
Recovering

Nonviolent

History

Civil Resistance
in Liberation Struggles

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Egypt: Nonviolent Resistance in the Rise of a Nation-State, 1805–1922

Amr Abdalla and Yasmine Arafa

In this chapter, we identify and examine important episodes of Egyptians' nonviolent resistance against foreign domination in the nineteenth century, including the 1805 revolution, the 1881 Orabi movement, nonviolent organizing against the British occupation after 1882, and the 1919 revolution that led to Egypt's formal independence in 1922.

Often, the focus on the role of political elites, elite-driven events, brutal internal political strife, aggressive foreign interventions, armed resistance, and violence overshadows seemingly less visible but no less important people-driven nonviolent actions. Sometimes, the stories of mass nonviolent resistance are ignored altogether, even in well-respected academic publications. For example, *The Cambridge History of Egypt* offers only a few lines on the events of 1805, overlooking entirely the civilian-led nonviolent mobilization.¹ In this chapter, we aim to create greater awareness about the history of nonviolent actions in Egypt's struggle against foreign domination and offer insights into their role and effectiveness and their contribution to strengthening a national fabric—the process that eventually led to the emergence of a truly nationwide and nonviolent movement exemplified by the 1919 revolution. We also make some references to the 2011 revolution in order to emphasize similar nonviolent patterns that seem to have been present in both the 1919 revolution and the events that led to Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's departure under the pressure of a popular nonviolent uprising.

Egyptian value systems generally emphasize the use of nonviolent means to fight oppression and injustice.² With the exception of violence in honor killings and blood feuds in Upper Egypt, both traditional and religious

values emphasize that, before resorting to violence, nonviolent methods should be exhausted.³ Furthermore, in order not to appear weak while taking nonviolent action, resisters should remind their opponents that the use of force remains a possible option. Collective nonviolent struggle as a form of self-defense and sacrificing one's life for the nation, religion, or principles has been highly valued.⁴ However, martyrdom does not imply engaging in armed combat; someone who dies while struggling nonviolently can also be considered a *martyr*—the term was used, for example, to describe the nonviolent protesters that were killed during the 2011 revolution.

In modern times Egypt's violent struggles against foreign occupiers, such as France, Britain, and Israel, are viewed as acts of self-defense. While violence in self-defense is justified in Egypt's national narratives, this is qualified by the recognition of a certain value in nonviolent actions. On one hand, many Egyptians often praise the successful 1952 revolution against their ailing monarchical system for being bloodless. On the other hand, they appear to celebrate national struggles against oppression and injustice, whether violent or nonviolent, regardless of how successful such struggle has been.

However, the mass-based nonviolent struggles of 1919 and 2011 seem to present a nonviolent model that was not accompanied by a threat of or use of force should nonviolent actions have failed. If the resisters used physical coercion, it was proportional and in self-defense. For example, in 2011 protesters dragged down thugs from charging camels and threw the policemen out of the shielded vehicles that were used to shoot at demonstrators. The two revolutions demonstrate that nonviolent resistance as a strategic option has its place in Egyptian national struggle. Even now, in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, Egyptians continue to insist on using only nonviolent methods to protest against occasional outbursts of religious violence, to pressure the military to stop prosecuting demonstrators, and to move ahead more vigorously with democratic changes and bringing to justice former top-level officials of the ousted regime.

The May 1805 Revolution

Egypt had been under Ottoman rule since 1517, its *walis* (governors) selected by the sultan and aided by the Mamluks, a military caste. In 1798, as part of the colonial rivalry between Britain and France, Napoleon invaded and occupied Egypt. After the French departed in 1801, the Ottomans, Mamluks, and British vied for power in the country. In 1804, Egypt was once again brought under the control of the Ottoman Empire, this time under a new *wali*, Ahmad Khurshid Pasha, who imposed heavy indemnities and taxes. Soon afterward Egypt witnessed a unique political nonviolent action,

which marked an unprecedented effort on the part of business and religious elites to take charge of the country's political destiny.

Responding to the plight of the masses,⁵ Cairo's religious and intellectual leaders joined forces with the "business elites" to appeal to the wali.⁶ Their grievances were about taxes, the presence of Ottoman soldiers in the capital, and the famine caused by the Mamluks' blockade of the transportation of grain from Upper Egypt.⁷ The wali exacerbated the situation by dismissing their pleas. The contemporary chronicler Abdel Rahman Al Gabarti recorded that ordinary people went out in the streets to protest, beat drums, and shout. Women joined in, putting mud on their hands and hair as a visual form of dismay and disapproval of the wali and his policies. Soon many others followed with the support of respected shaikhs from the religious and academic center, Al-Azhar.⁸ The soldiers on the streets were visibly moved and assured the masses that they empathized with their grievances.⁹ Following these spontaneous nonviolent protests, the religious and business leaders asked religious scholars to offer a religious interpretation—a common form of consultation in making major decisions at that time—of whether it was permissible under certain circumstances to oust a ruler. This resulted in the religious scholars of Al-Azhar issuing a fatwa (ruling) stating that "according to the rules of Islamic Sharia [law], people have the right to install rulers and to impeach them if they deviate from the rules of justice and take the path of injustice."¹⁰

Despite this loss of legitimacy, the wali refused to resign even as the opposition pushed for his impeachment and the installation of Muhammad Ali, an Albanian Ottoman commander popular among Egyptians.¹¹ The Albanian troops, joined by a demonstration of 40,000 Egyptians—20 percent of the population of Cairo—surrounded Khurshid's citadel and did not relent for four months.¹² During the siege, the masses followed the orders of their religious and business leaders and those of the prospective ruler Muhammad Ali. They formed vigilante groups equipped with primitive weapons and sticks to defend against any attacks by the wali's citadel soldiers and to enforce the siege until Khurshid resigned. The leaders instructed people "to be vigilant, and to protect their locations; if a soldier attacks them, they should respond proportionally. Otherwise people should refrain from provoking and attacking the soldiers."¹³ Occasional skirmishes, usually started by soldiers using cannons, resulted in some deaths and injuries (of both soldiers and civilians). Yet the firm intention of the siege leaders was not to use violence. They went to great lengths in using religious arguments to persuade the representatives of the wali that, according to Islamic principles, lack of public consent made it his Islamic duty to step down.¹⁴ Eventually, with the perseverance of a largely nonviolent mass mobilization and pressure by ordinary Egyptians, the Ottoman sultan withdrew Khurshid and appointed Muhammad Ali in his place.

The 1805 people's uprising at first followed an established political practice of making a plea to the ruler. When this failed, the people and their leaders resorted to unconventional, nonviolent methods of street demonstrations and later a siege. By directing their disobedience toward a specific wali, neither expressing hostility to the Ottoman Empire nor seeking the appointment of an Egyptian, the people avoided instigating a wider conflict against a much stronger adversary. Despite the importance of religion in rallying the people and as a source of identity, neither religious nor national awareness had yet developed sufficiently for Egyptians to challenge Ottoman rule in itself. Eventually, national identity became a more potent force, ultimately surpassing the Ottoman-led pan-Islamism. Scholars interpret the 1805 revolution as marking the first intervention by the people and their representatives (in this case, the religious and business elites) in political affairs of their state and the beginning of the rise of a modern Egyptian national identity, which was reinforced in the coming decades by the introduction of universal conscription to a national army, frequent educational missions to Europe, and the establishment of a modern school system.¹⁵

The Orabi Revolution of 1881

Tawfik Pasha became khedive (viceroy) in 1879, when the government was heavily in debt to Britain and France. The British and French had appointed financial controllers to oversee the Egyptian budget, which resulted in high taxation, low government salaries, and severe cuts in the army (from 124,000 in 1875 to 36,000 in 1879).¹⁶ In this deteriorating economic situation, and with foreign, non-Muslim domination over government policy, domestic discontent grew and Tawfik faced resistance from different sectors of society.¹⁷

Religious scholarly institutions became increasingly active and politicized, thanks to disciples of the Iranian revivalist of Islamic thought and advocate for Muslim unity Sayyed Jamal al-Din (known as Afghani, see Chapter 8 on Iran) who had lived in Egypt from 1871. Afghani was expelled in 1879, but not before he encouraged the growth of a critical press and formed several forums where he trained future Islamist and nationalist activists.

The main challenge to Tawfik and the European interference in the country's affairs came from the Egyptian Army. Colonel Ahmad Orabi, born the son of a village shaikh at a time when only 13 percent of the population lived in towns, had become a career army officer and protested against a new law preventing peasants' becoming army officers. Summoned to see the khedive and war minister Osman Rifki, Orabi and two other peasant officers were arrested, only to be rescued by comrades from their regiment who forced the dismissal of Rifki and annulment of the law. This success put Orabi in a position to raise wider demands, not just reversing the army cuts

but reestablishing a stronger Chamber of Deputies and drafting a new constitution. He also did not shy away from criticizing Ottoman as well as European interference. As such, his actions "created a platform upon which a variety of forces in civil society could agree."¹⁸ Consequently, Orabi was successful in winning the support and active involvement of broad sectors of society, including parts of political and urban establishment, local mayors, landlords, government employees, intellectuals, peasants, and the army that all were frustrated by the worsening political and economic conditions of the country and the foreign interference.¹⁹

Orabi developed a process of citizens' endorsement for his further actions: "Delegations from around the country approached us and handed us authorizations which empower us to work for our country's best interest, declaring their solidarity with us in all our reform efforts and their prospects."²⁰ He set September 9, 1881, as the date to take the people's grievances to Khedive Tawfik. Backed by a civilian-military demonstration in front of Abdin Palace, Orabi and his colleagues confronted Tawfik and the acting British consul with the people's demands to rebuild the army, dismiss the government, and form a truly national assembly. "God has created us free," Orabi declared. "He did not create us as heritage or property. . . . So in the name of God who there is no God but him we will not be slaves any more."²¹

Tawfik bowed to their demands, expanding the powers of the representative assembly and rebuilding the army.²² While reflecting on the successful nonviolent movement and its demonstration, Orabi wrote, "Whoever has read history knows that European countries earned their freedom by violence, bloodshed and destruction, but we earned it in one hour without shedding a drop of blood, without putting fear in a heart, without transgressing on someone's right, or damaging someone's honor."²³ The 1881 revolution relied on the nonviolent coercive pressure of both the military and civilian population. Orabi gained quick success by pursuing demands that were limited and posed no direct threat to the regime or generally to the interest of foreign powers. Successfully mobilizing broad-based support across the social strata, including some political leaders, large and small landowners, and urban guilds around the country, he effectively pressured Tawfik to accept the people's demands. However, if Tawfik was prepared to accept some reduction of khedival powers, Britain and France were firmly set against democratization. In January 1882, Britain and France reaffirmed their mutual interest in preserving the "order of things" in Egypt, pledging their support for the khedive.²⁴ And in the summer, Britain invaded militarily. Armed resistance proved futile; Orabi surrendered and was exiled to the British colony of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).²⁵ Thus began the British occupation of Egypt.

Despite the defeat, Orabi's movement set the stage for further mass-based and largely nonviolent efforts to organize, mobilize, and build alternative

institutions to directly challenge British colonial occupation a couple of decades later.

From the British Occupation to 1914

The British occupation of Egypt changed the Egyptians' struggle, yet again to one against a foreign occupier. Earlier occupation by the Ottomans included a sense of Muslim fraternity and pan-Islamism that appealed to many Egyptians, despite their growing sense of national identity. This time, however, a non-Muslim country ruled Egypt clearly for its own benefit. Britain took complete control over the state treasury, supervised tightly all government ministries, and appointed British administrators.²⁶ British administrators arbitrarily confiscated crops from farmers and forcibly collected excessive taxes to support their occupation and war efforts. They limited individual liberties, increased press censorship, and restricted public gatherings.²⁷ Egyptians were often ridiculed and abused in public particularly by Australians and New Zealanders—and their properties were ransacked by British troops.

Many nationalist leaders were either imprisoned or fled the country to avoid British persecution.²⁸ This oppression eventually backfired and aroused a mounting resentment among Egyptians.²⁹ A strategy of relying on more subtle forms of nonviolent resistance was dictated by pragmatic considerations of the weaker nation controlled by a powerful occupier and the conclusions drawn from Orabi's unsuccessful armed resistance to the British invasion.³⁰

The Denshawai incident of June 1906 was a flash point that provoked outrage at the occupation. Five British officers on leave shot pigeons, which angered their owners in the village and led to a fracas after which one officer died. The British made an example of the villagers by hanging four of them, imprisoning or flogging others.³¹ These events stirred national feelings and, for the first time since the Orabi revolution, many Egyptians became politically active. This increasing politicization ushered in a period where pro-independence parties were formed such as the National Party and the Party of the Nation, nationalist and pro-constitution newspapers (such as *al-Liwa* and *al-Jarida*) were launched, and private schools (including evening schools) as well as consumer cooperatives and trade unions were set up.³²

The nationalist press nurtured a sense of national identity. In 1909 the British authorities, fearing the power of the press, revived censorship laws to control not only the domestic but also the international press and even letters and telegrams to or from abroad.³³ To elude the censors, opposition

newspapers found foreign owners or editors since the censorship laws did not apply to non-Egyptians or Egypt-based entities owned by them. Petitions and protests against press censorship were organized in March and April 1909, with demonstrators chanting “down with oppression, down with the publications law, down with tyranny.”³⁴ To circumvent censorship, some publications went underground and were distributed by hand to supporters who then passed copies to others.³⁵

Journalist and founder of *al-Liwa* and the National Party, Mustafa Kamil carried his campaign against the British occupation to France and to Britain itself.³⁶ His untimely death in 1908 led to a collective national awakening when some 250,000 people joined “Egypt’s first mass funeral demonstration, as civil servants walked off their jobs and students cut their classes to march behind his bier.”³⁷ For the first time in modern history, ordinary Egyptians could finally visualize their movement and sense their strength in the vast number of people united in grief for their dead patriot.³⁸

The 1919 Revolution and Independence of 1922

During World War I, Britain declared Egypt a protectorate, imposed martial law, and then broke a promise not to involve Egypt in the war by requisitioning buildings, crops, and animals and press-ganging peasants to serve in the Labour Corps and the Camel Transport Corps. As the war came to an end, Egypt again faced an economic crisis with raging inflation and mass unemployment.³⁹ In view of the discontent with the British occupation and the Allied powers’ affirmation of the right to self-determination, the time seemed ripe for Egypt to renegotiate its own status. Therefore, on November 13, 1918, now celebrated as *Yawm al Jihad* (Day of Struggle), former government minister Saad Zaghlul and two members of the Legislative Assembly approached the British commissioner to propose the end of the British protectorate and the participation of an Egyptian delegation—Al Wafd al Misri, known as the Wafd—in the planned Versailles Peace Conference. Not only did the British reject these proposals, in March 1919 Saad Zaghlul and three colleagues were deported to Malta.⁴⁰ This repression backfired on a huge scale, provoking massive protests all over the country that continued despite lethal repression.⁴¹ The British government was forced to release Zaghlul and his colleagues, but the movement had now gathered momentum. While denouncing the British violence, the Wafd leaders firmly opposed any use of violence by Egyptians and criticized those who turned the demonstrations violent.⁴²

The following examples show the determined nonviolent action of various sectors of Egyptian society in the 1919 revolution.

Gathering of Signatures

The Wafd, after proposing the delegation to Versailles, embarked on a massive signature collection campaign in support of the proposal.⁴³ The authorities, fearing that this agitation would further politicize people—as it did—prohibited and confiscated the petition. This ban, too, turned against the British. People became even more eager to sign up. Signing was an act that bore little risk yet generated an almost transcendent feeling of fulfillment of patriotic duty, an electrifying sense of national unity and sheer enthusiasm for taking part in a historic event: the collective decisionmaking about their country's destiny.⁴⁴ Hundreds of thousands of petitions were secretly printed in Alexandria and circulated by hand until 100,000 signatures had been collected.⁴⁵

Public Statements

Many public statements were issued by various professional groups, especially to condemn the British use of force against unarmed citizens. On March 15, 1919, doctors at Al Kasr Al Ainy Hospital in Cairo declared that their examination of the bodies of protesters and wounds of other victims provided irrefutable evidence of British brutality.⁴⁶ On April 9, 1919, the city council of the Directorate of Giza strongly protested against violent actions perpetrated by the British forces, including burning villages, killing innocent people, raping women, shooting livestock, extorting money, and destroying property. These crimes were documented and records appended to the statement. Determined not to be silenced, the Giza council members pledged to deliver their statement to the sultan and all other official and international authorities.⁴⁷

Student Demonstrations and Strikes

The arrest and deportation of Wafd leaders outraged the Egyptian people. The next day a strike by the school students in Giza broke out, as they declared, "We do not study law in a country that does not respect law." The students marched peacefully, calling for independence and shouting the name of Saad Zaghlul. They headed first to the College of Engineering and Agriculture in Giza and then to the College of Medicine and Commerce in Cairo where many more students joined them, all marching together to Al Sayeda Zeinab Square in the heart of Cairo. There, police blocked the roads and tried to disperse the crowds, arresting 300 protesters.⁴⁸ The day after, March 10—as every available source says⁴⁹—*all* students in Cairo, including the university at Al-Azhar, announced their protest and went on strike, demanding the release of the Wafd leaders and condemning the British

occupation. Two students were killed, many were injured, yet the demonstrations continued unabated for weeks.⁵⁰ Students' strikes and demonstrations had an important impact in overcoming British censorship as students took home their news from Cairo. This led to growing unrest in many parts of Egypt.⁵¹

General Edmund Allenby, sent by London to establish order, told students to return to class by May 3. When they did not obey he threatened that, unless they returned by May 7, their schools would be closed for the rest of the year. This threat turned out to be a double-edged sword. Schools were indeed closed down but, by disobeying the British military authority, students further undermined its legitimacy and put in doubt British ability to rule the country. More importantly, students used the time away from their schools to continue demonstrations and organize protests in other parts of the country.

Workers' and Peasant Strikes

Tram workers along with railway, telegraph, and postal workers went on strike in mid-March 1919, joined by taxi drivers, lawyers who boycotted state courts, and even civil servants.⁵² The workers' protests and strikes had both economic and nationalist goals. They demanded higher wages and better working conditions while, at the same time, defending Egypt's right to self-rule. The railway workers brought the train system to a halt by striking and cutting railway lines and destroying the railway switches; the telegraph workers disrupted communication lines while peasants paralyzed trade in rural goods; both actions affected traffic and communication between and within cities and towns.⁵³ Crippling transportation and communication lines particularly damaged the British administration, which relied heavily on them. These strikes showed that the movement now involved a coalition engaging different social strata.

Formation of National Police and Nonviolent Discipline

To maintain an order and nonviolent discipline, the demonstrators formed a special marshal group called "the national police" that was identified by a red badge worn on their left arms. Some of the national police were responsible for isolating people who tried to incite violence on demonstrations while others provided demonstrators with water and first aid if needed. They were credited with organizing effective demonstrations and keeping the protests peaceful as people voluntarily obeyed them.⁵⁴ The strikes and demonstrations remained predominantly nonviolent, but when some properties on the fringe of a protest were damaged, student organizers quickly issued a statement of apology, condemning such behavior while stressing

that they wished to demonstrate loyalty to their country and support for harmonious relations between Egyptians and foreigners.⁵⁵

Public Speeches in the Refuge of a Sacred Place

Al-Azhar's religious status among Egyptians meant that it was the only place the British could not use force. This offered a sanctuary for delivering public speeches by people from all walks of life—student leaders, scholars, priests, lawyers, and even workers—both Muslim and Christian.⁵⁶ As well as boosting morale, these speeches informed the public about decisions relevant to the conduct of protests and strikes and presented action plans agreed on earlier by the leaders.⁵⁷ As a result of this transparent decision-making, people felt ownership of the ongoing struggle that in turn influenced their readiness to continue even in the face of brutality.⁵⁸

Public Involvement by Women

Hamidah Khalil, “a woman of the people,” became the first woman martyr of the 1919 resistance on March 14, 1919, in Cairo.⁵⁹ Two days later, hundreds of women wearing veils went to the streets of Cairo to demonstrate against the British occupation. This event is seen as the first collective and public entry of women into Egyptian political life.⁶⁰ Safia Zaghlul, Saad Zaghlul's wife, and Huda Sharawi, the organizer of the Egyptian Feminist Union, led the demonstration. During the ongoing protest, the British Army surrounded the nonviolent protesters and pointed their rifles at women. Women stood their ground while one of them approached a British soldier and told him in English, “We do not fear death. Shoot me and make me Miss Cavell of Egypt.”⁶¹ Ashamed, the British soldiers stepped aside to let the demonstration proceed.⁶² Women's protests posed the British authorities with a dilemma that was recorded by the police commander Sir Thomas Russell in a letter to his son: “My next problem was a demonstration by the native ladies of Cairo. This rather frightened me as if it came to pass it was bound to collect a big crowd and my orders were to stop it. Stopping a procession means force and any force you use to women puts you in the wrong.”⁶³

The revolution saw unprecedented participation of women from all social and economic backgrounds who were involved in all aspects of the nonviolent resistance.⁶⁴ Women and high school girls organized school strikes, distributing circulars about the protests to private homes despite heavy police surveillance; in the provinces secretly handed out pamphlets with nationalist demands; provided food and assistance to those who sabotaged the railway lines and communications in Upper Egypt; coordinated demonstrations and boycotts of British goods; and wrote and distributed petitions to foreign embassies to protest British oppressive policies in Egypt.⁶⁵

Women's participation and experience in nonviolent actions outlived the 1919 revolution and many of them continued their public involvement in various political and social affairs, building "the bridge from a gradual pragmatic feminism discreetly expressed in everyday life to a highly vocal feminism articulated in an organized movement and a vigorous process of entering and creating modern professions."⁶⁶

Demonstrations at Public Funerals

Public funerals were held by Egyptians to pay tribute to and honor victims of the British repression. Masses of people, representing various classes, participated in funerals where coffins were wrapped with the Egyptian flags. Such displays of public mourning were occasions for large, nonviolent gatherings and silent marches where thousands of people walked in silence that was occasionally interrupted by shouts against the occupation and British atrocities.⁶⁷

Citizen Protest and Boycott of Milner's Mission

In spring 1919, the British government sent Lord Alfred Milner to investigate establishing "self-governing institutions" subordinate to the British protectorate. This plan fell far short of independence. On his arrival in December 1919, Milner's mission was greeted with a new wave of strikes by students, workers, merchants, lawyers, and other professionals opposed to the status quo ante and the continuation of the British protectorate. Leaflets urged Egyptians to boycott the mission, refusing contact with its members or to help in its work.⁶⁸

Mass Prayer

Milner urged the British government to invite Zaghlul to London in May 1920. Therefore, the Wafd leader called a day of prayer for attaining full independence for Egypt and commissioned Ahmed Shawky to write a prayer.⁶⁹ The day of prayer illustrates Zaghlul's strategy for unifying Egyptians at critical moments, making the whole nation feel part of the struggle. On May 24, hundreds of thousands of Christians and Muslims converged around the houses of worship for a common prayer.⁷⁰

Displaying a Symbolic Unity Flag

Demonstrators throughout the country waved a flag with the cross and crescent on a green background—a symbol of national unity or, more precisely, of Muslim-Christian unity. Muslim and Christian leaders jointly held meetings

in mosques and churches where they alternated in delivering speeches.⁷¹ Demonstrations included not only Christians and Muslims, but Jews as well.⁷²

Drama, Music, and Literature That Advocate Resistance

Writers and poets expressed their love for free Egypt and denounced the British occupation through poems, songs, and literary works. In 1918–1919, Tawfiq Al Hakim wrote *Al Daif Al Thakeel* (An Unwelcome Guest), an allegorical play about a guest invited to stay at someone's home for a day who ends up staying for months.⁷³ Sometimes called "the voice of the 1919 revolution," Sayed Darwish's patriotic songs about the exiled Zaghul were so inflammatory that the British forbade the performance of any songs with Zaghul's name. Therefore, Darwish wrote a song about *saad* (happiness) and the fruit *zaghoul* (date).⁷⁴ The theaters of Munira al-Mahdiyya, al-Kassar, and Rihani popularized Darwish's patriotic songs with their subtle references to Zaghul and the events of the day.⁷⁵

When Milner's proposal of self-governing institutions failed to quiet the movement, the British reverted to authoritarianism and, once more, deported Wafd leaders.⁷⁶ Again this backfired, provoking a new wave of strikes and protests. Britain finally relented and on February 28, 1922, unilaterally declared the end of the protectorate and Egypt's formal independence. This independence was incomplete as Britain insisted on retaining a military presence and further negotiations on several other issues. Nevertheless, 1922 constituted a breakthrough in the formation of a modern Egyptian nation-state.

The 1919 revolution was a genuine people's uprising, largely nonviolent, which was not tainted by religious fanaticism or class conflict, that brought together a coalition of government officials, intellectuals, merchants, peasants, students, and, most remarkably, women. An equally significant feature of the demonstrations was the involvement of both Muslims and Christians, which illustrated a strong sense of common, national identity among ordinary Egyptians despite religious differences.

Conclusion

We do not claim that violence or armed struggle played no part in Egypt's road to independence, but rather that collective nonviolent actions constituted an important repertoire of resistance whose role, effectiveness, and impact require an appropriate acknowledgment and assessment.

Nonviolent resistance might not always be a conscious choice and neither its leaders nor other participants are necessarily guided by nonviolent principles. The leaders of both the 1805 movement and the Orabi revolution

of 1881–1882 organized largely through nonviolent means, with the option of using arms mainly in the background or as a response to invasion, which occurred in 1882. The period 1882–1914, in contrast, was one of growing national awareness through spreading ideas, publishing, and educational work that built internal strength. Finally, in the 1919 revolution, violence by the British was out of proportion to any committed by protesters.⁷⁷ Egyptian leaders, not only the Wafd, but the students and the full array of protest organizers, took care to avoid violence and at no time during the revolution did they look to violence as an alternative should nonviolent action fail.

Nonviolent movements provided an opportunity for ordinary Egyptians from all walks of life to join in collective actions that spanned more than their familiar communal context and increased their participation, expanding the public space that for centuries had been reserved to a narrow group of foreign military and political elites.

The Egyptians' national struggle, irrespective of its violent or nonviolent patterns, is a reflection of a complex interaction of different value systems where violent physical coercion, as in the 1919 and 2011 revolutions, was restricted to self-defense and protection.

The strategic choice of nonviolent resistance used in the 1919 revolution was replicated even more deliberately during the 2011 revolution. Both revolutions utilized similar repertoires of nonviolent methods. There was emphasis on unity of all Egyptians regardless of different faiths (e.g., the flag with a cross and crescent in the 1919 revolution and the chants "Muslims, Christians, We Are All Egyptians" and mutual protection during prayers in the 2011 revolution); inclusion of women and children; insistence on the peaceful nature of the revolutions in slogans and posters; setting up of checkpoints to ensure that no arms be smuggled to the locations of demonstrations; and use of humor, art, songs, and satire to express the demands of the revolutions or ridicule the adversary. The following depiction of the carnival mode of the 1919 revolution can easily be used to describe Tahrir Square at the beginning of 2011:

For Egypt's urban lower classes, women, and religious minorities, the almost spontaneous development of carnivalesque, and hence non-hierarchical, political expressions provided an important avenue of dissent. Marginalized voices were loudly heard through collective and direct action in the streets . . . public squares, cafés, bars, mosques, and churches [that] became the necessary carnivalesque spaces outside the reach of the centralized authorities, where illicit counter-hegemonic opinions were debated and exchanged.⁷⁸

There were also differences, one of them being that, unlike the 1919 revolution, the 2011 popular uprising has been leaderless but still able to maintain an impressive degree of nonviolent discipline and cohesion.

In this chapter, we showed that the repertoire of nonviolent methods can make a decisive difference at various stages in the growth of a movement and the conduct of a struggle. The history of modern Egypt should give greater cognizance to the strategic contribution of nonviolent resistance in major political and social developments, including its contribution to the formation of the Egyptian national identity. The events of 1919 and 2011 point to a new trend of increased use of strategic nonviolent actions as the collective identity becomes stronger. This is reflected in the people's desire to take charge of their own destiny as Egyptian nationals in 1919 and as Egyptian citizens in 2011. The development of nonviolent resistance as a strategic choice of fighting for people's rights that correlates with a reinforced people-centered identity deserves further research.

Notes

1. Khaled Fahmy, "The Era of Muhammad Ali Pasha, 1805–1848," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 144.

2. Resorting to violence has been governed by multiple value systems—religious, traditional, modern, and legal. The religious value system often calls for peaceful means and prefers patience and forgiveness to retaliation (see, e.g., Quran 42:40–43 and 49:9–10). Traditional values also generally favor nonviolent methods. During conflicts, people might invoke a proverb such as "people came to know God by reason"—meaning that rational discussion is better than violence—or "lucky is the one who while powerful forgives." The modern value system views dialogue and nonviolent means as a sign of civility whereas violence is considered uncivilized. The legal value system (although contentious by nature) advocates a similar approach by creating a venue (the judicial system) for parties to avoid physical conflict by settling disputes in courts of law. Nevertheless, all four value systems permit the use of violence as a last resort or in self-defense. Modern art, especially songs and films, often reflects this complex interplay between violence and nonviolent means of resistance in national struggle. See Amr Abdalla, "Inter-Personal Conflict Patterns in Egypt: Themes and Solutions" (PhD dissertation, George Mason University, 2001), 101.

3. Egyptians typically make a clear distinction between the use of "legitimate force" and the perpetration of "unjust violence." The former is usually seen as justified under conditions of self-defense or after peaceful means have been exhausted. The latter usually carries a negative connotation as it might imply brute, unprovoked, or disproportionate—essentially unjust—use of violent means against an opponent. In this chapter, we use the term *violence* broadly to encompass all types of violent acts, including those referred to by Egyptians as force. However, we also highlight that in many instances nonviolent actions became a force more powerful than both unjust violence and, for that matter, legitimate force.

4. Only in the early period of the expansion of the Muslim state can one hear stories and see images of glorified martyrdom, which were not necessarily warranted by the right to self-defense but through their contribution to the early quests of the rapidly growing Muslim state. Dying for Allah is seen as the highest form of faith.

5. Mahmoud Metwali, *Omar Makram Sout Al Horeya Wa Raed Al Demokratelya Al Masreya* (Cairo: Al Hay'a Al Ama Lel Este'lamat, 2008), 58.
6. Afaf Lotfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61; Metwali, *Omar Makram*, 59.
7. Metwali, *Omar Makram*, 59.
8. Al-Azhar, built in 972, has been an important religious and academic center in Egypt and in the Islamic world, serving as a safe haven for opposition leaders and protesters to Ottoman rule. Ahmed Mohamed Ouf, *Al-Azhar Fe Alf Am: Ebreel 970—Ebreel 1970* (Cairo: Matba'et Al-Azhar, 1970), 19–93; Shawky Atalla Al Gamal, *Al-Azhar Wa Dawro Al Seyasy Wal Hadary Fe Africia* (Cairo: Al Hay'a Al Masreya Al Ama lel Kitab, 1988), 11–129.
9. Abdel Rahman Al Gabarti, *Tareekh Aga'eb Al Athar Fe Al Taragem Wal Akhbar Al Goz' Al Thaleth* (Cairo: Al Matba'a Al Amira Al Sharkeya, 1904), 283.
10. Mohamed Abd el Fattah Abu el Fadl, *Alsahwa Al Masrya fi Ahd Mohammad Ali* (Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1998), 12; Al Gabarti, *Tareekh Aga'eb*, 330.
11. Metwali, *Omar Makram*, 60.
12. Abu el Fadl, *Alsahwa*, 11.
13. Al Gabarti, *Tareekh Aga'eb*, 332.
14. *Ibid.*, 331.
15. Metwali, *Omar Makram*, 62.
16. Donald Malcolm Reid, "The Urabi Revolution and the British Conquest, 1879–1882," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 220.
17. Hassan Hafez, *Al Thawra Al Orabeya Fel Meezan* (Cairo: Matabe'e Al Dar Al Quawmeya, 1999), 27.
18. Juan R. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's Urabi Movement* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1999), 235.
19. Hafez, *Al Thawra*, 35–36; Ahmed Abdel Reheem Mostafa, *Al Thawra Al Orabeya* (Cairo: Dar Al Qualam, 1961), 53; Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution*, 235.
20. Abdel Rahman Al Rafei, *Al Thawra Al Orabeya Wa Al Ehtelal Al Engelezy* (Cairo: Dar Al Ma'aref, 1983), 120.
21. Hafez, *Al Thawra*, 36–38.
22. Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *A Brief History of Egypt* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2008), 87.
23. Al Rafei, *Al Thawra*, 148.
24. Hafez, *Al Thawra*, 41.
25. Mostafa, *Al Thawra*, 120.
26. The number of British in the Egyptian government structures quickly exceeded the number of Egyptians appointed in both the government and the army. Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 101.
27. Ramzy Mikhail, *Al Sahafa Al Masreya Wal Haraka Al Wataneya Men Al Ehtelal Ela Al Esteklal 1882–1922* (Cairo: Al Hay'a Al Masreya Al Ama Lel Kitab, 1996), 137.
28. Mikhail, *Al Sahafa*; Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 107.
29. Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 101.
30. *Ibid.*, 97.
31. *Ibid.*, 102.
32. *Ibid.*, 103.
33. Mikhail, *Al Sahafa*, 116.

34. *Ibid.*, 110.
35. *Ibid.*, 128.
36. Hussein Fawzy Al Naggar, *Ahmed Lotfy El Sayyed Ostaz Al Geel* (Cairo: Al Dar Al Masreya Lel Ta'leef Wal Targama, 1965), 132.
37. Abdel Rahman Al Rafei, *Mustafa Kamil Ba'eth Al Haraka Al Wataneya* (Cairo: Dar Al Ma'aref, 1984), 276. Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 104.
38. Abdel Rahman Al Rafei, *Mustafa Kamil*, 276.
39. Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Egypt: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office for the Library of Congress, 1990), <http://countrystudies.us/egypt/>, accessed November 3, 2010.
40. *Ibid.*
41. On July 24, 1919, the British foreign secretary reported 800 Egyptians killed and 1,500 wounded in the March–June period, forty-nine death sentences, and thousands sentenced to penal servitude or imprisonment. <http://hansard.milbanksystems.com/commons/1919/jul/24/egypt> (from digitized editions of Commons and Lords Hansard, the official report of debates in Parliament), accessed December 21, 2010.
42. Abbas Mahmoud Al Akkad, *Saad Zaghlool Za'eem Al Thawra* (Cairo: Dar Al Helal, 1988), 239.
43. The petition read, “We, the undersigned, hereby authorize Saad Zaghlul Pasha, Ali Sharawi Pasha, Abdel Aziz Fahmi Bey, Mohamed Ali Bey, Abdel Latif Al Mekabaty Bey, Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha, and Ahmed Lotfy Al Sayed Bey, to seek through peaceful and legitimate means the full independence of Egypt.” Abdel Rahman Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919: Tareekh Masr Al Kawmy Min 1914 Ela 1921* (Cairo: Dar Al Ma'aref, 1987), 122.
44. Ramzy Mikhail, *Al Wafd Wal Wehda Al Wataneya Fe Thawret 1919* (Cairo: Dar Al Arab Al Bostany, 1994), 26; Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 111.
45. Mikhail, *Al Wafd*, 26; Goldschmidt, *Brief History*, 122.
46. The doctors' statement read, “We are deeply repentant to see the British forces' use of guns and rifles against peaceful and unarmed demonstrators, especially after finding among the victims women and children who cannot be considered as a threat, and finding most of the injuries fatal which proves the intention of causing harm and death.” Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 290.
47. *Ibid.*, 297.
48. Mikhail, *Al Wafd*, 40.
49. Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 195; Mikhail, *Al Wafd*, 40; Metz, *Egypt*.
50. Mikhail, *Al Wafd*, 40.
51. Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 216.
52. Metz, *Egypt*.
53. Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 216.
54. *Ibid.*, 235.
55. *Ibid.*, 197.
56. The list of speakers was long, including Shaikh Abdou Rabbu Moftah, Shaikh Abdel Baky Serour, Priest Markus Sergious, Priest Bolus Ghebrial, Hassan Yassin, and Mohamed Shokry, the latter two leaders of the student strikes. *Ibid.*, 228.
57. *Ibid.*, 229.
58. *Ibid.*, 198.
59. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 75.
60. Metz, *Egypt*.

61. Edith Cavell was a British nurse executed in 1915 after helping 200 Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium.
62. Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 211.
63. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 76.
64. Ziad Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism: Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism, 1870–1919" (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2007), 253.
65. Metz, *Egypt*; Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 77. An early petition sent by women to European officials condemned the "brutal use of force, and firing bullets at unarmed sons, children, boys and men only because they protested using peaceful demonstrations against the decision to ban Egyptians from travel to present their case at the Peace Conference." Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 211. Another petition delivered by women to the US, Italian, and French foreign delegations in Cairo read, "Egyptian ladies—mothers, sisters and wives who have fallen victims to British designs—present to Your Excellencies this protest against the barbarous acts that the peaceful Egyptian nation underwent for no wrong other than demanding freedom and independence for the country based on the principles advanced by Dr. [Woodrow] Wilson to which all countries, belligerent and non-belligerent, have subscribed." Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 76.
66. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 74.
67. Al Rafei, *Thawrat 1919*, 235.
68. Metz, *Egypt*.
69. Mikhail, *Al Wafd*, 147.
70. *Ibid.*, 150.
71. *Ibid.*, 135.
72. Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism," 259.
73. Mohamed Mandour, *Masrah Tawfiq Al Hakim* (Cairo: Dar Nahdat Masr, 1960), 9, 10.
74. Salah Eissa, "Birth of the Patriots: How Patriotic Song Played Out from the Revolution Through the 1973 War," *Egypt Today*, July 2005, www.egypttoday.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=5315, accessed June 3, 2010.
75. Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism," 292.
76. Including Saad Zaghlul, Mostafa Al Nahass, Makram Ebeid, Fathalla Barakat, Atef Barakat, and Sinout Hanna. See Hussein Fawzy Al Naggar, *Saad Zaghlul Al Za'ama Wal Za'eem* (Cairo: Maktabet Madbouly, 1986), 167.
77. British troops killed 800 Egyptians whereas 29 British soldiers were killed (fewer than the death sentences imposed by Britain) and 114 injured, plus 31 European civilians were killed and 35 injured.
78. Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism," 298.