

Throughout the world, protesting has become an effective way for citizens to provoke their governments to create policy changes. In modern times, particularly with the presence of social media, the voice of revolutionaries can be spread across the globe, as well as footage of government violence, ultimately rounding up an international community to support the cause. The documentaries *Winter on Fire* and *The Square* follow two such recent situations. The former follows the 2013-2014 Ukrainian revolution in Kiev, and the latter follows protests in Tahrir square in Cairo, Egypt. In both cases, citizens join together to overthrow their corrupt governments, demonstrating such courage and passion that their voices rang throughout the world.

In the documentary *Winter on Fire*, the revolution was started in November, 2013 by students with hopes to bring down President Viktor Yanukovich, who had been following Stalin-like authoritarian tendencies, as well as to gain Ukraine's entry into the European Union. The revolution started peacefully, with citizens gathering in Independence Square to chant and sing, demonstrating support for Ukraine's separation from Russia and integration into the European community. The demonstrations turned violent only when the Berkut police (Yanukovich's forces) attacked unarmed protestors with iron rods, violently beating any acting against the government. The Ukrainian congress at one point also passed extremely oppressive laws, intended to squash the rebellion. This ultimately led to the area (Maidan) turning into a battleground, with citizens creating barricades, makeshift hospitals, meal tents, and gathering supplies. In fact, civilians even set up a hospital and held dinners inside of a seized government building. The documentary does a really beautiful job of capturing the sense of community felt by the Ukrainian people during this time; celebrities singing the national anthem in the square, priests giving sermons in the middle of violent standoffs, crowds holding off the Berkut by linking their arms for strength. As the citizens found their fortitude in the community and in the hope for their future, the Berkut responded with pure violence; replacing their iron rods with rubber bullets, and ultimately replacing the rubber bullets with live ones coupled with Molotov cocktails. Finally, after 3 months, with 125 dead and almost 2,000 injured, Yanukovich fled the country and the Berkut was disbanded, leaving the steadfast protestors as the victors.

On the other hand, in Egypt, revolutionaries wanted the removal of Hosni Mubarak from his authoritarian presidency and sought the establishment of a representative democracy. The protests were started by a small group of citizens who created a campground in Tahrir square, which has been a popular revolutionary spot throughout the country's history. During this revolution there were three main groups taking part: the Egyptian army, the Muslim Brotherhood, and politically engaged citizens who do not belong to either of the other two other groups. All three factions remained united at the beginning, with the common goal of removing Mubarak from power, however, as that goal was attained, the groups splintered, each then

pursuing their own political agenda. Post-Mubarak, the new president of Egypt was elected to be Mohammed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, which despite being outlawed under the previous regime, was still the largest cohesive political group in Egypt. Morsi came to give himself even more power than Mubarak had, creating a restrictive constitution and exerting excessive control over the military. The army reacted by deposing of Morsi and violently repressing his supporters, often killing and using torture, eventually instating military rule with a surprising level of popular support. To summarize, civilians started by peacefully protesting to force their oppressive president to step down, and to set the foundation for a democracy. Once Mubarak stepped down, conflict broke out between the Brotherhood and the Army who both sought political dominance, leaving the third group of average civilians caught in the crossfire, still fighting to establish a fair and representative government.

The questions remain: how are we supposed to react to such events? What can we do to help? For citizens in other countries, they should respond and show support by spreading the word of injustices that may be taking place; whether that be sharing footage of the events on social media, keeping up with new information and starting a discourse, or finding organizations that donate to the revolutionary efforts. Such simple actions may seem small, but when taken by even a few individuals across the globe they can have astounding domino effects. British-Egyptian actor Khalid Abdulla even went as far as traveling to Cairo, using his fame to raise awareness for the revolutionary efforts in Egypt. Furthermore, action can also be taken by policymakers outside the country, whether that be by other states or international institutions. Other countries' governments can help by providing financial aid to the revolutionaries; many specific instances of this have occurred when the United States has donated money to foreign protest groups to encourage the spread of democracy. Countries' can also apply sanctions such as travel bans on government officials to demonstrate their opposition to the actions of that country. Lastly, for a country with great political power, such as the United States, even a public statement of disagreement can be enough to spur other countries into action as well. On the other hand, international institutions, such as the United Nations, have particular authority to be involved in such revolutions as the keeper of world peace. The United Nations could be helpful in such unstable situations by also providing economic aid, sending their peacekeepers, or sending diplomats to aid in negotiations. However, for the United Nations to send any of their own forces, it would have to be a particularly violent and bleak revolution in order to gain support for their intervention. In the case of Ukraine, however, the European Union instead sent a diplomat to Kiev to express support for Ukraine's integration into the Western European community.

To conclude, revolutions have often proven to be a successful method of overthrowing an oppressive government regime, however, success does not come without its costs. Oftentimes protests provoke violent interactions, taking the lives of innocent civilians. The documentaries *Winter on Fire* and *The Square* both demonstrate how hope for a representative and fair government has led to a dystopian reality with hopeful, and usually peaceful, revolutionaries giving their lives for the future of their country. Egypt and Ukraine do, however, differ on one

major factor: Ukraine found strength in the unity among its diverse people, whereas Egyptian groups were pit against each other, more concerned with political dominance than cooperation. Thus, every revolution has its own mitigating and aggravating factors depending on the culture, political climate, religions, etc. What is indisputable, however, is that every revolution requires a passionate and brave group of citizens, willing to risk everything to live in an egalitarian society.

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