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**THE PROTESTER**

## 2011 PERSON OF THE YEAR THE PROTESTER

Once upon a time, when major news events were chronicled strictly by professionals and printed on paper or transmitted through the air by the few for the masses, protesters were prime makers of history. Back then, when citizen multitudes took to the streets without weapons to declare themselves opposed, it was the very definition of news--vivid, important, often consequential. In the 1960s in America they marched for civil rights and against the Vietnam War; in the '70s, they rose up in Iran and Portugal; in the '80s, they spoke out against nuclear weapons in the U.S. and Europe, against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, against communist tyranny in Tiananmen Square and Eastern Europe. Protest was the natural continuation of politics by other means.

And then came the End of History, summed up by Francis Fukuyama's influential 1989 essay declaring that mankind had arrived at the "end point of...ideological evolution" in globally triumphant "Western liberalism." The two decades beginning in 1991 witnessed the greatest rise in living standards that the world has ever known. Credit was easy, complacency and apathy were rife, and street protests looked like pointless emotional sideshows--obsolete, quaint, the equivalent of cavalry to mid-20th-century war. The rare large demonstrations in the rich world seemed ineffectual and irrelevant. (See the Battle of Seattle, 1999.)

There were a few exceptions, like the protests that, along with sanctions, helped end apartheid in South Africa in 1994. But for young people, radical critiques and protests against the system were mostly confined to pop-culture fantasy: "Fight the Power" was a song on a platinum-selling album,

Rage Against the Machine was a platinum-selling band, and the beloved brave rebels fighting the all-encompassing global oppressors were just a bunch of characters in The Matrix.

"Massive and effective street protest" was a global oxymoron until--suddenly, shockingly--starting exactly a year ago, it became the defining trope of our times. And the protester once again became a maker of history.

## **PRELUDE TO THE REVOLUTIONS**

It began in Tunisia, where the Dictator's power grabbing and high living crossed a line of shamelessness, and a commonplace bit of government callousness against an ordinary citizen--a 26-year-old street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi--became the final straw. Bouazizi lived in the charmless Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, 125 miles south of Tunis. On a Friday morning almost exactly a year ago, he set out for work, selling produce from a cart. Police had hassled Bouazizi routinely for years, his family says, fining him, making him jump through bureaucratic hoops. On Dec. 17, 2010, a cop started giving him grief yet again. She confiscated his scale and allegedly slapped him. He walked straight to the provincial-capital building to complain and got no response. At the gate, he drenched himself in paint thinner and lit a match.

"My son set himself on fire for dignity," Mannoubia Bouazizi told me when I visited her.

"In Tunisia," added her 16-year-old daughter Basma, "dignity is more important than bread."

In Egypt the incitements were a preposterously fraudulent 2010 national election and, as in Tunisia, a not uncommon act of unforgivable brutality by security agents. In the U.S., three acute and overlapping money crises--tanked economy, systemic financial recklessness, gigantic public debt--along with ongoing revelations of double dealing by banks, new state laws making certain public-employee-union demands illegal and the refusal of Congress to consider even slightly higher taxes on the very highest incomes mobilized Occupy Wall Street and its millions of supporters. In Russia it was the realization that another six (or 12) years of Vladimir Putin might not lead to greater prosperity and democratic normality.

In Sidi Bouzid and Tunis, in Alexandria and Cairo; in Arab cities and towns across the 6,000 miles from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean; in Madrid and Athens and London and Tel Aviv; in Mexico and India and Chile, where citizens mobilized against crime and corruption; in New York and Moscow and dozens of other U.S. and Russian cities, the loathing and anger at governments and their cronies became uncontainable and fed on itself.

The stakes are very different in different places. In North America and most of Europe, there are no dictators, and dissidents don't get tortured. Any day that Tunisians, Egyptians or Syrians occupy streets and squares, they know that some of them might be beaten or shot, not just pepper-sprayed or flex-cuffed. The protesters in the Middle East and North Africa are literally dying to get political systems that roughly resemble the ones that seem intolerably undemocratic to protesters in Madrid, Athens, London and New York City. "I think other parts of the world," says Frank Castro, 53, a Teamster who drives a cement mixer for a living and helped occupy Oakland, Calif., "have more balls than we do."

In Egypt and Tunisia, I talked with revolutionaries who were M.B.A.s, physicians and filmmakers as well as the young daughters of a provincial olive picker and a supergeeky 29-year-old Muslim Brotherhood member carrying a Tigger notebook. The Occupy movement in the U.S. was set in motion by a couple of magazine editors--a 69-year-old Canadian, a 29-year-old African American--and a 50-year-old anthropologist, but airline pilots and grandmas and shop clerks and dishwashers have been part of the throngs.

It's remarkable how much the protest vanguards share. Everywhere they are disproportionately young, middle class and educated. Almost all the protests this year began as independent affairs, without much encouragement from or endorsement by existing political parties or opposition bigwigs. All over the world, the protesters of 2011 share a belief that their countries' political systems and economies have grown dysfunctional and corrupt--sham democracies rigged to favor the rich and powerful and prevent significant change. They are fervent small-d democrats. Two decades after the final failure and abandonment of communism, they believe they're experiencing the failure of hell-bent megascaled crony hypercapitalism and pine for some third way, a new social contract.

During the bubble years, perhaps, there was enough money trickling down to keep them happyish, but now the unending financial crisis and economic stagnation make them feel like suckers. This year, instead of plugging in the headphones, entering an Internet-induced fugue state and quietly giving in to hopelessness, they used the Internet to find one another and take to the streets to insist on fairness and (in the Arab world) freedom.

All over the world they are criticized by old-schoolers for lacking prefab ideological consistency, which the protesters in turn see as a feature rather than a bug. Miral Brinji, a 27-year-old blogger and TV-news producer who grew up in Saudi Arabia and arrived in Tahrir Square on the first day of protests 11 months ago, doesn't presume to have a precise picture of the new Egyptian government and society she envisions, but as she told me in Cairo last month, "I know what I don't want."

In each place, discontent that had been simmering for years got turned up to a boil. There were foreshadowings. In the U.S., the Obama campaign was in part a feel-good protest movement that galvanized young people, and then its shocking success and the Wall Street bailout produced an angry and shockingly successful populist protest movement in the Tea Party, which has far outlasted its expected shelf life. In 2009, after the regime in Tehran denied the anti-regime election results, millions of Iranians, especially young ones, protested for weeks. The Web and social media were key tactical tools in all three instances. But they seemed at the time to be one-offs, not prefaces to an epochal turn of history's wheel.

The Iranian regime's suppression of the Green Revolution must have reassured the dictators and monarchs in the Arab Middle East and North Africa and, you'd think, dispirited would-be democratic freedom fighters in those countries. The global spread of liberty hit a plateau a dozen years earlier, according to the international monitoring organization Freedom House. And the Middle East and North Africa remained the world's tyranny belt: at the end of 2010, Freedom

House declared three-fourths of the Arab countries "not free"--including Tunisia and Egypt. In Arab countries, the prosperity of the past decade--Egypt's economy grew by 5% and more, even during the recession--was not widely shared; rising expectations that go unfulfilled are sociology's classic explanation for protest. For a critical mass of people from Cairo to Madrid to Oakland, prospects for personal success--for the good life at the End of History that they'd been promised--suddenly looked very grim. They were fed up, and the frustration and anger exploded after the regimes overreached.

In short, 2011 was unlike any year since 1989--but more extraordinary, more global, more democratic, since in '89 the regime disintegrations were all the result of a single disintegration at headquarters, one big switch pulled in Moscow that cut off the power throughout the system. So 2011 was unlike any year since 1968--but more consequential because more protesters have more skin in the game. Their protests weren't part of a countercultural pageant, as in '68, and rapidly morphed into full-fledged rebellions, bringing down regimes and immediately changing the course of history. It was, in other words, unlike anything in any of our lifetimes, probably unlike any year since 1848, when one street protest in Paris blossomed into a three-day revolution that turned a monarchy into a republican democracy and then--within weeks, thanks in part to new technologies (telegraphy, railroads, rotary printing presses)--inspired an unstoppable cascade of protest and insurrection in Munich, Berlin, Vienna, Milan, Venice and dozens of other places across Europe, as well as a huge peaceful demonstration of democratic solidarity in New York that marched down Broadway and occupied a public park a few blocks north of Wall Street. How perfect that the German word *Zeitgeist* was transplanted into English in that unprecedented, uncanny year of insurrection.

During the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, just as the French colonialists were about to lose to the communist revolutionaries and leave Indochina, President Dwight Eisenhower held a news conference. "You have a row of dominoes set up," he said, positing Vietnam as the domino between fallen China and North Korea and the rest of Asia. "You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." But in 1975, after the communists won in Vietnam and Cambodia, no other countries followed, and the domino theory of contagious national-liberation movements was discredited forever.

Forever, until now. This is how the dominoes fell in 2011--and these are some of the people who pushed them.

## **THE YEAR OF PROTESTS**

The Fire didn't kill Mohamed Bouazizi right away. Passersby doused the flames and took him to the hospital. He was still alive, barely.

That afternoon, other produce sellers and townspeople joined the Bouazisis in protest outside the governorate. A cousin posted a video of the demonstration. Word spread thanks to al-Jazeera and the Internet--a third of all Tunisians use the Internet, and three-quarters of those have Facebook accounts--inspiring protests in other towns and cities. After Bouazizi died on Jan. 4, the protests reached a critical mass, and more than a dozen protesters around the country were killed by

police. "I'd watch TV," Basma Bouazizi told me, "and say, 'God, the Tunisian people have woken up!'"

Spontaneous protests? In 2011? In an Arab police state? Heroic, hopeless, doomed. Three weeks in, the nearly universal presumption about the protests' implications was summed up in the Economist's first report: "Tunisia's troubles are unlikely to unseat the 74-year-old president or even to jolt his model of autocracy."

Lina Ben Mhenni, 28, a linguistics teacher at Tunis University, had been blogging for a few years about Tunisian censorship and election rigging under the name "A Tunisian Girl." She went to the town of Regueb, 25 miles from Sidi Bouzid, to photograph a young protester who had been shot dead and uploaded the image. "On that day I lost my fear completely," she says. "I was ready for anything, even death." By the end of the week, she was back in Tunis, protesting outside the old white stucco casbah that served as the seat of government. So was Hilme al-Manahe, 23, an unemployed baker. His mother, Sayda al-Manahe, says Bouazizi's self-immolation had galvanized Hilme. "He used to say, 'This poor man--I can understand why he did that. He just wanted to earn a living. His story is like my story, which is like my friend's story.'"

"I would tell him," Sayda says, "Be quiet, sit down, and don't even think about getting involved in this." But on Jan. 13 he went to the demonstration in Tunis. He had just recorded a friend with his cell phone when a bullet, presumably fired by a police sniper, pierced his heart.

The next morning, Majdi Calboussi, a middle-class 29-year-old software developer and antiregime blogger, was there recording the protests and the police with his BlackBerry. "People started to say, 'Ben Ali, dégage'" ("Get out, Ben Ali"). He uploaded his video to Twitter, and it got half a million views in a day. Hours later, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali flew to exile in Saudi Arabia. After just four weeks, the protesters had won. And the next domino was struck.

Among all the Egyptians I met, there is absolute agreement about one thing: Tunisia was the spark of their revolution. "It wouldn't have happened without them," says Shady el-Ghazali Harb, a 32-year-old surgeon who was one of 13 main leaders in Tahrir Square. The lessons of Tunisia weren't just inspirational; they were practical. "This was like a user's manual in how to topple a regime peacefully," says Wael Nawara, 50, a Web entrepreneur and longtime opposition political activist. In January, Tunisians "sent us a lot of information," says Ahmed Maher, a Cairo civil engineer and one of Egypt's most prominent activists, "like use vinegar and onion"--near one's face, for the tear gas--"and how to stop a tank. They sent us this advice, and we used it."

The Egyptians had their own Mohamed Bouazizi: an underemployed middle-class 28-year-old named Khaled Said. One day last year, after apparently hacking a police officer's cell phone and lifting a video of officers displaying drugs and stacks of cash, he was arrested and beaten to death. Wael Ghonim, then a 29-year-old Google executive, created a Facebook page called We Are All Khaled Said to memorialize him. It went viral, and in January, Ghonim returned from Dubai to Egypt to help plan a protest set for Jan. 25: a "day of rage" in Tahrir Square. Maher and other activists were invited to collaborate. They met online and face to face to work out the details. Brinny told me she "was terrified. I thought we'd try but run away if necessary. Then we ran into huge

crowds heading to Tahrir, and I knew it was going to be big."

"From the start I thought it would succeed," 29-year-old filmmaker Mohammed Ramadan says. "In my whole life I'd never seen protests like that. Girls! Some wore hijabs, some didn't, Christians, Muslims--I'd never seen that." The Muslim Brotherhood hadn't endorsed the protest, but Khaled Tantawy, a 34-year-old Brotherhood apparatchik, came anyway. He also was struck by the diversity. "I saw all these different and surprising kinds of people protesting and thought, Wow, this can happen."

That night it happened. "The surprise," according to Mohamed el-Beltagy, a member of the Brotherhood who went to Tahrir unofficially, "was that there was a new generation who could break the fear barrier. At midnight, when the [police's] violent clearing of the square happened and the protesters didn't run away and go home, I knew it was a revolution."

The regime's violent response surprised no one. As in Tunisia, when the crackdown escalated--from tear gas to rubber bullets to real bullets, to Ghonim's detention for the duration, to a nationwide shutdown of Internet connections, to armed camel riders rampaging through Tahrir--so did the number of protesters in Cairo and all over the country. At least 4.5 million Egyptians protested during those three weeks--in other words, 8% of the population over 14.

Hisham Kassem, a prominent 52-year-old independent journalist and publisher, had never been part of a street protest before. He is bracingly clear-eyed, a stiff-necked curmudgeon. On Jan. 28 he was teargassed and, he told me, still sounding amazed 10 months later, threw rocks at police. "I saw people shot next to me." When he returned on "the day of the camel attack, it was war--I almost got mauled to death by the thugs." And another day when he arrived at Tahrir, "This kid asked for my ID: 'Whose side are you on?' I said, 'What the hell do you mean?' But then and there on the edge of Liberation Square, he had an epiphany: he may have been a longtime pro-democracy VIP, but this was now democracy. "I felt a strange acceptance," he says. "I didn't begrudge them."

By then the army had announced, "Your armed forces, who are aware of the legitimacy of your demands ... will not resort to use of force." President Hosni Mubarak was finished--PLEASE GO, a Tahrir protest sign urged, BECAUSE I WANT TO TAKE A SHOWER--but it took n more days for Mubarak to pass through denial, anger, bargaining and presumably depression to arrive at the acceptance stage. "The day Mubarak stepped down," says Abdo Kassem, 25, an unemployed Cairene who'd never been politically active until he followed the Facebook protest instructions last January, "I was crying. For me, that was like bringing down a fake god."

Millions protest. Armies stand down. Dictators leave. Impossible fantasies two months earlier--now they were coming true. The "days of rage" meme and democratic dream had achieved breathtaking momentum, spreading not just to the softer monarchical dictatorships--Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco--but also to Yemen, Algeria and the hardcore police states Syria and Libya.

In the spring, they spread to Europe. On May 15, tens of thousands marched to Madrid's Puerta del Sol plaza, along with tens of thousands more in dozens of other cities, united by slogans like

"We are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers." They were frustrated by unemployment, a lack of opportunity and politics headed nowhere. They called themselves Los Indignados, the Outraged.

Spain's one-day march turned into a months-long self-governing encampment--one of the new defining characteristics of 2011's brand of communal resistance. Throughout the country, about 6 million out of a population of 46 million participated in Indignados protests. Among those in Madrid was Olmo Gálvez, 31, an Internet entrepreneur just back from three years working in China and new to politics. He'd helped set up social-media networks for the protest. "It was marvelous to see people become the actors in their own lives," he says. "You could watch them breaking out of their passivity."

Ten days after the Madrid protests began, the contagion spread to Greece. George Anastasopoulos, 36, has a Ph.D. in sociology but earns his living as a DJ. "That first Sunday when we saw 100,000 people show up, we were overwhelmed," he says of the Athenians' camp in Syntagma Square, in sight of Parliament. "And then the second Sunday, 500,000 people showed up. That enthused us so much, and we started dreaming really big."

"Our protests," says Christina Lardikou, a 31-year-old Athenian who works in fashion, "all started from the Indignados." But they drew from other inspirations too. Among the chants in the birthplace of democracy last spring were "Yes we can!" And Anastasopoulos has kept a banner reading LET FREEDOM RING--that is, a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. quoting "My Country' Tis of Thee."

The Greek protests continued for more than a month, until just about the time 150 young Israeli protesters started pitching tents in the median of Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. The grievance package was familiar: good jobs too scarce, cost of living too high, politicians corrupt, only the well-connected rich getting richer. Soon there were 100 such encampments all over Israel, in working-class towns as well as yuppie-villes. For a finale in early September, an estimated 400,000 of the country's 7.7 million citizens marched, chanting, "The people demand social justice!" When the Egyptian revolutionary leader el-Ghazali Harb told me how pleased he was that Tahrir Square had inspired copycat protests all over the world, I asked if his pride extended to Israel. He laughed and said, "I will say we were happy about that as well."

In early August, after police in London shot and killed a young black man they were arresting, riots broke out all over England. Naturally, the rioters' instantly resorting to violence attracted little sympathy. Yet a new, three-month study by the Guardian and the London School of Economics concluded that these rioters were also protesters, motivated by anger about poverty, unemployment and inequality as well as overaggressive policing.

Back in Madrid, the protesters recognized the diminishing returns of this protest phase and started to decamp. By July, Gálvez says, they heard that Occupy Wall Street was going to happen. Online, the Indignados started explaining to the Americans how it's done.

Since 1989 the earnest, Zany little bimonthly Adbusters--"an ad-free international magazine for activists fighting to change the way information flows and meaning is produced in our society"--had

been preaching to its choir. In July the editors ran a full-page photo-illustration of a barefoot ballerina posed atop Wall Street's Charging Bull statue--in the background were gas-masked insurgents in a tear-gas fog--along with four lines of copy: WHAT IS OUR ONE DEMAND? OCCUPY WALL STREET SEPTEMBER 17TH. BRING TENT. Adbusters also sent out an e-mail--"America needs its own Tahrir"--and on Independence Day urged on its smallish cadre of Twitter followers: "Dear Americans, this July 4th dream of insurrection against corporate rule."

If you tweet it, they will come.

At the end of July, in an office in New York's financial district, the proto-Occupiers met with some veterans of the protests in Spain, Greece and North Africa. To figure out what "Occupy Wall Street" might mean, they reconvened two days later at a come-one-come-all meeting--outdoors, for hours, in a park near that charging bronze bull, amid the thousands of unwitting passersby on an ordinary Wall Street workday.

David Graeber, 50, a prominent anthropology scholar and soft-spoken proanarchism activist, showed up. Some standard leftists were pushing for a standard rally making a standard demand--no cutbacks in government social spending. Slowly but surely, Graeber and a pal, 32-year-old Greek émigré artist Georgia Sagri, nudged the group to a fresh vision: a long-term encampment in a public space, an improvised democratic protest village without preappointed leaders, committed to a general critique--the U.S. economy is broken, politics is corrupted by big money--but with no immediate call for specific legislative or executive action. It was also Graeber, a lifelong hater of corporate smoke and mirrors, who coined the movement's ingenious slogan, "We are the 99%."

Until late September, 99% of New Yorkers had never heard of Zuccotti Park, a privately owned public plaza tucked between the Federal Reserve Bank and the World Trade Center site. On the last Saturday of the summer--sunny, mid-60s, perfect--a couple thousand people showed up, a hundred slept overnight, and the occupation was on. It seemed as though the world would little note nor long remember it. On the third day, the first arrests--of protesters wearing Guy Fawkes masks in violation of an antique New York anti-insurrection statute--got scant attention.

It was through my Twitter feed that I started noticing that something was going on in my city. The following weekend, I watched the YouTube video of a New York police deputy inspector casually pepper-spraying some random female protesters. A few days later, my 24-year-old nephew, Daniel Thorson, e-mailed from his small town in western New York: he was coming down to occupy Wall Street, and could he stay with us in Brooklyn?

At Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Daniel was a philosophy major, lived in a frat house, volunteered for the Obama campaign and co-founded his campus's chapter of the nonpartisan Americans for Informed Democracy. Since graduating, he's held various minimum-wage and unpaid jobs and has grown deeply disappointed by how little the Obama Administration has been able to accomplish. In September he was stunned by the breadth and depth of the chatter on his Twitter and Facebook feeds about Occupy Wall Street and decided he wanted to be part of it.

As soon as he arrived at Zuccotti Park, he went to the information desk. "It was staffed by



someone who wasn't very articulate," he told me, "who wasn't the face of what I thought this should be." He offered to pitch in and thus became a member of the information working group. He helped guide the general assemblies, OWS's daily town meetings, reveling in the process of debating and deciding. To me it sounded like being a facilitator at a corporate management retreat--except outdoors, with everyone voting by means of kooky hand signals and making sure the anarchists are heard. Even if I were a 24-year-old idealist, I told Daniel, I would have zero patience for the process. He'd get annoyed from time to time by "craziness, by a sense of entitlement, anger, resentment," he said. "But there are jerks in every organization, no matter how 'pure' the organization."

After my wife and I kicked him out of our house--three weeks seemed like a fulfillment of avuncular duty--Daniel slept at the park most nights. At around 1 a.m. on the final night of the encampment in November, he was at a friend's apartment when he got a text message--police en route, eviction imminent. He rushed downtown, but new police barricades kept him and other protesters a block away up Broadway. They were ordered to scam, most of them refused, the pepper spray came out, and the police announced they'd be arrested if they didn't leave the sidewalk. Daniel spent 38 hours in custody, charged with resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and obstructing governmental administration.

I found out about his arrest and release--via e-mail and a Facebook status update--in Cairo, as I walked through Tahrir Square during the first of the recent, huge anti-junta protests. My interpreter, a young Jordanian immigrant to Egypt, was excited about Occupy Wall Street. "It's going viral," he said. "I know it's now like in 80 countries."

And in cities all over the U.S., of course, with all kinds of people protesting. Among the thousands occupying Oakland was Arthur Chen, 60, a family-practice physician. For him, "the expression of outrage was very on target with our current economic crisis and the way it's impacting the 99%," especially his low-income and uninsured patients. During his first day occupying Oakland, Chen remembers, "one of the announcers said, 'You're going to hear some things that you may totally disagree with.' I chuckled, and then I thought, "This generation really is about inclusiveness and transparency.' It was very moving."

In Cairo, meanwhile, there was Ahmed Harara, 31, a dentist who lost sight in both eyes to rubber bullets in Tahrir on two separate occasions--in January and November, when he returned for the anti-junta protests. What was the most memorable day of his whole annus mirabilis cum horribilis? "Actually," he said, "there are two days--the 28th of January here in Egypt and the day when Americans occupied Wall Street. Because here in Egypt, we raised the slogan of social justice, and I see that Americans need it and did that too."

## **THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY**

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven!--Oh!

times,

In which the meagre, stale, forbidding

ways

Of custom, law, and statute, took at once

The attraction of a country in romance!

--William Wordsworth,

"The French Revolution as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement"

Aftermaths are never as splendid as uprisings. Solidarity has a short half-life. Democracy is messy and hard, and votes may not go your way. Freedom doesn't appear all at once. Just off Tahrir, when a couple of us were taking pictures of graffiti about a blogger the army had imprisoned, a scowling secret policeman appeared and waved us away. We were unwanted tourists at the revolution.

Globalization and going viral have been the catchphrases of the networked 21st century. But until now the former has mainly referred to a fluid worldwide economy managed by important people, and the latter has mostly meant cute-animal videos and songs by nobodies. This year, do-it-yourself democratic politics became globalized, and real live protest went massively viral. But as they've rejuvenated and enlarged the idea of democracy, the protesters, and the rest of us, are discovering that democracy is difficult and sometimes a little scary. Because deciding what you don't want is a lot easier than deciding and implementing what you do want, and once everybody has a say, everybody has a say. No one knows how the revolutions will play out: A bumpy road to stable democracy, as in America two centuries ago? Radicals' taking over, as in France just after the bliss and very heaven? Or quick counterrevolution, as in France 60 years later? The mostly liberal, secular young people who made the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt last winter have been subordinated, if not sidelined, by better-disciplined political organizations. And they all agree it's partly their own fault, a function of naiveté about the realities of democratic politics.

"The only good thing Mubarak did," activist Mahmoud Adel Elhetta told me, "was unite us." Mahmoud Salem, 30, who blogs and tweets under the name Sandmonkey--and who has an American B.A. and M.B.A. and works in business development for clients like Coca-Cola--told me he "had the hubris of youth. It was utopia that immediately descended into chaos." He lost his election for a parliamentary seat representing a wealthy Cairo district two weeks ago. "We failed," says el-Ghazali Harb, the surgeon-revolutionary. "What made the revolution happen is the youth. We handed it back to the seniors. We didn't trust ourselves."

In both Egypt and Tunisia, the freely elected new parliaments will be dominated by Islamists--sweet-talking moderates who secularists worry won't stay that way. But as Tantawy of the Muslim Brotherhood told me, "It's not just liberals vs. the Brotherhood now. The Islamists disagree among themselves." To me, the mainstream Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia don't appear much more fanatically religious than, say, Pat Robertson-esque Evangelicals in the U.S., and unlike the

Republican hard-liners, they sound committed to a national consensus that includes secular liberals. "Democracy is a new culture, and we have to get used to it," says Abdelhamid Jlassi, a Tunisian Islamist leader who spent 17 years as a political prisoner. "Now we have to get used to being hit by eggs."

And the secular revolutionaries remain hopeful that they will not turn out to have been useful idiots to new oppressors. Shadi Taha is a U.S.-educated civil engineer and major liberal Egyptian party official who's running for parliament on a coalition slate with Muslim Brothers. "I don't agree with some of their things," he told me, "but in the 1980s, before they got into politics, they were as crazy as the Salafis"--the fundamentalists who are winning a quarter of the current parliamentary vote. He thinks democratic politics has an inherently moderating effect. Even Tunis University professor Dalenda Largueche, a feminist who could barely contain her horror at ascendant Islamism when we spoke, can eke out some hope. "They want to change Tunisia according to their vision," she says, "but Tunisia will change them." The secularists have a founding-fathers-and-mothers faith in freedom and democracy that is stirring: there's no going back to tyranny, they're sure. "In the end," Wael Nawara says, "things will turn out all right, because the relationship between people and authority in Egypt has changed forever. People discovered that they can change and stop authority from going too far. That self-discovery changes everything. They learned they can replace a ruler. That's the revolution."

Yet there is, for now, a self-sabotaging catch-22 operating among protesters all over the world. All the protests have been against systemic status quos. That has been their great strength. "If it was politicians who had led the movement," Jlassi says of the Tunisian revolution, "it wouldn't have succeeded, whereas the youths, who were unaffiliated, could appeal to everyone." But because even free politics can be inherently unclean, the youth and other liberals don't yet have the stomach for democratic hardball. Will the moral high ground keep working for them? It would be pretty to think so. U.S. Occupiers lack faith in the occupant of the Oval Office and aren't entirely thrilled with their labor-union allies, and the indie generation's need for absolute consensus can devolve into a feckless Bartlebyism--passive resistance, preferring not to.

Ditto in Europe and the Arab countries. In Tunisia, says Lina Ben Mhenni, "we didn't complete the revolution. We got rid of the dictator. Maybe the mistake that we made was that most of us rejected the idea of entering political life." Absent dictatorships to overthrow, idealistic purity can carry a high political price, and if you leave the dull but essential business of governing to the squares and grownups, you lose.

On the other hand, one of the unequivocal generational virtues of these movements has been their use of the Internet and social media. Two years ago, scholars Nicholas Christakis (Harvard) and James Fowler (University of California, San Diego) published *Connected*, a groundbreaking study of social networks, which they summarize as "how your friends' friends' friends affect everything you feel, think and do." The protests of the past 12 months look like a spectacular worldwide confirmation of those findings.

Calling the Arab uprisings Facebook and YouTube and Twitter revolutions is not, it turns out, just

glib, wishful American overstatement. In the Middle East and North Africa, in Spain and Greece and New York, social media and smart phones did not replace face-to-face social bonds and confrontation but helped enable and turbocharge them, allowing protesters to mobilize more nimbly and communicate with one another and the wider world more effectively than ever before. And in police states with high Internet penetration--Ben Ali's Tunisia, Mubarak's Egypt, Bashar Assad's Syria--a critical mass of cell-phone video recorders plus YouTube plus Facebook plus Twitter really did become an indigenous free press. Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, new media and blogger are now quasi synonyms for protest and protester.

And then there was the Arab Spring's other essential, not-quite-as-new media form--independent 24-hour TV news. When I asked the Islamist Jlassi why the revolution had not happened a decade earlier in Tunisia, he instantly answered, "Al-Jazeera and the Internet were the differences, especially al-Jazeera--everybody watches TV."

So America's great 21st century contribution to fomenting freedom abroad was not imposing it militarily but enabling it technologically, as an epiphenomenon of globalization. And for a second act, globalization returned the favor, turning democratic uprisings in developing countries into inspirational exports for the rich world. "We were on the receiving side," Egyptian presidential candidate Amr Moussa told me, "and now we are on the sending side. We have contributed to this global movement for change. There's a new spirit. The grassroots are revolting--young people on Wall Street and young people in Europe."

Ever since modern republican democracy was invented, astonishing protests and uprisings have spiked and spread once every half-century or so: the revolutions in America and France and Haiti; the revolutions of 1848; the revolutions of the 1910s (Russia, Germany, Ireland, Turkey, Egypt, Mexico); the postwar wave of worldwide revolt (the movements toward decolonization, Cuba, Hungary, American civil rights, countercultural militancy in America and Europe). It happens almost like clockwork, yet each time people are freshly shocked and bedazzled. So here we are again. History isn't a very precise guide to how long it might persist this time. In 1848 the revolutionary moment was explosive but lasted only a year, extinguished by both dictatorial and democratic counterrevolutions. The revolutionary dream hatched around 1960, however, was still powerfully contagious a decade later.

The nonleader leaders of Occupy are using the winter to build an organization and enlist new protesters for the next phase. They have shifted the national conversation. As Politico recently reported, the Nexis news-media database now registers almost 500 mentions of "inequality" each week; the week before Occupy Wall Street started, there were only 91. But what would count, a few years hence, as success? According to gung-ho Adbusters editors Kalle Lasn and Micah White, it's already "the greatest social-justice movement to emerge in the United States since the civil rights era." Yet it took a decade to get from the Montgomery bus boycott to the federal civil rights acts, which were just the end of the beginning.

The wisest Occupiers understand that these are very early days. But as long as government in Washington--like government in Europe--remains paralyzed, I don't see the Occupiers and

Indignados giving up or losing traction or protest ceasing to be the defining political mode. After all, the Tea Party protests subsided only after Tea Partyers achieved real power in 2010 by becoming the tail wagging the Republican Party dog. When radical populist movements achieve big-time momentum and attention, they don't tend to stand down until they get some satisfaction.

Protesters are ready to rumble in Egypt and Tunisia if democracy and freedom seem too compromised. Emboldened protesters may yet sweep away regimes in places like Jordan and Yemen. In Libya, a bloody revolution, assisted by NATO, brought down the 42-year-old regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. The protorevolution is still under way in Syria, where thousands of protesters have been killed.

And in Russia, the recipe for surprising protest circa 2011--pseudodemocratic-regime overreach, high Internet use, robust new media and suddenly galvanized middle-class youth--is being baked and served. On Dec. 5, after Putin's party, United Russia, did badly in parliamentary elections despite apparent ballot-box stuffing, more than 5,000 Muscovites gathered to chant, "Russia without Putin!" and called for his arrest. It was the largest Russian antiregime protest of the 21st century--and just as in Tunis and Madrid and New York City, nobody saw it coming.

These Russian protesters are a new breed, not just nostalgic old communist grandmas or bullyboy nationalists but yuppies, students, the best and brightest. "So this is what they look like," said Oleg Orlov, the 58-year-old head of Russia's main human-rights organization, as he scanned the square at Chistye Prudy the night of Dec. 5. "I've never seen them at rallies before, at least not in such enormous numbers. It's incredible."

Alexei Navalny, the blogger who coined a new United Russia moniker--"the party of crooks and thieves"--addressed the protesters. "They can laugh and call us microbloggers. They can call us the hamsters of the Internet. Fine. I am an Internet hamster. But I know they are afraid of us." The protesters cheered. And then 300 of them and Navalny were arrested. The next night in Triumphalnaya Square, protesters returned, and 600 were arrested. A Putin spokesman declared that "unsanctioned demonstrations must be stopped."

On Dec. 10, five days after the first protest, tens of thousands gathered in Moscow in the largest demonstration since just after the fall of communism. There were simultaneous protests in dozens of other cities all over Russia. A letter written by Navalny from his Moscow jail cell was read to the crowd. "It's impossible to beat and arrest hundreds of thousands, millions. We are not cattle or slaves. We have voices and votes, and we have the power to uphold them." An even bigger protest is scheduled for Dec. 24.

They are protesting corruption and the lack of real freedom and true democracy. Because Russia, like most of the world, has not quite totally arrived at the end of history.

## **HOW TO OCCUPY A SQUARE**

The protests of 2011 were often long-term affairs. Here are a few of the structures (along with the infrastructure) Cairo demonstrators established to make Tahrir Square their own:

## CHECKPOINTS

At the height of the revolution, protesters set up checkpoints at each entrance to the square to keep out the regime's thugs as well as the police. This practice has continued with subsequent demonstrations.

## STAGE

Protest leaders--often from competing political organizations--erected stages to broadcast chants, speeches and concerts to the crowd.

## ELECTRICITY

To keep texts, tweets and status updates flying, activists rigged public utility poles up to electrical stations inside the square's campsites. They hauled in donated generators for backup.

## TENTS

If you're going to stay the night, you'll need a place to sleep. Protests made traffic medians into camp settlements.

## FIELD HOSPITALS

At makeshift hospitals, volunteers treated people injured by tear gas, rubber bullets and police batons. Along with the standard supplies, there were unusual antidotes like vinegar and alkaline solution for tear gas.

## **HOW TO STOCK A PROTEST LIBRARY**

When Occupy Wall Street set up camp in Zuccotti Park, the protesters brought along reading material. These are some of the movement's canonical titles:

### A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

Howard Zinn

A seminal leftist revision of American history that subverts nationalist pieties once accepted without question by U.S. schoolkids.

### INTERN NATION

Ross Perlin

Published earlier this year, this Gen Y-er's tale is a chronicle of the uncertainties and dead ends facing American youth.

## PRISON NOTEBOOKS

## Antonio Gramsci

A pioneering Marxist text by a man imprisoned by Mussolini's Fascists; today's protesters draw much of their critiques of "hegemonic" capitalism from Gramsci's insights.

## MULTITUDE

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri Jargon-filled and dense, the works of these two leftist academics forecast the rise of 2011's leaderless protest movements.

## WELCOME TO THE DESERT OF THE REAL

### Slavoj Zizek

The celebrity Slovenian philosopher spoke at Zuccotti Park in OWS's early days and is a cheerleader from afar.

## TIME FOR OUTRAGE

### Stephane Hessel

The 94-year-old French author's short book denounces the gulf between rich and poor. It has sold 4 million copies.

## AIN'T I A WOMAN

### bell hooks

Often invoked by critics who say the Occupy movement doesn't adequately address concerns of race and gender.

## HOW TO TWEET IN A CRISIS

As the organizers behind @TahrirSupplies, Amira Ayman and Yara al-Sayes coordinated donations of medical supplies and other assistance to Tahrir demonstrators throughout the most recent occupation. They advise on tweeting to help those in need during a crackdown:

### STARTING UP

Set up an independent Twitter account. Keep your message clear and politics-free to gain as many supporters as possible. Spread the word through celeb tweeps; if they ignore you at first, be patient.

### SIMPLIFY

Strip tweets of extra hashtags and mentions, and specify where exactly help is needed.

### NETWORK

Establish a good relationship with doctors in field hospitals to update you with what is needed and where.

## TRUST

Identify trustworthy tweeps on the ground in case you need to verify information or assist volunteers in delivering supplies to field hospitals.

## USE IT AND ABUSE IT

Use whatever technology has to offer to serve your purpose--Twitter, Facebook, e-mail, Skype, mobile phones or landlines, depending on the task you are trying to accomplish.

## STAY ORGANIZED

Keep an updated database of contacts, supplies and important events that occur during the protests.

## WIDEN YOUR AUDIENCE

Creating template tweets in both English and Arabic made it easier for us to change a few variables in each tweet and send it out in two languages.

## SET POLITICS ASIDE

If you're tweeting for a humanitarian cause, don't get dragged into political battles. Keep politics out of it to bring more supporters to your cause and to help those on the ground.

PICTURED IN OPENING GRID El Général, Tunisia; Sayda al-Manahe, Tunisia; Anna Hazare, India; Katerina Patrikarakou, Greece; Crystallee Crain, Oakland, Calif.; Javier Sicilia, Mexico; Loukanikos, the protest dog, Greece; Ahmed Aggour, Egypt; Mona Eltahawy, Egypt; Thomas Basile, New York City; Melanisia Carmilia Jacobs, Oakland; Stephane Grueso, Spain; El Teneen, Egypt; Emil Samir, Egypt; Ahmed Harara, Egypt; Andre Little, Oakland; Carmen Rodríguez, Spain; Ray Lewis, New York City; Nehal Marei, Egypt; Olmo Gálvez, Spain; Nada Fadl, Egypt; Abdulhamid Sulaiman, Rami Jarrah, Mohamed Abazid, Syria; Molehe Kalaote, Oakland; Marianna Roumelioti, Greece; George Anastasopoulos, Greece; Um Treka, Egypt; Ydanis Rodriguez, New York City; Dalenda Lagueche, Tunisia; Mahmoud Salem, Egypt; an Oakland protester; Anas Aqeel, Egypt; Yahi Abdel Shafy, Egypt; Saleh Mohamed, Egypt; Lina Ben Mhenni, Tunisia; Ahmed Maher, Egypt; Dax Perrault, Oakland; Esraa Abdel Fatah, Egypt; Ricardo Gómez, Spain; Pavlos Papanotis, Greece; Shadi Taha, Egypt

PHOTO (COLOR): TEAR-GAS CANISTER, EGYPT

PHOTO (COLOR): AN OAKLAND PROTESTER

PHOTO (COLOR): RUBBER PELLETS AND A SPENT SHELL CASING



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By Kurt Andersen

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