

EGYPT AND THE DAYS OF ANGER

Introduction

Focus

This *News in Review* story focuses on the revolution that occurred in Egypt in January and February 2011. The revolution led to the fall of an entrenched dictatorship and helped to perpetuate change across the Middle East and beyond.

A wind of revolutionary change began to stir in the small North African country of Tunisia in December 2010. After enduring years of corruption and repression at the hands of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, huge crowds took to the streets demanding he step down. On January 14, 2011, much to their surprise and delight, the protestors were successful, driving Ben Ali and his family from the country and ushering in a new era of democracy.

Inspired by the Tunisian example, masses of Egyptians began to congregate in Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo on January 26, 2011. Protesters voiced similar demands for democracy and the resignation of the country's president, Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled Egypt with an iron fist since 1981. As the size of the protests grew from a few thousand people to almost one million, observers in Egypt and around the world began to wonder if the previously unthinkable might indeed be possible. Could the Mubarak regime—for three decades a solid pillar of authoritarian stability and a dependable supporter of U.S. and Israeli interests in the Middle East—be toppled?

The demonstrators quickly riveted the attention of the world's mass media on the brave and peaceful struggle for democratic change in Egypt and attracted widespread support abroad. The protestors represented a cross-section of Egyptian society: young and old, men and women, Muslims and Christians, middle-class professionals and urban and rural workers. They employed the new

communication technologies of social media to spread information and rally new supporters to their cause. Mubarak's government had dealt with protests before, never hesitating to deploy its widely feared internal security apparatus to crush them. But this time, the sheer size and scope of the demonstrations, and their resolutely peaceful tactics, seemed to disable the regime.

For 18 days Egypt, and the world, watched as the drama unfolded in Tahrir Square. After a failed attempt by pro-Mubarak gangs to drive the protestors away by force, and after being advised by the army that it would not fire on its own people, Mubarak's position was no longer tenable. On February 11, 2011, he reluctantly bowed to the inevitable and announced his resignation.

As the crowds in Tahrir Square and other parts of Egypt erupted into ecstatic celebrations, the rulers of other dictatorships across the Middle East and the wider Arab world began to tremble, wondering if they might be the next to share Mubarak's fate. By mid-February, largely peaceful demonstrations for democratic reform were spreading throughout the region, from Morocco in the west to Bahrain and Yemen in the east, and were even beginning to break out in the non-Arab nation of Iran. The revolutionary wind that had started stirring in Tunisia in late 2010 was becoming a full-blown hurricane by the early part of 2011, and no one could predict what the region might look like in the future.

To Consider

1. Why was it such a surprise that the Egyptian regime of President Hosni Mubarak was toppled in less than three weeks?
2. Why did Mubarak have to resign, after successfully crushing protests against his regime many times in the past?
3. What example did the protestors in Egypt set for people in other Middle Eastern and Arab countries?
4. Why is a popular movement for democratic reform sweeping the Middle East and Arab countries?

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Video Review

Pre-viewing Questions

With a partner or in a small group, discuss and respond to the following questions.

1. How much do you know about Egypt and the recent political upheavals that have occurred there?

2. Why do you think uprisings against unpopular leaders have broken out in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world?

3. Do you think peaceful protests can succeed in bringing about change? Why or why not?

Viewing Questions

As you watch the video, respond to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. Who was Mohammed Bouazizi and why did his actions set off a wave of popular uprisings in his own country and elsewhere in the Arab world?

2. What was the result of the protests in Tunisia?

3. How did the successful uprising in Tunisia influence events in Egypt?

4. Who was the leader of Egypt, and for how long had his regime held power?

5. What were the main reasons why protestors in Egypt were angry at their government?

6. How did Mubarak try to handle the protests against his government? How successful was he in doing so?

7. What new information technologies did the anti-Mubarak protestors use during the uprising?

8. Why did protests in Egypt turn violent?

9. What role did the Egyptian army play during the uprising? How did this affect the result?

10. What promises of political reform did the new military regime make to the Egyptian people?

11. How have the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt inspired protestors in other countries?

Post-viewing Questions

1. Now that you have watched the video, revisit your responses to the Pre-viewing Questions. How has watching this video helped you to respond to the questions in greater depth?

2. Why do you think Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak hesitated for so long before deciding that it was necessary for him to resign?

3. What kind of government do you think the Egyptian protestors are hoping will be established now that the Mubarak regime has fallen?

4. Do you think it is likely that the protests for democracy that succeeded in Tunisia and Egypt will also succeed to other countries in the Arab world and beyond? Why or why not?

5. What impact, if any, do you think these uprisings in the Arab world might have on Canada and other Western countries?

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Behind the Egyptian Revolution

Focus for Reading

After holding power in Egypt for almost 30 years, President Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign following 18 days of huge, but mainly peaceful, protests against his regime. As you read the following information, focus on these questions: What were the causes of this dramatic event? What does it mean for Egypt, the Middle East, and the world?

Mubarak Steps Down

On Friday February 11, 2011, Omar Suleiman, the recently appointed Vice-President of Egypt, made a terse announcement to the media. The man he had loyally served for many years, President Hosni Mubarak, was leaving office. Only the day before, Mubarak had appeared on national television, informing Egyptians that while he was handing over considerable power to Suleiman, he would not be stepping down before his term was officially over in September. This statement infuriated the huge crowds that had been demonstrating peacefully against Mubarak for over two weeks in Cairo's Tahrir Square and other places throughout the country. Enraged at Mubarak's refusal to listen to the people, they surrounded the presidential palace, the parliament buildings, and the main state broadcasting centre, refusing to leave. The Egyptian military, who had remained neutral throughout the weeks of protest, saw that the anti-Mubarak forces were determined that he should step down. At this point, senior officers informed the President that they would not use force to suppress the revolt, and that Mubarak had to resign.

The Beginnings of the Revolution

For decades, Mubarak's regime was regarded as a bastion of stability in the troubled Middle East region. His National Democratic Party (NDP) had kept a tight lid on Egypt, using a variety

of methods, including rigged elections, manipulation of the constitution, favoritism, and the strong backing of the United States and Israel. But beneath the apparent calm, many Egyptians were becoming increasingly disgusted with the corruption and repression that marked the Mubarak regime. For example:

- Middle-class university graduates were angry over shrinking employment opportunities.
- The poor in Egypt's teeming cities and rural areas were struggling with the impact of rapidly rising prices for basic food items.
- Egyptians of all walks of life resented the fact that Mubarak's cronies were enriching themselves through their close ties to the government while the majority of people were seeing their standards of living decline.
- The brutality of Mubarak's security forces, the *mukhabarat*, had long been a sore point with Egyptians who wanted to be able to express their opposition to the government in a peaceful manner.

After Tunisians successfully toppled their country's dictatorship in January 2011, it seemed to many Egyptians that they could accomplish the same goal. The first protests against Mubarak occurred in Tahrir Square on January 26 and grew steadily in size, enthusiasm, and resolve. By early February, his regime was on the ropes, having failed either to suppress the revolt or

Further Research

Find out more about what might happen to the region following Mubarak's resignation at the BBC World News site. This link explores the impact of the revolution in Egypt: <http://bbc.cp.ukl/world-middle-east-124371>.

buy off its leaders with concessions. Unlike previous upheavals, this revolt showed remarkable staying power and organization. For the first time, protesters used new social network communication tools such as Facebook and Twitter to mobilize opposition to the regime and overcome its efforts to clamp down on the mass media and Internet. After the demonstrators successfully faced down a clumsy attempt by hired gangs of pro-Mubarak thugs to drive them from Tahrir Square, they started to receive very favourable media attention worldwide, which helped their cause immensely.

Why is the Egyptian revolution important?

Egypt is the largest Arab country and, after Nigeria, the most populous nation on the African continent. It is a major player in the ongoing Middle East dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. Its control over the Suez Canal, one of the world's most-used waterways, gives it immense strategic importance, especially for the shipment of oil from the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world. For years, Egypt has been the second-biggest recipient of military aid from the United States, after Israel. Along with Jordan, Egypt is the only Arab country to have signed a peace

treaty with Israel. The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu watched the unfolding revolution in Egypt with great concern because it had relied on Mubarak as a dependable ally in the region, ignoring his regime's corrupt and repressive aspects.

It is still unclear what kind of government will emerge in Egypt as a result of the successful anti-Mubarak revolution. The military has assumed the role of a caretaker administration, overseeing the transition to democracy and free, multi-party elections, expected to be held later in 2011. Previously banned or seriously restricted political groups of all stripes are now organizing and preparing to contest the elections. Among them is the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that, while officially banned, has operated as a major political and social force in Egypt for decades. Although it played only a minor role in the uprising, it is expected to wield significant influence in any future government. This is a matter of some concern to both Israel and the United States, since the Brotherhood is a militant Islamist group that in the past has supported the violent struggle of Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Follow-up

1. With a partner or in a small group, compare your responses to the Focus for Reading at the beginning of this section. What seem to be the most important causes of the Egyptian revolution? What are some possible results of it for the Middle East and the world?
2. Imagine that you are an Egyptian who has been involved in the protests against the Mubarak regime. What kind of government would you like to see emerge in your country? Give reasons for your choice.

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Egypt: A Profile

Did you know . . .

Cairo emerged as one of the most important urban and religious centres of the Muslim world and became Egypt's capital in 969.

Focus for Reading

In your notebooks create an organizer like the one below. As you read the following information on different periods in the history of Egypt, record key points in your organizer. You should be able to enter at least four or five points in each section of your chart. You will be using this information in the activities that follow the text material.

The Gift of the Nile

- Egypt is one of the world's oldest civilizations, with many monuments and structures dating from ancient times (Sphinx, pyramids).
- The River Nile is Egypt's lifeline, providing rich soil for agriculture.
- Egypt's capital, Cairo, became a major urban and cultural centre during the period of Arab Islamic rule.
- The construction of the Suez Canal made Egypt an important strategic point for trade and military activities in the 19th century.
- An Egyptian nationalist movement led a military coup against the unpopular monarchy in 1952.

The Nasser and Sadat Eras

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Mubarak and Beyond

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The Gift of the Nile

Egypt is one of the oldest civilizations on the planet; its history dates back over 6 000 years. Ancient and impressive monuments from the eras of the pharaohs—such as the Great Pyramid of Giza and the Sphinx—are a lasting testament to Egypt's past glories and continue to fuel the country's tourist trade, one of the mainstays of its modern-day economy. The pharaohs held sway for an immense time span, from roughly 3 000 BCE to the beginning of Roman occupation in 31 BCE.

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus marvelled at the pyramids and other wonders of Egyptian civilization while visiting during the sixth century BCE. At this time, these monuments were already ancient, leading him to write that, "Everyone fears time, but even time

fears the pyramids." Herodotus was also the first to refer to Egypt as "the gift of the Nile," underlining the importance of that river and the fertile plains surrounding both of its banks to Egypt's economy and way of life. Egypt's advanced civilization made many important contributions to later ancient societies like those of ancient Greece and Rome, in such areas as religion, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, and engineering. Today huge crowds flock to museums around the world whenever exhibits of priceless ancient Egyptian artifacts—such as those discovered in the tomb of "King Tut" in 1922—are put on display.

In 1517 Egypt was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, whose capital was Istanbul. It remained under Ottoman rule until 1882, when it became part

of the British Empire. One of the most important developments to occur in Egypt during the 19th century was the building of the Suez Canal in 1859-60. This dramatically shortened the sea route from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean and made Egypt an important global strategic centre for commerce and military activity, which it still is today. Britain and France, the two European powers that had financed the construction of the canal, jealously guarded their control over it, much to the resentment of a rising Egyptian nationalist movement that was agitating for its country's freedom from foreign rule as the 20th century dawned.

In 1922, Egypt gained its independence under the rule of King Fuad I, who was succeeded by his son Farouk in 1936. But despite its nominal independence, Egypt remained under the domination of Britain and France. Farouk, whose nickname was "the playboy king," was widely despised for his corrupt and inept style of governing, and his regime was discredited by its poor military performance during the 1948 war with the newly created state of Israel. On July 23, 1952, Farouk was forced to leave the country. The main figure in the opposition was Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became prime minister in 1954, and two years later, the first president of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The Nasser and Sadat Eras

Nasser ruled from 1956 to his sudden death in 1970. One of Nasser's first moves was to demand the total withdrawal of British troops from Egypt, which occurred shortly after he became president. Following this he took the dramatic step of nationalizing the Suez Canal, a move that prompted a joint Anglo-French and Israeli invasion in the autumn of 1956. But world opinion,

and the opposition of the United States, forced the British and French forces to withdraw. The Suez Crisis resulted in a major foreign policy victory for Nasser, cementing his support among the Egyptian masses.

Nasser then turned to the Soviet Union for military and technical assistance and used the levies collected from the operation of the Suez Canal to finance his regime's most ambitious construction project, the building of the Aswan High Dam. The dam was designed to promote agricultural and industrial development through irrigation and hydro-electric power. But its construction caused some opposition among archaeologists who were worried that priceless monuments from the time of the pharaohs would have to be relocated elsewhere, risking irreparable damage to them.

One of Nasser's main goals was the promotion of pan-Arab unity—that is, the union of all Arabic-speaking countries into one super-state. During Nasser's time in power, many steps were taken to achieve this unity. The first was the union of Egypt with Syria in 1958 to form the United Arab Republic. That same year, the pro-Western monarchy in Iraq was toppled in a military coup that Nasser supported. In the autumn of 1970, Nasser suddenly died of a heart attack, removing from office the most powerful Egyptian leader since the time of the pharaohs. Millions of Egyptians took to the streets to mourn his passing.

Nasser was succeeded by his vice-president, Anwar al-Sadat, who had also been a general in the Egyptian army. One year later, the Aswan High Dam was finally opened, to great acclaim. During the early years of Sadat's regime, Egypt continued its close relationship with the Soviet Union, which provided it with much-needed military aid. But by the mid-1970s Sadat was reformulating his country's foreign policy by reducing its

Further Research

To read and view more about the assassination of Anwar Sadat, visit the BBC Web page "On this day" for October 6, 1981, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/6/newsid_2515000/2515841.stm.

dependence on the Soviet Union and improving relations with the United States. In 1975, he reopened the Suez Canal to foreign shipping and in late 1977 made a dramatic and unexpected visit to Jerusalem to talk peace with his former Israeli enemies.

One year later, the Camp David Accords were signed, resulting in Egypt becoming the first Arab nation to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel. As a result, Israeli forces withdrew from the Sinai, and Israeli tourists began to visit Egypt. But Sadat's peace deal with Israel was extremely unpopular throughout the Arab world and inside Egypt itself. Many believed that in pursuit of peace with Israel, and increased military and foreign aid from the United States, he had betrayed the cause of the Palestinian people who continued to suffer at the hands of the Israeli occupation. As a result, in 1979, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, and on October 6, 1981, while viewing a military parade from his VIP platform, Anwar Sadat was assassinated. His killers, believed to be members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, claimed they had acted out of opposition to Sadat's pro-U.S. and pro-Israeli policies and his regime's secular and anti-Islamic tendencies.

Mubarak and Beyond

In the stunned aftermath to Sadat's assassination, Egypt's new president, Hosni Mubarak, also a military man, moved quickly to restore order and track down those responsible for the act. An emergency law was introduced, basically placing the country under a state of martial law, which remained in force until the revolution of January 2011 that drove Mubarak from power. Heavy repression was brought to bear against the Muslim Brotherhood, many of whose leaders were executed or imprisoned for lengthy terms. On the

foreign policy front, Mubarak continued his predecessor's basically pro-U.S. and pro-Israel stance while at the same time trying to mend fences with Egypt's Arab neighbours still angry over Sadat's peace treaty with Israel. In 1989, Egypt rejoined the Arab League and tried to use its influence with Israel to broker a settlement with the Palestinians, but without success.

Under Mubarak, Egypt seemed to enjoy a lengthy period of political stability and economic growth. The ruling National Democratic Party did allow elections to be held for the Egyptian parliament, but the rights of opposition parties to nominate candidates and campaign freely were severely limited. Many foreign observers believed the elections held by the Mubarak regime were flawed, if not totally fraudulent. The mass media were almost entirely under government control, and journalists exercised a form of self-censorship in their reporting for fear of running afoul of Mubarak's security force, the *mukhabarat*. Trade unions and other non-governmental organizations of civil society were also very restricted, while the Muslim Brotherhood, its support rising, remained an outlawed organization throughout Mubarak's tenure in office.

Economically Egypt saw its economy grow dramatically during the Mubarak years. His regime encouraged tourism and foreign investment and practised a policy of economic liberalism that was basically business-friendly. As a result, a prosperous new middle class began to appear in Egypt, concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria, the country's two major cities. As well, a small but influential group of super-rich Egyptians also flaunted their newfound wealth, much of it the direct result of close contacts with senior figures in the Mubarak regime. But for the ordinary Egyptian worker,

whether living in the city or on the farm, life remained a constant struggle. Prices, especially for basic foodstuffs, were rising to record levels by the mid 2000s, placing severe pressure on many Egyptians to make ends meet. Almost half the country's population was living on less than USD\$2 per day.

Unemployment and underemployment, especially for young Egyptians, was increasing rapidly, even more so after the global economic recession of 2008 put a damper on Egypt's crucial tourist business and the jobs it generated. Cairo's sprawling slums continued to spread and fester, lacking facilities such as schools and medical clinics, or even basic hygienic infrastructure like sewers or running water. Many homeless Cairo residents set up living quarters

in the famous "City of the Dead," an ancient cemetery whose mouldering tombs provided shelter for thousands. A growing number of Egyptians, especially the young, were becoming restive, demanding greater economic opportunities, a more equitable sharing of the nation's wealth, and an end to the gross corruption and brutal repression that had become the twin hallmarks of the Mubarak regime. Beneath the outward appearance of political stability and economic growth, deep currents of unrest were running under the surface of Egyptian society. It would take only the spark ignited in the neighbouring North African nation of Tunisia in January 2011 to set the whole country ablaze and topple the Mubarak regime once and for all.

Follow-up

1. With a partner, compare the information in your summary chart. Help each other to complete any missing information.
2. Why does ancient Egypt hold such a fascination for people today around the world?
3. Why was Gamal Abdel Nasser such a dynamic and influential figure in the modern history of Egypt?
4. What were the consequences of the important foreign-policy decisions Egypt made under the leadership of Anwar Sadat?
5. Why did the surface appearance of political stability and economic prosperity in Egypt under Hosni Mubarak's regime prove so deceptive in early 2011?

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Main Players

Focus for Reading

As you read this section, prepare brief notes on each of the figures or group profiled in it. Summarize what you consider to be their major strengths and weaknesses as potential leaders for Egypt after the downfall of the Mubarak regime. You should be able to identify at least two strengths and weaknesses for each one.

Create an organizer like the following to summarize your points:

Individual or Group	Strengths	Weaknesses
Mohamed El Baradei	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguished diplomatic career• Civilian background• Highly educated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has lived abroad for a long time• No base of support• May be out of touch with average Egyptians
Muslim Brotherhood		
Wael Ghonim		
Mohamad Hussain Tantawi		

Mohamed El Baradei

One of the most respected Egyptians to grace the international stage, Mohamed El Baradei is a Nobel Peace Prize winner who once headed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a United Nations body responsible for monitoring the spread of atomic weapons around the world. In the run-up to the 2003 Iraq war, El Baradei made headlines when he questioned the allegations of then U.S. president George W. Bush that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. Since then, he has also been involved in diplomatic efforts to persuade countries such as Iran and North Korea to abandon any plans they might have for developing nuclear weapons and instead devote their nuclear programs to peaceful purposes only. In recognition of his work to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, El Baradei was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

Because of his involvement in international diplomacy, El Baradei has spent most of his adult life abroad and

only returned to his native Egypt in early 2010 after completing his term as head of the IAEA. Thousands of admirers defied government orders and gave El Baradei a hero's welcome when he landed at Cairo Airport. After the wave of popular demonstrations against Mubarak began to swell in January 2011, El Baradei quickly identified with the protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square and expressed his readiness to play a key role in any new government that might be formed after Mubarak left office.

One of El Baradei's greatest strengths is that he is a civilian with no military background. He is highly educated, holding a doctorate in international law from the New York University Law School and counts as his personal friends a number of key figures on the international stage. However, some protestors regard him as out of touch with the concerns of the average Egyptian, such as the problem of rising food prices. He also lacks a solid base of support among any of the various opposition groups that have been

agitating against the Mubarak regime inside Egypt for many years.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood, or al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, has been a leading opposition movement inside Egypt ever since its founding in 1928. The Brotherhood was established by Hassan Al Banna to advocate the cause of “political Islam,” and was the first such organization anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world.

By the 1940s, the Brotherhood had attracted approximately two million followers inside Egypt and was spreading its influence throughout the Arab world. Its military wing, the Special Apparatus, staged an effective campaign of bombings and assassinations during the anti-British struggle. In 1948, the government banned the group, accusing it of plotting the assassination of Egypt’s prime minister. Shortly afterward, Al Banna was himself assassinated, leading to an outbreak of violence across the country. After a failed assassination attempt against him, Gamal Abdel Nasser banned the Brotherhood and jailed many of its prominent leaders.

Operating underground, the Brotherhood continued to influence events in Egypt and other Arab countries. In 1964, its new leader, Sayyid Qutb, published a book called *Milestones*, in which he proposed that “Islam is the solution” for all the problems of the Middle East, and even the entire world. His writings were to inspire a younger generation of Islamic fundamentalist *jihadis*, or holy warriors, including Osama bin Laden, the Al Qaeda leader responsible for planning the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Qutb’s execution, ordered by the Nasser regime in 1966, made him a martyr, or *shahid*, of the cause of political Islam.

The Muslim Brotherhood is viewed with suspicion by many secular Egyptians who do not want to become another Islamic theocracy like Iran. And while the Brotherhood has publicly committed itself to respecting the democratic wishes of the majority, it calls for Islamic *sharia* law as the basis of Egypt’s law code. Its support for groups that have used violence against Israel, such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, has also raised concern among Western governments, including the United States, about its future role in Egypt’s government.

Wael Ghonim

Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian Google executive, was one of the main organizers of the Facebook campaign for peaceful democratic change in the country. As a result of his efforts, Ghonim was held in police custody for 12 days, where he was reportedly blindfolded and threatened with torture. Upon his release on February 7, he gave an emotional television interview that galvanized protestors.

Ghonim denies he is a hero and insists that the real heroes of the movement are those who have sacrificed their lives to bring about Mubarak’s downfall. But in today’s cyber-world, where social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook are becoming leading forces for political change, it seemed only natural that a Google executive would emerge as a major spokesperson for the opposition. His televised response to videos showing pro-Mubarak gangs physically assaulting peaceful demonstrators in Tahrir Square riveted Egyptian viewers and swayed millions who until that point had not made up their minds as to which side they were backing in the country’s ongoing political struggle.

As a Google executive, Ghonim was based in Dubai, the search engine’s

headquarters in the Arab-speaking world. He fooled the organization's directors into permitting him to return to Egypt after the protests against Mubarak erupted, claiming the reason for his visit was personal. However, upon arriving, he immediately set up his Facebook page and plunged himself into the opposition movement. Ghonim is only 30 years old and has no record of any previous political involvement with any anti-Mubarak group within Egypt. But he is now one of the first "cyber-celebrities" to appear on the world stage as a potential political leader. Aside from his opposition to Mubarak and his advocacy of democracy, he has not made any specific statements on the kind of government he would like to see established in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era.

Mohamad Hussain Tantawi

After the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011, political power fell into the hands of Egypt's armed forces. The head of the Higher Military Council, the group that now effectively runs Egypt, is Field Marshall Mohamad Hussain Tantawi. Unlike Google executive Wael Ghonim, Tantawi is a familiar figure to most Egyptians. Until Mubarak

resigned, Tantawi was a loyal supporter of the regime, serving it in a number of important posts, including deputy prime minister and defence minister.

In discussions about potential successors to Mubarak before the revolution that toppled him, Tantawi's name was frequently mentioned as a likely presidential candidate. A military man in a country that has only known leaders coming from the army, Tantawi appeared to many as a safe choice to continue the stability and main policies of the regime. He enjoyed close contacts with his military opposite numbers in the United States and was a strong supporter of Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. Personally, he is regarded as "charming and courtly," but also as "aged and change resistant." There is also speculation that his reported ill health may work against any future political ambitions he may harbour.

Sources: "Profile: Mohamed El Baradei," BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk/news/10420218; "Profile: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk/world-middle-east-123134; "Profile: Egypt's Wael Ghonim," BBC News www.bbc.co.uk/world-middle-east-124005; "Egypt after Mubarak: Mohamad Hussain Tantawi Profile," BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk/world-middle-east-124415

Follow-up

1. With a partner or in a small group, compare your responses with those from the Focus for Reading. Help each other complete any missing information from the summary chart.
2. Of the four individuals and groups examined in this section, which do you think is most and least likely to play a leadership role in Egyptian politics in the post-Mubarak era? Why?

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Activity: The Role of the Media

The popular uprisings that began in Tunisia and rapidly spread to Egypt in January 2011 are also occurring in a number of countries in North Africa and the Middle East. From Morocco in the west to Iran in the east, people in the thousands are taking to the streets to demand democratic change. As of late February, demonstrations against unpopular regimes had taken place in seven countries. These nations are very different from each other with regard to their cultures, histories, and political systems. The only similarities among them are that Islam is the dominant religious faith, none can be classified as full-fledged democracies, and that in six of the countries Arabic is the official language.

Your Task

As a culminating activity for this *CBC News in Review* story, form groups to track the media coverage of events as they continue to unfold in each of these countries. With your group, research the background to the uprisings in one of the countries listed below. Prepare and present a report on the country to the rest of the class. In your report be sure to provide background information on the country and its political situation, what the protestors are demanding and why, and their chances of success. Also indicate why what is happening in this country is important, not just for it, but also for the rest of the world.

After the reports have been presented, evaluate the role of the media in reporting on these events, and possibly even influencing them. As a concluding activity, write a short reflection or review of the media's role in covering major news stories such as the wave of protests in North Africa and the Middle East, or your own news story on the issue.

Morocco (Population: 32.3 million, Capital city: Rabat)

Type of government: Monarchy

Head of State: King Mohammed VI, crowned 1999

Political situation: King exercises authority, role of political parties and mass media limited. People are demanding democratic reform but not necessarily the removal of the monarchy.

Algeria (Population: 35.4 million, Capital: Algiers)

Type of government: Republic

Head of State: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in power since 1999

Political situation: Government dealt with serious internal political conflicts in 1990s against Islamist opposition groups. Ruling party faces rising demands for greater democracy, but many fear return to civil war.

Libya (Population: 6.5 million, Capital: Tripoli)

Type of government: Republic

Head of State: Colonel Moammar Gadhafi, in power since 1969

Political situation: Gadhafi has ruled as a dictator for over four decades. No opposition political groups or non-government media permitted. Widespread demonstrations in February 2011 met with heavy resistance from army and security forces, causing hundreds of deaths.

Jordan (Population: 6.5 million, Capital: Amman)

Type of government: Monarchy

Head of State: King Abdullah II, crowned 1999

Political situation: King exercises authority, role of political parties and mass media limited. People are demanding democratic reform but not necessarily the removal of the monarchy.

Bahrain (Population: 807,000, Capital: Manama)

Type of government: Monarchy

Head of State: Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah, ruler since 2002

Political situation: King and his family exercise authority. Same family has ruled since 18th century. Demonstrations against the monarchy and Sunni Islam elite by mainly Shi'ite protestors are demanding democratic reforms and an end to the monarchy.

Yemen (Population: 24.3 million, Capital: Sanaa)

Type of government: Republic

Head of State: President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in power since 1978 in North Yemen, 1990 in united country

Political situation: Saleh's regime supported by army and traditional tribal leaders. Protestors are demanding Saleh's resignation and major democratic reforms. Internal instability and active radical Islamist groups are seen to pose major security threats in the country and region.

Iran (Population: 75.1 million, Capital: Tehran)

Type of government: Islamic republic

Heads of State: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (since 1989), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (since 2005)

Political situation: Islamic revolution overthrew the Shah's pro-Western government in 1979, replacing it with theocratic state. Limited role for opposition groups, and no free media. Widespread protests against Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009, which many believed to be rigged. Smaller protests are now erupting after events in Tunisia and Egypt.

Source: BBC Country Profiles, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/middleeast

The following Web sites provide up-to-the-minute and in-depth coverage of events in these countries as they are unfolding:

- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: www.cbc.ca
- British Broadcasting Corporation: www.bbc.co.uk
- Cable News Network: www.cnn.com
- Al Jazeera: www.aljazeera.net
- YouTube: www.youtube.com

You could also read comments on these events on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.