

The Arab Spring and its Aftermath in Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*

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Abstract

The current study aims at clarifying the relationship between authority and citizens through the Social Contract theory and the endless struggle between them to obtain power. The study investigates the beginning of the state of nature and the modern social contract through the perspective of Thomas Hobbes, John Lock, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Rawls. The citizens protest against their authority to obtain their freedom under some circumstances. The Arab Spring that happened in the Arab countries is an example of the relationship between the citizens and the authority. The study is divided into six sections: The first discusses the Social Contract Theory. The second presents the meaning of freedom, especially the freedom of speech and when it becomes frail. While the life of Basma Abdel Aziz is discussed in the fourth section. Thus, the fifth section is the analysis of the novel *The Queue*. The study ends with the sixth section, which presents the conclusions.

Keywords: The Social Contract Theory, Freedom, Arab Spring, Basma Abdel Aziz

Introduction

The relationship between authority and citizens goes back to the Social Contract Theory by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Rawls. They presented the contract between the state (authority) and the society (citizens) through different periods and situations to make a balance between them; each philosopher developed the social contract according to his perspective. Hobbes considered the state of nature a state of complete liberty where individuals struggle to obtain their freedom. In contrast, John Lock believed that the law of nature allows the state to control individuals' lives. Rousseau's perspectives of the social contract depended on the morals and ethics of the individuals. Freedom is the ability to do and express what individuals want without restriction, and it becomes frail when the authority impose restrictions on citizens.

Arab Springs is an example of the relationship between the authorities and citizens in Arab countries. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood controlled the country when Mohamed Morsi won the election to start a new phase of oppression and suppression of people's freedom after the collapse of the Mubarak regime. Then, Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi ended their regime and imprisoned Morsi to formulate a more democratic government. The novel *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz examines how authority affects people's freedom which becomes frail.

The Social Contract Theory

The history of the relationship between the society representing the individuals and the state representing the government goes back to establishing the Social Contract Theory and even before it. Mainly four philosophers have developed the social contract theory: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Rawls. The researcher, Neophitos Economides, traces the origins of the Social Contract Theory. He argues that the writings of the old philosophers like Plato and Aristotle contain the notion of the social contract, almost in the form of a debate between nature's law and the city's law. Throughout the medieval centuries, the churches resurrect the concept of the social contract, transforming it into an agreement between God and the government. Political life begins to be liberal and secular for the first time during the Renaissance period, and the concept of the Social Contract assumes conceptual independence and self-reliance (2018: 19).

Interestingly, Mehmet Kanatli, a Turkish lecturer in political philosophy and sociology, argues in his book *Private Property, Freedom, and Order: Social Contract Theories from Hobbes to Rawls* (2022: 3) that the relationship between the state and society goes back to the eleventh century. Then Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John-Jack Rousseau developed the modern Social Contract Theory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the same time, John Rawls worked on the theoretical perspective and the connection between liberty, property, and order in society in the twentieth century. He adds that the importance of the Social Contract Theory lies in that without social demands, which the theory organises, there will be social, economic, and political chaos in the state. According to the theory, the state acting as an order founder can only avert any potential inequity

between individuals and any abuses of natural rights, including the right to life, that may arise in such a chaotic environment. Accordingly, the theory is not newly formed but has developed over the centuries.

The Social Contract Theory is the core tool that organises the social system, individuals' lives, and the frequent contact between individuals and the state to have an orderly society. The aim is to establish a society based on the balance between the individuals' and the states' rights and duties; they can only achieve that by following the social contract. Moreover, Kanatli asserts that the modern social contract originated as a contract among reasonable human beings and functions as a systematic approach that controls the relationships between the state, society, and individuals. It has crucial methodological substance since it shapes how the contemporary state evolves and ideals like freedom, justice, and equality in the person, society, and state relations (2022: 35).

According to Hobbes, people are born equal and have infinite freedom. Individuals have equal opportunities and skills in body and mind to gain and achieve whatever they want, even though a man may be stronger physically than other men. Hobbes also observes that the equality of people and their unrestricted freedoms to get whatever they wish breeds hostility among them; this causes the state of nature to devolve into a state of war due to rivalry, diffidence, and glory. Hobbes' freedom, however, is precarious because his image of static human nature depends on two essential qualities attributed to human nature: selfishness and warlike. The individual turns into an enemy of other men. He describes life in the state of nature as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (1997: 78). However, since no orders and laws control and guide individuals, this leads to unlimited freedom that allows them to do whatever they need to obtain their desires, even if they have to kill or steal. Individuals should contract to establish a civil society where men should respect others. Through following the principles of the social contract and the sovereign and rules of the state in which they gain security, they enter civil society. The state must create a life where a man can live peacefully and enjoy security, and everything the state does for that is legitimate. Once the government achieves that, it will be able to improve the standard of good living for individuals.

In chapter II of his second section, *Of the State of Nature*, Locke (2003) defines the state of nature. He illustrates it as a state of complete liberty. Individuals are free to organise their behaviours and distribute their property and persons as suitable within the bounds of natural law and without seeking permission or conforming to others will. Individuals in the state of nature are all born with the same rights and advantages. They call it "A state also of equality," which means that all are equal and no one is subordinate to the others (p. 101). Locke looks for the state of nature as a golden state in which man has the right to do whatever they desire without controlling other individuals or rules, which is the perfect state for Locke.

Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1994) is an essential foundation and cornerstone of the entire construction of Rousseau's political structure. He illustrates that people in the state of nature live simple life. Individuals are born free, but they start to develop and create communities as they first live by their own will and freedom. He asserts, "MAN was born free, and everything he is in chains" (p. 32). To understand Rousseau's perspective on the social contract, Matthew Simpson, a professor of political science (2006: 1), argues that Rousseau defines the social contract as a group of independent people who band together with the state to live a better life than they could without it. However, political society is ultimately the result of the social contract and lifestyle. He adds that the social contract is the way to protect the citizen's freedoms as the modern states suppress them in civil societies. However, with the existence of the social contract, people have a better condition of living in which they have a bond that they must respect and follow.

In *The Social Contract Explained and Defended* (1972), Marshall Cohen argues that Rawls' main concern is justice. Certain fundamental rights like freedom of thought, speech, and property. Furthermore, from Rawls's perspective, he asserts that men are born with varying inherent capacities in varying social places is neither right nor wrong. These are facts of nature, which he calls the original position, and it is rational for man to be in civil society (p. 1).

The Frailty of Freedom

Freedom is a renewed concept; its general meaning does not mean being out of prison, but rather people's feelings from the inside that they are free (inner freedom) and not under partial restrictions. In this study, the terms freedom and liberty are used interchangeably. *The Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary* defines freedom as the state or right of being able or permitted to do, speak, think, and act as one wishes without being restricted or constrained (2009: 376). John Locke states that freedom is the condition of a man following and living by a law enacted by the state and known to all individuals to not be under the force of other authorities but the law of nature (2003: 109-110). However, being under laws does not mean that individuals' freedoms will decay. Instead, individuals have to follow the state's laws they live in to have their freedoms. Accordingly, liberty does

not mean being out of law and order; instead, it means respecting the rules set by the government. Moria M. Walsh argues in his article *Aristotle's Concept of Freedom* (1997) that according to Aristotle, thinkers do not illustrate the proper definition of freedom since it is not about doing what the individual desires but rather about enslavement since an enslaved person or an animal can live as it pleases. In one sense, living as one wants is a sign of freedom, which is only accurate when one wishes in an entirely reasonable manner. A man conducts his life by living according to his reasonable desires (p. 502).

Interestingly, Thomas Hobbes (1997) asserts that liberty in the state of nature is the ability to use one's power to do what one wants without the interference of external forces. The transformation of man from the state of nature to civil society occurs when individuals contract with the state where they willingly get rid of some of their freedoms and become restricted by the state's laws; it is positive liberty. Interestingly, negative freedom exists in a state of nature where no external forces act upon the individual (p. 79). However, by calling for civil society, Hobbes unintentionally asserts that he favours positive liberty since he calls for civil society. The German social psychologist Erich Fromm (1942) illustrates that people believe that freedom of expression is the final stage in the victory of freedom. They neglect the reality that, although freedom of expression is an important victory in the struggle against the old limitations, the contemporary man is forced to consider the intervention of others. He asserts that no one can intrude on his ideas and speeches (p. 91).

The Historical Background of the Arab Spring

The Arab countries have gone through many obstacles throughout history. Many revolutions started in Arab countries where the resisters either got their demands or failed in facing the authorities' power. As a result of the collapse of the authorities in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arabic countries, the Arab countries had their first spark of hope for democracy, known as the Arab Spring, in 2010 and 2011. According to Nadine Sika (2014), various dissents webpages assert that Egypt followed Tunisia in the protest against the government between 14 and 25 January. The Egyptians planned for a big demonstration to call for their rights like "food, human dignity, and freedom." While the governments did not listen to their demands in having their right to have a good life, the protestors called for removing the government and voting for a more democratic authority (p. 96). Interestingly, Marie Duboc asserts that numerous Egyptian citizens were discontent with the economic and political situation of Hosni Mubarak and his administration during the massive street demonstrations that ended his presidency in February 2011. Over the last decade, the number of protestors has increased, motivated by the continuous collapse and decline in the standard of living in Egypt (2014: 223).

To end the demonstration pervasion, Mubarak ordered his government to cut the internet access and broke down the signature of the phones to limit how the protestors communicated with each other and their families. Numerous Egyptian families went to the street to look after their children who protested against the Mubarak regime (Korany, 2014: 254). Sika (2014) asserts that Muslim Brotherhood supported Mohamed Morsi. He was declared the election winner after removing Hosni Mubarak from the position in the first democratic and relatively impartial elections. Despite this, during the first six months of his presidency, Morsi ignored the legal system by bestowing more legitimate powers and authority onto himself and adopting very contentious Islamic restrictions on the citizens (pp. 80-81). Reem Abdellatif (2012) states that many Egyptians protested against Morsi and called for his leaving. They chanted, "Leave, leave like Mubarak!" because they were dissatisfied with his policy. The conflicts between the demonstrators and Morsi's followers rose. Many citizens were wounded, and about six were murdered during their protest against Morsi. Abdullah Al-Arian (2014: 123) asserts that on the first anniversary of Morsi's presidency, the military forces under the command of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi expelled Morsi from authority. Al-Sisi, the Defence Minister, seized power with his troops. He led the July 3 military forces upheaval that removed Morsi in the face of the economy's persistent recession and the political ideology's division and instability.

The Life and Achievements of Basma Abdel Aziz (1976-....)

Basma Abdel Aziz is an Egyptian psychologist, activist, painter, researcher, and novelist born in Cairo, the capital of Egypt, in 1976 (Al-Barazeni, 2020: 36). Annie Gagiano (2019) asserts that Basma Abdel Aziz was called the Rebel for her reform activities and attitude toward the authority. Through her speeches and opposition to the Egyptian regime, Abdel Aziz obtained a unique and remarkable position in Egypt's political and cultural life, enabling her to present a state in every aspect. Additionally, in an interview with Charlotte Bailey, Abdel Aziz asserts that she has worked in multiple places; she works in the Ministry of Health and Al-Nadeem centre for victims of torture recovery; she also writes for the Al-Shorouk magazine (2016b: 95).

The host (2021) asks Abdel Aziz in her speech with Hoopoe, an imprint of the American University of Cairo, whether her study in medicine influenced her writing or not. She says that

psychology undoubtedly helps her make sense of things rationally and intelligently. She adds that being a psychiatrist benefits her as a novelist because it allows her to examine complicated human behaviours. She focuses on the interaction between the repressive rulers and the repressed citizens, which requires a depth investigation of human psychology, mistakes, achievements, motivation, and power imbalances. Furthermore, after finishing her study in psychiatry, Abdel Aziz changed her field to study for a Master's degree in sociology. In her interview with Daum (2015), Abdel Aziz asserts that she attended Poitiers University in France to have a Master's degree in sociology, particularly in discourse analysis. Then, she was forced to return to Egypt to continue her study there. Abdel Aziz wrote her thesis about Al-Azhar and their actions and speeches during the Muslim Brotherhood regime in 2013. However, her supervisor and the college rejected it for its critical subject. Then, she published it as a book in 2016. Abdel Aziz joined a group during her study at the university that called for human rights and supporting minorities, which faced many objections from her university, ending in preventing her from having a career in it.

Alexandra Alter states that Abdel Aziz says, "fiction gave me a very wide space to say what I wanted to say about totalitarian authority" (2016). However, writing fiction is Abdel Aziz's way of reflecting her dissatisfaction with the suppressive authority that ruled Egypt. Interestingly, Al-Barazengi asserts that, like other writers, Abdel Aziz believes that literature, specific fiction, offers means to criticise and oppose totalitarian governments and authorities. Therefore, she admits that they use their literary works to enhance their nation's political situations and conditions (2020: 37). Recently, in her speech with Hoopoe (2021), Abdel Aziz asserts that the opposite of dystopia fiction, which is for people, gives a gloomy and frightening interpretation of current events; she focuses on discussing what is happening, what we have previously encountered, and what we are now experiencing in our countries. Abdel Aziz considers writing a way to protest as she believes that individuals must be free to express themselves and speak freely without restriction. Abdel Aziz (2016b) asserts that fiction is a solid tool to criticise the suppressive government. She says:

With fiction I am playing on a ground without borders. This fits in well talking about a ruling totalitarian regime, where the citizen's life is transformed [into a] continuous dystopic nightmare, and where [facts] are very hard to find. (p. 92)

Alter (2016) states that for the last seven years, Abdel Aziz has worked half-time at a facility in Cairo that provides counselling and therapy to survivors of abuse and assault. As a result of her job, short story compilations, fiction, and academic works on delicate topics, including torment and crimes against humanity, conducted by the military forces in Egypt are among her many publications. She is influenced by the stories of the people who seek recovery as she deals directly with them by listening to their issues and trying to find solutions for them. She writes about every aspect of life, including social, political, and religious aspects.

Additionally, when the host asks her about her obsessions, Abdel Aziz asserts that her primary passion is the constant pursuit of freedom, which makes the regimes obtain power and suppress people's liberties significantly impact her writings. However, Abdel Aziz witnessed the Arab Spring revolution in Egypt and the change of the authorities (The Pen, 2017). Abdel Aziz states in an interview that if she had written her novel *The Queue* during the Al-Sisi regime, she would not change anything as the people still suffer from the same issues in the current time. She argues that the citizen's freedom of expression and speaking are suppressed, and the country's economic condition is not stable yet; still, many people suffer from poverty. Although the Egyptians started a new phase with the new authority after the Muslim Brotherhood, they suffered from the impact of previous restrictions and the new restrictions and strategies they put (ChiassoLetteraria, 2019).

The Frailty of Freedom in *The Queue*

The Queue is a dystopian novel, the first by Basma Abdel Aziz, published in 2013 in Arabic by Dar Al-Tanweer and translated into English in 2016. Luma Al-Barazengi states that the events of the novel were taken from reality as Abdel Aziz one day saw a long queue of citizens waiting for a governmental institution to open, which made her want to know why they were standing in lines and inspired her to write *The Queue* (2020: 36). Furthermore, Hawley declares that Abdel Aziz portrayed a gloomy, despondent dystopian and surrealist picture in her novel *The Queue* of the Egyptian society after the uprising (2017: 8). However, she shows in her novel the negative aspects that appear in any society after a protest fails and its effect on people and their lives. Al-Barazengi (2020) asserts that Abdel Aziz spent two months writing the novel and did not stop writing for 11 hours. Al-Barazengi says:

That scene moved beyond Basma's viewing only by encouraging her to start investigating the status of the waiting people listlessly. For continuous 11 hours, she did not stop writing the surreal debate story *The Queue* that took place after the chaotic revolution in Egypt. (p. 36)

Technically, being inside Egypt prevent her from criticising the authority directly to not being punished or put in prison. Alter argues that Abdel Aziz wrote in high language to convey specific ideas, political terminologies, and circumstances to avoid any attack from the authority. Abdel Aziz used symbolic language; she used phrases to reflect some events; "the first storm" refers to the revolt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, and "the Disgraceful Events" refer to the bloody citizens' rebellion in the same period after the collapse of the Mubarak regime (2016). However, Abdel Aziz used many symbols; she used the Gate as a symbol of the Muslim Brotherhood that controlled Egypt after the uprising of 2011 and followed a very restricted strategy in ruling the country. They suppress people's freedoms and prevent them from acting as they desire or doing what they want.

The novel contains six parts; each part starts with a document dealing with Yehya Gad el-RabSaeed, the 38 years man injured during a protest. Elisabeth Jaquette, the novel's translator, declares that the novel's chapters are introduced with documents taken directly from Yehya's medical file, portraying his issues while his condition continues to deteriorate. The documents present a complete picture of the main character and his relatives and friends. Jaquette adds that Abdel Aziz portrays the novel's events in a dystopian way in an unnamed city in the Middle East after the government suppresses the popular demonstrations of the Arab Spring in a realistic way (2013).

The citizens stand in front of the gate to ask for permission to do or take what they want. The writer portrays a picture of authority and its effect on society and individuals' freedom. She sometimes goes back to the days of the protests and then explains the current situation when people stand in the queue. Numerous characters appear in the novel; they are from different ranges and classes of society, suffer from numerous pains, hold different requests, and have different stories. Um Mabrouk asks for a paper from the Gate to treat her daughter. Shalaby seeks his cousin's reputation after being killed on duty during the Disgraceful Events. Ines, a teacher, allows a student to read a paper criticising the authority, so she needs a certificate of true citizenship to continue teaching. Finally, Yehya wants a doctor to remove the bullet from his body after he was injured during the Disgraceful Events by the fire of the military forces. The writer reflects the reality of Egyptian society after the uprising and the situation of the people who split between those who try to keep their principles like Yehya and Tareq and others who capitulate and coexist with the oppression of the authority like Amani and Ines.

Abdel Aziz discusses many themes throughout the novel, like poverty, hope, fear, waiting, and the frailty of freedom. Although she never mentions the frailty of freedoms as a theme, it exists in many places in the novel as a satire against the government. She chooses the third-person narrator with a few direct conversations between the characters to portray the situation during the unstable time. As a psychiatrist, Abdel Aziz portrays a complete picture of each character's thoughts and physiological condition as each character suffers from a different issue. The novel's events describe the period after the Arab Spring and the clash between the protestors and the military forces, which the writer refers to as the Disgraceful Events. The Gate controls the country after this period and becomes responsible for everything, although the citizens never have direct interaction with them. Tareq Fahmy, the doctor, is responsible for Yehya Gad el-RabSaeed's condition. The Gate controls even the citizens' life because Yehya needs the surgery but has to wait until the Gate opens to ask for approval. Abdel Aziz describes every detail about the characters, events, and situations to portray a complete picture of everything, making it more realistic and attracting the reader's attention.

Through the conversation on the radio that Tareq hears while he is in the hospital, Abdel Aziz shows people's opinions about those who participate in the uprising. The presenter praises the mother for not participating neither she nor her children in the Disgraceful Events, describing the event as "swept up in lies or spreading false rumours themselves" (Abdel Aziz, 2016a: 13). Although the Egyptians share the same opinion and view about the uprising, Abdel Aziz shows that many still do not believe in it and consider its principles a lie. Abdel Aziz portrays the period after removing Mubarak from the regime. She highlights the situation after the Muslim Brotherhood took the regime and how the citizens were dissatisfied with their restricted rules and strategies. The narrator describes the whole situation and people's opinions about the new authority; it was not as they imagined it would be. On the contrary, people protest again for a more democratic authority; the conflict between the authority and the citizens to obtain power does not end. Abdel Aziz portrays through this scene that the Egyptians suffered for an extended period from the suppression of the government, so they no more accepted being suppressed by the authorities. The writer describes the protestors and their demands to show how the events start to rise. The narrator describes the protest and the beginning of the events; the protestors do not ask about big things but their simple rights and freedom to have good living conditions and criticise the Gate for its policy. The narrator says, "they boldly condemned the Gate's injustice and tyranny" (p. 14). She portrays how the authority deals with the protestors who gather in the streets and chant their demands peacefully and the conflict between the military forces and the protestors resulting

in the death and injury of many of the protestors. He says, "a street battle that lasted for four days. More and more people fell" (p. 15).

Abdel Aziz draws a complete image to the readers inside and outside Egypt of the situation during the demonstrations in Egypt in 2011 and how the authorities suppressed them; they arrested, injured, and killed many of them. They ended the protest and cleaned the street to hide the evidence, condemning them for suppressing the protestors. The narrator says, "On the final day, it cleared the square effortlessly, wiping out everyone at the rally in just a few hours. In the end, the Gate and its guardians had prevailed, and they emerged stronger than before" (p. 15). Through this scene, Abdel Aziz shows the harmful usage of the authority's power; they firstly suppress the people's freedom of calling for their rights and then clean everything as if they never protest.

Abdel Aziz writes about the event that led the Gate to the regime to reflect the situation that led the Muslim Brotherhood to obtain power in Egypt after the first uprising of 2011 against the Egyptian president Hussiny Mubarak. The narrator says, "The Gate had come into power many years earlier, in the wake of a popular uprising known as the First Storm" (p. 16). The writer highlights the Egyptians' situation after they ended the regime of Mubarak that suppressed them for many years; the Muslim Brotherhood controlled them and imposed strict rules on citizens, frailer their freedoms, and restricted their rights. The country witnessed many obstacles and issues during this period due to the numerous changes. The people in the queue do not move, and some lose hope and leave because they can not bear the situation and the hot weather as they have nothing to do, so they wait and speak to each other. Abdel Aziz describes numerous characters in the queue with different personalities, positions, and classes to show that all types of people suffer from the same issues and the suppressive policy of the authority.

Many stories reflect the frailty of the individuals' freedom in society and the suppression of authority. Abdel Aziz portrays these characters and how their freedom is suppressed by the authority to deliver a complete picture of the situation after the uprising. Each character suffers from weakness in their freedoms, reflecting the situation of freedom in the whole country. They tell others their stories about why they are standing in the queue. The first story is of the southern woman standing in the queue. She wants to complain against the bakeries that do not sell her bread because of the candidate she votes for in the election. They mistreat her because she votes for another candidate than the one they order her to vote for before the elections. Abdel Aziz reflects through this scene the weakness of the citizen's freedoms, especially the freedom of voting. The citizens do not have the freedom to vote as they desire; the person who votes for another candidate will be punished not only by the authority but by the followers of that candidate or authority. The Gate controls every aspect; even if others mistreat a person, he can not complain till the Gate looks into their case and approve that. The writer wants to show how the political situation affects the social life of the citizens; the struggles start to appear between the politics and the citizens, then the politics with each other, and the citizens with each other. A young woman says, "Politics had eaten away at people's heads until they in turn had begun to devour one another" (P. 20).

The second is about the Arabic language teacher, Ines. Ines praises the student who writes an essay about the country's condition; she criticises the authority and the candidates in her city. Ines likes what the student writes as she reflects the opinion of Ines and many other people who can not utter their thoughts and feelings toward the authority. Ines has to get a certificate of true citizenship or prevent from teaching, and the girl does not appear in the school again. Abdel Aziz shows the frailty of the freedom of speech in Egyptian society. People are not allowed to say anything concerning the authority and can not express their opinions about the candidates to the authority. Although Ines does not write the essay herself, the authority sends a warning to her and asks for approval from the Gate to continue teaching. The man who comes to the school the next day brings a cassette that contains the voice of the girl reading the essay. Through this scene, Abdel Aziz shows how the authority, The Muslim Brotherhood, or as she calls it in the novel, the Gate, controls every aspect of the country and knows everything. The writer emphasises the idea of the authority muzzling the citizens and restraining them from uttering their opinion.

The third is of Um Mabrouk, a woman of three children, one son and two daughters, who works in cleaning houses and offices to provide food to her ill children. When Um Mabrouk returns from the queue where she meets Yehya by the metro, she starts an argument with a dirty man who tries to touch her; she insults the man and shouts at him for what he does, but other passengers do not accept her way of dealing with the man. The narrator says, "She heard mutters of shame from a few passengers, and a tall man whispered that a woman's place was in the house... someone else quoted a passage from the Greater Book" (pp. 29-30). The writer portrays how some men deal with women during that period, using religion to justify their behaviours and opinions. They suppress women's freedom of working and being responsible for their families and houses. The man tells Um Mabrouk

that the place of women is in houses, representing the Muslim Brotherhood's beliefs at that period concerning women. The story of Um Mabrouk does not end. The authority ignores the bad health condition of her daughter, who dies after months; she does not receive a permit to do her surgery. The authority controls the lives of the citizens and ignores their needs; they suppress their freedom of getting the proper care for their illness.

Interestingly, the situation in the queue starts to be more chaotic with the hot weather, and many stand for a long time without rest. When the southern woman falls because she stands in the queue under the sun for a long time, the man in the galabeya says that Gad punishes her for her sin. Abdel Aziz portrays how some people connect every action and accident to the anger of God; they change reality according to their desire. They use religion to justify what they are saying and doing. The man in the galabeya ignores the woman's condition while she stands in the queue without rest and blames her for declaring to whom she votes; he considers that a sin that Gad punishes her for it. In an interview with Alexia Underwood, Abdel Aziz asserts, "I wanted to show that religion is being used here to control people, but meanwhile, the military system is still present" (2019).

Abdel Aziz describes the condition of the place to show how things start to be after people leave everything and stand in front of the Gate waiting for its opening as a picture that reflects the condition of Egypt at the time of the uprising. Everything was affected by the country's condition, not only the political aspects but the social and economic as well, and the country did not witness any development through that period. Many employers are forced to leave their jobs due to the country's economic situation. She portrays the country's condition and how people's freedom is frail due to the suppression of authority.

The writer describes the events of 2011 through the novel; she writes about the end of the Mubarak regime in a conversation between Yehya and Nage. They assert that people never know where the Gate comes from after the collapse of the previous regime. The narrator says, "The Gate had appeared rather suddenly as the First Storm died down, long before the Disgraceful Events occurred. The ruler at the time had been an unjust one, and popular resistance gathered to oppose him" (Abdel Aziz, 2016a: 42). However, she portrays the new regime, the Muslim Brotherhood, which controls every aspect of Egypt and imposes new rules and principles on the people; due to these rules and restrictions, an uprising started. The narrator says, "Word spread that a small group of people, who had recently joined together, were going to organise a protest... what became known as the Disgraceful Events" (p. 44). She shows that authority suppresses people's freedom to express their opinion and speak, criticising authority. Yehya and many others have injured or died during the events as the military forces opened fire against the peaceful protestors and anyone across the square where they protested and ended the protest.

Yehya's condition starts to affect his whole life. The writer describes Yehya many times; he can not stand for a long time, can not walk for long-distance, and can not bear the pain he feels from time to time. On his birthday, he suffers from pain when he visits Amani, the girl he loves. The narrator describes him as "but he couldn't eat with her; the stabbing pain had spread into his whole stomach and down his thighs" (p. 46). Abdel Aziz describes this event to show how the injury of this man by the authority's fire-affected his social life and relationship with people. He is an example of many citizens wounded in the protest against the authority. The writer describes the situation after they bring Yehya to the hospital. Tareq, the doctor, can not do the surgery due to the restrictions the Gate puts, so they send it to another hospital. The authority hides all the evidence that proves that Yehya was injured during the protest. They take Yehya's file and the X-ray he did on the first day in the hospital and take the machine to the Gate. Through this event, Abdel Aziz shows the power of authority in controlling all people despite their position and education. The writer portrays how the authority puts rules and restricts the people who disobey their orders or act without permission, reflecting the condition of Egypt during that period under the authority of the Muslim Brotherhood. The authority cut the signals of the cell phones so the people in the queue could not call anyone. The narrator says, "It began gradually, affecting just a few others, then dozens, then hundreds, and the numbers kept rising, until people finally realised it was a system-wide outage" (p. 62).

On June 18, the day Yehay was injured, many other people were in Zephyre hospital, and Yehya witnessed how the authority changed the conditions of many wounded citizens. The date that Abdel Aziz mentions on which Yehya was injured was the exact date when Morsi became the first democratic president of Egypt on June 18, 2012. The writer once again highlights the power of authority in changing the truths. The story of the man and others in the hospital whose papers and x-rays change by the authority reflects how the authority controls everything, including the life and death of the people. She shows the oppression of the Gate representing the authority in Egypt during the demonstrations. The authority hides their suppressive actions during the protest toward the protestors and puts high sanctions on the people who reveal anything about that day.

Um Mabrouk also suffers from the wrong policy of the authority; her daughter dies due to a problem in her heart that the authority has neglected for many years; she does not receive medical treatment. She uses the death of her first daughter as a way to treat her second daughter, who suffers from the same issues. Once again, the writer shows the effect of authority on the people. The man in the Maladies Gate informs her that to take care of her second daughter's health; she must change the truth. They persecute Um Mabrouk and neglect her first daughter's death to save the authority's reputation and care for her second daughter.

Abdel Aziz describes the life in the queue; the Gate keeps putting new rules and orders, and many people start to join the queue. Shalaby attends to ask for the rights of his cousin, Mahfouz, who dies on duty during the protest. Although Mahfouz kills a young protestor and then jumps from the bridge because that man's friends follow him, Shalaby wants to consider him a war hero, which is refused by Ines, who calls him a killer. The writer shows how soldiers do not have the right to reject the authority's orders; they follow the authority's instructions without hesitation. Ines puts herself in a critical situation by uttering her opinion on Mahfouz's death; the authority may fire her if they hear her opinion. They suppress people's freedom to express their opinion and say what they think. She portrays the power of authority in controlling every aspect, even people's private conversations. The Gate listens to everything and any conversation in the queue; they spy through their phones and record their speeches when the Violet Telecom Company, which belongs to the Gate, gives the people free phone lines. Ehab discovers sheets of paper containing information and conversations, one between him and his friend and the others belonging to four other persons; he knows only Ines.

Although some people, the anti-Gate called Riffraff, notice that months pass and the Gate does not develop any aspect of life, and people live under the aggressive rules, others accept the reality of waiting in the queue till the Gate opens its doors. The surrounding environment changes people's thinking, so they stand against the Riffraff that eventually disappears. However, Abdel Aziz shows the power of the authority in changing people's principles in the queue that represents the Egyptian society and how they accept the situation of living under the control of a government that persecutes them and frails their freedom.

Abdel Aziz highlights the power of the government in changing people's principles and opinions throughout the events. People's freedom becomes frail as many rules restrict them and their liberties, and the authority policy has affected their social life and relation. Although many people in the queue boycott the company that records their conversations, Ines and other groups of people do not. She becomes afraid that she will disappear like other people who disappear after joining the company's boycott. Ines changes her way of thinking and principles due to her fear of authority, so she starts supporting the company. People's freedoms of expression are frail due to the suppression of authority; Ines can not express her opinion about anything concerning authority because they persecute her and may disappear like other people. The authority oppresses Ines psychologically by spreading rumours that everyone criticises the authority or any aspect relating to them will disappear.

Additionally, Amani is similar to Ines; she also changes her principles and opinions due to the suppression of authority. They persecute her physically and psychologically when she goes to Zephyr hospital. Amani decides to go to Zephyr hospital, where injured people have taken to ask for Yehya's X-ray, proving that he has a government bullet in his body while he suffers from pain and spends his days waiting in the queue. When the military forces around the hospital discover her aim, they arrest her. The narrator says, "Amani was standing in the middle of the room with the pink sign, where they'd brought her once they'd found her" (p. 183). Abdel Aziz shows the condition of the citizens who seek the truth and call for freedom and how the authorities deal with them. They spend days investigating why she comes to the hospital and isolate her in a dark room where she neither sees nor hears anything. The writer describes Amani's condition as a result of her working in a centre for victims of torture recovery, where she speaks to many victims of authority torture and knows their stories which helps her portray a realistic picture of Amani's condition. She also shows the impact of arresting and torturing on people's psychological states and life. Abdel Aziz states, "In writing *The Queue*, I drew on my experience in psychiatry, my specialisation and the field in which I work. I also drew on my later studies in sociology to establish the means by which authority dominates and controls citizens" (2017). People's lives are affected by their experiences under the authority's control. Amani lives a harrowing experience, which changes her way of thinking and principles; she becomes ready to leave everything to gain her life. Through Amani's experience, the writer sheds light on the psychological issues resulting from the torture that change the person to portray a complete picture of authority. The narrator describes Amani after they leave her, "... and that had been enough to strip her of all her nature vitality and determination, leaving her in this dull and lifeless state, not like herself at all" (p. 191).

The characters live under stress in the queue waiting for the Gate to open its doors. The struggles continue in the queue between the people. On one side, between the woman with the short hair and the man in the galabeya, and the other is between Ines and Shalaby, each one attacks the other for their opinions or way of thinking. The man in the galabeya attacks the woman with the short hair and Um Mabrouk for gathering people and discussing things relating to the country, especially the Gate, with them rather than coming to his religious lessons. People are not free to decide for themselves; their freedom is frail as the followers of the authority adopt its rules and attack people by using religion as the man in the galabeya does with the woman with the short hair and Um Mabrouk.

Ehab, the journalist, starts facing problems with the journal. His boss rejects whatever Ehab writes about the queue or anything relating to the authority. Abdel Aziz portrays how the authority restricts not only the citizens' freedom of expression but also imposes high restrictions on the freedom of the press and speeches in journals and magazines. The rejection of the reports shows how freedom is frail and restricted by the authorities in such societies where individuals do not have the right to express their opinion, criticise the government's weakness, or even deliver what happens in the country to the public. Yehya declares that it is the right decision not to publish the report about the events of the day of the Disgraceful Events because the only witness, the microbus driver, sees the authority men shooting the citizens disappear after his testimony.

The country's general atmosphere, the events the people go through, and the frailty and weakness of their freedom changed Ines and Amani's lives. On the one hand, Ines starts attending the lessons of the man in the galabeya and finally marries him and leaves the queue. On the other hand, Amani has many problems at work; the narrator says, "Amani's life gradually broke down... she slept only in scarce, sporadic spells, waking up terrified in the middle of the night" (p. 230). Finally, Amani leaves work; her life turns out to be a disaster due to the authority's persecution. Abdel Aziz shows the effects of the struggles between the citizens and the authority to obtain power and the frail freedoms in the country on the people's lives.

Documents number six, the last document of the novel, contains information about Yehya from birth to the present and about his family and friends. The authority follows Yehya and records his movements and conversations, so the document's information is updated. Abdel Aziz shows the authority's capacity to follow and control the individuals' lives. Tareq reads the documents for months; he follows Yehya's medical condition, which declines over time. Tarek's decision to make Yehya's surgery represents a resistance to the restricted rules of the authority. At the same time, Amani changes her opinion; she convinces herself that there is no real bullet in Yehya's body. The narrator says, "She felt liberated; freed from the fears that had wrapped around her life and mind for what felt like an eternity" (p. 254).

The novel has an open-ended line; it ends without telling the readers whether Yehya does the surgery or not. He disappears in the queue, and Tareq reads the last sentence at the bottom of the document "*Yehya Gad el-RabSaeed spent one hundred and forty nights of his life in the queue*" (p. 259). There is no sign of whether Yehya does the surgery or dies before it. Symbolically, Yehya may represent Egyptian society after the uprising. Yehya's condition is similar to the Egyptian people's, whether they gain freedom and express their opinion freely or remain like Yehya, silent due to the oppression of the authority. The Gate keeps updating its rules to control every aspect of society, leading to the frailty of every character's freedom. They do not have the freedom of expression, so they can not express their opinion or criticise the authority as they suppress the protest, and many protestors are injured or die. The Gate persecutes Yehya, Amani, Ines, and other characters and frails their freedoms, especially the freedom of speech, through numerous actions.

Conclusions

The relationship between the authority and citizens is not new; it existed through the Social Contract Theory, which formulated their relationship. The study shows that in the novel *The Queue*, Abdel Aziz shows the country's condition during the phase of the Arab Spring when people could not express their opinion or utter their thoughts about the authority, which killed and injured the protestors in the time of the uprising by using symbolic language and referring to the authority as the Gate.

The study shows that citizens' freedom turns out to be frail rather than a right they should have due to political problems. The authorities in Arab countries suppressed and oppressed the citizens and imposed high restrictions on their freedoms, especially the freedom of speech, to keep their power. People can not express their opinions. In *The Queue*, the citizens who protest against their authorities are oppressed by the military forces who care for nothing but how to obey orders. Many protestors have been killed and injured by the fire of the authority. As a result of the authorities' policy in dealing with the citizens who protest, the future of many people has been affected and remains unknown. The main character, Yehya, is an example. People's aim of calling for their rights and freedom turns into an

ironic situation where the authorities impose strict restrictions on them to suppress their freedoms and control them to keep their power.

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