

**Ultras in Egypt: The Power of Organized Soccer Fans and their Political Influence on the  
2011 Egyptian Revolution and Post-Revolution Era**

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## **DEDICATION**

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this thesis, I will investigate how the Ultras, a group of organized and nationalistic Egyptian football fans who are widely credited with having played a major part in the more physical aspects of the Egyptian uprising (Woltering 2013), became politicized and significant actors in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The Ultras, as hard-core soccer supporters, have the ethos of fanatical commitment towards their respective clubs (Jerzak 2013). In the case of Egypt, most of these Ultras are associated with the two largest soccer clubs, Al-Ahly and Al-Zamalek. I will analyze what political ideologies and social and economic factors have affected the mobilization of the Ultras, and assess whether the Ultras have specific sustainable political objectives and organizational leadership strategies to be viable Egyptian political actors. Interrelated factors, such as political beliefs, socio-economic status, educational level, organizational structure, gender, and age will be used to understand the coalescence of the Ultras as a significant political force during and after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. This analysis will provide a fundamental understanding of how the Ultras transformed into revolutionary actors, through their autonomy in public spaces, and why this dissent became an organized and influential political movement that transitioned from the soccer stadiums to the public forums of political protest. I will use semi-structured interviews, with academicians and Ultra leaders, and an analysis of published data and sources to understand how the Ultras transformed into revolutionary actors, and whether they will have a sustainable and meaningful political impact on the Egyptian political scene.

I became interested in this topic by closely observing and following the 2011 revolution and post-revolutionary aftermath in Egypt. During the revolution, Mubarak's authoritarian regime and his security forces specifically targeted the Ultras. They were perceived as a visible

threat to Mubarak's regime in the public space of soccer stadiums. Soccer stadiums had been one of the few public venues where large crowds could assemble, and the Ultras utilized these spaces to clash with security forces of the regime. The clashes with the security forces had little to do with soccer games, but were a manifestation of the Ultras' frustration with the iron handed and violent response of the security forces towards the Ultras that included imprisonment, torture, and suppression of any dissent (Jerzak 2013). Sport and politics coalesced, as these civic expressions of opposition became part of a multifaceted national protest and civic protest against the Mubarak regime.

### **The Evolution of the Ultras as a Political Force**

Ultra soccer fans have changed the nature of the soccer fan culture, not only in Egypt, but globally. Ultras have become a major aspect of global soccer fans' culture. They have helped change the culture of the game in countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Argentina, Serbia, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt. The essential role of soccer in political life of Egypt goes more than a hundred years back, to the anti-colonial struggle in the beginning of the last millennium (Tuastad 2013). When Al-Ahly sport club was founded in 1907, the club was used as a cover for political activists fighting against British colonial rule. Student unions formed a core of the anticolonial struggle, but their unions needed premises where they congregated and planned activities, where they would not be harassed by the British colonial authorities (Tuastad 2013).

After the 1952 revolution, a large percentage of the Egyptian population continued to identify and feel connected with the fortunes of Al-Ahly (El Zatmah and Jerzak 2013). As a result, soccer culture became part and parcel of Egypt's popular and national culture in the sixties and seventies (El Zatmah 2013). In the early 2000s, however, there was a social and

political transformation of young fans of popular Egyptian soccer clubs. Young fans started two main ultra groups: Al Ahlawi Ultras of Al-Ahly and the White Knights Ultras of the Zamalek. The rise of the Ultras and their politicization was a direct response to the heavy handed and repressive practices of Mubarak's security forces at soccer stadiums and in other public forums. These groups became politicized through violent confrontations with the police, the state's chief representatives in the public arena. By seeking autonomy in the public spaces of Egyptian stadiums, the Ultras were reacting against the daily humiliations in Mubarak's Egypt, such as police surveillance, physical degradation, verbal abuse, and arrest with indefinite jail detention (Ismail 2012; Jerzak 2013). This rise of the Ultras movements in Egypt came at a time when political activist groups, such as April 6<sup>th</sup>, Kifya, and the Muslim Brotherhood began to organize themselves in open opposition to Mubarak's regime (El Zatmah 2013). All of these political organizations had significant youth participation. These youth groups organized public street demonstrations through social media (Ezbawy 2012). On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, which is considered the start of the Egyptian Revolution, youth with the movement took to the streets by the millions. These public demonstrations were significantly strengthened by the participation of Al Ahly and Al Zamalak Ultras (Ezbawy 2012). The activists from the different political parties had secured their participation and they actively fought in pitched street battles with the security forces. Through the efforts of the Ultras, the security forces could never reclaim Tahrir square (Ezbawy 2012). This was significant because different political factions at the start of the revolution were cooperating with each other, and they also foresaw the Ultras both as supporters and street fighters.

The Egyptian Revolution deepened the Ultras' political involvement, giving these groups the ambition and opportunity to confront the authoritarian state's entire presence in the public

sphere. In the post-revolutionary era, many Ultra members continued to seek civic autonomy by opposing the authoritarian tendencies of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF). The Ultras were part and parcel of the continued rise in youth-oriented social and political movements that came to challenge the SCAF in the post-Mubarak era. The Ultras continued as one of the popular forms of this dissent, and they were recruited by the different political movements (Elgohari 2013). On February 1, 2012 a massacre occurred in the Port Said stadium during a match between Al Ahly and Al Masry, and it resulted in 72 fatalities and more than 100 injuries. This was widely seen as retribution by SCAF and the security forces against Ultra groups of al Ahly and Al for their political role in the 2011 revolution, and it was reminiscent of the violence that the security forces had used against the Ultras before the Revolution (Elgohari 2013).

## **Methodology**

Due to the multifaceted aspects of trying to understand how the Ultras evolved into a cohesive political force, I have used a combination of primary and secondary sources and semi-structured interviews with Ultra members and academicians for a qualitative assessment of their perspectives on the Egyptian revolution of 2011 and post-revolution era. Secondary sources, which will primarily be journal articles, book chapters, and news articles will be reviewed and analyzed to obtain a fundamental understanding to delineate the specific factors that led to the Ultras coalescing into significant political actors on the Egyptian political scene. These characteristics will be classified in terms of socio-economic status, political affiliation and motivation, organizational capabilities, and gender to understand how the Ultras evolved from soccer stadiums to the political arena.

The semi-structured interview techniques that I used were based on the approaches

outlined by Aberbach and Rockman (2002). The goal of the semi-structured technique is to use mainly open-ended questions, and to allow the respondents to engage in wide- ranging discussions. The main aim of this technique is, therefore, to probe beneath the surface of the response to further understand the reasoning and premises beneath the responses (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). In this study, I conducted six semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to allow respondents to fully articulate their answers. The academicians and researchers I interviewed were: Professor James Dorsey, a senior fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, a columnist and the author of the widely acclaimed and quoted blog, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*; Mohamed Elgohari, a leading expert on Egyptian political movements, who has completed a master thesis on the Ultras and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, and is now a political researcher at the Hariri institute in Washington DC and a columnist with Jadaliyya; Shawki al Zatmah, a Middle East History Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who has published on how the Tersos transitioned to Egyptian Ultras. The Ultras I interviewed were Khalid Shalan, a member of Ultras Ahlawys and one of the student leaders who formed a student movement, FECU (Faculty of Engineering Cairo University) Revolutionary Movement, after the Port Said massacre in February 2011; two Ultras Ahlway members, one of whom is the one web-master of the Ahlawy Facebook, and both of these Ultras were involved in the 2011 revolution and the Port Said massacre. This cross section of academic researchers and Ultras were chosen, such that a representative perspective and understanding of the Ultras could be obtained.

I also conducted qualitative research through a survey that I sent out to Ultras White Knights and Ultras Ahlway. I created a Facebook account under the name Ahmed Bakri, and I was able to monitor the Facebook sites used by the Ahlway Ultras. I also distributed the survey



to the webmasters for distribution on their websites and Facebook accounts. Only ten people completed the survey, and therefore it did not provide enough information for a detailed understanding of the Ultras.

The interviews and survey were conducted in English with and the specific issues I discussed with the Ultras were:

- What motivated you to be an Ultra? And do you think that the Ultras are a political force?
- What were your experiences in the 2011 revolution?
- Do you think that the Ultras have viable political motivations and goals?
- What do you believe is the future role of the Ultras in Egyptian politics?
- How involved were you with politics prior to the revolution? What motivated you to become involved in politics?
- In what specific political activities do you and did you engage in?
- What are the goals of your political activism?
- What do you believe is the future role of the Ultras in Egyptian politics?
- What role did they play beyond organized demonstrations? Were there specific leaders or committees that funneled and organized support?
- What were the sources of financial or institutional support for the Ultras?
- Did the Ultras have tangible connections with opposition parties?
- How large and politically influential are the Ultras?
- Are the Ultras a major political force?

The questions for the academicians were:

- Do you think the Ultras are a political force?

- What are their long-term political motivations and objectives?
- What do you believe is the future role of the Ultras role in Egyptian politics?
- What role did they play beyond organized demonstrations?
- How did it transition from soccer pitches to the political arena?
- Were there specific leaders or committees that funneled and organized support?
- What were the sources of financial or institutional support?
- What major factors are continuing to lead to the festering antagonism between the Ultras and the security forces?
- Did the Ultras have tangible connections with opposition parties? Were they affiliated with specific political parties or movements?
- How did the Ultras use popular media and social media to organize?

These interviews were a mix of direct and indirect questions, and each interview averaged approximately an hour. I conducted the interviews by Skype, and the interviews were recorded with a Zoom H-1 audio recorder. This small but targeted interview sampling size provided a cross-section of academic insights and personal experiences that provided detailed and diverse perspectives into the political identity of the Ultras, and whether they have a long-term impact on Egyptian politics.

This thesis is organized as follows, in Chapter 2, I will conduct a literature review of current work related to the Ultras and how political dissatisfaction with Mubarak's regime was a precipitating factor in the Ultras' political mobilization. In Chapter 3, I will assess through semi-structured interviews and analyses of available findings the political impact of the Ultras on the 2011 revolution and post-revolution era. In Chapter 4, I will summarize the major conclusions of the research. In Chapter 5, I will recommend future research areas that can be pursued.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, I will review the current literature for the state of knowledge on how the Ultras evolved into a significant political force in Egypt. The literature will be reviewed in terms of a brief history of Egyptian soccer, and its interwoven relations with Egyptian politics; the evolution of passionate apolitical soccer fans, the Tersos, into politicized Ultras; the authoritarian practices of the Mubarak regime, and how this shaped the political response of the Ultras; and the significant role that the Ultras played in the Egyptian 2011 Revolution and post-Revolution era.

#### **Egyptian Soccer and Political Dissidence**

The essential role of soccer in political life of Egypt goes more than a hundred years back, to the anti-colonial struggle in the beginning of the last millennium (Tuastad 2013). When the Al-Ahly sport club was founded in 1907, it was also used as a cover for political activists fighting against British colonial rule. Student unions formed a core of the anticolonial struggle, and their unions needed premises where they could safely congregate and plan activities (Tuastad 2013). Al-Ahly, which means the national in Arabic, was founded by these nationalistic students and sympathetic Egyptian middle-class professionals, and not under the patronage of the King, as was the case for other sporting clubs, such as Al-Gezira and the Shooting Club (Tuastad 2013). Clubs, such as Al-Gezira and the Shooting Club, were patronized by exclusive members from the royals, the upper classes, and colonial expatriates, for their golf courses, skeet shooting, and swimming pools (Tuastad 2013). The middle classes, in contrast, frequented clubs, such as Al-Ahly, and membership was open to the general public. The main sports within Al-Ahly were

the more proletarian games of soccer, handball, and basketball. The Egyptian middle class was, in general, firmly opposed to the King, since he was viewed as a puppet of the British colonial authorities. Since public protest against the King and the colonial British authorities were generally prohibited, dissidents needed public spaces to meet and discuss Egyptian political and social developments (Jerzak 2013). The club facilities of Al-Ahly, which encompassed hundreds of acres near the middle of Cairo in Al-Gezirah, came to be one of the main centers where political opposition against British colonization could be voiced and marshaled (Jerzak 2013). Hence, Al-Ahly from its inception was viewed, by the Egyptian masses, as a nationalistic symbol and a center of anti-colonialism.

In 1952, after Egyptian independence from the British and the abdication of King Farouk, Al-Ahly gained significant popularity throughout Egypt and the Arab World. This was mainly due to its dominance of the local, Arab, and African soccer competitions. The club won numerous soccer championships, such as Egyptian Premierships, national cups, and African and Arab championships. Al-Ahly also represented Africa three times in the FIFA World Club Championships. The popularity of Al-Ahly with the Egyptian and Arab masses resulted in a fanatical following and an obsession with the club's athletic fortunes. Al-Ahly's success in Egypt has only been rivaled by the other Cairo club, Zamalek, and matches between these two clubs have evolved into the main sport event of the whole Arab world (Tuastad 2013). The clubs usually meet at the 80,000 sold out Cairo Stadium, and it is one of the rare moments where no people can be found out in the streets of Cairo. These clubs' popularity has been fueled by large general memberships, which are approximately on the order four to five million members for both clubs, and government subsidies (Al-Zatmah, 2013). This government support is in the form of subsidies for athletes', administrators', and coaches' salaries, and club infrastructure

maintenance and development. This government support, which spanned the authoritarian regimes of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak, has been employed, so that soccer could be used as a social outlet and a diversion for the masses to head off any political or social dissent.

### **The Evolution From Tersos to Ultras**

Up until the late 1990s, the most fanatical fans were known within Egypt's soccer culture as the Terso fans. Within Egypt's popular culture, the term 'Terso fans' referred to the most passionate soccer fans of the lower and economically poor classes who could only afford to buy third or terso (third in Italian) class tickets, which were the cheapest tickets, at the soccer stadiums (El Zatmah 2013). As the popularity of Al-Ahly soared with the masses, after the 1952 revolution and overthrow of the King, Terso fans began to shape the culture surrounding the game, by allowing a large percentage of the Egyptian population to identify and feel connected with the fortunes of Al-Ahly (El Zatmah 2013 and Jerzak 2013). As a result, soccer culture became further solidified within Egypt's popular and national culture. Soccer terminology became part of the vocabulary of the daily lives of the masses, thereby cementing the Terso culture as an integral part of Egyptian popular culture (El Zatmah 2013). The Terso fans' chants, songs and celebrations became rooted in other spheres of Egyptian culture, such as in popular songs, cinema, politics, magazines, newspapers, and religious and national celebrations (El Zatmah 2013).

All of these elements cemented the place of soccer as both a national obsession and an outlet for the Egyptian masses. The Tersos, however, maintained a largely non-violent culture, especially in comparison with the cultures of Latin American and European Ultras, which were characterized by hooliganism and violence (El Zatmah 2013). This general nonviolence could have been due to the relatively stable economic conditions in Egypt in the early 1960s and

1970s. The fervor for Al-Ahly was also reflected to a lesser degree for other clubs, such as Al-Zamalek, Al-Ismaily, Al-Ittihad, and Port Said. But as El Zatamah (2013) notes, Al-Ahly had the most fanatic and largest following, and this was due to their celebrated soccer accomplishments, history, and large memberships.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the Terso culture started to evolve into a new culture due to worsening economic conditions and political repression. As El Zatamah (2013) notes, during Sadat's rule, there was extensive privatization of state supported economic institutions, which resulted in greater economic inequality and increased poverty levels. The economic situation became so dire that even a third class soccer ticket became a burden for the masses. Furthermore, the emerging conservative Islamic ideology in the late 1970s resulted in greater measures of gender segregation, which discouraged the participation of women within the Tersos. Thus, the small number of women who had been a part of the Terso fans disappeared from the stadiums, and by the 1990s the third class seats in the stadium were dominated by young males of the lower class, who came to eventually form the majority of these passionate fans. This working class dimension of the male dominated fans was an essential factor in the evolution of these Tersos, since it added a lower class and male dominated socio-economic component to the previously apolitical Tersos.

### **The Political and Socio-Economic Motivation of the Ultras Fans**

In the early 2000s, during the authoritarian Mubarak regime, the Ultras coalesced into cohesive and distinct groups. Young fans of the popular Egyptian soccer clubs started two main ultra groups: Al Ahlawi Ultras of the Ahly and the White Knights Ultras of the rival Carian club, Zamalek. One of the main factors that resulted in this transformation was a general sense of alienation due to the repressive political practices of the Mubarak regime. Egyptian youth, like

many other Egyptians, felt that the political system did not represent them, and it was important for them to find an entity or a body to belong to (Elgohari 2013). They were looking for a collective alternative to the state, where they could express and vent their opinions and frustrations.

The Ultra groups brought together young and mostly underprivileged men, giving these youths an opportunity to form community ties through soccer, and these collective ties of support were not available through other social and political institutions in Egypt. Dorsey succinctly sums up the typical Ultra as:

Soccer is bigger than politics. It's about escapism. The average Ahly fan is a guy who lives in a one bedroom flat with his wife, mother-in-law, and five kids. He is paid minimum wage and his life sucks. The only good thing about his life is that for two hours on a Friday he goes to the stadium and watches Ahly. People suffer, but when Ahly wins they smile. (Dorsey 2012a).

This description encapsulates how soccer in Egypt was the only outlet for economically and socially repressed males. The living and economic frustrations of these Ultras were not going to be addressed by the government, and they could only alleviate some of their frustrations by their fanatical support of their club. Ultra groups could bring together these young and economically desperate men into organizations, which would provide connections to a larger collective and structured community.

As Al Zatmah further notes (2013), the transformation from Tersos to Ultras on the cultural level, signified the transition from the non-violent festive celebrations of the Tersos to the more violent marches and celebrations of the Ultras. This radically altered the culture of the Ultras in many ways. The Ultras developed much more vulgar chants and songs that were aimed at the opposing teams and its fans. These vulgar songs and chants became an essential part of the male dominated Ultras culture in the stadiums. These vulgar songs and chants paired with the



lighting of Shamarikh and other fireworks, became a central element to Ultras culture, and marked a marked shift towards violence. Shamarikh were lit to celebrate scoring a goal, to energize the fans, and to intimidate opposing fans and teams. Shamarikh came to cause many injuries among the Ultras and fans, and more often than not the stadium benches were purposely set ablaze by the Ultras. Shamarikh were often thrown at players and referees on the field and towards the opposing Ultras, and the police forces that secured the matches. This led to violent confrontations with the police and security forces at soccer stadiums, and it reinforced the Ultras' ethos of resistance and community (Jerzak 2013). This form of collective resistance against the government was focused on viewing the police and the security forces as the enemy, and this was an initial step of the Ultras' politicization.

### **The Ultras and Conflict with Government Institutions and Security Forces**

Fireworks and fire blazes were used by the Ultras to further escalate their confrontations with the security forces and clubs. Fireworks and fire blazes in stadiums are prohibited by Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and continental soccer associations including the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and the Egyptian national soccer associations. Heavy fines were imposed by the Egyptian Football Association (EFA), the CAF and the FIFA on the clubs' Ultras, who used fireworks and fire blazes. In international soccer, clubs are punished for the transgressions of their fans. Punishments and sanctions can include fines, prohibition from international competitions, and games that have to be played in empty stadiums (FIFA 2014). Hence, these transgressions pitted the Ultras against the club administrators and the security forces, since the Ultras were seen as a threat to state security, the clubs' financial stability and reputation, and Egypt's standing within the international soccer community.

The Egyptian autocratic state, under Mubarak had also developed a dominant power relation with the goal of suppressing actors, such as the Ultras, who would be seen as challenging any vestige of state authority. As Elgohari notes, collective organizations were not tolerated and the state used whatever measures were needed to ensure that protests did not evolve into anything larger, such as public demonstrations or protests against the state (Elgohari 2012). Any larger gathering tended to make the authorities nervous, since any attacks on the security forces would be seen as an attack on the regime.

The Ultras used these threats of penalties and punishment by international and national governing soccer boards to put financial pressure and assert power over the clubs administrators to force them to meet their demands. After the 1952 Egyptian revolution, all clubs in Egypt were nationalized, and the appointment of club administrators had to be approved by the government. Club management was, therefore, seen as an extension of the heavy handed and repressive government (Elgohari 2012). As Al Ztmah also notes, the Ultras use of fireworks during the games, was used to cause financial damage to their respective clubs to force them to meet their demands, which usually consisted of either firing the coach, preventing player transfers, or demanding punishments or rewards for particular players (Al Ztmah 2013). These penalties have been costly to the clubs' budgets, have run into millions of dollars, and have caused severe financial strains on Egyptian clubs (Al Ztmah 2013). Since, the club administrators had to be approved by the government, the pressures of the Ultras on these administrators and sports officials were perceived as a direct challenge to governmental authority. The Ultras, through their violent actions, were challenging the government security forces in the stadiums and the government representatives in the club boardrooms.

The Ultra groups became increasingly further politicized, in the early 2000s, as they

sought more autonomy and visibility in public spaces. These groups became politicized through increasingly violent confrontations with the police, the state's chief representatives in the public arenas of soccer stadiums. By seeking autonomy in the public spaces of Egyptian stadiums, the Ultras were reacting against the daily humiliations in Mubarak's Egypt, such as police surveillance, physical degradation, verbal abuse, and arrest with indefinite jail detentions (Ismail 2012; Jerzak 2013). Ultras from different clubs reacted against this harassment by mobilizing into groups that opposed the security forces at soccer stadiums and other public venues. The security forces retaliated by harassing Ultras at stadiums, which led to clashes with the Ultras. The security forces and the government feared that any large public gatherings presented a threat to the Mubarak regime (Jerzak 2013; Dunmore 2007). This harassment by the security forces reinforced the notion that the security forces were the enemies of the Ultras, and this was another step in the continued politicization of the Ultras (Jerzak 2013). The confrontations between the security forces and the Ultras in the public stadium venues were significant, because these were the only public forums where the security forces were challenged by thousands of hostile Egyptians. The Al-Ahly Ultras' confrontation with the government significantly escalated in 2009, when during a match with their main rival, Zamalek, they released banners and chanted slogans in support of the Palestinians in Gaza during an Israeli siege. Solidarity demonstrations with the Palestinians were banned during the Mubarak regime, and fearing for their relations with Western sponsors and that demonstrations could go out of hand – the police cracked down on the Ultras, arresting hundreds of them (Tuastad 2013). This marked another significant milestone in the politicization of the Ultras; they were taking a public stand on an issue that resonated with the majority Egyptians and Arabs. The crackdown by Mubarak's regime also underscored how any public dissent was immediately confronted with violence and arrests.

## **The Ultras and The 2011 Egyptian Revolution**

Until January 2011, the anti-government sentiments and stadium violence that came to characterize the Ultras groups was mostly expressed against the security forces securing the soccer matches (El Ztmah 2013). With the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution on 25 January 2011, a more politically charged form of activism of the Ultras emerged, which had nothing to do with the fortunes of any Egyptian soccer clubs. Political activist groups from all across the Egyptian political spectrum, such as April 6<sup>th</sup>, Kifya, and the Muslim Brotherhood began to organize themselves in open opposition to Mubarak's three decade long grip on power (El Ztmah 2013). The youth groups, within these movements, organized public street demonstrations through social media and word of mouth (Ezbawy 2012). On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, which is considered the start of the Egyptian Revolution, mass demonstrators took to the streets by the hundreds of thousands. These public demonstrations were significantly strengthened by the participation of Al Ahly and Al Zamalak Ultras (Ezbawy 2012). The activists from the different political parties had secured their participation by appealing to their sense of injustice and hatred of the security forces (El-Zatmah 2013) This was significant, because normally divided political factions were cooperating with each other, and they also foresaw the Ultras both as political supporters, experienced street fighters, and organized agitators.

The Ultras played a central role in public demonstrations and securing Tahrir Square, the center of public demonstrations, in the January Revolution. "More importantly, the Ultras came to play an important role in the success of the revolution during the first 18 days of demonstrations that would ultimately force President Mubarak to resign" (El-Zatmah 2013). The Ultras were active and effective street fighters during the clashes with security forces on the Qasr

al-Nile bridge (a critical pathway to Tahrir square), which allowed the masses to flood into Tahrir Square, and they repelled the security forces at a major pitched street battle, which became known Mawqi‘at al-Jamal (The Camel Battle) on February 3, 2011. In this battle, government paid thugs riding on camels and horses and armed with swords, long knives, and chains attacked and killed demonstrators in an attempt to disperse them (El Zatmah 2013). However, these government thugs could never reclaim Tahrir Square, because Ultra demonstrators from Al Ahly and Zamalek would not allow it (Ezbawy 2012). The Ultras, as street fighters, had essentially secured the defeat of the Egyptian security forces, and driven them from Tahrir Square, the center of the largest public demonstrations during the revolution.

Thus, the 2011 Revolution was a turning point for the Ultras groups. The Ultras’ disenchantment with the public security institutions was transformed into a sudden engagement with politics and political dissidents during the January 25, 2011 revolution. As El-Sherif (2012) notes, the Ultras with their group mentality and rebellious attitude were primed, before the revolution, to take on the security forces. In the early stages of the 2011 revolution, their political motivation was not aligned with any one political movement (Jerzak 2013). The Ultras’ political orientation was initially distinguished strictly by a hatred of the security forces and authoritative symbols. Since the early 2000s, the Ultras had openly protested police brutality, corruption, and called for the ouster of Mubarak’s regime (Lindsey 2011). This politicization was a direct challenge to the Mubarak regime, since it exposed how government violence was being used to control public spaces (Jerzak 2013). During the revolution, the Ultras with their large number of followers, organizational skills, and hatred of the security forces had evolved into street foot soldiers for the revolution. They were not initially aligned with any political movement, such as the liberal April 6<sup>th</sup> movement or the conservative Muslim Brotherhood, but their political

motivation was based solely on an anarchistic view that the government, as an authoritarian symbol, must be brought down (Lindsey 2011). The rise of the Ultras movements in Egypt came at a time when political activist groups, especially the youth began to organize themselves in opposition to Mubarak's regime (El Zatmah 803). Hence, the Ultras phenomenon was part and parcel of the rise in Egyptian youth-oriented social and political movements that came to challenge the Mubarak regime on the eve of the revolution, and dissent from the Ultra groups emerged as one of the most popular forms of this opposition to the regime.

### **Post 2011 Revolution Era**

The Egyptian Revolution deepened Ultras' political involvement, giving these groups the ambition and opportunity to confront the authoritarian state's presence in the public sphere. In the post-revolutionary era, many Ultra members continued to seek a political voice by opposing the authoritarian tendencies of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), the ruling entity that succeeded Mubarak. Furthermore, "with the outbreak of the 2011 revolution, the general disenchantment of the Ultras groups with politics turned into a direct engagement with politics, and the Ultras groups emerged as the most radical political force among the revolutionary forces on the scene" (El Zatmah 2013). The Ultras had gained revolutionary credibility by their successful pitched battles with the security forces in Tahrir Square (Bush and Mercer 2012). The Ultras were the one group in Tahrir that had extensive experience in confronting security forces in public forums. However, this new found political activism would have serious consequences for the Ultras. In 2012, due to deliberate negligence by the security forces, 74 Ultra Ahlawy soccer fans were killed and 1000 injured in a match in Port Said stadium on 1 February 2012 between Al-Ahly and Al-Masry. As Bush and Mercer note, the failure to properly police the match at Port Said and to keep rival fans apart was an intentional scheme by security officials to

take revenge against their enemies among the Ultras. The security police were said by one perpetrator to have hired paid thugs (Bush and Mercer 2012). This traumatic incident further politicized both the Al-Ahly and Al Zamalek Ultras by viewing the military council as an accessory to this crime, and it further solidified their opposition to the military council and the security forces. As Dorsey also notes, the government's failure to hold senior security officials accountable for any of the deaths, further substantiated the reality of the security forces as the implementers and enforcers of the repressive Mubarak and SCAF regimes (Dorsey 2012). The Port Said incident earned the Ultras an outpouring of sympathy from the Egyptian public, and it again placed the Ultras in the center of the Egyptian political arena, as they sought justice for the Port Said deaths. This was also another significant turning point for the Ultras politicization, as it was evident that they were specifically targeted by the military regime, and it fueled their demands for justice and retribution.

Apolitical Terso fans had evolved into Ultras who challenged the security forces in the public venues of soccer stadiums. These Ultras, mostly from Al-Ahly and Zamalek, transformed into an autonomous source of power with a strong voice of public dissent against the security forces of the Mubarak regime. The interrelated factors of socio-economic status, educational level, gender, and age led to the coalescence of the Ultras as a significant political force during and after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. They played a critical role in the Egyptian Revolution by joining the demonstrations in large numbers and by providing organized and motivated demonstrators. More significantly, they were the foot soldiers that fought and defeated the security forces in critical locations, such as Tahrir Square. After the revolution, they continued to engage the corrupt security forces, and they were part of a continuing struggle against the repressive remnants of the security forces and institutions.

One of the key elements that has not been clearly understood, however, is whether the Ultras have specific sustainable political objectives, and how they are interacting with the different political actors and parties in Egypt. As I have noted earlier, the current literature addresses the history of the Ultras and their formation, and their evolution from Tersos to Ultras. The cited investigations also discuss their forms of organized dissent before and after the 2011 revolution, and their continuing conflict with the government and security forces. It has, however, not been clearly established whether the Ultras are a viable and long-term political constituency with distinct ideologies and objectives, or whether they are merely young angry males who want to continually challenge any political authority. Furthermore, previous studies have not clearly identified whether the Ultras have an established leadership that is driving the organization in specific political directions, or whether they are aligned with other Egyptian political movements.

As I have noted earlier, I have used a combination of primary and secondary sources and semi-structured interviews with key Ultra leaders and academicians to obtain a fundamental understanding of what the political ideologies of the Ultras are and its potential role and long-term effects on the Egyptian political scene. These interviews are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 3.



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## Chapter 3

### RESULTS PART I

In this chapter, I will analyze through semi-structured interviews with academicians and Ultra leaders whether the Ultras have had specific political objectives, which are not related to soccer, and how they have attempted to achieve these objectives. I will also discuss whether these attempts and efforts have resulted in them being viable political actors with distinct ideologies and influences on the Egyptian political scene. I will analyze what political motivations and socio-economic factors have affected the mobilization of the Ultras, and assess whether the Ultras have specific sustainable political objectives to be viable Egyptian political actors.

In the summer of 2014, I conducted six ninety-minute interviews where I used open-ended questions to allow the respondents to fully articulate their views on the political impact and influences of the Ultras. The academicians and researchers I interviewed were: Professor James Dorsey, a senior fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, a columnist and the author of the widely acclaimed and quoted blog, *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*; Mohamed Elgohari, an expert on Egyptian political movements, who has completed a master's thesis on the Ultras and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, and is now a political researcher at the Hariri Institute in Washington D.C. and a columnist with *Jadaliyya*; Shawki al Zatmah, a Middle East History Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who has published on how the Tersos transitioned to Egyptian Ultras. I also interviewed active Ultra leaders. One was a leading member of Ultra Ahlawys and a student leader who formed a student movement, FECU (Faculty of Engineering Cairo University) Revolutionary Movement, after the Port Said massacre in February 2011; two

Ultra Ahlway members, one of whom is the web-master of the Ahlawy Facebook, and both of these Ultras were involved in the 2011 Revolution and present at the Port Said massacre. To protect the Ultras from any retributions from the Egyptian government, these Ultras had requested their identities not be disclosed. This cross section of academic researchers and Ultra leaders provides a perspective and an understanding of the Ultras' role before, during, and after the Egyptian Revolution based on historical analyses, personal experiences and viewpoints.

### **Methodology**

I conducted these semi-structured interviews through Skype video and the audio portions were recorded with Garage Band. Based on my interview transcriptions, I coded these interviews. These interviews were open coded system based on the following seven categories: political beliefs, socio-economic status, educational level, organizational strategies, gender, and age, and employment status. These categories emerged as a result of the combined process of making thematic associations with the interview responses and how they were related with the relevant published literature. Based on my findings from the coded interviews, I organized my findings into three interrelated categories: the Ultras' political motivations, the effects of socio-economic status on the formation and mobilization of the Ultras, and the organizational strategies of the Ultras both inside and outside of the soccer stadiums. Each one of these three categories are related to all the coding factors, and these three categories have been formulated to address what the Ultras' political motivations are, why socio-economic factors affected the formation and mobilization of the Ultras, and how the specific organizational strategies that the Ultras employed during and after the 2011 Egyptian revolution enabled them to attempt to attain their political objectives. This Chapter is organized as follows: Analyses the interviews based on each

of the three categories is presented in Sections 3.1-3.2, and a conclusion of the findings is presented in Section 3.3.

### **3.1 The Ultras' Political Motivations**

As noted in Chapter 2, the Ultras had a long history of confronting the security forces before the 2011 Egyptian Revolution (Jerzak 2013 and Tuastad 2013). Thus, though individual members of the Ultras may not have initially viewed themselves as political, as a collective entity they became politicized because of their continuous challenges to the government security forces of an autocratic government. The political nature of the Ultras is derived from their passionate love and devotion for soccer, and this view that they are the only true fans became a political statement, because this further fueled their confrontations with the security forces before and after the 2011 Revolution. The Ultras were one of the few organized entities, before the 2011 Revolution, not controlled by the government and that by itself was viewed by the government as a threat to the government's stability and survival (Dorsey xxx). Through their long years of confrontations with the security forces and the regime, the Ultras had developed street fighting capabilities and street survival skills against a formidable array of security forces that included forces from the Department of the Interior, the police, the military, and street thugs (Dorsey, 2012). This lack of fear in confronting the security elements of the regime was highly political, since the Ultras were fighting the security forces to express their lack of freedom and expression and frustration with the repressive practices of the security forces.

James Dorsey views that the Ultras' main political motivations is driven by their desire for freedom of expression within the publicly controlled autonomous spaces of soccer stadiums. He believes that the Ultras' politicization then evolved due to their violent clashes with the security forces. As he states:

“Now I think in Egypt, and other Arab autocracies that by definition is a political statement, whether they recognized that or not, and put them in direct confrontation with the security forces, and with the regime, because they viewed themselves as the only true fans of the club and derived with them an ownership claim to the stadium, in a country where there is no non-governmental controlled public spaces” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

This politicization of the Ultras is further substantiated by Dorsey’s observation that:

“They were the only force that not only publically challenged that notion (that there were no non-governmentally owned public spaces), but were willing to fight for it, and the result of that was that by the time you got to the outpouring against Mubarak they were almost the only force that was highly organized and political in its leadership, but also to a degree ranked in file of animosity towards the security forces, they were the only force that was street battle hardened, so that gave them an organizational asset in the revolt, and it meant that they were in a sense shock troops. They were on the square, on the outer defense perimeter and, because of who they were and because they stood their ground, they also played a major role in breaking down what people called the barricade of fear” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The politicization of the Ultras, due to their constant confrontations with the security forces started within the stadiums, but as the Revolution evolved, their political motivations went beyond confronting the security forces and it crystallized into a movement that was focused on dissent and a desire for a new government. The Ultras viewed their participation in the Revolution as necessary to save the country from the evils of autocratic rule and police brutality. As one Ultra Ahlawy member points out:

“Yes of course the Ultras are a political force, because they have a big effect on society and had an important role in the 2011 revolution. We (Ultras Ahlawy) have a specific motivation, we do not want to take specific spots in the government, but in the Revolution, we wanted to save our country. Ultras is very political, because it is a way for us to express our dissatisfaction with the government” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

These insights by this Ultra member illustrate that their motivations were not, as Dorsey alludes to, merely an extension of their activities in and around the autonomous spaces of the soccer stadiums. The political motivation of the Ultras was driven by a hatred of the brutality of the security forces, who symbolized the ironfisted cruelty of the Mubarak regime. The unique aspect of the Ultras’ political motivations originates with their love of soccer. As Dorsey notes:

“Well, if you ask them they (Ultras) will deny that they are a political force. In fact they will deny that they have involvement in politics. But most Ultras worldwide have always denied that they are political. Now part of that is self-protective, in an autocratic environment, because if

they were to say they were political would make them vulnerable. What makes them Ultras and unites them as Ultras is the passion for the game. They have a specific power structure, and that passion is their focus” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The regime’s perception of and reaction against the Ultras also precipitated the politicization of Ultras. The regime before, during, and after the Revolution viewed any mobilized movement as a security threat. This can be further corroborated by the observations of Zatmah on the power of the Ultras before and during the Revolution. As he notes:

“Some of the Ultras have specific political ideologies, like liberty and freedom. They have a problem with the police, their main goal is to clash with the police, but overall they have a problem with the state in general. The police are the expression of the state, so by attacking the police they are attacking the state. In other words, they do not believe in the state itself. This is their main political motivation. The state understands the Ultras as a real political power that can galvanize the street (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).”

The Ultras continued to challenge the authorities, such as during Sisi’s regime. They were not afraid to support the Muslim Brotherhood, which Sisi had overthrown in 2013. As Zatmah notes, the authorities still fear the Ultras and are reluctant to act against them. Zatmah relates the event where Abu Treika, one of Egypt’s best-known players refused to acknowledge a government official, and as he describes

“For instance, you know Mohammed Abu Treika the famous Egyptian player, Mohammed Abu Treika challenged the Egyptian regime, he refused to shake the hand of the minister of sport during the game, and basically he flipped off the regime (Sisi’ regime), but the regime did not do anything to him, because they are worried about the Ultras. Mohammed Abu Treika, if there were no Ultras, he would be now in jail, but because of the Ultras, the state does not touch him. He challenged the state on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood after that. This shows that the Ultras have the power to challenge the state” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

These observations by Zatmah point out that the authorities were worried about how the Ultras would respond to certain situations. Abu Treika was one of the leading soccer players in the history of Africa and Egypt, and as such held a special mantle in Egyptian soccer. As Zatmah notes, Abu Treika has been highly sympathetic and supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. The

incident with the Sports Minister occurred after the June 30<sup>th</sup> military coup, which overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood government. Even though the government had arrested and killed thousands of Muslim Brotherhood supporters, Sisi's government never sanctioned or confronted Abu Treika because they were afraid of the Ultras' response and political power. The government's response also implicitly acknowledged that a majority of the Ultras were sympathetic with the political views of the Muslim Brotherhood, and that the Ultras identified with the Brotherhood's persecution. This wariness and fear of the Ultras shows how their influence has spanned the different regimes from Mubarak to Sisi.

The Ultras political motivation was driven by their hatred of the authorities and the government. Their motivations, before and during the revolution, were driven by their opposition to the security forces, the government's corruption, and lack of support for the Palestinian cause. The Ultras may not have a specific political ideology that enable them to be part of a ballot or a political party, but they are driven by a desire for personal freedom and expression. As Dorsey states:

“Well, I think that they agree on very general political motivations, such as greater freedoms, opposition to the security forces, anti corruption, and the Palestinian issue. But once you go farther beyond those notions, political views among them run the gamut from left to right and therefore do they have sustained power as a futbol group. Does this also have a political aspect to it? Yes? Are they capable of forming into a political party if you wish? No”.

As Dorsey further notes, the Ultras were the able to break the barricade of fear against dissent in public space, but it remains questionable if Ultras' form of street politics has evolved into mainstream politics. As Dorsey notes:

“That is leaving aside all the problems that groups who engage in street politics have in deciding, do you surrender the street and move into main- stream politics? I think if you asked many of those from Tahrir Square or those who were in leadership or leading positions in Tahrir Square, such as Ultras they probably would feel today that they left the square too early” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The Ultras' greatest political influence may be seen in the streets, especially during the 2011 Revolution. The Ultras were, however, one of the few movements that were highly organized and political in its leadership, which gave them political power in the 2011 revolution. As it was noted in Chapter 2, the Ultras were recruited by the Muslim Brotherhood, the April 6<sup>th</sup> Movement, and other groups for support in Tahrir Square in the 2011 Revolution. The main reason that the Ultras were recruited was because of their street fighting experiences with the authorities. As one of the Ultra leaders states:

“We have always had clashes with the police. This is the main factor why January 25<sup>th</sup> was a success. When facing protests, the police usually use formations of central security force soldiers; they tend to block the marches or the protests. Encircle them and then get everyone arrested. So the only people who knew how to break the central security force formations were the Ultras. They were accustomed to it. They have always done that with central security forces that guard the matches. They always have had a feud with these forces, but they have always been able to fight back with the police. They have always been prosecuted by the police. The main focus of the Ultras is a feud with the police and with the Ultras having the right to use fireworks. Many of the Ultras members have joined the political movements, and many still define themselves as revolutionaries” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

As Dorsey notes, though, there is no one Ultra political entity with one set of ideologies. There is a large group Ultras, who have a deep hatred of the iron-fisted security forces, and who were sympathetic and supportive of anyone who has opposed government brutality and injustice. In Dorsey's analysis, he believes that the Ultras wished they had been more visible and active in Tahrir Square in the 2011 Revolution, but that would required a transition and an organized integration into dissident politics.

Before and during the 2011 Revolution, the politics of the Ultras, however, was mainly driven by their bitter antagonism towards the security forces. Their political power and influence derived from their organized street fighting skills and clashes. As Elgohari's notes:

“I believe that they (the Ultras) are organized around their inherent hatred towards the police. One of the founding principles of the Ultras mentality is: all cops are bastards (A.C.A.B



movement). So the relationship between the Ultras and the police in Egypt is characterized by violence between these two groups. So, I think the Ultras engaged in the Revolution, because the revolution was one way for them to be able to show their leverage over the police forces” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

Elgohari views the organization of the Ultras as mainly focused around their hatred of the security forces, and he discounts that the Ultras’ political motivation is based on any deeply held ideologies. In his view, the Ultras involvement in the Revolution was a means of gaining leverage over the security forces. The Port Said incident earned the Ultras an outpouring of sympathy from the Egyptian public due to the massacre and death of the seventy-seven Ultras. That incident again placed the Ultras in the center of the Egyptian political arena, as they sought justice for the Port Said deaths. This was also another significant turning point for the Ultras politicization, as it was evident that they were specifically targeted by the military regime, and it fueled their demands for justice and retribution. It is evident, based on the Port Said massacre and the Mohammed Mahmoud incident, that the Ultras were leading the charge against the SCAF and the remnants of the Mubarak regime. The Ultras actions, after the Port Said and Mohammed Mahmoud incidents, indicated a well- organized and vocal political response against government brutality. This is further reinforced by the perspectives of one of the Ahlway Ultras, and as he states:

“I don’t think that the political situation in Egypt is going to stabilize in the long-term, and I do not think that this generation is ready to accept the future that is being drawn. I believe that there will be another wave, a third revolution, and the Ultras will be a core part of this. The political chants of the Ultras are focused on futbol, but others are revolutionary chants. In the FECU student movement (Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University movement) we tried to claim legal suit in the Port Said massacre. We had one colleague detained in the massacre. We have always used the Ultras chants. We have a sit in every morning and chant ultras chants, and the *horaya* (freedom) song for Ultras Ahlway for hours everyday. The Ultras chants are like revolutionary nostalgia songs in addition to five other songs. I do believe that Ultras will join the next wave, and that their power will have long-term effects on the political situation in Egypt” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, May 2014).

The Ultra's leader's views are those of a political leader and organizer. They had transformed stadium chants, slogans, and songs into revolutionary chants that challenged the legitimacy of the SCAF and Sisi's regimes. This demonstrates that the politicization of the Ultras had spawned the creation of other political movements, such as FECU, and that the Ultras are motivated to start a new revolution that will result in a fair and just government. These beliefs and actions of the Ultras are not those of an anarchistic movement, since their ultimate desire is for a fair and politically effective government. The analyses by the academic experts, in my opinion, discount the political aspects of the Ultras, since they are not associated with any one specific Egyptian political movement, but have sympathies with different political movements and parties. The Ultras have actually influenced other Egyptian political movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and sympathizers of the deposed President Morsi, since these political movements have started to use the chants and slogans of the Ultras. As noted by an Ultra Ahlawy member:

“These Ultra songs and chants are very popular, they challenge the state. Now new Ultras groups have formed, such as Ultras *Morsawy* (named after the deposed President Morsi), and they have begun using the same chants of the Ultras. Many of the ultras members from the Zamalek club joined the Morsi campaign and then formed a political group called *ah-hrar* (freedom). All of these groups are modeled after the Ultras, which is why they are political! We (Ultras Ahlawy) challenge the state and the police” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The political tools and methods used by the Ultras are now being used by dissidents, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who are now, during Sisi's regime being persecuted by the security forces, just as the Ultras have been persecuted and targeted by different Egyptian regimes.

### **3.2 Socio Economic Status and How it Affected the Formation and Mobilization of the Ultras**

The membership and the participation of the Ultras are also directly related to the high rate of youth unemployment. In 2011, nearly half of all Egyptians lived under or just above the poverty line, which the World Bank sets at \$2 a day (CIA World Fact Book 2011). According to the CIA World Fact Book, “despite the relatively high levels of economic growth over the past few years, living conditions for the average Egyptian remain poor. (CIA World Fact Book 2011).” Furthermore, the unemployment rate in Egypt is 13.4 percent of a labor force of 27.3 million, (Pew Research Center Report 2011). As the Pew Research center report also stated, “Youth constituted 70.8% of the total unemployed, with around 13.6% aged between 15 and 19, and 57.2% ranging between 25 and 29 years old” (UNDP). Furthermore, 71% of the unemployed in Egypt are holders of academic certificates (UNICEF Egypt). According to UNICEF, this youth unemployment rate is one of the highest rates in the world.

The relation between the socio-economic status of Egypt and the makeup of the Ultras can be clearly seen in the interview of one of the Ultra Ahlway leaders:

“In 2011, Egypt had the largest percentage of unemployment, like me and my friends, most members of Ultras Ahlawy were grappling with that joblessness, destitution, and high food prices. This all added to our personal and political discontent, and we expressed this through club activities and through being the first people in Tahrir in 2011! The regime and country do not care about us, the youth” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The political power of the Ultras has been growing, before and after the Revolution, due to the continuing unemployment of young Egyptians and graduating university students. The continuing explosion of unemployed youth has resulted in the continued growth of the Ultras after the Revolution. As the Ultra leader further notes:

“There are about 80,000 of us in Ultras Ahlway and the number of members is continuing to increase everyday. In Ultras Ahlway, we started out with about 500 people, and now we have expanded, because we have nothing else to do! The numbers are increasing in the last year and many people want to enter and be a member since last year. Because of two reasons: 1) Most Ultra members are unemployed and have nothing to do, or they are students. Ultras Ahlway is a way to do whatever you want and spend your free time. Most of us go to jail for a week or a month because of the problems we cause, but I have no job so it does not matter to me. I went to jail for a week, and I came out and now I fight the cops harder! (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

As he notes, unemployment and high food prices are leading to political discontent, specifically among the youth, and many of these youth have funneling their discontent through joining the Ultras. The ranks of the Ultras have swelled before and after the Revolution due to high youth unemployment and dissatisfaction. As noted earlier, Egypt has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. As the numbers have grown, their clashes with the security have increased, and this has further politicized and hardened their opposition to the government. (Jerzak 2013). Thus, the Ultras, in a country with governmental control over most aspects of public expression, have become an outlet for dissent against their socio-economic status of Egypt under the Mubarak regime and the post-revolutionary governments.

As Zatmah discussed the shift from the Terso's to Ultras in Egypt in the 1990, he related how socio-economic factors affected this shift:

“This started to change if you want to understand the condition or the situation for the rise of the Ultras, it started with the Tersos in third class (third class was the cheapest seats in Egyptian stadiums). This third class was relatively diverse, full of youth and families and women. So it was open, but starting in the 1970s, females stopped showing up in the third class seats, even in the cinemas, and the theater. This started with the Islamization of the culture. The segregation, between the male and female, led to only the males attending the game, and the family and women staying at home. So the soccer games were reserved only for the male youth. The youth were able to gain power from this, they started to use the most vulgar chants, and do what they wanted. This was the start of the formation of the Ultras. The shift from the Ultras to the Tersos was fueled by hatred towards the postcolonial state power structures after 1940. But today we

have a similar situation. The youth understand that once they finish college, they will be sitting around unemployed. They do not have a future in this state; this state is not doing anything for them. Some of them would rather immigrate to Europe or die in the Middle of the Mediterranean. The contemporary states in the Middle East do not give anything to these youths! These kids make up the Ultras, the lower middle class graduates. They have nothing else, except the Ultras, you will find a few from the rich classes, but they are mostly from lower middle classes. These kids are coming from families where their families can afford to pay a few extra pounds to send them to university of Cairo or Alexandria, but they know that after they graduate they will have no future, and they will be unemployed”(Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

Zatmah succinctly links the socioeconomic impact of the shift from Tersos to Ultras to frustrated males with little or no economic opportunities or hopes. The cohesive group dynamics of the Ultras was also cemented as the popularity and success of Al-Ahly soared (El Zatmah 2013 and Jerzak 2013). Soccer terminology became part of the vocabulary of the daily lives of the masses through popular songs and chants, thereby cementing the Ultra culture as part of Egyptian popular culture (El Zatmah 2013). All of these interrelated factors of socio-economic status, political alienation and dissatisfaction, and cultural popularity led to the Ultras becoming an organized and subservient force outside the public spaces of soccer stadiums prior to, during, and after the Revolution.

The political alienation and dissatisfaction of the youth dominated Ultras continues to have an effect in post-revolutionary Egypt. As Zatmah notes:

“ I want you to understand that the Ultras played a very large political role in the revolution, but I want you to know that one specific political color cannot capture them, because really they do not have belief of political organization. The economic and social condition was very severe in the Middle East. The socio-economic history of Egypt has a direct effect on the political make-up of the Ultras. Without satisfying the youth, the Arab Spring will never be successful, and countries like Egypt will continue to face problems, because youth are the ones who can revolt. The Ultras have essentially become an outlet for these dissatisfied youths.

Thus in Zatmah’s opinion, the Ultras served as a vehicle for the political expression of the youth. He believes that they generally are not driven by any one political ideology, but their

motivations are directly related to unemployment, socio-economic status, and a hatred of the security forces.

These views are further substantiated by Dorsey, who in his interview noted that:

“You had an influx of young men who were undereducated, uneducated, unemployed, underemployed, for who the security forces were an issue in their daily lives, not just the stadiums. This was an opportunity to vent pent up anger and frustration, and animosity towards the security forces and they could act out anger in stadiums, and have the opportunity to be crystal clear about their political opinions. These youth formed the mass rank and file of the Ultras, and much of their anger towards the state is fueled by unemployment, and their socio-economic status (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).”

This description specifically links the Egyptian youths’ frustration to unemployment and socio-economic status. This frustration is evident in the high unemployment rate of Egyptian youth (Pew Research 2011), but the Ultra youth are also driven by political frustration. As Elgohari notes:

“We cannot discard the fact that these Ultras groups mostly consisted of youth members, and most of them are involved with the bad politics from the Mubarak regime. The Ultras did not announce collectively that they participated in the Revolution, but after the Port Said massacre the regime started to target the Ultras. Many members were detained after the Mohammed Mahmoud incident (the first Egyptian journalist to be killed in the 2011 Revolution)” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The Ultras have been persecuted not only for their confrontations with the security forces, but due to their continuing protests of the killing of journalists and the Port Said massacre. This is significant because the Ultras’ influence has extended into areas of political dissent that broad sectors of the Egyptian political opposition and society have already been involved in. The Port Said massacre highlighted the targeting of the Ultras by the security and the SCAF. Furthermore, since no security forces were ever prosecuted for the Port Said crimes, it also highlighted the ineffective and corrupt Egyptian judicial system.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analyzed the interrelated aspects of political ideologies and socio-economic factors that led the Ultras to be viable Egyptian political actors, before, during, and after the Egyptian Revolution. Based on my primary sources, I discussed and analyzed how the political beliefs, socio-economic status and composition of the Ultras has led to their formation and their evolution into a viable political entity and force in Egypt. The Ultras' political motivation is driven by their hatred of the security forces, their desire for free expression, and social and economic frustration.

The Ultras have played a critical role in the 2011 January revolution and their continual clashes with the security forces and different regimes, since 2011, have rendered them as political actors that the state fears. This fear is based both on the inability of the different regimes to control the Ultras and the Ultras' extensive experience and success in confronting the security forces.

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## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS PART I**

In this chapter, I discuss the organizational strategies that the Ultras have used in their efforts to be viable political actors with distinct ideologies and influences on the Egyptian political scene. I analyze how these organizational strategies have affected the mobilization of the Ultras, and what organizational leadership approaches the Ultras' have used to attain their political objectives. This was another step in understanding why and how the Ultras formed as a political force. I use primary sources from the semi-structured interviews that I conducted in summer 2014 and secondary sources, such as scholarly journals and media sources, to understand and delineate the political organizational structure and strategies of the Ultras. I will discuss how the Ultras have raised funds to sustain their operational activities and their interactions and outreach with other political parties and dissidents in Egypt. Furthermore, I will assess specific motivational and mobilization strategies and tactics of the Ultras, such as the use of songs, chants, fireworks, and graffiti. I find that these organizational strategies express the political interests of the Ultras.

#### **4.1 Organizational Strategies**

The political motivation, which is driven by the Ultras hatred of the security forces, is directly related to how they organize themselves both inside and outside the soccer stadiums. The Ultras' organizational strategy is essentially a division of labor that is focused on assigning the different activities related to chants, songs, and the use of fireworks to the Ultras members. There are small groups called Top Boys, which divide up the work needed to sustain the whole. These small groups are highly secretive, and usually operate independently from other groups

within the Ultras (Bashir 2011). Work assignments are grouped around the Top Boys, who are tasked with making and designing banners, flags, composing chants, organizing trips, selling merchandise, collecting donations and managing social media activities. This organizational structure is also used outside the stadium, when the Ultras organize large-scale street demonstrations (Bashir 2012). Subgroups are organized based on assignments pertaining to security, chants, and rock and firework throwers.

The Ultras make their own t-shirts, soccer kits, mementos, and music, and they sell them to generate their own funding to be financially independent, as part of their organizational strategy. As Bashir notes, the Ultras cooperate with sympathetic businessmen and firms to sell their merchandise and music (Bashir 2011). These funding mechanisms keep the Ultras operational, but, more importantly, these sources are independent of governmental or state influences. In addition, the Ultras have developed successful efforts to be independent from the officially organized Egyptian soccer clubs, which are controlled or strongly influenced by the government. As noted by Dorsey:

“The idea with the Ultras is that they are not supported by the fan associations (which are funded and supported by the clubs). Each club had a fan association and these clubs were provided with transportation-reduced tickets. The Ultras members refused this way of funding, because they now see it as a repressive way to control their actions. So now the Ultras groups are self-funded. They have membership fees, and they are producing products that commemorate the clubs, like t-shirts and jerseys that they sell to members. This is their main source of funding” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

This financial independence has allowed the Ultras to be a self-functioning entity with a freedom of expression to simultaneously fanatically support their clubs, criticize the government, and harass the security forces. This independence, through their actions, has furthermore enshrined them as a political threat to the political system before, during, and after the 2011 Revolution. As further underscored by one of the Ultras leaders:

“No, we do not want money from the state. We use products like hats and bags to sell and get money to support the team, because we do not want money from anyone that could control us in the future” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

This is noteworthy because the refusal of the Ultras to take state funding has empowered and sustained their independence from outside influences. As noted by Dorsey:

“The Ultras are self-funded, and they put a premium on independent self-funding. They put their own money into the club” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The structure of the Ahlaway Ultra, which is the largest Ultra group in Egypt, is highly organized and core groups are formed for each of the activities, such as organizing the songs and chants in which Ultra members participate (Shahin 2012). A notable feature of the Ahlaway Ultras is that there are no specific leaders, leadership groups, or hierarchical leadership structures. The Ahlaway Ultras are organized around the amount of time that members commit to attending club activities and matches, including attending club athletic activities, such as soccer, basketball, and handball games. Each athletic activity and team has a central core Ultra organization, which manages attendance, stadium seating, transportation to and from events, placards, songs, and chants (Shahin 2012). As Shahin notes, soccer has the most Ultra followers, and usually for a large club like El-Ahly, tens of thousands of Ultra followers usually attend Premier Division games. For sports, such as handball and basketball followers are on the order of thousands (Shahin 2012). This organizational structure is substantiated by one of the Ultras Ahlaway leader who states:

“The Ultras group is not hierarchal, it looks like a kind of core group that are considered the leaders of the group, and also there is another circle that is within this larger circle in this area of Egypt. The largest circle is the ordinary members (sic) of such a group. So to be a leader of the Ultras is not difficult, it is dependent on how much time you dedicate to the activities within the group. The group was formed around the absence of any kind of specified political and social structure, so these groups could not find anybody or channel, or institution that could represent them, so the Ultras idea, and it is an international movement, was formed in 2007 was only about sports and the love for the club, but it became an outlet to express political frustrations as well” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

Hence, the organizational structure of the Ultras, which was originally set up for activities within the stadium, was easily adaptable as an outlet and mechanism for political expression and action outside of the stadiums. As noted earlier, the Ultras use the same organizational techniques outside the stadium, as they do inside in the stadium. The major difference is that outside the stadium the battles with the security forces are on the streets and they involve confrontations that not only include security personnel, but armored vehicles. Due to the size of the Ahlawy and the White-Knight Ultras, these two groups are the dominant groups, and as Bashir noted, their demonstration usually are on the scale of tens of thousands (Bashir 2012). More importantly because of their financial independence, the Ultras did not have to join or be part of other political movements or parties, such as April 6<sup>th</sup> and the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, since they did not have or seek any state funding from the government, this rendered them as a threatening entity to the authorities. As the Ultra leader notes:

During the *thawra* (revolution), even the Ultras Ahlawy and White Knights joined together because we hate the government, and all police. We coalesced as one entity, as one Egyptian (sic) trying to save the country. We gathered seven hours before the match and organized our songs and chants to fight the police. Since 2011, all Ultras are united for this cause, because futbol is the only thing we have left, and we cannot let the government control this! (citation needed).

As the Ultra leader notes, members from the leading Ultra groups, such as the Ultra Ahlawys and the White Knights, were united in their support for the Revolution and their opposition to Mubarak's government. This point is highly significant because these Ultras, who were from the two leading clubs of al-Ahly and al-Zamalek, historically had violent clashes with each other. The ideals of the 2011 Revolution of freedom, equality, and economic prosperity were what

brought and united these usually warring groups. Give one more sentence to really emphatically state what that means for your question and argument.

A critical important point for understanding the organizational success of the Ultras is due to the large percentage of youth who comprise the membership in the Ultras groups. Since a large percentage of the Ultras are youth, this has allowed the Ultras to be a street hardened and energetic core of followers, and this is one of the main reasons for their organizational success. They are street hardened due to their continuous protests and clashes with the security forces, since the 2011 Revolution. As noted by Shahin in his observations on how the Ultra youth cooperated with the youth of April 6<sup>th</sup> and the Muslim Brotherhood, “The Egyptian youth led the January 25 revolutions, the people embraced it, and the military managed it. Various youth movements played a central role in calling for protests and organizing the mass mobilization that turned the January 25 protests into a people’s revolution ” (Shahin 2012). The Ultras were recruited by the youth movements of the leading dissident groups, such as April 6<sup>th</sup> and the Muslim Brotherhood to provide support and security in Tahrir Square during the 2011 Revolution. As also noted earlier in Chapter 1, the Ultra youth major role in defending Tahrir during the Battle of the Camel. They battled the security forces in fierce street battles, they maintained security within the Square, they manned first aid stations, and provided food and drinks to the demonstrators.

#### **4.2 The Ultra Tools: Slogans, Songs, Graffiti, and Fireworks**

Critical elements of the Ultras’ organizational structure is driven by they organize the different subgroups pertaining to chants, slogans, songs, *shamarikh* (fireworks), and graffiti. These elements have been used to energize and rally the Ultras and to intimidate the security

force and opposing soccer fans. These elements have involved extensive choreography and planning. As one of the Ultra leaders notes:

“There is a website called Ultrahlawy.com and a Facebook page. Before any match--for example, a match in the African championship,--there will be a post four days ahead in the Facebook page, telling us where we are meeting before the match. We use this meeting point to practice the chants. There are flags and banners that we put in the stadium. We go seven hours before the match. This is why we hate the cops, because they do not want us to go to the stadium early, so this causes a problem. But cops hate us as we hate them! And it really is a big deal, because before every match now we burn their cars, we run after them in the streets, we take their weapons and machines. (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

As these comments indicate, the Ultras been at war with the security forces and the government both within and outside the stadiums, and they come to the stadiums prepared for battle. The Ultras use songs, chants, and placards to energize themselves and their followers, and this has them psychologically prepared to engaged in confrontations with the security forces.

Another essential element that the Ultras have used is *shamarikh*, or fireworks, to physically threaten and intimate the security forces. These fireworks have been used to set stadium bleachers afire and as projectiles to harm the security forces and damage their armored vehicles (Bashir 2011). The *shamarikh* is the weapon of choice for the Ultras and they view its use as empowering and leveling the field against the heavily armed security forces. This point is underscored by one of the Ultra leaders,

“We use fireworks as much as we can inside and outside of the stadium! Because, it is our weapon. Each member can make a song and upload it on Facebook. Then the leaders choose a song and we memorize and sing it in the stadium. There are special songs for the cops and for the SCAF. We use really bad words, to describe that we hate them and that they are losers!” (Fareeda Zikry, personal interview, June 2014).

The fireworks are, therefore, used as weapons against the security forces, and the launching of the fireworks is coordinated with specific songs and chants, with each Ultra group assigned specific duties and responsibilities.

As the images below show, the use of *shamarikh* is an effective tool of street and stadium warfare. In the first image, the Ultras used fireworks to set off large bonfires in the center of Cairo in 2012 in protest of the Port Said deaths and massacre. The second image shows how the *shamarikh* were used to damage Al Gouna soccer stadium, where the Ahlawy Ultras had clashed with security forces in 2013. The third image shows how the Ultras are being violently confronted by the uniformed security forces and other security personnel, known as *bultkaiya* or street thugs, dressed in plainclothes. The use of these paid street thugs by the security forces is a common tactic to infiltrate Ultra gatherings inside the stadiums to sow confusion and to target and kill the Ultras (Shahin 2012), and that is what happened in the Port Said massacre.



Ultras protesting Port Said massacre in the center of Cairo, 2012. Source: New York Times, March 13, 2012



Ahlawy Ultras setting fire to Al Gouna stadium in Al Gouna, Egypt  
Source: Ahram Online June 22, 2013





Security forces battling Ahlawy Ultras during the Port Said Massacre in Port Said, Egypt  
Source: CNN February 2012

Need a smoother transition. This next set of paragraphs seems like it might need another subhead that discusses “out of stadium political mobilization” Ultra songs and chants have also proven to be essential as forms of resistance and expression against pre- and post revolutionary regimes, and they have also been used by the Ultras to publicize their resistance against the government. One of their most popular songs is *Hekayetna*, or “our story” ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2hYgkXjdJI&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2hYgkXjdJI&feature=youtu.be)), which has had tens of millions of hits on YouTube. The song summarizes the Ultras’ history of resistance against the autocratic regimes of Egypt. It demonstrates their desire for political freedom and support of the 2011 Revolution, and their hatred of SCAF for their role in the Port Said massacre. The song, which I directly translated from Arabic, is summarized below as:

“Soccer when we arrived was lies and deception,  
It was brain numbing and a shield for the authorities.  
They (authorities) tried to beautify it but it resembled the Grief of the country,  
They did not take account for the thousands in the stands.  
Keep Killing our ideas,  
Oppression is everywhere.  
We will never forget your past (police),  
You are the slaves of the regime.  
And when the revolution came, we went and participated in every city,

We died for freedom and the removal of the oppressive regime.  
 We never kept quiet and will never give up since the regime is still in power.  
 The police dogs (from the Ministry of the Interior) are the oppressors and are still everywhere,  
 Keep killing the revolution.  
 They (police and regime) have killed our dearest friends and dream, in Port Said the victims  
 witnessed treachery before their murder.  
 They lay witness to the authorities that said either accepts our rule or total chaos will be  
 everywhere,  
 Keep killing the revolution.  
 Keep killing the idea, The word Freedom is crazy.  
 But no matter how cruel and mighty the jailor, my voice for freedom is even mightier,  
 Keep killing the revolution.  
 Keep killing the idea,  
 We chanted in front of millions “down with the regime that kills generation after generation.”  
 They trapped us and plotted against us,  
 Keep killing the revolution.  
 Keep killing the Idea,  
 In Port Said the authority said either accept our rule or will set you into total chaos,  
 They thought that the people would chose the regime and bow down to the police as was done in  
 the past.  
 I will never let you feel safe as an authority and will never forget what you have done to us, I  
 will never allow you to rule us again one more day,  
 Keep setting your police on us.  
 They all died with the dream of ending the regimes grip on the country,  
 Oh SCAF, you bastards.  
 You sold the blood of the martyrs in return for protecting your regime that you are part of, Oh  
 SCAF you are bastards.

This song illustrates the deep hatred of the political authorities by the Ultras. It is focused  
 on the brutality of the security forces, SCAF, and the Port Said massacre. There is not one stanza  
 or passage related to a specific soccer game or result. It is a political call to collective action  
 used to mobilize the Ultras inside and outside stadium, and to serve as a political and historical  
 tract of their clashes and demonstrations. The song is not only heard on YouTube, but it is  
 distributed and sold on CDs throughout the Arab world (Bashir 2012). The repeated reference to  
 the Port Said atrocities and the characterization of the government as “the regime that kills  
 generation after generation,” strikes a resonant chord with Egyptians from across the political  
 spectrum.

After the January 2011 revolution, there was an explosion of graffiti art in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt. As noted by Klaus, this graffiti is “one of the most visible marks of the changes brought about by the revolution of 25 January” (Klaus 11). As he further notes, graffiti by the Ultras represented a significant portion of this (Klaus 15). The significance of the Ultras graffiti is that the city walls serve as a political message board for the Ultras and other dissident groups. There is a unique Egyptian perspective on this because Cairo is a large city with many walls and a large percentage of the population is illiterate. Therefore, the graffiti constitutes another aspect of the Ultras struggle and efforts to present their grievances and continue their struggle.

Graffiti has been used by the Ultras to enshrine their political grievances and also as a collective memory of their sacrifices during and after the Revolution (Klaus 2014)). As seen from the figure below, the acronym ‘UA 07’ stands for the centennial celebration of Ahly club from 1907 to 2007, and it shows an image of Ultra protesters emphasizing their strength and unity. This can also be seen below by the portrayal of the *shamirikh* and the emphasis that each Ultra member plays a critical part in the club, which is highlighted through the same clothing worn by both Ultras, demonstrating that they are members of Al-Ahlawy.





Graffiti on Mohammed Mahmoud Street in Cairo portraying the Ultras,  
Source: After the Revolution. Aslan Media: "Ultras revolution"

Another iconic image , due to the hooded Ultra throwing shamarikh or fireworks at the police, has been painted on numerous walls throughout Egypt (Klaus 2014). This presents one of the essential characteristics and iconic images of the Ultras group, which is their clashing with the security forces in the streets of Cairo. Give some additional details about how these images are viewed by public, supporters, and Ultras themselves.

As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the A.C.A.B (All Cops Are Bastards) movement is a political slogan used by the Ultras group to fuel their clashes with the security forces and protests during after the Revolution and to marshal and rally their supporters. As the image below shows from graffiti near the Ministry of Interior, which is the ministry that oversees the security forces, the image of Mubarak has been superimposed on that of the security forces. As noted by one of the Ultras Ahlway leaders:

“The ultras are known to be the only people who can beat up the central security forces. The ACAB movement will continue. It’s an unfinished feud between the police and the ultras, and we use it to rally the group” (Fareeda Zikry, Personal Interview June 2014).



Graffiti signed by the Ultras portraying the “All Cops Are Bastards” movement CNN: “A.C.AB Ultras Movement” Source: CNN



Wall with martyrs from the 2011 Revolution, most of whom are  
Source: Ultras Arabwy.org: “Grafitti of Ultras Martyrs”

This graffiti image memorializes the martyrs of the Port Said massacre, and it also shows that most of these members were young. Images of the Port Said martyrs are common throughout Egypt (Klaus 17), and they have been used by the Ultras to emphasize that their members were

massacred and that no security or government officials have ever been convicted for these crimes. Graffiti as a subversive art has been used by the Ultras as instruments to perpetuate their political activism, to memorialize the spirit of the Egyptian Revolution, and to claim public spaces throughout Egypt.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed how the Ultras used organizational strategies, such as core groups associated with specific sports to mobilize and organize the Ultras inside and outside the stadiums. The leadership structure is not hierarchical or centralized, and this has allowed the Ultras to easily adapt this organizational structure as an outlet and mechanism for political expression and action outside of the stadiums. This decentralized structure has prevented the authorities of focusing on specific leaders, and this has allowed the Ultras to continue to thrive as a political force, despite widespread arrests by the security forces. The Ultras have developed independent financial funding mechanisms, such as the sale of soccer mementos, kit, and songs, to achieve independence and control from the government and other political parties and movements. The use of songs, chants, fireworks, and graffiti are all concerted elements of a strategy that the Ultras have used to mobilize their members, express their political frustrations and objectives, and confront and challenge the government before, during, and after the 2011 Revolution.

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Ultras Ahlawy Web Master. Interview by Fareeda Zikry. 16, June 2014. Recorded.



## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this thesis, I analyzed what political ideologies and social and economic factors have affected the mobilization of the Ultras, and I assessed whether the Ultras have had specific sustainable political objectives and organizational leadership strategies to be viable Egyptian political actors. I used primary sources, based on semi-structured interviews with leading academicians, Ultra leaders, and students. This cross section of academic researchers and Ultra leaders provided a perspective and an understanding of the Ultras' role before, during, and after the Egyptian Revolution based on historical analyses, personal experiences and viewpoints. My secondary sources included scholarly articles, media sources, chants, and graffiti. I reviewed the literature in terms of a brief history of Egyptian soccer, and its interwoven relations with Egyptian politics; the evolution of passionate apolitical soccer fans, the Tersos, into politicized Ultras; the authoritarian practices of the Mubarak regime, and how this shaped the political response of the Ultras; and the significant role that the Ultras played in the Egyptian 2011 Revolution and post-Revolution era.

As my findings indicate, the Ultras are not aligned with any one political movement or ideology, but are motivated by a desire for a freedom of expression and a collective sense of injustice due to repressive state security practices and poor economic conditions. The Ultras have been and continue to be a potent political force in Egypt due to their organizational abilities and fearlessness in confronting the government and the security forces. The Ultras' politization is directly related to their continuous challenges to the government security forces, and this spans the time period from the early days of the Mubarak regime to the present day. The Ultras were



one of the few organized large entities, before the 2011 Revolution, not controlled by the government. This has always been viewed by different regimes and the security forces as a threat to the government's stability and survival. Through their long years of confrontations with the security forces and the regime, the Ultras have developed street fighting capabilities and street survival skills against a formidable array of security forces that included forces from the Department of the Interior, the police, the military, and street thugs. This lack of fear in confronting the security elements of different regimes, such as Mubarak's and the military SCAF regime, has been highly significant, because Egyptian political dissidents and opposition parties have been, due to their fear of the iron-fisted security authorities, hesitant and incapable of confronting the authorities. This was evident during the 2011 January Revolution, when the April 6<sup>th</sup> Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood recruited the Ultras to confront the security forces in Tahrir. They played an essential role in securing Tahrir Square during pitched street battles, such as the Battle of the Camels.

A major reason that the Ultras continue to be a political force is their organizational structure. It is a structure predicated on rapid mobilization, independent funding, and adaptable leadership structures. The Ultras have used organizational strategies, such as core groups associated with specific sports to mobilize and organize the Ultras inside and outside the stadiums. The leadership structure is not hierarchical, and this has allowed the Ultras to easily adapt this organizational structure as an outlet and mechanism for political expression and action outside of the stadiums.

The Ultras have developed independent financial funding mechanisms, such as the sale of soccer mementos, kit, and songs, to achieve financial independence and control from the government and other political parties and movements. The use of songs, chants, fireworks, and

graffiti are all concerted elements of a strategy that the Ultras have used to mobilize their members, express their political frustrations and objectives, and confront and challenge the government before, during, and after the 2011 Revolution. The Ultras are a movement that is driven by the slogan of A.C.A.B. (All Cops are Bastards), and that is the political spirit that continues to fuel the Ultras to pursue justice and freedom of expression, and to continue clashing with the different repressive Egyptian regimes and their security forces.

For future studies pertaining to this topic, based on my current findings, I would recommend that the following areas should be pursued:

- An investigation of new offshoots of Ultras Ahlawy and White Knights, such as the Ultras Morsian and Kerdasa. Ultras Morsian and Kerdasa are Ultra groups committed to the return of the deposed President Morsi. These movements have arisen after the overthrow of President Morsi by the military, and it is unclear how powerful these movements are, whether they have the shared political goals of the main Ultras groups, and whether they are connected with the Muslim Brotherhood and other dissident groups.
- An investigation of how the current Egyptian regime of General Sisi is targeting the Ultras. An interesting perspective would be to determine how many Ultras have been imprisoned during the crackdowns by Sisi's regime. Another relevant issue that can be pursued is that some of the major clubs in Egypt, such as Al-Zamalek, have asked for government support to target Ultras inside and outside soccer stadiums.
- An analysis of how and whether different Ultra movements in the Arab and Muslim worlds are related, and whether they cooperate in achieving specific political goals. For example, a study should be conducted to determine if the Egyptian Ultras have influenced the political ideologies of Ultras in Arab and Islamic countries, such as Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, and Turkey.