

# Renaissance or Revolution?

## Legacies of Pan-Arabism in the Egyptian Arab Spring

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### Introduction

Research Question: How was Pan-Arabism influential in Egypt's Arab Spring and how does the Arab Spring represent the unfinished goals of decolonization of the mid-twentieth century Egypt?

Thesis: The failure to deliver on the promises of Nasser's ideology after 1952 resulted in decades of disenfranchisement of Egyptians and a renewed call for the promises of decolonization; this led to calls for free and fair elections, an end to emergency powers and the military in power, and decreased unemployment and inflation that Egyptian participants in the Arab Spring demanded in 2011.



### Origins of Pan-Arabism in Egypt

- ❖ Pan-Arabism is an ideology tied to a shared linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity and defined by common goals like the liberation of Palestine and the unity of Arab communities.
- ❖ Egypt's decolonization revolution happened in July 1952 and was led by the Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser, who tied Pan-Arabism to Egyptian Nationalism
- ❖ *The Philosophy of the Revolution* by Gamal Abdel Nasser outlined the goals for decolonization. The goals included an end to colonial and military governments, the liberation of Palestine, and economic and social justice.
- ❖ Nasser used organizations like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Arab League, and the United Arab Republic (UAR) to achieve the goals of Pan-Arabism
- ❖ The 1967 Six Day War between Israel and Egypt represented a culmination of tensions over Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt's loss and Nasser's death three years later changed the relationship to Pan-Arabism
- ❖ Anwar Sadat took power after Nasser and turned towards the US for economic support. His ultimate acknowledgement of the state of Israel led him to lose the support of the Arab League and funding from other Arab nations. This led to a major economic crisis that culminated in his assassination in 1981.

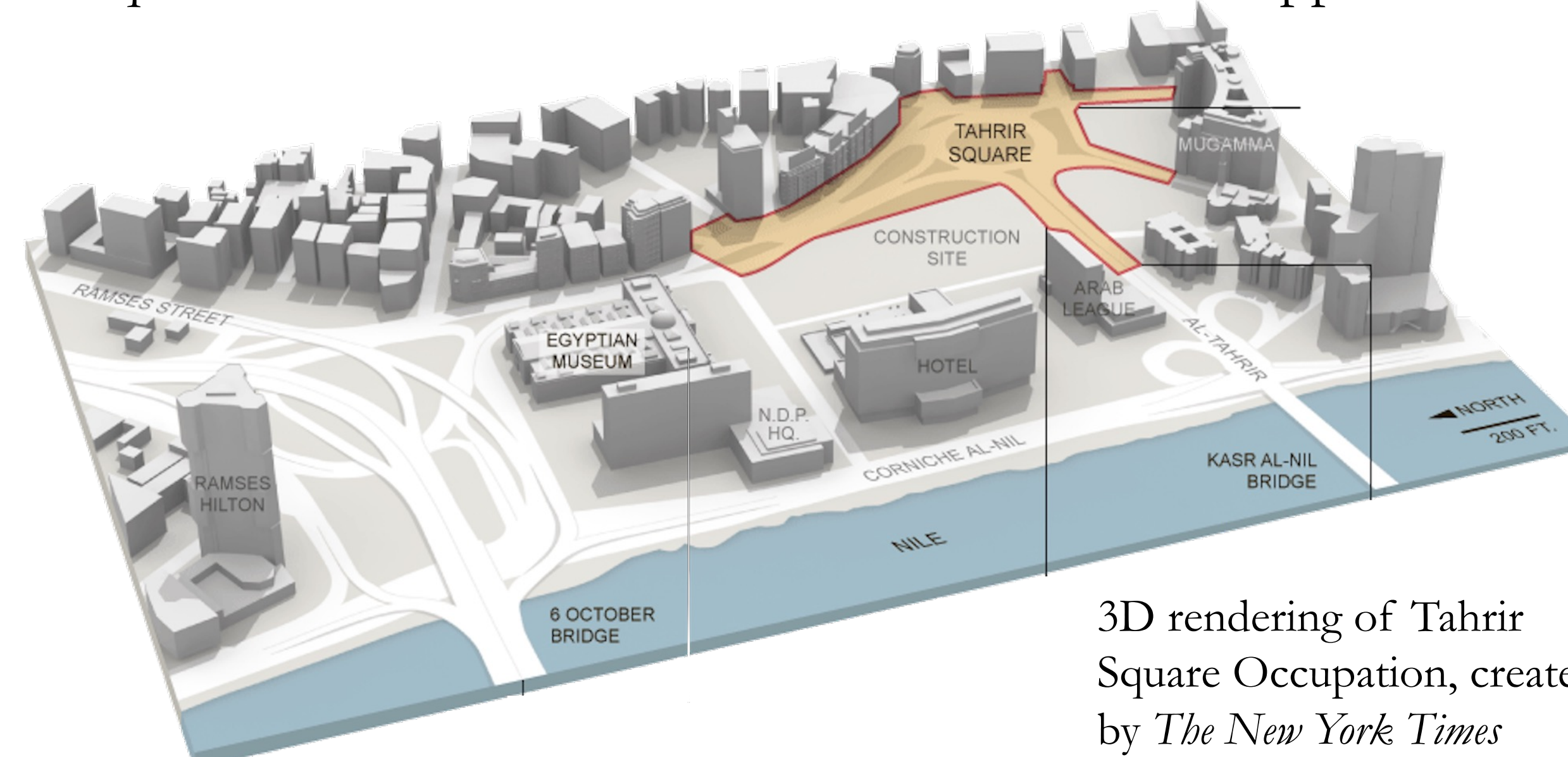
### Rise of Resistance

- ❖ Protests over the economic conditions in Egypt happened in 1977, with the Bread Riots resulting in part from Sadat's turn away from Pan-Arabism
- ❖ Hosni Mubarak took power after Sadat's assassination and implemented Emergency Laws that allowed him to maintain control for the next 30 years. Mubarak also proposed a law that would allow his son to take power, which led Egyptians to reflect on the historical resistance to patrilineal power and Nasser was the most recent success story

### Tahrir Square



- ❖ Kefaya Movement – meaning enough it was both a popular protest chant (enough is enough) and an organization that exemplifies the Pan-Arab demands of the Arab Spring. The Manifesto discussed the liberation of Palestine, the condemnation of global imperialism, the end of Emergency Law, economic inequality, cronyism and military governments in Egypt
- ❖ Tahrir Square itself came to represent the goals of the revolution. Within the square, protesters organized and maintained decentralized leadership and self-government through collective decision making. Community care led to a lack of class divisions in the square as people in the square had the same access to food and medical supplies.



3D rendering of Tahrir Square Occupation, created by *The New York Times*

### Conclusions

- ❖ Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took governmental control after Mubarak stepped down in 2011. Despite calls for an end to military leadership, SCAF maintained power and control until the election of Muhammed Morsi in June 2012, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's new political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)
- ❖ Youth organizations like the Coalition of Revolutionary Youth (CRY) worked towards governmental change under the SCAF and Morsi. Despite the influence of youth movements in organizing the new government, there were still problems that had not been addressed
- ❖ A major problem of the protests in Tahrir Square and in the formation of a post-Arab Spring government was the treatment of women in Egyptian society. Women were essential organizers in the protests, yet they faced extreme physical and sexual violence inhabiting the public square.
- ❖ Feminist movements have worked to navigate the violence of the SCAF and the Morsi government's religious polices to create spaces where their voices could be heard.



Graffiti in Cairo post Arab Spring, Designed by Bahia Shebab from '1000 Times No'



Celebrations after Mubarak Stepped Down, Cairo 2011

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