displayed within Tahrir Square (Khalil, 2011; TahrirDocuments, 2011). The research aims:

- To establish whether it is possible to use popular geopolitical sources to narrate a succinct geography of a country's revolution
- To establish the relationship between popular geopolitical discourses and the identity and voice of lay people
- To establish whether popular geopolitical discourses contribute to the ownership of a public space

Case study: the 2011 Egyptian revolution

On January 25th 2011, the Egyptian people began eighteen days of popular protest against the autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak and the National Democratic Party. For most in the international public, the revolution appeared to have simply evolved as one piece in the 'Arab Spring', the collection of popular protests erupting across countries in the Middle East from December 2010 into early 2011. (Goldstone,2011). Frustrations with rising food prices, high unemployment and closed and corrupt unresponsive political systems across the Middle East promoted the mass populations within various countries into popular protest against their ruling autocratic regimes (Goldstone, 2011). Tunisia erupted first, with the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in December 2010 providing the decisive explosion of frustrations and grievances of the Tunisian population against the abusive rule of Ben Ali (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Ben Ali was overthrown on 14th January 2011 (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Egypt was next.

Inspired by Tunisia, the death of Khaled Said in the hands of the Egyptian police, and grievances against the corrupt 2010 parliamentary elections, high unemployment, food prices and low wages, frustrated Egyptian citizens were brought onto the streets and into Tahrir Square on January 25th 2011 (El-Ghobashy, 2011). On this, the National Police Day in Egypt, designated to celebrate the workings of the state police, the call was taken by Egyptian and lower middle class youths to march in a political demonstration to confront the Mubarak regime and its state institutions which had long been associated with corruption, uneven resource distribution, violence and the abuse of power (Goldstone, 2011). Between January 26th-28th 2011, Tahrir Square quickly became the focal point of the protests. As more and more Egyptians took to the streets, the government responded by shutting off all internet services in an attempt to prevent communications between the protests. However, this appeared to have the opposite effect, with more protesters taking to the street as a result. On Friday 28th January 2011,

the military were drafted into take over control from the security services (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2011). For the protesters, this was a significant and progressive step as many held much more respect for the military than the police in Egypt (El Ghobashy, 2011).

Mubarak still remained in power on February 1st 2011. His brief appearances on television had seen him dismiss his government, appoint a new vice-president and name a new cabinet (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2011). The Egyptian protesters grew increasingly frustrated with his actions, and now up to a million people stood in Tahrir Square, defying the military imposed curfews to stay overnight (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2011). On February 2nd 2011, these protesters were met with violence from the pro-government supporters, who attacked them with stones, swords and whips on horses and camels (Huffington Post, 2011). This was just one of the acts of violence imposed upon the protesters whilst in Tahrir Square: by the end of the eighteen days, over three hundred people had lost their lives (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2011).

Protesters remained within Tahrir Square and others squares across Egypt for the first week of February 2011. On February 10th 2011, the protesters' hopes were shattered as Mubarak once again took to the stage saying that he would remain in power until September. Eventually, on February 11th 2011, the protesters achieved their goal as Mubarak resigned as president and handed over power to the armed forces (Al Jazeera and agencies, 2011).

Research questions and chapter outline

The research questions, formulated in accordance with the aims and objectives of the project, are as follows:

- To what extent do the popular geopolitical discourses produced in *Al-Khan, Taxi,* and the selected signs and poetry displayed in Tahrir Square shape a geographical imagination of life in Egypt for and of the Egyptian population prior to the 2011 Revolution?
- How do the popular geopolitical discourses produced in *Al-Khan, Taxi,* Youssef's diary and the selected signs and poetry construct the identity of the Egyptian population throughout the protests?
- To what extent does an analysis of these selected popular cultural outputs of the 2011 Egyptian revolution help to narrate a geography of the revolution?

The following chapter explores, in greater depth, the conceptual and methodological framework behind this project. This begins with a discussion of the position of popular geopolitics within the wider sphere of geopolitics, and an examination of how developing enquiries into anti- and subaltern knowledge have led to the widening of this theoretical agenda. Then, past research into the use of literature, comics and diaries within

geographical and geopolitical research is critiqued, to underline the influence that popular culture can have on geopolitical narratives. Finally, the chapter explores the method of discourse analysis and the source material, detailing the discursive framework which will be engaged throughout this project.

Chapter three addresses, in detail, the first research question through the concept of the 'geographical imagination'. It argues that the discourses produced within *Taxi, Al-Khan* and the signs and poetry contest the state produced discourses of Egypt by exposing the true social, economic and political conditions within the country prior to the 2011 revolution. It reflects a geographical imagination of the country that emphasises both the dreams and grievances of the Egyptian population whose voices are too often left unheard in state and international media (Macfarland, 2011). These findings greatly support the claim by Dittmer (2005), Daniels and Rycroft (1993), Da Costa (2003) and Crang (1998) that popular culture and geopolitical resources have the potential to contribute greatly to cultural and geopolitical understandings of the environments which they represent.

Chapter four addresses, in detail, the second research question through the concept of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester'. This follows previous empirical findings by Dittmer (2005; 2007) and Dunnett (2009) that fictional texts and characterisations can help to establish an understanding of national identity as well as the geopolitical events of the time. The chapter argues that the discourses produced within *Taxi, Al Khan,* Nariman Youssef's diary and the analysed signs and poetry produce an uncensored and encompassing representation of the Egyptian protesters' experience within the 2011 revolution, vilifying the state media's construction of the protesters as 'foreign traitors' (El Kouedi, 2011) by highlighting their agency, collective identity and civic activism and how this helped the protesters to reclaim the public space and affirm their belonging to Egypt (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Finally, the chapter addresses how the 'Egyptian protester' used popular culture sources in order to constitute and reaffirm their own identity within the protests, establishing how an analysis of these produced creative alternatives to the dominant geopolitical scripts greatly contributed to an understanding of the agency-driven identity of the Egyptian population throughout the 2011 revolution (Sharp, 2011).

Chapter five addresses, in detail, the third research question through the concept of the *geography* of the revolution. This is conducted through an exploration of the different spaces and sites of the revolution mentioned within *Taxi,* Youssef's diary and the analysed signs and poetry, highlighting the complementary roles played by the physical spaces of protest and the act of assembly and speech in the events (Butler, 2011). The chapter argues that the discursive transformation of Tahrir Square from a 'non-space' to the proclaimed 'Republic of Tahrir' seen within Youssef's diary reflects how the protesters

worked to alter this public space from a closed to a claimed space throughout the revolution and the influence that this held upon the protesters' experience within the events (Shafie, 2011). It also argues how the creative energy and design of the protest signs illustrates how the spaces of the revolution were used an instrument in the revolutionary movement (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). This use of space and popular geopolitics develops an understanding of the protesters own reality of living and 'getting by' in the revolution (Harker, 2011), Finally, the virtual space of the social and new media within the 2011 revolution is examined, recognising the socio-political influence this had on the actions of the protesters. The chapter concludes by illustrating how the creative outputs and spaces of the revolution contributed to its politicisation (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011).

This thesis concludes in chapter six, with a summary of the findings and an assessment of the extent to which the popular geopolitical sources have provided a lens through which to analyse and understand a geographical imagination of Egypt and the Egyptian people, the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' and the spaces and geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. This chapter highlights the wider implications of the analysis for the framework of popular geopolitics, and the influence which popular culture sources have upon geopolitical narratives, before offering recommendations for future study in the area.

CHAPTER 2: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION.

This chapter aims to identify and justify the conceptual and methodological framework identified as fundamental in order to undertake this popular geopolitical analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The research and approaches outlined here help to conceptualise the nature of this investigation, by highlighting how past research within the subject area has approached their study and the methodological and theoretical challenges which emerge from them. It begins with a review of research on geopolitics, popular geopolitics and anti-geopolitics, before examining how developing enquiries of a 'subaltern' knowledge have led to the call to research 'subaltern geopolitics'. The review then moves onto an assessment of the use of literature, comics and diaries within geographical and geopolitical research, to underline the influence that popular culture can have on geopolitical narratives. Finally, the issue of discourse within geography is discussed. The second half of the chapter provides a methodological framework for the research. This begins with a detailed examination of the use of discourse in geographical methodologies and the justification for using discourse analysis within this research. Details about the source materials follow, with a description of their content and justification for why each was specifically chosen. The chapter closes with a detailed outline of how this discursive framework will be engaged within this work.

Geopolitics and popular geopolitics

Geopolitics, from a political-geographical perspective, is defined as 'the elements of discourse and/or social practice' which play a significant role in the construction of worldviews and international politics (Reuber, 2009: 441; Agnew, 1998). The origins of this practice began with 'classical geopolitics' in the late nineteenth century, focused specifically on how geographical factors such as oceans, continents, natural resources and perceived threats and opportunities relate to international relations (Sparke, 2009). At a time when geographical enquiry was focused on the researcher's production of unbiased and transparent representations of the world, geopoliticians such as Mackinder and Haushofer practically and objectively claimed to be able to help predict which areas would be politically successfully or vulnerable dependent on the surrounding geographical elements (Hyndman, 2009). Sparke (2009) recognises that this classical geopolitics continues to hold some influence over policy making today (Sparke, 2009).

However, following the 1970s humanistic backlash against quantitative geography and the emergence of both post-structuralist enquiry and critical theories of international relations from the 1980s onwards, geographers have now become more concerned with a 'critical geopolitics' (Power & Campbell, 2010). This was inspired by Foucault and Derrida, and the seminal works by O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992), O'Tuathail (1996) and Dalby (1991),

who all sought to deconstruct and reconceptualise geopolitics as a 'complex set of discourses, representations and practices' (Power & Campbell, 2010: 1). Rather than developing theories of the intersection of space and politics, 'critical geopolitics' seeks to develop a method for 'interrogating and exposing the grounds for knowledge production', examining the institutional claims and assumptions that are present when writing about and constructing the world (Power & Campbell, 2010: 1; Hyndman, 2009). This move arose to challenge previous objectivist claims to reality, to demonstrate the ideological power of geopolitical representations and 'imaginative geographies' to 'script space' (Sparke, 2009).

Critical geopolitics is influenced by a post-structuralist focus on the politics of representation, as it concerns itself with how the certain discourses work to shape political practice (Hyndman, 2009). For post-structuralists, the politics of representation is significant, following the argument that 'geography cannot provide a mimetic presentation of that which it seeks to describe' (Sharp, 1993: 492).For Scott (2009:352):

> 'Representations are never mirror-images of reality, but instead are always the product of diverse and ever-shifting contexts, and hence are never innocent, unbiased or divorced from the realm of power and politics' (Scott, 2009: 352).

Following this, post-structuralism places a particular focus on those representations that are produced by the most powerful, to illustrate that geography as a discipline is always intimately bound to particular constellations of power and privilege in its knowing and imagining of the world (Scott, 2009: 352; O'Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). This was inspired by Foucault's insistence that power and knowledge are inseparable (Foucault, 1972; Hyndman, 2009). Critical geographers have carried this claim through to critical geopolitics, as they argue that there is the possibility of great power for those whose map or discourse of the world is accepted because of the influence this can have on the way the world is understood (Hyndman, 2009). To examine this, O'Tuathail (1996) and O'Tuathail and Dalby (1998) argue that each taken for granted meaning of discourse in international politics should be destabilised, asking how and why certain geographical narratives have come to be accepted. As O'Tuathail (1996: 256) specifies, critical geopolitics is:

> 'a small part of a much larger rainbow struggle to decolonise our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible'.

Critical geopolitics argues that there must be a full questioning of the nature of each map, discourse and narrative, along with the author, in order to destabilise understandings so as to allow alternative writings to be brought to the stage (O'Tuathail & Dalby, 1998).

Indeed, the cultural turn within political geography challenged the previously accepted boundaries, generating a move towards:

> 'Non-traditional political geographical knowledge and a concern with the everyday as a valid space of political analysis' (Sharp, 2008: 189; O'Tuathail & Dalby, 1998).

For Dodds (2008), even that which appears banal in the world has the potential to be geopolitical. O'Tuathail and Dalby (1998) follow through these claims, by designating that geopolitics is in fact composed of three strands: formal, practical and popular geopolitics. Whilst the strands of formal and practical geopolitics encompass the theories, visions and narratives produced by the state, policy makers and politicians, the designation of the third strand as 'popular geopolitics' highlights how outlets such as cinema, magazines, novels and cartoons can also produce geopolitical narratives to the wider public (O'Tuathail & Dalby, 1998; Dodds, 2008). This designation is critical, as it highlights and legitimises the use of 'popular culture' sources to analyse political issues, and defines that geopolitical narratives are both written and circulated beyond official sources to ordinary people. Dodds (2008) even goes as far as to claim that the narratives formulated from both elite scripts and sources of popular culture are equally critical for an understanding of a world event.

Popular geopolitics demands an 'examination of the role of the media in the construction and perpetuation of dominant geopolitical understandings of events, people and places' (Macfarlane and Hay, 2003: 213; Sharp, 1993). There have been a number of works which recognise the significance of using popular culture as an alternative geopolitical source to the intellectuals of statecraft (Sharp, 2000; Dittmer, 2005, 2007; Dodds, 2007; Power & Crampton, 2005). From this, numerous geopolitical scholars have analysed film, magazines and cartoons to successfully illustrate that these texts from popular culture are a means through which the structures and ideologies of world politics can be sustained or challenged, and through which a voice and view can be articulated beyond the elite geopolitical script (Dittmer, 2005, 2007, 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Dodds 2007, 2008; Dunnett, 2009; Macfarlane & Hay, 2003; Power and Crampton, 2005; Sharp, 2000). These studies reveal how popular geopolitics can have an impact in two particular ways: through a reinforcing of certain geopolitical discourses, or by having the potential to reverse a hegemonic geopolitical script.

Sharp's (1993, 2000) study of *Reader's Digest,* Dittmer's (2005) study of the comic book and character of 'Captain America' and Dunnett's (2009) study of TinTin comics all indicate a clear resonance between the fictional or non-fictional constructions within the texts and the representation of geopolitical realities at the time, especially with regards to national identity., Sharp's analysis of the *Reader's Digest* is considered as an important

impetus in the study of popular geopolitics following the findings that the editorial line of the magazine worked to shape American identity and garner support during the Cold War period (Sharp, 2000). Of eighty nine articles analysed over a ten year period, only one was sympathetic to the Soviet case, with the majority following a geopolitics which represented a degenerative system of the USSR against the progressivism of America (Sharp, 1993). Consequently, Sharp (2000: ix) considers that '*Reader's Digest* might offer the single most important voice in the creation of popular geopolitics in the twentieth century', given the magazine's role in knowledge reproduction for the American society at the time. This makes a clear case for the importance of studying popular sources within geopolitics, as Sharp's research (1993, 2000) demonstrates how American identity was not only constituted through elite state propaganda but also through popular culture (Sharp, 1993).

Despite the success of Sharp's study of *Readers' Digest* (1993; 2000), it is not without its critics. Toal's (2003) assessment of the research suggests that Sharp's ignorance of the compilation and selection process for the magazine and the political economy which considers and shapes the knowledge production and dissemination means that the study presents only a decontextualised treatment of the produced discourses. It is essential that these contexts are addressed within studies of popular geopolitics in order to recognise the circuits of knowledge production and validation which no doubt affect the presentation of certain discourses and identities (Toal, 2003).

The work of Macfarlane and Hay (2003) supports this critique by Toal (2003), as they identify that the role of the mainstream media in the construction and dissemination of dominant geopolitical understandings can defy its definition as 'popular', as this serves to exclude certain voices from the narrative. Their analysis of *The Australian's*, Australia's daily newspaper coverage of the 2002 Seattle protests indicates how a public articulation of the protesters' voice was excluded through due to the framing of the events through a 'protest paradigm', supported by evidence from official sources (Macfarlane & Hay, 2003). Rather, the viewpoints on the event which were articulated in the newspaper reflected aligned to those in support of the World trade center whilst the protesters were left delegitimized and marginalised (Macfarlane & Hay, 2003). This example draws back to the critique by Toal (2003), as it identifies how the political economy involved in the selection process for the representations affects the discourses which are disseminated. This example fully illustrates how the political economy of the mainstream media can influence the produced geopolitical representations. The representations within *The Australian* simply contribute to the scripting of the dominant geopolitical hegemony, with no acknowledgement of the counter-hegemonic resistance being expressed on the streets by the protester (Macfarlane & Hay, 2003). For this reason, this thesis will not utilise material produced by international or domestic news corporations, especially given the

censorship of the national press within Egypt which refrains from allowing any publication of direct criticism towards Mubarak (Miles, 2011). Instead, it will use more citizen-led sources of popular geopolitics to more fully explore the voices of the protesters. This decision is further supported by Harlow and Johnson (2011), whose content analysis of various media sources during the 2011 Egyptian revolution itself stipulates that whilst a 'protest paradigm' was distinguishable in the New York Times coverage, the website Global Voices (a citizen-led, participatory source) allowed the protesters to act as commentators and analysts for the event. It will be these types of sources that will be used here to forge a narration of the event.

Since Sharp (1993, 2000), studies of popular geopolitics have continued to predominantly trace the ways in which popular culture sources and media reinforce elite discourses (Dittmer & Gray, 2010). Dittmer in particular highlights how 'comic books are still a tool used to influence geopolitical imaginations… to promote favoured geopolitical scripts' (2007: 248). He uses the Captain America comic books to distinguish how language can be used to connect representations of the reader's 'reality' to the parallel universe of the superhero (Dittmer, 2007). Captain America as an implicit defender of the international system and protector of American ideals is consumed by readers who then internalise his ideals as their own (Dittmer, 2007). Thus, through the power of 'Captain America' both as a 'nuanced geopolitical script that interrogates post 9/11 American territorialisation' (2005: 629) and as a character with 'the ability to both embody and narrate America' (2004: 630), the comic connects the reader to patriotism for the US nation. Dittmer thus uses this comic and its connection to patriotic identity to draw a strong case for the use of popular geopolitics to present and reflect political ideologies and to provide insight into how a population constructs their identity. A similar conclusion can be drawn with regards to the Tintin comics, where the discourses of Colonialism, European pre-eminence and anti-Americanism illustrated in both Tintin's character and activities in the comic strip work towards a discourse which centralised European ideals (Dunnett, 2009). Popular culture texts evidently have the power to strongly reinforce geopolitical visions of an event or the time.

Whilst the influence of popular culture can be used in hegemonic ways, it can also be used in anti-geopolitical ways (Dodds, 2007). Thus, the premise of using popular culture texts within this research derives from Dodds (2007) analysis of Steve Bell's cartoons and further commentary about homemade videos that recognise the potential these sources may have to reverse a hegemonic geopolitical script. Dodds argues that Bell's use of juxtaposition and characterisation within his cartoons highlight the 'dark contours of geopolitics' as they 'probe, ridicule and subvert the contemporary geopolitical condition' (2007: 13). For instance, his cartoon of the homemade video being shown on Al-Jazeera which sees Mickey Mouse, an icon of US political and cultural power, having been taken

hostage by Islamic militants provokes a counter-intuitive view of this scenario (Dodds, 2007). The focus here on the embodiment of the USA through Mickey Mouse rather than on the Muslim Other disturbs the dominant visual economy which usually prevails (Dodds, 2007). This example illustrates that texts, visual images and technologies within popular culture can challenge the dominant imaginations of the world around us as well as highlight those aspects which are otherwise hidden from view (Dodds, 2007). This is significant and a point which prompts the need for further engagement with counter-hegemonic and 'subaltern' geopolitical sources for an alternative narrative (these are discussed in a later section of this chapter).

Although the above examples all highlight the power of texts in 'popular geopolitics', Dittmer and Gray (2010) argue that there is a need to review and renew research on 'popular geopolitics' in order to move away from this excessive focus on textual deconstruction (Megoran, 2006; Thrift, 2000). For Dittmer and Gray (2010), the generic focus of 'popular geopolitics' on media and popular culture artefacts has resulted in the visions of elites being prioritised over the everyday experience of the geopolitical, as it involves an inevitable focus on the movie directors, journalists or writers and their political economy. This in turn continues to reproduce a dominant geopolitical hegemony and, as Muller (2008) outlines, an 'agency-notion' of discourse (Dittmer & Gray, 2010). Dittmer & Gray's (2010) assertion for the need to abandon this agency centered popular geopolitics in favour of a research agenda that is more diffuse, relational and focused on everyday life critiques the decision here to analyse the 2011 Egyptian revolution through a novel, cartoon, diary and poetry. However, the choice of sources to be utilised in this study has tried to encompass this proposed future for popular geopolitics, providing a branch between a focus on textual deconstruction and the everyday by using texts which not just produced by elite agents (Dittmer & Gray, 2010). Instead, by analysing the chosen texts, especially the signs and poetry written by the unidentified members of the protesting population within Tahrir Square, these texts should hopefully illustrate more diffuse representation of the events rather than one caught up in one agent's narrative. It is acknowledged that Dittmer and Gray (2010) offer an important critique to the practice of research in 'popular geopolitics'. However, with such strong support for the use of cultural artefacts in geopolitics stemming from other geopolitical scholars (Dittmer, 2005, 2007; Dodds, 2008; Sharp, 2000; Dunnett, 2009), and further backing for the use of these sources from cultural and postcolonial geographical enquiries (Crang, 1998; Sylvester, 2011), this research has decided to proceed with an examination of texts as the main sources for this analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution as it is evident from various research that these sources have the potential to provide valuable narratives to the event (Sharp, 2000; Dittmer, 2007; Dunnett, 2009; Da Costa, 2003).

<u>Anti-geopolitics</u>

For the most part, geopolitical knowledge is constructed within positions and locations of power and privilege (Routledge, 2003). Consequently, the history of geopolitics focuses heavily upon states and elites (Routledge, 2003). However, as Routledge (2003) explores, the geopolitical discourse articulated by states rarely passes without some resistance from those dominated and within 'subaltern' positions in society as they challenge the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the discourse. In the case of Egypt, this is an important observation, given the street demonstrations by the general population to expose the Mubarak regime's violations of people's freedoms and rights and the state media's dismissals of the protests (Iskander, 2011).

'Anti-geopolitics' refers to the production of 'geopolitical knowledge that challenges and contradicts the hegemonic discourse produced by traditional elites' (Dittmer, 2010: 134). This practice works to dismiss the idea that the discourse put forward by the state or elites is the hegemonic interest of everyone (Dittmer, 2010). For Routledge (2003: 236-237), there are two lines of challenge: first, challenging the material aspects of states and institutions, and second challenging the representations imposed by these elites. So far, popular culture has provided promising cases of anti-geopolitics through a focus on culture which is produced locally and focusing on local values (Dittmer, 2010). For instance, the Turkish film *Valley of the Wolves* released in 2007 offered a clear discursive resistance to traditional narratives of American war films in which American soldiers are icons of morality as a Turkish agent seeks an American agent responsible for Turkish humiliation (Dittmer, 2010; Dodds, 2008). The possibility of a similar narrative within the popular culture sources chosen from Egypt is likely, given the previously mentioned general population's resistance of the state discourses.

<u>Subaltern knowledge and the need to research a 'Subaltern Geopolitics'.</u>

O'Tuathail declares that we must 'decolonise our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible' (1996: 256). Yet the voice of the 'subaltern' within geopolitics still remains largely hidden. However, more recently, Sharp (2009; 2011), Dittmer (2010) and Harker (2011) have all engaged with postcolonial thought to argue that it is necessary to include the subaltern voice in geopolitical research.

There has been considerable discussion about the term 'subaltern' within postcolonial literature (McEwan, 2009; Spivak, 1985).This research will follow Spivak, and her definition of the subaltern as 'a group of people whose voices cannot be heard or are wilfully ignored in dominant modes of narrative production' (in McEwan, 2009: 61) as the Egyptian population has been 'wilfully ignored' within the systematic inequalities, violence and censorship programmes of the Mubarak regime, and effectively lay subordinate and

without voice against the government until the recent unrest and subsequent revolution (Amin, 2011).

Academic engagement with the subaltern began with the Subaltern Studies collective in 1980s India, following their criticism of Marxist and elitist narratives within India that disregarded the historical role and agency of the Indian masses and subsequent identification of non-elites, specifically peasants in India, as 'agents of political and social change' (in McEwan, 2009: 60). For this research, an identification of the general Egyptian population as such agents is critical, given that it was through the public popular sphere that the regime in Egypt was overturned. Sharp (2011: 271) too recognises this need to encompass all within geopolitical research, as she argues that we must pay specific attention to the 'politics of representation from the margins' in order to highlight those voices that are too often rendered silent in political accounts. She coins the term 'subaltern geopolitics' so as to highlight that these 'subaltern imaginaries offer creative alternatives to dominant (critical) geopolitical scripts' (2011: 271). Such a methodology, which engages with the masses rather than the elites, is desirable in research using popular geopolitics given that it focuses on the agency of the public sphere and facilitates an engagement with specific incidents rather than simply the grand state narratives of an event (McEwan, 2009). Harker (2011) and Smith (2011) both support this, as they demonstrate that listening to the 'voice' of the Palestinians helps us to recognise the population as active subjects rather than simply 'political resistance to Israeli occupation' (Sharp, 2011: 273).

Through an analysis of postcolonial novels and diaries to explore contemporary Zimbabwe, 1960s Nigeria and 1994 Rwanda, Sylvester (2011) highlights the talents, subjectivities and hybridity of 'subaltern' populations that are otherwise left obsolete within development theories. Although this research is rooted specifically to arguments within development practice, her conclusions are highly applicable to geopolitics as she suggests that development theory can only be more successful with a postcolonial focus on local people and their daily livelihood decisions. This follows Sharp's (2011: 273) 'subaltern' geopolitics as it similarly focuses on those that can offer an alternative script to the dominant one. Sylvester (2011) highlights how understandings of these regions has been solidified through top down narratives of development theory, at the expense of resistance narratives and the more mundane issues of life and living. To counter this, Sylvester (2011) uses an analysis of certain novels and diaries to move towards an articulation of experiences by the people themselves rather than reducing their life to aggregates, as statistics tends to do (Sylvester, 2011). She identifies the population's enthusiasm and conviction in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the emotion, determination and resistance of the main character in *Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* as he chooses to die from AIDS rather than in the genocide (Sylvester, 2011). This

thus fully supports a move in geographical and geopolitical analysis towards a use of sources which represent the voice of those so often left unheard (Sharp, 2011). Hence, this research will use a novel, diary, cartoon and signs and poetry written by Egyptians. It is hoped that this focus will help to reveal those voices that will have been wilfully ignored under the Egyptian regime, especially through censorship and repression (Amin, 2011). With this focus, it should be possible to examine the Egyptian population as active subjects, to understand the protesters' agency and voice and to recognise their own opposition to the Mubarak regime (Sharp, 2011). This should gather a more encompassing account of the 2011 Egyptian revolution which pays attention to both the resistance narratives as well as dominant geopolitical representations put forward through the domestic and international political sphere and censored media (Sylvester, 2011;Sharp, 2011; Amin, 2011).

<u>Using literature, comics and diaries within geographical and geopolitical research</u>

Following the post-structural influence within critical geopolitics, it is important to analyse texts within geographical and geopolitical research, especially given Barnes and Duncan's (1992:2) defining claim that it is 'humans that decide how to represent things, and not the things themselves'. Critical geopolitics is concerned with the construction of meaning and constructive effects of text, language and discourse on the construction of global space (Hyndman, 2009). Therefore, analysing texts as representation is critical to formulating an assessment of a global political space (Kobayashi, 2009).

Thrift, in 'The Future of Geography' recognises that today geographers are increasingly experimenting with 'new kinds of representation that can expand the range of what can be communicated and what counts as communication' (2002:296). With regards to literature, it was only with the cultural turn in geography that studies began to be attentive to how literature can both reflect upon and generate its own unique geographies (Brosseau, 2009). Previously, literature had only been regarded as a supportive data set, reinforcing the interpretations or conclusions already drawn by more rigid scientific investigations (Brosseau, 1994: Sharp, 2000). However, Thrift (2000) directs our 'mesmerised attention' to both texts and images in his article 'It's the little things', as he recognises that these objects can contribute to the workings of geo-power. Both Brosseau (1994) and Sharp (2000) support this, arguing that the power of literature to represent in research is extraordinary, as novels and other fictional texts can bring evocations of experiences and an exploration of identities. Crang exemplifies this, by arguing that:

> 'literature does more than provide an emotional counterpart to an objective knowledge in geography… [rather] literature offers ways of looking at the world that show a range of landscapes of taste, experience and knowledge' (1998: 57)

Following this, and the further argument that 'for most people, the representation comes before the reality' (Crang, 1998: 44), an analysis of literature appears critical to the construction of social reality within geographical research (Sharp, 2000).This is identified in practice in Da Costa's research (2003), as although her claims are made with regards to films rather than written texts, she argues that the representations of New York made within films set there speak a specific set of ideas about the social, economic and cultural politics of the city and its population. The use of fictive literature in geography has been celebrated among certain academics as they identify that literature 'contains a voice' which can speak to the geographies of academics' (Sharp, 1996: 119). Yet despite the recognition of this value, early analyses using this resource were criticised by Brosseau (1994) for merely reinforcing existing knowledge on an event or place rather than subverting this medium. However, research completed since by Sharp (1996) and Daniels and Rycroft (1993) confirms that geographers are beginning to identify the subversive potential of literature. Today geographers are beginning to more frequently examine the intersection between geography and literature as it is recognised that this relationship can help to comprehend the spatiality of social life (Brosseau, 2009).

For Daniels and Rycroft (1993: 460):

> 'Any one novel may present a field of different, sometimes competing, forms of geographical knowledge and experience, from a sensual awareness of a place to an educated idea of region and nation.'

Their study of the novels of Alan Sillitoe and their representations of the modernisation of Nottingham's working class areas of the city from the 1920s to the 1950s exemplifies this statement clearly, as they conclude that the novels 'chart the modernisation of Nottingham in a way that combines and competes with the official academic geographies of the city' (1993: 476). Theirs is a compelling enquiry, as it reveals how the novels can be seen to work as counter-hegemonic discourses to the hegemonic discourses of Nottingham as the 'model' modern city portrayed within the official source (Daniels & Rycroft, 1993). For example, the guidebooks and pamphlets produced at the time for Nottingham used a feminine image to portray the city as grime-free and healthy where women worked in bright spacious surroundings. In contrast, Sillitoe's characters lived within a masculine world of industrialisation, much harsher and grimmer than the pamphlets suggested (Daniels & Rycroft, 1993). Hall and Reiben (1993:14) held a similar observation:

> 'If official and academic versions of Nottingham's geography were written in that progressive, optimistic, enlightened discourse of modernism, Sillitoe's version was written in modernism's counter discourse of violence, oppression and exclusion.'

Essentially, the novels of Alan Sillitoe 'rebel against the authoritative texts of the city' (Daniels & Rycroft, 1993: 468). This observation helps to identify the power of the novel to subvert the dominant geopolitical and hegemonic condition, as Sillitoe's books provide the 'alternative' representation of the city. Hence, the novels work to challenge the 'taken-for-granted' meaning of Nottingham that the official pamphlet discourse expresses, illustrating how the use of particular discourses written by certain voices of authority can present a one-sided representation of a place (Sharp, 2009). Here, Daniels and Rycroft (1993) help to clarify the critical role that a novel and literature in general can play in helping to understand spaces, places and people, especially when they work to subvert the discourses already presented of that place from other contexts and political positions (Brosseau, 2009).

An analysis of literature may also allow the researcher to hear voices of those who have so often been unable to articulate their voice within global politics. This ties to Sharp's (2011: 271) postcolonial focus on 'those voices that are usually rendered marginal and silent in other accounts'. In her designation of 'subaltern' geopolitics as 'those subaltern imaginaries that offer creative alternatives to dominant (critical) geopolitical scripts', she argues that there is much need for a focus on the 'politics of representation from the margins' in geopolitics – on those who have been otherwise wilfully ignored by the dominant geopolitical representations (Sharp, 2011: 273). This is supported by Harker (2011) and Smith (2011) who both demonstrate that the provision of a space for the 'voice' of the Palestinians helps these populations to be recognised as far more active subjects that simply 'political resistance to Israeli occupation' (Sharp, 2011: 273). Dittmer's (2010) analysis of Web 2.0 (internet content produced exclusively by its users), and more specifically the blogs of Salam Pax in Baghdad published during the 2003 occupation of the city, provides further evidence for this. Dittmer (2010) argues that Pax's blogs offer a 'fascinating window into the everyday life in Baghdad during 2003, as well as providing an anti-hegemonic narrative to state opinions that the American invasion of Iraq was altruistic. This is an insight and narrative from Baghdad as the city 'most talked about but never heard' (Dittmer, 2010: 152) and invites the audience to engage with the realities, discontent and marginalisation that the Iraqi population faced during the 2003 events. This highlights how an uncensored representation from the wider population away from the hegemonic state is critical within geopolitical research to provide an alternative and more encompassing set of narratives to geopolitical events.

Discourse in Geography

The majority of the above geopolitical studies of literature have employed a study of discourse in order to achieve their aims (Muller, 2010). Foucault, in the 1960/1970s, first illustrated how discursive formations (combinations of linguistic elements, actions and

institutions (Cresswell, 2009)) work to produce and perform subject positions and spaces (Foucault, 1977). His book *Discipline and Punish* (1977) highly influenced the use of discourse in geography as he outlined how, throughout the eighteenth century, new structures of punishment and surveillance changed the subject of the criminally deviant individual (Cresswell, 2009). The influence that discourse holds on space and spatial relations was then taken up in Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), as he explored how the imaginative geography of difference in representations of 'us' in the West and 'them' in the Orient within texts in Western culture actually shaped the real geographies and space of the Orient (1978).

Since the 'cultural turn' in geography from the 1990s, and engagements with post-structuralism and post-colonialism, the importance of discourse in geography has been more deeply explored through the increased attention to literature as an object of geographical study (Brosseau, 2009). As discourse and textuality have become more prominent in geography, through work such as Said's *Orientalism,* geographers have begun to recognise how literary language can work independently to help understand spaces, places and people (Brosseau, 2009). It is only since the 'cultural turn' that there has been a geographical recognition that literature can both reflect and generate its own geographies (Brosseau, 2009).

Most importantly for this research, the increased attention to discourse in geography has been utilised within the sub-discipline of critical geopolitics (Cresswell, 2009). This has been most significantly within critical geopolitics. By using discourse, critical geopolitics has been able to illustrate how geopolitics is not simply objective but rather a discursive construction of space and the world constructed from a particular powerful authority, person and place (Sharp, 2009). By recognising the importance of discourse within, for example, security, we can understand how 'difference' and the division of space between 'ours' and 'theirs' work to define geographical space (Sharp, 2009). This is further exemplified by the previously mentioned work by Sharp (2000) on Cold War geopolitical discourse, as the discourses displayed in literature and state papers heightened US identity by constructing the identity of USSR as completely opposite to it. It is clear that an analysis of discourse within critical geopolitics is essential to understand international politics and representations of it: it is the use of particular discourses which work to shape political events, spaces and practices (Sharp, 2009).

A methodological framework for studying the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Discourse analysis was identified as the most appropriate methodology for this research given the method's popularity and previous success when used to study critical, and more specifically, popular geopolitics (Muller, 2010; Sharp, 2000). Many scholars of critical geopolitics take recourse to discourse analysis as a tool for helping to understand the

social production and construction of world politics and the formation of geopolitical identities (Muller, 2010). This study will use discourse analysis so as to illustrate how the language and discourse within the source texts work to constitute the conditions and understanding of 'reality' by producing certain meanings (Berg, 2009; Foucault, 1972). As critical geopolitics examines the institutional production and methods for writing about the world (Sharp, 2009), discourse analysis was most well suited to this research as it holds the 'text' as its object of analysis. 'Texts' write global spaces (O'Tuathail, 1996). Discourse analysis works to determine how such texts are 'created by, impose and maintain particular discursive formations' which influence legitimacy and the arrangement of certain claims in society (Barthes, 1973 in Berg, 2009: 216).

The definition of discourse varies across disciplines. Whilst linguists consider discourse with specific reference to spoken or written language, social scientists focus on the way that language structures knowledge and practice (Berg, 2009). This follows the post-structuralist sensibility that language does not mirror pre-existing reality, but rather actively constitutes the conditions under which we come to 'know' that reality (Waitt, 2005; Berg, 2009). Thus, this research follows the definition of discourse as:

> 'A specific series of representation and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible' (Campbell, 2009).

For Campbell (2009), discourse carries five characteristics. Firstly, discourses are heterogeneous. They are neither confined to one single author or text, and whilst they may have a dominant form, this form does not eradicate alternative knowledge or resistance (Campbell, 2009). Second, discourses are regulated, marked by the boundaries which define inclusions and exclusions to them (Campbell, 2009). Third, discourses are embedded. As performances that materialise social life, they are embedded with the institutions and subject positions of this. Fourth, discourses are situated, a product of historical and geographical location. For Foucault, whilst a discourse is produced in a historical period, it often radically alters between periods (Foucault, 1972 in Hall, 2001). Finally, discourses are performative: they construct the topic, defining and governing the material, forming the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1977, Campbell, 2009). This definition is important with regards to Foucault's advancement of a novel conception of power. For Foucault, power is more than simply repressive, whereby it controls existing agents and outcomes and prevents new action (1977). Rather, power is also productive: it holds the ability to induce new actions, agents and outcomes (Foucault, 1972). Also, whereas many tended to consider power as only radiating singularly, Foucault argued that power instead circulates, with it permeating all levels of society rather than being monopolised by one (Foucault, 1972 in Hall, 2001). Considering

this, and the connections that discourse holds to power through its performativity, this is important as it illustrates that discourses may be created at all levels of society, rather than being constituted and held by those in the most powerful institutions. These observations of power are thus critical with regard to the analysis of discourse within geography and geopolitics, as they distinguish that certain bodies have the power to produce discourse which aligns to certain (perhaps hegemonic) knowledge and relations. Therefore, through a discourse analysis, it can be established how certain individuals and institutions benefit from discursive power, and how different subjectivities are established within power relations (Berg, 2009). Ultimately:

> 'discourses shape the contours of the taken for granted world, naturalising and universalising a particular subject formation and view of the world' (Campbell, 2009: 167).

Whilst the popularity of discourse analysis as a concept to study geopolitical identities is increasing (Newman, 2000), such studies often fail to provide an explication of their methodology (Antaki *et al,* 2003, Muller, 2010). Such a reticence to lay out a methodology was undoubtedly inherited from Foucault, who himself remained reserved about his own techniques of study (Berg, 2009). Yet the reticence itself is unsurprising, given that Post-Structuralist sensibility objects to such a quantification of methods for discourse, and the category 'analysis' is drawn from a discourse relating to quantitative positivist methodologies, which undermines the very basis of discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherall, 1992; Berg, 2009). Due to this, when undertaking discourse analysis, many geographers follow Potter and Wetherall (1992:101) and their argument that:

> 'much of the work of discourse analysis is a craft skill… that it is not easy to render or describe in an explicit or coded manner'.

For this research, in light of no explicit methodology, a basic structure for analysis was set up following Rose's (2007) method for discourse analysis on visual materials, Waitt's (2005) adaptation of this to wider geographical objects and Berg's (2009) review of these methods. It was also acknowledged that, for the most part, discourse analysis relies upon a reflexivity to the source materials (Rose, 2007). Hence, this method was only formulated as the initial starting point for the analysis.

Locating the sources

In reference to the 'text' which forms the object of discourse analysis, Barthes distinguishes that 'text' encompasses all kinds of social and cultural production (Barthes 1972). In light of this, as well as Phillips and Hardy's (2002) instruction that the initial and main sources for the research should be those that you expect to produce the most theoretically relevant results and Rose's (2007) call to recognise intertextuality, multiple

forms of data sources are used in this research: one novel, one cartoon strip, one diary, and a collection of the protesters' signs and poetry. All of these materials are produced by Egyptians. The sources are as follows:

- Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi!* (2011)
- Tarek Shanin's *Rise! The story of the Egyptian Revolution as written shortly before it began* (2011)
- Nariman Youssef's *Tahrir: 18 days of grace.*
- A selection of handmade signs and poetry held up by protesters in Tahrir Square, sourced from the Khalil's collection *Messages from Tahrir* (2011), and the 'culture' section on the website www.tahrirdocuments.org

This material written by Egyptians was chosen as the main source of data following both Sharp (1996) and Crang's (1998) claims that literature presents the possibility of creating and presenting a landscape which highlights and/or critiques present conditions of a society, and the claim by Sylvester (2011) that literature can provide a much needed assessment of the general population and its everyday realities. The chosen texts have particular significance to the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Abdel-Latif (2007) recognises the discussions in *Taxi!* to be a strong barometer of Egyptian grievance against the government, while Whipple (2011) praises *Rise!* for foreshadowing the Revolution through its 'unforgettable vision' of the conditions of life in Cairo in the months leading up to 25th January 2011. To the Western reader who was distanced from the event itself, the small snapshots of life presented through the fictional monologues of the Cairo taxi drivers and the characters in *Rise!,* the events of the Revolution seem 'much more personal, immediate, dramatic and understandable' as it allows for connection to 'real' people within the events (Whipple, 2011). This is intensified and exaggerated further through the diary of Nariman Youssef and the signs and poetry held up in Tahrir Square, with both directly incorporating the perspectives of the everyday Egyptian in the protests into the narration of the revolution. These sources were also chosen as they provide an avenue through which the Egyptian population is able to articulate their voice and define their own identities in the event, following years of an 'Egypt whose voice is hardly heard' (Abdel-Latif, 2011).

All of the texts centre around Cairo and Tahrir Square specifically. This focus was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, Tahrir Square became the 'Camp of the Revolution' as the main site of protest for the eighteen days (BBC, 2011) and a site where many cultural outputs from the protesting population were documented (Allesandrini, 2011). Second, a focus on this level will allow for the appropriate engagement with the popular and perhaps counter-hegemonic geopolitics that focus on specific events and incidents rather than on one grand narrative surrounding the revolution (McEwan, 2009).

The sources' content

Al Khan – Tarek Shanin

Al Khan is a daily cartoon strip which was written by Cairo born cartoonist Tarek Shanin and published every day in the English independent *Daily News Egypt* between 2008 to 2010. As well as following the daily life of the five main and various subsidiary characters, the cartoon provides a commentary on actual social and political events that were plaguing Egyptian life at the time (Whipple, 2011). For these reasons, it provides a critical vision of Cairo for the months preceding the revolution in order to help define the events further.

Daily News Egypt is an English-language independent daily newspaper published in Egypt (Khazbak, 2012). Since its first publication in 2005, *Daily News Egypt* has defied the state produced geopolitical discourses by addressing stories and issues that were disregarded by the state owned media (Khazbak, 2012). The paper published stories the street movements, protest and dissent which formed the beginnings of the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Khazbak, 2012). Although the publication is in English rather than Arabic, thus carrying a far smaller readership than the Arabic press, the success of the independent journalism within the paper define it as an ideal source from which to geopolitical narratives of Egypt which speak in a more truthful manner of the conditions in the country compared to those which were produced under state censorship (Khazbak, 2012).

The cartoon *Al Khan* is set primarily within the offices of the fictional newspaper *Al Khan,* where Omar has returned from London in order to replace his grandfather as publisher, Nada works as editor and Yunan as photographer. Throughout the cartoon, Omar's relationship with Nada is fraught, as they are constantly in conflict over his views as a 'liberal capitalist' and Nada's devotion to socially liberal causes (Whipple, 2011). This is significant, as it examines, often humorously, the fraught relationship between the different political opinions in Egypt as its political landscape changed. Omar's views that the events which benefit only a few are significant versus Nada's fight for equality and justice for all indicate the impact that capitalism and foreign investment had on the country, its everyday population and the attitudes of them.

The three parts which divide the comic strips address three distinct issues in Egyptian life. Part one, the Privatisation of ENECO, deals with the issue of privatising a major engineering company and the implications this has on the general population. Part two, Project Love, addresses the calls to take action in some protest as an effort to battle corruption. Part three, Scary But Good, discusses issues of social justice and equality. The experience of the characters throughout each of these situations reveals much about the daily life which Egyptians were facing in light of these topical events. For instance, as

the cartoon follows the experience of one woman getting raped, the reader learns about the role and attitudes towards to women in Egypt at the time (Whipple, 2011). The discourses prevalent in the Al-Khan cartoons foreshadow the popular revolution of 2011 as they emphasise the consequences in daily life of the various economic, political and social programmes enforced by the National Democratic Party. Whilst the 'real' people here are the cartoon characters themselves, the intimate settings of each cartoon strip allows the Western reader to engage with actual issues, events and emotions which preceded the uprising in a personal and understandable manner (Whipple, 2011).

Taxi- Khaled Al Khamissi

For Khaled Al Khamissi, the admission that he is simply a 'novelist' in Egypt is bold, as 'Egyptian and Arab history tells us we cannot be novelists' (Al Khamissi, 2012). However, since it's first publication in 2007, his novel *Taxi* has been a bestseller in the Arab world and has been translated into over ten different languages (Al Khamissi, 2012). Written originally in Egyptian dialect before its translation, the text offers a unique perspective to Egypt, especially given the importance of dialect across the country, compared to traditional Arabic, in the forging of national identity (Fahmy, 2011). The success of the book within Egypt itself, with more than 75,000 copies sold, indicates the strength of colloquial popular literature for sharing grievances and identity across the population (Al-Khamissi, 2011; Fahmy, 2011). *Taxi* consists of fifty-eight fictional monologues with Cairo taxi drivers to form an 'urban sociology, an ethnography and an oral history classic of the 80,000 city taxi's daily struggle to make ends meet' (Al Khamissi, 2011). In the novel, the taxi drivers discuss their working conditions, brushes with the laws, government and government regulations and day to day struggles to make a living (Johnson, 2011). Together, the monologues explore how, despite the Egyptian rulers' enthusiastic embrace of neoliberalism, life for the general population became much harder and their changing psyche as a result (Simic, 2008; Johnson, 2011). With monologues from taxi drivers who are young, old, religious and secular, the novel illustrates how the struggle to survive in unrestrained market conditions and resulting grievances with Hosni Mubarak and Egypt's conspicuous rich stretch across the entire population (Simic, 2008). The novel illustrates how tasks such as renewing a driving licence becomes a bureaucratic nightmare and how social and political conditions in society have affected the manner in which the taxi drivers live (Simic, 2008). For instance, the reader learns of the taxi driver who falls asleep at the wheel attempting to earn the one thousand Egyptian pounds he owes, the taxi driver who sends his daughter alone in a taxi armed with a knife, the taxi driver who sets aside money for bribes along with his living expenses, the double lives of veiled women, and of lives lived within the context of censorship and repression (Johnson, 2011; Ross, 2011). Together, the monologues provide a 'fast crash course' into the beginnings of the

Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring, and a valuable vision of the Egypt of the general population before the events began (Ross, 2011).

<u>Diary of Nariman Youssef – *Tahrir – Eighteen days of Grace*</u>

Nariman Youssef is an Egyptian writer, translator and researcher who lives between Cairo and London (Random House Group, 2011). The diary of her experiences in Tahrir Square during 2011 was published within a Random House E-book series of long-form journalism gathered from events throughout 2011 (Random House Group 2011b). Although the text was published for a British and international audience, Youssef's Egyptian heritage and life in Cairo ensures that her narrative speaks of an Egyptian's experience during the events. However, due to Youssef's international academic position and social and living conditions, her experiences may not fully represent the 'Egyptian protester' experience due to the political economy within which her knowledge of the event has been constructed (Toal, 2003). However, due to the political geopolitical nature of this piece, and the narratives which are constructed through it, it has still been identified as an ideal source from which to gauge an Egyptian protester's experience in Tahrir Square for the analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Written from the beginning of the protests on January 25th 2011, the diary follows the movements, actions and feelings of Youssef throughout the eighteen days until Mubarak's resignation on 11th February, allowing a direct insight into the changing hopes and fears of the Egyptians across the time (Random House Group, 2011b). It explores the different locations in which Youssef and her friends sat out the Revolution, the solidarity that she felt from other protesters around her, the preventative actions taken against the attacks from the police and pro-Mubarak supporters, and the day to day wanderings of an Egyptian protester. As well as providing the invaluable insight into the daily life in Tahrir Square, Youssef's diary also documents the signposts to and issues that fuelled the calls for democratic change in Egypt (Random House Group, 2011b): this ties directly to the insights gathered from *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* to explore how the actions and grievances prevalent in the country prior to the 2011 revolution can be used to forge a wider understanding of the events in Egypt away from Tahrir Square specifically.

<u>Signs and Poetry</u>

The final source utilised in this research is a collection of signs and poetry from two sites: the book *Messages From Tahrir* edited by Khalil (2011) and the website www.tahrirdocuments.org. These final sources were chosen given the presence of poetry not only in Tahrir Square, where it composed a significant part of action itself, but also its use in the 1919 and 1952 Revolutions in Egypt (Colla, 2011). This genre is particularly

significant to illustrate how revolutions are a time for celebration and laughter as well as anger and grievance (Colla, 2011).

Messages From Tahrir (2011) is a photographic collection of signs held up by protesters in Tahrir Square taken by professional and amateur photographers who participated themselves in the protests (Cario360, 2011). It is edited by Karima Khalil, a medical doctor living in Cairo with her family and has been distributed internationally (Cairo360, 2011). The photographs and signs within the collection speak clearly of the popular geopolitical understandings of the 2011 Egyptian revolution as they perfectly capture the spirit of the square through illustrations of the unnamed multifaceted protesters' fury, despair, humour and determination (Cairo360, 2011). This collection thus represents the dynamism of the Egyptian protesters' identity and experience within the square, complementing the more detailed yet less encompassing experience of Youssef. It is also important for illustrating the exact power of the signs within the events, indicating exactly how they became a powerful tool within the protest (Cairo360, 2011). Through the discourse analysis of these photographs, it has been possible to establish how popular geopolitical understandings of the 2011 Egyptian revolution were forged and utilised by the Egyptian protesters themselves in order to further their protest.

Tahrir Documents (2011) is an archive of activist papers, signs and literature collected from demonstrations in Tahrir Square presents material that was written by Egyptians and displayed within Tahrir Square itself, and thus represents the articulation of voice by the protesters (Tahrirdocuments, 2011). Again, the author of each piece is largely unidentified, meaning that there is little contextual understanding of their own position and experience within the square beyond the piece itself. Therefore each piece has been taken as an encompassing representation of the Egyptian protester's opinion and grievances towards the Mubarak regime and their demands and ideals for the future. The poetry covers topics such as the protester's love of Egypt, their grievance with the country's corruption and the 'citizen's dream', providing an understanding of the Egyptian protesters' opinions and hopes during the protests. As with Youssef's diary, these final sources help to link the located discourses within *Al Khan* and *Taxi* with the action and opinions in Tahrir Square during the protest, thus indicating how the popular geopolitical understandings of the event are carried across different popular culture sources at the time.

Engaging the discursive framework

First, the rhetorical organisation of discourse within the 'texts' was explored (Rose, 2007). To be successful, this primarily involved suspending any 'pre-existing categories' or preconceptions against the texts (Foucault, 1972). As the identification of hegemonic discourses form a main aspect of discourse analysis, this suspension meant that the texts

could be examined fresh, free from any existing hegemonic discourse (Berg, 2009). Once this was done, each text was read and re-read, in order to fully absorb the key narratives, themes and objects within it (Rose, 2007: Berg, 2009). To assist the identification of these narratives, coding categories were set up, so that key themes and objects both within and across the texts were recognised systematically (Berg, 2009). These codes were reflexive, formulated from the text and themes themselves to ensure no bias was brought into the research (Rose, 2007). This practice allowed for the recognition and identification of 'regimes of truth' within the texts, the knowledge that legitimises certain claims (Rose, 2007). It also allowed for an assessment of any inconsistencies or absent presences within the texts, such as contestations by subordinate discourses, which may have influenced the discourse constructed (Berg, 2009). This was an important part of the analysis given Foucault's (1972) identification that invisibilities and dissent within texts and discourses can be as powerful as visibilities and claims of truth. It was therefore essential that these discrepancies from the texts were analysed, in order to establish how they may have reinforced or contested hegemonic discourses, or created or erased particular subjects (Berg, 2009).

The second stage of analysis involved analysing the social production of the discourse within the texts, in order to identify and examine the effects of the institutional location of the discourse and its social context (Foucault, 1972). This was done through an intertextual engagement across the text, and through additional material obtained from Alaa Al Aswany's newspaper articles published in *On the State of Egypt: What Caused the Revolution* (2011) and in review of the Egyptian population's social situation before and during the protests. This was done to link the 'production of the discourse with the production of key subject positions' (Berg, 2009: 220) to understand the power relations prevalent from the discourses presented. Whilst the analysis of the rhetorical production of the discourses forms the prominent part of the research, this secondary analysis is critical in order to assess the power relations that may still be prevalent in the research.

It is acknowledged throughout this research that language is only the construction of one interpretation rather than an objective revealing of the truth (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Kobayashi, 2009) and therefore power relationships will still be implicit within the discourse. However, despite this unavoidable discrepancy, the conduct of a discourse analysis on these particular texts remains the most theoretically relevant and productive method for analysing the 2011 Egyptian Revolution from a popular geopolitical perspective. The discourse analysis of the texts revealed three key themes upon which the three analytical chapters are based: the construction of Egypt in popular culture discourses, the discursive construction of the 'Egyptian protester', and the construction and utilisation of the 'spaces' of the revolution. The chapters are arranged by themes, with the discourse analysis of each text interwoven throughout. This was done so as to

encompass the intertextuality of the discourse and to demonstrate that certain themes ran across all cultural texts. Each of the chapters explores how the texts collectively construct a certain discourse about Egypt and of the Egyptian population. They also examine how 'many complex and contradictory discourses can be in circulation at any one time' (Berg, 2009: 220) by showing the 'subaltern' discourses created by the Egyptian populations themselves in reference to grievances with the Mubarak regime. Finally, with all the texts written by Egyptians, this research provides an analysis of how discourses can be produced by a variety of authors and texts within different geographical and political positions in society, and the impact of such.

Whilst the use of text written and produced by Egyptians as source material combats the issue that popular texts produced within the West often remain laden with a biased and hegemonic geopolitical discourse (Dodds, 2008), this draws up further issues regarding representation and the issue of translation. Here, the researcher is positioned within a different culture (English) to that where the source materials are set and published (Egypt). Fortunately, all the texts are pre-translated by professional translators. However, the interpretation of certain meanings may be problematic, given Hall's (1997) outline that meaning is shared within cultures, by those who share the same ideals. It is difficult to provide a voice to populations who are separated from the researcher by profound cultural differences (Scott, 2009). Müller (1997) argues that in cases, translation can be hegemonising and depoliticising, with uniform translations of words potentially reducing their cultural meaning, and potentially neutralising the connotations such as humour and rhetoric associated with them. This could prove particularly problematic in this case, as the production of a new popular literature, such as the signs and poetry, especially at during a revolution, inevitably utilises the shared cultural heritage of the population (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). Consequently, it may not be possible to understand through translation implicit references to songs or religious notes, or to cultural phenomena such as popular television shows (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). However, research to the same vein by El Zein and Ortiz (2011) acknowledges and overcomes this issue by remaining reflexive and de-centred within analysis, to prevent a bias in their interpretation. This research will follow the same approach, as whilst the issue of translation cannot be overcome, by ensuring reflexivity throughout the analysis, the impact of this translation on the resulting discourse should be minimised. The signs and poetry from the 2011 Egyptian revolution carried immediate significance to the international audience as soon as they were transmitted globally (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011).

CHAPTER 3: 'HOW DID THIS DREAM TURN INTO A NIGHTMARE':

POPULAR GEOPOLITICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF EGYPT PRIOR TO THE 2011 REVOLUTION.

This chapter examines how a 'geographical imagination' of Egypt is shaped by the popular culture texts of *Taxi, Al-Khan* and the poetry displayed in Tahrir Square, by looking at how a reading of these texts facilitates an understanding of Egypt and the Egyptian people in the lead up to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Following Schwartz and Ryan (2003: 6), 'geographical imagination' is defined here as 'the mechanism by which people come to know the world'. It is the manner through which 'geographical information is gathered, geographical facts are ordered and imaginative geographies are constructed' (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003: 6). Consequently, any understanding of the 2011 Egyptian revolution will be framed through a 'geographical imagination' (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003).

In line with this definition of the 'geographical imagination', Cosgrave and Daniels (1988), Duncan and Ley (1993) and Da Costa (2003) collectively identify that the representation of a space, place or event can contribute as much to the meaning of a space, place or event as an examination of the material elements of it can. With regards to an examination of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, this claim is highly significant, as for the British observer, geopolitical understandings of the event will likely only be garnered through the representations and 'geographical imagination' of it (Kobayashi, 2009). Therefore, this chapter supports the argument by cultural geographers Daniels and Rycroft (1993) and Crang (1998) that popular culture, and literature in particular, can contribute quite significantly to the image and understanding of the social, economic and cultural environments that they represent. This chapter complements this discussion by arguing that the representations of Egypt gathered through the analysed texts contributes greatly to a 'geographical imagination' of Egypt and the consequential understanding of both its land and its people. Past investigations into popular geopolitical discourse have identified how popular culture can play a substantial role in the representation of the structures and ideologies of world politics, either tough reinforcing or subverting the dominant hegemonic script (Dittmer, 2005; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Dunnett, 2009; Sharp, 2000). Indeed, following Daniels and Rycroft's (1993) analysis of Alan Sillitoe's novels of Nottingham, it is clear that popular culture and literature has the potential to contribute a geographical imagination of place that speaks to and/or furthers the official or academic representations and geographies of that space. This chapter follows this, arguing that the novel *Taxi,* the political cartoon *Al-Khan* and the poetry laid on the ground in Tahrir Square present a competing discourse to the state-produced discourses imposed by the Mubarak regime. The discourses identified within the texts illustrate a view of Egypt and its population which emphasise both the dreams and grievances of the Egyptian state and

the regime held by the people whose voices were often left unheard in state and international media (Mcfarland, 2011).

Al-Khan, Taxi and the poetry in Tahrir Square represent part of the resistant popular culture that, having been present in Egypt since the 1919 revolution increased in proliferation in the years before the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Mostafa, 2012; Mcfarland, 2012). Films, novels, poetry and free expression on online blogs, all produced by a highly politicised youth culture, were all used to circumvent and challenge the stringent regime and security policies in place on the ground in Egypt (Mostafa, 2012; Tawil-Souri, 2012). This chapter illustrates how *Taxi, Al-Khan* and the poetry written by the protesters contest the state produced discourses of Egypt and the manner through which the Mubarak regime represented and treated its population as well as examining how the discourses of resistance produced through the texts contribute an indication that the youth population in Egypt was on the verge of revolt.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the discourses identified within the poetry and *Taxi* that construct Egypt as a space of nurture and opportunity, examining how the nature of these discourses reflect on the social context within which they were created. The discussion then moves to how this discourse changes throughout the timeframe of the texts, reflecting changes in the social conditions in Egypt at the time. There is a detailed analysis of how the discourses within *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* subvert the hegemonic discourse of 'stability within Egypt, as the texts expose the true social conditions within the country for the majority of the population. This reflects a geographical imagination of the country that speaks to the experience of the Egyptian people directly and expresses their grievances.

<u>'My Mother Egypt' **–** The construction of Egypt as a space of nurture and opportunity</u>

A strong geographical imagination of Egypt can initially be constructed from the analysis of the novel *Taxi,* first published by Egyptian born Al-Khamissi in 2007, and the poetry written and displayed in Tahrir Square by pro-democracy protesters in January and February 2011. Discourses in both texts illustrate a clear disparity between Egyptian people's hopes and dreams for their *country* Egypt and the harsh realities of life for millions of Egyptians within the *state* of Egypt. Through these, Egypt is immediately imagined as two distinct spaces: a space of nurture and opportunity versus a space of repression. This contrast highlights how the opinion and experience of the Egyptian population changes within the two spaces, through highlighting the resistance held by the Egyptian people against the destruction and opportunity of the *country* Egypt by the corrupt Mubarak regime (Mostafa, 2012).

Both the poetry taken from Tahrir Square and *Taxi* appear to initially construct a 'popular' geographical imagination of Egypt, voiced by the Egyptian people themselves. This image sees Egypt as a country which holds the potential to provide amply for its population and to nurture and offer opportunity for its people. Immediately, this presents an interesting popular geopolitical narrative to an understanding of the events of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and of the desires of the Egyptian people to have freedom for Egypt, given Barnes and Duncan's (1992: 2) claim that it is 'humans that decide how to represent things, and not the things themselves'. A discursive 'dream' of Egypt is most significantly emphasised through the poem 'Anthem and Allegiance to the 25th January Revolution', where the literary representation of the chants of the protesters in Tahrir square personify Egypt as a mother figure, implying it can provide for its people in the same sense as the maternal symbol does:

My mother Egypt, my gorgeous Egypt,
In my heart and in my eyes
(Abd Rabih, 2011)

This geographical imagination of the country of Egypt as a 'mother' figure, holding the maternal impulse to nurture and provide opportunity for its people, is further developed within *Taxi.* One monologue (Al Khamissi, 2011: 74) constructs this imagination by contrasting the everyday experiences of the taxi driver within the state of Egypt to his experiences immersed in the natural beauty of the country.

'*In Egypt we are truly blessed, one of the most beautiful and greatest countries in the world and you live here… looking at [the Nile] purifies your heart… everyday I finish the taxi shift worried, worried for my children, worried about the future, worried about the world and after I finish the fishing shift I'm full of hope, hope for tomorrow and confidence that everything will be fine'*

Here, the references to the land and its beauty present a geographical imagination in which the Egyptian people hold feelings of rootedness and belonging for their own country (Gilroy, 2000). In this quote, whilst the taxi drivers interactions with the Egyptian state on his work shift leaves him worried, once he engages with the nature of Egypt he encounters a sense of personal renewal and holds hope for the future. It is with reference to the beauty of the country and the purity of the Nile that the national sentiment is reflected upon within the geographical imagination (Gilroy, 2000). This discursive construction is similar to that used by Mandela when he used territory and nature in order to define citizenship and national solidarity in South Africa post-Apartheid in light of the divisions of the population within the state (Gilroy, 2000). This reference of the beauty of the Nile in *Taxi* suggests that only an escape from the current state conditions will 'save'

Egypt, as the representation suggests that it only amongst the nature of Egypt rather than the working conditions of the state that the taxi driver feels rooted (Gilroy, 2000).

Further references to the beauty of Egypt's natural resources within *Taxi* contribute to this geographical imagination of Egypt as a site of nurture and opportunity as they are used to highlight the Egyptian people's ideal for the country:

> *We want a shirt that's tailor made for Egypt, our own cotton shirt. I mean a shirt that smells of jasmine, made of Egyptian cotton. It would be the colour of the Nile, a shirt that makes us feel free when we wear it so we know we're working the way we should be for our country.* (Al-Khamissi, 2011: 2).

In this passage it is especially noteworthy that the shirt is made of *Egyptian* cotton, heightening the representation of Egypt as a country that, at least in terms of its natural resources, can provide for its people. Furthermore, with the representation of the Nile, arguably Egypt's foremost geographical feature, as the embodiment of notions of freedom and safety, this passage presents an idea that the natural resources in Egypt can be used to provide material benefit, direction and freedom. Finally, unlike other geopolitical representations of Egypt which presents the state in direct opposition to its people, exploitative and corrupt (Amin, 2011), the repetition of 'our' and 'us' within this passage implies the 'dream' of an Egypt with fair and equal distribution of wealth, political power and Egypt's plentiful natural resources. This is further exaggerated as the monologue continues:

> '*These days everyone wants to work. They want to be productive, they want a government that knows how to make the most of that feeling that every Egyptian feels deep down*' (Al Khamissi, 2011: 2)

This depiction of the Egyptians' 'wants' – work and a representative and fair government – aligns to the demands made by the protesters in Tahrir Square when they called for, amongst many demands, the dissolution of the current government and the removal of the 'state of emergency' across the country (Khalil, 2011). It is absolutely clear through his popular geopolitical imagination from *Taxi* that the Egyptian people were seeking autonomy and the means to make a living in a democratic state (Al Khamissi, 2011; Khalil, 2011). However, through this representation of the call for these 'wants', it is evident that these key Egyptian values have been lost and corrupted through the oppressive and exploitative regime of Mubarak: the pride and love that Egyptians feel for the values of their 'mother' Egypt have been lost. This reflection of the Egyptian people's values and desires helps to indicate how much they want to reconnect with their 'dream' of Egypt, and thus provides further context to the reasoning behind the 2011 revolution.

Through the poem 'This is Cairo and this is our country!', written by a protester and displayed in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the Egyptians' love for their country is exaggerated by a plea to appoint someone 'who will fix Egypt'. The poem suggests that the constructed state apparatus and practices worked to destroy the nurture of Egypt:

> *If Egypt's president really loved Egypt, then it would not have stayed this way*
> *If Egypt's people really loved Egypt, then it would not have stayed this way*
> *If Egypt's prime minister really loved Egypt then it would not have stayed this way*
> *If the working class really loved Egypt then it would not have stayed this way*
> *If doctors, lawyers and engineers really loved Egypt then it would not have stayed this way*
> *Dear God, please appoint the one who will fix Egypt. The undersigned, Egypt. The Egyptian people love her.*

(source: 'Egypt Says by Hani Hafiz', translated by Andrew Alger. Online at: http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2011/05/egypt-says/)

This declaration that the 'Egyptian people love her' returns to the discourse of Egypt as a matriarch, further suggesting that the Egyptian people were there to help the country. This discourse combats the patriarchy discourse of Egypt which had dominated much of the Mubarak government discourse since the 1980s and was used as an organising myth by Mubarak through the suggestion that the Egyptian people were under the control of the state (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Thus, through this popular geopolitical narrative, the idea that the Egyptian people want to talk action to repair their loved Egypt counters the discourse that the Egyptian citizen was indoctrinated to support the Mubarak regime in any state (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Instead, it presents a collective memory and action for Egypt which reflects the rootedness and belonging which the Egyptian people felt towards their country, as the poem reflects upon all the citizens, 'the undersigned', wanting to find a repair for Egypt (Gilroy, 2000). This claim also constructs a geopolitical imagination which indicates how the practice of repair for Egypt will have to come not just through an adjustment of the political regime. Rather, the poem narrates that there will need to be a change in behaviour of all within the Egyptian state, as it is the fault of all that Egypt has ended up in this position; from the political repression of the Mubarak regime, the corruption of the people's assembly, the greed of the elite, and a lack of fight from the working class (Omar, 2011).

The discursive division between Egypt as a space of nurture and opportunity and as a space of repression highlights the power relations existing between the Egyptian people and the Egyptian state in the lead up to the 2011 revolution (Berg, 2009). The poetry texts

begin to illustrate the active resistance and unhappiness of the population against how the Mubarak regime destroyed the beauty of their country (Mostafa, 2012). This is clearly exemplified in the poem 'Ali Baba and the forty thieves', displayed in Tahrir Square and subsequently published on www.tahrirdocuments.org:

A leader ruled for thirty years,
And with him, the country sank down in the mud.
It became clear they were a gang
And they organised a syndicate against the people.
They sold all of Egypt for their own profit,
All that's left now is her skin.
They left her green land defiled..
Houses – factories – smoke
Only a few acres remained.

(source: 'Ali Baba and the forty thieves' Translated by Emily Drumsta: online at: http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2011/05/1774/)

The contradictory discourse between the previous *'green land'* of Egypt and the present *'country* [which] *sank in the mud'* under the Mubarak rule clearly illustrates the grievances that the Egyptian protesters held against the Mubarak regime for its destructive social, economic and political actions across its three decades of power (Amin, 2011). It highlights the power relations which existed between the population and the state during these years, as the homeland to which the Egyptian are profoundly connected is represented as defiled, with both the people and the land robbed of the resources to which they are entitled. Instead, through a *'syndicate against the people'*, a select few have taken benefit off the land at the expense of the rest of the people (Amin, 2011). This representation clearly reflects the changing power relations at the time, as changes to land rights due to privatisation schemes meant that tracts of land which had traditionally belonged to the indigenous population were given to elites and foreign investors within the Mubarak governance (El Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009). A similar construction of Egypt is illustrated through another poem listed on Tahrir Documents (2011), entitled 'Happy Spring Egypt!', written and published shortly after Mubarak's resignation on February 11th 2011:

'*Happy Spring Egypt! My country, today we are celebrating your liberation from the hand of a corrupt ruler, who had a clique of thieves around him that thought you were a place where anything goes or a private estate. But your youth rose us and revolted with the blood of your martyrs... they returned freedom to you once more… may you always live free and young my country!'*

Here, the state of Egypt is constructed as a 'private estate' because of the 'clique of thieves' surrounding Mubarak. This, and the above description from 'Ali Baba and the forty thieves', is an accurate representation of the Egyptian state prior to the 2011 revolution, as it was characterised by a closed circle of politicians and businessmen operating around Mubarak (Nowaira, 2011). The language of both poems reflects the resulting grievances of the population, as the authors allude the face that, due to the changed state bureaucracy, hope and opportunity for the Egyptian people was lost (Shanine, 2011). However, it is important to recognise that these representations do not leave the Egyptian people imagined as repressed: rather, the poems construct the Egyptian people as active subjects willing to fight back for the 'green land' of their homeland, a clear illustration of the revolutionary spirit of the protesters in Tahrir Square.

The popular geopolitical representations within *Taxi* provide an imagination of how the prior 'dream' landscape of Egypt was quickly disrupted through the repressive practices of the Mubarak state from the 1980s. This is first envisaged through the changed discursive image of a policeman throughout Mubarak's presidency:

> *'A policeman with a rank 'Amin' – literally a trustworthy guardian- was a beautiful dream in the early seventies, an Amin on the streets in his smart uniform, walking along so elegant, proud as a peacock. How did this dream, over the last thirty years, turn into a nightmare haunting the streets of Egypt?'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 7).

In this discourse, the Egyptian policeman is initially represented as a 'guardian' in society, essentially embodying the 'dream' of Egypt on the streets. However, the narrator in the passage suggests that this discourse has changed drastically over the thirty years of Mubarak rule, with the policeman now standing as a 'nightmare haunting' the lives of the Egyptians (Al Khamissi, 2011). This popular geopolitical representation clearly corresponds to practical geopolitical reasoning on the image of the police in Egypt, as their use of torture in Egypt is described as 'routine and pervasive' through US Embassy cables, so much so that the Egyptian government no longer denies that it exists (US Embassy cables in Harding, 2011). Over Mubarak's presidency, the police in Egypt were installed as an instrument of regime power rather than a public service institution in favour of the people (US Embassy cables in Harding, 2011). Through the passage, this role is clearly imaged, as whilst the police used to be an 'amin', implying that they protected the people, in present day the police appear to be damaging the streets themselves rather than protecting them (Harding, 2011). This representation of the changed discursive construction of the police in this passage also indicates how this had a negative impact on the people's social relationship with the state, as the driver questioning how his dream became disrupted in such a manner. Indeed, opposition to the police brutality on the street

and the unjustified acts of torture and violence that they imposed upon innocent members of the Egyptian population formed one of the more prominent protest calls in Tahrir Square in January 2011 (El Ghobashy, 2011). Hence, the comments on and implications of the changing discourses that are brought up here in *Taxi* provide an interesting representation of how the Egyptian people were beginning to respond to Mubarak's state apparatus, thus altering the power relations between the state and its people (Foucault, 1972). This illustrates one instance of how popular geopolitical representations within texts were utilised by the Egyptian people as counter-discourses in the run-up to the revolution (Fahmy, 2011).

In addition, as well as the discourse of the 'dream' of Egypt being disrupted by the discursive representation of life under the Mubarak presidency and associated state apparatus, the representation within *Taxi* further this disruption by suggesting that the responsibilities for the destruction of the 'dream' spread wider across the people of Egypt. This is expressed through the monologue of one taxi driver discussing her daughter taking a taxi for the first time:

> '*She* [the taxi driver's daughter] *must not be frightened of taking a taxi on her own because Egyptians are the kindest people in the world, and when the driver finds a young girl he treats her as though she were his daughter… the driver has lifted my eyes from the veil of illusion and I'm standing now in the kitchen sharpening the knife to give to my daughter tomorrow morning*' (Al Khamissi, 2011: 82).

As this monologue begins, the sentiments of the taxi driver suggest that the discourse of Egypt as a 'dream' continues, as he discusses the kindness of the Egyptian people. Yet, following the representation of an incident where his daughter took a taxi on her own the previous day, the represented actions of his taxi to arm his daughter on her upcoming travels indicates that he believes himself to be deceived by the 'dream'. This is a poignant message, as it highlights the destruction of the dream of Egypt in the context of the destruction of the innocence of the youth. Through this, it is possible to understand how the population began to become disenfranchised within the Egyptian state, and thus this provides a compelling popular geopolitical representation of Egypt.

The geopolitical imagination of Egypt which is developed throughout these analysed examples of poetry and *Taxi* fully illustrate the influence that the 'little things' of literature can have on the articulation of geo-power and geopolitical narratives (Thrift, 2000; 2002). Here, through the literature, the Egyptian people themselves construct a geopolitical imagination of Egypt as felt by 'every Egyptian... deep down' (Al Khamissi, 2011), one that emphasises the nurture and opportunity of the country and presents the possibility of the progression of the country to these freedoms. Presenting an evocation of the desires of

the Egyptian people, this representation of Egypt through the literature 'contains a voice' which provides a foundation from which to understand the 2011 Egyptian revolution: the Egyptian people are seen to be strongly resisting the destruction of opportunity within their country, and expressing their determination to fight to regain this for their land (Mostafa, 2012; Sharp, 1996).

'What part of stability are you against?' 'The stab part' : *AL-Khan* challenges the state produced discourses of 'stability'.

The manner through which people envisage the world defines their geographical imagination (Cosgrave & Daniels, 1988). Critical geopolitics pays much attention to this, given the observations that geopolitical discourse and, by implication, the geographical imagination, is largely dependent on the political power of those constructing the representations (Sharp, 2009; O'Tuathail, 1996). In the context of Egypt and this research, this influence of political power upon representations is highly significant, especially given the hegemonic discursive representation of 'stability' professed by the Mubarak regime in reference to the state of political and economic affairs in Egypt (Shanine, 2011). Academic commentary acknowledges that a rhetoric of 'stability' was quickly constructed as the norm within Egypt following Mubarak's take to power in Egypt in 1981, with Mubarak declaring himself as the pillar of stability within the politically turbulent Middle East (Shanine, 2011; Fahmy, 2011). This rhetoric of 'stability', standing as the 'prevalent shorthand for the Mubarak regime's combination of economic liberalisation and authoritarian politics' was presented by the Mubarak government as the only perceived means of progress for the country, suggesting that future success was rested on a continuation of the current provisions, services and laws in Egypt (Shanine, 2011: 2; Fahmy, 2011).

Such has been the strength of this rhetoric of 'stability' that, over the years, it has also been utilised in international geopolitical representations of Egypt, with Mubarak and his country referenced as the symbol of regional stability in the Middle East (Guirguis, 2009; Shanine, 2011). Indeed, even on the eve of the 2011 uprisings, Hilary Clinton, US Secretary of State, issued a statement which placed direct emphasis upon it, and the continued belief held by the United States of America that Egypt was 'stable':

> 'Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people' (Clinton, 2011 in Tisdall, 2011).

This statement directly highlights how the rhetoric of 'stability' was held by both domestic and foreign government officials and academics immediately prior to the 2011 uprisings, consequently constructing the regime as resilient and as unlikely to become the next site

of popular uprising against autocratic rule (El-Ghobashy, 2011). Evidently, 'stability' was the hegemonic discourse of the Egyptian state within 'practical' geopolitics before the uprisings began (Cook, 2011; Shanine, 2011; Guirguis, 2009).

Although academic commentaries highlight how the discourse of 'stability' was a stronghold in both domestic and international practical geopolitical representations, even until the eve of the 2011 uprisings, with the general public sphere, this rhetoric was being dismissed on the basis that a continued reliance on this 'stability' was a risky proposition (Shanine, 2011; Guirguis, 2009). Whilst Mubarak may have been considered a pillar of regional stability, the repression and corruption used by the regime in order to sustain stability and security within Egypt has in fact served to undermine it (Guirguis, 2009). Instead, there has been rising social discontent against 'stability' in recent years due to the chronic repression and corruption from the regime, economic instability and minimal state legitimacy (Guirguis, 2009; Shanine, 2011).

In reflection of this, the political cartoon *AL-Khan,* published daily in Cairo's English independent newspaper *Daily News Egypt* from 2008 to 2010, presents a parodied direct resistance to the rhetoric of 'stability' as the definition for Egyptian political, economic and

social affairs. This is first perfectly exemplified in the satirical cartoon drawn by Tarek Shanin and published in the newspaper on 16th January 2010 (figure 1):
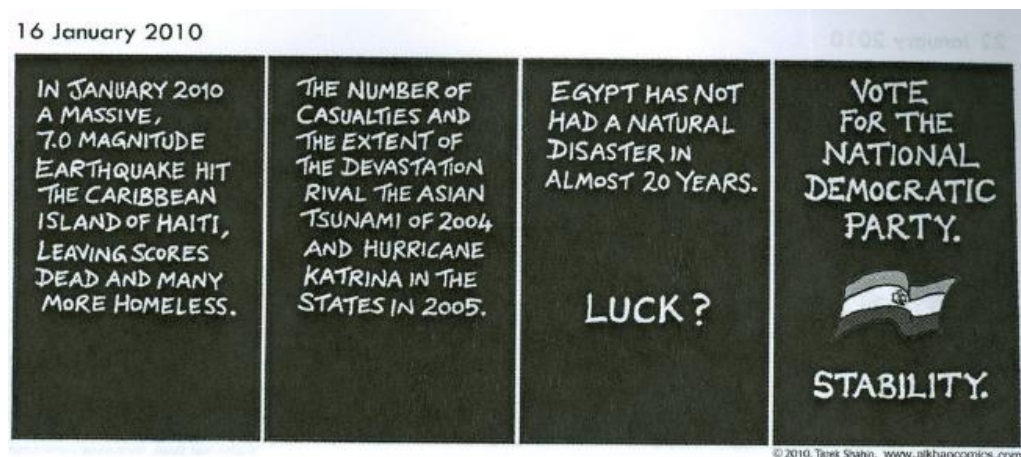
Figure 1- (source: Shanin, 2011: 103)

With reference to the recent earthquake disaster in Haiti and the previous disasters of the 2004 Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the cartoon satirically constructs a National Democratic voting poster, in which the discourse of 'stability' is given as the strapline to their campaign. This implies that it has been the Mubarak regime's provision of 'stability' within Egypt which has been the sole reason for the lack of natural disasters in the country. This is a compelling representation, as it parodies how the National Democratic Party would frame their actions through 'stability' with a complete disregard for the physical and social characteristics of Egypt that may have also contributed to this

'luck' (Guirguis, 2009). Second, it implies that the National Democratic Party call for stability as a means to prevent disasters (Shanine, 2011). However, through this parody, there is an absent presence of any acknowledgement of the activities of oppression, torture and hardships for which they have been responsible under and in the name of this discourse of 'stability' (Machett, 2011). This representation thus draws into question the assumptions and power through which geopolitical visions are constructed (Dodds, 1996). The analysis of Steve Bell's political cartoons of the Falklands war throws up a similar critique and criticism of the respective Margaret Thatcher government (Dodds, 1996). In Dodds (1996) article, it is mused that the Thatcher government used the successes of the Falklands war in order to mask the national suffering of high unemployment in the UK. This is mirrored here through the claims of 'stability', as the Mubarak government in Egypt posit Egypt as an international stability figure in the Middle East to hide the instability of Egypt itself (Shanine, 2011). Yet, the political cartoons drawn and published by Bell in an English national newspaper, which refused to illustrate the Falklands war in any manner other than as an absurd battleground of domestic politics, destabilised the authority of the British government's representational claims that the UK was in full success at the time as it brought into view the domestic issues affecting the country (Dodds, 1996). In a similar vein, this satire of the political cartoon of *Al-Khan* undermines the authority of the Mubarak government's claims of 'stability' by highlighting the instability that lies within it due to the repressive domestic actions of the state (Guirguis, 2009; Dittmer, 2010).

This discourse in this cartoon of 16th January 2010 (figure 1) also holds an absent presence of the government's failure to acknowledge the destabilising effects of the 'economic liberalisation' brought about by 'stability' (Shanine, 2011). Alongside another cartoon, published by Shanin in *Daily News Egypt* on 6th February 2010 (figure 2), this popular geopolitical representation challenges the disproportionate effects of this 'economic liberalisation' through a direct reference to the continued desire of Mubarak to progress with 'stability' despite the evident consequential economic or social problems in the state (Shanine, 2011):

Figure 2: (Source – Shanin, 2011: 107)

Through a satirical conversation between the character Nada, a zealous socialist editor of the fictional *Al-Khan* magazine where the cartoon is set, and a gas canister (evidently representing the voice of the National Democratic Party (NDP)), *Al Khan* satirically portrays the NDP's belief that 'stability' is the safest and only route forward for Egypt: the cartoon parodies th*at* that the gas canister would 'explode' if other actions were taken. This ridiculing of the hegemonic discourse of 'stability' illustrates exactly how a text or cartoon can work to disturb the dominant imagination a space (Dodds, 2007). Here, the discursive challenge through *Al-Khan* prompts the reader to dispute the discourses presented by the Egyptian state, and gives an alternative vision of the space and its people (Dodds, 1996). This representation is thus an important anti-geopolitical challenge presented through the popular geopolitics of *Al-Khan* and its evidence holds an important support for the progress of the inclusion of popular geopolitics within geopolitical representations of events as this illustrates a visuality of the important resistance to the hegemony existing within a space (O'Tuathail, 1996; Holland, 2012). This satirising of the hegemonic discourse of 'stability' continues within the *Al-Khan* cartoons throughout the series' publication, with a final challenge to it published in an epilogue to the series on February 4th 2011, during the revolution itself (figure 3).

Epilogue 4 February 2011

| I'M STANDING IN TAHRIR SQUARE IN DOWN TOWN CAIRO WHERE MILLIONS OF EGYPTIANS ARE DEMANDING AN END TO AUTHORITARIAN RULE. | AFTER FIGHTING THE PROTESTERS WITH TEAR GAS, LIVE AMMO AND WEAPONIZED CAMELS. THE RULING REGIME IS NOW OFFERING CONCESSIONS BUT TO NO AVAIL. | WE PROMISE CHANGE. BUT WE NEED TIME FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION! | WHAT PART OF STABILITY ARE YOU AGAINST?! — THE "STAB" PART! |

Figure 3: (Source- Shanin, 2011:1)

First, this cartoon illustrates how, even in the midst of the 2011 revolution, the discourse of 'stability' was still supported and reinforced by politicians within the formal geopolitical discourse in Egypt, with the fictional politician fighting to understand *'what part of 'stability' are you against?'* (Shanine, 2011). Second, the reaction of the fictionalised protesters here subverts the discourse of 'stability' once more, demonstrating exactly how a discourse can change or lose meaning over time and in different contexts (Foucault, 1972). In the cartoon, the protesters shout that they are against *'the stab part'* of stability, precisely illuminating that because of the repression and torture that the population have faced under the framework of 'stability', 'stability' is an act of violence against the people (Machett, 2011). The breakdown of the word 'stability' to an alternative stem of 'stab' rather than 'stable' draws a focus on violence rather than to a firmly established and calm existence, and hence subverts the discourse that 'stability' means a continuation of economic, social and political prosperity (Shanine, 2011). Instead, this representation serves as a humorous challenge to the fact that the Egyptian people have long been victims of a thoroughly repressive national structure under Mubarak (Harutyunyan, 2012).

Also, with the large majority of the protesters within Tahrir Square constituted from Egypt's youth, this subversion demonstrates the claim by Shanine (2011) that the discourse of 'stability' now carries distinctly different characteristics for the youth population than it did for the older generations. Shanine (2011) discusses how, when the Mubarak regime first came to power, 'stability' stood for economic liberalisation and westernisation as previously outlined: it was celebrated and enjoyed (Shanine, 2011). However, throughout the 1990s, with the stifling of bureaucracy and the monopolisation of wealth and opportunities by the rich few, the discourse of 'stability' soon came to mean far less than the previous comforts and opportunities it exuded (Shanine, 2011). Indeed, for the youth protester who grew up amongst the poverty, repression and torture of the 1990s, 'stability' meant 'no prospects for the future' (Shanine, 2011: 3). Thus, the exemplification of the fictionalised protesters' reaction against the discourse within *Al-Khan* works to reinforce a

geographical imagination of the Egyptian population that are truly opposed to the practice of 'stability' by the Mubarak regime.

These illustrations in *Al-Khan* demonstrate the impact that popular culture texts can have on the understanding of a certain place, especially where a hegemonic discourse would otherwise dominate the geographical imagination (Holland, 2012). Daniels and Rycroft (1993) examined how the novels of Alan Sillitoe presented a conflicting imagination of Nottingham to the 'model modern city' expressed in the city's corporation publications through the fictional representations of the city in conflict and upheaval. Here, *Al Khan* illustrates the grievance against the discourse of 'stability' from the youth against the persistence of the National Democratic Party to continue to utilise this discourse to define their country. This is noteworthy as it illustrates how a discourse can be altered within a certain context and by the individuals creating it, thus providing a distinct and perhaps alternative representation to that which the discourse presented before (Berg, 2009). Overall, this analysis demonstrates how, despite the cartoons being laden with humour and satire, they still reflect public knowledge and opinion at the time and represent a sense of Egypt in conflict in the lead up to the 2011 revolution (Greenberg, 2002).

These challenges through *AL-Khan* to the practical geopolitical representations of 'stability' within Egypt strongly challenge the acceptance of geopolitical imaginations of places, especially those apart from our own experiences, as it illustrates exactly how the manipulation of political power can lead to representations which can mask the realistic conditions of a place (Sharp, 2009; O'Tuathail, 1996). Through the popular geopolitical representation of *Al-Khan,* the discourse of 'stability' is first satirically mocked, and then dissected so as to uncover its true meaning for the population living under it. The resulting representation presents a more faithful understanding of the conditions of living under 'stability', and lead the reader to understand that 'stability' doesn't ensure the security or stability of the Egyptian population at all (Shanine, 2011). It illustrates the resistance of the Egyptian people against internalising the claim of 'stability for the sake of development' because they did not feel that they benefited from the wealth and health that the neo-liberal regime claimed it provided (Cook, 2011). This representation through the popular geopolitics of *Al-Khan* is thus insightful, as it is indicative of the resistance held against the hegemony of the state discourses and the impact that this can have (Holland, 2012).

'Why won't you understand that Capitalism *is* social justice?' : *AL-Khan* challenges the discourses of capitalism in the Egyptian state

The discourses prevalent in the *Al-Khan* cartoons greatly support the argument that 'popular culture' sources are a legitimate source from which to analyse political issues as the cartoons' discourses emphasise many of the daily life and social relation consequences of the various economic, political and social programmes enforced under

Mubarak's presidency (Dodds, 2008; Whipple, 2011). In particular, the cartoon's narratives offer a competing discourse to the suggestions by the Mubarak government in 2005 that, following an economic privatisation programme and private foreign investment, an era of 'rapid and sustainable development had begun' (Amin, 2011: 64). The cartoons focus heavily on the on-the-ground realities of uneven wealth and resource distribution and the wide resistance that came against this from Egyptian people (Amin, 2011), providing a geographical imagination of life in Egypt which presents the susceptibility of the country to revolution given the grievances held by the Egyptian people as a result of these programmes.

One such programme was the aggressive programme of economic privatisation in Egypt, put in place in the 1990s following recommendations from the IMF, World Bank and Washington Consensus (Mekay, 2011). The Mubarak government discourse on the programme, alongside the international discourse from Washington, declared it as necessary in order to promote a stronger domestic environment within Egypt, enhancing both private investment and job opportunities (Mekay, 2011). Yet, evidence suggests that the adherence to these programmes contributed largely to the prosperity of only the already affluent elite whilst the quality of life deteriorated for the rest of the Egyptian population (Mackell, 2011). One series of the *Al-Khan* political cartoon, entitled 'The privatisation of ENECO' contributes to this competing discourse, as the representation of the privatisation of the fictional company Engineering Nile Egyptian Company (ENECO) highlights how only the elite appeared to benefit from the process. In the cartoon published on 1st July 2008 (figure 4). Shanin shows the character Omar, a 'liberal capitalist', as ignorantly regarding the privatisation scheme as beneficial, with 'greater efficiency', a 'higher tax revenue' and 'uneven distribution of income' standing as positive outcomes of the process:

Figure 4: (Source- Shanin, 2011: 12)

The competing narrative comes from the character Nada, a socialist, highlighting that the increased uneven distribution of income would in fact be to the detriment of the majority of

the population. Indeed, whilst the Mubarak government were claiming that a stage of rapid and sustainable development had been reached by 2005, many of the poor were still fighting each other for as much subsidised bread as possible (Amin, 2011).

This competing discourse against the economic privatisation programme is continued in the political cartoon published in *Daily News Egypt* on 3rd July 2008 (figure 5), with Omar again portrayed satirically as holding little regard for the equality it fails to offer:

Figure 5: (source- Shanin, 2011: 13)

As a result, this cartoon reflects a discourse which sees the process of privatisation in Egypt at the 'core of a complicated web of crony capitalism' where as selected few senior executives amassed huge fortunes whilst the rest of the population failed to benefit (Halime, 2011: n.p). Through the character Nada's responses, the reader of the political cartoon can recognise the extent to which the Egyptian people held frustrations with this privatisation programme, as Nada challenges that it will only be with a higher GDP per capita that '*you me and that family over there can **all** live prosperous*' (figure 5). The representation of this conflict is substantial, as critics have argued the privatisation of companies, and the consequences this had on daily life, was a contributing factor to the popular uprising due to the widespread popular opposition that emerged against the aggressive programme (Mekay, 2011). Indeed, this resistance was represented in *Daily News Egypt* though political cartoons on both 13th November 2008 and 7th November 2008 (figures 6 & 7):
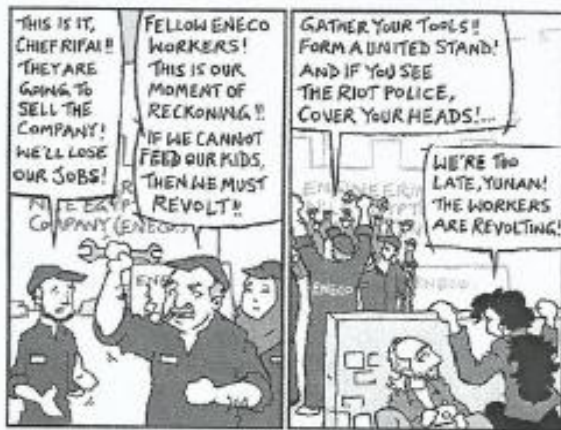
Figure 6: (Source- Shanin. 2011: 30).   Figure 7: (source- Shanin, 2011: 31)

These political cartoons of *Al-Khan* not only challenge the discourses that the economic privatisation schemes would be of benefit to all: they also provide a clear imagination that the Egyptian population were ready to challenge and protest against state practices which only benefited the elite, and to make their voice heard in within the political sphere. This is an important asset of this popular geopolitical representation, as it continues to visualise the emerging resistance within the Egyptian population, which accounts for the changing political dynamics within Egypt at the time (Holland, 2012). As well as providing a competing narrative to the economic consequences of the privatisation programmes, the political cartoons of *Al-Khan* also indicate the social relations and justice that occur as a result of this between the state and its people. Social justice suggests that there is equality and solidarity within a society (Mitchell, 2003). In the cartoon published in *Daily News Egypt* on 3rd November 2009 (figure 8), the character Nada challenges the National Democratic Party's discourse that there would be competitive elections and social justice for all:

Figure 8: (source- Shanin, 2011: 80)

Whilst the character of Omar, representative of the capitalist opinion in the Egyptian society, declares that capitalism itself is constitutive of social justice, Nada's vocal resistance to this claim is unnervingly similar to that expressed by the protesters in Tahrir Square in January 2011. In January 2011, one of the main demands of the protests was the right to a competitive and fair election (EL-Ghobashy, 2011). Nada foreshadows the eruption of this protest as she argues that there will be protests as the Mubarak government cannot facilitate their claim of the provision of 'competitive elections and social justice'. El-Ghobashy (2011) identifies that the capitalist Mubarak regime provided a 'simulacrum of politics' which allowed enough space for tightly controlled parties and elections. However, the responses within the 2011 protests indicate that the stringent controls prevented many from participating (El-Ghobashy, 2011). Hence, Nada's reaction here provides an accurate geographical imagination of the resistance emerging against these claims of social justice by the Mubarak government and the failed implementation of such.

This geographical imagination and foreshadowing is further exaggerated in the cartoon published on 2nd January 2010 (figure 9) which highlights the fraudulent activities within national and local elections since 2005. Whilst the Mubarak government worked to encourage economic freedoms and development, there was a simultaneous stifling of political freedom and democracy within Egypt (Weinberger, 2011). For decades, the political system and electoral process was rigged in order to ensure a majority win for Hosni Mubarak and his National Democratic Party (Carlstrom & Hill, 2012). Figure 9 illustrates this, as a member of the population is interviewed about her preparations for voting in the 2010 parliamentary elections. It satirises electoral violations by the National Democratic Party through the absurd suggestion that this woman had been denied a voting card because her living situation had changed since she was a newborn baby (figure 9: Shenker, 2010):

Figure 9: (source- Shanin, 2011: 100)

This use of satire presents an interesting geographical imagination of Egypt as a 'democracy in denial', as it illustrates the Egyptian authorities trying to restrict the voting turnout, rather than encourage it as is normal practice within a democratic environment (Hamid, 2011). This same representation is carried within the novel *Taxi*, as the authorities are represented as controlling the votes through a means of force and bribery:

> '*What happens is a few village heads and the directors of government offices round up by force the peasants or the government workers to vote, to earn a little extra money. In the end, it's business.... I swear out of the 70 million Egyptians, there's not one who votes willingly*' (Al Khamissi, 2011: 53)

Egypt is imagined here as a 'democracy in denial' because we see the removal of the constitutional political freedom of voting from the Egyptian people by the National Democratic Party, who simply wish to consolidate their power within the country (Hamid, 2011). This is an important imagination, as it also foreshadows the corruption and fraudulence which did end up accompanying the Parliamentary elections when they were fully undertaken in December 2010 (Hamid, 2011). The result, a landslide victory for the National Democratic Party, was tainted by vast reports of ballot stuffing, vote buying and the prevention of opposition representatives and voters from accessing polling booths (Shenker, 2010). Thus, this imagination of Egypt as a 'democracy in denial' (Hamid, 2011) within *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* is truly revealing of the corrupt political system of the time, and the reactions from the fictional characters within each text against these practices contributes to an understanding of the on-the-street grievances of these actions. This is important, as it was in anger against the corrupt 2010 parliamentary elections that the Egyptian people, who had long been accused of political passivity, took to the streets in the 2011 revolution to protest against the economic and political deterioration in the country (Hamid, 2011). Hence, the representation of these corrupt political conditions within both *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* contribute significantly to a geographical imagination of Egypt prior to the 2011 revolution. By exposing Egypt as a 'democracy in denial', the texts help to illustrate how the landscape of Egypt prior to the 2011 Egyptian revolution was restricted, controlled and corrupt. Neoliberal advances within the country were accompanied by stifled political and economic freedoms for the masses, and the Egyptian people were beginning to act upon it (Mekay, 2011; Hamid, 2011).

'The Government's got a 50-50 stake in the lamp': *Taxi* highlights the impact of corruption and poverty on the daily lives of the Egyptian people.

As the discourse analysis moves across texts to the monologues in *Taxi,* the discourse of corruption in Egypt envisaged within the representations of political freedoms in *Al-Khan* more predominantly emerges, establishing an imagination of the hardship faced by the general population in the face of government bribery. Just as Daniels & Rycroft (1993)

identify that Alan Sillitoe's novels reveal a grimier and darker Nottingham than the official sources, *Taxi* reveals a shadier and more corrupt Egypt than that which is portrayed through the state discourses (Al Khamissi, 2011; Ross, 2011). Although from various literature, the nature of the corruption across Egypt across the last twenty years is well known (Amin, 2011; El Ghobashy, 2011; El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009), *Taxi* provides a valuable extension to this narrative by providing an account of the impact that such practices were having on the population itself (Holland, 2012). This is an important representation, as it exposes the emerging on-the-street grievances of the Egyptian people and helps the reader to understand why they were prompted into revolution.

By the 2000s, corruption in Egypt had reached such saturated levels that Amin (2011: 43) refers to the 'institutionalisation of corruption': corruption was a law itself that was unable to be broken. This is visualised through one taxi driver's comment that he accounts for bribery within his daily expenses:

> *'Just as I spend so much a day on petrol, I have to put aside bribe money for the traffic department everyday just in case'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 101)

As this monologue continues, it becomes evident that despite appearing to hold little intention, the government officials *'plunder and steal and ask for bribes'* from the taxi drivers to allow them to carry on with their daily activities (Al Khamissi, 2011: 101). Across the monologues this same discourse continually emerges, with various incidences of the taxi drivers succumbing to the bribes demanded from police officers:

> *'If they stopped me now they would ask for my licenses. If my licenses are ok they would ask for the fire extinguisher, I'd get it out for them and they would say it's too far away from you or its empty or cold… in short he has a million ways to arrest you even if everything's in order and he doesn't like your face'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 68)

> *'He turned out to be a sergeant in plain clothes… I pulled out five pounds 'that won't do' he said… he took twenty pounds and the bastard got out. Thuggery big time… there's not one of those sons of bitches who doesn't take bribes and steal.'* (Al-Khamissi, 2011: 6).

This text offers an enlightening view of the general population's experience of the bribery. Amin (2011) reports how, due to the institutionalisation of corruption, the population had begun to think of the bribery and fraud as no different to everyday life. However, through this analysis of Taxi it is established that regardless of how much corruption had come to be expected and accepted, its impact on the lives of the general population was still damaging. As this discourse deepens throughout the text, an analogy of Aladdin's lamp is

employed in order to further indicate the extent to which the police and government practice interfered in the daily earnings of the Egyptian population:

> *'A guy was walking through the desert when he found Aladdin's lamp. He rubbed it and a genie appeared, and said 'Hey presto, at your service, your wish is my command'. The guy didn't believe his eyes and asked for a million pounds. The genie gave him half a million…. It's like this, the government's got a 50-50 stake in the lamp'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 22).

This analogy helps to further visualise the belief that the government retrieves half of the earnings from the population through a manner of *'various tricks, every now and then they dream up a new story'* (Al Khamissi, 2011; 22). Within this discourse, the taxi drivers are left as victims of the government's own meddling so as to ensure an increased return on bribes. It is a life in Egypt determined by a number of lies: '*we live a lie and believe it'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 24). Although academic literature informs the reader of the saturated levels of corruption in Egypt, it is from the characters in *Taxi* that the reader can learn of the impact that such practice has on their income:

> *'There's not a single Egyptian taxi driver who can tell you what they earn. It's all in the hands of God'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 99).

> '*My God I tell you, I'm living like a dead man. No, a dead man's much better off than me. I work two shifts and at the end of the month, I'm still about 100 pounds in debt'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 157)

> '*We live from day to day, meal to meal. I mean, if I went home I'd find one hundred and one disasters, I'd find the children hadn't eaten and their mothers at wits end'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 14).

These representations reveal how, due to the levels of corruption within the country, often the only benefactors from the advances of neoliberalism in Egypt since the 1990s were the wealthy businessmen who had connections with the National Democratic Party (Al Jazeera, 2011). Outside of this super rich elite, household incomes and unemployment rose and poverty levels were exacerbated even further (Beinin, 2012). World Bank figures illustrate that more than forty percent of the population, such as these fictional taxi drivers represented in *Taxi,* were 'extremely poor' (unable to meet minimum food needs), 'poor' (not able to meet basic food needs) or 'near poor' (meeting little more than basic food needs), all living on $2 or less a day (Slackman, 2011; Amin, 2011). *Taxi* speaks directly to this resulting poverty, with the many of the fictional taxi drivers actually lawyers, accountants or teachers by training in a country that cannot offer them the role which they are qualified for (Abdel-Latif, 2007). As a taxi driver, their income was minimal, with many of the represented drivers struggling to make ends meet for their family, as is represented

in the above quotes (Al Khamissi, 2011). This is even true when they have worked a double shift (Al-Khamissi, 2011). This representation is significant, as it indicates the daily life experience for the lower strata of society in Egypt under the Mubarak regime, providing a clear visualisation to how the corruption of the economic and political systems worked to impoverish this majority of the population (Abdel-Latif, 2007; Slackman, 2011). Whilst there has been international praise for the economic changes made by the Egyptian government since the 1990s, with annual marked growth in Gross Domestic Product in the country, the representations within *Taxi* indicate how there was little trickle down of this performance to the lower populations (Slackman, 2008).

The discourse of poverty in *Taxi* also indicates how the lower population was beginning to react against this poverty and corruption through street action, illustrating the frustrations and grievances which were developing because of their living conditions (Slackman, 2008):

> *'You know these kids that blew themselves up in El Hussein and Tahrir Square? Those kids are top notch. They're a bunch of poor kids who say where things are going. I mean, saw things properly and they realised that death was much better than this son of a bitch life we lead'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 157/158)

Whilst the violence of this represented reaction is at the extreme, this reveals the agency of the 'subaltern' lower population to act for themselves even in the conditions of poverty (Sylvester, 2011). This echoes Sylvester's (2011) analysis of postcolonial novels, like the character Methode in the *Sunday Night at the Pool in Kigali*, the Egyptian here is refusing to accept a life prescribed to them, instead choosing to take their own control of their life by killing themselves (Sylvester, 2011). Although it is uncertain whether this illustration in *Taxi* reflects a true event within Tahrir Square, the grievances and agency which it reveals allow the reader to understand the passion of the Egyptian people to release themselves from *'this son of a bitch life we lead'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 158). Indeed, this activism is reflected in the significant upsurge of trade union protests in the 2000s against the accelerated neoliberal policies and the associated exacerbated poverty in the majority of the population (Beinin, 2012). Therefore, these exaggerations of how the fictional taxi drivers within *Taxi* are drawn to take action against their living conditions contributes to the imagination that the Egyptian people were beginning to successfully revolt in events which culminated in the 2011 revolution.

Due to the nature of these discussed representations, *Taxi* must be taken as an invaluable contribution of popular geopolitics to the analysis of the geopolitical imagination of the lead up to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Based on discussions with true Cairo taxi drivers, these, albeit now fictional, representations of the lower strata of society offer a

much deeper and reflective analysis of Egypt prior to the events of 2011 as they offer a true indication of the popular moods and grievances against the government (Abdel-Latif, 2007). This is especially important given that the taxi drivers are representative of a strata of society who are located on the periphery of politics, and hence hardly heard, but yet so largely affected by it (Abdel-Latif, 2007). Indeed, one of the key protester demands within the 2011 Egyptian revolution was for a release from the current state of corruption and poverty (Shenker, 2011). Also, this geographical imagination of Egypt produced through *Taxi* is more important given the high circulation response of the book across an Egyptian audience (Abdel-Latif, 2007). Consequently, this produced geographical imagination, as well as presenting an image of Egypt to the international audience, could have worked to connect those Egyptians who may have espoused similar grievances against their country to reveal a collective despondence against the Mubarak government (Abdel-Latif, 2007). The text clearly holds the qualities of the resistance text culture emerging at the time, and for this reason it presents an accurate and revealing geographical imagination of Egypt, the Egyptian people and the developing grievances which collectively prompted the Egyptian people into the 2011 revolution.

A geographical imagination of Egypt prior to 2011 Egyptian revolution

The analysis of the popular geopolitical narratives presented within the political cartoon *Al-Khan,* the novel *Taxi* and the poetry gathered from the website *Tahrir Documents* (2011) construct a strong and defining 'geopolitical imagination' of Egypt in the lead up to the 2011 revolution.

First, the representations within the poetry and *Taxi* 'contain a voice' which provide the foundations from which to understand the 2011 revolution as it illustrates the Egyptian people constructing their own geopolitical imagination for Egypt through the articulation of a maternal and matriarchal discourse (Mostafa, 2012; Sharp, 1996). This evocation of the Egyptian people's desires, their rootedness and belonging to their country despite the repressive nature of the Mubarak regime and their desire to return Egypt to its nature and its beauty, presents a strong articulation of how 'all Egyptians felt deep down' in the pre-revolutionary environment (Al Khamissi, 2011: 2; Gilroy, 2000; Mostafa, 2012).

Second, the geographical imaginations which are presented through the poetry, the novel *Taxi* and the political cartoon *Al Khan* contribute a visuality of resistance against the geopolitical narratives of the Egyptian state (O'Tuathail, 1996; Holland, 2012). For example, the vision presented in both *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* highlights how few Egyptians internalised the Mubarak state discourse of 'stability for the sake of development' because of the associated uneven wealth and resource distribution, restricted political rights and repression from the state forces (Cook, 2011; Shanine, 2011; Abdel-Latif, 2007). The analysis of the texts highlights the construction of a geographical imagination of a

'democracy in denial' (Hamid, 2011: n.p). The illustrations of the daily life experiences for the taxi drivers and the lower strata of the population emphasises how corruption and a restrictive political system within Egypt was working to impoverish its majority in the lead up to the 2011 revolution (Abdel-Latif, 2007).

Finally, the discourses within *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* indicate the beginnings of the street protest action in Egypt across the 2000s through a microscopic personalised view of how the Egyptian people were rising up against the aggressive neoliberal policies implemented by the Mubarak regime (Beinin, 2012). This presentation of a subverting discourse to the ideologies of the Mubarak regime contributes a geographical imagination of Egypt which furthers an understanding of the geography of the space in the years prior to the 2011 revolution as it expresses the on-the-ground realities and grievances of the Egyptian population.

These popular geopolitical narratives greatly support the claim by Dittmer (2005), Daniels and Rycroft (1993), Da Costa (2003) and Crang (1998) that such resources have the potential to contribute greatly to cultural and geopolitical understandings of the environments which they represent. The analysed popular literature of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the 'little things' (Thrift, 2000), moulds the interpretation of the space and life of the Egyptian people prior to the events of 2011.

CHAPTER 4: 'I USED TO BE AFRAID... I BECAME EGYPTIAN':

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE 'EGYPTIAN PROTESTER' IN THE ANALYSED POPULAR GEOPOLITICAL SOURCES

Dittmer (2005) argues that popular culture provides one of the principal avenues through which people come to understand their own and others' identity within a wider collective or geopolitical narrative. For instance, Dittmer (2005, 2007) and Dunnett (2009) identify that the fictional characters and storylines within the Captain America and Tintin comics help to establish an understanding of national identity as well as the geopolitical events of the time. This chapter follows this, by arguing that *Taxi, Al-Khan,* the diary of Nariman Youssef and the signs and poetry written and displayed by the protesters in Tahrir Square all help to constitute the identity and subject position of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 Egyptian revolution. It establishes how this identity was constructed and represented through the selected texts before illustrating how the protesters used these popular culture texts to imagine themselves in this identity throughout the events. The use of popular culture texts in order to analyse this identity is an important inquiry as Harlow & Johnson (2011) have already identified how the *New York Times,* as an example of the international mainstream media, utilised a 'protest paradigm' to define the 'Egyptian protester', which worked to discredit and marginalise the protesters and their protest action. In contrast, the citizen-led sources of Twitter and Global Voices, a social media blog, presented a more agency driven and encompassing representation of the 'Egyptian protester' (Harlow & Johnson, 2011). This chapter instead establishes that the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' constructed from *Taxi, Al-Khan,* the diary of Nariman Youssef and the signs and poetry moves beyond the 'protest paradigm' (Harlow & Johnson, 2012) and Winegar's (2012) definition of the traditional iconic image of a young male revolutionary. Rather, the 'Egyptian protester' is represented in a manner that is more encompassing and representative of the variety of revolutionary experiences and emotions which the protesters encountered in Tahrir Square (Winegar, 2012).

First, this chapter examines how *Taxi, Al Khan,* Nariman Youssef's diary and the poetry and signs constitute this discourse and identity of the 'Egyptian protester' prior to the 2011 revolution, and how this influences an understanding of the proliferation of the 'Egyptian protester' in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011 (Dittmer, 2005). The analysis then looks specifically at the 'Egyptian protester' in Tahrir Square, and how the texts reveal the acts of civic responsibility and collectiveness within the square. Within this analysis, attention is turned specifically to the poetry and signs in Tahrir Square displayed in Tahrir Square in order to illustrate how these popular texts were utilised by the 'Egyptian protester' themselves in order to constitute and reaffirm their own identity as the people fighting for an end to Mubarak's oppressive regime (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). Past

research by Dittmer (2005, 2007), Sharp (1993, 2000), Dunnett (2009) and Dodds (2007) has already revealed the potential and value of popular culture texts to reinforce, challenge and highlight geopolitical narratives. This chapter adds to this research by exploring how such texts can provide a narrative on a geopolitical event which engages directly with the realities and identity of the population actually living it (Dittmer, 2010).

'Egyptians are like camels': discourses of the 'Egyptian protester' in *Al-Khan* and *Taxi.*

In Egypt, the geopolitical identity of the 'Egyptian protester' was not actually a new phenomenon for 2011: bouts of protest had been regular in the country since the popular mass protests and mobilisations of the 1919 and 1952 revolutions (El Shakry, 2011). Nonetheless, despite this protest activity, contradictory discourses initially circulate between and within the popular geopolitical sources of *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* about the possibility of the Egyptian people becoming 'Egyptian protesters', resulting in both the creation and erasure of the subject position within the texts (Berg, 2009).

In Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi,* a glancing reference to protest events in the 1960s and 1970s highlights how the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' had previously been in abundance, with the Egyptian people taking to the streets to demand that they be accepted as valid actors within the political arena (Anderson, 2011):

> *'In the old days we used to go out on the streets with 50,000 people, with 100,000… in the sixties we did many protests and in the seventies before the 1973 war there were demonstrations everywhere… people understood politics and they went out on the streets… in Nasser's time we went on demonstrations that made a real impact'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 9-10)

Indeed, this reinforces the geopolitical reality at the time, as bouts of student activism and popular protests against the removal of state subsidies during the 1970s, such as the 1977 bread riots, did see the 'Egyptian protester' holding an active role within the Egyptian society (El-Ghobashy, 2011; Dittmer, 2007).

However, this understanding of the Egyptian people as 'Egyptian protesters' is soon destabilised by a further discourse within *Taxi* which assesses the diminished impact of politics on the street under the Mubarak regime, thus rendering the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' obsolete:

> *'But now there's nothing that matters… the government has planted us in a fear of hunger. It's made every woman hold her husband by the arm and say to him 'mind you don't go out, the kids will die'. They planted hunger in the belly of every Egyptian, a terror that made everyone look out for himself and say 'why should I make it my problem?'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 11).

This change in narrative produced through *Taxi* suggests that the 'hunger in the belly' of Egyptians deterred them from active political participation (Al Khamissi, 2011: 11). This suggestion from *Taxi* is reinforced by further academic and popular discussions on the topic. For instance, Khalil (2011: 22) suggests that the practices and policies from the Mubarak state government in the years before the 2011 revolution taught Egyptians to 'walk next to the wall' – to keep themselves to themselves, to focus on feeding the family and to keep out of affairs of governance. Al Aswany (2011) reinforces this discourse through his newspaper articles published in an independent Cairo newspaper. He describes how the years of political, economic and social repression and poverty experienced in Egypt, which had left more than forty million people living on or below the poverty line, 'had given Egyptians such a legacy of cowardice and submission that they would not rise up, whatever happened' (2011: vii). Despite the injustices at political, economic and social levels, there was still no 'Egyptian protester' as 'Egyptians were distracted by the need to make a living' (Al Aswany, 2011: vii).

Within the formal and practical geopolitical discourse in the lead up to the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the Mubarak government both physically challenged and explained away any possibility of Egyptian popular protest (El-Ghobashy, 2011). First, the strictly controlled Emergency law, in effect since Mubarak's ascent to power in 1981, prevented the gathering of more than a few people in a public space at any one time and any engagements in political discussion (Elshahed, 2011). This law legitimised the use of violence and terror by central security forces upon those who did attempt to engage in public action (Elshahed, 2011). The case of the April 6th 2008 protests in Malhalla illustrates this. The general strike and national day of protest called for by Malhalla textile workers and town residents in protest against the minimum wage and police brutality was quickly dissolved by state security forces using force, tear gas and arrests (El-Ghobashy, 2011). Second, those protests were disguised by the Mubarak government as economic, local and defensive rather than political, national and proactive (El-Ghobashy, 2011). Through this guise, the Mubarak state government dismissed the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' by constructing a hegemonic discourse which suggested 'the little people had no politics' (El-Ghobashy, 2011: n.p).

This formal geopolitical interpretation that the 'little people had no politics' is replicated within the political cartoon *Al-Khan,* published in the *Daily News Egypt* on 19th June 2009 (figure 10):

19 June 2009

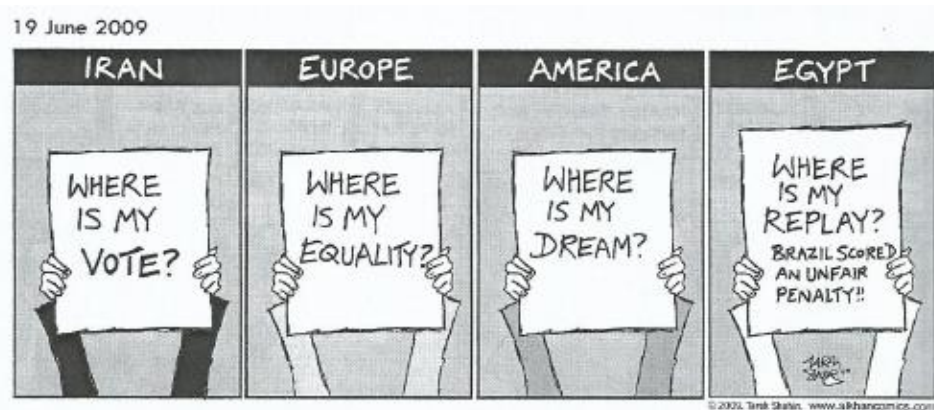| IRAN	EUROPE	AMERICA	EGYPT
WHERE IS MY VOTE?	WHERE IS MY EQUALITY?	WHERE IS MY DREAM?	WHERE IS MY REPLAY? BRAZIL SCORED AN UNFAIR PENALTY!!

Figure 10: (source: Shanin, 2011: 66)

Unlike the constructed Iranian, European and American protesters who are represented demanding their right to vote, equality and dreams respectively, the 'Egyptian protester' s satirically portrayed as devoting their protest energy to the football. Although it cannot be ignored that the Egyptian people are 'football mad', with football representing a front of national unity under the Mubarak regime (Chakravarti, 2012), this satirical representation implying that football is the highest concern for the Egyptian protester continues the suggestion that the 'Egyptian protester' in 2009 was unconcerned with either the politics of their own nation or their own freedom, equality and dream. From this, and the representations within *Taxi,* it appears that the Mubarak government constructions of the political motivation of the Egyptian people throughout the 2000's are supported through illustrations within the Egyptian popular culture. Consequently, readers of these texts during the late 2000s would have likely held little presumption that the 2011 Egyptian revolution was on the horizon.

To accept the discourse that 'the little people have no politics' (El-Ghobashy, 2011), however, fails to account for why their participation may be stifled, or their 'hidden' agency within a space apart from the physical street. For instance, the presentation of the 'Egyptian protester' as most concerned with football in the *Al-Khan* cartoon of 19th June 2009 (figure 10) holds an absent presence that throughout 2008 and 2009, there was a severe waning of social protest action from the Egyptian population due to intensified repression by the regime (Carr, 2012).Hence, their football related chants could be said to reflect an 'Egyptian protester' afraid of engaging in political protest due to the state apparatus suppressing them (Carr, 2012). On a similar vein, whilst the force of the state security forces throughout the years of 2008 and 2009 prevented the physical occurrence of protests, the resulting discourse that the 'little people had no politics' does not account for the successes of coinciding social media campaigns (Carr, 2012). In the case of the April 6th 2008 protests, whilst the physical protests were halted before they spread out of Malhalla, the social media activism related to it prompted thousands of Facebook responses, indicating that the 'Egyptian protester' was in abundance at the time (Carr,

2012), This is significant, as it this specific social media campaign was actually a key agent in the mobilisation of the 2011 revolution (Carr, 2012). Hence, whilst the geopolitical discourses may have initially suggested that the 'little people had no politics', through an assessment of the alternative narratives and absent presences within the texts, we begin to establish a greater understanding of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester'.

As the *Al-Khan* series of political cartoons enter its 2009-2010 season, a counter-hegemonic discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' does begin to emerge. This strongly challenges the practical geopolitical presumption that the 'little people have no politics' in Egypt by visualising the determination of the Egyptian people to challenge Mubarak's oppressive regime (El-Ghobashy, 2011; Whipple, 2011). This representation highlights the reality that Egyptians were defying the regime's laws and had been partaking in collective action on the street for at least a decade (El-Ghobashy, 2011). In *Al-Khan,* this representation is first constituted through the character Yasser Youkry, a television presenter in a cartoon published on 25th February 2009, as he campaigns on his fictional television magazine show that Egyptians should fight for change in response to the 'plunging of Egypt into a mudpile of capitalist corruption' and fight to ensure that 'today's youth will no longer become tomorrow's government tools' (Shanin, 2011) (figure 11):
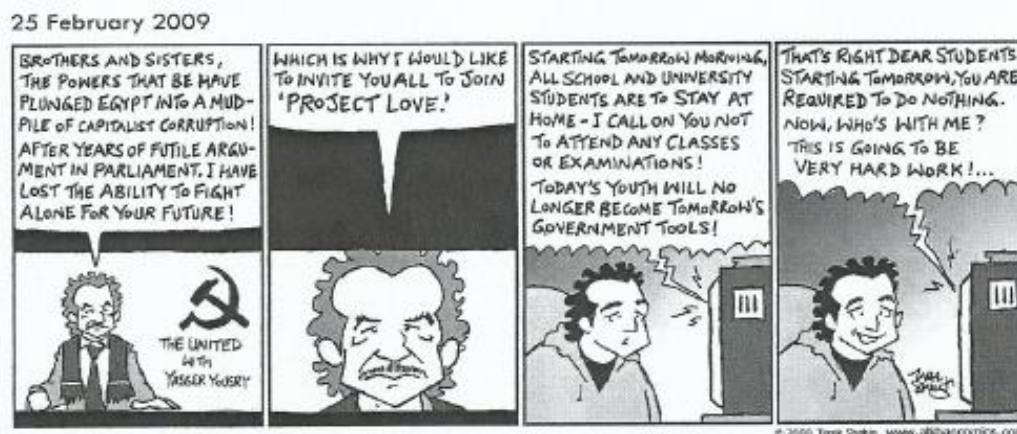
Figure 11: (source-Shanin, 2011: 47)

Whilst the previously analysed representations in *Al Khan* and *Taxi* reinforced the state discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' as having little concern with politics and their freedoms, this particular cartoon strip highlights a sudden increased demand for protests on the street in Egypt in 2009. This thus redefines the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' as an active participant in street politics. The cartoon is published within a season entitled 'Project Love', which highlights the increasing calls for protest action from within middle and lower classes throughout the 2000s in response to their grievances with the government, economy and elites (Shanin, 2011). This strongly reflects the emerging landscape of protest groups and street protests from the mid 2000s, operating outside of the formal political arena (Carr, 2012). Indeed, there are vast similarities between the

development of the April 6th Movement and this representation of the fictional 'Project Love'. In the *Al-Khan* cartoons, the youth of Egypt are encouraged to stay at home in protest (Shanin, 2011). The Facebook mobilisation for the April 6th movement in 2008 encouraged participants to wear black and remain at home for the day in solidarity with the striking textile workers in Malhalla, and so as to signal the widespread discontent with rising food prices, depressed salaries and disparities in wealth (Carr, 2012). Hence, this popular geopolitical representation in figure 11 accurately reflects the actions which the Egyptian people were taking in protest of the political system under which they were forced to live (Carr, 2012). Also, the reflection of this call to form a social movement against an absence of any represented support for opposition political parties within the series of *Al-Khan* clearly reflects how the Egyptian people used to avenue of submerged networks and social movements in order to express their grievances in the face of restricted involvement with formal oppositional politics in the country (Carr, 2012; Youssef & Kumar, 2012). The actions of all these smaller protest movements such as the fictional 'Project Love' campaigned for my Yasser Youkry, were the making of the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Hence, this popular geopolitical representation presents an accurate geopolitical imagination of the emerging protest scene in Egypt at the time, suggesting that the 'Egyptian protester' was becoming more dominant' (Jacob, 2012).

Also, this representation within the *Al-Khan* cartoon in figure 11 reflects on how the expansion of the independent public sphere in Egypt worked to support the 'Egyptian protester' as it created wider avenues to communicate both within country and the international sphere (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). In the cartoon, Yasser Youkry is seen speaking on his independent programme 'The United with Yasser Youkry', a transmission which is represented within the series of cartoons as exposing the equality within the practices of the National Democratic Party and encouraging the social activism of its viewers (Shanin, 2011). Through this illustration, we can understand the influence of satellite news channels and internet upon the action of the 'Egyptian protester, as it demonstrates how quickly shared grievances and thoughts of activism could be shared across the population (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). The development of satellite news channels and opposition newspapers across Egypt provided an alternative and uncensored broadcast to the government regulated channels, allowing for the reporting of those political and social issues that were otherwise hidden from view (Khamis, 2011). To recognise this development of the media landscape is significant with regards to understanding the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and the 'Egyptian protester'. The proliferation of this new media within the Egyptian political sphere, and the pluralistic media arena it created, contributed to the shift towards the desired political reform fought for in the 2011 revolution, as it allowed for a pluralisation of geopolitical narratives within the state to challenge the state-controlled broadcasts which simply aligned to government policies and

ideologies (Khamis, 2011). Indeed, the stories and issues covered by the fictional newspaper *Al-Khan* in the political cartoon *AL-Khan* provide an imagination of how the oppositional newspapers such as *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Akbar* and privately owned satellite television channels would run investigations into political issues and social grievances within the country (Khamis, 2011). The representation of these sources thus seems to highlight how the Egyptian people utilised resources and communications beyond the control of the Mubarak regime in order to express their message and gather the 'Egyptian protester' into action leading up to the 2011 revolution (Youssef & Kumar, 2012).

El-Ghobashy's (2012: n.p) review of the 2011 Egyptian revolution suggests that the discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' prior to the 2011 event within speeches of Mubarak loyalists and independent academics suggests that 'Egyptians rarely explode': that there was little chance of political unrest conducted by the Egyptian people as this was 'not part of the Egyptian mentality'. However, Al Aswany (2011: 2) argues that this discourse that 'Egyptians rarely explode' disguises the reality that the dormancy of the 'Egyptian protester' actually constitutes a critical part of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester', as it influences how they rebel and protest:

> *'Egyptians are like camels; they put up with beatings, humiliation and starvation for a long time.. but when they rebel they do so suddenly and with a force that is impossible to control'* (Al Aswany, 2011: 2).

Indeed, the protests and campaigns which followed each of the main preceding catalyst events to the 2011 revolution, namely the fatal beating of Khaled Said in June 2010, the corrupt and poorly attended 2010 parliamentary elections and the 2011 New Year's eve bombing of Two Saints Church in Alexandria, suggested that the Egyptian people were fast reaching their tolerance levels (Carr, 2012). These events, and the successful outster of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, provided the inspiration for a 'sudden rebel' by the Egyptian people (El-Ghobashy, 2011). This energy and draw to protest is exemplified further within *Taxi,* as the foreword to the novel represents the transition between the Egyptian as a 'camel' to the rebelling Egyptian through a description of how the Egyptian can no longer deal with the tribulations affecting their daily life (El-Ghobashy, 2011):

> *'we want to set fire to the whole system, because frankly the stench is unbearable now… we've seen billionaires manipulating policies and people, and we've seen the worst of times with thieving presidents. No one's happy with the state of politics… we want a shirt that's tailor made for Egypt, our own cotton shirt.'* (Al-Khamissi, 2011: 3)

The opening comment that the 'stench is unbearable now' corresponds exactly to Al Aswany's (2011) comment that the 'Egyptian protester' is inclined towards submission and

compromise until such a point, as the quote's metaphorical suggestion that the regime is now 'unbearable' suggests that although the Egyptians had been coping with the conditions in Egypt, they are no longer tolerable. As this monologue continues, the popular geopolitical representation confirms the agency and identity of the 'Egyptian protester' in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, as it suggests that the 'Egyptian protester' is now willing to take an active role in political change:

> *Look around you, look at people's dreams floating in the air, waiting for someone to grab them. If someone blew a trumpet today, you'd find 90 million Egyptians standing in a queue. You wouldn't hear any nonsense then, or the smell of fear coming out of their mouths'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 3).

Through this representation in *Taxi,* supported by the evidence of the 'Egyptian protester's agency already identified through *Al-Khan,* the identity of the Egyptian people as 'Egyptian protesters' is fully constituted, cemented through the idea that '90 million Egyptians' are poised and ready to protest (Al Khamissi, 2011). Indeed they were, as the January/February 2011 protests constituted the largest protests in Egyptian history to date (El-Ghobashy, 2011).

At first, the construction of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' within the subordinate discourses in both *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* appeared to align with, and support, the Mubarak government's and other practical geopolitical assumptions that the Egyptian people were unlikely to revolt due to their living conditions. However, as the last few examples illustrate, both texts' storylines quickly heighten a discourse which highlights the active participation of the Egyptian people in protest action in the lead up to 2011 and the agency which they exhibit in their demands for political change in the country (Al Aswany, 2011). As with Dittmer's (2005) analysis of the Captain America Comics, the constituted identity and agency of the Egyptian protester established within *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* helps the reader to understand the political landscape of Egypt prior to the 2011 Egyptian revolution, by recognising the geopolitical reality that mass protests were imminent by 2011. The identity of the 'Egyptian protester' in these texts, by their end, is fully constituted as he/she who is ready to protest at a moment's notice; which they did on January 25th 2011.

<u>'I used to be afraid... I became Egyptian': defining the 'Egyptian protester' of Tahrir Square through Youssef's diary and the protesters' poetry and signs.</u>

As the 2011 Egyptian revolution developed, so too did the identity of the 'Egyptian protester'. Whilst the above analysis of *Taxi* and *Al-Khan* helps to constitute this identity in the lead up to the events, the diary of Nariman Youssef and the signs and poetry written

and displayed in the square continue this construction throughout the eighteen days until Mubarak stepped down on February 11th 2011.

Practical geopolitical discourse produced by the Mubarak government of the 'Egyptian protester' in Tahrir Square in January and February 2011 accused the protesters of being 'traitors' to the country. It was suggested they held affiliations with foreign enemies, a 'secret agenda' and had been trained in the USA or Israel (Mersal, 2011; Shenker, 2011). This geopolitical discursive identity of the anti-government was replicated by the Syrian government with regards to their own protesters: the Syrian government suggested it was the victim of a 'foreign conspiracy' by the anti-government 'terrorists' (Lundgren-Jorum, 2012). This vilification of the 'Egyptian protester' is similar to that observed against the April 6th movement protesters in 2008; these protesters were denounced as 'foreign-funded traitors' involved in a Western-led plot to destroy Egypt (Carr, 2011: n.p). This geopolitical discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' is significant, as, due to the power held by both the Egyptian and Syrian governments within their respective countries, this discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' was widely disseminated (Routledge, 2003; Mersal, 2011). Indeed, the narration within Youssef's diary highlights how she and her friends were addressed as traitors by Mubarak loyalists on the street:

> '*The road is blocked by a checkpoint: young men with makeshift weapons and pro-Mubarak banners denouncing the traitors – that is us'* (Youssef, 2011:n.p).

Through a wider analysis of Youssef's diary and the protesters' own signs however, it is clear that the 'Egyptian protester' was far from willing to accept their designation as 'traitor'. Rather, they carried the agency to construct their own 'anti-geopolitical' response through the popular culture sources, directly challenging the representation of their identity by the state elites (Routledge, 2003). For instance, Sussmann (2011) reports that protesters would arrive with blank notebooks in Tahrir Square, before sarcastically stating that they had forgotten their 'agenda'. This action is fully highlighted within the popular geopolitical representation gathered from Youssef's diary, through the description of how one protester had used a handmade sign in order to draw a satirical reconstruction of the 'Egyptian protester' as defined by the Mubarak government and pro-government protesters:

> '*as someone who wore a Sunni beard and a bandana in the colours of the American flag, held up a spliff in one hand and a Kalashnikov in the other and flaunted a wad of cash with the flags of Israel, Palestine and Iraq'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

This construction, which over-emphasises all of the characteristics that the state media accused the 'Egyptian protester' for carrying, mocks this (mis)representation and

challenges their subjection under the hegemonic geopolitical representations contrived by the state (Routledge, 2003). This narrative thus unsettles the dominant practical geopolitical vision that the protester is a 'traitor', and forces the reader to observe that there are existing alternative discourses of the 'Egyptian protester' to that put forward by the Mubarak government (O'Tuathail, 1996; Holland, 2012). It is thus highly valuable that Youssef's diary, as an example of popular geopolitics, has been analysed here, as this illustrates how an altered perspective on events provides the possibility of new and challenging narratives to those unconsciously assumed to be true (Holland, 2012).

Indeed, the signs written by the protesters and held up in Tahrir Square provide a clear discourse as to the Egyptian protesters' own construction of their identity throughout the events of January 2011. As figure _ shows, for the 'Egyptian protester', their identity was based upon collectiveness and liberation from the Mubarak regime:

Figure 12: Sign translation: 'Name: Citizen, Religion: Egyptian, Place of Birth: Tahrir Square, Date of Birth: 25th January 2011, Occupation: Revolutionary' (Khali, 2011: 72)

This sign is defining, as the 'Egyptian protester' presents himself as having sacrificed his individual characteristics in order to devote himself fully to the revolution. This is an important representation, as it illustrates the true experience for many protesters within Tahrir Square during January and February 2011: protesters were living in the square and spending all their hours fighting for liberation for the Mubarak regime (Rashed, 2011).

Firstly, the protester defines his name as 'citizen', implying his status as an inhabitant of 'Tahrir Square'. The claim of his birthplace and birthdate as 'Tahrir Square' on 'January 25th 2011' appear to be a resistant act against Mubarak's Egypt, as he claims that his life only began on the first day of the protests, presumably due to the liberation that this gave him from the state apparatus (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). This is a defiant self-representation, as it highlights how many Egyptians were 'awakened' with the start of the protests, after years of living a valueless and helpless life under the Mubarak regime (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). The statement of the protester's religion as 'Egyptian' is, however, the most capitulating here, as it provides a strong, geopolitical claim that the protesters' will be unite under national values first and foremost. This is again an act of resistance, as the Mubarak regime had appeared to take action in the decades before the 2011 revolution to ensure that the Egyptian people did not collect under one 'Egyptian' political community (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Instead, the wealth divisions from harsh neoliberal economic policies and the co-opting of political opposition vastly segregated the population (Youssef & Kumar, 2012; El-Ghobashy, 2011). Therefore, by stating that he is acting in name of being 'Egyptian', the protester in figure 12 projects his own popular claim of how the 'Egyptian protester' will be identified and acting within the events. This is highly significant, as it begins to illustrate how the protesters used the representative power of their protest signs to redefine their own character in resistance to the identity imposed upon them by the Mubarak regime, reclaim the public space and affirm their belonging to Egypt (Youssef & Kumar, 2012; Foucault, 1977). The analysis of this sign indicates the strength of the protest sign, as a creative output, to construct the identity and resistance of the 'Egyptian protester'. Using the sign, the 'Egyptian protester' visually expresses his own popular geopolitical narrative of his role within the protests and performs his resistance against the Mubarak regime (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). This is a significant geopolitical contribution to an understanding of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, as it illustrates exactly how the popular and the cultural came into play to narrate and actualise the political event (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011)

Through the representations in Youssef's diary, the 'Egyptian protester' is seen as both male and female. This is an important discursive construction, as the visual economy of the 2011 Egyptian revolution put forward by mainstream news media saw the male 'Egyptian protester' as the dominant within Tahrir Square, with female protesters holding only ancillary roles (Moll , 2011). Indeed, this representation conforms to the traditional discursive construction of the 'iconic revolutionary' as a young man in urban space (Winegar, 2012). However, through the discourse analysis of Youssef's diary, it is clear that this representation of the 'iconic revolutionary' presented by the mainstream news media occludes the true identity and many of the experiences of the collective 'Egyptian protester' within Tahrir Square (Winegar, 2012). For instance, the diary reveals how Youssef's experiences as a female appear to vary little form those of her male friends.

She gets caught up in the tear gas and violence as she tries to reach the square, spends every day in the square itself, seeks out first aid supplies and food for the wounded and interacts and talks with people from all parts of Egypt (Youssef, 2011). Through the representation of this daily life it is obvious that women held a significant role in Tahrir Square as an 'Egyptian protester'. This is a crucial observation, especially given the high participation rate of women for the protests (Biggs, 2011; Taher, 2012). Whilst previous protests had seen a female participation of only 10%, the January 2011 protests saw women constitute no less than 40% of the total protesters in Tahrir Square, with them taking on jobs such as guarding the entrances to the square, handing out food and manning clinics (Biggs, 2011; Moll, 2011).

The diary evidently illustrates the active role of women and daily experience within the protest from a female perspective, and thus provides a much needed alternative commentary to the state produced discourses of the 2011 events (Dittmer, 2010). However, with Youssef's narration guided by her own position and circumstances, the representations in her diary still fail to fully reflect on all experiences of women in and around Tahrir Square during the event (Winegar, 2012). For instance, when Youssef is active in the square, there is no acknowledgement of the role that women played in the private spaces, as they continued to provide childcare and manage the home throughout the period (Winegar, 2012). Also, due to Youssef's occupation and social position, she has not faced the difficulties that may have been encountered by some women in trying to reach the square (Winegar, 2012). The identity of Youssef herself no doubt contributed to these occlusions. As a young female translator with a British education, with no familial commitments, Youssef had the mobility to partake in the protests in Tahrir Square compared to those Egyptian women who had family and religious constraints (Winegar, 2012). Whilst the use of this source to analyse the 2011 Egyptian revolution carries many benefits due to the everyday experiences in the square which it reflects upon, the authorship of the diary evidently has some impact on the voices that it represents. Hence, although the source presents a much needed narrative compared to what has previously been obtained, because of the social advantage which Youssef holds, this is not necessarily a complete narrative on how the female 'Egyptian' protester experienced the events.

From Youssef's narrative, as well as an analysis of the protesters pictured holding each of the signs analysed from *Messages from Tahrir* (2011), it is clear that the age demographics of the 'Egyptian protester' were widespread. The diary mentions the young men fighting on the boundaries of the square, the middle aged woman acting as security on the entrance to the square and the elderly man from upper Egypt sitting in the square (Youssef, 2011). Men and women of all ages are pictured holding their revolutionary messages on signs, even young children (Khalil, 2011). This is a fully representative

feature of the demographics within Tahrir Square (Omar, 2011). Indeed, the Egyptian youth lead the revolution itself, through their social media campaigns and street protests in the lead up to January 25th 2011 (Omar, 2011). However, once in Tahrir Square, these youth were joined by a large variety of the Egyptian population; from workers, peasants, retirees, families and housewives (Omar, 2011; Taher, 2012). Hence, the image of the age of the 'Egyptian protester' displayed through Youssef's diary and the images of those holding the signs provides an accurate representation of the protesting population.

The narratives within Youssef's diary reflect on how psychological boundaries as well as physical boundaries in Tahrir Square bound together the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 revolution (Rashed, 2011). Through this representation, and the actions of the protesters in Tahrir Square and Cairo throughout January and February 2011, the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' is discursively constructed solely as 'Egyptian' regardless of any religious or cultural divides; citizenship rather than religion was the vehicle to success for the 'Egyptian protester'. The diary's narration on this discourse begins with an assessment as to how the previous social and religious divides across Egypt had caused the Egyptian people to live in isolation from each other:

> *'Tahrir had made us realise that we had all been living in isolated bubbles. The rich knew nothing of the poor, the religious knew nothing about the secular and vice versa. People from the same city, sometimes the same neighbourhood, had lived all their lives regarding each other with growing suspicion'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

Once in Tahrir Square in January 2011, this discourse of Egyptians living in 'isolated bubbles' is quickly dismissed, as a discourse of being 'Egyptian' takes hold over the 'Egyptian protester':

> '*Conversations unfolded in wonder and belief. The laughter at shared jokes was mixed with relief. We had so much in common after all. As we shared stories of injustice and oppression we had accumulated over the years, we added the atrocity of our fragmentation. We understood that we had all been the victims of the old strategy of divide and conquer'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

This representation from Youssef's diary highlights exactly how an understanding of shared sentiments between the 'Egyptian protesters' contributed to their collective desire to protest against the Mubarak regime that had long segregated the population through its economic, social and political policies (Bayat, 2010). Under this identity, the 'Egyptian protester' quickly established concern for the protection of each other, regardless of each protester's individual identity:

'*We stuck together, and with no regard to class or creed, protected each other and each other's homes and properties'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

This description from Youssef's diary of the experience within Tahrir Square highlights how, despite previous social differences, being 'Egyptian' now ensured that the 'Egyptian protesters' within this space were a collective agent fighting for a collective will (Ismail, 2011): '*social differences were gone, we all sat on the ground and ate the same koshari'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p). This identity is further established as Youssef describes how her interactions with other protesters proved the strength of the collective will as it highlighted how '*freedom is indeed indivisible'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p):

'*An elderly man from upper Egypt, what I thought of as the most conservative part of the country... thinking nothing of the fact that a woman in jeans would sit next to him on the ground and smoke in public* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

Through this 'Egyptian' solidarity, the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' correlates to Rashed's (2011: 27) suggestion that, within Tahrir Square, the 'Egyptian protester' 'embraced new simplified anti-regime identities' which became the only identities that mattered. This construction illustrates how the space of the urban street is far more than a physical space where collectives are formed (Bayat, 2010). Rather, it works 'beyond the physicality of the street to convey the collective sentiments of a nation or community' (Bayat, 2010: 3). Through this quote, we see exactly how the solidarity and co-existence of the 'anti-regime' identity of the 'Egyptian' collective supersedes religion, culture and social class, as the older man sets aside his conservative values to talk with a woman whose dress and behaviour he would have usually interpreted as highly inappropriate (Bayat, 2010). A similar identity was embraced within the 1919 revolution, where the collective assertion of territorial nationalism in the face of British colonialism by the protesters overshadowed any existing divisions of social structures and class relations (I Shakry, 2011). In 1919, this consolidation helped the Egyptians to achieve their desired independence from the British colonial rule (El Shakry 2011). Evidently, as the representations in Youssef's diary suggestion, the 2011 protesters were quick to understand that it would only be through a collective embrace of their 'anti-regime' identity and shared sentiments to demand the removal of the Mubarak regime from power that the revolution would be won (El Shakry, 2011).

This superseded identity of 'Egyptian' is most prominently recognised through the represented supportive relationship between the Christian Copts and the Muslims within Tahrir Square throughout the 2011 revolution (figures 13 & 14):
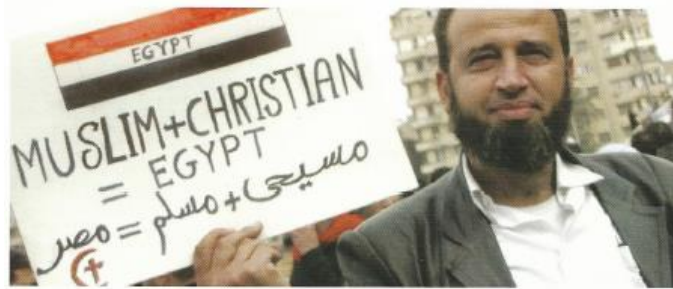
Figure 13 : (source Khalil, 2011: 90)

Figure 14: (left) Sign translation: 'Egypt belongs to all Egyptians, Muslims and Christians' (source- Khalil, 2011: 74)

From the signs shown in figures 13 and figure 14, it is clear that the 'Egyptian protester' overstepped the religious divide in order to present the future for Egypt through a discourse of Muslim-Christian unity (Bayat, 2011). This is envisaged on the sign in figure 13 which uses the commonly cherished symbols of the Islamic crescent and the Christian cross as well as the Egyptian flag to illustrate the unity of both religions together and evoke an 'Egyptian' identity within the protests and (Youssef & Kumar, 2011). This 'waving of the flag' on the sign evokes an 'Egyptian identity within the protests, through using a banal but celebrated and cherished national symbol to gather the protesters together (Billig, 1995). Indeed, this collective 'Egyptian' identity is supported in Youssef's diary, as it illustrates how the Christian Copt protesters formed a human shield around the Muslim protesters on all Fridays during the protests so that they could pray in security (Youssef, 2011). The description of this act is poignant as it continues to highlight the strength of the 'Egyptian' collective in Tahrir Square, and creates the image that the protests were for every Egyptian, that every Egyptian could feel safe both in the square and in the future of Egypt (Youssef & Kumar, 2011). However, this celebrated inter-religion relationship was not novel in Egypt (Bayat, 2010). Rather, Muslims and Coptic Christians in Cairo already carried an 'interwined culture, shared lives and inseperable histories' before the 2011 revolution, a behaviour which subverts the current language of 'inter-religious' relations around the world (Bayat, 2010: 13). Even after the New Year's Eve bombing of a Christian Church in Alexandria, and the resulting clashes between Christian and Muslim protesters at the scene (Hauslohner, 2011), a representation of national unity was established through the slogan 'we are all Egyptians' because of a collective appal at the events from both Christians and Muslims (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). As with this Alexandria bombing, the events within Tahrir Square were ones that symbolised national unity and where the 'Egyptian' protester dominated. For instance,

popular chants laden with Islamic religious discourse were celebrated by all within the square:

> *"Allah Akbar' (God is Great)is the collective voice of thanksgiving... it doesn't matter what your religion is or if you have none.. that same synergy carried us through the second week of protest'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

This representation suggests that the strength of the revolutionary movement is garnered through the collective uniting of the shared hopes and values of the 'Egyptian' protester, sidestepping religious affiliations (Youssef, 2011: n.p). This 'Egyptian' identity of the protesters is again celebrated in Youssef's diary when she discusses how those in Tahrir Square welcomed the arrival of others into the space:

> *'All afternoon and evening people flood the square from all directions... as we clap and whistle to welcome the new arrivals, they raise their fists to the air and chant: we are all in one hand!'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

The celebrated arrival of protesters from all walks of life within Tahrir Square and the actions which these protesters take to demonstrate their collectivity within one another highlights the sense of belonging and fraternity felt between the 'Egyptian' protesters. Here, it is the 'one hand' of the 'Egyptian' identity which is being celebrated, with no reference made to the divisions which previously segregated the population (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). These valuable insights into the identity of the 'Egyptian' protester allow the reader to understand how the protesters strengthened their claim of the public space of Tahrir Square throughout January and February 2011: by celebrating the 'Egyptian' national identity and recognising that everyone within the protests mattered (Youssef & Kumar, 2012).

The representations within Youssef's diary support the self-construction of the 'Egyptian protester' as a 'citizen' of the 2011 revolution, as seen in figure 12. This aspect of the protester's identity follows Ismail's (2011) assertion that acts of citizenship are not undertaken simply by virtue of membership to the state but also by virtue of the resulting civic self which assumes responsibilities as a member of the collective. In Egypt, prior to the 2011 revolution, reflections on citizenship and belonging only seemed to be discussed within practical geopolitical discussions of the country (Mersal, 2011). However, the discourses evident within Youssef's diary, and reflections upon the security, solidarity and preparedness between the protesters in Tahrir Square, highlight how the theme of citizenship, and becoming a 'citizen' of the revolution more specifically, was strongly encompassed into the protests. Firstly, this is through the collective responsibility the protesters have to care for each other:

'Walking over an empty 6th October bridge after the so-called curfew, I felt cared for and protected by every single person I met' (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

This collectiveness spread not just between the 'Egyptian protesters', but also between the Egyptian and Tunisian protesters. The diary entries reveal how this communication between the protesters enabled Youssef to pack supplies each day which were suitable for ensuring that she and others around her were prepared for attack from the police forces:

'*Following tips from Tunisia that had been circulating the internet for the past few days, I packed lemons, water and a scarf and headed out. I had agreed on a meeting point with some friends in preparation for the eventuality of phones being cut off*' (N.Youssef, 26th January: n.p).

For others, it was the assumed responsibility of ensuring that others were protected from the police attacks in and around the square:

'Someone I don't know grabs me by the shoulders and pours cola in my face. At first I think he's nuts because now my eyes are burning like hell. But a few seconds later I feel much better. (Youssef, 28th January 2011)

'*one of the most striking incidents of that day was when we escaped into a side street next to the police hospital, and the residents inside smuggled out hospital masks to help us against the tear gas. It was their colleagues who were shooting the gas but as long as they were not on duty their sympathies seem to lie on the side of the people*' (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

In this second incident, it is striking that the display of 'citizen' is shown by those that are, in theory, supposed to hold allegiance to the Mubarak regime. It reveals how the calls to revolt and demands to oust the Mubarak regime and state apparatus were supported by 'Egyptians of all stripes' despite previous political allegiances (Mostafa & Khalil, 2011). This returns to the suggestion that 'Egyptian' citizenship took precedence throughout the events, and presents an imagination of the revolution as a truly 'popular' event, with Egyptians from all walks of life participating in the name of their country rather than any previous loyalties (El Shakry, 2011).

More significantly, one incident within the diary explores how the 'Egyptian protester' becomes a 'citizen' within the protests not just regardless of their location, but also regardless of their action levels. Youssef considers the moments when a friend becomes a 'citizen' of the revolution after his initial cynicism over the protests:

'*A friend who has so far been cynical about the purpose of protesting called to ask me about the safest way to get into Tahrir with medicine and food. There*

were innocent people out there, who were trying to do good and who were being attacked and killed he said. It was one of those rare extreme moments in history where everyone was forced to take a stand, when it became clear that inaction was also some kind of action. Thank you, thank you I kept repeating into my phone' (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

Similarly, others became 'citizens' of the revolution though their involvement in popular committees, or Legan, which infiltrated the square from the first day:

Legan Shaabeyya or popular committees were suddenly everywhere. They were spontaneous and organised, they took shifts on the entrance of streets and neighbourhoods, like a form of extreme neighbourhood watch' (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

In both these representations, the act of civic activism contributes to the discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' in two ways. First, these actions further support the idea that a protester did not need to be active or even present in the violence of the uprisings in order to be an 'Egyptian protester'. They were equally involved as a protester through their role in these committees or individual acts of assistance. Second, the formation of these leaderless committees reflects the democratic aspirations of the collective of protesters (Rashed, 2011). Resisting the enforced hierarchy of the Mubarak regime, they instead form a community in no one person holds control over another. Finally, it poignantly erases representations of the Egyptian population as politically dominated and subordinated (Rashed, 2011). This counters the state discourse which presents Egypt as the patriarch, and the imagination of the citizens as the infants who were dependent on the parenting of the state (Osman 2011 in Youssef & Kumar, 2011). Instead, it allows the 'Egyptian protester' to speak and promote their own message to the Mubarak regime and to the wider public that they are capable of managing and supporting themselves without an imposed government or police presence (Rashed, 2011). Through this popular geopolitical narrative, the relationship between 'ruler' and 'the ruled' in Egypt is redefined, and the 'Egyptian protester' is identified as an active political and social agent (Youssef & Kumar, 2012).

As Ismail (2011) has explored, these acts have redefined the Egyptian 'national character' as they altered the way Egyptians interact with each other and the agents of the state. Although the acts themselves were quite small, the organisation and enforcing of them slowly allowed the 'Egyptian protester' to not only define themselves as a citizen within the revolution but also allowed them to redefine and reclaim their own country (Ismail, 2011). The formation and regulation of neighbourhood committees described through Youssef's diary reflects a form of citizenship not previously seen in Egypt, and contributes to a new image of the Egyptian people as a population willing to take the running of the country into

their own hands (Ismail, 2011). Previously, the largest protests in the country had been the 1977 bread riots, propelled by the poverty stricken masses and lower class population within Egypt with the main concern of fighting the rising food prices which threatened their starvation (Nelson & Peterson, 2012). However, through the self construction of the 'Egyptian protester' on the streets in Egypt in 2011, it is clear that this protest held a much deeper meaning of 'reclaiming the dignity and character of a whole nation' (Nelson & Peterson, 2012: n.p). Through the enacted ownership of the country initiated through the popular committees, it is clear that the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 revolution became invested with certain responsibilities, such as the maintenance of the streets (Ismail, 2011). By using Youssef's diary and the signs and poetry, an engagement with the finer points of the civility enacted by the protesters in the square allows for an identification of the way that the protesters defined themselves as agents and ultimately 'citizens' of the revolution through the representation of their increased acts of citizenship and responsibilities within Tahrir Square (Ismail, 2011).

'I'm not afraid of dying Mr President': Egyptian protesters affirming their own identity through their protest signs

As well the popular geopolitical sources representing the 'Egyptian protester', the source material from *Messages from Tahrir* (Khalil, 2011) and the website Tahrir Documents (2011) illustrates how the signs and poetry written and displayed in Tahrir Square were used by the 'Egyptian protester' in order to constitute and reaffirm their own identity within the 2011 revolution. This literature allows the protester a previously inaccessible avenue through which to express their grievances and hopes for Egypt, indicating how the prominence of this literature provided the space through which the previously repressed 'Egyptian protester' could be heard (Colla, 2011). Throughout the 1919 revolution, colloquial literature such as this provided a mass vehicle and forum for the expression of a national identity and critique of the colonial and elite authority (Fahmy, 2011). Here, we see a similar effect, with the poetry and signs providing the protesters with the confidence and authority to resist the Mubarak government and present themselves as the 'saviours' of Egypt (Fahmy, 2011).

To start, the signs in figure 15 and figure 16 show the protesters addressing their own previous passivity and silence as an 'Egyptian protester' before the 2011 revolution, indicating that the events of January 2011 provided them with the confidence and voice to express their views:
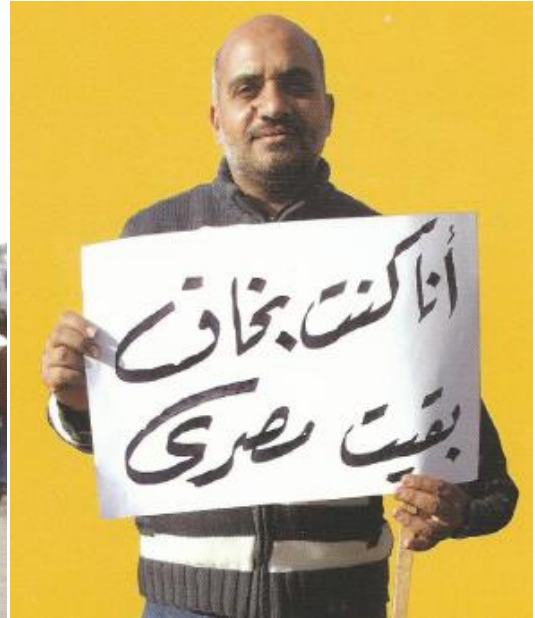
Figure 15 (left): sign translation: 'Forgive me Lord, I was afraid and silent' (source- Khalil, 2011: 71)

Figure 16 (right): sign translation: 'I used to be afraid... I became Egyptian' (source- Khalil, 2011: 48)

In figure 15, the 'Egyptian protester' is defines himself as 'afraid and silent' before the 2011 Egyptian revolution, highlighting a previous passivity and fear of engaging in the politics of the country. This discursive construction is reflective of the fear held by Egyptians under the political restrictions of Mubarak's iron fist rule throughout the 1990s and early 2000s and their consequential silence within politics (El-Hamalawy, 2011). However, with the protester himself acknowledging this previous identity as 'before' the 2011 events, this sign suggests that the 'Egyptian protester' now considers themselves confident and outspoken. Indeed, the chain reaction of street protests within Egypt developing since 2000 indicate that the 'Egyptian protester' has found their voice, especially once they reached Tahrir Square on January 25th 2011 (El-Ghobashy, 2011).

Figure 16 also cements this identity of fear as a past identity for the 'Egyptian protester' by replicating the same statement that 'I used to be afraid'. In addition, this sign utilises the discourse of an 'Egyptian' identity to suggest that it was through this identity that this fear was overcome. Certainly, as El-Hamalawy (2011: n.p) suggests, 'nothing aids the erosion of one's fear more than knowing there are others who share the same desire for liberation'. This sign reinforces the suggestion of the collective of the 'Egyptian protesters' under one, anti-regime, identity free from religious, social and political allegiances, by suggesting that this helped the protester to find their confidence within the country (El-Hamalawy, 2011). Also, through with the suggestion being that the protesters have now become 'Egyptian', this sign posits that the previous identity of fear was not Egyptian in

nature at all. Instead, the 'Egyptian protester' only defines himself as 'Egyptian' now that he has escaped this identity of fear. This is an important geopolitical discursive construction, as it suggests that the Egyptian protester doesn't wish his national identity to be associated with the previous fear which governed the nation (Nelson & Peterson, 2012): rather, being Egyptian means being confident, outspoken and able to challenge the autocratic dictatorship imposed upon them.

The 'Egyptian protester' uses their protest signs to express their defiance against the Mubarak regime, highlighting their confident and assertive identity as protesters through the suggestion that they would be willing to sacrifice themselves for a new Egypt:
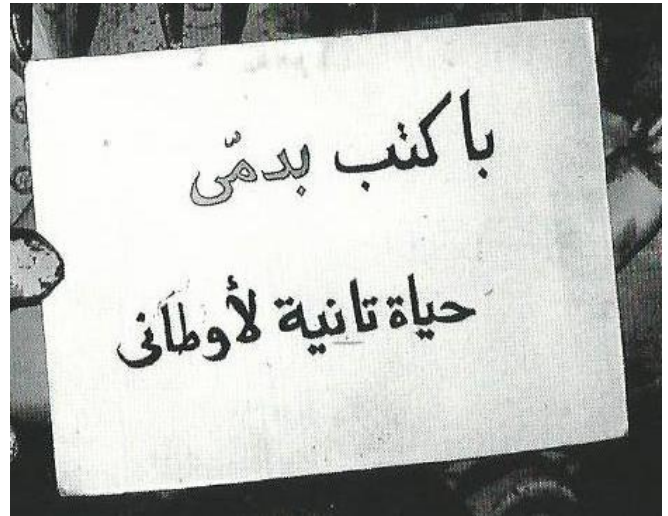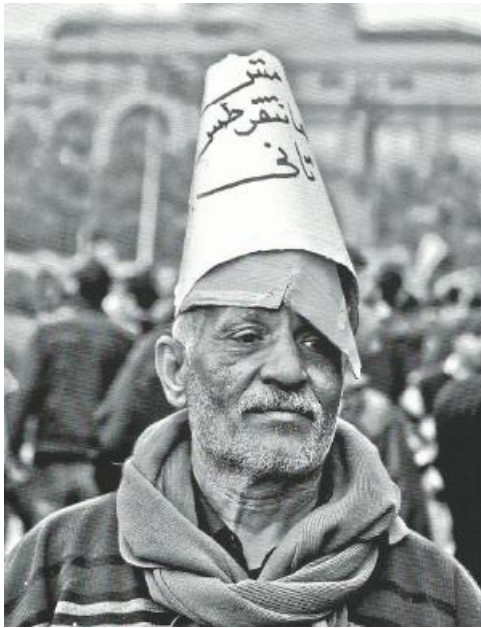

Figure 17 (left): sign translation: 'We won't be made dunces of again' (Khalil, 2011: 124)

Figure 18 (right): sign translation: With my blood I write another life for my country' (Khalil, 2011: 86)
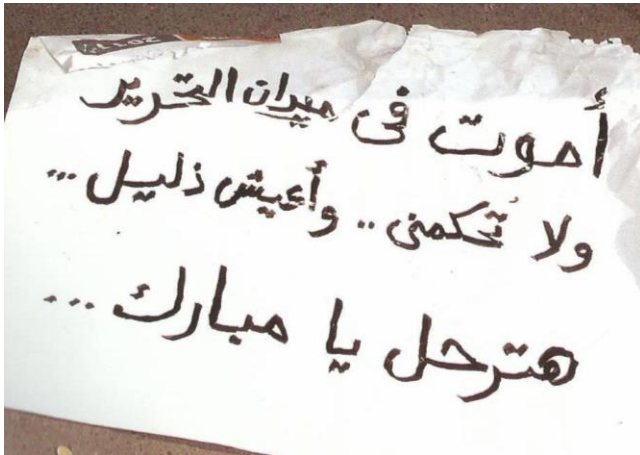
Figure 19: sign translation: 'I would rather die in Tahrir Square than have you govern me and live in humiliation... you will die Mubarak! (Source: Khalil, 2011: 1)

Figure 20 (right): sign translation: 'I'm not afraid of dying Mr President'
(Source: Khalil, 2011: 54)

In figure 17, the statement that the protesters 'won't be made dunces of again' and use of the word and image of 'dunce' mocks their previous passive behaviour under the Mubarak regime. It suggests that their previous self was incapable of learning due to their passive internalising of state discourses, such as the discourse of 'stability' which resulted in repressive and corrupt conditions of living for themselves (Cook, 2011; El-Ghobashy, 2011). The claim through this sign that this behaviour will not be repeated indicates the activism of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 revolution, as it highlights how they will no longer be fooled into repression and poverty by the capitalist interventions of the Mubarak government (Cook, 2011) (figure 17). Instead, this 'Egyptian protester' is looking to actively contribute to a new 'life for my country' (figure 19), and wishes to illustrate to the government that, free from fear, they are willing to go to all extremes in order to ensure that this achievement is reached (figure 19). These signs represent the 'Egyptian protester' as more than willing to die than to continue to live under the reign of Mubarak, to die in the 'liberated' space of Tahrir Square rather than continue living in the hands of the repressive Egyptian state (figure 19 & figure 20). This is a claim which mirrors the actions of the character Methode in *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* (2003), when the character insisted that he would rather sacrifice his life to AIDS, that it would be to do so, than to die in the hands of the genocidal state of 1994 Rwanda (Sylvester, 2011). It is a powerful subaltern geopolitical claim, which serves to highlight the agency of the 'Egyptian protester' by recognising that they hold the right to the decision on how they will live their life (Sylvester, 2011). Through all four of these signs, the 'Egyptian protester' clearly resists the presumption of the Egyptian state discourse Egyptians will live under the 'humiliation' of the Mubarak regime due to their legacy of submission (Al Aswany,

2011; Sylvester, 2011). Instead, the agency of the 'Egyptian protester' is presented through the use of direct speech on the signs, illustrating their determination to achieve their liberation from the regime. The use of popular geopolitics in this instance provides a voice for the 'Egyptian protester; which would have otherwise been suppressed, highlighting the strength of using popular geopolitical sources in this analysis. Here, the signs provide the protester with the chance to directly exclaim their awareness, identity and defiance to both the Mubarak government and the international media (El Zein & Ortiz, 2012). It offers an important 'creative alternative to dominant (critical) geopolitical scripts' (Sharp, 2011; 271) of the event and focuses directly upon the a representation of those voices from directly within the events in order to ensure that the event is understood in relation to the protesters' own experiences, opinions and determination within the revolution (Sylvester, 2011; Sharp, 2011).

The poetry and signs displayed within the Tahrir Square, as published on the website Tahrir Documents (2011), further exaggerates the revolutionary voice of the 'Egyptian protester'. First, one sign reveals their collective determination, to the extent to which they are willing to sacrifice their lives for a 'New Egypt':

> *'You wont be able to steal our dreams from us, even if we have to sacrifice our live. We've all had enough. We're all gathered together, stretching our hands to freedom, we extend our steps as long as they can reach, refusing to be surrounded by a wall'* (Source: 'Egypt is telling you...', translated by G. Ali. Tahrir Documents (2011).

Then, another author uses the characterisation of the 'Egyptian protester' as sailors on a stalling ship to suggest their identity as the 'saviours' of Egypt:

> *'Everything has been taken from us; the country is sinking in an ocean of problems, not within sight of the shore. The people are the sailor that could take the wheel, saving the nation before it drowns, leading it to the shore of safety'* (Source: 'We need a miracle', translated by A.Leber. Tahrir Documents, 2011).

Through these signs, the 'Egyptian protester', having had enough of Mubarak's Egypt, first outlines the intentions of the Egyptian people to fight for their own freedom and dreams, before suggesting that the 'Egyptian protester' are the only people who can bring about this change. This is significant, as it illustrates how the popular literature became a revolutionary material within the square, defining the 'Egyptian protester's own intentions and opinions on the event at hand as well as professing their own forthcoming desires. Through these creative sources, the reader can begin to understand the extent of the needs and desires of the protesters, as well as their own agency in achieving this (Colla,

2011). They also help to illustrate how the 'Egyptian protester' used a creative output to begin to redefine their own identity in order to help achieve what they wanted for the future of Egypt (Colla, 2011). This is finally illustrated through the poem 'The January 25th Pact':

Lift up your head, for you are Egyptian

You are now streaming life on television and the whole world is watching you

And how we carry out the revolution, the broom is now in our hands

I will not harass women in the street

I will tell the truth and I will not block the way

You will not wage war on your brother abroad for the love of money

I will not take any bribes

And will live an honest life

You and I will deal with each other respectfully

I will not be bigoted towards anyone

Because that is the true nature of Egypt

I will not stay quiet about corruption

I will not go back to the way it was

I will report every transgression

No matter how insignificant it may seem

From this day forward I will not be passive

I will say the truth with a strong heart

The cleanliness of the country is like the cleanliness of my house

Its protection is a duty not a condition, I will wear my uniform

I will not throw anything on the ground

My country is Egypt through and through

I am the one who will clean up the streets

I will respect the law and not take what I want with force

With us Egypt will become a paradise

(Source: 'The January 25th Pact- translated by O.Foda. Tahrir Documents, 2011)

The author of the poem outlines a new geopolitical narrative for the 'Egyptian protester', as one which resists a return to the previous state of corruption and repression and the silence of the 'Egyptian protester'. Instead, recognising that 'you are Egyptian', the 'Egyptian protester' presents their own script for the future of their country, outlining how they will need to change their own behaviours and play their new role in order to ensure the success of this (Colla, 2011). This perfectly exemplifies Colla's (2011: n.p) assertion

that 'poetry is not an ornament to an uprising, it is a soundtrack' because of the determination and belonging to Egypt which it exhibits from the protesters. The 'Egyptian protester' is both heard directly speaking of their new vision for Egypt within the poem and seen embracing their identity as 'Egyptian' within this (Colla, 2011). Thus, the poem provides a defining geopolitical representation of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, as it highlights exactly how the protesters utilised popular geopolitics in order to present their own 'soundtrack' for their intended outcome of the events (Colla, 2011).

These creative outpourings from the Egyptian protester in Tahrir Square in 2011 illustrate the power that these sources can have as a political tool, especially in protest (Musawi in Dzieza, 2011). The agency of the Egyptian protester that is illustrated through these sources echoes the similar agency displayed by the Egyptian protester during the 1919 revolution (Fahmy, 2011). As with the actions of protesters then, the use of the poetry here illustrates how the protesters used creative sources to construct their own identity as protesters within Tahrir Square, and as an Egyptian collective fighting for a drastic change from the current political and social practice in Egypt (Fahmy, 2011). The collective and nationalist language of these poems illustrates how these sources have acted as a positive collective ethos within the 2011 revolution, a promising and important action given the manner through which the Mubarak regime worked to denigrate political opposition both prior to and during the events (Colla, 2011). Thus, the analysis of these poems contributes greatly to an understanding of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' as it illustrates how they utilised the available resources to them in order to advance their political status within the revolution and to ensure a 'subaltern' creative geopolitical narrative of the event is facilitated (Fahmy, 2011; Sharp, 2011).

<u>The identity of the 'Egyptian protester'</u>

The popular geopolitical representations established through *Taxi, Al-Khan,* Youssef's diary and the signs and poetry in Tahrir Square (Khalil, 2011; TahrirDocuments, 2011) produce an insightful and encompassing representation of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 Egyptian revolution. There is a small question over the extent to which Youssef's diary can truly represent the role of Egyptian women within the events, as Youssef's access to the square and resources is not restricted by the domestic responsibilities facing other women (Winegar, 2012). However, this analysis has shown that, in all other respects, the diary produces a popular geopolitical narrative to the events which speaks directly to the realities and identity of the population living it (Dittmer, 2010). Together, the analysed texts produce an uncensored representation of the protesters' experience within Tahrir Square in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, critical for an alternative view of the 'Egyptian protester' to that produced by international news media (Harlow & Johnson. 2011; Macfarlane & Hay, 2003).

Initially, the discourse of the 'Egyptian protester' within *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* appears to contribute a vision of hegemony to the dominant state discourses that the 'little people had no politics' (El Ghobashy, 2011), with representations of their concern with food and football illustrating a discourse that the 'Egyptian protester' was more concerned with the hunger in their belly than active political participation (Al Khamissi, 2011; Al Aswany, 2011). However, further discourses within the texts indicate how this discourse of 'cowardice and submission' (Al Aswany, 2011: vii) was the result of state violence against political participation in the 2000s (Amin, 2011). The popular geopolitical narratives contribute a discourse of resistance of the 'Egyptian protester', which emphasises the influence that opposition media had on the development of their identity as such, by highlighting how submerged networks such as social media and satellite television networks allowed for the people to express their collective grievances and unite into protest action (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). As well as providing representations, both *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* could have played contributing roles towards this development, given their initial publication within Egypt in the late 2000s. Thus, this analysis assesses how the changing political landscapes within Egypt, and the spread of resistance messages across new media marked the rise of the 'Egyptian protester'.

The discursive constructions of the 'Egyptian protester' in Tahrir Square within Youssef's diary and the analysed signs and poetry unsettles the geopolitical vilification of the protesters as 'foreign traitors' presented by through the state media and forces the reader to understand an alternative discourse of their identity (El Kouedi, 2011; Mersal, 2011; O'Tuathail, 1996; Holland, 2012). The texts illustrate the agency of the 'Egyptian protester', and their collective desire to resist the long segregation of economic, social and political policies by embracing a 'simplified anti-regime identity' of 'Egyptian' (Rashed, 2011; 27: Bayat, 2010). This representation of their collective involvement in the protests within the texts erases the state discourses that the Egyptian people were political dominated and subordinated (Rashed, 2011; El-Ghobashy, 2011). Instead, through the representation of the protesters' civic activism and solidarity, the 'Egyptian protester' is seen to be reclaiming their public space and affirming their belonging to Egypt (Youssef & Kumar, 2012; Nelson & Peterson, 2012; Foucault, 1997).

Finally, the analysis of the popular literature of the signs and poetry published within Tahrir Square contributes significantly to the geopolitical narrative of the 'Egyptian protester', as these sources provided the previously repressed 'Egyptian protester' with the voice to constitute and affirm their own identity within the 2011 revolution (Colla, 2011; Fahmy, 2011). Both sources show the 'Egyptian protester' speaking directly to the Mubarak regime and international sphere, expressing their own defiance to the conditions of the Mubarak regime and their determination to see it overthrown (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011; Colla, 2011). This illustrates the geopolitical power of popular culture sources, as the

shared collective identity and desires for liberation which it facilitated amongst the 'Egyptian protester' strengthened their own revolutionary spirit (El Hamalawy, 2011). Indeed, the poetry was 'not an ornament to [the] uprising, it [was] a soundtrack' (Colla, 2011: n.p). Thus the analysis of these creative alternatives to the dominant geopolitical scripts of the state greatly contributes to an understanding of the agency-driven identity of the 'Egyptian protester (Sharp, 2011).

This chapter exaggerates the need to incorporate popular culture and texts of non-elites into the geopolitical narrative of world events, as the analysis indicates the extent to which the identity of those persons involved can be established through these sources (Dittmer, 2005; Fahmy, 2011). Here, the discourses within such sources are shown to construct an identity for the 'Egyptian protester' which is reflects upon the protesters' movements, agency and opinions throughout the events (Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Ditmer, 2010). They also illustrate how the popular culture sources were the primary source employed by the 'Egyptian protester' to constitute and reaffirm their own identity as the people fighting for an end to Mubarak's oppressive regime (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). It is only through these sources that this fascinating insight into the 2011 Egyptian revolution can be established (Dittmer, 2010).

'ENTERING TAHRIR ALWAYS FELT LIKE COMING HOME' :

USING POPULAR GEOPOLITICAL SOURCES TO EXPLORE THE SPACES OF THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

The previous chapters have identified that Youssef's diary, the signs and the poetry written by the protesters and Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi* indicate and construct discourses about Egypt and the identity of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the 2011 revolution. This chapter argues that these popular geopolitical sources also have much to contribute to an understanding of the *geography* of the revolution, as each of the texts highlights how the different spaces utilised by the protesters in January and February 2011 played a significant role in the events. This is an especially important inquiry, as Bayat (2010) identifies that street protests and revolutions are not just shaped by historical trajectories, but also by certain geographies and spatial influences. Certainly, the occupation of physical space in Tahrir Square, Cairo and across Egypt was crucial to the success of the revolution (ElShahed, 2011). Therefore, the contribution that these texts can make to an understanding of the spaces used in the events is insightful, as this will provide an outlook on how the protesters used the different spaces to their advantage, or how they worked to their disadvantage, throughout the events. This will provide an understanding of the events that may have otherwise remained unexplored (Sylvester, 2011).

First, this chapter examines how Youssef's diary, and *Taxi* briefly, constructs the discourse of Tahrir Square and the surrounding protest space, both before and during the events of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. It examines how the diary represents how Youssef, as an Egyptian protester, also utilised spaces away from Tahrir Square in order to acknowledge the contribution that these spaces had on the events. This section finishes with an evaluation on how success Youssef's diary, as a popular geopolitical source, is in providing an understanding of the spaces of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Second, the chapter explores how the analysed texts both represent and were utilised by protesters in order to creatively claim the spaces of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the impact of this. These texts illustrate how the discourse of the space of the square changed from being a closed public space to a claimed public space (Shafie, 2011). This highlights the importance of analysing popular geopolitical texts within an event such as this in order to illustrate the agency of the protesting population and to gauge the importance of popular geopolitics compared to formal and practical geopolitics within a world event (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008).

<u>'The Republic of Tahrir was being born': discourses of Tahrir Square and the physical protesting space in the Youssef's diary, *Taxi* and the signs and poetry.</u>

Nariman Youssef's diary provides a detailed account of her specific, and protesters' general, utilisation of space throughout the main eighteen days of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The narrative follows Youssef's movements and experiences within Tahrir Square and within other spaces across the city throughout this time. This is revealing both of the role of the different spaces of the revolution and also of what each space came to mean for the protesters. For the most part, Youssef's diary centres on the space of, and movements from and to, Tahrir Square in Cairo. However, her movements in surrounding streets and shelter within a private flat adjacent to the square illustrate how the intersection between the different spaces and public/private influenced the experience of the events (Butler, 2011).

First, Youssef's narrative on the physical and discursive transformation of Tahrir Square in Cairo from a busy traffic hub to the home of the protesting community and the proclaimed 'Republic of Tahrir' (Youssef, 2011: n.p) provide a compelling commentary to how these changes to the physical space influenced the activity within the uprisings (Gregory, 2009). Tahrir Square has been the 'traditional gathering place for Cairenes with a grievance' and primary site of political struggle in Egypt since 1919 revolution (BBC, 2011b; Taher, 2012b; Sayed, 2011): most significantly the 1919 and 1952 revolutions, the 1977 'bread riots' against rising prices, protests condemning the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and protests in 2008 in solidarity with textile workers protesting elsewhere across the country (Taher, 2012; BBC, 2011b). However, the first discursive construction of the square within Youssef's diary sees it alternatively represented in the everyday as a 'non-space' (Youssef, 2011: n.p). Through this, there is a neglect of any representation of the historical political role of the space. Instead, Youssef muss that although she has always been aware of the space, and has passed through it almost daily like most of the Cairene population for herself the only significance of the space prior to January 2011 was its role as a structure for traffic mobilisation around the city:

> *'The square has always been present… driving through the centre of town has always meant passing through Tahrir.'* (Youssef, 2011:n.p).

> *I don't think I ever really took in the wide green circle in the middle. I mean, it's always been there, I know that, but I was only ever vaguely aware of it, as a structure that marked the road and provided traffic with something to flow around.'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

Through this discursive construction, the primary function of Tahrir Square appears to be cemented as the 'sprawling, traffic choked plaza' of 21st Century Cairo (BBC, 2011).

However, whilst this representation involves a clear absent presence of any other role for Tahrir Square, this itself actually works to highlight the exceptional nature of the 2011 Egyptian revolution by representing the square as an otherwise completely embedded space and aspect of the everyday life for Egyptians (Nasser, 2011). The discourse of Tahrir as a 'non-space' actually works to further sustain the impact of the protests.

The discourse of Tahrir Square as a 'non-space' in Youssef's diary is destabilised by the a discourse of the square in *Taxi,* which actually serves to support Tahrir Square's historical function as a protest space (Nasser, 2011). In a previously mentioned example a taxi driver proclaims how in previous years '*we used to go out on the streets with 50,000 people, with 100,000... on demonstrations that made real impact... in Tahrir Square* (Al-Khamissi, 2011: 11. This contrasting discourse highlights exactly how the function of Tahrir square in Cairo over the years changed depending on the social actions surrounding it. Whilst the square may serve as a traffic hub for the city in its everyday existence, at those times when Cairenes want to display their grievances, it is the space of Tahrir Square which has historically been transformed into the protest space (Taher, 2012b); El Mahdi, 2009). In reference to these past protests which have occurred in the square, the discourse of Tahrir Square in *Taxi* clearly reflects this role for Tahrir Square, indicating the importance of the square within the novel before the activities of January 2011 are known. This popular geopolitical representation helps to cement the idea that Tahrir Square was, and is, the central site for popular political action in the country, thus foreshadowing the role that the square would play in the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Nasser, 2011).

Certainly, although Youssef's diary initially suggests that Tahrir Square was an insignificant space with regard to protest action prior to January 2011, it illustrates how Youssef and her friends were quick to move to Tahrir Square soon after the protests began. This cements the pivotal discourse of Tahrir Square as the defining protest space in the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Taher, 2012; Nasser, 2011). Tahrir Square provided the natural point of convergence for the protests, as it was a conveniently positioned transport hub surrounded by key elements of the state apparatus such as the National Democratic Party headquarters, the State Television building, and the Egyptian museum (Rashed, 2011). The transformation and acquisition of this particular 'public' space held two particular significances. First, the square was surrounded by significant state buildings such as the National Democratic Party headquarters, the state television building and the Egyptian museum and the *Mogam Al-Tahrir,* the government's administrative buildings which had become a symbol of the Egyptian state's corrupt, repressive and inefficient powers (El Kouedi, 2011). Therefore, the occupation of this space considering its political association with the Mubarak regime, indicated the vast determination of the protesters to take down the regime; as they fought to have their voice heard whilst surrounded by the

structures that had enforced the past decades of suffering and repression (Nelson & Peterson, 2011; Elshahed, 2011). Second, any occupation of physical space within Cairo was an achievement, given the stringent control of public space and popular culture under the Mubarak regime for the last three decades (Mehrez, 2012). The Mubarak regime clearly understood the power that a public square could hold as a 'place where citizens meet, promenade, gather, protest, perform and share ideas', given the previous uses of Tahrir Square as a protest space since the 1919 revolutions (Elshahed, 2011: n.p). They understood that a truly public square could be, in effect, a 'physical manifestation of democracy' and by implication a threat to security (Elshahed, 2011: n.p). Consequently, the Mubarak regime deployed the physical design of urban space as a chief means of discouraging democracy: any urban space in which it would be possible for citizens to gather and stage a public demonstration was fenced off, subdivided or given over to vehicular traffic in order to make it inaccessible to the public (Elshahed, 2011). Under the Emergency Law, which still remained in place in January 2011 after its installation in 1981 when Mubarak first came to power, there was further stifled possibility of collective political activism as the gathering of even a few people in an open public space or public participation in political activism could be met with severe punishments of detention, torture or disappearance (Elshahed, 2011). Hence, the initial acquisition and prolonged occupation of Tahrir Square in January and February 2011 was seen as a triumph of the protesters over the regime, and the first step in the success of the revolution (Mehrez, 2012).

This occupation of Tahrir Square as a protest space by the Egyptian protester exactly defines the geography of revolution as outlined by Bayat (2010) as it sees the active use of public space by those subjects who are otherwise only allowed to use the space passively or as the Egyptian state dictates. For Bayat (2010), revolution is only defined when those who are usually excluded from certain spaces come to claim them as their own. This occupation of Tahrir Square also serves to illustrate the exact manner by which the disenfranchised youth in the Middle East have participated in social action over the past years (Bayat, 2010: 4):

> '[the disenfranchised youth] through their quiet and unassuming daily struggles reconfigure new life and communities for themselves and different urban realities on the ground in Middle Eastern cities, not through formal institutional channels from which they are excluded, but through direct actions in the very zones of exclusion.'

Thus, the occupation of Tahrir Square within the 2011 Egyptian revolution was a defining moment within the revolution, as it saw the protesters resist the stringent state controls about public space to occupy the very essence of it (Bayat, 2010).

Both Youssef's diary and *Taxi* provide a clear narrative on how the space of Tahrir Square, especially in the first days of protests from 25th January – 28th January 2011, became a site of contention between the protesters and the Central Security forces (Nasser, 2011). First, the narrative within *Taxi* illustrates the well-practised procedures of the Mubarak regime to control and restrict the use of 'public' space for protest by representing how past demonstrations had been quickly halted and dispersed by the police containing and outnumbering the protesters (Tawil-Souri, 2012; Taher, 2012):

> *There are about 200 people holding banners and around them about 2000 riot police and 200 officers and riot police trucks blocking everything'* (Al Khamissi, 2011: 9).

Youssef's diary, however, reveals how a different set of tactics were by the Mubarak regime in the first days of protest in Tahrir Square in January 2011. Firstly, it illustrates how all the protest paraphernalia from the first night's protest on January 25th 2011 had been removed from Tahrir Square by the Central Security forces by the time Youssef passed through the space the next morning:

> *'The next morning, all the signs of the night before were erased from Tahrir. People going through Tahrir on their way to work would not have known that anything had happened and would be forgiven for thinking that stories of protests were exaggerated.'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

Second, Youssef's diary highlights how this physical downplaying of the protests by the Mubarak regime was then bolstered by the representation of the event through state media broadcasts which fabricated stories about the calmness of Cairo streets (Youssef, 2011; Saeed, 2011). Only a fraction of the protesters present within the square would be shown on television broadcasts (Mersal, 2011). This illustration of the attempt by the Mubarak government and security forces to reclaim the space of Tahrir Square illustrates the power that the physical occupation of streets has on the success of a protest, as the Mubarak government are represented as desperately trying to stop it (Bayat, 2010). Alongside this, the state television reports also presents a discourse of two differentiated public spaces within Egypt throughout the protests: the corrupt space of Tahrir square where the protesters were vilified as foreign agents, and the celebrated space where pro-Mubarak supporters stood, represented as honest and rational Egyptians aware of Egypt's best interests (El Kouedi, 2011). This is an important discursive construction, as illustrates the state televisions attempts to hide the visibility of the occupied reality of Tahrir Square (El Kouedi, 2011). The identification of this manipulated geopolitical narrative within Youssef's diary highlights how the influence of power can serve to distort the true representation of a space, as it privileges the interests of those formulating the

representation rather than acknowledging the true material conditions present (Foucault, 1972).

Third, the representations in Youssef's diary reveal how she and other protesters actually struggled to reach Tahrir Square in the first place due to the Central Security forces lining the streets with police trucks and weapons in order to prevent the protests from growing larger (Youssef, 2011; Saaed, 2012; Tawil-Shalil, 2012). For the first few days, whenever Youssef travels or attempts to travel to the square, Youssef is met by either cordons or extreme violence from the security forces:

> *'On foot, we took the back streets to bypass the police cordons blocking the main road… where we were met by a police truck shooting a water cannon into a small crowd… several rounds of heavy tear gassing failed to drive us away from the square'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p, Jan 25th 2011)

> *'The police are stationed on a fly over that cuts across the street and are shooting tear gas into the crowd'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p, Jan 26th 2011)

These representations of Youssef's experiences partly illustrate the discourse proposed by Taher (2012b: n.p) that, due to increasingly strict policing measures since March, 2003, Tahrir Square was the 'meeting point that protesters were rarely able to reach'. Indeed, in the diary, there are two occasions on her attempt to reach Tahrir Square that Youssef is forced back by a police cordon or struck by tear gas (Youssef, 2011). The analysis of this narrative is thus significant as it illustrates the physical violence inflicted upon the protesters as they fought to overcome the Central Security forces to reach Tahrir Square.

Further popular geopolitical representations of the protesters' experiences of reaching Tahrir Square actually work to dismiss Taher's (2012b) definition for Tahrir Square. The representation of the agency and collective action demonstrated by the protesters illustrates their ability to safely and strongly defy the violence of the Central Security forces to reach the space (Youssef, 2011). For instance, the diary shows how someone aids Youssef when she is hit by tear gas by throwing cola in her eyes, how hospital masks are given out by hospital workers and other protesters in order to protect them from the fumes and how Youssef and her friends were careful to use alternative routes and backstreets in order to bypass to police cordons (Youssef, 2011). This narrative instead suggests, in contrast to Taher (2012b), that Tahrir Square was actually a meeting point which protesters were able to reach due to their steely determination. Following these representations of Tahrir Square in Youssef's diary, and the consequential inundation of the space by the 'Egyptian protester', Tahrir Square can be established as the defining space of the revolution:

'All afternoon and evening people flood the square from all directions, some marching in rally like awe inspiring formations, others spontaneously joining, arriving in twos and threes' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. Jan 25th 2011).

'This was Cairo's biggest and most traffic laden square, now entirely claimed by the people!' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. Jan 25th 2011).

From the activities of the 'Egyptian protester' described within Youssef's diary, much is revealed about the geography of the transformation of Tahrir Square into the 'territory' of the revolution. A distinct boundary, centre and social identity for the space can be recognised through the represented interplay between social life and social power within it (Paasi, 2003). This is identifiable through the diary's representation of the exclusionary and inclusionary material and functional dimensions of the space (Paasi, 2003). First, the narrative describes how the exclusionary nature of the perimeter of the square allows for a stable, functioning and inclusionary social life within the 'heart' of the square. Protesters lined and endured violence on the square's 'front lines' to ensure that Tahrir Square remained exclusive to the anti-Mubarak protesters (Cox, 2002; Youssef, 2011):

'people come back [from the 'front line']… for their wounds to be treated, they get some rest before heading back with bandaged heads and arms in slings' (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

The described physical trauma that the protesters were willing to face in order to defend their protest space supports the suggestion that Tahrir Square became a territory during the 2011 events, as this follows the definition by Cox (2002) that territories are spaces which are strongly defended by people through the exclusion of others or other activities. Further narrative within the diary continues to reinforce this definition. For instance, Youssef describes how the perimeter of the square was controlled each day by security gates and the presence of volunteers who checked the identity and conducted security checks upon those protesters entering the square:

'There was tightened security at the entrances [since Wednesday 2nd February attack] *with a line for women and another for men, and volunteers, always apologetic and smiling, searching people for weapons'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p)

This description contributes to the suggestion that Tahrir Square was now a 'claimed' public space, as it indicates the stringent controls which the protesters had imposed themselves for entry to the square (Shafie, 2011). However, it could be debated that this security meant that the square wasn't entirely public, as the controls prevented the access of those who supported Mubarak from the space (El Kouedi, 2011). This offers an important challenge to the dominant geopolitical narrative of the position of Tahrir Square

throughout the 2011 revolution. Nonetheless, for the narrative of the protesters' experience within the revolution, the condition which this security provided for the open space indeed defines it as a 'claimed public space' (Shafie, 2011).

Second, through these representations, the reader learns of how the exclusionary actions of the protesters at the boundary of Tahrir Square served to support and protect the other protesters within the square. As a result, the centre of the square became a space where the protesters could freely interact with each other (Youssef, 2011; Paasi, 2003):

> *'In the calm heart... people can walk freely'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

This discursive construction of the inclusionary nature of the territory of Tahrir Square is supported by another first-hand account of life in the space by Rashed (2011). For Rashed (2011), a walk from the 'front lines', a space of 'uncertainty, violence and paranoia', to the secure centre of the square was accompanied by a shift from 'feelings of unease and suspicion to a sense of solidarity, unity and safety' (Rashed, 2011: 22-23). This description from Rashed (2011) supports Youssef's above exclamation, thus illustrating the accuracy of the representation offered by Youssef's diary of the protesters' experiences in the physical sections of the square. Through its representations, Youssef's diary clearly reveals the changed nature of the space of Tahrir Square (Mersal, 2011). Whilst before the 2011 revolution Tahrir Square, and the public spaces of Cairo, were often characterised by congestion, pollution and class and religious conflict, Youssef's diary presents Tahrir Square as representative of a new kind of solidarity and community (Mersal, 2011). This representation illustrates the 'public' square as 'claimed' for the first time in years for Egypt, as the square has become a space where citizens are able to freely meet, exchange ideas, cooperate and perform (Ahram Online, 2011; Shafie, 2011). This is an significant popular geopolitical narrative of the event, as it identifies exactly how the acquisition and transformation of the square by the actions of the protesters helped to forge the geopolitical meaning of the space as the symbol and 'home' of the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Ahram Online, 2011).

Through Youssef's diary, the social identity of Tahrir square throughout the 2011 Egyptian revolution is defined as 'the Republic of Tahrir':

> *'The Republic of Tahrir was being born with borders and smiling immigration officers'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 3rd Feb 2011).

This discursive construction is characterised through continued references to the collectiveness and equality experienced in the centre of the square, with the diary's narrative on the formed *Legan Shaabeyya* or popular committees highlighting the horizontal spread of power and responsibility amongst protesters within the space (Youssef, 2011: Butler, 2011):

'Every residential street was protected by self-organised groups with makeshift barricades and sticks, debating politics and joking and making bonfires to keep warm' (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

This is a highly significant representation, as the discursive construction of the 'Republic of Tahrir' illustrates the relations of equality through which the resistance against the Mubarak regime was strengthened. These relations defied the entrenched hierarchies by which the space and people of Egypt had long been governed (Butler, 2011). Indeed, Youssef reveals how all the protesters '*sat on the ground [eating] the same koshari'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p). As the previous chapter identified, the activities and relations that Youssef's diary describes reveals how it was not just through the physical space but also under the symbolic collective identity of 'Egyptian' that the protesters worked to defy and overthrow the regime (Sadiki, 2012; Bayat, 2010). Through this, and a further examination of the formation of the 'Republic of Tahrir', it is clear that one of the most important spaces of the 2011 Egyptian revolution was not just the physical territory created in Tahrir Square, but also the 'psychological boundary' that simultaneously formed when the physical divisions were divided. This resulted in a state of mind and psyche which ensured that all the protesters held the same determination and defiance – something that was impossible for the Mubarak regime to overturn (Rashed, 2011: 22; Sadiki, 2012).

As has been previously identified, the diary's reflections on Youssef's movements indicate how the security felt within the space of Tahrir square was contrasted with feelings of hostility on the streets outside Tahrir Square:

'While buying provisions on the way to Tahrir I sense that people might be hostile if they know where we are heading.' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 2nd Feb 2011)

This insight into the insecurity felt outside of the square clearly indicates the strength of the 'psychological boundary' established within the space of Tahrir Square as it suggests that the collectiveness of the 'Egyptian protester' is only established once within this space (Rashed, 2011). This is reinforced by Youssef's own experiences outside of Tahrir Square, where she was left feeling paranoid about her own appearance as an 'Egyptian protester' outside of Tahrir Square due to her clothing, when it was this identity that provided her with freedom and a feeling of utopia within Tahrir Square:

'Suddenly, the unity of the past few days is replaced by paranoia... I'm conscious of my practical and dishevelled clothes, of the mud on my boots that I've been wearing since the 25th because they allow me to walk freely on the perpetually flooded garden in the Square' (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

This is an insightful representation, as it reveals how the discourse of the revolution changed both spatially and temporally. Whilst the feelings of unity and euphoria spread

across the streets and more specifically within Tahrir Square from January 25th 2011, by February 2nd, after the pro-regime supporters attack on Tahrir Square, residents across streets of Cairo became frightened into submission (Abouzeid, 2011). Hence, dressed as an 'Egyptian protester', Youssef was met by feelings of hostility on the streets outside of Tahrir Square due to a fear the consequences of holding allegiance with the protests (Abouzeid, 2011). Thus, by analysing Youssef's diary, the impact of the autocratic Mubarak regime's rule of fear on Cairo's population is clear to see, as the revolutionary spirit from Tahrir Square fails to carry through to the different spaces of Cairo during the second week of protests (Abouzeid, 2011). Although more than twenty percent of the population did participate in the protests across the country, there still remained a majority who did not (Omar, 2011). For Youssef, outside Tahrir Square it was a *'divided country'* (Youssef, 2011:n.p). There were even internal divisions within the protests, especially following Mubarak's announcement on the 2nd February that he would stand down from his position in September, as some protesters began to succumb to the idea that a few more months of Mubarak could be tolerated (Shenker, 2011b). Shenker (2011b) argues that the nationalist formal geopolitical rhetoric of the speech attempted to appease those who had not been actively engaged with the protests, who had been sympathetic to the protesters' demands so far throughout the action but who wished for some level of stability to be restored (Ahmed in Shenker, 2011b). For instance, the diary reveals how Youssef receives a number of phone calls from friends suggesting the need for the protests to end: '*please tell your friends to go home! Enough is enough!* (Youssef, 2011: n.p). It defines how those opposed to the protests were either against the actions because of the presumed resulting chaos, who had begun to view the protesters as the enemy (Ahmed in Shenker, 2011b) and those who were moved by Mubarak's sentiment and remained supporting of the president regardless of his actions (Youssef, 2011). This definition, and the popular geopolitical representations of Youssef outside of Tahrir Square contribute greatly to the overall representation, as both illustrate how lived experiences of the 'Egyptian protester' and those who were opposed to the protests altered depending on the space which they were in, and the extent to which they let themselves be influenced by Mubarak's rule of fear (Youssef, 2011: Abouzeid, 2011; Gregory, 2009).

The analysis of Youssef's diary also reveals how she, and her friends, moved between public and private spaces during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, which results in a merging of the public/private boundaries of the event (Butler, 2011). Youssef's routine throughout the diary sees her camping at a friend's flat overnight on a few occasions during the protests (Youssef, 2011). The discussion of this is interesting, as Youssef feels she has to convince herself that such a retreat into the private space did not mean that she was any less of an 'Egyptian protester':

'I join some friends in a flat overlooking the square… I tell myself I'm not simply a coward but that ill be better able to see what's happening from up here, just trying to get out the way' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 3rd Feb 2011)

In fact, contrary to the retreat to the private space separating Youssef from the protests, the diary reveals how this 'private' space actually became implicated in the protests while Youssef and her friends were using it as a space of 'relative safety'. Though even within this space, the group were still threatened by the violence of the police forces due to the presence of snipers on the roofs surrounding Tahrir Square:

'We hear rumours that snipers are stationed on roofs and surrounding buildings, so we dim the lights and close the shutters on the windows' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 3rd Feb 2011).

Through this representation, it is clear that the politics of the 2011 Egyptian revolution cannot be described through sole reference to the business within Tahrir Square (Butler, 2011). Rather, it implies that the other spaces, both public and private, must be acknowledged in order to truly understand the geopolitics of the event (Butler, 2011). To further this argument, the diary shows Youssef and her friends using supplies from within the private space of the flat to aid the 'Egyptian protester' within the public space of Tahrir Square:

'We took boxes of old clothes… to be used as bandages of the wounded' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 3rd Feb 2011).

This clearly illustrates how, throughout the protests, the boundaries between home, politics and the public space became obsolete as the 'Egyptian protester' is seen utilising resources from the home environment in order to further the political revolution (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). This is an important observation, as it confirms the argument held by feminist geographers that public and private spheres are mutually constituted (Staheli & Mitchell, 2004). Indeed, the flat was used as a protection from the violence on the streets and the first aid supplies from within the flat were used to aid the injured (Youssef, 2011). Through this representation in Youssef's diary, it is clear that the activities occurring within the private sphere were implicated in the success of the revolution (Winegar, 2012).

This representation also highlights how the previously unidentified role of the private sphere within the events. Within many international media accounts of the 2011 Egyptian revolution there was a primary focus upon the 'iconic male revolutionary' within the space of Tahrir Square only (Winegar, 2012). However, this represented use of private space within Youssef's diary also identifies this as a significant space of the revolution. Winegar's (2012) article supports this, as she argues that the activities occurring within the private space during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, such as childcare, cooking for the

neighbourhood watch communities and the donation of medical supplies, had as much to contribute to the revolution as the protests within Tahrir Square itself. Dittmer's analysis (2010) of Salam Pax' blogs covering the 2003 American invasion of Iraq illustrates a similar cross into the private sphere during Pax' narration: 'Dishes are fun to do while you think about the possibility of the big window in front of you being smashed by the falling tons of explosives' (Pax, 2003: 137 in Dittmer, 2010: 152). The dialogue indicates the role that the private space played for the Iraqis dealing with the events (Dittmer, 2010; Butler, 2011). In a similar stance, Youssef's diary serves to highlight how the Egyptian protesters clearly utilised the private spaces around them in order to succeed in their revolution. It has only been possible to establish this dynamic geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution through this analysis of events from a direct Egyptian perspective: from the popular geopolitics of the events.

<u>'You won't be able to steal our dreams from us': the protesters' creative claiming of space</u>

Butler (2011) argues that as much as the material conditions for public assembly and speech must be in place for protests, such as the politically iconic Tahrir Square, it is equally the workings of the assembly or speech itself which serve to produce or reproduce the characteristics of the protest environment. It is only possible to make a meaning of a space by analysing how that space has been used (Ahram Online, 2011). This has significant implications for the geography of the event, as it implies that there must be a study of the cultural and social outputs as well as the physicality of the events (Butler, 2011). In the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the vast production and spread of popular signs and poetry across Tahrir Square indicates how the popular components of public assembly, actions and speech of the protesters worked to construct Tahrir Square as a stage, upon which popular geopolitical narratives could be narrated. A discourse within Youssef's diary exemplifies this:

> *'Tahrir has been our stage… on which our message to the Egyptian regime was performed while the world was watching'* (Youssef, 2011: n.p).

Indeed, 'the creative output [in Tahrir Square] actualised the political revolution' (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011: 4). Hence, it is thus highlight significant to examine the popular literature displayed in Tahrir Square as the manner through which the protesters created their identity and claimed their space through the use of cultural texts can tell us much about the nature and geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The creative claiming of the space was significant, as it changed the discourse of Tahrir Square from a closed public space to a claimed one (Shafie, 2011)

The strongest creative claim of the public space of Tahrir square comes through the exclamations by the protesters that Tahrir Square is now '*home'.* The suggestion through protesters' signs that they would be living in Tahrir Square for the duration of the protests highlights the extent of their defiance to overthrow the Mubarak regime (figures 21 and 22):
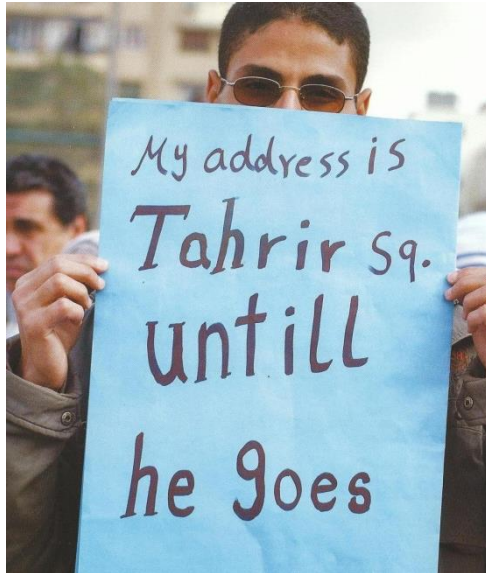
Figure 21: (Khalil, 2011; 2)

Figure 22: Sign translation: 'I've brought my bags and I'm waiting in the square' (Khalil, 2011: 121)

This claim of Tahrir Square as 'home' is also reinforced in Youssef's diary. For Youssef, '*Tahrir Square slowly became my home'* as the strength of community and belonging which developed within the space meant that Youssef felt like she was returning '*home'* upon every re-entry to the square:

> '*I would feel that volunteers recognised me as a regular. That was virtually impossible since there were changing shifts and tens of thousands of people coming in and out every day… such was the sense of community and belonging that I experienced that entering Tahrir always felt like coming home'* (Youssef, 2011:n.p).

This perception of 'home' highlights the success of the claiming of the public space, as the protesters evidently feel comfortable returning into and residing within the space on a daily basis. Also, through this claim, Tahrir Square is visualised as the key symbol of the revolution, the space in which the protesters feel the most 'community and belonging' within the protests due to the collective identity of the protesters within it and the shared desires for removal of Mubarak from power (Youssef, 2011; Mersal, 2011; Rashed, 2011). Through the popular geopolitical discourse of Tahrir Square as 'home', the protesters' defiance is exaggerated and the symbolism of the space for the protesting population is established: these signs highlight exactly how the discourse helped the protesters to claim the space, strengthen their feelings of belonging within the square and provoke their determination to hold the space until the revolution was won.

The analysed collection of protest signs from both *Messages From Tahrir* (2011) and Tahrir Documents (2011) clearly indicate how the creative production of signs, placards and displays were favoured as a means of claiming the space of Tahrir Square, especially in response to the violence of the Central Security forces who were attempting to take control of the protest space. It has already become evident that Tahrir Square during the 2011 Egyptian revolution was a site of contention between the symbols of the Mubarak state and the protesters (Nasser, 2011). The non-violent response of the 'Egyptian protester' to these contentions reveals much about the nature of the protests:

'Military helicopters keep circling the place… people use paint and stones to draw messages on the ground' (Youssef, 2011: n.p. 3rd Feb)

Figure 23: Rocks spell out 'Leave!' on the ground in Tahrir Square': (Khalil, 2011: 130)

Through this sign display, the reader can see how the protesters resisted the military securing of space by using tactics of agency and creativity, spreading their messages non-violently on the ground in order to claim the space of Tahrir. It suggests that the protester's responses were non-violent, as the space of Tahrir was physically transformed and claimed by the laying down of signs and poetry across all surfaces in Tahrir. For instance, members of the April 6th Movement unravelled a pro-revolution banner expressing their demands down the side of one of the buildings surrounding Tahrir Square:

'A tall banner rolls down from the top of a building to cover the whole of its front. It lists our demands in big letters that I can read from the other side of the square. Chief among them are: removing the president, ending the state of emergency, bringing to justice those responsible for the killing, forming a transitional national unity government' (Youssef, 2011: 3rd Feb)

As well as using the protest signs to non-violently claim the public space of Tahrir, the protesters appeared to use the agency and creativity of the signs and poetry as a means

of sustaining their occupation of the space. For instance, Youssef describes how, as she and her fellow protesters waited for the 'million person protest' on 1st February 2011, people spent their time creating signs:

> *'People have been preparing for this day, so the signs and placards are full of humour and creativity'* (Youssef, 2011: 1st Feb)

The signs were hence not only present in the square in a physical sense, but they symbolically embodied both the identity of the protesters and the demands that they were making (El Zein & Ortiz, 2012). Most prolific among the signs were those which used humour to sustain and further the demands for Mubarak to 'leave!' These chants were a direct geopolitical response to the second speech of Mubarak on 1st February 2011, in which he strongly resisted the calls for his departure (Mersal, 2011). Such was the stubbornness of his refusal that protesters joked he had not understood the world 'Irhal' (Leave') (Mersal, 2011). The signs analysed illustrate the response, with the protesters playing on the call to 'leave' by extending their chants with small humorous additions such as '*Leave! I miss my wife and children'* or *'Leave the wife's in labour and the kid doesn't want to see you!'* (Khalil, 2011). This deviation from the basic framework of articulating political demands also reflects how the use of self-aware humour created a space of creative energy which supported the endurance the protesters needed to maintain Tahrir Square (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). Indeed, Sousmann (2011) identifies how the flow of humour within the space functioned to strengthen the solidarity and community of the 'Egyptian protesters' and helped to provide an outlet through which they could defy the regime. Thus, through these signs, the agency of the protesters is clearly displayed, as they use the signs to not only express their political demand s but also how humour was used to support their own efforts to remain in Tahrir Square (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). This has much to contribute to an understanding of the Egyptian protester within the space of the protests

It is also interesting to examine where the signs themselves are displayed as a further insight into the geography of the revolution, as the protesters appeared to utilise every available space, using their bodies, the floor, lampposts and buildings as surfaces upon which to display their revolutionary energy (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011; Mostafa & Khali, 2011). One protester scrawled his message on a kitchen pot, immediately blurring the lines of home and politics once more by incorporating an item usually associated with a solely domestic activity into a political message ((figure 24 : Khalil, 2011 (ed); El Zein & Ortiz, 2011).

Figure 24: sign translation: 'Down with Mubarak' (Source: Khalil, 2011: p125)

Figure 25; (Source: Khalil, 2011: 57)

Another protester displays his demands on the sole of a shoe (figure 25), a strong resistance act due to the custom of Arab cultures which sees showing the sole of a shoe as an insult because it suggests that the recipient is lower than the 'dirty' shoe itself (Gammell, 2011). This is an important popular geopolitical narrative on the events, as it illustrates the protesters' agency to transform these mundane daily items into political sites themselves, whilst the placing of these items within the message exemplifies the extent to which their daily lives and cultures have been previously been influenced by the apparatus of the Mubarak regime (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). The utilisation of both materials as sign surfaces is a unique display of how the protesters incorporated these aspects of quotidian life into the protests in order to exemplify their resistance against the Mubarak regime by representing their message upon those surfaces which symbolise exactly how widespread the control of Mubarak was on their lives (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011).

In line with this, the most striking utilisation of space and materials by the protesters in Tahrir Square moved away from the representation of quotidian life to instead incorporate an apparatus which fully represented the Mubarak regime: the scrawling of revolutionary messages on military tanks (figure 26):

Figure 26: sign translations: 'Victory comes with patience'; 'With my blood I write another life for my country' (Khalil, 2011: 86)

Following the proclamations by protesters that the 'military' and the 'nation' were in 'one hand' during the protests, the surfaces of tanks became unprecedented space for the display of anti-regime messages (Mersal, 2011). This act is anti-geopolitical in itself, regardless of the text on the sign, as the protesters are challenging the material structure of the state institutions (Routledge, 2003). The surface of the military tank, a symbol of power within the Mubarak state, is converted into a surface upon which a revolutionary energy is expressed (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). Through this process, the protesters have effectively removed the power from that structure and enforced their own, demonstrating their defiance against the regime further (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). Further to this, the text itself on the tank holds a strong revolutionary message, as it emphasises the manner through which victory in the revolution can be achieved. This furthers the anti-geopolitical discourse effective from this sign, as it highlights how the Egyptian protester is seeking victory from the state hegemonic discourse.

These illustrated examples of the creative claiming of space suggest that the space itself was simply an 'instrument of revolutionary struggle', with the physical structures of the space acting as surfaces upon which the protesters' demands could be non-violently displayed (Ahram Online, 2012: n.p). This is a valuable observation, as it demonstrates the power that sources of popular geopolitics held throughout the 2011 revolution, especially as they served to strengthen the solidarity and community of the 'Egyptian protesters' within Tahrir Square (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). However, the paradox which this representation constructs between the non-violence of the protesters and the violence of the state security forces is not entirely faithful to the reality of the protesters' experience within Tahrir Square (El Mahdi, 2011). There is no doubt that these examples narrate, along with the other examples of the creative use of signs, that the protesters were in the majority part non-violent, and obviously less violent that the state security forces use of

ammunition and physical abuse to control the space (El Mahdi, 2011). However, the protesters were still violent on occasions; by January 28th all of the police stations in the city and the National Democratic headquarters had been set on fire (El Mahdi, 2011). The exclusion of any representation of this violence from Youssef's diary and through the signs and poetry does benefit the geopolitical narration of the uprising as a non-violent revolution (El Mahdi 2011). However, this does not provide a fully representative narration of the protesters' use of space within the 2011 revolution, as it simply privileges the desired image of the non-violent 'Egyptian protester' whilst masking their violent reactions (El Mahdi, 2011).

As well as being utilised in order to claim the space of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, this analysis suggests that the protesters also used the signs and the poetry in order to claim their own voice in the events. Most significantly, this was as an act of resistance to the state apparatus, with the popular geopolitical texts indicating both anti and subaltern geopolitical tones within their protest. In a few instances, the popular literature of the signs stand as an anti-geopolitical resistance to those state hegemonic discourses which are actually misrepresentative of the whole population (Dittmer, 2010):
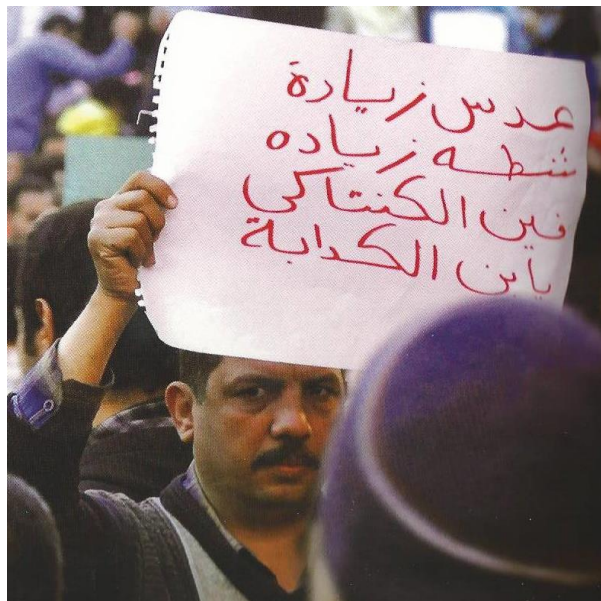
Figure 27: sign translation: *'More lentils, more chilli, where's the Kentucky, you son of a liar'* (Source- Khalil, 2011: 142)

For instance, figure 27 presents a discursive resistance to the formal state narratives of the protesters in Tahrir Square by making a mockery of the Mubarak regime and state media's transparent attempts to discredit the protest through rumours that the demonstrators were being given free KFC meals and paid fifty euros a day by foreign agents (Shenker, 2011; Rashed, 2011). These rumours were so well spread among both practical and popular geopolitical discourse that they even cropped up in conversations in local shops (Rashed, 2011). Hence, this sign is a clear anti-geopolitical response against

this, with the exclamation that they have been eating 'more lentils, more chilli' challenging the geopolitical narrative from the state television to instead illustrate the on-the-ground reality of life (and food) for the protesters (Routledge, 2003). This is an imperative challenge, as it is only via this protester's own popular sign that the reader can truly understand the protesters' experience within the square given the vilification of it through the state media (Shenker, 2011; Dittmer, 2010). This reveals how popular geopolitics can act as a visuality of resistance as well as a visuality of hegemony, as it is through this popular geopolitical representation that a different, counter-hegemonic reading of the protesters' food regimes within the square is established (Holland, 2012). This also highlights the protesters as active agents, able to participate directly to the geopolitical narrative, rather than condemning them to only be represented by alternative sources (Holland, 2012). Hence, once more, the analysis of the popular geopolitical sources serves to present the true on-the-ground reality of life in Tahrir Square.

Also, the presentation of this sign works to construct the protesters' as active subjects within the events through the iteration of their challenge to their representation, rather than simply constructing them as political resistance against the Mubarak regime, which is how the state media broadcasts reflect upon them (Harker, 2011). Here, as well as presenting a challenge to the rumour, by providing an indication of how the protesters are living within the square, the sign presents a narrative which helps the reader to understand how the lived experience within the square and how the protesters are 'getting by' in the space: providing a subaltern geopolitical narrative on the event (Harker, 2011).

Figure 28: sign translation: 'no talk before he leaves' (source- Khalil, 2011: 80-81)

In one of the images in *Messages from Tahrir* (Khalil, 2011), four protesters are seen utilising the space of Tahrir Square to perform their act of resistance against the Mubarak regime through a silent protest (figure 28). With stickers over their mouths emblazoned

with the word 'leave!' and messages on their shirts which state 'no talk before he leaves!', the protesters use this space to defiantly exclaim how they will refuse to talk until Mubarak has been removed from the government. This action is defining for the 'Egyptian protester' as it recognises how they are no longer afraid to use the public space of Egypt in order to publically express their political views following years of violence against those who dared to do so (El Kouedi, 2011; Elshahed, 2011). A similar act of political resistance had taken place in December 2004, when members of the Kefaya movement, some of the first voices of resistance against the Mubarak regime, gathered in Tahrir Square and expressed their demands for the resignation of Mubarak by taping their mouths shut with stickers emblazoned with the work 'kefaya!' (enough!) (El Kouedi, 2011). The transfer of this popular geopolitical act into the 2011 revolution illustrates how the protesters perceive this use of space to be a powerful act of their own defiance against the government. The protester is using the space of their own body as the literary text, expressing their message through their very silence.

Finally, the signs within the square indicate the fundamental importance of one non-physical space within the 2011 Egyptian revolution, the virtual public space, as they highlight the influence of Facebook and other social media on the geography of the revolution (El Kouedi, 2011) (figure 29 and figure 30):

Figure 29 (left): sign translation: The Facebook kids have blocked Mubarak' (Khalil, 2011: 107)

Figure 30 (right): (source- Khalil, 2011: 108)

From the early stages of the events, international news outlets were framing the protests 'as the work of wired, twenty somethings awakening the liberating potential of Facebook ' (El-Ghobashy, 2011:n.p). Consequently, it is almost impossible to separate the identity of

the individuals within the revolution from the power of the social and new media that facilitated and supported the events' development (Lim, 2012). Indeed, Youssef's diary

illustrates how Youssef herself regularly checked her emails and sent online messages to friends both within Egypt and internationally throughout the protests, an act which supported the globalisation of the revolution (Lim, 2012). Also, as the sign in figure 30 visualises, the contributions of Facebook as a tool through which to spread and share collective grievances and a common identity in opposition to Mubarak was invaluable (Lim, 2012). From a review of past evidence, it is known that the virtual public space in Egypt provides an important addition to the public space of protest, as the most successful social movements of the past years, (Kefaya, 6th April movement and We are all Khaled Said) used social media to circulate their messages and create a collective identity between their supporters (Lim, 2012) Within the 2011 revolution, the first calls for protests on January 25th 2011, stimulated by members of the 6th April movement and We Are All Khaled Said group, came through Facebook and Twitter (Lim, 2012). As the protests continued, communications across social media forums provided much of the information for the majority of protesters (Lim, 2012). Yet, through the signs in figures 29 and 30, the allegiance which the protesters appear to hold to Facebook illustrates how this media spaces acted not just as a technological tool within the protests, but also as a socio-political space, as the sign illustrates how it helped to forge the identity of the protesters through uniting them symbolically under the 'Facebook' community (Lim, 2012). The Mubarak regime obviously recognised the power that this virtual space held within the protests, as it blocked access to it within days of the protests beginning (Lim, 2012).

Through this space, the protests were globalised: indeed, this analysis stems from a collection of those signs which were projected through the social media into the international media sphere (Lim, 2012; Khalil, 2011). This can also be said of the similar representation of the development of oppositional press though *Al-Khan* and *Taxi,* as this press provided a platform for the Egyptian people to express their anger and grievances towards the Mubarak government, both directly to the government and to the international sphere, thus emphasising their role as effective tools of public mobilisation (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Khalil, 2011; Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Most importantly, these virtual and oppositional media spaces provide the voice of the 'Egyptian protester' rather than the state-controlled media (Lim, 2012). This is significant, as it ensured that the geopolitical narrative reflected the protesters' experiences and identity within the protests, in order to truly visualise the revolutionary public space of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

The spaces of the 2011 Egyptian revolution

The analysis of *Taxi,* Youssef's diary and the signs and poetry within Tahrir Square indicates the crucial role that texts play in an understanding of the formulation of political space (Kobayashi, 2009). Here, the analysed texts significantly contribute to an understanding of the *geography* of the 2011 Egyptian revolution through their popular

geopolitical representations of the different space and sites of the events, and the use of each by the 'Egyptian protester' (Shafie, 2011; Butler, 2011). They highlight the complementary roles played by the physical space of protest and the act of assembly and speech within the space in the success of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

The discursive transformation of Tahrir square from a 'non-space' to the proclaimed 'Republic of Tahrir' (Youssef, 2011: n.p) presented by Youssef's diary provides a compelling commentary on how the changes within the physical protest space contributed to the development of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Initially, although Youssef's diary constructs Tahrir Square as a 'non-space' sprawling traffic choked plaza' (Youssef, 2011; n.p; BBC, 2011), this discourse highlights the exceptional nature of the revolution, as it was conducted within a space that appeared to otherwise be completely embedded within the everyday space (Nasser, 2011). Of course, the positioning of the protesters were actually less exceptional given the historical role of Tahrir Square as 'the traditional gathering place for Cairenes with a grievance' (BBC, 2011; Taher, 2012). Yet, given the imposed restrictions on the use of public space by the Mubarak regime, its acquisition and transformation throughout the 2011 revolution highlights how the disenfranchised youth in the Middle East performed their struggles in the very spaces from which the authorities excluded them (Bayat, 2010). Youssef's diary reveals how the Mubarak state reacted to this acquisition of the space, with the state media producing a differentiated discourse of the space and its occupiers compared to that produced through Youssef's diary (El Kouedi, 2011). Hence, it has been critical to include an analysis of popular geopolitical representations of the space so as to understand the geography of the revolution, as the state media discourses vilify and downplay the protesters' occupation of the space (El Kouedi, 2011).

Through Youssef's diary, the vision of Tahrir Square as a self-constructed territory of the 2011 revolution in Egypt indicates exactly how the protesters worked to alter this public space from a closed to a claimed space (Shafie, 2011). The narrative sees how the securing of the space through exclusionary 'border' actions on the outskirts of the square served to establish a new kind of solidarity and community within the interior space (Mersal, 2011). Seeing the protesters form neighbourhood committees within the space highlights the horizontal spread of power and responsibility across it, forming the discourse of the 'Republic of Tahrir' (Youssef, 2011; Butler, 2011). This defies the entrenched spatial hierarchies long imposed in Egypt by the Mubarak regime, providing a new definition for public space and participation (Butler, 2011; Mersal, 2011). The representations within Youssef's diary reveal how the psychological boundary of this 'Republic of Tahrir' held as much influence over the space of the 2011 Egyptian revolution as the physical boundary of it, as the associated state of mind and psyche of the 'Egyptian

protester' gave them the determination and defiance to overthrow the Mubarak regime (Rashed, 2011; Sadiki, 2012).

Both Yousef's diary and the protest signs reveal how the utilised spaces and resources within the 2011 Egyptian revolution brings into question the public/private divide. We see Youssef still as an 'Egyptian protester' when inside a friend's flat, as she remains implicated within the protests due to the shelter and resources that the private space provides. Similarly, the creative protest signs define Tahrir Square as 'home' for the duration of the events, identifying that, for the protesters, the public space held the same levels of belonging and community as usually experienced within private spaces (Mersal, 2011; Rashed, 2011). These represented actions correlate to the argument held by feminist geographers that public and private spaces are mutually constituted (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2004). The illustration of the use of private spaces in the midst of the public protest helps to establish the lived experience of the protesters throughout the events, and how the different spaces came to hold meaning for them within the events (Ahram Online, 2011).

The content of the protest signs within Tahrir Square illustrates the extent to which the acts of assembly and speech helped to present a discourse of a claimed public space within the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Shafie, 2011; El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). They reflect how the assembly invoked self-buoyed humour in order to claim the space through creative energy and how the use of different surfaces as political sites for the expression of revolutionary messages presented anti- and subaltern geopolitical narratives to the event (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011; Routledge, 2003; Sharp, 2011). Through this, it can be understood how the space of the 2011 Egyptian revolution not only contributed the physical location for the protests, but was also utilised as an instrument within the revolutionary movement (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). The signs show how the protesters used the space in order to present their own reality of living and 'getting by' in the revolution, meaning that they are seen not simply as political resistance against the state (Harker, 2011). However, whilst a focus on these resources exemplified how the creative outputs of the revolution contributed to its politicisation (El Zein & Ortiz, 2011), this focus masks the occasions where the protesters engaged violence in order to continue their claim on the space (El Mahdi, 2011). Therefore, whilst the popular geopolitical narratives have much to contribute to the geography of the revolution, it must be acknowledged that this still serves to exclude certain images from the representation.

Finally, through the analysis of the signs, as well as *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* in the previous chapters, we can begin to assess the influence of the virtual space of social and new media within the 2011 revolution. These spaces were socio-political, as they were the tools for shared grievances and common identity between the 'Egyptian protesters', as

well as the platform upon which political mobilisation within the country was first prompted (Youssef & Kumar, 2012; Lim, 2012). This highlights how any assessment of the revolution must encompass both the virtual and physical spaces of the event, as the 'Egyptian protester' required the space of new and oppositional media in order to express their identity throughout (Lim, 2012). In addition, these spaces further the geography of the 2011 revolution as they provided the avenues for its globalisation. The majority of the international audience for the events gathered their information and imagination through the spread of new or social media across the international sphere (Lim, 2011). Given the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the signs and resistance texts within this analysis, this ensures that the voice of the 'Egyptian protester' was heard, to truly visualise the space of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

CHAPTER 6: 'TAHRIR HAS BEEN OUR STAGE':

POPULAR GEOPOLITICS AND THE 2011 EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION.

From the discourse analysis of *Al-Khan, Taxi,* Youssef's diary and the signs and poetry produced by protesters in Tahrir Square, it is possible for the reader and academic to narrate a succinct geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The literatures have offered a powerful lens through which to analyse the landscape and identity of Egypt and the Egyptian people before and during the revolution, as well as the space of the protests and identity of the 'Egyptian protester' throughout the events (Brosseau, 2009; Crang, 1998; Daniels & Rycroft, 1993). They have also presented the Egyptian people as active subjects, allowing for an understanding of the protesters' agency and voice throughout the eighteen days in Tahrir Square, and to recognise their own opposition to and lived experience of the Mubarak regime (Sharp, 2011). This study highlights the influence on geographical imagination and identity that popular culture texts produced within the 2011 Egyptian revolution can have on the subsequent understanding of the event, both through the representations which they exhibit and how they are involved in the Egyptian people's own construction of their identity. Hence, this new empirical case study of the use of popular geopolitics to narrate a world event contributes to the stock of research which argues for the benefits and strengths of using popular culture sources in a geopolitical/geographical analysis (Sharp, 1993, 2000; Dittmer, 2005, 2007, 2010; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; Dunnett, 2009). This case adds to the past research, as it presents not just how popular geopolitics can help to represent the imagination and identity of world space and its people, but also how people use such sources to reclaim their own public space, affirm their own identity and belonging to it, and narrate their own version of the event at hand. In the case of Egypt, this an especially important finding, as the Egyptian people had endured years of political and social repression under the Mubarak regime (Amin, 2011; Bayat, 2010). These creative popular alternatives to the dominant geopolitical scripts of the state acted as a unifying identity marker for the protesters, as well as an expression of their voice in a political arena where their voice had been so infrequently heard (Amin, 2011; Sharp, 2011).

Firstly, the discourse analysis reveals how the political cartoon *Al-Khan* and the novel *Taxi* provide a powerful lens through which to examine the landscape and lived experience of the Egyptian people prior to the 2011 events (Crang, 1998; Daniels & Rycroft, 1993). This is achieved through the context of both texts working to satirise and subvert the state discourses by focusing heavily on the on-the-ground realities of uneven wealth, resource distribution and social justice (Shanin, 2011; Al Khamissi, 2011; Brosseau, 2009). These representations satirise and counter the practical geopolitical discourse of 'stability' as they indicate exactly how 'stability' was categorically not teamed with the suggested

'economic liberalisation' and 'social justice' for the majority of the population (Shanine, 2011).The presumption that capitalism leads directly to social justice is mocked through a cartoon illustrating the continuing corruption of elections in *Al-Khan,* and the narrated experiences of fictional taxi drivers in *Taxi* provides a detailed understanding of the tough lived experience of the people under the corruption and repression of the Mubarak state. These representations reveal how the influence of political power within geopolitical narratives can serve to incorrectly reflect their material conditions, as the representation simply favours the desired ideology of its author (O'Tuathail, 1996). In this case, living conditions within Egypt bared little resemblance to the discourse of 'stability' popularised by the Mubarak government (Shanine, 2011). This recognition thus supports the call by Brosseau (2009), Crang (1998) and Daniels and Rycroft (1993) to include an analysis of popular culture sources within interpretations of world events, given the evocation of experiences and identities which they provide. The popular culture text within this analysis provides an important understanding of the true, lived space and people Egypt by subverting the dominant and repressive state discourse of 'stability'.

Second, the analysed texts contribute greatly to a formulation and understanding of the identity of the 'Egyptian protester', defining 'who' the 'Egyptian protester' was during the 2011 Egyptian revolution, their grievances and how they constructed their own identity as 'Egyptian' protesters defiant of the Mubarak regime using their protest signs and poetry. Initially, the discourses within *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* contributed a discourse that, prior to the 2011 revolution, the 'Egyptian protester' was far more concerned with the hunger in their belly than active political participation due to the discourse of fear instilled by the Mubarak regime (Al Khamissi, 2011; Shanin, 2011; Al Aswany, 2011). However, the representation of the influence of oppositional media and submerged social networks in Egypt within *Al-Khan* and *Taxi* illustrates how these avenues provided the Egyptian people the opportunity to express their collective grievances and the platform from which to unite into protest action (Youssef & Kumar, 2012). Once the 'Egyptian protester' reaches Tahrir Square in January 2011, the discourses of their identity within Youssef's diary and the analysed signs and poetry unsettles their continuing vilification by the state media (Holland, 2012; El Kouedi, 2011). They present the 'Egyptian protester' through a new 'anti-regime identity' (Rashed, 2011: 27) in which the protester themselves actively defies previous social, religious and class boundaries, defining themselves simply as 'Egyptian'. Also, by engaging with these popular geopolitical representations, we can establish the power that these sources held in helping the 'Egyptian protester' to articulate their own identity on the ground in Tahrir Square. The protesters used their signs and poetry to constitute their own identity, laying claim to their 'home' Tahrir square, and affirming their belonging to Egypt (Nelson & Peterson, 2012). Also, through these sources they expressed their own subaltern and anti-geopolitical narrative of the conditions and landscape of the 2011 revolution and against the Mubarak regime that they were seeking

to overthrow. This is imperative, as it indicates that these popular geopolitical sources act as more than simply representations of the world event. Rather, they are embedded directly within it, they were not the 'ornament' to the uprising, they were the 'soundtrack' (Colla, 2011; n.p). Therefore, the analysis of the popular geopolitics of the 2011 Egyptian revolution contributes significantly to an understanding of the identity and agency of its protesters (Fahmy, 2011; Dittmer, 2005).

Thirdly, the analysed texts help to narrate the geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution by presenting and constructing the spaces of the revolution. Youssef's diary illustrates where and how certain spaces were utilised within the revolution. This is a valuable insight, as it provides a compelling commentary on how the changes and utilisation of the physical space in Egypt and Cairo during the 2011 revolution influenced the activities of the uprising (Bayat, 2010). For instance, Youssef's diary illustrates how the social identity of Tahrir Square as the 'Republic of Tahrir' represented and supported the relations of equality through which the resistance to the security forces and the Mubarak regime was strengthened (Butler, 2011). This presents a strong resistance to the entrenched social hierarchies imposed in Egypt by the Mubarak government by defining an alternative narrative of the Egyptian people's participation in public space. This narrative is further bolstered by the discourse of the merge of the private and public spaces of the 2011 revolution within Youssef's diary. The space and resources of the private space contribute to Youssef's experience within the public space of Tahrir Square when she uses a friend's flat as shelter and to find first aid supplies. By looking at this popular geopolitical representation of the protesters' utilisation of space, we can recognise the lived experience of the events, and how the different spaces came to supply different meanings to the revolution: that the geographies of the revolution contributed as much to its meaning as its historical trajectories (Bayat, 2010; Ahram Online, 2011).

Fourth, the analysis of the signs and poetry produced by the protesters illustrate how the protesters themselves utilised popular culture sources in order to creatively claim their own space in the revolution, in order to present their own geopolitical representations of their desires for the country and their experiences within the square (Fahmy, 2011). This finding provides further empirical support for the claims by Harker (2011) and Sharp (2011) that subjects within a contested geopolitical space are far more than passive actors within the script: rather, they carry the ability to form creative alternatives to the dominant geopolitical imagination, expressing their own voice and experience of 'getting by' in the space. This analysis has revealed how the protesters utilised popular geopolitical sources to both physically and symbolically lay claim to the public space of Tahrir Square and Egypt throughout the protest, and to launch anti- and subaltern geopolitical narratives that unsettle the dominant state narratives on the events (Holland, 2012).   Revolutionary messages which were expressed on the surfaces of military tanks serve as an anti-

geopolitical challenge to the material and symbolic structures of the Mubarak state institutions (Routledge, 2003; El Zein & Ortiz, 2011). The signs mocking the rumours spread by state media that the protesters were receiving free fried chicken meals directly challenged this discourse and gave an insight into the actual survival techniques being used within the square. Finally, the signs and poetry reveal the true desires of the 'Egyptian protester' in Tahrir Square, and the acts of resistance which they were engaged in for the success of the revolution: protesters used their signs to declare how they 'have awakened', that there will be 'no talking until he leaves' and how they would desire to die rather than continuing to live in humiliation under the Mubarak regime (Khalil, 2011). This important focus on 'those voices that are usually rendered marginal and silent' in the state media accounts (Sharp, 2011: 271) facilitated through this analysis of the popular geopolitical sources provides an essential outlook on the protesters' own determination to achieve liberation from the Mubarak regime. This contributes significantly to an understanding of the geography of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and provides an empirical justification for further engagements with popular geopolitics as here this has lead to reflections on subaltern and anti-geopolitical alternatives to the dominant geopolitical script of the event.

Much has previously been said about the politics of power within representations (Kobayashi, 2009; Sharp, 2009). In this research, there is inevitably a question over the potentially privileged position of the authors of *Al-Khan, Taxi* and Youssef's diary, following the criticism from Dittmer and Gray (2010) that popular geopolitics studies that focus on texts remain elite-focused. Within the analysis of Youssef's diary, it has been recognised that her position may have slightly obscured an all-encompassing representation of the 'Egyptian protester' as her career and social situation meant she was more able to participate in the protests than other women (Winegar, 2012). Winegar (2012) outlined that many Egyptian women were unable to participate in the public space of the protests given their domestic duties and religious constraints. Whilst the overall narrative of Youssef's diary contributes heavily to an understanding of the 'Egyptian protester' in the revolution, further research on the subject would have to consider using a resource which does not hold the biases of social position which Youssef's identity presents in order to ensure that the experience of all within the space is encompassed. However, in comparison, the evidence articulated from the analysis of the signs and poetry produced by the protesters works to counter the claims by Dittmer and Gray (2010) that a focus on texts will remain elite-focused and struggle to indicate the truly 'popular' within the geopolitical representation, as these texts are written by unknown and unspecified protesters. Overall, this detailed discourse analysis of the 2011 Egyptian revolution from four different type of popular texts highlights how a popular geopolitical investigation using textual deconstruction continues to be valid in the field. In addition, whilst this case is primarily focused upon the impact of the representations, a focus on

how the construction of the popular culture texts by the protesters has served to affect an understanding of the geography of the revolution deepens the analysis of this case further, providing an intervention which reaches beyond previous political geopolitical investigations (Holland, 2012).

Given the above conclusions, the discourse analysis of *Al-Khan, Taxi,* Youssef's diary and the signs and poetry from protesters in Tahrir Square, as examples of popular geopolitical sources covering the 2011 Egyptian revolution, is value added to the calls for the use of popular geopolitics in analyses of world events (Sharp, 2000; Dittmer, 2005; Dittmer, 2010). This case study has highlighted how these popular geopolitical sources have highlighted both a visuality of the state hegemony in Egypt and a visuality of the resistance against this (Holland, 2012; O'Tuathaill, 1996). This has highlighted the manner through which geopolitical narratives from the Egyptian state have come to be articulated within examples of Egyptian popular culture (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008). The discourses prevalent throughout the sources have strongly challenged the discourses forwarded by the Mubarak state institutions and state-controlled media, thus providing an important insight into the resistant popular culture which has been present in Egypt since the 1919 revolution and increasingly steadily in the years before the 2011 revolution (Mostafa, 2012; Macfarland, 2012). Thus, from these texts, it has been possible to establish an imagination of Egypt and its population which emphasises the grievances held by ordinary Egyptians within Egypt whose voices had previously been suppressed by state power (Macfarland, 2012). Following similar empirical findings from Daniels and Rycroft (1993) and Sharp (2000), the findings of this research have contributed a narration of the event that furthers those geographies of the 2011 Egyptian revolution professed through the official state discourses of the events.

This work is restricted to a case study of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and thus there is some hesitation in making extensive conclusions on the matter (Holland, 2012). However, the particular conclusions drawn from this study do carry some wider implications for the analysis of popular culture sources and their influence upon geopolitical narratives. First, there is some question as to whether an analysis of the still word and the still image were the most representative medium through which to think of the popular geopolitics and the cultural politics of the 2011 Egyptian revolution (Alessandrini, 2011). Certainly, these literary and visual sources provided a clear understanding and imagination of the events and the lead up to them, as well as a construction of the identity of the Egyptian protesters and the space of the revolution itself. However, in today's digital and social media age, the circulation of amateur video via the internet throughout the events often provided the first vision of the revolution for many viewers (Alessandrini, 2011). Due to this, Alessandrini (2011) believes that the still word and image cannot compete to provide an understanding of the extent, dynamism and nature of the protests: 'while a photograph may capture a

moment, political and aesthetic energies don't stand still' (Alessandrini, 2011: n.p). Naturally, with this analysis focusing solely on the still word and image, it will have occluded an analysis of some of the energy and dynamics of the protests, as these are only captured through video footage (Alessandrini, 2011). Therefore, it is recommended that further analyses of this event incorporate an analysis of this video medium in order to acknowledge those energies which remain hidden in this work. Given the role of circulated videos in the global viewing of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, this recommendation will allow for a further analysis of the geopolitical imagination of the events (Alessandrini, 2011). Similarly, whilst beyond the scope of the research, the analysis does draw briefly on the role of the space of virtual social media within the revolution. These spaces provided the Egyptian protesters with a space to unite together under shared grievances and the platform to spread their geopolitical narrative and plan for popular mobilisation (Lim, 2012). With the rise of this forum across the ever globalising world, the narratives produced within the virtual social spaces will inevitably increasingly influence, through support or resistance, the dominant geopolitical scripts (Lim, 2012). Indeed, in Egypt, social media played an integral role in the political activism of the late 2000s (Lim, 2012). Therefore, future geopolitical investigations into the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and similar popular protest events across the world, should incorporate some assessment of the role and space of social media within the events.

In contrast to the above recommendations, it is believed here that whilst this analysis is of the still word and image of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, it still greatly contributes to an understanding of how the aesthetic and cultural can contribute to the political (Alessandrini, 2011). Fahmy (2011) had already identified the defining contribution that popular culture resistance texts played in the formation of national identity for Egyptians throughout the 1919 revolution. This case study reveals exactly how powerful fictional and creative outlets can be in providing popular geopolitical representations of a world event, as this case reveals how the analysed texts represent the geographical imagination, lived experience and identity of places and people within geopolitical events (Sharp, 2000; Dittmer, 2007; Dodds, 2007; Dodds, 2008; Holland, 2012). Most importantly, the discourses serve to represent the voice and grievances of the lay population within Egypt, to provide a representation of their reactions against the state discourses. This exaggerates the need to incorporate popular geopolitical representations more extensively into the analysis of world events, especially those involving popular protests, so as to provide a space for the protesters voice and to examine the narratives that stem from this space. Thus, on the back of this thesis' conclusions, the inclusion of these popular texts within analyses of similar events is recommended in order to ensure an inclusion of hegemonic, anti- and subaltern perspectives are recognised in order to contribute to an encompassing geopolitical representation of the event.

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