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Social Media's Impact on the Arab Spring

By

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Introduction

Revolutions have occurred since the beginning of organized society. People have been deprived of certain essential rights, have collaborated about their grievances and formed coalitions to rise against the government. Knowing how previous rebellions have succeeded or failed can allow one to predict the success of another revolution. Today through the increased communication levels between countries around the world, more information is available to the average person and political ideologies of people can be changed through media. No longer are citizens content to be complacent and sit by while their leaders engage in corrupt actions that make those around them richer while the rest of the population lives in a state of poverty. In late 2010 and early 2011, people within the Arab world held similar grievances towards their governments and created a succession of protests that began in Tunisia and swept through North Africa and the Middle East. Protesters began by demanding changes to government policies and structures, but soon people in every country wanted new leadership and the resignation of their current ruler. This group of protests is known as the Arab Spring.

While the increased communication technologies of satellite television, as well as non-state run programming has added to the transfer of ideas from one nation to another within the Arab region, social media has made discussing grievances even easier than television. In recent years social media, which is any technology or technique that can inspire and influence other individuals, has played a large role in politics. Social media includes social networking sites, blogging sites, and mobile phones. These devices allow for the spread of information to happen at a quick pace; furthermore, news can be received anywhere among those who have access to such technology. News, pictures and updates from friends are instantaneous. This is crucial during protests when events and circumstances are rapidly changing.

The revolutions within the Arab Spring happened in quick succession. All of the protests began within a three-month period.¹ Tunisia, which was the first revolutionary country, began protests on December 18, 2010, and President Ben Ali left office on January 14, 2011. Just days later the uprising in Egypt began and lasted for a mere eighteen days from January 25, 2011, to February 11, 2011. The starting dates of the next two revolutions in Yemen and Libya were respectively February 3, 2011, and February 15, 2011.² The people of Bahrain took action and organized against their leader in the capital city of Manama starting on February 14, 2011. Lastly the sixth nation to have demonstrators rise up against their leader was Syria on March 16, 2011. All of these revolutions learned from one another and began as soon as mobilization was possible. Some scholars see the quick spread of protest from one country to another, the quick victories that occurred in some of the nations, and the authority figures who were caught off guard, as a sign that a new organizational technique was used to inspire the revolutions and ensure the success of these rebellions. It is widely debated whether social media was that factor. The use of this new communication style as a political tool to rally people to the streets rather than as a social network could be the distinguishing element in these demonstrations.

The purpose of my thesis is to discern what role social media actually played within the Arab Spring as a whole. By looking at individual countries and analyzing when social media was used, how it was used within the country or to target those who were abroad, what types of social media were used, and what happened if and when the government tried to limit access to social media, I evaluated how important the new technology was in the entire region during the protests of late 2010 and early 2011. Through these specific criteria a country can fall into one

¹ Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 < <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>.

² Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 < <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>.

of three schools of thought on social media's impact in the nation's rallies. The first school indicates that social media was necessary for the revolution to begin and the revolutionaries could not have mobilized without the use of social media; the second school purports that social media was not essential to the success of the uprising and the use of social media was exaggerated; and the third and final school deems that social media was used to change the opinions of outsiders about the regime and those protesting against it rather than to organize protesters within a nation. None of the schools indicate that social media was unused within the country during the time of the revolt; for social media was used, even if briefly, by all the countries but the extent to which it was utilized to help spur and add to the revolutions is what will be analyzed.

There is some support for each school of thought among the four countries that I studied, which makes concluding how social media impacted the Arab Spring as a whole a difficult task. Social media use in specific countries is easier to discern than the larger scale of impact throughout the region. Small conclusions can be drawn; the use of mobile phones seemed to be successful when overthrowing a dictator, and the unity of the public who was rebelling helped to create a set of clear demands that could be met by the government. However, since social media use in revolutions is so recent, it is hard to recognize one key factor that will always ensure success. The people of some countries, such as Egypt and Syria, utilized Facebook or Twitter to organize and mobilize people, but even though both conducted similar actions only Egyptians dethroned their dictator. Likewise, protesters in other Arab Spring nations like Tunisia did not use social media when creating the revolution or sustaining it but the citizens still succeeded in having their leader resign from office. Additionally different types of social media were implemented in different countries to combat the regimes, so no one aspect can definitively lead

to the success of a revolution. Not all of the countries that were successful in government change were successful in social media usage.

Once more time has passed and more research can be done on the topic of social media usage in revolutions, a more definitive analysis can be given as to what new technology factors contribute and can lead to the success of protests. Whether social media impacted the Arab Spring is a complex question with many angles and levels. What is known is that without social media the Arab Spring would not have happened so quickly or affected as many nations. Only time will tell if the tweet will replace the street and how effective social media will be towards the success of a revolution. For now speculations and small conclusions can be made but more information is needed to reveal if social media led to the success of the whole Arab Spring and how future rebellions can use this knowledge to ensure victories for demonstrators.

Chapter 1: Literature Review of Social Media's Impact on the Arab Spring

Mobilization is arguably the most important aspect of a successful revolution and social movement. Getting people to rally behind a cause and to take action will help achieve a goal. In late 2010 and early 2011, Middle Eastern countries had a succession of protests. People in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria rallied for changes in the government structure and leadership. The Arab Spring is comprised of these rallies that began over a three-month period starting with Tunisia in December of 2010 and the ending with Syria, the sixth nation, in March of 2011. It is generally perceived that six countries make up the Arab Spring, even though many more nations had political unrest during the time period. Protesters in these six countries provided the largest and most organized demonstrations, which is why they are considered to be the political uprisings of the Arab Spring.³ The people of the six nations had the potential to overthrow their rulers, even though only four of the six have currently succeeded.

Leading up to the Arab Spring, also known as the Arab uprising, new media sources and social media had grown in importance in the Middle East. These outlets were used for political organizations and common people to have dialogues among themselves, Western countries and other Arab states (Lynch 2011). People with similar views and interests found each other online and could discuss problems and frustrations. This new form of communication provided a way

³ "The Arab Awakening," *Al Jazeera*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/2011/02/2011222121213770475.html>>; Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 <<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>; Schuman, Michael, "Why the Arab Spring Success Depends on Jobs, Not Guns," *Time Business*, 22 August 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <http://business.time.com/2011/08/22/why-the-arab-springs-success-depends-on-jobs-not-guns>>; "Arab World Uprisings: A Country-by-Country Look," *The New York Times*, 10 December 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/middleeast/middle-east-hub.html>>.

to reach a vast and diverse group of people, who could quickly be engaged in action.⁴ The new media sources connected the Arab region.

In recent years social media, which is any technology or technique that can inspire and influence other individuals, has played a large role in politics. Social media's real contribution to politics is its threat to governments and regimes. It can challenge leaders in the Middle East in four distinct ways by promoting collective action; attempting to limit state repression; impacting international support for the dictator; and changing the perception of the public sphere (Lynch 2011). These risks beg the question was social media the instigator behind the uproar in the Middle East? Did the idea of protest begin on the Internet and what role did it play in executing demonstrations? Is the importance of social media exaggerated to create headline stories? To answer these questions the role of social media in the mobilization of people during the Arab Spring has been broken up into three categories. Some scholars think that without social media, these demonstrations would never have occurred. Others think that social media played no part in mobilizing or starting the protests; the outcome of the revolution would not have been unchanged whether social media was used or not. A final group is somewhat in between these first two. It thinks that social media played a role in the Arab Spring, yet it did not matter much in the Middle East because its influence was abroad.

By looking at the components necessary for revolution, the increased transparency in the Arab world, the impact of social media on politics around the globe and more specifically in the Arab region, one can begin to gauge the role that social media played. How previous revolutions have been started can attest to what trends are necessary within a nation to spark rebellion.

Knowing the factors that contribute to demonstrations will help answer the question of whether

⁴ Lama Al-Haqhaq, "Social Media Megaphone Reaches to More People," *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, 9 August 2011, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/881797226?accountid=14637>>.

social media has the potential to insight protests in average citizens or if something else is needed too. Looking at the connected nature of the countries in the Arab region can indicate the similarities in all of the nations that started revolts in the last year. Unrest in Tunisia could only have carried over to other countries if there was a sense of community and an ability to share information among nations. The previous use of social media in politics and by angered groups is important when researching the Arab Spring too. Deeming if social media has had the capacity to change or affect politics worldwide will add to its ability to impact the Arab Spring. Once former social media rebellions both abroad or in the Middle East are discerned then the likelihood that it contributed to the Arab Spring can be better analyzed. All of these elements are outlined in the chapter because they are necessary to determine the impact of social media on the revolutions. Without analyzing any one of these categories a false conclusion may be made where social media did not play a role but is falsely credited for one in an Arab Spring nation or vice versa. Therefore all of this background information is necessary before a conclusion can be drawn about the importance of social media in the Arab Spring. Ultimately my thesis will try to define what role, if any, social media including Facebook and Twitter, played in the Arab Spring that occurred in late 2010 and early 2011.

Components of Revolutions

Revolutions do not just happen overnight. There are set steps that occur before people mobilize. They have arisen within every movement, no matter the time, place or technological circumstances. Modernization has not changed these instigators or allowed for them to happen more often (Tilly 2003). While it has been debated that modernity causes more rebellion that is not true. Seeing what other countries possess that the deprived lack leads to revolution but there is no evidence that modernity will bring about a revolution (Tilly 2003). In order for rebellion to

start internal and external causes must both be present. Once people are angered by these causes they will look for others that share similar sentiments and organize against the government.

There are two components that lead to revolutions and protests. They are internal feelings and sentiments, which are referred to as internal factors, and those that are presented by outside forces, which are external factors. External factors do not always insinuate forces from a foreign area, they can include an action that is perpetuated by foreigners against those within the country or restrictions that an individuals' own government puts on those residing in the nation. These actions placed on the citizenry are considered an external aspect because they are not an internalized feeling; these acts come from an outside force.

External forces such as corruption from the government or high unemployment rate can contribute to interior beliefs that the government must be altered. External factors can be present, but they become a cause for rebellion when the population stops being ignorant that they exist and calls for a change to the status quo. People can live for decades under a corrupt regime but once they realize how they are suffering while others live lavish lifestyles, the citizenry will rise against those in power. Once a person finds others who like them are internally hurt and feel a need to change, then action will be taken and uprisings will follow. Previous authors have examined and concluded that internal feelings are caused by external factors. These internal feelings are harsh enough that people need immediate change and rally to overthrow a dictator or "democratic" leader.

Previous literature about revolutions and protests determines that internal factors lead to collective violence. Whether it is called grievances and deprivations or grievances, collective incentives and opportunities, it all represents a sense of unhappiness with the status quo. No matter what component of grievances, deprivations, aspirations or moral obligations occurs, all

of the authors feel that internal factors drive the force needed behind protests. To Pinnard (2011) this includes being deprived of basic necessities such as education and political freedoms to express ones own opinion. This can be seen in Egypt in 2006, when the people staged a rally to gain political freedoms and change their leader. Other authors consider deprivation to be the lack of aspirations. These aspirations for goods consist of objects that could be obtained if the population was not deprived. If the people were not deprived of a functioning political system then they could reap the benefits of political freedom. People long for the rights and opportunities that they lack (Tilly 2003).

The last component is a sentiment of moral obligations and duty to make some contribution to the collective good and action (Pinnard 2011). When everyone else is fighting for a common goal of a better nation, those who are not at the forefront feel guilty and join in the rally for a better lifestyle. The appearance of other contenders who have alternative claims to the controlling government bring more people who are willing to oppose the regime (Tilly 2003). The expected success of the goals and actions being taken will also play a part in the number of people who mobilize to the cause (Pinnard 2011). This takes the emphasis away from a new contender starting and structuring the mobilization process and focuses on joining an already existing challenger (Tilly 2003). People follow others, and advertising the bandwagon is an easy way to appeal to the population to gain more supporters.

These internal factors of grievance, deprivation, aspiration, and moral obligation come from external factors that the government has created. The political situation in a government can create these sentiments. People across classes fight for the removal of deprivations, abandonment of dominating governments, control over one's life and social decisions, and to create individual identities outside of the state (Pinnard 2011). The removal of tyrannical

governments and regimes are often reasons behind uprisings. This has been popular in Middle Eastern countries. Prior to the 2011 uprisings, in Bahrain and Egypt people have been arrested for their beliefs and blog postings. Opposition to the regime is not tolerated; therefore, control over one's own life and social decisions causes people to rally behind a movement for a new government. Lastly people want their own identity and the ability to think for themselves, rather than believe the propaganda that the government feeds them (Pinnard 2011). With state controlled media, until recently people did not have the ability to question dictators (Rinnawi 2006). Fighting for these causes and eliminating the problems will ameliorate the lives of the public (Goldstone 2003).

Some factors do not always happen before protests but if they do it is extremely beneficial for those who are frustrated with the government. It is not always necessary but if others, either elite civilians or military figures, in the country get involved because they share these grievances it expedites the mobilization process: "if the loyalty of the army should falter or be pressed by widespread popular mobilization against the regime in urban or rural revolts, revolution becomes nearly inevitable" (Goldstone 2003, 74). These groups have more influence than the average middle class citizen and can obtain change faster. With support from people of different backgrounds, success is more achievable.

Political issues that cause external factors can stem from three categories. The external causes can be summed up as large-scale structural change that transforms power within the population and affects opportunities for mobilization within society, allotment of the resources available to the country, and unfair benefits for those who hold positions of power (Tilly 2003). Simple examples of the three categories include: an increase in unemployment and the inability for social mobility would constitute the first classification; benefits from oil, whether that be

wealth or owning the rigs, would fall into the second category; lastly a patron-client relationship that only benefits one specific ethnicity and allows them to hold positions of power within a government would fall into the last factor of external causes. Yet, a more common way for the elite to maintain control of opportunities or mobilization is by cutting education and economic status to the populace. If the elite are the only educated portion of the public, then they can maintain the land and labor force. Without employment the average citizen cannot function in society or get angry about his position. By keeping the population less educated, as well as poor it makes them unable to revolt easily. Goldstone (2003) also discusses the temptation for elites and cronies to monopolize resources. Hoarding resources enables the elite to get richer while the poor seep deeper into poverty. Since the populace is uneducated they do not realize that their standing in the country is deteriorating while others are flourishing. In both of these examples the rich benefit while the poor continue to suffer.

Another factor is when a state comes into conflict with traditional organizations (Goldstone 2003). Conflicts between religion and state or between education and justice are traditional factors that clash with modern ideas. These conflicts can lead to mobilization of those who oppose the state. When it comes to fundamental Islam and Shari'a Law, different people and sects of Islam clash on how they want the government to operate; some want a more traditional view where Islamic law is the same as state law while others prefer a more modern approach to government. In Iran in 1970 the government was a mixture of secular and Islamic rule but people rioted to the point where the Shah was removed and replaced by an Islamic Republic. Differences in issues concerning the clash, of in this case mosque versus state, made people revolt against the government (Goldstone 2003).

Economic contributors also play a role in the external factors that cause the grievances and deprivations that protesters feel before engaging in mobilization for rebellion. Just as with political external factors, there are three economic aspects that contribute to the need for revolt. One cause is when foreign investors maintain a greater domestic control of the economy than the indigenous people. The country must keep the foreign investors satisfied (Goldstone 2003). To do this the general population can be forgotten about and the focus can be placed directly on pleasing the outside businesses. Keeping foreigners happy will continue the flow of aid to the country. The United States has given aid to many nations across the globe. In the 1970s, it stopped supporting Nicaragua because it wanted the country to change its human rights policy. When aid stopped the country was not used to supporting its populace and revolutions began (Goldstone 2003). Another common trend is relying too heavily on foreign economic or military support. A country is not stable on its own and when aid stops, it plunges into economic upheaval. When foreign forces pull out of the country it leaves an economic hole. People become accustomed to a lifestyle that is no longer present. Lastly government officials steal money for corrupt reasons and growth fails to trickle down to the masses (Goldstone 2003). This is another example of where the elite become the only beneficiaries of the country and the poor cannot ameliorate their lives. This is a popular tactic in corrupt one party ruled governments. The ruler will live a lavish lifestyle while his constituents reside in poverty. The average man wants a change when these situations arise.

These internal and external causes of unhappiness will lead to a desire to change the government and current system of rule. All of these motivating elements lead to a sense of activism. Once people have realized the need to mobilize, actions can take many forms. People often lump dissent, resistance and rebellion together but they are all slightly different. The terms

have different meanings and are more than “protest is when I say I don’t like this and that. Resistance is when I see to it that things that I don’t like no longer occur. Protest is when I say I will no longer go along with it. Resistance is when I see to it that no one else goes along with it anymore either” (Hands 2011, 3). Dissent is classified as a certain prescribed procedure to engage citizens, including protesting in the streets or disagreeing with someone in a position of authority. In an authoritarian society, dissent can turn into resistance when the act of speech itself becomes a direct refusal of power (Hands 2011). Refusal to pay taxes because a person does not agree with a large issue that the government supports, such as a war, is an example of resistance. Resistance, on the other hand, suggests a more active and stubborn approach than dissent. It is more defiance of authority or perceived injustice than just rallying people (Hands 2011). It is backed by the use of force. Rebellion therefore includes both dissent and resistance, and cannot take place without them. However, it also entails and even needs action. This action must take the form of words and go further to achieve its goal (Hands 2011). Mobilization of people to take action is rebellion. Activism and revolution contain all three terms. Revolution is also characterized as being sudden, violent, and ending in political succession (Hands 2011).

When external factors lead to internal unrest, the people of a nation are angry and ready to take action against their governments. It is only when the two combine that people are inspired to change the government. With the correct conditions under a crumbling government, the regime will unravel and those who are protesting will achieve their goals: “this combination of pressures can cause a patrimonial regime to unravel with astonishing rapidity” (Goldstone 2003, 73). Different areas of government can easily unravel when protests target them. All of these events collaborated into successful revolts and in the Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Philippine, and Iranian revolution (Goldstone 2003). The action that a population takes can be

of various forms but the activism that ends in revolution will best change the country. The political system will be removed and the changes will ameliorate the society.

Increase in Communication Among Middle Eastern Countries

The idea of a united Arab region is a new phenomenon that has developed in the last fifteen years. The Arab region is comprised of any Middle Eastern country and not just those that speak Arabic. Before modern technology of satellite television, this diffusion of boundaries was not possible. The Islamic world has become more educated in this time period too because it has broken out of its government propagated shell. Satellite television made more objective information accessible to people within the Arab region. Regimes could no longer hide facts or manipulate their populations because opposition television was available to the public. Al Jazeera was the first news station to bring these facts to people within the Middle East. This transition has had positive effects on the public while impacting the leaders negatively since the leaders are losing power and influence over their constituents.

Before the advent of satellite television and Al Jazeera, governments controlled, funded and censored all media sources in the Middle East. All forms of news, whether print or electronic, were monitored by ministries (Rinnawi 2006). Television and radio programs were comprised of two components, political propaganda and entertainment. On these programs, most of the political content described the accomplishments of the leaders (Rinnawi 2006). Even newspapers and magazines that provided opposing views were hard to find. In the 1990s, these newspapers “were expensive and didn’t have wide circulation, so ...the average person in most Arab countries just watched national TV and read national papers” (Rushing 2007, 130). People were only getting the viewpoint of their governments, which was a biased account. The censoring of news by ministries began to change as technology advanced. Easily accessible

opposition information began with cassette tapes in Iran during the 1970s. These tapes opposed the Shah and were monumental. They were easy to maneuver and duplicate too. Other technologies including fax machines, desktop publishing, photocopying machines, and most recently the Internet evolved and were beneficial for spreading information (Eickleman 2005). Nothing as transforming as Al Jazeera was seen until the 1990s.

Al Jazeera was the first independently Arab owned news station, and it began broadcasting in 1996 (Eickleman 2005). It began when the former BBC Arabic Television network was dismantled. Hamad bin Khalifa, who had worked with the BBC, recruited other staff members and with \$140 million US dollars launched Al Jazeera. Since 1996, the station has been present for the Iraq bombings of 1998, the Palestinian intifada in 2000, the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003 (Seib 2008). During these events, for the “first time, many Arabs did not have to rely on the BBC, CNN, or other outside news sources when a big story broke. They could instead find news presented from an Arab perspective” (Seib 2008, 143). The region had its own broadcasting network. It quickly became the most watched and trusted channel in the region (Eickleman 2005).

The station was new and different because the owners had the ability to criticize countries during their programming. The ability to criticize and allow for opposition in an open news source was monumental in the Arab world (Anderson 2003, 890). It was “quite different from any Arabic-language television programming previously seen” because it was not owned by a government, it was owned by an individual (Rinnawi 2006, 38). Since it was privatized Al Jazeera could be viewed without the permission of the government and people began to see opinions different from those that they were usually fed. The station provided the region with independent news that bypassed most other available media, which was government censored

and controlled (Eickleman 2005; Rinnawi 2006; Rushing 2007). It was a privatized network and did not have to serve the mandate of one specific country. In this sense it could criticize and discuss topics about every Arab nation except its own, Qatar (Rinnawi 2006).

The news station put Qatar on the map, making it an important Arab nation because it was the headquarters of Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera provides an objective base, which does not favor any country that it is allowed to discuss on air (Eickleman and Anderson 2003). Two things have ensured the success of Al Jazeera: “the channel’s tendency to deal with issues that are often considered taboo, including the radical critique of Arab rulers, and above all the channel’s notable tendency to align itself with public opinion” (El Oifi 2005, 74). The network discusses popular topics that people within the Arab region want to know about but may not have access to.

Al Jazeera has worked to create a sense of Pan-Arabism, which is also known as McArabism. Television created by Arabs for Arabs helps to form a sense of community. Nationalism and a sense of Pan-Arabism increased the potential for community interaction and mutual recognition in networks, while breaking down differences between religious and political authority as well as space and distance between people (Eickleman 2005). The idea of separate countries began to diffuse and a sense of an Arab identity arose. The programs are aimed at Arab-speakers in the Islamic world, which means that it has both addressed the region as a whole and created a common bond among members of the region (Rinnawi 2006). Influence can go beyond the boundaries of one nation and impact a whole region: “Al Jazeera emerged in an uncertain geo-political context in which the controversial ideology of the nation-state is receding in front of the more prominent trend toward transnational identities” (El Oifi 2005, 69). The television station has helped with “the erosion of state sovereignty and borders as information

barriers and the greater accessibility of regional audiences” (Rinnawi 2006, 128). This lack of boundaries makes it easier for one idea to start and bounce quickly to other nations.

Since its creation not only does the network critique behaviors of leaders in the Islamic World but it makes the leaders articulate their plans and policies more than they previously had to. The use of Al Jazeera has brought speakers and audiences closer together by creating an “alternative to the ‘official story’ promulgated by state-controlled broadcast and print media, challenging other media” (Eickleman 2005, 47). Authorities and commentators express their views on live broadcast, which enables them to be questioned and challenged in front of an audience (Eickleman 2005). Unrestricted satellite television lets the general Arab public participate in discussions about events across the region. People anywhere in the Middle East can call in and challenge the authoritarian ruler. When common citizens can ask questions on live television it forces governments to be more transparent and responsive to the public (Anderson 2003; Seib 2008). Dictators have been put on the spot and forced to be open and honest, therefore changing their influence on their constituency. The official version of news now comes from Al Jazeera and it is more objective than a state owned network and news source.

The response to this new process of open aired questioning was termed the Al Jazeera effect. Al Jazeera has also liberalized Arab media by making the topics of discussion in its sphere of influence more diverse (El Oifi 2005). Now the Arab media discusses women in society, religion, political power, the individual versus the state, and the meaning of modernity (Press and Williams 2010). Topics are not limited to those that the regime wants to discuss. Issues of importance to the people can be debated. Another contributor to liberalization of media is the use of multiple leaders of countries being questioned at once. Not only does Al Jazeera air

debates between leaders and audiences but it has discussions between different Middle Eastern leaders. Arab satellite television has “introduced viewers to the culture of public debate between various Arab figures” (El Oifi 2005, 75). This helps to spread ideas from one state to the next by increasing communication among countries.

Even those who do not live in the region can watch the network and stay informed. Al Jazeera has helped to form a McArabism sense of nationalism for Arabs in the Arab world and those “in diaspora and indigenous Arab minorities in other Middle Eastern countries” (Rinnawi 2006, 7). As well as being a satellite network, Al Jazeera has also launched a website to inform those who reside outside the Arab region. The use of the Internet for Al Jazeera has helped to “strengthen national identity while also fostering a de-territorialized identity” (Seib 2008, 66). Not only do the Internet versions of the broadcasts make those within the Arab region feel akin to one another but it bonds those abroad. The website makes it easier for people around the globe to stay informed with what is going on in the Middles East by those who reside in that area. The website receives twelve million hits per day and is the first Arabic news site of its kind (Eickleman and Anderson 2003). It enables the spread of information over a wider range of nations and people.

Al Jazeera has had a huge impact on the world, especially the Arab nations. This influence cannot be overestimated because Al Jazeera has opened up the Arab world to new opportunities (Rushing 2007). The programs are essential to Arab viewers because they provide “broadcasting in Arabic, by Arabs and for Arabs who, for decades, have been under the domination of foreign media broadcasters” (El Oifi 2005, 68). Since the news outlets for people of the Middle East were either state news or foreign coverage, they did not receive the knowledge that they needed about the region. In the past Arab nations did not know how they

compared to other areas of the world. They did not realize how fast they were falling behind not only the West but Eastern countries too (Rushing 2007). The depictions on TV make citizens compare themselves to other regions. The broadcasts allow citizens to make “comparisons between what they see on screen and what they have in almost all levels of life, particularly socially, politically, and materially” (Rinnawi 2006, 142). The depictions of what is shown about Western life on Arab television have led analysts to expect political change.

The news station of Al Jazeera has opened up the region to potential political transformations. The broadcasts are as much a political tool as anything else; it is “not only the biggest media phenomenon to hit the Arab world since the advent of television, it is the biggest political phenomenon” (Rushing 2007, 125). This new form of political information through a non-state owned broadcasting station could bring “new dimensions to freedom of expression and political action” which could lead to democratization (Seib 2008, 48). Arabs see the alternative government styles of other nations and envy some of the freedoms that they offer. Even the director of Al Jazeera in 2005 commented that “democracy is coming to the Middle East because of the communication revolution. You can no longer hide information and must now tell the people the truth. If you don’t, the people won’t follow you, they won’t support you, they won’t obey you” (Seib 2008, 141). This is a huge change from a decade ago when the media was controlled by leaders who could lie about their regimes. It is for this reason that people believe that the political landscape of the Middle East is in transition. It is all because of the opposition views and increase in availability of information that Al Jazeera has afforded the region (El Oifi 2005 and Seib 2008).

Social Media’s Impact in Politics

When most people think of social media they think of the Internet, Facebook and Twitter, but it is much more than that. Mobile phones and blogs are an important part of this new information sharing technology. It is often debated when social media was created. Some believe that in the 1980s the use of chat rooms and electronic note boards, which were the precursors to online networks and websites, were the start of social media. However, modern social media and the expansion to the level of current usage began when Web 2.0 and social networking sites came into existence (Simon 2010). Web 2.0 was introduced in 2002, when the average person could interact online with others around the world (Simon 2010).

Besides debating its true origin, scholars also differ on what components actually make up social media. All definitions of social media indicate that it has made information more available to the average person and at a quicker pace. People can receive and upload new information no matter where their location. Information is farther reaching and people can now know what is going on around the world pretty instantaneously; the population is more informed and connected to news. Social media is more instantaneous than twenty-four hour television. People are updated about an event from the people at the site before, during and after the incident has happened.

Yet scholars do differ in what they consider to be social media. Blossom (2009, 29) defines social media as “any highly scalable and accessible communications technology or technique that enables any individual to influence groups of other individuals easily.” Any social networking site, blog or mass texting device would qualify as social media under this definition. When used for political reasons sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube qualify as influencing devices. Simon (2010) considers social media to be only social networks and online networks. This only encompasses a few select websites, and not even the entire Internet.

Included in this definition are Facebook and Twitter but excluded are any site where people cannot interact with one another, which could indicate that a blog is not a form of social media. Simon (2010) also leaves out key aspects of social media including mobile technology. Lastly Press and Williams (2010) deem that social media is any new form of media, but limits it to specifically the Internet, cable and satellite television, digital recording, MP3 players and cell phones. This definition is outdated because other scholars do not consider cable television to be a form of social media, and few would classify satellite television as a source of social media either. For my thesis I will be using Blossom's (2009) definition because the others are too narrow and specific. Technology is changing so rapidly that the definition of social media needs to be variable instead of outlining only certain sites or types of appliances that can fall under the social media umbrella. Blossom (2009) also includes the influential component of social media in his definition. In this thesis it is important that people are influenced by the ideas of others. Without the ability to influence social media cannot be used as a tool to motivate people to join revolutions.

The types of social media outlets differ in usefulness and importance. Some of the most popular social media types are mobile phones, SMS messaging (more commonly known as text messaging), blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. For most of the world's population, it is cheaper to own a cell phone than a computer. The technology for text messaging makes it easier to spread information than emailing or blogging (Rheingold 2002). With a few taps of a finger, a message can be forwarded to ten friends or even an entire phonebook. The cell phone has become an important facet of society and companies are trying to monopolize on this by making "it easy to receive alerts and news via SMS" (Goggin 2011, 101). News organizations like CNN have capitalized on this.

Through the use of cell phones and smart phones, citizens have become journalists and paved the way for future social media outlets such as YouTube and Twitter to allow for trustworthy news that is broadcasted by the average citizen. When viewing old media sources today it appears that “much of the footage that was featured, capturing the latest events, was shot on mobile phone cameras, by individual protesters and witnesses ... mobile and online media, [is] featured prominently in other ways in-how this news was created, listened to and watched, and circulated” (Goggin 2011, 99). These forms of mass media are more centralized and even uploaded to social media sites as news (Hands 2011). Citizen journalists communicate on-site to the world the occurrences that are going on around the globe. All of these things allow for information to be spread easily and quickly among groups.

The phone is important but the Internet is a more recently publicized component of social media revolutions. With this new tool, people have the ability to assemble their own sites and opinions on the Internet. It is easier for people to freely post profiles on Internet sites when they feel anonymous; they do not fear the repercussions of the state. They can create identities with more ease than face-to-face encounters (Press and Williams 2010). With these identities they can meet like-minded individuals. This anonymous feeling is important in electronically restrictive regimes in the Middle East. It is easier to oppose the government when people cannot see you.⁵ These capabilities of the emerging media system will enrich cultural and political life by making communicating among people and nations easier (Press and Williams 2010). Sharing of ideas outside of government control will occur more often and the ideas produced from these conversations will enrich the region.

⁵ Lama Al-Haqhaq, “Social Media Megaphone Reaches to More People,” *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, 9 August 2011, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/881797226?accountid=14637>>.

Within the Internet, social networking sites have led people to find one another. Twitter has made huge advances for the social networking world. It was created in 2006 with the idea that it would be “a brilliant network where friends were made effortlessly and without bias and a 140-character limit ensured dialogue moved swiftly along, Twitter gave a voice to all those faces out there” (Simon 2010, 10). It has turned into an area where groups of people can meet and interact, but also where news can easily flow and circulate quickly from one group to another. People conduct conversations by tweeting at friends, who they follow. By using the same hashtag (#) people can easily find comments about the same issues. Twitter enables an information-sharing environment. Additionally with the process of retweeting, wide ranges of people can learn about current events, “The death of Michael Jackson, for example, travelled rapidly throughout the network, becoming a top trending topic and at high volume” (Crawford 2011, 116). The *New York Times* caught onto this circulation: “for many people their first contact with the news of Jackson’s death was on Twitter, before any coverage by newspapers, television or radio” (Crawford 2011, 116). It is news stories like this that made Twitter change its motto. From 2006 to 2009 the catchphrase read “what are you doing now” but the founders changed it to “what’s happening.” This switch mirrors the change in Twitter’s role from purely social to a more journalistic media source (Crawford 2011). There is an “increasing number of global news stories quoting Twitter or Twitter sources” because it is being used all across the world as more than a social network. Twitter no longer is simply the status portion of Facebook, which tells about a person’s day, it is critical news, links and the witnessing of events (Crawford 2011). As a “platform that can lend itself to the speedy delivery of breaking news headlines” Twitter is a news source in itself now (Crawford 2011, 119). The use of the social networking

site is being harnessed by some of the major networks, including the BBC, ABC and CNN, to spread breaking news to online members.

The use of social media has transformed the world of politics. Across the world more people are using the Internet for political reasons. In places such as the United States roughly three-fourths of people in the last month searched the Internet, including blogs, for political purposes.⁶ At the end of an article on a newspaper websites there is now the option to send the link to a friend, post on Facebook or Tweet about the article. Politics and social media are meshing with ease: “If ever there were an activity that was perfectly tailored for social media, politics would certainly be it ... social media enables masses of people to participate in political processes in personal ways that make all politics a local affair on a scale never before achieved in human history” (Blossom 2009, 164). It makes each issue important to the recipient of the social media update. People can also take these updates and then discuss with one another about what is going on in the political realm.

Social media allows for political issues to grow into movements. This new communication form can cover a wider range of topics and for longer periods of time than other older news sources: “traditional media finds political causes that pay for a few commercial breaks and then moves on. Social media finds causes that can grow into movements that carry personal endorsements into lasting influence” (Blossom 2009, 191). People become passionate and involved with an issue and they continue conversations about the topics through social media. Television and newspapers stop covering certain topics after a few days or if it will not support enough viewers. Yet those who are inspired do not stop caring and can continue their

⁶ Lama Al-Haqhaq, “Social Media Megaphone Reaches to More People,” *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, 9 August 2011, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/881797226?accountid=14637>>.

work through the use of social media. These small issues can turn into larger ones that are pursued until corrected.

In the last decade there have been several occasions of smart mobs. Smart mobs are demonstrations and protests that are initiated by social media instruments. Not all have been successful but in each instance the idea of revolution has begun to be spread through social media. These attempts at smart mobs have not been reserved for those in the Western world. On January 20, 2001 “President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines became the first head of state in history to lose power to a smart mob. More than 1 million Manila residents, mobilized and coordinated by waves of text messages” to take down his regime (Rheingold 2002, 157). Through the actions taken during the movement the term Generation Txt was born (Rheingold 2002). In another example of a smart mob, the people of Myanmar used social media in a different manner than those in the Philippines. Myanmar protesters in 2007 used social media to alert the world about what was occurring within the borders of the country. The government-controlled media was not accurately reporting on protests but “citizens equipped with text- and video-enabled mobile phones and concealed video cameras were able to capture many key moments of the protests and to find ways to transfer them from their phones to people outside of the country” (Blossom 2009, 189). Uploading videos to the Internet heightened awareness of what was happening. These posts enlightened outsiders because the images had circulated around the globe. The outcome of the use of the Internet was that when television and newspapers stopped covering the issue, people online still rallied behind the cause. It lasted longer through social media and more people were interested in the problems of Myanmar citizens (Blossom 2009).

The Internet has been used to mobilize groups too. The Obama campaign used “the Internet, text messaging and other forms of communication to build a now-legendary grassroots network of organizers and volunteers” (Hands 2011, 115). This added people to the campaign and made individuals feel closer to the candidate. Mobilization for a candidate could begin online and help to elect the individual. People came together in support of Obama and began to pave his road to the White House.

Social networking sites can be utilized to organize people before protests. A Facebook group known as No Mas FARC was arranged before protests in Columbia. In 2008, after the country had been terrorized by the FARC guerilla movement for decades, over a million protesters stormed the streets and acted out against the FARC group (Morozov 2011). The protests were unsuccessful because the FARC stopped the demonstrations. However, the organization of the protest was successful because those who were repressed found each other online and strove to change the status quo. Through grassroots organizations that begin online it is “thought that representative democracy and networked activism might combine to provide a radical tool to challenge the political system” (Hands 2011, 114). Mobilization online led to the materialization of protests in the streets.

Even with this failure the No Mas FARC movement in Columbia impressed governments around the world. Social networks and media had become a driving force and “American officials decided to embrace social networking sites as viable platforms for breeding and mobilizing dissent” (Morozov 2011, 182). The United States even went as far as creating a five million dollar grant from the State Department for anyone in the Middle East to request funding “for projects that would ‘develop or leverage existing social networking platforms to emphasize priorities of civil engagement, youth outreach, political participation, or nonviolent conflict-

resolution” (Morozov 2011, 183). America wanted to help the people in the Middle East during 2009. The United States saw the value in social media and how it could affect politics worldwide.

The most talked about social media political movement prior to December of 2010 was in Iran. During the 2009 protests in Iran, CNN failed to cover the story accurately (Crawford 2011). The average Twitter user who was being fed information agreed that CNN dropped the ball. Therefore “the result was the emergence and widespread use of the tag #CNNFail, which then became a trending topic on Twitter” (Crawford 2011, 122). CNN prides itself on being the number one source for political outbursts worldwide. It quickly had to play catch up, as Twitter was the major source of news. The reputation of CNN was damaged as people turned to social media for first hand accounts (Crawford 2011, 122). This incident demonstrated the failure of “old media” and solidified the transition from television to newer media forms.

Social media started as an electronic note system in the 1980s with only a handful of users and has blown up into a global phenomenon. It is expanding to more than just friend groups; it is influencing politics: “the explosion of social networking sites has succeeded in bringing people closer together as the restless masses stand on the mountaintop, waiting for the next revolution. Where will it start? Who knows? But we’ll probably read about it on Twitter first” (Simon 2010, 10). Social media will continue to impact those who look for political alternatives to their current system. People who search for reform will meet and plan online before enacting these outbursts in the real world.

Social Media in the Arab Region

As previously stated social media use to inspire political change is a global phenomenon. Prior to 2010 Iran was the biggest “success” story of social media in a protest. Social media use

in politics has happened in the Middle East before, educating both citizens and leaders about the dangers of this new communication form. While social media has been useful in political arenas around the globe, the number of users has specifically increased in the Middle East over the last few years. The usage keeps growing at a rapid rate and since 2008 the increase in social media has been enormous. One reason for the recent increased use in social media in the area can be that the majority of the population in the region is below the age of thirty (Eltahawy 2008). The youth are tech savvy and want to be a part of these social networks.

The increase in users has subsequently led to the increase in shared ideas and opposition to current political rule. It is reported that in the last six years the access to Internet has increased by five hundred percent in the Middle East, and that almost universally in Arab countries it has mobilized political youth through their new access to social media (Lynch 2007). Access to Internet is key for people to be able to access Web 2.0 and social media outlets that are based online. Arab leaders have even deemed that “technology isn’t just a luxury of the developed world; it’s a crucial tool for the developing world.”⁷ Social media is everywhere and has impacted every facet of life. Blogs have sprung up about sports, fashion and culture, as well as economics and politics. Exploring social media use in the Arab world is important for understanding the unrest today.

As there was an increase in the use of blogs, the Internet, and social networking sites, there was an increase in the number of people who went online for political reasons. The Internet became a forum for political debates and discussions for young activists, especially in Egypt (Eltahawy 2008). It presented an opportunity for people who felt marginalized or oppressed to speak their mind about their grievances towards the government. Women and

⁷ Anonymous, "Facebook, Twitter and Change in the Middle East," *Daily News Egypt*, 9 December 2010, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/816771107?accountid=14637>>.

young adults are most often in the category of frustrated people who are seeking outlets to discuss their problems (Eltahawy 2008). Sites such as Facebook allow those people to connect over common interests or frustrations. People began to find one another and by 2010, just before recent protests, the number of Facebook users increased by 78 percent in the Arab world alone (Salem and Mourtada 2011). Additionally one quarter of all Arab Facebook users are Egyptians (Salem and Mourtada 2011).

Facebook is not the only method of social networking that is popular among Middle Eastern people searching for those with similar frustrations and sentiments. Twitter has a strong following in the area. Arabs found Twitter to be a mix of blogging and social networking (Morozov 2009). It is like a blog because discussions can be about whatever the person wants, whether it is personal feelings or current events. Additionally people can link up with others who have common interests, which is the social network element. They also found that it has a real ability to “challenge authoritarian Arab regimes by shattering their ability to control the flow of information, opinion, images and ideas” (Lynch 2011, 302). As of 2009, there were 12,266 people in the Arab world who had subscribed to Twitter and many more who visited without their own personal account.⁸ In 2009, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates had the highest Twitter population of all the Middle Eastern countries.⁹ Iran took advantage of this resource in 2009 and started using it for news. With only one hundred and forty characters Twitter makes news quick and concise.¹⁰ It was used to depict to the outside world short updates of what was happening during the rallies.

⁸ Anonymous, "Middle East Twitter Growth Rockets," *Middle East Company News*, 20 July 2009, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/232792716?accountid=14637>>.

⁹ Anonymous, "Middle East Twitter Growth Rockets," *Middle East Company News*, 20 July 2009, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/232792716?accountid=14637>>.

¹⁰ Anonymous, "Middle East Twitter Growth Rockets," *Middle East Company News*, 20 July 2009, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/232792716?accountid=14637>>.

The potential for this technology to bring democracy to the region is being debated. Governments have tight control over the Internet and what gets put into cyberspace. Yet, these restrictions are not stopping the youth of Middle Eastern nations from accessing Facebook and Twitter. The tight control is backfiring and actually spawning “a generation adept at circumventing cyber road-blocks, making the country ripe for a technology-driven protest movement” (Morozov 2009, 10). This generation is enthralled with blogging and social networking as a means of self-expression. They are becoming more politically engaged and active (Lynch 2007). The restrictions are not curbing this interest or diverting the youth from the Internet. The Internet is being used across the region, from both individuals and organizations, to impact social platforms as well as politics and culture.¹¹

Social media was used as a political tool within the Arab region prior to the Arab Spring in late 2010 and early 2011. Media sources such as blogs were popular in politics in the early 2000s: “bloggers have had a discernable impact in a wide range of Arab countries, including their role in the Kefaya movement in Egypt, political protests in Bahrain, the turbulent post-Al Hariri period in Lebanon, anti-corruption campaigns in Libya and the 2006 Kuwaiti elections” (Lynch 2007, 4). In Egypt protests against President Mubarak were conducted in 2006. The Kefaya movement wanted the president to transfer power to his son, Gamal. Blogs and the Internet played key roles in mobilization of protesters. The demonstrations did not accomplish their goals because Mubarak remained in power, but the protesters were successful because of their use of the Internet to mobilize people to the cause. People learned of the protests through social media websites. Blogs spread the word about the dates of the movement. They also covered the protests before conventional news sources such as the Egyptian media and Al

¹¹ Anonymous, “Facebook, Twitter and Change in the Middle East,” *Daily News Egypt*, 9 December 2010, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/816771107?accountid=14637>>.

Jazeera reported on them (Lynch 2007). Bahrain also used blogs as a political tool. The government imprisoned people for their political beliefs that were expressed online. One such person, Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, who worked for the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was arrested (Lynch 2007). Protests broke out after this injustice. In response to the protests, the government of Bahrain arrested more political activists and bloggers. The blog was the first step in online political activism within the region (Lynch 2007).

Yet today social networks such as Twitter may be replacing blogs as the most important Internet tool when dealing with protests. Twitter has had marginal success and some argue that especially in Iran in 2009, Twitter was a catalyst for the protests. Social media was used to arrange and organize days of protest, including identifying where they would take place: “Iran’s youth effectively leveraged web-based social networking sites and messaging services to organize campaign rallies before the election, coordinate the protests that ensued, and document the police abuses at those protests” (Quirk 2009, 2). This was the critical tool to instigate and organize protests in Iran (Morozov 2009).

Iran attempted to shut down Internet service to its citizens but failed. Therefore, ordinary people used social messaging services such as Twitter and YouTube, “to document and disseminate to the world images of and information on repression in the wake of the recent election” (Quirk 2009, 2). The use of the Internet to depict the protests changed how the election results were discussed. News stations no longer focused on the political process that sparked the uprisings; the use of Twitter became the new story. The whole world began to watch, blog, Tweet, Google, and YouTube about Iran. With a few clicks of a mouse one could be “bombarded by links that seemed to shed more light on events in Iran” (Morozov 2011, 5). The protests drew people’s interest because they were believed to be the first Twitter revolution.

The number of people who were protesting the election results and wanted Ahmadinejad, the incumbent president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, out of office was a small portion of the population. However, it was this group of pro-Western and technologically savvy individuals that the world was listening to (Morozov 2009). They could manipulate the Internet and foreign countries into helping them because their side of the story was easily accessible. What has become known as Generation Txt or Generation Facebook succeeded in mobilizing people for two main reasons. The generation has taken to a bold blogging technique and then it transfers that blogging and social media use to street activism (Eltahawy 2008).

People in the West are quick to point to the Iranian revolution as a success story for social media. The use of Twitter is being celebrated while opening doors for prodemocracy throughout the region. However, before jumping to conclusions, a more critical view of Iran is necessary. There was an overemphasis on the importance of social media in the revolutions in Iran. A large portion of the population did not see the events of the election as being unfair; therefore, Ahmadinejad was not overthrown. This may be why the West focused on the Twitter use more than what the majority of the people actually wanted. Western journalists and bloggers stretched the scenario to make it a social media war (Morozov 2011). Since Mousavi, the presidential candidate running against Ahmadinejad, never gained power, numerous critics believe that the Twitter revolution was “dreamed up and advanced by cyber-utopian Western commentators, who finally got a chance to prove that the billions of hours that humanity wastes on Twitter and Facebook are not spent in vain” (Morozov 2009, 11). More than changing the political atmosphere of Iran, it proved that the West longs for a world in which social media and technology is so widespread and advanced that it can spread democracy (Morozov 2011). Looking back on the uprising, most individuals deem that the role of Twitter in the Green

Revolution of 2009, after the elections, was exaggerated. The number of Iranian Tweeters during the revolution was over estimated since many tweets about the events actually came from outside of Iran (Kavanaugh et al. 2011). Additionally people within the country did not necessarily receive their information from the social networking site. Taxi cab drivers were a main source of information for whether protests were occurring on a specific day and where they were currently taking place (Kavanaugh et al. 2011). The use of social media in Iran was similar to the Egyptian's use of Facebook in 2006, because the small percentage of people who did use social media caught the authorities off guard. This initial factor of surprise and temporary success made analysts search for a reason behind the excessive media coverage of Iran (Lynch 2011).

Critics have concluded that it is highly unlikely that a social networking site could be the main contributor to the demise of a government regime. Blogging will not broadly change the political landscape of the Middle East (Lynch 2007). Some even went so far as to indicate that “if an authoritarian regime can crumble under the pressure of a Facebook group, whether its members are protesting online or in the streets, it’s not much of an authoritarian regime. The real effects of digital activism would thus most likely be felt only in the long term rather than immediately” (Morozov 2011, 198). It is now the objective of governments to see what role these new forms of communication will take for “understanding how the Internet fits a particular political and social environment” and it is a challenge that faces every country (Morozov 2009, 14). How social media impacts politics is a topic that has been widely debated in the last year since the Arab Spring began.

The Impact of Social Media in the Arab Spring

The protests within North African and the Middle Eastern nations in 2010 and 2011 called for changes to their political system. These protests bloomed over a society-wide mobilization to remove the leaders from office (Lynch 2011). Social media was used in each of the six countries that make up the Arab uprising. Each nation utilized social media but used it in a different manner; therefore, the range of success has varied. What is common among them all is the use of one or multiple outlets including blogs, Facebook, Twitter, video sites such as YouTube, and text messaging during the Arab Spring. However conventional methods of organizing people at mosques and through fliers were used too. This allows for contradictions in examining the extent to which social media was used and the question of whether it made a difference in all of the revolutions is still being determined.

The uprisings began in Tunisia on December 18, 2010. When the day before a man committed self-immolation based off of the deprivations he felt while living in Tunisia, the country entered a state of chaos. Many people began to protest. Using Tunisia as a model, uprisings spread to Egypt and then quickly to Bahrain and Syria. Protests began in Egypt on January 25, 2011. Soon after the defeat of Mubarak the uprisings were launched in Bahrain on February 14, 2011. The last of the countries that I will analyze to engage in political activism was Syria, which didn't begin rallies until March 16, 2011.¹² During the rebellion, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen were successful in removing their leaders. In Yemen the leader was injured during an assassination attempt and temporarily left office but returned after three months and has subsequently resigned.¹³ The outcomes of both Syria and Bahrain are grimmer. The governments have brutally responded and no changes have come from the revolts.

¹² Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 <<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>.

¹³ "Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh Cedes Power," *The BBC*, 27 February 2012, accessed: 27 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17177720>>.

In 2010 by the time of the uprisings, the use of the Internet, especially social media, for political uses was commonplace in the Middle East. By the time that mobilization occurred in Egypt the number of Facebook users had risen, and there were “21 million Arab users, more than the estimated total number of newspaper readers in the region ... Egypt and Tunisia had particularly high levels of membership” (Lynch 2011, 303). However, the political aspect of the protests was not what was covered most by outside news sources. Numerous media outlets focused on the social media aspect of the demonstrations and what inspired the revolts just as much as the day-to-day struggles. Since the Arab Spring has unfolded, there have been three schools of thought about the role that social media played within the countries that protested. Some scholars believe that social media was essential for the uprisings to occur, others thought that it played no role and was over emphasized by Western nations, and the last describes the use of social media as important to outside countries but not those within the Middle East. Which of these, if any, provides the actual significance of social media in these situations will be determined in the months and years to come.

There are some scholars who attribute the Arab Spring largely to the use of social media. Prior to these outbursts social media had been growing as a political tool.¹⁴ More than simply organizing where to begin the protests, social media allowed for “like-minded members to find one another and to make their true beliefs known in a semi-public setting” (Lynch 2011, 304). Once dissatisfied people had found one another they could organize before taking their plans to the streets and general public. Social media was the key to mobilization. Facebook and Twitter have been cited as the most important aspects of the Internet to encourage the protests. After witnessing the revolts, one reporter described that “much of the online organizing and

¹⁴ Lama Al-Haqhaq, “Social Media Megaphone Reaches to More People,” *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*, 9 August 2011, ProQuest Central, accessed: 24 September 2011
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/881797226?accountid=14637>>.

mobilization that went into the Arab revolutions happened on Facebook, usually in Arabic” (Hounshell 2011, 21). This group believes that without social media no movement would have been initiated.

Others oppose this belief that social media inspired the Arab Spring. These people believe that media cannot force change onto people, that new media has its limits (Seib 2008). They deem it impossible for only a website to create such a large mass movement and for that action to be successful. These critics find it “surprisingly difficult to demonstrate rigorously that these new media directly caused any of the outcomes with which they have been associated” (Lynch 2011, 302). To the individuals that advocate for this school of thought, the same outcome would have been produced whether social media was used or not because it did not add to the demonstrations, and could potentially have hindered the revolution. Scholars purport that while social media may have been used it was not an important factor in gaining people as members of the movement for democracy. People did not organize, mobilize, or produce a successful rebellion through the use of social media tools. The protesters had grievances and took those to the streets. People learned of these demonstrations through older forms of communication and joined; that is how mobilization of the population occurred and not through social media.

There is a third grouping of people who believe that social media played a role in informing the rest of the world about what was occurring in the Middle East. In other words, social media did not impact the actual protests but the perception of them. These individuals believe that the real purpose of networks like Twitter and Facebook was changing public opinion about the demonstrations in foreign countries. It made people sympathize with those who were fighting for democracy, and it allowed them to better understand what was going on in the

country while it was happening. Most Western countries thought favorably about the leaders before December of 2010 because they were United States allies. After the use of social media to depict hardships, public opinion turned in the favor of the populations fighting for change. This had been a crucial factor in earlier Arab revolts and would be beneficial for countries during the Arab Spring. Twitter and other social media, whether it was coming from within Iran or not, exposed the 2009 Iranian protests and shaped global opinion of those in the streets. Since spreading information to outside countries had occurred before it is easy to see how it could shape public opinion again this time during the Arab Spring. Social media was used to alter the mindset of those abroad rather than to mobilize protesters to request that leaders leave.

Whether the protests began because of social media, social media helped in spreading the visualization of on-the-ground fighting, or social media played no substantial role at all is to be determined. What is known is that the desperation of one man in Tunisia led to protests, which quickly carried and spread to other Arab nations including Egypt, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, and Yemen. The uprisings in Egypt are essential for disturbances in other countries within the region. Social change that happens within Egypt is often easily reverberated and duplicated in other Arab Middle Eastern politics (Eltahawy 2008). Through the unification of the Arab region, the countries could recognize their deprivations and use technology to mobilize against their dictators.

Looking at specific countries and analyzing how social media impacted Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria individually will help to conclude whether social media influenced the Arab Spring as a whole. Whether social media led to the success of these protests and revolutions is what my thesis will explore. It will discern if the use of social media led to the Arab Spring or if journalists and the media exaggerated the impact of this communication tool.

Chapter 2: Methodology for Case Studies

In order to decide if social media played any role in the collective Arab Spring, individual nations need to be analyzed. Only six nations are considered to be a part of the Arab Spring; all of the other nations that experienced unrest were not organized enough and their protests are considered to be more clashes with the government than full on rebellions.¹⁵ The six countries that the media focused its attention on possessed the largest and most organized protests in the Arab region.¹⁶ There were other countries such as Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia that had some unrest and minor rallies. Yet they did not reach the status of revolution because civilian life and the economy were not disrupted in the same manner as the Arab Spring nations.¹⁷ I will analyze the specific circumstances that surround the mobilization and protests within Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Bahrain during the Arab uprising. Libya and Yemen have different circumstances that surround their uprisings; therefore, I will not focus on these nations within my thesis. My thesis will look at how large a role social media did play in these protests and which, if any, of the three schools of thought regarding social media influence most accurately portrays the importance of social media within each nation.

¹⁵ "The Arab Awakening," *Al Jazeera*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/2011/02/2011222121213770475.html>>; Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 <<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>; Schuman, Michael, "Why the Arab Spring Success Depends on Jobs, Not Guns," *Time Business*, 22 August 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <http://business.time.com/2011/08/22/why-the-arab-springs-success-depends-on-jobs-not-guns>>; "Arab World Uprisings: A Country-by-Country Look," *The New York Times*, 10 December 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/middleeast/middle-east-hub.html>>.

¹⁶ "The Arab Awakening," *Al Jazeera*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/2011/02/2011222121213770475.html>>.

¹⁷ "The Arab Awakening," *Al Jazeera*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/2011/02/2011222121213770475.html>>; Myre, Greg, et al., "Timeline: The Major Events of The Arab Spring," *NPR*, 12 December 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012 <<http://www.npr.org/2012/01/02/144489844/timeline-the-major-events-of-the-arab-spring>>; Schuman, Michael, "Why the Arab Spring Success Depends on Jobs, Not Guns," *Time Business*, 22 August 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <http://business.time.com/2011/08/22/why-the-arab-springs-success-depends-on-jobs-not-guns>>; "Arab World Uprisings: A Country-by-Country Look," *The New York Times*, 10 December 2011, accessed: 25 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/middleeast/middle-east-hub.html>>.

Case Study Countries

My thesis will assess which of the three schools of thought apply to each country, and from those assertions I can determine the role that social media played overall. The following chapters can attest to how important of a factor social media was in dethroning those in power and why protests failed in some states while succeeding in others. By using Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Bahrain, I will have two countries that were successful in dethroning their leaders and two that still live under their regimes (as of the time I am writing). This will make it easier to look at what impact social media has on the protests.

Specific circumstances within Libya and Yemen make these countries dissimilar from the rest of those that are categorized in the Arab Spring. Libya had an intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It was not a rebellion that was completely conducted by the citizens within the nation. Without the help of NATO and other forces, the dictator Muammar Qaddafi may not have been overthrown or killed. While the Bahrain revolution used outside forces as well, it did so at the idea of the king rather than other countries that do not have sovereignty over the nation. Social media cannot be fairly evaluated in Libya since outside forces took over the rebellion to rid the nation of Qaddafi. The success of the revolution cannot be linked with social media, because the protests within the nation are not the sole reasoning for the toppling of the government. Without the help of foreign nations the end result may have been different and not deemed a success. The impact of social media may or may not have helped to rally forces to push the president out of office but it cannot be confidently analyzed since NATO intervened. Therefore, it is difficult to compare it to the other countries within the Arab Spring movement.

Yemen is also different than the other four nations. The people of Yemen do not see

themselves in the same light that the protesters of the other five countries did. Yemenis first wanted reform and not revolution. A Yemeni journalist stated the following in an interview with *The Guardian*: "these were not spontaneous or popular protests like in Egypt, but rather mass-rallies organised by the opposition who are using events in Tunisia to test Saleh's regime. This is only the start of a fierce political battle in the run-up to Yemen's parliamentary elections in April."¹⁸ These protesters wanted to change their frustrations with the government through opposition parties and the electoral process. Additionally another thing that sets Yemen apart from the other four countries that I have chosen is the president. He was injured during an assassination attempt and left Yemen for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. He ruled from foreign soil for three months. Who knows what decisions he would have made concerning the protests if he had remained within his own borders for the entirety of the rallies.¹⁹ He finally and officially stepped down on February 27, 2012.²⁰ It is inconsistent with the other case studies that I have chosen to conduct; therefore, I will not compare it to the other countries within the Arab Spring.

Sources

When looking for sources to evaluate the impact of social media on the four countries I examine, I initially tried to get first hand accounts provided by the people within the countries or those reacting to the protests. Tweets, Facebook pages, or copies of texts that were used by protesters are the types of sources that would have been most useful. In some places, such as Egypt, that was easy to procure, while in others the Internet was not used as widely to post

¹⁸ Finn, Tom, "Yemenis take to the streets calling for President Saleh to step down," *The Guardian*, 27 January 2011, accessed: 23 December 2012, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/27/yemen-protests-president-saleh>>.

¹⁹ Leyne, Jon, "Yemen crisis: One-way ticket for Saleh?," *The BBC*, 5 June 2011, accessed: 23 December 2011, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13661373>>.

²⁰ "Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh Cedes Power," *The BBC*, 27 February 2012, accessed: 27 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17177720>>.

expressions and feelings about the revolution. Some places posted videos of what was happening but they were not beneficial for indicating the impact of social media on those rallies. The videos themselves did not indicate how many people joined the rallies because of this use of social media. I could better understand what the people of the nation and foreigners were viewing but could not see the impact that these videos had just by watching them. Therefore, the sources that I did evaluate were mostly news articles from the time period of the revolutions as well as journal articles and scholarly papers that analyzed social media or the reason for success in the Arab Spring. News articles from America, the United Kingdom, and the Arab region were used. Only articles, tweets and other sources that were written in English could be analyzed for this thesis. Additionally ongoing research from professors debating similar topics was also taken into account when addressing the influence of social media on the Arab Spring.

In all scenarios, I learned about the background and actual events that took place in the uprisings and then how social media was used to potentially influence these events and the mobilization of people. A wide variety of information was needed to be able to analyze the impact of social media. I also made sure to look at different types of social media for each nation; these types include social networking sites, video sites, mobile phones, and blogs. Different forms of social media targeted different groups; some nations used multiple media outlets while others focused directly on one or two to organize and mobilize. What social media types were used also was based on the socioeconomic makeup of the nation. In a poor country that is fighting for more political freedoms and changes to their economic system, the general population had the money to afford SMS messages but may not have had access to the Internet, which impacted social media usage.

The sources that I have chosen are necessary and essential to this research because they

provide extensive knowledge of the uprisings in each country. Analysis of social media covered an expansive amount of time so that not just the beginning organizational posts and messages were chosen to distinguish the influence. Social media was depicted from the start of the revolution to either the end or present rebellions. Not only did I use sources from before and during the revolutions, but for those countries that have overthrown their dictators, I looked at articles afterwards analyzing how the overthrow happened. These articles were not written until months later, after the countries had settled down, and academics could find reasons for the success of these protests versus previous attempts at democracy. The research covered numerous topics and was objective. The sources can accurately depict if social media was used in each country.

Schools of Thought on the Impact of Social Media

There are three general schools of thought on how social media impacted the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Bahrain. These are: social media was necessary for the revolution to begin and the revolutions would not have happened or continued without the use of social media; social media was not essential to the success of the uprising and the use of social media was exaggerated by the media; and social media was used to change the opinions of outsiders about the regime and those protesting against it rather than to organize protesters within a nation. When looking at sources and evidence to determine which of these schools a country falls under it is important to determine: when social media was used, how it was used within the country or if it was used to target those who were abroad, what types of social media were used, and what happened if and when the government tried to limit access to social media. Some countries had limited use of Internet, and others could not use broadband width or mobile phones at all because the government shut down these means of communication. Any change in style of mobilization

or change in tactics of protests after government action will contribute to my conclusions in indicating how important social media was in each case study.

If I conclude that social media was used in a country and the nation falls under the first classification of schools, then certain things had to have taken place before or during the protests. Social media must have been used to organize and mobilize people to a protest. Therefore, discussions and actions involving social media would have taken place before people moved to the streets. A specific date and time must have been set and discussed using social media outlets. Grievances must have been talked about before the protests and the official start of the revolution began. Social media would have been used to target key facts about the demonstrations including when, where and how the protests would take place. In this school any type of social media can be used, and protests will be slightly altered by the government shut down of social media forms; however, protests will still continue.

The second classification does not mean that social media was not used at all in the country. Scholars who believe that social media was over exaggerated do not think that such media sources were not utilized during the time of the uprising. They just deem that social media could not have started the revolution. Instead, built up anger caused people to protest, not a Facebook page or other form of social media. What this school deems is that the news media greatly exaggerated the use of social media during the revolution. Therefore, it did not play any role in starting the revolution and it was not essential for the revolution to continue. In this school, protests started before online discussions. These uprisings were spontaneous rather than preplanned and discussed online. Social media was not necessarily a rallying technique. People did not depend on social media to indicate what was happening within the protests. Protests would have been unchanged by the government shut down of social media forms because they

were not essential to starting or maintaining the protests. Digital media was an addition but not one that made the protests into a revolution or made the revolution successful.

The last category that social media impact can fall under is that it was necessary for altering the perceptions of foreign nations about what was happening within the country. Through outsiders viewing how protesters were treated by the current government, public opinion could change from a pro-government stance towards pro-democracy and demonstrators. This would cause foreign nations and leaders to put pressure on the Arab Spring governments to make concessions with their constituents or resign from office. For this to have occurred within a nation, those within the country need to have targeted outside individuals. In this school of thought the protesters' use of social media increased once protests began because they had more videos and tweets from the demonstrations to depict how the government was mishandling the peaceful marches. Foreigners paid more attention to the citizen based news that was coming out of revolutionary countries after protests had begun in each nation. Online social media forms would have been used more often than mobile devices or other types of digital media because the Internet can more easily reach those within foreign nations. Poor countries cannot use SMS messages to contact people in foreign nations; therefore, mobile phones would not be an important tool. Depicting hardships and protests as a form of propaganda and creating sympathy for the protesters would have been a main purpose of uploading videos to the Internet. Additionally in this school of thought, the protests would have been completely altered by the shut down of social media sources. People were willing to do anything to get back on the Internet and have access and contact to foreign nations.

These three schools differ in whether social media is deemed to make the protests a success. The first school of influence indicates that social media is necessary for protests to

begin and for them to succeed, in the second school there is no real added benefit from social media and it is unnecessary for the success of demonstrations, and finally in the third school of thought social media is necessary for the success of the revolution because foreigners would aid and support those in the streets. Of the countries that were analyzed, every school of thought was represented. By using the criteria of what social media devices were used, when they were used, how they were used in protests, and what happened when the government tried to stop demonstrators from using them, I can determine which popularly declared school of thought on the impact of social media each of the countries of the Arab Spring fall into. Through that knowledge a larger picture can be drawn on the influence of new media types in the Arab Spring, and this information will help future revolutionaries who wish for their protests to succeed.

Chapter 3: The Uprising in Tunisia

Tunisia was the first of the Arab uprisings to occur. Citizens within the nations were tired of the corrupt regime and lack of economic mobility. The protests began on December 18, 2010, and lasted until January 14, 2011. These rallies set an example for the rest of the Arab world, demonstrating that peaceful protests could accomplish the goals of their participants. The president was forced to leave the country because the population was not willing to make concessions or have him in power for any longer than his current reign had permitted.

Social media was prevalent during the Arab uprisings. In Tunisia, mobile devices and uploaded videos on the Internet were the most important forms of social media. However, these devices were used after December 17, 2010, when the revolution began and after December 18, 2010, when the first protests broke out in Sidi Bouzid. Social media was used more to depict the treatment of police towards those protesting in the streets, which reminded people why the protests began and how the protests began in the first place. Social media was not used until after the beginning of the uprising. In fact other forms of media and organizational tactics were used instead. Unions, professional groups and satellite TV had large impacts in the beginning of the protest.²¹ People with common grievances stormed the streets in protests against the government. Social media was not utilized to begin these protests, which is why social media use in the rebellion of Tunisia is categorized as over exaggerated and not important for the success of the demonstrations.

²¹ Lewis, Aidan, "Tracking Down the Ben Ali and Trabelsi Fortune," *The BBC News*, 30 January 2011, accessed: 12 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12302659>>.

Table 1: The important dates in the Tunisian Revolution.

WikiLeaks article was posted online – December 7, 2010
Bouazizi conducts the act of self-immolation –December 17, 2010
First Protest—December 18, 2010
Internet blackout begins – January 7, 2011
Concessions between Ben Ali and the people begin – January 12, 2011
President Ben Ali resigns –January 14, 2011

Events in Tunisia

President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (usually referred to as President Ben Ali) had been the leader of Tunisia for twenty-three years, since he took over in a bloodless coup. His family ruled the country in a mafia-esque manner because they had a stake in every major business in the economy. Ben Ali, his wife and close family, controlled thirty to forty percent of the entire Tunisian economy.²² They were domineering and conducted business in fraudulent manners, which created the mafia nickname of “The Family” among Tunisian citizens (Dickinson 2011). The website WikiLeaks, which is devoted to bringing secure or innovative news and information to the world, helped to publicize some of the corruption present within the ruling family (Anderson 2011). The website demonstrated the disparity between the people of Tunisia and “The Family” when it leaked videos and documents from government officials on December 7, 2010 (Anderson 2011). Table 1 indicates that on December 7, the WikiLeaks website uploaded videos of private jets taking Ben Ali’s wife shopping in Europe. It also had accounts from the U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia describing the luxuries that President Ben Ali and his family had attained. The report mentioned their spacious home, which was covered with ancient artifacts

²² Lewis, Aidan, “Tracking Down the Ben Ali and Trabelsi Fortune,” *The BBC News*, 30 January 2011, accessed: 12 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12302659>>.

from around the world, lovely multiple course meat filled dinners, a pet tiger, and a wait staff including a Bangladesh butler and South African nanny (Anderson 2011). These items are all rare in Tunisia and to see so much wealth and flaunting of that wealth in one place angered the people of Tunisia. The average everyday Tunisian was “struggling to build livelihoods, while the families of the president and those connected to him enriched themselves” at the expense of the general population (Angrist 2011, 1). This had become an increasingly problematic situation in “the context of the financial and economic crisis of the last two years.”²³ The citizens within the country could no longer ignore the problems and frustrations that they felt toward the government, including “high unemployment and regional inequities. As a consequence, the risks to the regime's long-term stability [were] increasing.”²⁴ After WikiLeaks spread this information, the Tunisian government began to crackdown on social networks and the Internet because it did not want these images to become widespread (Anderson 2011).

While corruption was a huge part of why protesters wanted President Ben Ali gone, it was not the sole grievance that incited the revolution; inequalities and the lack of opportunities also inspired people to take action. The official figure for the overall unemployment rate in Tunisia was fourteen percent before December 2010; yet, in reality it was much higher.²⁵ More specifically for the age range of fifteen to twenty-nine year olds, the unemployment rate for those with educations was thirty percent.²⁶ Fed up with the lack of economic opportunity and mobility as well as the rampant poverty within Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi decided to make a statement.

²³ Lewis, Aidan, “Tracking Down the Ben Ali and Trabelsi Fortune,” *The BBC News*, 30 January 2011, accessed: 12 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12302659>>.

²⁴ “US Embassy Cables: Tunisia-a US Foreign Policy Conundrum,” *The Guardian*, 7 December 2010, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/217138>>.

²⁵ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

²⁶ Borger, Julian, “Tunisian President Vows to Punish Rioters After Worst Unrest in a Decade,” *The Guardian*, 29 December 2010, accessed: 12 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/29/tunisian-president-vows-punish-rioters>>.

The revolution in Tunisia officially began on December 17, 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a twenty-six year old college educated vegetable vendor, conducted the act of self-immolation in front of a government building.²⁷ Inequalities were the main motivator for Bouazizi. He chose this spot as a sign of disrespect to the police and government of Tunisia. This was an act of desperation for he had tried to seek help regarding his food stand but was beaten every time he went to an authority figure to seek guidance. Bouazizi went further and further into debt just to try and sell enough food everyday to earn money to feed himself, but “The Family” could fly to Europe for shopping or to Disney World for a vacation (Anderson 2011). It was hard for people with an education to find a job so they resorted to selling simple things like vegetables to make money. Occupations such as this employed the poorest people within the country of Tunisia. When Bouazizi lit himself on fire, “this set off protests about jobs in the town, which has an agriculture-based economy in one of the poorest regions of the country.”²⁸ It began the revolution in Tunisia and then what became known as the Arab Spring.

His action was the spark necessary to inspire people first in Sidi Bouzid, where Bouazizi lived and worked, and then other provinces around Tunisia to protest against President Ben Ali’s rule.²⁹ Bouazizi’s act was so dramatic and beyond normal social parameters that other Tunisians also decided the President’s reign had been unbearable for too long. They flocked to the streets: “these were the first protestors, who rioted in the streets of Sidi Bouzid. Their actions triggered bandwagoning by thousands more who joined the demonstrations, emboldened by the sight of their fellow citizens daring to confront the regime” (Angrist 2011, 1). While protests began in

²⁷ “Tunisia,” *The New York Times*, 28 October 2011, accessed: 23 December 2011 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/tunisia/index.html?scp=6&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

²⁸ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

²⁹ “Tunisia,” *The New York Times*, 28 October 2011, accessed: 23 December 2011 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/tunisia/index.html?scp=6&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

Sidi Bouzid, they quickly spread around the nation. Clashes were contained to Sidi Bouzid for more than ten days but shortly before the New Year they spread to neighboring towns.³⁰ These areas include Thala, Kasserine, and Regueb, which are closer to the capital Tunis than Sidi Bouzid is. Protests moved from one town to another as more people were outraged at the reaction of authority figures to the peaceful demonstrators: “these demonstrations then spread elsewhere ... the violent response of the authorities - with the police opening fire on demonstrators - appears to have exacerbated anger and ignited further protests.”³¹ Police violence was common in all towns, not just Sidi Bouzid. Over the particularly bloody weekend of January 8 and January 9, 2011, five people were killed in Thala, three were declared dead in Kasserine, and three were killed in Regueb.³²

The classes of people who tended to join the protests were students. Unemployed students, graduates, and lawyers were the first wave of protesters because they were frustrated with the lack of opportunities and freedoms, “the excesses of the ruling class and anger at police brutality seem to have come together to spark an unstoppable wave of public anger.”³³ Students were suffering the most because they were educated but could not make money; this is why they were the first groups of people to move to the streets in Sidi Bouzid (Howard and Hussain 2011). Soon others joined the demonstrations and protests within each town went morphed from a few hundred people to a little over a thousand. It was not until after the death of Bouazizi on January

³⁰ Borger, Julian, “Tunisian President Vows to Punish Rioters After Worst Unrest in a Decade,” *The Guardian*, 29 December 2010, accessed: 12 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/29/tunisian-president-vows-punish-rioters>>.

³¹ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

³² Borger, Julian, “Tunisia: 11 Die in New Clashes After Weeks of Unrest,” *The Guardian*, 9 January 2011, accessed: 12 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/09/tunisia-clashes-weeks-unrest>>.

³³ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

4, 2011, that the number of protests and demonstrators swelled in Tunis.³⁴ Even with the swell in numbers, the demands of the protesters did not change much over the month long demonstrations. Beginning as an outcry over the inequalities and corruption within Tunisia, the demands quickly moved from the call for reforms to the end of President Ben Ali's rule as well.

President Ben Ali put up restrictions to stop the protests. He encouraged the police to take action against those who were in the streets, saying that the brutality would be ok since it was considered "protecting public property against a small number of 'terrorists.'"³⁵ Additionally to keep people off the streets, "all universities and schools were closed in a bid to keep young people at home."³⁶ In a final attempt to stop the spread of protests, the government shut down the Internet on January 7, 2011 (Anderson 2011). Since the Internet had not been used as an organizational tool, face-to-face contact continued to spread the word about the revolution. The blackout did not affect the protests or slowdown the rallies in the street because it did not impact personal contact. Yet that effort at stopping mobilization to the rebellion didn't work either, so President Ben Ali changed tactics and attempted to compromise with the now growing number of protesters. To his dismay, bargaining was the only option that would allow him to remain in office.

Even though protests began to get ugly, with increased number of deaths, President Ben Ali was not willing to withdraw his power so quickly. President Ben Ali fought for his position in office even as "the clashes became much more deadly on the weekend of 8-9 January, and then spread to the capital Tunis. The government says 78 people have been killed in the

³⁴ "Witnesses Report Rioting in Tunisian Town," *Reuters Africa*, 19 December 2010, accessed: 20 January 2012 <<http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE6I06U20101219>>.

³⁵ "Q&A: Tunisia Crisis," *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

³⁶ "Q&A: Tunisia Crisis," *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

protests.”³⁷ He did not initially want to give up his reign so he tried to bargain. On January 12, 2011, he fired his whole cabinet and interior minister and ordered the release of those who had been arrested during the protests (Anderson 2011). He tried to curb anger by creating a government department that would investigate corruption.³⁸ Citizens knew that most of the corruption came from within President Ben Ali’s office and no one would dare investigate him; therefore, this committee was a sham. The protesters wanted real change and continued their demonstrations for his departure from the country. He also tried to sweeten the deal by ordering his “security police to stop using live ammunition on protesters . . . cut the price of basic foodstuffs, and promised to allow a freer media and end Internet censorship” (Zuckerman 2011, 1). Ben Ali kept making concessions because none were working; he tried to meet the demands of the protesters but all they wanted was his removal and a new government system.

Further concessions were made that targeted root causes of protests. Another change that Ben Ali tried was to create an extra 300,000 jobs in the economy. President Ali hoped that this would solve one of the demands that protesters had against the regime. Lastly President Ben Ali stated that he would not run for reelection in 2014 when his term was supposedly going to end and that he would establish “new parliamentary elections within six months.”³⁹ Yet all of these attempts to ameliorate the lives of Tunisians were not enough for the people of Tunisia. Citizens did not believe that anything proposed by Ben Ali would actually illicit change. On January 13, Ben Ali initiated a curfew for the Tunisian people. This was the final straw for demonstrators. Those in the streets continued to rally, and protests exploded in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia.

³⁷ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

³⁸ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

³⁹ “Q&A: Tunisia Crisis,” *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

People ignored the nighttime curfew that Ben Ali had set in place and stayed in the streets. They did not want to leave until Ben Ali resigned from the government.⁴⁰ President Ben Ali was forced from office and fled Tunisia for Saudi Arabia, which was one of the only places that he was granted exile, on January 14, 2011.

Uses of Social Media

Social media specifically mobile phones and sites such as *DailyMotion*, which hosts videos and is used like YouTube, were utilized during the Tunisian uprising. Tunisia is unique among North African countries because a large percentage of its citizens actually used social networking websites before December 2010. A little less than twenty percent of those with Internet access had their own Facebook accounts (Kavanaugh et al 2011). However, the country ranks one hundred and sixty fourth out of one hundred and seventy eight nations in the world for press freedom; the government censors most of the Internet.⁴¹ With such strict censorship anything anti-government was forbidden and closely monitored. A jail sentence was likely given to anyone who opposed the government through the Internet. During the protests, the most popular forms of social media were video uploading websites (whether it was *DailyMotion* or Facebook) and SMS messaging. Although text messages and videos that were uploaded to the Internet were important tools for educating people on the protests occurring in the country, they did not start until after the revolution had begun (Howard and Hussain 2011). Therefore, the Internet social media sites were not used for organization in Tunisia. Tunisia mobilized and organized using ways of communicating that the state could not control.

⁴⁰ "Q&A: Tunisia Crisis," *The BBC*, 19 January 2011, accessed: 4 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12157599>>.

⁴¹ Lewis, Aidan, "Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets," *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

Social media only came into play for people in other cities of Tunisia who heard of Bouazizi and the uprisings in Sidi Bouzid that took place shortly after he set himself on fire. Some people learned about the rallies through word of mouth or witnessing one and felt encouraged to participate. To learn more information about what was going on within the country than could be discovered through face-to-face encounters, Tunisians could use social media. Traditional media forms such as newspaper articles, were controlled by President Ben Ali, and could not be trusted. Since national television was not covering the situation and foreign media was chalking it up to vandalism or terrorism within Tunisia, people who wanted the truth turned to their phones and the Internet (Zuckerman 2011). The Tunisian public could not even look at outside news sources for help because news stories on sites such as the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and other foreign correspondents were blocked online during the protests.⁴² Online posts uploaded by natives, informed people of the reasons, actions and responses to the Tunisian protests. While social media was used by some it was not enough people to warrant this communication type an intricate part of rallying people to the protests.

The sudden surge in Internet activity, after protests began when people were attempting to inform other Tunisians through videos about the ongoing protests, caught Al Jazeera's attention and educated the station on the situation too. These posts made Al Jazeera dispatch someone to cover the revolts (Howard and Hussain 2011). It was the first news station to cover what was actually going on in Tunisia, and it had footage of the demonstrations. Al Jazeera picked up the videos of citizens in the streets and played them on the air and online. More people in Tunisia would have learned about protests through this television coverage rather than through the Internet.

⁴² Lewis, Aidan, "Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets," *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

Al Jazeera's coverage allowed neighboring countries in the Arab region to see the protests that were occurring within the country. It also allowed other regions of the world to see that the uprising was not an act of terrorism or vandalism, but instead peaceful gatherings to fight for more freedoms and a new government. The videos also showed the abuse of the military and government, as they beat and shot at the peaceful protesters (Howard and Hussain 2011). People saw treatment of protesters and went into the streets. Al Jazeera, while important in the region, is merely satellite television and not social media; therefore, those who joined the cause after these broadcasts cannot be attributed to social media use. The use of videos on the Internet corrected misunderstandings about the reasoning behind the protests. Through Tunisians' use of websites such as the *DailyMotion*, Al Jazeera picked up the news and made it easy for Arab nations to discount other reporters' misinformed accounts of the Tunisian uprising (Zuckerman 2011).

Facebook and Twitter

The Internet was used to upload videos of people actually protesting. More specifically, Facebook, *DailyMotion*, and Twitter were the social media sites that were used to upload videos or post about the demonstrations. Yet, before celebrating the use of these Web 2.0 devices, there are some caveats. Only thirty-four percent of the people within Tunisia prior to Ben Ali's removal were online and of those a mere eighteen percent used Facebook.⁴³ Of the thirty-four percent who have access to the Internet many were elite, and not disadvantaged students or unemployed citizens. While this is higher than most Middle Eastern and North African countries, the Tunisian government restricted most aspects of the Internet. Therefore these sites were used to inform the people of the nation about what had already happened in the

⁴³ Lewis, Aidan, "Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets," *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

demonstrations rather than incite protests by organizing people to a new rally. This is why the people of Tunisia did not conspire to have large days of unified protest. Social media was not used to organize and anything posted on the Internet was about prior demonstrations not upcoming unrest.

Scholars have searched for a way to link Bouazizi and social media. Yet he was “not the linked-in, internet whizz, you may have read about, who wrote online about his intentions and frustrations.”⁴⁴ Bouazizi did not update a post, status, or tweet to indicate to the world his actions, for with such strict Internet censorship that may have stopped him from being able to accomplish them. In fact, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter were not used for political reasons until after the start of protests on December 18, 2010, since the videos posted were mostly of rallies. Once people moved to the streets “a steady flow of protest videos, tweets, and political manifestos ... continued to make its way onto the web in a variety of languages: Arabic, the Darija Tunisian dialect, French and English.”⁴⁵ People posted regular videos to *DailyMotion* and updated their Facebook pages to demonstrate what was happening in Tunisia. After these videos and subsequent posts about them were put online, people learned more about each other’s grievances. However, no organization of protests occurred online.

The use of social media allowed for Al Jazeera to use the content to broadcast the protests to the rest of the world (Howard and Hussain 2011). The videos that were used were of how people were protesting and how the authority figures were reacting. Knowledge of this police brutality rallied people in other cities besides Sidi Bouzid and made them take to the streets in protest of the behavior of the government. The videos themselves were not used to mobilize

⁴⁴ Davies, Wyre, “Doubt Over Tunisian ‘Martyr’ Who Triggered Revolution,” *The BBC*, 16 June 2011, accessed: 12 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13800493>>.

⁴⁵ Lewis, Aidan, “Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets,” *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

people. Unintended social media use, through Al Jazeera picking up some footage from either *DailyMotion* or other social media posts, could have inspired other people, but social media was not intentionally used to mobilize the population of Tunisia.

Twitter feeds of Tunisians were not used to encourage people to start protesting either. When analyzing Twitter feeds about the Tunisian revolution, it was found that the most frequent tweeters were not even based in Tunisia. It was others outside the country who tweeted and posted about the events and were commenting on the circumstances that were occurring in Tunisia (Kavanaugh et al 2011, 5). This adds to the case that those within the country were not using social media to perpetuate the revolution. Twitter was a luxury of the elite. While most people do have mobile phones, they are not advanced enough to have the Internet on them; most tweeters were already in the street versus those waiting for a reason to join the cause. Not only were the biggest Twitter proponents not updating from the country where protests were taking place, but also tweets and hashtags including the words Tunisia drastically spiked after President Ben Ali left office. Furthermore, this conclusion that Tunisian citizens were inactive on Twitter had nothing to do with the Internet blackout. The tweets that were analyzed occurred between January 1, 2011, and February 1, 2011, which is both well before and after the government shut down access to the Internet (Tsotsis 2011). On January 13, 2011 the largest number of tweets at one time was 5,000 but on January 14, 2011 after Ben Ali's plane left for Saudi Arabia, the number spiked to about 18,000 (Tsotsis 2011).

The Tunisian government attempted to censor the use of social media sites on the Internet in early December. Before shutting down the Internet, the government tried to erase blog websites and subversive pages on social networking sites. To do this a new JavaScript, which is the language that is used for computer programming of websites, was written and added into the

login page of Facebook, Gmail and similar sites. The Tunisian Internet Agency embedded this JavaScript into sham Facebook URLs (the web-addresses) and began “harvesting passwords and usernames of bloggers, reporters, political activists and protesters” while bringing them to a nonexistent webpage (Anderson 2011, 2). This brought the user to an error page with the number 404 and text saying that the website had not been found. While this fake site loaded, the government received all of the individual’s personal information. Police around the country used this new knowledge to apprehend those who wrote threatening things about the government on these sites (Anderson 2011). At least five opposition bloggers and a rap artist were arrested in the following days.

The government shut down the Internet on January 7, 2011. No longer were Internet sites labeled as “not found” because the government deleted and censored them; instead the Internet was not accessible to the population at all. The lack of Internet did not stop the protests because people could still contact one another through cell phones and when face-to-face in the streets during protests. The news media over exaggerated the use of Facebook and Twitter as sources of social media. These sites were not needed for the revolution in Tunisia to begin nor were they used to organize any of the protests during the rebellion against the government. Videos on the Internet did not change the opinion of others; they educated and informed people.

Mobile Phones

Pictures that were sent through SMS messages serve more of a purpose than the sources of Facebook, Twitter and other Internet sites. The percentage of the Tunisian population that had cell phones in 2009 was ninety-five percent (Kavanaugh et al, 2). A small percentage of people within the country have access to Facebook, but almost everyone has a mobile phone. Citizens described the month of upheaval as a time when people ran into the streets to protest carrying

only two things, a rock and a cell phone (Kavanaugh et al 2011). Since mobile phones are so prevalent, they are better to use than Internet postings when a message needs to circulate among a large portion of the public. Thus, SMS messages were the most popularly used social media form during the protests (Howard and Hussain 2011). The SMS messages that were sent during the protests were geared toward people within the country of Tunisia (Howard and Hussain 2011). Messages received on a phone were used to continue to motivate people rather than spur anger in those who had been complacent. It was not until early January, after the death of Bouazizi, that mobile phones began to be used. At this point there were already a plethora of people in the street and social media was not needed to inspire the revolution (Howard and Hussain 2011).

Phones continued to provide the motivation needed for people to continue storming the streets in protest after weeks had gone by with no concessions. When Bouazizi lit himself on fire, it did not go unnoticed or undocumented. People within Sidi Bouzid captured this action on mobile video and pictures. The government may not have made a big deal about the self-immolation, but citizens were cognizant of this intentional censoring. Scholars have classified this as the ignition phase of the protests, because it involved an “incident that the state-run media ignored, but which came to wide notice online and enraged the public” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 42). Pictures of Bouazizi’s courageous act and later of his dead body kept the enraged public angry (Howard and Hussain 2011). These pictures continued to motivate protests. After the New Year, SMS messages reminded Tunisians that Bouazizi gave his life to fight against the economic inequalities within the nation that would allow its people to live in a perpetual state of poverty, while elite family members lived like lavish kings.

Bouazizi did not die from his self-immolation until January 4, 2011. His actual death encouraged more people and gave a renewed sense to the protest. Graphic pictures of a burned or dead Bouazizi were used to inspire people who were rallying for a new regime. After his death, a new surge of critics of the president and his rule went from the virtual world to public places to finish what Bouazizi had started (Howard and Hussain 2011). After weeks of protests with no noticeable gains, these pictures served as a reminder of injustices towards the citizens of Tunisia. It kept people in the streets demanding change rather than admitting defeat and going back to their regular lives. The pictures of Bouazizi's body may have encouraged people at the end of the rebellion, but at this point in the revolution any added people in the street were just icing on the cake. Tunisians were protesting and dragging friends and family into the streets each day because they sensed the weakness of President Ben Ali's rule (Anderson 2011). The protests in Tunisia began without the use of phones and would have continued to succeed without the advent of messages from mobile devices.

The Internet blackout did not strongly alter the use of phones. Mobile phones were the most popular social media form in Tunisia, and continued to be used at a similar rate both before and after January 7, 2011. Social media was used only to sustain the already occurring anger at the ruling government through text messages and videos of the treatment of protesters. It was not until early January, when protests were well underway, that "mobile-phone videos of police repression were streaming across North Africa" (Howard and Hussain 2011, 37). The videos were used to continue motivating those who were already fighting for the removal of President Ben Ali. They continued to motivate but did not start the protests and were not necessary for them to happen.

Impact of Social Media

It is debated how important social media was to the dethroning of President Ben Ali. Was this the first social media revolution victory? After looking at the evidence of Tunisia different scholars have diverse opinions, although they generally fall into the latter two categories: over exaggerated when coming to the revolution, or important for changing the opinions of outsiders about those who were fighting.

There are numerous people who believe that the use of social media was over exaggerated throughout the Tunisian revolt. Those who support this theory deem that Tunisians took action because of “decades of frustration, not in reaction to a WikiLeaks cable, a denial-of-service attack, or a Facebook update” (Zuckerman 2011, 3). There were numerous problems with the government of Tunisia and people finally got tired of the corruption. These individuals would argue that the citizens knew of the extravagances that “The Family” had and they did not need a WikiLeaks report to become educated. It is unknown if this WikiLeaks page was even looked at by those in the country, and “it remains unclear if Mohamed Bouazizi ... had even heard of WikiLeaks” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 38). Protesters did not need social media to ensure that Ben Ali resigned from office.

In Tunisia, the people who used the social media websites were generally college educated. The majority of social media users and protesters were young adults, but because of life expectancy that is also the largest population of people within Tunisia (Kavanaugh et al 2011). Social media was not used until protests in the streets were underway. Therefore the first grouping of revolutionaries felt the same deprivations as Bouazizi, lived in Sidi Bouzid and after seeing his actions wanted to protest too. People assembled because they found that “in their shared sympathy for the dying man, networks of family and friends came to realize that they shared common grievances too” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 36). Within Tunisia digital media

was not used to organize people so citizens went into the streets before going online. When people were together they realized their collective goals of ridding the country of President Ben Ali because of the actions he took against his own citizens (Howard and Hussain 2011). Demands based off of past grievances were set and people hoped to change the political atmosphere of Tunisia.

How the protests were covered by journalists lead some scholars to believe social media inspired other countries and informed foreigners on what was happening. Before the Internet postings to Facebook, Twitter and *DailyMotion* by the people within Tunisia, it was unknown what was happening there. The Tunisian government would not let reporters into the country. There was little to no coverage by domestic news, let alone foreign correspondents, of the protests in Sidi Bouzid and other regions.⁴⁶ Once outside reports began, foreign and domestic broadcasts deemed the protests to be vandalism, terrorism or just protests about unemployment, all of which were wrong.⁴⁷ The government wanted to keep the disruptions quiet so, “reporters were prevented from traveling to cover protests in Sidi Bouzid” (Zuckerman 2011, 2). The *New York Times* did not even begin to report about this topic until January 10, 2011, which is only four days before Ben Ali left office.⁴⁸ Therefore *The New York Times* and foreign journalists could not get the full correct story since they arrived so late to the revolution; people within the country were the only form of news for the people on this topic. News outlets were way behind the game, and if it weren't for citizen journalists this could have been a huge missed opportunity for the Arab world and the rest of the Arab uprisings.

⁴⁶ Lewis, Aidan, “Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets,” *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

⁴⁷ Lewis, Aidan, “Tunisia Protests: Cyber War Mirrors Unrest on Streets,” *The BBC*, 14 January 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12180954>>.

⁴⁸ “Tunisia,” *The New York Times*, 28 October 2011, accessed: 23 December 2011 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/tunisia/index.html?scp=6&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

Tunisia is not a Social Media Success

Tunisia was the revolution that led to all of the others. Without this uprising the Arab Spring might not have happened. Social media played a small role once protests were under way. Yet the role of social media within this country that is purported by the news media was greatly exaggerated. Headlines such as “Tweeting Tyrants Out of Tunisia: Global Internet at Its Best” and “The First WikiLeaks Revolution?” demonstrate the media’s ploy to attribute the revolution to social media. Social media was not used to coordinate the first protests, nor was it used to organize later mobilizations. It was used to keep people motivated but rarely spurred emotions that would lead them to the streets. Social media could not be used to mobilize or organize because the demonstrations in Tunisia were unintended and spontaneous outbursts calling for a new government. The revolution was leaderless. There were no formal protests; people stormed the street in response to Bouazizi’s action and then subsequently to how those who sympathized with him were treated by police. There was no social media organization of when, where or how to protest that was posted online.

Tunisia has been compared to Iran in 2009, the most successful social media revolution until the Arab Spring. Critics and authors have concluded that when it comes to the aspect of social media use during rallies “had the Tunisian protests hit during a slow news month, it’s still unlikely they would have been followed as closely as events in Iran” (Zuckerman 2011). Nor should it have been because the protests did not begin because of social media. They were inspired by a grievance of a man not the WikiLeaks page, a blog post, or a social networking group. The use of social media forms was over exaggerated; this was not the first successful Twitter revolution or the first WikiLeaks revolution. It was simply long overdue protests against a controlling and corrupt government. The revolution was inevitable. The policewoman Hamdi,

who is claimed to have slapped Bouazizi sending him into a frenzy that ended with his self-immolation stated: “today, tomorrow, or after tomorrow, it was going to happen, because of the accumulation of frustration. We don't know when exactly, but we knew it was going to happen. He was just the first spark. It was like a full glass of water, and he was the drop that made it overflow.”⁴⁹ With or without social media, the Tunisians were going to revolt and succeed in dethroning Ben Ali.

Tunisia falls into the second category of scholars’ depiction of social media use in the Arab Spring; social media use was over exaggerated. Social media was used but it was not necessary for the revolution to take place, and it did not change foreigners’ opinions from dictatorship to pro-protesters. Foreign countries, once they learned the truth about the reasoning of the protests mere days before they ended, fully supported those in the streets. Tunisia as a democracy is not as much of a threat as other Middle Eastern countries, so there was no need to convince outsiders that the people deserved more rights. People did not need social media to indicate that the rule of President Ben Ali needed to end. Social media usage was not important to the rallies and the protests would have succeeded without the videos and SMS messages. The media should have focused on the rallies for a new government rather than the false statement of how social media or a WikiLeaks post of a document from 2009 was used to create those rallies.

Epilogue: What is Happening in Tunisia Since Ben Ali Left

Tunisia has rid the country of Ben Ali. Even with this supposed new freedom of democracy and elections, citizens feel that little has changed since the ousting of the regime. Economic restrictions within the nation still exist. People feel helpless since they fought to

⁴⁹ Bowen, Jeremy, “Tunisia: Broken Dreams Six Months After Revolution,” *The BBC*, 11 July 2011, accessed: 6 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14104682>>.

achieve more rights and have seen little to no change.⁵⁰ They do not know where to go from this point because they deem that protests got them where they are today and would not work to accomplish goals if they have not succeeded yet. The people of Tunisia do not know how to alter their state to achieve the original goals of the 2011 revolution. More freedoms were the demands of the people in 2011, but when looking at the results of the election this does not seem to be the future of the nation. Surprisingly, Tunisia has put its faith into a religious political party to lead the country to a democratic future. It is too soon to see how this will impact the goal of democracy and modernization.

The economy, job market, and lives of people have not improved vastly since Ben Ali left Tunisia. In the six months that immediately followed Bouazizi's death and then the end of the successful revolution, over one hundred people in Tunisia conducted the act of self-immolation.⁵¹ People are frustrated with the lack of opportunities and increasingly upset about no apparent change in their lifestyles since ridding themselves of the corrupt regime of Ben Ali. The number of people who believe that there is no future prosperity in Tunisia and ultimately chose self-immolation has increased five-fold since the end of the revolution.⁵² This does not depict progress in the country and indicates that the people and nation are more unstable now than before the uprising. Those who are most willing to make such a statement are type-casted and fit a profile: they are "unemployed and (perhaps unrealistically) disillusioned that the revolution had not yet delivered real economic reform."⁵³ Tunisia was the first successful country to overthrow its dictator in the Arab Spring, the first to hold elections, and the first to

⁵⁰ "Tunisia One Year on: New Trend of Self-Immolation," *The BBC*, 12 January 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16526462>>.

⁵¹ "Tunisia One Year on: New Trend of Self-Immolation," *The BBC*, 12 January 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16526462>>.

⁵² "Tunisia One Year on: New Trend of Self-Immolation," *The BBC*, 12 January 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16526462>>.

⁵³ "Tunisia One Year on: New Trend of Self-Immolation," *The BBC*, 12 January 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16526462>>.

demonstrate to the world that just because a country expels its leader does not mean that all of its problems will be solved. It takes more than one election to rid a country of years of corruption and governmental abuses, but people are unwilling to wait that long before seeing any change to their country and lives.⁵⁴

Elections in Tunisia were initially supposed to occur over the summer of 2011 but were delayed until October of 2011 because of improper ways to register voters. There were 400,000 Tunisians with outdated forms of identification cards; therefore, they could not register to vote, and the switch was made to hold elections in October.⁵⁵ After this mix-up was corrected, only “around 55% of the total number of Tunisians eligible to vote - were registered.”⁵⁶ By the time October emerged and all of the problems with registration in the underdeveloped country were resolved, ninety percent of Tunisians actively participated in the election for a new Constituent Assembly.⁵⁷ People were lined up for hours waiting to cast their votes, and the elections went smoothly. The citizens of Tunisia were simply proud to have the ability to vote for their own government and hoped their vote would make a difference in their lives.

While elections give the promise of hope, there will be a slow change in the lives of those within Tunisia. Within the elections the people of Tunisia had a few political parties that they could chose to elect from. The main contenders in the Tunisian elections were the Ennahdha, which is the most popular political party in Tunisia and it is also an Islamist based party; the Progressive Democratic Party, which is the most well-established secular party and unlike most parties was legal under President Ben Ali; and the Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties,

⁵⁴ Bowen, Jeremy, “Tunisia: Broken Dreams Six Months After Revolution,” *The BBC*, 11 July 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14104682>>.

⁵⁵ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

⁵⁶ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

⁵⁷ Little, Allan, “Tunisians Embrace Democratic Life,” *The BBC*, 27 October 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15462198>>.

which is a social democratic party.⁵⁸ In October voters were electing people to the “new Constituent Assembly which will draw up a new constitution and appoint a new transitional government until further elections return a permanent government.”⁵⁹ The Constituent Assembly will be comprised of two hundred and seventeen seats, and it will have one year to create and write a new constitution for the country.⁶⁰ Of the two hundred and seventeen positions that were elected, “199 seats [were] contested in 27 constituencies in Tunisia and 18 seats [were] marked for Tunisians abroad voting in six overseas constituencies.”⁶¹ The Ennahdha party won about half of the seats in the assembly and the other half was taken by various secular parties.⁶² A coalition will be formed to create the new country, and the Ennahdha will have the most representation.⁶³

Since the Ennahdha won and plan to use Islamic law as a part of their platform to rule, some people are concerned. Yet the religious party declared that the results of the election were “not necessarily an embrace of religious rule. But they also cautioned that voters had been looking to punish those secular parties that appeared to pick a fight with religion.”⁶⁴

Spokespeople stated that the Ennahdha party did not attract voters just because of their religious

⁵⁸ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

Kirkpatrick, David D., “Tunisia Liberals See a Vote for Change, Not Just for Islamists,” *The New York Times*, 25 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/world/africa/tunisia-liberals-see-a-vote-for-change-not-just-for-islamists.html?scp=11&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

⁵⁹ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

⁶⁰ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

⁶¹ “Q&A: Tunisia Elections,” *The BBC*, 17 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15309152>>.

⁶² Kirkpatrick, David D., “Tunisia Liberals See a Vote for Change, Not Just for Islamists,” *The New York Times*, 25 February 2012, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/world/africa/tunisia-liberals-see-a-vote-for-change-not-just-for-islamists.html?scp=11&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

⁶³ Ashton, Catherine, “Supporting the Arab Awakening,” *The New York Times*, 2 February 2012, accessed: 16 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/opinion/supporting-the-arab-awakening.html?scp=12&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

⁶⁴ Kirkpatrick, David D., “Tunisia Liberals See a Vote for Change, Not Just for Islamists,” *The New York Times*, 25 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/world/africa/tunisia-liberals-see-a-vote-for-change-not-just-for-islamists.html?scp=11&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

aspects but more for the credibility of their call for change.⁶⁵ The people of the country were tired of the abuses of the Ben Ali government and when a political party preached the long awaited call for change the Tunisian population jumped on its bandwagon. People are desperate for change and want it to come quickly. Therefore, since little modifications have occurred in the year since the removal of Ben Ali, people are discouraged and do not know how to ameliorate their lives any more. They are putting their faith into the new Ennahdha coalition, in hopes that its campaign promises will come true.

⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick, David D., "Tunisia Liberals See a Vote for Change, Not Just for Islamists," *The New York Times*, 25 October 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/26/world/africa/tunisia-liberals-see-a-vote-for-change-not-just-for-islamists.html?scp=11&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

Chapter 4: The Egyptian Revolution

Tunisia's revolution helped to spark the ideas of uprising in Egypt. Egyptians began protests shortly after the Tunisian President Ben Ali vacated the country for Saudi Arabia. The citizens of Egypt saw the potential that peaceful well-organized protests could accomplish and took cues from the Tunisians when deciding how to approach demands for a new government. Tunisia's success was a great recruitment tool for activists in Egypt. When the president of Tunisia was exiled it became official that some Egyptians wanted to emulate the demonstrations.⁶⁶ It made the idea of rebellion and democracy easier to execute since they had an example in the Tunisian people.

Protests in Egypt officially began on January 25, 2011, and President Mubarak left office on February 11, 2011. This makes the Egyptian Revolution the quickest of the rebellions during the Arab Spring. There had been rallies and disturbances for more freedoms in Egypt since 2000 (Anderson 2011). However, during the 2011 demonstrations, social media was used in more ways than previous protests. Numerous social media outlets were utilized to rally support for protests from those within Egypt, to gain more support, and those abroad, who could help exercise pressure on the government to resign and put a democracy in place. Videos, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or *DailyMotion*, and cell phones were used during the eighteen days of protests. This makes me conclude that not only was social media necessary for the protests to start and continue but it was necessary to get other countries on board with the pro-democracy demonstrations.

⁶⁶ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, "The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed 22 September 2011
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

Table 2: Important dates in the Egyptian revolution.

Protests Begin – January 25, 2011
Day of Rage – January 28, 2011
Internet Blackout –January 28 – February 2, 2011
Wael Ghonim tortured – January 28 – February 8, 2011
Minor Concessions Begin –January 28, 2011
Million Man March/Day of Departure – February 4, 2011
Mubarak resigns from office – February 11, 2011

The Egyptian Revolution

Talk of protests in Egypt began on January 18, but did not move to the streets until later. Table 2 demonstrates the major events in the revolution and that protests officially began on January 25, 2011. The government of Egypt was a military dictatorship. Since 1952, there had only been three leaders of Egypt: Gamal Abdul Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak.⁶⁷ President Mubarak had been ruling for the past thirty years. The people of the nation had few freedoms, the government was repressive, and Mubarak utilized a secret police within the state to enforce his restrictions on citizens.⁶⁸ On January 25, 2011, people rallied in the street because they felt common grievances against the government. Changes to levels of poverty, corruption, and unemployment needed to be made, and the people of Egypt were ready to protest until the government stopped abusing its power and instead helped the citizenry.⁶⁹ Pouring into the streets on the first day of protests, demonstrators called “for an end to the 30-year reign of

⁶⁷ Simpson, John, “Egyptians Celebrate a New Era in History,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12437827>>.

⁶⁸ Simpson, John, “Egyptians Celebrate a New Era in History,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12437827>>.

⁶⁹ “Egypt Protests: Key Moments in Unrest,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12425375>>.

President Hosni Mubarak with complaints of corruption, unemployment and lack of democracy” (Kavanaugh et al 2011, 5). The regime had abused its people for too long, and citizens wanted President Mubarak out of office.

Protests were scheduled by online activists to begin on January 25, 2011. Twenty locations were decided upon for the first protests. These places were strategically picked, usually near mosques and in lower or working class neighborhoods. These areas were densely populated. By having so many spots the thought was that demonstrations would “draw larger numbers and increase the likelihood that some protesters would be able to break out and link up in Tahrir Square.”⁷⁰ Tahrir Square is located in the downtown portion of the capital city of Cairo. The Egyptian Museum, National Democratic Party headquarters, Headquarters of the Arab League, and downtown campus of the American University in Cairo all surround the square, making it a historic place for protests during Mubarak’s reign. The strategy of having multiple rallies end at Tahrir Square worked. To the police, the protests seemed like a spontaneous mass movement in the slums of Bulaq al-Dakrou, which is located on the edge of Cairo.⁷¹ Previous protests in Egypt had not been this successful, and that encouraged more people to join the next rally during this revolution. After the first day of protests, there were about 10,000 people occupying Tahrir Square (Nunns and Idle 2011). However, thousands more had participated in the protests during the day. Protests were the largest in Cairo but took place in multiple cities. Additionally the demands of protesters on January 25, 2011, were the same as those on February 11, 2011, when Mubarak stepped down: protesters were “fed up with high

⁷⁰ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed 22 September 2011
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

⁷¹ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed 22 September 2011
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

levels of poverty, corruption and unemployment. Some protesters say they will not give up until President Mubarak steps down.”⁷²

While protests began on January 25, 2011, another larger gathering was scheduled for that Friday January 28, 2011. The success of the first demonstrations was the spark that led to tens of thousands of people storming the streets on January 28, 2011, which was the next big protest day known as the “Day of Rage.”⁷³ They headed towards Tahrir Square, where the protesters seized what is now referred to as Liberation Square and did not give it back until the end of the revolution.⁷⁴ After seeing the number of people who had participated in protests on that day, a curfew was instilled by President Mubarak to prevent people from staying in Tahrir Square and plotting more protests. As soon as President Mubarak initiated the curfew, protesters ignored it and rallied more in the streets.⁷⁵ Not only did people storm into Tahrir Square in Cairo, but protests occurred in Alexandria, Suez, and Ismalia.⁷⁶

January 28 was an influential day in the Egyptian protests. It was a large protest day, as well as the day that the government decided to shut off access to the Internet and mobile phones. These actions transformed some people’s views from pro-Mubarak to pro-protesters. Business owners and middle-class individuals were outraged by Mubarak’s decision because it negatively impacted the economy (Howard and Hussain 2011). The blackout also indicated to foreign investors that Egypt was not a place that they would enjoy doing business safely; support from

⁷² “Egypt Protests: Key Moments in Unrest,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12425375>>.

⁷³ Alexander, Anne, “Internet Role in Egypt’s Protests,” *The BBC*, 9 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12400319>>.

⁷⁴ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed 22 September 2011 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

⁷⁵ “Egypt Protests: Key Moments in Unrest,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12425375>>.

⁷⁶ Knell, Yolande, “Egypt’s Revolution: 18 Days in Tahrir Square,” *The BBC*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 25 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16716089>>.

international companies was altered and relationships were soured by this approach to the protests (Howard and Hussain 2011). Eventually President Mubarak lost the support of the middle class, since he angered them when he shut off the use of Internet and phones during the first few days of the protests. The disruption in Internet access altered the pro-regime citizens' opinions toward governmental change. The middle class who relies on the Internet to conduct business was denied access and "took to the streets in larger numbers than ever, many driven by an urge simply to find out what was going on" (Howard and Hussain 2011, 39). It was more of a recruiting tool for the protesters than Mubarak intended. It backfired on him and sent more of his allies into the streets because they were angered at the actions of the government.

President Mubarak had some supporters during the beginning of the protests. The middle class as well as elites within the army supported his rule. These citizens related more to President Mubarak because the elites and military were the ones to fight alongside him when he gained power thirty years before. They lived comfortable lifestyles because President Mubarak took care of them. What the president asked in return for this favor was for his supporters to take back Tahrir Square from the protesters. To do this President Mubarak bussed loyalists into the square during the first few days of the protests before the blackout, but the demonstrators showed great vigor and fought back.⁷⁷ People began to get hurt doing the dirty work of the president. Combining this fact with the government blackouts, the middle class citizens no longer supported Mubarak's rule and joined the cause of the protesters.

The largest protest up until this date occurred on February 4, 2011. It was deemed the "Day of Departure," for Egyptians believed that by the end of the day President Mubarak would be ousted from office. They truly believed that after their eleven days of protest, democracy

⁷⁷ Simpson, John, "Egyptians Celebrate a New Era in History," *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12437827>>.

would finally be theirs. Unfortunately it took another week before Mubarak would step down as President, but millions of citizens stormed the streets for this march. While these protests were proving to the government that the people within Egypt were unhappy with their current lifestyle, nothing was changing. Protests were not affecting the government in the manner that the people who organized the uprising had hoped. Just when people were beginning to lose faith, Wael Ghonim, the Google executive who was seen as the leader of the movement, was released from capture. Wael is depicted as the organizer and leader of the movement because he created a safe haven for people to discuss the protests before and during the rebellion. Through a pseudonym he instigated the revolution and protests. To the people of Egypt, he is seen as the sole leader of the movement.

Wael Ghonim was taken into police custody and tortured for eleven days. He was reported missing on January 28, 2011. Ghonim was a symbol of the country's move towards democracy. He was seen as the voice of the revolution, because he linked the voices of Egyptian revolutionaries with well wishers who resided overseas (Howard and Hussain 2011). He enabled a way for people within the country to collaborate over their frustrations and then take action. Once he was released from custody on February 8, 2011 he made the most impactful statement to rally people to the cause for democracy in Egypt. During an interview with Dream TV station in Egypt immediately after his release, he gave what is deemed to be a very emotional interview and one that will prove to be a historical interview.⁷⁸ His interviewers showed Ghonim pictures of the hundreds of people who had died in the streets during the past eleven days, and this led to his emotional breakdown into tears. When he was released he wept at the destruction and human devastation that had occurred:

⁷⁸ Black, Ian, "Wael Ghonim Anointed Voice of the Revolution by Tahrir Square Faithful," *The Guardian*, 8 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/08/wael-ghonim-tahrir-square>>.

This emotional display was utterly alien to the Mubarak regime—and proof to many wavering Egyptians that the revolutionaries were humans, and the government was a heartless bureaucracy easily capable of every brutality of which it had been accused. Popular fear dissolved and Tahrir Square became a protest site for ordinary Egyptians, not just for Facebook friends and a crowd of tweeting revolutionaries (Wood 2011, 48).

His actions rallied more people into the streets than any other motivational tactic. It could even be determined that this was the turning point in the revolution for Egypt.

After his release, people around the nation were calling his speech the inspiration remaining Egyptians needed to mobilize. Others indicated their fear that the revolution would fade and fizzle had been unnecessary because of their leader Wael Ghonim (Nunns and Idle 2011). Ghonim was so genuine when he cried for those who had died during his imprisonment. He explained that he did not want blood to be shed but that the current government was unacceptable and it was their abuse of power that caused those deaths. His sincere emotions for those who were martyrs for democracy made people question whether “Mubarak has ever shed a tear for a single life he’s taken” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 174). It brought Egyptians together more than any other mobilization effort thus far in the revolution. Thousands more people came out to Tahrir Square the next day than had been there for any other portion of the protests.

President Mubarak attempted to make some concessions during the eighteen days of protests. His first move was to fire his cabinet on January 28, 2011.⁷⁹ When this did not deter people from calling him corrupt and wanting him to leave office, he created a Vice President position. It was the first time in thirty years that he was willing to share power. His Vice President, Omar Suleiman, would take over more responsibilities, but Mubarak conveniently left out what those would be and was vague when questioned about this transfer of power.⁸⁰

Mubarak also told his country that he would not run for president again in the September 2012

⁷⁹ “Egypt Protests: Key Moments in Unrest,” *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12425375>>.

⁸⁰ “Egypt Protests: Hosni Mubarak Refuses to Step Down,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12424587>>.

elections. He made this announcement on February 1, 2011.⁸¹ Still none of these concessions were appeasing the protesters. After just over a week of rallies and these attempts at bargaining made by President Mubarak, more than one hundred people had died at the hands of military violence. Many more would lose their lives at the hands of riot police before the revolution ended. While President Mubarak was claiming to understand the grievances of the protesters and telling his countrymen that he would make changes, he was instructing the army to use force against those in Tahrir Square. His actions were contradictory and the protesters were unwilling to compromise because they wanted him to leave office.

On February 11, Mubarak finally stepped down after eighteen days of protests. He lost the support of his people, the military and foreign allies such as the United States. Mubarak's decision to leave office in February, rather than before the September elections, was brought on by both the military and American influence. Younger military men found cracks in the system and wanted to side with the demonstrators; therefore, they wanted a change in government too and if necessary would have resorted to a forceful removal of Mubarak.⁸² The day before the million person strong march in Egypt on February 4, the military deemed that they would not use force against any person with a legitimate demand for democratic reform in government.⁸³ This turn of events was detrimental to the regime of President Mubarak. Additionally, after looking at the protests from afar, America "finally summoned up all their power and influence to force the Egyptian military to get rid of Mr Mubarak."⁸⁴ These were added contributions to the already

⁸¹ "Egypt Protests: Hosni Mubarak Refuses to Step Down," *The BBC*, 10 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12424587>>.

⁸² Simpson, John, "Egyptians Celebrate a New Era in History," *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12437827>>.

⁸³ Black, Ian, Jack Shenker, and Chris McGreal, "Egypt Set for Mass Protest as Army Rules Out Force," *The Guardian*, 31 January 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/31/egyptian-army-pledges-no-force>>.

⁸⁴ Simpson, John, "Egyptians Celebrate a New Era in History," *The BBC*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12437827>>.

powerful protests that drove Mubarak from power. On February 11, 2011 Mubarak ended his thirty yearlong reign as president and the military took over the country.⁸⁵

How Social Media was Used in Egypt

While some forms of older media were used to help inspire people to take action, social media was a much faster and more efficient method of getting people to join the bandwagon. Leaflets were distributed and meetings at mosques were held to try and mobilize the population but social media was “far faster than leaflets, with the added benefit that those receiving the messages were already interested and trusted the source” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 20). Egypt is one of the leading countries in the number of Internet users that reside within its borders (Howard and Hussain 2011). Egyptians used the Internet for YouTube, Facebook and Twitter during the revolution. Through the use of these sites to mobilize people and the added excitement after the resignation of President Ben Ali in Tunisia, people were prepared to protest. Circumstances surrounding the Tunisian president were powerful recruiting tools for the people of Egypt. It is easier to entice people to join a cause when they have seen a successful one in a neighboring country; therefore, they know that their efforts could pay off and provide a change in their government system instead of just a jail sentence.

Tech-savvy youth discussed how to organize protests in a different way than the previously failed protests attempting to gain more freedoms. When the Egyptian government felt threatened by the organizational tactics being conducted online during the January protests, Mubarak chose to shut down Internet access to citizens. It was an unprecedented action in Egypt that included a complete shutdown not only of the Internet but mobile phone networks too (Lynch 2011). January 28, 2011, was when Mubarak chose to cut the public’s access to the

⁸⁵ “Egypt News: Revolution and Aftermath,” *The New York Times*, 26 January 2012, accessed: 23 December 2011 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/egypt/index.html?scp=10&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

Internet. He blocked the Internet and phone services on the third day of protests; people could not contact each other within Tahrir Square (Kavanaugh et al 2011). The shutdown happened early on in the protests; while it took weeks for the government of Tunisia to impose this restriction, it took the government of Egypt mere days (Howard and Hussain 2011).

After the Egyptian government shut off Internet access to its residents, the country went from using as much as 2,700 Mega Bytes per second (MBps) three hours before the government intervention to about 25 MBps after it. At 5:30 EST traffic to and from Egypt was almost all but terminated (Schafer 2011). In Egypt, unlike Tunisia, all social media forms were cut off. However, the Internet was the most dramatically affected, “the government shut down Internet access, although briefly, in an attempt to squelch communication among citizens with each other and with the outside world. [On January 28] close to 97% of Egyptian Internet traffic was reported lost” (Kavanaugh et al 2011, 9). Mubarak’s attempt to isolate Egyptians from outside countries was only partially successful. People within the country had expected his maneuver since the Tunisian president had taken this tactic too; therefore, “tech-savvy students and civil society leaders had put in place backup satellite phones and dial-up connections to Israel and Europe” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 39). Even though mobile phone lines were down, satellite phones could still be used as forms of communication to foreign nations. Protests did not slow down during the Internet blackout because at that point “there was no need to organize events online because people were spending every day face to face on the streets” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 21). Activists continued to rally because they were already mobilized.

Initially the organization and mobilization for these protest was online. However once thousands of people were in the streets it was easier to just conduct business face to face. This is why when the government turned off access to the Internet and mobile phones on January 28,

2011, the lack of electronic communication systems did not stop people from continuing to protest or talk amongst themselves. Social media was not utilized in the same vein because the thousands of people on the street, instead of a select few people through social media, decided on the next step of the revolution; through face-to-face interactions the majority were now demanding how the protests proceeded. Those in the streets “realized they could not call for less than [what all of] the demonstrators wanted. So the demands of the Revolution were set by the spontaneous chants of the People” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 32).

The blackout only lasted for five days because it was inefficient and rather than stopping the protests it was rallying more people to the cause. When the blackout did not stop the protests, Mubarak changed his tactics for dealing with the demonstrations. His first strategy was to make citizens turn on one another because they were inconvenienced by the interruptions in their daily lives, but instead of targeting fellow citizens the people’s anger at the government grew. He had shut down the Internet as well as banking systems in hopes that people would get frustrated and blame those in the streets for their inconveniences: “now for the first time banks reopened and people resumed their jobs. This was a change in strategy and a threat to the protestors” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 159). President Mubarak returned Egyptian life to normal by restoring social media channels in hopes that no more people would join the cause for democracy. Instead of restricting communication, his second plan to stop the protests was to resort to violence. On February 2, 2011, the blackout ended and attacks by security forces against peaceful protesters intensified (Barany 2011). Security police targeted innocent protesters but turned on the government on February 4, 2011 and joined the protesters.⁸⁶

Facebook

⁸⁶ Black, Ian, Jack Shenker, and Chris McGreal, “Egypt Set for Mass Protest as Army Rules Out Force,” *The Guardian*, 31 January 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/31/egyptian-army-pledges-no-force>>.

The total number of Facebook members skyrocketed both in Egypt and the Arab region during 2010. There were 21,361,863 Facebook users in the Arab world in December of 2010, as opposed to the 11,978,300 users in January of that year (Salem and Mourtada 2011). In Egypt the number of Facebook users in 2010 was 4,634,600, which is only about 5.5% of the total population. Yet that was all that was needed to organize the initial January 25 revolution. While Egypt has the second largest number of Internet users, it has the largest number of Facebook members in the region: “Facebook has been the social networking tool of choice for human rights activists in Egypt. There are five million Facebook users in Egypt, the highest number in any Middle Eastern or North African country.”⁸⁷ The best site to manage and organize the influx of demands for a protest was Facebook. It was where people chose to plan the protests and discuss the mobilization of different groups to the January 25 demonstrations (Nunns and Idle 2011).

When deciding to begin rallies on January 25, a holiday usually set aside for the military, the Egyptian Facebook sites asked “What do you think we should give as a gift to the brutal Egyptian police on their day?” and the answer was Tunisia.⁸⁸ These organizational talks happened on Facebook, and more specifically on the “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook group. Khaled Said was a twenty-eight year old Egyptian. His name is remembered because he was beaten to death by the Egyptian police in June 2010. He was known to have had a cell phone video that demonstrated the corruption of the justice system and police authorities. That is why he was targeted, dragged out of a coffeehouse, and killed. There were other people within Egypt

⁸⁷ Preston, Jennifer, “Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave it an Outlet,” *The New York Times*, 5 February 2011, accessed: 18 January 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06face.html?pagewanted=1&%2334&st=cse&%2359;Arab%20Spring&%2359;%20AND%20timeline&scp=31>>.

⁸⁸ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

who were killed by the police over the summer of 2010. This caused some unrest within society and a few minor protests.

Two Facebook pages were devoted to Said's memory, one in English and one in Arabic. Both pages educated the public about his brutal death, and they soon became the sites for angry Egyptians to discuss ways to overthrow their oppressive regime. Said's death and subsequent Facebook page sparked a huge explosion from activists.⁸⁹ The Facebook page was set up in his honor but soon allowed for people to form a common bond over their anger at the government.⁹⁰ It was a natural place for those who felt grievances to express them and find others who were equally as upset with the government; therefore, the site diverted from discussing Said himself to a collective dissent and commiseration towards the government (Howard and Hussain 2011). Said died in June of 2010 and successful protests that we now deem a part of the Arab Spring began in January of the following year. When the Tunisian government fell, websites like "We Are All Khaled Said" and "April 6 Youth Movement," which was an Egyptian Facebook page in 2008 that attempted to gain supporters for a worker's strike, were used as organizational sites for Egypt's own protest.⁹¹ After the Tunisian success activists used the page to organize the first protest and came up with the idea of choosing multiple sites for protests. Their hope was that the riot police would have to separate, making them too strained to do any real harm. This could ensure success.

⁸⁹ "Egypt News: Revolution and Aftermath," *The New York Times*, 26 January 2012, accessed: 23 December 2011 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/egypt/index.html?scp=10&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

⁹⁰ Preston, Jennifer, "Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave it an Outlet," *The New York Times*, 5 February 2011, accessed: 18 January 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06face.html?pagewanted=1&%2334&sq&st=cse&%2359;Arab%20Spring&%2359;%20AND%20timeline&scp=31>>.

⁹¹ Preston, Jennifer, "Movement Began With Outrage and a Facebook Page That Gave it an Outlet," *The New York Times*, 5 February 2011, accessed: 18 January 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06face.html?pagewanted=1&%2334&sq&st=cse&%2359;Arab%20Spring&%2359;%20AND%20timeline&scp=31>>.

At first the creator of the Khaled Said webpage was anonymous, but word leaked out that it was initiated and run by Wael Ghonim.⁹² Said became the figurehead and symbol of the revolution but Wael Ghonim was the leader: “a revolution organized by Facebook, spread by twitter and organized by a guy working for Google. #jan25 #ILOVEOURREVOLUTION” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 173). To the people participating in the Egyptian revolution, Ghonim was seen as the creator, organizer and instigator of the protests (Nunns and Idle 2011). Not only did he create the Facebook page but he was the one who encouraged participation from other Egyptians. Instead of making people feel that he was the sole leader he “polled the page’s users and sought ideas from others, like how best to publicize a rally — through printed fliers and mass text messaging, it turned out.”⁹³ Whether he will admit it or not, Ghonim inspired the revolution and others to discuss organization tactics. There were two Facebook pages, one in English and one in Arabic.⁹⁴ Had Ghonim not started the English version, then no Arabic one would have been created and it would not have relayed the information that Ghonim and his allies decided upon.

Ghonim, who created the English version of “We are all Khaled Said,” was taken into police custody on January 28, 2011. After members of the “We are all Khaled Said” Facebook group organized the first of the Egyptian protests, the Internet was shut off to deter more people from coming into Tahrir Square (Wood 2011). The government was shocked that the revolt and protests occurring throughout the nation could have been started by just some kids on social

⁹² Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

⁹³ Vargas, Jose Antonio, “Spring Awakening: How an Egyptian Revolution Began on Facebook,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 2012, accessed: 7 March 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/books/review/how-an-egyptian-revolution-began-on-facebook.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Facebook%20AND%20Arab%20Spring&st=cse&scp=7>>.

⁹⁴ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011

networking sites such as Facebook (Wood 2011). By the “Day of Rage” protests on January 28, 2011, 90,000 people had pledged online that they would join the protests against President Mubarak.⁹⁵ The number of people who were being mobilized by Facebook and social media scared the Mubarak regime (Nunns and Idle 2011).

Middle class Egyptians joined the fight, in part, because they were angered by the loss of Internet access in their own homes and the detriment to the economy that taking away the Internet caused. Mubarak’s decision to shut down and ban “access to social-media websites, powering down cell towers, or disconnecting Internet switching points in major cities were among the desperate tactics to which authoritarian regimes resorted as they strove to maintain control... Egypt lost at least US\$90 million to Mubarak” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 44). The shut down of these communication forms made businesses lose contact with foreign partners. Everything but the stock market was shut down and could not be accessed by those within the nation or outside of it: “this episode harmed the country’s reputation among technology firms as a safe place to invest,” and conduct business (Howard and Hussain 2011, 44). Therefore, through the government’s actions to quell the protests more harm was done and millions of dollars were lost for the country. People poured into the streets after the Internet was shut down. The government blackout of the Internet did the opposite of what the government wanted or expected. In general, “if a government were to shut down Internet access or ban cell phones, it would risk radicalizing otherwise pro-regime citizens or harming the economy” (Shirky 2011, 6). People who were pro-government or neutral in Egypt turned against the regime because their freedoms were being taken away. Mubarak’s actions rallied them to the pro-democracy cause.

⁹⁵ Knell, Yolande, “Egypt’s Revolution: 18 Days in Tahrir Square,” *The BBC*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 25 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16716089>>.

Facebook was used for organization and mobilization of people in the beginning of the protests. Therefore, when the government shut down the access to Internet, it was problematic for keeping people updated on the progress of the protests, but not detrimental to the cause. Since thousands of people were already in Tahrir Square and hundred more were protesting in different cities around Egypt, they could determine the next step in their movements based on conversations that they had face-to-face instead of over the computer. People were not leaving Tahrir Square for fear that the government and military would take back control. Thus people were sleeping in the city center and were constantly together talking about what direction the protests should take.

Twitter

Twitter was used as a news source as well as an organizational tool. Unlike Tunisia, the people who were tweeting about the Egyptian uprisings were within Egypt. The frequency of tweets was 63,255 for the week that Mubarak left Egypt (February 7, 2011 to February 14, 2011). The next largest number of tweets came from London, and that frequency was much less at only 5,921 tweets (Kavanaugh et al 2011, 8). Egyptians deemed this site as an alternative to traditional news sites. Before protests started people used Twitter to decide on common hashtags so that anyone wanting information about the protests knew exactly where to go. One Egyptian posted asking “What time should we be in the streets tomorrow #jan25?” and was answered by another saying “For when and where the revolution will be and what other important info, go here <http://bit.ly/Jan25egypt>” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 29). This social media site was used to spread information about the first day of protests and then was utilized to inform outsiders of the events of the protests.

Twitter was a way to become informed by those in the streets rather than a second hand news update (Nunns and Idle 2011). Tweets were filled with the emotions of the people who were in Tahrir Square, “so emotional and exciting that anyone following them felt an intense personal connection to what was happening in Tahrir” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 13). Twitter provides a way for people to become informed instantaneously. Tweets such as “we have news of rubber bullets being fired in tahrir sq. And people are not budging” were common (Nunns and Idle 2011, 41). The posts served as informational tools. Protesters provided lots of tweets about where to meet, how to get there, including what roads were accessible and what areas were filled with riot police, as well as when to come in groups versus individually to Tahrir Square because of the military. There were a plethora of Twitter feeds about the treatment and actual events of protesters. Twitter was also used to debunk myths and false statements made by the national media. Posts on Twitter were trying to down play the demonstrations and discredit those in the streets as being thugs. The national media, which was run by Mubarak regime, did not want more people to join the rallies for democracy. He wanted the remaining loyalists to side with him and join the fight against the protesters (Nunns and Idle 2011).

It was not only a way for protesters to communicate with themselves and foreigners, but it was a way to communicate directly between President Mubarak and the people in Tahrir Square. President Mubarak sent out tweets that said, “Habib just sent me a bbm. He says I should prepare a farewell speech for my citizens. Where are you guys going? #jan25” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 52). He also used Twitter to indicate his actions. He blocked Facebook and Twitter, in hopes that it would stop communication between protesters and slow down the rallies, yet he told his citizens that “I blocked Twitter and Facebook so you could focus on your work, not run around the streets shouting. #jan25” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 49). Twitter was essential

for those within the country to communicate, Egyptians to talk with those who were outside the country, and people to send personal messages to President Mubarak and read his responses. It was a recruiting tool.

When President Mubarak chose to shut down access to the Internet as well as mobile phones, it affected the use of Twitter as a social media tool. The Internet and SMS messages were blocked from January 28, 2011, to February 2, 2011. During this time frame there were absolutely no tweets on January 28, but as people found ways around the system there was more access to Twitter (Nunns and Idle 2011). To get tweets posted online, people talked with foreign media officials who were in the country covering the protests. By trading interviews for access to satellite phones, activists could call a new service provided by Google and Twitter, which translated voice mail messages to tweets.⁹⁶ The new service network was named speak2tweet.⁹⁷ Egyptians were desperate to find ways to post and get information out to foreigners. They wanted to be heard and influence the opinion of anyone, whether Western or Egyptian, to rally behind those in the streets. Once access to Twitter was restored after the five-day blackout tweet frequencies went back to normal.

Mobile Phones

Just as in Tunisia, the potential for an Egyptian to have a cell phone is greater than his or her access to the Internet. Only about six percent of the people within the country use Facebook as a social network. The number of people who had a cell phone increased in the few years before the Arab Spring: “mobile phone use has grown exponentially in the past few years,

⁹⁶ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

⁹⁷ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

reaching around 80% of the population according to recent figures.”⁹⁸ Thus photos through SMS messages were used as well as the Internet to gain supporters. Photos of Said’s brutally beaten up body and pictures of his body at the morgue were “passed from one mobile-phone camera to thousands” during the protests in January (Howard and Hussain 2011, 38). Protesters also used their mobile phone to call people within their social networks, whether that was their online networking friends or people within their community, to come and join the protests (Howard and Hussain 2011). When people had the ability to use their phones, the social media device was an intricate part of the protests within Egypt.

Satellite phones were helpful during the social media blackout. The government could block the cell phone waves for domestic phones but could not stop the use of satellite phones. Therefore, most foreign correspondents and non-Egyptians had access, even if it was limited, to foreign people who could tweet and outside sources such as speak2tweet, which converted voicemails to tweets. Those who had not planned ahead soon found ways around the blackout. These citizens got around the government intervention “by telephoning friends abroad to upload their tweets, pooling their resources to get on to the one remaining internet service provider in Egypt, or offering interviews to news organizations in return for access to their satellite internet connections” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 20-21). The government blocked all Internet services except the national stock exchange server, in hopes that the economy would not be affected by the protests.

During protesters’ time in Tahrir Square, they found the cell phone to be the most important form of social media. Tweets indicated that the interruption of the use of phones, either from the government blackout or spending too much time in Tahrir without access to

⁹⁸ Alexander, Anne, “Internet Role in Egypt’s Protests,” *The BBC*, 9 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12400319>>.

electricity to charge a phone, was causing problems. People were actually routing power from streetlights so that they could charge their cell phones without leaving the protests (Nunns and Idle 2011). On February 9 one person even stated, “I say we take over parliament, not to increase pressure, but to have access to plugs so I can charge phone” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 188). Phones were essential, before and after the brief blackout, in keeping people around Tahrir updated on the happenings of the revolution, as well as informing foreigners of the recent events in the revolution.

Impact of Social Media in Egypt

Most scholars are quick to say that Twitter and Facebook played a huge role in the uprisings in Egypt. They deem that there were different levels of involvement of social media in each state, but in Egypt “Facebook was crucial for coordinating Egyptian protestors to emulate Tunisia starting January 25” (Lynch 2011, 303). This enabled the January 25 protests to succeed when previous attempts had failed (Lynch 2011). I agree with the statement that the Egyptian uprisings depended on social media to succeed. However, some are skeptical about this approach and question the links between social media and the resignation of President Mubarak.

This school of thought thinks social media is exaggerated and would deem that revolutions can never be attributed to just one element. It is unfair to say that social media is the only thing that inspired people. Revolutions do not come out of thin air, or even cyberspace (Nunns and Idle 2011). While this is true, Facebook and Twitter allowed people to express their frustrations about their repression. Facebook combined with other older concerns, such as political anger over corruption in elections and the horrible economic situations in the country, to lead to action within Egypt (Lynch 2011). These external factors of corruption and high unemployment can be linked to the governing tactics of President Mubarak. Additionally, the

leader was becoming older and “President Mubarak appeared in public less frequently, and soon it seemed as if every month brought a new disaster or crisis” (Eltahawy 2008, 70). His governing style was not conducive to the happiness and productiveness of Egyptians anymore. For these reasons activists began looking for ways to organize and mobilize people into the streets to provoke a rebellion.

The same school of thought indicates that the Egyptian revolution cannot solely be a Facebook Revolution because only about six percent of people use Facebook. More than just the elites with access to Facebook were needed for the revolution to succeed but it would not have begun without the Khaled Said Facebook page to organize it. The majority of the population lives on less than two dollars a day, and the prospect of having a personal computer with the ability to use Facebook is not even on their radar. Yet it was these people who would be essential in overthrowing the government. Those who thought up the initial plans for the protests on January 25, 2011, knew “that the demonstrations’ success would depend on the participation of ordinary Egyptians in working-class districts ... where the Internet and Facebook aren’t as widely used.”⁹⁹ The urban poor are the main group in this category, and while Internet based social media outlets were the last thing on their minds, hundreds still “literally placed their bodies between tyranny and freedom on the front line” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 22). Tweeters agreed that “I doubt that people in Tahrir ... have revolted cuz of facebook but for why&how KhaledSaid was killed in the first place” (Nunns and Idle 2011, 174). Those who organized knew that Facebook would not be the only organizational tool, which is why fliers were distributed to inform the less wealthy about the rallies. Posters and leaflets were a source of

⁹⁹ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

spreading the word for the January 25 protests, not just Facebook or Twitter.¹⁰⁰ The rallies were staged around mosques so that people would have an easy access point and could hear about the protests before they began. Numerous types of organizational tactics were used, not just social media.¹⁰¹ All of these ranges of media helped to get the point across and spread the word about January 25.

Social Media Made a Huge Difference in Egypt

Social media was necessary for Egypt's revolution. It was essential for initially organizing the protests. Egypt falls under the category of the first school of thought, that social media was necessary to start the rebellion, as well as the third school of thought, social media was used to change the opinions of foreigners from pro-Mubarak to pro-democracy seeking. Social media websites were used to organize big rallies such as the "Day of Rage" and the "Million Man March/Day of Departure" protests. These happened both before and after the blackout and continued to sustain the revolution by mobilizing more people to the cause. It has been stated that without social media "the way in which the Revolution is seen in the West, in the Arab world, and even within Egypt would be very different if we had not been able to hear from protestors and see the action so directly" (Nunns and Idle 2011, 22). The accessibility that foreigners had to first hand accounts of protesters made them angry at the treatment by Mubarak, his regime, and the military.

Social media was essential for getting the revolution organized and started. Without it people would not have been able to communicate across the country with a set day, time and place to meet to rally people towards Tahrir Square. Along with these essential details, coming

¹⁰⁰ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, "The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

¹⁰¹ Alexander, Anne, "Internet Role in Egypt's Protests," *The BBC*, 9 February 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12400319>>.

up with a clear list of consistent demands across the population was also a use of social media. In a diverse population it could have been easy for protesters in Cairo to call for different changes than those who were demonstrating in Alexandria. Facebook and Twitter unified the call for Mubarak to resign. Organization for the initial protest of January 25, 2011, was formulated online. The sites of the protests were announced as well as the time. Since most sites were placed around mosques, rallies would begin at 2 P.M. after prayers had just ended.¹⁰² By using Internet social media sites such as Facebook people could comment on how previous protests, even if they were organized online, did not work (Anderson 2011). They could discuss and pinpoint problems that needed to be solved before January 25, 2011. The activists online came up with a way to ensure that the police could not prevent “demonstrations from growing or moving through the streets, and at keeping ordinary Egyptians away” from joining the movement.¹⁰³ They used this knowledge to form twenty different protests that would converge in Tahrir Square. Social media was used to organize, mobilize, and sustain the protests, which is why Egypt falls under the first school of thought on social media’s impact on the revolution.

Egypt was the real model for how to organize a protest. It was a quicker process than Tunisia, and it had real leaders during the fight. People around the Arab region could emulate the Egyptian protest in hopes of getting the same outcome and changing governmental systems. When Mubarak shutdown the Internet for five days, people still fought for ways to Tweet and put videos on the web. Who were they sending these messages to? Others within Egypt had no way of checking for new posts online. They were blacked out too and would have had to trade

¹⁰² Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011

<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

¹⁰³ Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, “The Secret Rally That Sparked an Uprising,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 February 2011, accessed: 22 September 2011

<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704132204576135882356532702.htm>>.

interviews for online usage. Protesters would not have wasted time searching for updates since it was unnecessary because no one else was posting information frequently enough that it was dire to check. This indicates that those who did continue to post during the blackout found outside nations and people their target audience. They were either inspiring other Arab nations to follow in the footsteps of Egypt, or letting others know what was happening on the ground. Changing the perceptions of Americans and other Western allies of Egypt away from pro-Mubarak and stability towards freedom and democracy was another motive. If the third school of thought, influencing foreigners to change their opinions of the regime, was not an aim of protesters then protesters would not have gone to such lengths to gain access to Twitter in the five-day blackout (Nunns and Idle 2011).

Some foreign nations were ecstatic when Tunisia began protesting and removed President Ben Ali, yet once Egypt tried to do the same thing Western political figures and administrations were cautious and purported that protests should remain peaceful. There was not the same excitement because Egypt had been such a longtime ally of the United States and Western societies. The instability that came with a new government, free elections, and the possibility of an Islamic regime, scared governments. Jon Stewart even joked on his show, that the underlying force behind the American government's hesitation to support the protests was stability.¹⁰⁴ After the United States government reacted to the protests in Egypt, Stewart mocked that "we want Egyptian people to have freedom just as soon as we're sure they will use that freedom for hugging not hurting. See Tunisia's reputation is as a more secular, moderate nation where as Egypt sits atop one of the regions largest reserves of untapped Islamist rage."¹⁰⁵ In Tunisia there was no threat from a new democratic government but in Egypt a democracy could indicate a

¹⁰⁴ Stewart, Jon, "The Daily Show," *Comedy Central*, 27 January 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Stewart, Jon, "The Daily Show," *Comedy Central*, 27 January 2011, accessed: 20 February 2012.

Muslim Brotherhood victory. This belief was confirmed by Hillary Clinton in a speech after the first day of protests. She indicated that “what we don't want ... are radical ideologies to take control of a very large and important country in the Middle East.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore, during the first few days of protests in Egypt, “US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said her administration supported ‘the fundamental right of expression and assembly’ and urged all parties ‘to exercise restraint.’”¹⁰⁷ This is not what the Egyptians were hoping for.

The protesters needed to prove that their grievances were just as legitimate as those from citizens of other autocratic rulers in the Middle East. To do this, videos of protests were uploaded to sites such as Facebook and YouTube, and people tweeted about violence on the ground in Tahrir Square. The use of social media worked. Outsiders became sympathetic to the cause of protesters and wanted to ensure their victory. Through interactions on Twitter and Facebook, foreigners became invested in the livelihoods of the protesters. The posts of those in Tahrir Square were so moving that people could envision being along side those who were shedding blood for democracy (Nunns and Idle 2011). Additionally seeing videos that were posted and pictures that were taken of peaceful protesters having to run for cover because the military and loyalists were attacking them, added to the sympathy that outsiders felt towards those in the streets. After these depictions, foreign governments could not ignore the human rights violations. By the end of demonstrations on February 11, America had changed its views. President Obama was encouraging the Egyptian army to take control of the country and overthrow President Mubarak. Egyptians welcomed the aid of foreign people on their side to ensure that Mubarak would vacate his seat as president. However, foreign governments never

¹⁰⁶ Shenker, Jack and Ian Black, “Egypt Protests: Change is Coming, Says Mohammed ElBaradei,” *The Guardian*, 30 January 2011, accessed: 20 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/30/egypt-protests-mohammed-elbaradei>>.

¹⁰⁷ “Egypt Protests: Three Killed in ‘Day of Revolt,’” *The BBC*, 25 January 2011, accessed 20 January 2012 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12272836>>.

would have changed their opinion about Mubarak if they had not witnessed the atrocities of his government through social media outlets.

Egypt falls into the first and third schools of thought on social media's impact in the Arab Spring. The protests would not have started if they were not organized online and the demonstrations would not have received the large number in turnouts if social media did not continue to entice people to join the demonstrations. Additionally, it made countries that had backed the Mubarak regime for thirty years turn on this alliance in favor of the citizenry who wanted more rights. The United States eventually placed pressure on President Mubarak to leave and the military to take over. Without social media the revolution in Egypt would not be considered a success.

Epilogue: What is Happening in Egypt Since Mubarak Left

Egyptians have rid their country of President Mubarak and instilled a new government. In the last year the nation has held free elections for a government, but citizens feel that little has changed since the ousting of their leader. The unemployment rate has not decreased significantly; people are still having problems making ends meet.¹⁰⁸ The people of Egypt do not know how to alter their current state to achieve the original goals of the 2011 revolutions. With their newfound freedom the people of Egypt have elected the Muslim Brotherhood into the majority of the new parliament seats. As other nations feared, Egyptians have put their faith into the religious political party. It is too soon to see how this will impact the goal of democracy and modernization.

Just as in Tunisia, the people of Egypt feel that little has been accomplished since the end of the revolution in February of 2011. Some residents of Egypt even feel that their lives have

¹⁰⁸ "One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future," *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

gotten worse since Mubarak was exiled.¹⁰⁹ Instead of creating a new democracy with political freedoms, the military government has kept the same ruling system in place that was present under the old Mubarak regime.¹¹⁰ All of the optimism that was present when Mubarak left the country has evaporated. The one-year anniversary of the end of the 2011 revolution sparked new protests.¹¹¹ These were warranted because Egypt is still unstable and people have used their new freedoms for criminal purposes and corruption rather than uniting the country. Illegal acts were more common in the latter portion of 2011 and early 2012 than they were in 2010 and early 2011 when protests began. The police and authority figures do not stop these crimes because “they want [Egyptians] to feel that Mubarak may have been corrupt, but people were safer in his time.”¹¹² In order to combat the amount of corruption, the military would have to put a new governing structure into place, but authority figures do not want to put the energy into altering the current system. Leadership is absent in the country and there is no direction or clear path for the future of the nation.¹¹³ Not only is there no rule or job opportunities for people within Egypt, whether they are educated or not, but inflation has soared and raising the salaries of those who are fortunate enough to have a job is not solving the problem.¹¹⁴ Elections hoped to help the country but the population was not positive that it would change the lives of the common man who was protesting in the streets.

¹⁰⁹ “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

¹¹⁰ “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

¹¹¹ “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

¹¹² “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

¹¹³ “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

¹¹⁴ “One Year Since Mubarak: Egyptians Fear For the Future,” *The BBC*, 10 February 2012, accessed: 15 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16969376>>.

Watson, Katy, “The Economics of Egypt’s Revolution, One Year On,” *The BBC*, 29 January 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16765309>>.

The elections in Egypt were a months-long process. People within Egypt were so discouraged by the government that many did not even want to vote at all. People felt that the revolution did not accomplish the goals that it set out to, and that elections were not the answer because they too would not result in change. Therefore “the Egyptian authorities suggested that they might fine people about \$80 if they failed to vote.”¹¹⁵ This would force everyone to get involved, and hopefully make voting and the elections create a real change. The first portion of the voting process was for the lower house and elections began in major cities. After this two other rounds of voting for the upper house and the presidential election were scheduled. The last round was in January and election results will officially be completed by March.¹¹⁶ Even though some results are known, the “final results remain uncertain, in part because Egypt’s military rulers have yet to spell out the formula that will be used to allocate seats among parties according to their share of the vote.”¹¹⁷ Preliminary actions can be taken to create a new government but the real results of the elections from all parts of Egypt, not just the biggest cities, will be calculated in March.¹¹⁸

Multiple political parties and individuals placed themselves on the ballot for elections. Some of these included the Muslim Brotherhood, which wants to rule through Islamic law, and former members of the Mubarak regime also ran for political office. Mubarak’s cronies are “hoping past patronage and name recognition will overcome anger at their association with the

¹¹⁵ Kirkpatrick, David, D., “Egypt Elections, Largely Peaceful, Draw Big Turnout,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=5>>.

¹¹⁶ Kirkpatrick, David, D., “Egypt Elections, Largely Peaceful, Draw Big Turnout,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=5>>.

¹¹⁷ Kirkpatrick, David D., “Egyptians Vote in Final Round of Parliamentary Elections,” *The New York Times*, 3 January 2012, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/africa/egyptians-vote-in-final-round-of-parliamentary-elections.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=19>>.

¹¹⁸ Kirkpatrick, David, D., “Egypt Elections, Largely Peaceful, Draw Big Turnout,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=5>>.

old government.”¹¹⁹ While there was a wide range of candidates, the results of the election so far have been a huge victory for the Muslim Brotherhood’s political party, which is known as the Freedom and Justice Party. As of the current knowledge on election results: the Brotherhood won approximately half of the legislative seats in the new democratic government.¹²⁰ During the three rounds of elections for different houses of the new parliament, the Freedom and Justice Party won “50 percent of the seats awarded in the first two rounds of the vote. It won roughly 40 percent of the seats allocated by party voting, and a higher percentage of the seats contested by individual candidates.”¹²¹ The Muslim Brotherhood party, which was banned under the Mubarak regime because it was seen as a threat, now holds the largest number of seats in parliament.¹²²

For now the future of Egypt is uncertain. The nation is temporarily operating on a Muslim Brotherhood parliament. The election results do not indicate that the Brotherhood will be asked to form a coalition government.¹²³ Final results and decisions will be made in later months of 2012. If the Freedom and Justice Party does win and does not chose to form a coalition government then it will “diminish the power of the partners in any alliance as well as any other parties.”¹²⁴ The Brotherhood would have all of the power and would not need to rule in favor of the entire Egyptian population because it would control the majority of the

¹¹⁹ Kirkpatrick, David, D., “Egypt Elections, Largely Peaceful, Draw Big Turnout,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=5>>.

¹²⁰ Kirkpatrick, David, D., “Egypt Elections, Largely Peaceful, Draw Big Turnout,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/middleeast/egyptians-vote-in-historic-election.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=5>>.

¹²¹ Kirkpatrick, David D., “Egyptians Vote in Final Round of Parliamentary Elections,” *The New York Times*, 3 January 2012, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/africa/egyptians-vote-in-final-round-of-parliamentary-elections.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=19>>.

¹²² “Egypt Anniversary Demonstrators Remain in Tahrir Square,” *The BBC*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16734600>>.

¹²³ “Egypt Anniversary Demonstrators Remain in Tahrir Square,” *The BBC*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16734600>>.

¹²⁴ Kirkpatrick, David D., “Egyptians Vote in Final Round of Parliamentary Elections,” *The New York Times*, 3 January 2012, accessed: 17 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/africa/egyptians-vote-in-final-round-of-parliamentary-elections.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Egypt%20AND%20elections&st=cse&scp=19>>.

government anyway. The transition from dictatorship and authoritarian rule to a democracy will be a long process. To ensure that the goals of the revolution are met, the party must lift the state of emergency. Egypt can only call itself a real and deep democracy if it rids the nation of the state of emergency law. Without the transfer of rule from the military to the people, reform and changes cannot be made.¹²⁵ One can only hope that the Brotherhood will rule in favor of the majority, ameliorate the lives of the citizenry and lift the state of emergency. However, since this political party has a majority of the representatives in parliament, even if it does not alter the state of emergency law a challenge by other political figures would result in the favor of the Brotherhood. With the end to the state of emergency, the people will no longer be disheartened about the failures that have occurred since Mubarak has left and they will begin to see that change is not just an illusion but can be achieved.

¹²⁵ Ashton, Catherine, "Supporting the Arab Awakening," *The New York Times*, 2 February 2012, accessed: 16 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/opinion/supporting-the-arab-awakening.html?scp=12&sq=Tunisia%20AND%20elections&st=cse>>.

Chapter 5: Bahrain Protests

The Bahraini people were inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, and the ability of their citizens to rid the country of longtime dictators. Bahrain is a monarchy that has been run by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and his family for over two hundred years. They are Sunni Muslims but the majority of the people within the country are Shia. Therefore, the majority of the people are being ruled by a minority power who suppress them and take away economic opportunities. In early 2011 the Shias of Bahrain used websites such as Google Earth to see the disparities between the ethnic groups in Bahrain; “the Shias of Bahrain—many of whom live in one-room houses with large families—could map and aggregate photographs of the ruling Sunni minority’s opulent palaces” (Howard and Hussain 2011, 40). The need for more political rights and economic opportunities was what started the protests but soon more than just Shias were in the streets. At some points of the revolution, which only lasted for one month, protesters could be heard yelling slogans such as No Shia, No Sunni, Just Bahraini. Numerous groups wanted reforms to the government. Yet, after the military crackdown the ethnic divisions grew larger and the two groups could not compromise on reforms because they wanted different changes to the government.

The revolution was short lived in Bahrain. In an article in *The New York Times*, it was written “in all the revolts that roiled the Arab world in 2011, Bahrain’s government was the only one to manage a tactical, perhaps ephemeral victory through force.”¹²⁶ It is the only revolution where the government stopped major protesting. Even though Bahrain is one of the few Arab Spring countries that journalists were allowed to report from for the majority of the rebellion, the articles that were written on the uprising focus more on what happened once protests started

¹²⁶ “Bahrain News—The Protests (2011),” *The New York Times*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 5 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/bahrain/index.html?scp=5&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

rather than how they were organized and began. Demonstrators went out into the streets on February 14, 2011, and stayed there until they were crushed on March 16, 2011. After the crackdown, the revolution ended and the government declared itself victorious against the protesters.

Table 3: Important Events in the Bahrain Revolution.

Revolution Begins – February 14, 2011
Destruction of Pearl Roundabout – February 19, 2011
Government Clampdown and State of Emergency Enacted – March 16, 2011
Outside Forces Enter Bahrain and End Rebellion – March 16, 2011
State of Emergency Lifted – June 1, 2011
National Unity Talks Begin – July 1, 2011
New Elections – September 2011

Revolution in Bahrain

Protests for more equality among the Shiite ethnicity in Bahrain had been occurring since 2009. Most protests were small, but after witnessing the events in Tunisia and Egypt the people of Bahrain were inspired. The people of Bahrain wanted democratic reforms. A new constitution and more political power was promised to the people ten years earlier but no changes had been made to the government system. People had previously been complacent about the lack of change, but after seeing other Middle Eastern and North African countries peacefully protest to get reforms, the people of Bahrain decided to call for change too. As shown in Table 3, protests began with a “Day of Rage” in Bahrain on February 14, 2011. The first protests were in the villages of Karzakan and Nuweidrat, which are located on the main island of

Bahrain not too far from the capital.¹²⁷ Protests also took place in Manama, which is the capital of Bahrain.

The first day of protest was largely made up of Shia citizens of Bahrain but in the following days of demonstrations those on the street would become more diverse. Sunni and Shia people were protesting side by side for reforms to the government.¹²⁸ Some protesters even were calling for the downfall of the king as early as the February 14, 2011, demonstrations.¹²⁹ On that first day of protests, demonstrators marched through Manama and took over the Pearl Roundabout in the center of the city. Police wanted to stop those who were protesting from gaining a central rallying place but when those in the streets would not budge authority figures pulled out and left the demonstrators. The crowd “waved flags and carried banners into the square in a show of defiance to the authorities.”¹³⁰ Force and violence were not immediately used. It was assumed that since Bahrain has close ties to the West, King Hamad showed restraint at the request of the United States’ President Obama.¹³¹ This act of restraint against those protesting the current regime would not last past the first day.

Demands of demonstrators evolved over the course of the month of rebellion. They began with a desire for compromise over a new genuine democratic parliament. Neither the government nor the people could be the sole decider on the new system of rule; the two parties

¹²⁷ “Bahrain Protests: Your Stories,” *The BBC*, 15 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12466384>>.

¹²⁸ “Bahrain Unrest: Torture Fears as Activists Die in Jail,” *The BBC*, 11 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13033288>>.

¹²⁹ “Bahrain Unrest: Tens of Thousands Rally in Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 25 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12583633>>.

¹³⁰ “Bahrain Unrest: Protesters Reoccupy Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 19 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12514849>>.

¹³¹ “Bahrain Unrest: Protesters Reoccupy Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 19 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12514849>>.

would have to come together to form the new regime.¹³² However, it only took four days from the official start of the protests for those on the street to change their views from “we used to demand for the prime minister to step down, but now our demand is for the ruling family to get out.”¹³³ The use of violence helped create this transformation. The government was waiting for the people in the streets to get tired or frustrated and go home, but the people who were protesting were doing the same thing with the government. They were waiting for the government to give up and leave. Both groups were using a battle of wills, and each side was hoping that the other would give up first.¹³⁴

The Bahrain rebellion had a centralized meeting point, similar to Tahrir Square in Egypt. In Manama, the capital of Bahrain, the protesters took over a roundabout called Pearl Square. There were thousands of protesters camped out in the roundabout, “pledging to stay until their demands [were] met. Protests began with a Day of Rage on Monday.”¹³⁵ From this position the people could control the stretch of road from the Bahrain Mall to Pearl Square. This area became a sea of national flags as people gathered for a pro-democracy rally on February 14, 2011, and then again later in the week.¹³⁶ The protesters wanted their voices heard and the best way to do that was to camp out and indicate that they would not leave until the demands of the public had been met by the monarchy.¹³⁷ They deemed that their voices be heard and listened to. By staying in one spot people could coordinate the next action of the protests and discuss in real-

¹³² “Bahrain Unrest: Tens of Thousands Rally in Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 25 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12583633>>.

¹³³ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain’s Soldiers Fire on Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 18 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/18/bahrain-soldiers-fire-on-protesters>>.

¹³⁴ “Bahrain Unrest: ‘Hope and Fear’ for Protesters,” *The BBC*, 25 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12578409>>.

¹³⁵ Black, Ian, “Bahrain Police Open Fire on Funeral Procession Leaving One Dead,” *The Guardian*, 15 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/15/bahrain-police-funeral-procession>>.

¹³⁶ “Bahrain Unrest: Thousands Join Anti-Government Protest,” *The BBC*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12535681>>.

¹³⁷ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain’s Quiet Anger Turns to Rage,” *The Guardian*, 17 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/17/bahrain-quiet-anger-turns-rage>>.

time how to deal with the demonstrations. By taking control of the square early, it lessened the need for organization through social media.

The government tried numerous tactics to get the people of Bahrain out of the Pearl Square Roundabout and Manama. At first King Hamad ordered the use of military forces to move people away from their central meeting point, but this did not work. On February 16, 2011, people were scared when police used live ammunition but the demonstrators did not give up or retreat. Four people died but anti-government demonstrations continued within the roundabout.¹³⁸ Since people did not show fear and kept meeting at the Pearl Roundabout, the government withdrew from the area. On February 20, the people set up extra tents to allow more people to live in the protest camp.¹³⁹ The attempt to clear the camps had failed.

Unfortunately for the protesters, the next tactic that the government tried in order to get people out of the Pearl Roundabout was to destroy the site. Demonstrators left the capital to attend the funerals of the four people who died during the first attempt to clear Pearl Square. Military forces took this opportunity to raid the area. Up to five hundred officers showed up at Pearl Roundabout to destroy the site.¹⁴⁰ Not only did they wreck havoc on the property of the protesters, but they took down a giant white monument that was in the middle of the roundabout. By breaking this over the area it made it harder for the protesters to recreate their old living arrangements. The mound of grass that the protesters had been living on was now a pile of dirt littered with debris.¹⁴¹ The raid left the tent city in ruins and rallied more people into the streets.

The treatment of the base camp of the protesters led other people who had not yet been

¹³⁸ "Bahrain Opposition Set Demands for Talks With Royals," *The BBC*, 20 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12517291>>.

¹³⁹ "Bahrain Opposition Set Demands for Talks With Royals," *The BBC*, 20 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12517291>>.

¹⁴⁰ Chulov, Martin, "Bahrain's Quiet Anger Turns to Rage," *The Guardian*, 17 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/17/bahrain-quiet-anger-turns-rage>>.

¹⁴¹ Chulov, Martin, "Bahrain Destroys Pearl Roundabout," *The Guardian*, 18 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/18/bahrain-destroys-pearl-roundabout>>.

prominent in the protests to join the cause. The destruction to the tent city was so rampant that it initially destroyed all hopes of peaceful change.¹⁴²

By the time that word had gotten to protesters who were attending funerals outside of Manama, it was too late. Few protesters could make it back to the roundabout in time to see its destruction. Additionally King Hamad put into place a curfew, which stopped people from returning to the site after it had been demolished.¹⁴³ The people of Bahrain, unlike protesters in other countries, listened to the curfew. Demonstrators obeyed the law because they had no place to meet and protest the unfair government actions, since the military had just destroyed their center of operations.

After the Pearl Roundabout was destroyed, people began congregating at the Salmaniya medical center in Manama. It was the site where many people who were injured during the previous protests had gone for medical treatment. It was now the new home to the revolution; “a hospital forecourt was an unlikely spot to start a revolution. But the thousands of people who surged into the grounds of Salmaniya hospital in the capital Manama clearly believe a revolt [had] been born that [would] lead them into a showdown with police.”¹⁴⁴ People were angered at the reaction of the government to the peaceful protests. Demonstrators organized at the hospital and took action with newly invigorated protests.

The government found the new protest headquarters to be problematic too. The monarchy thought that the hospital was now operating as a base to plot the overthrow of the

¹⁴² Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain’s Quiet Anger Turns to Rage,” *The Guardian*, 17 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/17/bahrain-quiet-anger-turns-rage>>.

¹⁴³ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain Destroys Pearl Roundabout,” *The Guardian*, 18 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/18/bahrain-destroys-pearl-roundabout>>.

¹⁴⁴ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain’s Quiet Anger Turns to Rage,” *The Guardian*, 17 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/17/bahrain-quiet-anger-turns-rage>>.

regime and governing family.¹⁴⁵ Any medical professional who helped to treat those who were injured during protests was seen as supporting the cause of anti-government rallies. They too were traders to the regime and were even put on trial for their crimes against the monarchy. The defense that during the unrest “they were under professional duty to treat all casualties and strongly rejected claims by authorities that helping anti-government protesters was akin to supporting their cause” was heard by deaf ears.¹⁴⁶ King Hamad did not accept this justification and sentenced forty-seven health professionals to between five years in jail and a life sentence.¹⁴⁷ Military forces took control of the hospital on March 15, when martial law was implemented in Bahrain.¹⁴⁸ King Hamad wanted an end to the protests and crushed the rebellions through the use of military forces and martial law. The military was not treating those who came in with wounds from police brutality during the protests. In fact it was reported that troops were using live ammunition in the hospital to shoot people and threaten doctors not to give medical attention to certain individuals.¹⁴⁹ This was the first action in the government crackdown. The Salmaniya medical center no longer was a central point in the protests.

These actions against the people of Bahrain led to more changes in the demands of those in the streets. Now protesters were requesting that the government release people from custody. Those who opposed the rule of King Hamad as well as citizens who were just doing their jobs, such as doctors, were detained. Demands in the streets changed to “prisoner release, they want the government to resign, the deaths of protesters to be investigated, and political reforms that

¹⁴⁵ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain Doctors Jailed for Treating Injured Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 29 September 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/29/bahrain-protester-death-sentence>>.

¹⁴⁶ “Bahrain Puts Medical Staff on Trial for Treating Injured Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 6 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/06/bahrain-puts-medics-on-trial>>.

¹⁴⁷ “Bahrain Puts Medical Staff on Trial for Treating Injured Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 6 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/06/bahrain-puts-medics-on-trial>>.

¹⁴⁸ “Bahrain Puts Medical Staff on Trial for Treating Injured Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 6 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/06/bahrain-puts-medics-on-trial>>.

¹⁴⁹ “Bahrain Crackdown on Protests in Manama’s Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 16 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12755852>>.

will lead to a constitutional monarchy.”¹⁵⁰ Additionally the demonstrators believed that the curfew should be disbanded and peaceful protests should be allowed to happen without the result of violence from military and police officials.¹⁵¹

After just over a month of protests, the government of Bahrain cracked down on those who were calling for more reforms and a change of government. The day before the crackdown, Bahrain kicked out all foreign media correspondents.¹⁵² In an attempt to crush the protests, martial law was declared on March 15 and was enforced by troops. On March 16, 2011, the Bahraini government instituted troops from around the Gulf, including Bahraini, Saudi Arabian, and United Arab Emirates forces, to put the country into a state of emergency. The use of so many types of security forces was to ensure that protests and disruptions in the streets stopped.¹⁵³ The Sunni monarchy snapped; the government’s patience with protesters and their roadblocks ended and the king wanted to make sure the protests ended too.¹⁵⁴ The police took control of the streets. With this control came, “police checkpoints ... tanks stationed in the centre of the capital Manama, a curfew from midnight until early morning and more than 1,000 troops and police from neighbouring Arab Gulf states helping to guard vital installations.”¹⁵⁵ There was no longer any accountability of troops, which meant that violence against those who opposed King Hamad

¹⁵⁰ “Bahrain Unrest: Tens of Thousands Rally in Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 25 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12583633>>.

¹⁵¹ “Bahrain Crackdown on Protests in Manama’s Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 16 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12755852>>.

¹⁵² Black, Ian, “Bahrain Protests: ‘The Repression is Getting Worse,’” *The Guardian*, 8 August 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/08/bahrain-protests-repression-getting-worse>>.

¹⁵³ “Middle East Protests: Country by Country,” *The BBC*, 24 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482295>>.

¹⁵⁴ “Bahrain’s Security Clampdown Divides Kingdom,” *The BBC*, 14 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13088600>>.

¹⁵⁵ “Bahrain’s Security Clampdown Divides Kingdom,” *The BBC*, 14 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13088600>>.

increased.¹⁵⁶ The police and military could do whatever they wanted and get away with these actions because no one was going to report them or reprimand them.

Not all people within Bahrain believed that there was a need for change within the government. While other dictators in Arab Spring countries had supporters who they called upon at times to help aid their cause, none held rallies on their own to indicate the successes of the regime.¹⁵⁷ But in Bahrain, demonstrations by anti-government protesters were met by even bigger pro-government events, especially at the end of February (Dalacoura 2012). Numerous Sunni communities benefit from the rule of King Hamad. The Sunni population is the minority but rules over the majority Shiite ethnicity. While the Shia people feel that they have been taken advantage of and disenfranchised by the Hamad regime, the Sunnis benefit economically from being in power.¹⁵⁸ Bahrain is a relatively wealthy country because they have a large quantity of oil. The Sunni minority profits from the oil money more than the Shia population. Therefore, they do not want to have a constitutional monarchy or a democracy because it would hurt their lifestyles. At a Sunni mosque numerous people were quoted as saying that they were supportive of the crackdown against protesters. To this group the protesters had gone too far in their demands and were hurting the economy of Bahrain. For this they deserved to be repressed and have their protests ended by both foreign and domestic troops.¹⁵⁹ This increased tension between Shia and Sunni led more Shia into the streets because they felt the need for quicker change. This

¹⁵⁶ Law, Bill, "Police Brutality Turns Bahrain into 'Island of Fear,'" *The BBC*, 6 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12975832>>.

¹⁵⁷ "Bahrain Unrest: Thousands Join Anti-Government Protest," *The BBC*, 22 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12535681>>.

¹⁵⁸ Chulov, Martin, "Bahrain Declares Martial Law as Protesters Clash With Troops," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/15/bahrain-martial-law-protesters-troops>>.

¹⁵⁹ "Bahrain's Security Clampdown Divides Kingdom," *The BBC*, 14 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13088600>>.

does not mean that both sects were not rallying for some changes to take place in the government but the majority of those who opposed the government were Shia.¹⁶⁰

Within the Shia population there were influential individuals and groups that were fighting for more equality and a change in government structure. One of the key activists was Abdulhadi al-Khawaja. He is considered by King Hamad and his government to be a dangerous republican because he called for the end of the regime.¹⁶¹ King Hamad's government has charged al-Khawaja with inciting unrest among the Sunni and Shia communities and pitting one sect of Muslim against the other to inspire the revolution.¹⁶² He has been taken from his home and detained by the government because he spoke out against the abuses of the Hamad regime. The government has detained hundreds of other people, who like al-Khawaja have opposed the rule of the monarchy. Anyone who appears to be harmful to the government is taken, even if they are not purposely acting out against King Hamad's regime. These individuals have not been heard from for weeks or even months.¹⁶³

Besides outspoken activists such as al-Khawaja, the opposition party Al-Wifaq has been instrumental in the protests. This political party, which represents the Shia majority, used to hold seats in parliament. However, the eighteen members of parliament resigned after they saw the treatment of the government during the crackdown on protesters in March.¹⁶⁴ This was a bold statement against the government, but it may not have been the smartest move on the part of the Al-Wifaq party. In September the government held a special election to fill the seats of those

¹⁶⁰ Marcus, Jonathan, "Bahrain Unrest Prompts Diplomatic Rethink," *The BBC*, 17 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12498028>>.

¹⁶¹ Gardner, Frank, "Leading Bahrain Activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja Arrested," *The BBC*, 9 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13023428>>.

¹⁶² Gardner, Frank, "Leading Bahrain Activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja Arrested," *The BBC*, 9 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13023428>>.

¹⁶³ Gardner, Frank, "Leading Bahrain Activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja Arrested," *The BBC*, 9 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13023428>>.

¹⁶⁴ "Bahrain Government Moves to Disband Shia Opposition," *The BBC*, 14 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13084101>>.

who had resigned months beforehand.¹⁶⁵ The people who support Al-Wifaq “make up about 70% of Bahrain's native population, and is boycotting the polls on the grounds that the ‘election is not aimed at achieving serious results.’”¹⁶⁶ In these special elections that occurred only certain people were allowed to vote or run for office. The people involved were “either pro-government or nominally independent, given the opposition boycott. Four of the seats have already been filled, as single candidates were left when all competitors withdrew ahead of the polls.”¹⁶⁷ These classifications ensured that people who were pro-government won the empty seats. The majority of the population who are Shia and those who were protesting in the streets would not be represented in the government. Therefore, King Hamad might not be forced to change his behavior or his rule of the land. More laws that crackdown and repress the population could be passed. This could be one of the contributing factors to King Hamad’s continued reign of power instead of him being forced from the country like other Arab Spring leaders.

Unlike most other Arab Spring leaders, the government of Bahrain gave few concessions to its people. Few reforms were granted during the uprising in February and March. King Hamad made one announcement about his government. He promised to reshuffle his cabinet to allow for a more diverse group of people to help him rule. During this announcement the king stated that he would change his cabinet but not replace his prime minister, Sheikh Khalifah ibn Salman al-Khalifah, who has been governing with him for forty years.¹⁶⁸ King Hamad hoped

¹⁶⁵ “Q&A: Bahrain’s By-Elections,” *The BBC*, 23 September 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15016365>>.

¹⁶⁶ “Q&A: Bahrain’s By-Elections,” *The BBC*, 23 September 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15016365>>.

¹⁶⁷ “Q&A: Bahrain’s By-Elections,” *The BBC*, 23 September 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15016365>>.

¹⁶⁸ “Bahrain Crackdown on Protests in Manama’s Pearl Square,” *The BBC*, 16 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12755852>>.

that this announcement would curb dissent in the streets, but it did not.¹⁶⁹ Most talks with opposition groups happened after the end of emergency law, which was lifted on June 1, 2011. It was deemed that after this time the country had returned to normal because protests were no longer regularly occurring. Therefore, the government could rationally talk about making some changes.

On June 1, 2011, King Hamad ordered an end to the state of emergency rule that he had put in place in March. This decision was staged as an attempt for Bahrain to reassure foreign financial markets that the country was ready to conduct business again.¹⁷⁰ It was a way to show outside countries that Bahrain had returned to normal.¹⁷¹ The government wanted to entice foreign investors and tourists to come back to Bahrain because it was safe to conduct business with and visit again. Officials hoped that by discontinuing this eleven-week law it would indicate that the country was no longer a threat since it did not need emergency rule.¹⁷² However, those in power were depicting a contradictory response to outside sources and to the protests within the nation. King Hamad was telling the world that the unrest had stopped and people were content with the government again but “the joint Gulf security force, which rolled into Bahrain when the emergency was declared on 15 March, will stay in place until the government thinks it is no longer needed.” This Gulf security force was comprised of Saudi and UAE forces.¹⁷³ By keeping outside mercenaries in the country, it does not give off the

¹⁶⁹ Chulov, Martin, “Bahrain Destroys Pearl Roundabout,” *The Guardian*, 18 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/18/bahrain-destroys-pearl-roundabout>>.

¹⁷⁰ “Bahrain Oil Company Fires Almost 300 Over Anti-Government Protests,” *The Guardian*, 11 May 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/11/bahrain-oil-company-fires-300-protests>>.

¹⁷¹ “Middle East Protests: Country by Country,” *The BBC*, 24 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482295>>.

¹⁷² “Bahrain Ends State of Emergency Imposed After Protests,” *The BBC*, 1 June 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13616798>>.

¹⁷³ “Bahrain Ends State of Emergency Imposed After Protests,” *The BBC*, 1 June 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13616798>>.

appearance of safety and security. Additionally mere hours after Hamad lifted the law, “security forces attacked peaceful protesters in more than 20 villages with rubber bullets, stun grenades, shotguns and tear gas.”¹⁷⁴ King Hamad has stated that the law has been lifted but in reality nothing has changed because violence and troops are still present in the country.

On July 1, 2011, King Hamad began a national dialogue with opposition groups to ameliorate the country.¹⁷⁵ Opposition leaders and members of the government met on July 2, 2011, but the first day of discussion was “mostly ceremonial, with a recital from the Koran, a speech and presentations. The talks [were] to last until the end of July, with delegates meeting three times a week.”¹⁷⁶ The talks included the Al-Wifaq party, which represents seventy-percent of the country.¹⁷⁷ While this Shia opposition party was allowed into the discussions about reforms, they only received a small portion of the spots in the national dialogue. For the number of people that the opposition party represents they should have received more than thirty-five seats out of the three hundred available spots. If any reform was put to a vote the Al-Wifaq party could easily be overturned and overruled by parliament, which is comprised of all pro-government supporters.¹⁷⁸

The Al-Wifaq party removed itself from the talks during the national dialogue because the discussions were not accomplishing any goals; the talks began on July 2, 2011, and the Al-

¹⁷⁴ Zoepf, Katherine, “Bahrain Ends Martial Law but Renews Crackdown on Protests,” *The New York Times*, 2 June 2011, accessed: 6 March 2012

<<http://fe5uk3rb3z.search.serialssolutions.com/?sid=36520&genre=article&title=New+York+Times&atitle=Bahrain+Ends+Martial+Law+but+Renews+Crackdown+on+Protests.&author=ZOEPEF%2c+KATHERINE&authors=ZOEPF%2c+KATHERINE&date=20110602&volume=&issue=&spage=6&issn=03624331>>.

¹⁷⁵ Law, Bill, “Bahrain Sentences Widen Sectarian Rift,” *The BBC*, 23 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13879622>>.

¹⁷⁶ “Bahrain Opposition Joins Talks,” *The Guardian*, 2 July 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/02/bahrain-opposition-joins-talks>>.

¹⁷⁷ “Bahrain: Sunni Leaders Begin Talks With Shia Groups,” *The BBC*, 2 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13999741>>.

¹⁷⁸ “Bahrain: Sunni Leaders Begin Talks With Shia Groups,” *The BBC*, 2 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13999741>>.

Wifaq party pulled out after only two weeks of participation.¹⁷⁹ The talks were not serious and nothing was being changed because too few seats were given to represent those who were protesting. The King had announced that all topics and options could be put on the table but refused the release of detained protesters when it came up. King Hamad knows that anything put on the table that is not beneficial to the ruling party and those who associate with them can be stopped by a vote, which will result in the ruling party's favor. Until this point the government has not made any concessions on the "demands to free all detainees and clear other convicted of protest-related charges, including eight Shia opposition leaders sentenced to life in prison [in June]." ¹⁸⁰

In November an independent report from the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry came out in Bahrain saying that the government used excessive force when dealing with protesters during the February and March uprising. After this declaration questioned the leadership of King Hamad, he made a committee to look into the human rights abuses during the protests.¹⁸¹ Few activists and opposition parties are hopeful about the new committee. They find it to be a political ploy and indicate that the government has no intention of looking into the deaths of protesters.¹⁸² The government has made promises before that it has not followed through on and the people of Bahrain do not see how this committee could be any different from those previous actions. This committee will not resolve any grievances in the country or conduct

¹⁷⁹ "Bahrain Opposition Bloc al-Wifaq 'To Quit National Talks,'" *The BBC*, 17 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14178740>>.

¹⁸⁰ "Bahrain: Sunni Leaders Begin Talks With Shia Groups," *The BBC*, 2 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13999741>>.

¹⁸¹ Law, Bill, "Is Bahrain on Route to Reform?," *The BBC*, 8 December 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16089861>>.

¹⁸² Law, Bill, "Is Bahrain on Route to Reform?," *The BBC*, 8 December 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16089861>>.

any reforms that are beneficial to those who wanted a regime change.¹⁸³ If anything does come of this investigation, it will not be in favor of those who were in the streets. King Hamad would more likely use this opportunity to exonerate Bahrain's rulers who were involved in the government crackdown of demonstrators.¹⁸⁴

After the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report was released, the government has looked into making other small changes besides the new commission. King Hamad has replaced his head of security by moving him to a different government job and appointing someone new to his old post. This change comes after the report stated that the crackdown was too harsh and violated human rights of those within Bahrain. Being a Western ally that depends on foreign investment, the country cannot afford to ignore a report claiming it is unsuitable for outsiders to do business there. Therefore, on the surface it appears that King Hamad is taking measures to deter such crackdowns from happening in the future, but in reality this is just a show.¹⁸⁵ He has successfully stopped the protests once already and would likely do it again. It does not matter who the head of security is. If protests threaten his position of power King Hamad will crackdown on the rallies. Other recent changes that the king has made include "constitutional reforms that are intended to lead to greater accountability, ordered the rebuilding of mosques knocked down by the government, and appointed two distinguished British lawyers to overhaul Bahrain's judicial system."¹⁸⁶ Lastly the government has stated that it will give jobs back to those who lost them during the protests. Some people were fired for rallying on the

¹⁸³ Law, Bill, "Is Bahrain on Route to Reform?," *The BBC*, 8 December 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16089861>>.

¹⁸⁴ Ali, Halima, "Bahrain's King Orders Investigation into Human Rights Abuses at Protests," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/29/bahrain-king-human-rights-protests>>.

¹⁸⁵ "Bahrain Security Chief Replaced After Inquiry," *The BBC*, 29 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15935682>>.

¹⁸⁶ Law, Bill, "Bahrain Pushes Reform Agenda," *The BBC*, 18 January 2012, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16594326>>.

streets while others lost employment simply because they were Shia and could potentially be against the reign of King Hamad.¹⁸⁷ Either way people were given their jobs back and could work again. Hamad is making it appear that all is back to pre-protest conditions and norms.

As of this writing, King Hamad is still in power in Bahrain. The one-year anniversary of the start of protests has passed, but protests are rare now. Over the last year, the government has detained hundreds of people. Protesters, opposition leaders, human rights advocates, athletes in the country as well as doctors and lawyers and Shia professionals are just some groups of people who have been rounded up and put into Bahraini custody.¹⁸⁸ It is approximated that the Bahrain government has detained 1,600 people.¹⁸⁹ Those who have been held by the Bahrain government have experienced mental and physical torture. These people have confessed to committing crimes against the government that they had no part in because they were tortured or threatened until they would admit to these acts.¹⁹⁰ Of the people in custody a few have even been sentenced to death for protesting against the government and disrupting the way of life in Bahrain.¹⁹¹ More than four hundred people have lost their jobs because of the protests and the ethnic divisions that have widened since the protests began.¹⁹² During the two months of

¹⁸⁷ Law, Bill, "Bahrain Pushes Reform Agenda," *The BBC*, 18 January 2012, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16594326>>.

¹⁸⁸ "Bahrain Oil Company Fires Almost 300 Over Anti-Government Protests," *The Guardian*, 11 May 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/11/bahrain-oil-company-fires-300-protests>>.

¹⁸⁹ "Middle East Protests: Country by Country," *The BBC*, 24 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482295>>.

¹⁹⁰ "Bahrain Security Chief Replaced After Inquiry," *The BBC*, 29 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15935682>>.

¹⁹¹ "Bahrain Puts Medical Staff on Trial for Treating Injured Protesters," *The Guardian*, 6 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/06/bahrain-puts-medics-on-trial>>.

¹⁹² Gardner, Frank, "Leading Bahrain Activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja Arrested," *The BBC*, 9 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13023428>>.

protests and the small squabbles with authority figures since, over forty people have been killed in the Bahrain revolution.¹⁹³

King Hamad is still in power for multiple reasons, including the lack of calls for his resignation from outside forces, the effective use of domestic and foreign militaries to crackdown on the protesters, the change in seasons that made it harder to revolt and the sectarian division among those living in Bahrain. America and other outside countries are allies with Bahrain. To them, King Hamad was not threatening and did not need to be removed in the same manner as President Mubarak. Obama called for reform but never indicated that King Hamad should leave his post; “in the case of Bahrain, where the US Fifth Fleet is stationed and there is fear of Iranian meddling, Obama called for ‘reform’ but failed to publicly condemn the regime’s repression” (Dalacoura 2012, 78). Stability was even more important in Bahrain than in Egypt. The American government did not want to anger the monarchy of Bahrain and risk conflict that would result in the US government having to move its military base from the nation. Bahrain is located in a key area of the Gulf region because it is so close to Saudi Arabia and Iran. Therefore, President Obama chose to call for restraint rather than back the protesters (Dalacoura 2012).

Having troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates come in to help crush the rebellion marked an end to the revolution.¹⁹⁴ Scholars and those within the country of Bahrain indicate that the uprising in this country lasted from February to March. Even though other small demonstrations occurred, once the emergency law and use of foreign troops occurred the

¹⁹³ “Middle East Protests: Country by Country,” *The BBC*, 24 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482295>>.

¹⁹⁴ “Bahrain’s Security Clampdown Divides Kingdom,” *The BBC*, 14 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13088600>>.

rebellion ended. Subsequent protests were infrequent and did not accomplish any goals.¹⁹⁵ Even the climate of Bahrain added to the unsuccessfulness of the protests. Once emergency rule was lifted and people had the potential to begin protests again, it was “blazing summer across the Middle East. In most places it's too hot to demonstrate, or to fight, in the middle of the day. And it is clear that the process of change that has come to the Arab world is not neat, quick or easy.”¹⁹⁶ It was too much effort to protest in the streets under the hot Middle Eastern sun, so people gave up on fighting for reforms when the emergency law was lifted.

The division between the Sunni and Shiite Muslim sects did not enable the people of Bahrain to come up with a unified force against the government. The problem between the two groups stems from and is “fuelled by minority regimes for whom majority rule is especially threatening.”¹⁹⁷ Religion and different sects play a role in the inability to overthrow the dictator. Protests bring groups together but when deciding upon how changes should be made and what changes should occur, differing religions can come up with diverse answers. At the beginning of the rallies, the majority of people in the streets were Shia. They were calling for a change to “economic hardship, the lack of political freedom and employment discrimination in favour of the ruling Sunni Muslim minority.”¹⁹⁸ The Sunni population did not feel the same grievances as the Shia citizens. The Sunnis benefit much more from being the political party in power. They did not necessarily want a change to these political issues and therefore were protesting for different government reforms. With the addition of foreign troops in the country, the divide

¹⁹⁵ Bowen, Jeremy, “Arab Spring: Unfinished Business for Protesters,” *The BBC*, 14 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14153583>>.

¹⁹⁶ Bowen, Jeremy, “Arab Spring: Unfinished Business for Protesters,” *The BBC*, 14 July 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14153583>>.

¹⁹⁷ Hardy, Roger, “What Happened to the Arab Spring?,” *The BBC*, 15 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13091091>>.

¹⁹⁸ “Middle East Protests: Country by Country,” *The BBC*, 24 November 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482295>>.

between the two Muslim sects that were protesting grew.¹⁹⁹ Different groups blamed others for the harsh crackdown, injuries and deaths that the Bahrain government imposed on its citizenry. A large sectarian dimension reappeared within the nation.²⁰⁰ King Hamad could use this divide to remain in power. If the citizenry was not united on what reforms they wanted enacted, it was easier for the king not to make any changes.

Social Media Use in Bahrain

When looking at the statistics of Internet accessibility, number of Facebook users, wealth of the country and literacy within Bahrain, it is hard to understand how little social media impacted the uprisings in 2011. By June of 2011, when the state of emergency was lifted 649,300 people out of a population of about 800,000 were Internet users.²⁰¹ That's eighty-one percent of people in the country who had the ability to use the Internet. Of the people who utilized the Internet in June of 2011, roughly twenty-four percent of people in Bahrain used Facebook (Salem and Mourtafa 2011). However another study stated that before the crackdown most people used Facebook for social networking and not political or organizational dialogue. Additionally during the months of the Arab Spring in early 2011, Bahrain was named one of the "top five Arab countries in terms of usage of social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. The word 'Bahrain' was also among the top 'hashtags' posted by Twitter users in the Arab world in a series of regional trends focusing on the events of political unrest across the region in the first quarter [of the] year."²⁰² This does not mean that the tweets were coming from within the

¹⁹⁹ Hardy, Roger, "What Happened to the Arab Spring?," *The BBC*, 15 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13091091>>.

²⁰⁰ Chulov, Martin, "Bahrain Declares Martial Law as Protesters Clash With Troops," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/15/bahrain-martial-law-protesters-troops>>.

²⁰¹ "Bahrain Profile," *The BBC*, 4 January 2012, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14541053>>.

²⁰² "Bahrain Social Media Users on Rise," *TradeArabia*, 9 June 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/871119169/134D94653335110661E/8?accountid=14637>>.

country though. The country is ripe with wealth from oil production, and uses that money for education, which means that roughly ninety-one percent of the population is literate.²⁰³ This adds to the number of people who could have read about the protests online and mobilized to the cause. With all of these factors, it is puzzling that when looking at the Arab Spring nations journalists talk least about social media in Bahrain. Why did journalists, who were freely allowed to roam the nation until the day before the crackdown on March 16, 2011, not comment on the use of social media to start or sustain the protests?

Access to specific tweets or posts were not available for me to analyze. However, stories have been told to reporters about social media use gone awry. Messages were misleading and directed people towards harmful rather than helpful situations. Such messages include government groups that used anonymous names to create organizational posts and round up activists and detain them. The government also arrested people for posting opposition arguments on the Internet when in fact the government had hacked into their account and created those updates. Hackers from the monarchy went online and posted opinions that were anti-government under the name of known opposition activists.²⁰⁴ These acts quickly turned people off of social media. Protesters in the streets did not use social media, so both foreign and domestic viewers of digital media stopped paying attention to the false posts.²⁰⁵

Since social media was not essential for the uprisings, the two attempted government blackouts of social media did not affect the protests. The government altered social media services twice in the month that protests occurred in the nation. Even though the majority of the

²⁰³ “Bahrain Protests: King Hamad Seeks Talks After Violence,” *The BBC*, 18 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12512741>>.

²⁰⁴ Tran, Mark, “Bahrain Accuses Human Rights Leader of Faking Pictures of Beating,” *The Guardian*, 11 April 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/11/bahrain-human-rights-activist-accused>>.

²⁰⁵ Tran, Mark, “Bahrain Accuses Human Rights Leader of Faking Pictures of Beating,” *The Guardian*, 11 April 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/11/bahrain-human-rights-activist-accused>>.

people within the nation did not utilize social media, the government took precautionary measures against the spread of information on rallies, during the first blackout, and the spread of human rights violations videos, during the second blackout. The interruptions to social media use were both at key points in the demonstrations. On February 15, 2011, the day after protests began, people found that their connections were not working up to par: “Bahrainis complained at the slowness of internet connections, fuelling speculation that the government had forced service providers to throttle speeds to slow the dissemination of information.”²⁰⁶ Even if people wanted to use social media, they could not. Not only were Internet connections altered for the people in the nation but other social media outlets were monitored too; “mobile phones [had] been disrupted. Social networking outlets [were] being monitored. Activists with contacts to outside journalists [were] being arrested.”²⁰⁷ The second blackout administered by the government was when the crackdown began on protesters. On March 16, 2011, as foreign troops were helping to remove demonstrators from the streets, social media was not working within the country. People could not indicate to one another what was happening or how to avoid it even if they wanted to or trusted the posts that would be put on the Internet through social media. Both times the government blacked out social media usage, the disturbances did not last for long periods of time.

Facebook and Twitter

Facebook and Twitter were not used as organizational tools before the protests began. When people within the country were interviewed, they could not indicate if social media had led to the start of the protests. People responded with statements such as I think social media was

²⁰⁶ Black, Ian, “Bahrain Police Open Fire on Funeral Procession Leaving One Dead,” *The Guardian*, 15 February 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/15/bahrain-police-funeral-procession>>.

²⁰⁷ Law, Bill, “Bahrain Rulers Unleash ‘Campaign of Intimidation,’” *The BBC*, 22 March 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12817106>>.

utilized, but no definitive webpage could be recalled where organization took place.²⁰⁸ In fact a Facebook page was created called 14 February Revolution Youth Coalition. However, it only briefly talked about a protest that should end at the Pearl Roundabout. No details were decided upon through the use of the webpage. The page did not have many updates between the first demonstration and the special elections in September, when it was utilized again.²⁰⁹ It was not used to organize the first protest or attempt to mobilize people to the cause. The social media blackout did not alter the use of Facebook or Twitter because people who were going to rally in the streets for regime change were not monitoring the sites. The lack of use of this Facebook page cannot be attributed to the first government black out of social media. The first blackout began on February 15, 2011, after the protests began. The rare protester who did check these social media sites reported that they could no longer access sites such as Facebook and Twitter.²¹⁰ By the time that Twitter was back people had taken up residency in Pearl Square and did not need social media to organize. Instead organization happened through older forms of communication. Meetings at mosques and coffee houses were used to establish dates, times and ways of protesting. Fliers along with word of mouth informed people about the demonstrations and when they would begin. Social media was not needed to spread the word about the revolution.

Twitter was used mostly by elites, and very few elites were also Shia protesters. Those who posted on Twitter that were anti-government were not the same protesters who ran into the streets to demonstrate against the government. Since those who opposed the regime in the open

²⁰⁸ "Bahrain Protests: Your Stories," *The BBC*, 15 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12466384>>.

²⁰⁹ "Q&A: Bahrain's By-Elections," *The BBC*, 23 September 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15016365>>.

²¹⁰ "Bahrain Protests: Your Stories," *The BBC*, 15 February 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12466384>>.

were more likely to be picked up by authority figures and tortured, these elites aired their disagreements with government policies through social media outlets while congregating at local coffee shops.²¹¹ By meeting at a local business, tweeters hoped that the government would not track their Internet Protocol (IP) address (which indicates the location of the social media device that is uploading or updating information on the Internet) back to their houses. Twitter was used to depict the harsh realities of the government security forces and anger in the different ethnic communities, according to the British Broadcasting Company.²¹² However, the depictions that were tweeted were from those watching the protests rather than those who were participating in them and felt first hand what it was like to be struck by teargas. Since Twitter was quickly found to be unreliable, these tweets were not impacting those within or outside of the nation.

Social media is discredited in Bahrain because it was unreliable for indicating what was happening on the ground. Individuals within the country and abroad felt that what was shown through social media could have been fabricated and the source was often untraceable. Government intervention, and use of Internet based social media by elites rather than actual activists led the general public to find social media untrustworthy. The Bahraini government had seen the impact of social media in other countries, and tried a new tactic of infiltrating the system to stop the use of this communication type as a mobilization tool. Government officials even used social media to trick protesters and detain them. Bahraini individuals did not use social media to organize or mobilize because they did not trust those whose identity they could not verify. The addition of people who were not directly involved or camped out in Pearl

²¹¹ “Bahrain News—The Protests (2011),” *The New York Times*, 25 January 2012, accessed: 5 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/bahrain/index.html?scp=5&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

²¹² Law, Bill, “Bahrain Sentences Widen Sectarian Rift,” *The BBC*, 23 June 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13879622>>.

Roundabout but were commenting as if they were revolutionaries, adds to the theory that social media could not be trusted to give an accurate picture of the uprising in Bahrain.

YouTube

YouTube was used to capture the protests on camera. The few killings that happened as well as violent demonstrations were caught on tape for the world to see. The videos, especially one in Sitra, which is close to the capital Manama, revealed what the Bahraini government preferred its Western allies not see.²¹³ The police and military fired on civilians, threw teargas canisters, and used other means to silence the protests. People within the nation and some that were outside of it viewed these videos. They circulated around different social media websites such as YouTube and Facebook.²¹⁴ Few people abroad were shocked or appalled at these videos in the same manner that they had been when videos of Egypt were posted online. Since other social media sites had been fabrications of the truth, viewers were skeptical of the material in the videos. Another reason that these images did not invoke a reaction could be that most of the videos that were uploaded were of the crackdown. These depictions wanted to show the hardships of the protesters during the violent crushing of the rebellion, but the Bahraini crackdown coincides with the first day of protests and “Day of Rage” in Syria. Abuses were much more dramatic in Syria; therefore, Syria received more media attention than the crackdown in Bahrain.

While Bahrain is an ally of the United States and even houses one of its military fleets, Americans were unconcerned with protests in this Gulf state. People often do not know much about the nation and in comparison to all of the other unrest going on in the Middle East, Bahrain

²¹³ Black, Ian, “Bahrain Protests: ‘The Repression is Getting Worse,’” *The Guardian*, 8 August 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/08/bahrain-protests-repression-getting-worse>>.

²¹⁴ Booth, Robert, “Bahrain: Four Protesters Sentenced to Death by Firing Squad,” *The Guardian*, 28 April 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/28/bahrain-four-protesters-sentenced-death>>.

was not a major concern. Other countries attracted more media attention. Since the videos in Bahrain could not be authenticated and viewers did not know if the images were real or contrived, people in other nations did not feel strongly about King Hamad's use of force.²¹⁵ Outsiders did not call for his resignation. People did not watch the videos from Bahrain with as much passion as they did the other revolutions in the region. They were caught up in more violent and pressing uprisings. The demonstrations in Bahrain were coming to an end as a result of the government crackdown, while rebellions were flaring up in other countries.

Impact of Social Media in Bahrain

Social media should have been extremely important in fostering the protests in Bahrain and organizing grievances against the regime, but older forms of media were used instead. With a high rate of Internet use, Facebook members, and cell phone users, Bahraini protesters should have organized online before moving to the streets, yet the people of Bahrain did not use social media in the same vein as other nations. Multiple scenarios could explain the absence of a mobilization technique that made more sense in this Arab nation than any of the others that did utilize it. Shia Muslims, who comprise the largest population of protesters, are poor. They do not have the luxuries of owning a personal computer with access to the Internet or Facebook. The available data on Internet and Facebook users is from June 2011, not February when the protests began. Nothing helps to encourage the use of technology more than uprisings and confrontation. It is unknown if Shia Muslims had the ability to use Facebook as a massive organizational tool before the protests began. People could have developed the skill of social media usage during the revolutions, since Shia Muslims were out of work, protesting, and

²¹⁵ Lefkow, Chris, "Social Media Fuels Arab Protest," *Nanaimo Daily News*, 23 February 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/856458330/134D94653335110661E/31?accountid=14637>>.

looking for ways to gain supporters for the rallies. If protests were to start again, the possibility of social media use could be higher.

The government of Bahrain was quicker to shut down protests than any other government. It was the only regime that succeeded in stopping demonstrations all together without mass killings. Very early in the rebellion, the government began rounding up anyone who was capable of using social media to inspire those who were not already in the streets. Through government filters they could “[target] political, human rights, religious material and content deemed obscene. Bloggers and other netizens were among those detained during protests in 2011.”²¹⁶ Protesters were being arrested for speaking out against the government. The protesters that were being detained were “doctors, bloggers and opposition activists - some of whom have simply ‘disappeared’, according to reports from family, friends and rights groups.”²¹⁷ The Bahrain monarchy has tried them for organizing a terrorist group against the government. Police forces picked up twenty-three people and detained them without access to a lawyer for weeks. Finally they were pardoned by King Hamad but days after this decree the police began picking up the protesters again. People were “dragged out of bed by armed men in ski masks and their houses smashed up. The Mukhabarat [secret police] set up a Twitter account and named people as traitors so that when they tried to leave the country they were picked up. Hundreds remain in prison.”²¹⁸ One protester even died at the hands of government officials.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ “Bahrain Profile,” *The BBC*, 4 January 2012, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14541053>>.

²¹⁷ Law, Bill, “Police Brutality Turns Bahrain into ‘Island of Fear,’” *The BBC*, 6 April 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12975832>>.

²¹⁸ Black, Ian, “Bahrain Protests: ‘The Repression is Getting Worse,’” *The Guardian*, 8 August 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/08/bahrain-protests-repression-getting-worse>>.

²¹⁹ Tran, Mark, “Bahrain Accuses Human Rights Leader of Faking Pictures of Beating,” *The Guardian*, 11 April 2011, accessed: 7 February 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/11/bahrain-human-rights-activist-accused>>.

By capturing leading bloggers and people with access to the Internet, people were deterred from using social media to plan a protest.

The protests of Bahrain occurred from February 14, 2011, to March 16, 2011. During that time period the people of Bahrain used social media minimally. When it was used it did not aid in bringing people out into the streets to protest against the Sunni monarchy that had been ruling for two hundred years. The protesters in Bahrain did not use social media to organize or mobilize because they did not trust the sources that posts and updates were coming from. While some scholars found the Arab Spring to be determined and defined by social media, that was not the case in Bahrain. For this revolution the e-activist had not replaced a pamphleteer.²²⁰

Bahrain reverted back to older forms of communication. The common meeting ground of Pearl Roundabout was akin to a town square. To get information people would converse face-to-face at the rallies in the roundabout. One writer even indicated that the Bahraini rebellion demonstrates that “the tweet will never replace the street.”²²¹ For the Bahraini people to mobilize and figure out what direction the protest should take, it was easier to communicate when together than virtually discuss goals and motives. Social media did not impact or have any influence over the Bahrain uprising. Instead of using social media, the people in Bahrain stuck with older and more traditional forms of communication. These tactics were successful before the intense and violent crackdown by the government. Had the government not used foreign and domestic forces to crush the rebellion and detain those who had any relation to it, older forms of communication may have led to more reforms and even a change of government.

²²⁰ Sabar, Ariel, “Why the Tweet Will Never Replace the Street,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 March 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<https://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=15&sid=9ed65f9f-7461-443a-a9d0-eea1e6248ea7%40sessionmgr4&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=59437830>>.

²²¹ Sabar, Ariel, “Why the Tweet Will Never Replace the Street,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 March 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<https://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=15&sid=9ed65f9f-7461-443a-a9d0-eea1e6248ea7%40sessionmgr4&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=59437830>>.

Social Media did not Impact the Revolution

Social media did not play an important role in the revolution of Bahrain. Older forms of communication were utilized rather than social media. When police vehicles or military tanks rolled through one town and headed towards another, people would throw paint on the vehicle. When the authority figure reached the next destination those in the area could tell where the vehicle had just been. This process was used for “alerting fellow protesters to where the force has just come from.”²²² Demonstrators within Bahrain deemed this a better tactic for communicating with one another than blogging, texting or updating a post saying what type of vehicle or license plate numbers had been through their own town recently. People within the nation did not trust social media because information on the sites was often wrong or defamatory.²²³ The government was also apprehending anyone who spoke out against the government or helped the protesters achieve their goals. An easy way for the regime to find opposition parties was to target those who posted on the Internet about revolutionary actions.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry created a report on the February and March uprisings in Bahrain and released the report in November. In the report it was noted that “the commission found numerous examples of exaggeration and misinformation, some highly inflammatory, that were disseminated through social media.”²²⁴ This furthers the thought that people did not trust social media during the uprising. Social media outlets were untraceable and unaccountable during this time period. Posts incited violence between protesters and the government and protesters of different ethnic divisions. People were unsure where these social

²²² Gardner, Frank, “Bahrain Poised for Human Rights Report,” *The BBC*, 18 October 2011, accessed: 8 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15358707>>.

²²³ Grewal, Sandeep Singh, “Social Media ‘Played a Negative Role in Unrest,’” *Gulf Daily News*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/906300330/134D94653335110661E/17?accountid=14637>>.

²²⁴ Grewal, Sandeep Singh, “Social Media ‘Played a Negative Role in Unrest,’” *Gulf Daily News*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012 <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/906300330/134D94653335110661E/17?accountid=14637>>.

media postings were coming from but they were detrimental to the progress and goals of the revolution in Bahrain because they caused disagreements among the demonstrators.²²⁵

Protesters did not use social media to organize rallies, and these tools were not used to mobilize or sustain people during the revolution. Bahrain falls under the second school of thought when it comes to the impact of social media in the Arab Spring. Social media tools were not necessary for the rebellion to begin. Social media impacted the country negatively rather than positively. Bahraini protesters were not successful in achieving any of their goals of reform or riding the nation of King Hamad. However, the use of social media would not have allowed this country to succeed against the regime. Citizens within the nation did not trust each other or social media outlets because they could not validate the source or indicate if the person behind the message wanted to help or hinder the cause for a constitutional monarchy. For multiple reasons, social media was not an important factor in the revolution in Bahrain. It was not utilized and not necessary. Social media was more of a detractor from the protests, so people quickly learned to stay away from what posts were saying. Therefore, social media did not contribute in any way to the uprising.

²²⁵ Grewal, Sandeep Singh, "Social Media 'Played a Negative Role in Unrest,'" *Gulf Daily News*, 28 November 2011, accessed: 10 February 2012
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/906300330/134D94653335110661E/17?accountid=14637>>.

Chapter 6: Syrian Revolution

The Syrian revolution is different than the previous Arab Spring revolutions. The movement and protests have lasted much longer than the rebellions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain. The government did not allow foreign media into the country and even domestic news sources have been censored. Additionally military and police brutality have been excessive for those who have protested against the government. For these reasons, the knowledge that outside countries have gained about the uprising cannot be completely verified. People who do come forth with information on what is happening on the ground must do so under pseudonyms for fear if their real identity is revealed they will be captured, tortured, and killed. In this chapter quotations and information come from sources known as Katherine Marsh, Nour Ali, or Nidaa Hassan. They are all protesters within Syria, but they are not always the same person. People use the same name to disguise their true identity. These people have helped further the understanding of the protests and enabled people to see the use of social media during the rebellion.

Protests officially began in Syria on March 15, 2011 and the revolution is credited to have begun the next day. Syria is still in a state of revolution today and President Assad maintains power over the country. Protesters have been fighting for more freedoms and a change in government for almost a year with little change to the status quo. During these uprisings social media outlets such as Facebook and YouTube have been used to organize and mobilize more people to the cause for democracy. Therefore, Syria falls under the first school of thought on social media's impact on the Arab Spring. Social media was necessary to start the revolution and needed to continue the protests during the uprising.

Table 4: Timeline of important dates that have happened so far throughout the Syrian uprising.

Protests Officially Begin –March 15, 2011
“Day of Rage” protest –March 18, 2011
President Assad begins concessions –March 27, 2011
“Day of Martyrs” protest –April 1, 2011
Hamza’s dead body is returned to his family—May 27, 2011
Government Blackout –First week in June 2011
“Day of Not Kneeling” – August 12, 2011
Arab League Suspends Syria – November 12, 2011
UN votes on Peacekeeping Mission – February 2012
Hussameddin, a governmental official, resigns – March 8, 2012

Revolution in Syria

Syria’s leader President Bashar Al-Assad has only been in power since 2000. However, his family has ruled the country for the last forty years. Assad was naive enough to state that his country was not at risk to the wave of democracy that was sweeping the Arab region in 2011. He told sources that “his country is immune to the demands for change that have already toppled leaders in Egypt and Tunisia.”²²⁶ This could not have been farther from the truth. Some minor protests occurred in February and early March but they were small with no more than thirty

²²⁶ “Syrian Police Seal Off City of Daraa After Security Forces Kill Five Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 19 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/19/syria-police-seal-off-daraa-after-five-protesters-killed>>.

people at each demonstration.²²⁷ These rallies were over the government's torture of students. Students in a small southern city of Syria drew anti-government graffiti on walls of buildings. The fifteen students wrote the "well-known slogan of the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt: 'The people want the downfall of the regime,'" on walls in Daraa.²²⁸ The government did not respond well to this outburst of dissent. Authority figures rounded up the perpetrators, and tortured those who were responsible. Some of the teenagers who were involved were killed by police forces. These students just wanted freedom and the government crushed those dreams.²²⁹ These brutal actions led others in the town to protest the abuses of the state.²³⁰ Once these protests started in early March, they spread to other cities and towns around the south of Syria. This was the initial spark that led people to organize mass movements all over the nation. Young people did not want to stand by as others of their age were ruthlessly murdered while attempting to depict their need for more rights; the "young are determined and fearless, prepared to pay the bloody price for change."²³¹

As Table 4 demonstrates, the official beginning to the revolution was March 16, 2011. After this date thousands of people stormed into the streets. Marwan Kabalan, a political science professor at the University of Damascus, noted that thousands of ordinary people were protesting because they wanted more freedoms in their daily lives.²³² He even found the initial protests to be unorganized because they were spontaneous actions of frustrated people. Later mobilizations,

²²⁷ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²²⁸ "Guide: Syria Crisis," *The BBC*, 31 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13855203>>.

²²⁹ "The Evolution of Arab Revolutions," *Al Jazeera English*, 28 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2011/04/201142893739382332.html>>.

²³⁰ "Syria—Protests (2011-)," *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html?scp=1&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

²³¹ "The Evolution of Arab Revolutions," *Al Jazeera English*, 28 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2011/04/201142893739382332.html>>.

²³² "Syrian's Unrest: Between Myth and Reality," *Al Jazeera English*, 24 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/04/201142413450323305.html>>.

which were organized and unified the North and South of Syria, would be thought through and more calculated. Since the revolution is still going on, and the government has chosen to use violence and detainment as a way to discourage people from participating, those who organize protests cannot use their real names. This would be detrimental to their safety, so it is unknown who within Syria is behind the mobilization. However, there are some spokespeople who talk for protesters. Omar Idlibi, is a spokesman for a network of activists in a suburb of Damascus, which did not have large protests until later in the revolution.²³³ Some outside Swedish and French individuals have helped to inspire protests and opposition groups though. Burhan Ghalioun, who is from Paris, had worked with opposition groups that directed protests later in the rebellion.

The demands of protesters changed over the almost yearlong rebellion. The demands began simply as a need for reform and change. Some laws and policies were outdated and needed to be altered to ameliorate the lives of Syrians. The people of the country wanted an end to the state of emergency that had been in place since the Assad family had been in charge, and they wanted an end to the secret police, which kept the citizens in a state of repression.²³⁴ The people wanted President Assad to lift the emergency rule, because “Syria has been under emergency law since the Ba'ath party took power in a 1963, banning any opposition and ushering in decades of economic retreat characterised by nationalisation.”²³⁵ Initially people did not want to overthrow President Assad, they wanted to change some of his family’s policies.

²³³ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²³⁴ “Syrian Forces Kill at Least Six in Midnight Mosque Attack, say Daraa Residents,” *The Guardian*, 23 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/23/syria-kills-six-mosque-attack-Daraa>>.

²³⁵ “Syrian Forces Kill at Least Six in Midnight Mosque Attack, say Daraa Residents,” *The Guardian*, 23 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/23/syria-kills-six-mosque-attack-Daraa>>.

After the initial protest of March 16, 2011, the next scheduled uprising was set for Friday March 18, 2011. These rallies were scheduled to take place in five cities within Syria. They included Damascus, the capital, Homs, which is in the north, Daraa, which is located in the south, Baniyas, which is on the western coast of Syria, and Deir el-Zour, which is in the east of Syria.²³⁶ Protests were not successful in all of the cities. In Damascus, the revolutionaries never got out of the mosque that they gathered at before the protest; police entered the Ummayyad Mosque and beat demonstrators there.²³⁷ Police brutality began the same day that the protests started. On March 18, 2011, in other cities protesters were beaten, tear gassed, and put into detention centers. Shots from military forces were fired into the air.²³⁸ Even from the beginning of the rebellion it was clear that the road to democracy would be much more violent for Syria than it had been for either Tunisia or Egypt. Both the largest and bloodiest protest of the day occurred in Daraa.²³⁹ In Daraa the government took control of the city. For eleven days the people of Daraa were trapped inside their town, and families ran out essentials including water.²⁴⁰ Over these eleven days three hundred people were killed and hundreds more were detained.²⁴¹ This city received the bulk of force from the government during those first protests.

Even though Damascus is the capital, the protests within this city were light. For the first few weeks of the rebellion, rallies were not large within Damascus. This is because the city is the home to intelligence and security services, as well as the military headquarters. It is harder to

²³⁶ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²³⁷ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²³⁸ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²³⁹ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²⁴⁰ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²⁴¹ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

successfully protest (Abouzeid 2011). In general “protesters appeared to consolidate their positions in Daraa in the deep south and in the northern port city of Latakia, which are the two main fronts in the challenge to the Syrian regime.”²⁴² Those who were demonstrating for change kept moving protests from smaller cities closer towards the capital of Damascus. At the end of April, protests officially reached Damascus, but demonstrations did not take full force there until July. Then it became the third largest city to hold protests.²⁴³

After the first nationwide demonstration on Friday March 18, protests within Syria occurred weekly on Fridays. Uprisings would begin after the 2 P.M. prayers. People would begin in mosques and then take to the streets together after praying. These types of demonstrations have become weekly events.²⁴⁴ After seeing the brutality of how President Assad’s forces treated unarmed protesters, the population of Syria was angered. The violence was a large recruiting tool, and made tens of thousands of Syrians angered to the point of protesting against the authoritarian rule of Assad.²⁴⁵ Every time people were killed within a town, more citizens decide to join the protest for the next Friday.

Whenever protests flared up on a Friday in parts of the country “security forces launched a harsh crackdown on [those calling for freedoms]. But only in Daraa did they turn deadly,” during the first month of protests.²⁴⁶ Daraa was the first city to have a casualty from the protests for governmental change. More fatalities began to occur at the hands of authority figures and

²⁴² Marsh, Katherine, “Syrians Protesters Come Under Fire From Security Forces,” *The Guardian*, 28 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/28/syrian-protesters-come-under-fire>>.

²⁴³ Borger, Julian, “Syrians Continue to Protest as Unrest Spreads to Damascus,” *The Guardian*, 29 April 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/29/syrian-protests-unrest-damascus>>.

²⁴⁴ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²⁴⁵ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrian Soldiers Shot for Refusing to Fire on Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/12/syrian-soldiers-shot-protest>>.

²⁴⁶ “Syrian Police Seal Off City of Daraa After Security Forces Kill Five Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 19 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/19/syria-police-seal-off-daraa-after-five-protesters-killed>>.

President Assad loyalists. It was more than live ammunition that was used against peaceful protesters. Teargas and sound bombs were utilized to stop those demonstrating in the streets. Roads and access points to hospitals were closed off. This made those who were injured harder to save and increased the death toll.²⁴⁷

Authority figures were not the only ones to use violence, loyalists shot those who opposed the government too. Mass graves containing up to four hundred and twenty bodies have been found in public parks close to protest sites.²⁴⁸ Gangs, known as Shabiha, that have close relations with the ruling Assad family have been seen terrorizing neighborhoods of protesters even when the demonstrations were not going on.²⁴⁹ President Assad inspired the idea of demonstrating and fighting against those who opposed the regime, but after initiating the cause loyalists took it farther than Assad dreamed. They were brutal towards those in the streets. Even if these loyalists did not agree with the violence against protesters, they would not dare disobey the president. Military and police figures are more than willing to defend President Assad and his rule. They live comfortable lives with him as a leader and would not want to alter the status quo. Syria is unique because it is comprised of a Sunni majority but is ruled by a minority group. Therefore, letting other ethnicities have the opportunity to win political offices is problematic for those who are close to Assad.²⁵⁰ It would be detrimental to their lifestyle if they no longer had the luxuries they currently possess because Sunni leaders were in power.

²⁴⁷ Borger, Julian, "Syrians Continue to Protest as Unrest Spreads to Damascus," *The Guardian*, 29 April 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/29/syrian-protests-unrest-damascus>>.

²⁴⁸ Ali, Nour, "Syrian City's Attorney General Resigns in Protest at Government Crackdown," *The Guardian*, 1 September 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/01/syria-attorney-general-resigns-protest>>.

²⁴⁹ Borger, Julian, "Syrians Continue to Protest as Unrest Spreads to Damascus," *The Guardian*, 29 April 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/29/syrian-protests-unrest-damascus>>.

²⁵⁰ "Syria—Protests (2011-)," *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html?scp=1&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

Even if individuals chose to defy President Assad, in his eyes they would turn into demonstrators and be treated that way. Once violence started to increase, some soldiers did not want to shoot live ammunition at demonstrators anymore. When they refused to fire on the peaceful protesters, the soldiers were shot themselves. There is footage of a soldier being shot in the back for refusing to fire on defenseless demonstrators.²⁵¹ Numerous soldiers were injured this way. If they still refused to defend President Assad's regime by firing at those who were opposing the government then they were killed. Death tolls went down for a few weeks at the beginning of April, as military officials tried to oppose the rule to shoot at protesters. The number of demonstrators increased, until authority figures used force again: "casualty figures ... were down on previous weeks but the numbers of demonstrators appeared to be some of the largest yet seen."²⁵² People returned to the streets when violence increased because they were reacting to the abuses against citizens.²⁵³

At the beginning of the revolution, Assad's government had numerous individuals who were loyal to his regime and rule. As the protests went on the number of Assad supporters waned. The president treated those who were his companions but had a change of heart as if they were enemies. Assad tortured and killed hundreds of his own citizens. This treatment changed the opinion of people within his regime from pro-Assad to wanting a change in government. Government officials began to question fighting against the protesters. One official named Bakkour resigned in September of 2011 after remaining loyal even during the

²⁵¹ Marsh, Katherine, "Syrian Soldiers Shot for Refusing to Fire on Protesters," *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/12/syrian-soldiers-shot-protest>>.

²⁵² Ali, Nour and Ian Black, "Mass Syrian Protest Against Assad Regime Adds to Death Toll," *The Guardian*, 22 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/22/mass-syrian-protest-assad-deaths>>.

²⁵³ Marsh, Katherine, "Syrian Soldiers Shot for Refusing to Fire on Protesters," *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/12/syrian-soldiers-shot-protest>>.

rising domestic and international pressure for President Assad to step down.²⁵⁴ Bakkour, the former attorney general, soon went missing after his resignation from government duty. It is speculated that Assad took him into custody and is torturing him, as he has done to other military and government officials who have betrayed him during these uprisings.²⁵⁵ The highest-ranking government official to step down from the Assad government was Abdo Hussameddin. He was the Deputy Oil Minister and vacated his seat on March 8, 2012.²⁵⁶

One of the last rallying techniques besides the initial unhappiness with government actions, and brutality of authority figures towards protesters, happened at the very end of May. Up until this point, the majority of the violence had been restricted to actions taken against adults. While men and women were targeted by the military, it was rare that a child was killed. If this did occur, it never seemed to be an intentional fatality in cold blood as this death had been. On April 29, 2011, Hamza al-Khatib who was a thirteen-year-old boy from al-Jizah, which is a village in the south near Daraa, was captured by security forces. On May 27, 2011, “his badly mutilated corpse was released to his horrified family, who were warned to keep silent.”²⁵⁷ He was the first child, that is widely known of, to be taken and tortured by Assad’s government. To many people around the country this was the final straw. The government had gone too far to capture and torture a small boy. Pictures of the brutality were sent around the nation. One could see that his “tortured and his swollen body showed bullet wounds on his arms, black eyes, cuts,

²⁵⁴ Ali, Nour, “Syrian City’s Attorney General Resigns in Protest at Government Crackdown,” *The Guardian*, 1 September 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/01/syria-attorney-general-resigns-protest>>.

²⁵⁵ Ali, Nour, “Syrian City’s Attorney General Resigns in Protest at Government Crackdown,” *The Guardian*, 1 September 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/01/syria-attorney-general-resigns-protest>>.

²⁵⁶ “Syria Deputy Oil Minister Resigns to Join Opposition,” *The BBC*, 8 March 2012, accessed: 8 March 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17295748>>.

²⁵⁷ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, “Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria’s Revolution,” *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

marks consistent with electric shock devices, bruises and whip marks. His neck had been broken,” and other appendages had been cut off.²⁵⁸ The death of an innocent boy rallied people to the cause of democracy and demand for the resignation of President Assad. Hamza became Syria’s version of Bouazizi and Said for the respectively Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. He was an innocent person who had been killed at the hands of the corrupt and abusive government.

Assad blames the unrest in Syria on armed gangs who were disturbing the population.²⁵⁹ By categorizing these protesters as outlaws, who were dangerous to the citizenry, he could justify crushing those who were opposing the government. To Assad, foreigners were also implanting ideas of reform into these thugs who were hurting the people of Syria. Assad even took this view so far as to publicize it on his state run television networks. On television people could see the destruction that these gangsters were imposing on innocent civilians; “state-run Syrian TV has run lingering, gruesome close-ups of dead soldiers, their eyes blown out and parts of their limbs missing, to back up their claims that they are under attack.”²⁶⁰ With these videos, President Assad hoped to maintain the loyalty of some citizens and halt the recruitment of other Syrians to the protests.

President Assad began talking with protesters to make concessions almost immediately after protests began. Yet these discussions provided empty hopes for demonstrators. On April 1, 2011, the “Friday of Martyrs” was organized as a giant day for demonstrations against the government. Demonstrators over the country wanted to protest President Assad not following

²⁵⁸ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, “Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria’s Revolution,” *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

²⁵⁹ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrian Soldiers Shot for Refusing to Fire on Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/12/syrian-soldiers-shot-protest>>.

²⁶⁰ Syrian Army Units ‘Clash Over Crackdown,’” *Al Jazeera English*, 28 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/04/201142818233234775.html>>.

through on his pledges to change his rule to better the lives of the average Syrian.²⁶¹ People began to distrust the government even more than they had before the start of the uprising in Syria. During the almost year of protests in Syria, President Assad has made some concessions to his people. The first of these peace offerings happened a mere eleven days after the revolution began. Assad chose to fire his cabinet. He hoped that this gesture would reflect his willingness to make changes to the government.²⁶² Yet, his actions were indicating that he would not allow for any changes to his rule. With only eleven days of protests, “more than 150 people have been killed in 11 days of unrest, which have seen protesters calling for increased freedoms.”²⁶³ Assad was not willing to give up power to the demands of his people. His next big plea to persuade protesters not to call for him to leave office was “granting Syrian nationality to thousands of Kurds, a long-ostracised minority. But the gestures have failed to satisfy protesters, who demand political freedoms and an end to the decades-old emergency laws that allow the regime to arrest people without charge.”²⁶⁴ Protesters would not settle for small changes to the government. They wanted more freedoms and the repealing of unnecessary laws that restrict the abilities of citizens in Syria.

In the middle of April, one of the protesters’ demands was achieved. The decades old emergency law was abolished. However, instead of being a cause for victory Assad put into place other equally as restrictive crackdowns. When the emergency law was lifted, Assad’s

²⁶¹ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrian Security Forces Crack Down on ‘Friday of Martyrs,’” *The Guardian*, 1 April 2011, accessed 31 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/01/syria-security-forces-crackdown>>.

²⁶² Chulov, Martin, “Syrian President Sacks Cabinet in Effort to Quell Protests,” *The Guardian*, 29 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/29/syrian-president-sacks-cabinet>>.

²⁶³ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrians Protesters Come Under Fire From Security Forces,” *The Guardian*, 28 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/28/syrian-protesters-come-under-fire>>.

²⁶⁴ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrian Soldiers Shot for Refusing to Fire on Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/12/syrian-soldiers-shot-protest>>.

troops fired on demonstrators.²⁶⁵ In 2008 the government of Syria created a law that made security forces of the country immune to prosecution.²⁶⁶ This made the enforcement of new laws restricting protests even more debilitating for people. Security forces chased protesters from central locations, tracked them down, beat them and then detained the revolutionaries.²⁶⁷ There were no consequences for authority figures because they could attack protesters without repercussions. Assad also sent military tanks into cities that were known for widespread and large protests against his regime. President Assad had finally lifted the state of emergency ban but his security forces killed people the next day.²⁶⁸ The tanks opened fire on those who were peacefully demonstrating.²⁶⁹ These concessions should have been the most important to date but President Assad did not change anything. He lifted one law but put into place almost the same rule but under a different form. He also increased violence and subsequently casualties from the ongoing protests.²⁷⁰

The previous concessions had not quelled the protests that were still spreading to new cities every Friday. Assad decided that more aggressive concessions needed to be made. His next form of action was to abolish another long-standing law. The state security court, which was responsible for the trials of any political prisoners, would be abolished. President Assad

²⁶⁵ “Syria—Protests (2011-),” *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html?scp=1&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

²⁶⁶ Marsh, Katherine, and Ian Black, “Syria to Lift Emergency Rule After 48 Years-But Violence Continues,” *The Guardian*, 19 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/19/syria-lift-emergency-rule-violence>>.

²⁶⁷ Marsh, Katherine, and Ian Black, “Syria to Lift Emergency Rule After 48 Years-But Violence Continues,” *The Guardian*, 19 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/19/syria-lift-emergency-rule-violence>>.

²⁶⁸ Ali, Nour, “Syria Passes Law to Allow Rival Parties,” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/25/syria-allows-rival-parties>>.

²⁶⁹ “Syria—Protests (2011-),” *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html?scp=1&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

²⁷⁰ Marsh, Katherine, and Ian Black, “Syria to Lift Emergency Rule After 48 Years-But Violence Continues,” *The Guardian*, 19 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/19/syria-lift-emergency-rule-violence>>.

also created a new law that legalized peaceful protests.²⁷¹ These responses to the demands of the people came in the middle of April, which was about one month after the start of the protests. Still these were not deemed to be sufficient freedoms for those who were participating in the uprising.

People were no longer angered merely because they did not have enough freedoms within their own society. After the initial protests, more people rallied to the cause based on the treatment by the government towards those who were peacefully demanding more rights. The abuses of the government against those who were unarmed in the streets made more Syrian citizens mobilize to the cause. Chants of “He who kills his people is a traitor,” could be heard after especially violent protests.²⁷² Demands of revolutionaries changed from wanting more freedom to wanting a new government and leader. They could no longer accept someone who would be so brutal to his own citizens. Thousands of people on May 6, 2011, chanted in sixty-five towns across the country, “the people want to topple the regime.”²⁷³ Nothing short of the resignation of President Assad would make people stop protesting every Friday.

President Assad continued to bargain and even tried to hold a meeting of opposition groups to find an end to the protests. In June of 2011, “more than 150 Syrian intellectuals and activists including prominent opposition figures [met] in Damascus ... to discuss the current crisis and propose a way out of the violence.”²⁷⁴ Assad did not invite all of those who were involved with the uprising to meet at the table and discuss ways to ameliorate the lives of Syrians

²⁷¹ Marsh, Katherine, and Ian Black, “Syria to Lift Emergency Rule After 48 Years-But Violence Continues,” *The Guardian*, 19 April 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/19/syria-lift-emergency-rule-violence>>.

²⁷² Marsh, Katherine, “Syria Sanctions Declared as Violent Crackdown Continues,” *The Guardian*, 6 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/06/syria-sanctions-crackdown-eu>>.

²⁷³ Marsh, Katherine, “Syria Sanctions Declared as Violent Crackdown Continues,” *The Guardian*, 6 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/06/syria-sanctions-crackdown-eu>>.

²⁷⁴ Hassan, Nidaa, and Martin Chulov, “Syrian Authorities Give Go-Ahead to Opposition Meeting,” *The Guardian*, 26 June 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/26/syria-damascus-opposition-meeting-talks>>.

and end the violence. The talks are supposed to be between independent figures. Neither Assad nor anyone who has had a previous affiliation with a political party was allowed to join the peace talks.²⁷⁵ The groups are hoping to come up with an inclusive response to the fighting before suggesting concessions to the government and demonstrators. However, a compromise will not be accepted by the Syrian protesters if Assad will remain in office.

According to a Syrian Human Rights group, at this point in the protests approximately, “1,419 civilians and 352 members of the security forces [had] been killed since 15 March, while more than 1,300 people [had] been arrested.”²⁷⁶ While President Assad had been telling opposition forces that he wanted to make concessions and end the violence over the first four months of protests, in reality he had been killing and torturing thousands of citizens who challenged his reign. Protesters did not want to make deals with Assad or other government officials because they did not trust that Assad would follow through; “opposition figures have emphasised that there can be no dialogue or trust in the regime's reform programme until the security crackdown stops.”²⁷⁷ His actions and words had been contradictory up until this point in the revolution, and instead of bargaining demonstrators just wanted him gone.

It was reported on July 25, 2011, that as one of his final major concessions President Assad would draft a new election law. This legislation stated that rival political parties were allowed to run for political office against the ruling Ba'ath party. President Assad is a part of the Ba'ath party; therefore, this legislation states that if someone were to run against his party and win, they could hold office. Even though this was a large step towards freedoms, the move was

²⁷⁵ Hassan, Nidaa, and Martin Chulov, “Syrian Authorities Give Go-Ahead to Opposition Meeting,” *The Guardian*, 26 June 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/26/syria-damascus-opposition-meeting-talks>>.

²⁷⁶ Ali, Nour and Ian Black, “Mass Syrian Protest Against Assad Regime Adds to Death Toll,” *The Guardian*, 22 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/22/mass-syrian-protest-assad-deaths>>.

²⁷⁷ Ali, Nour, “Syria Passes Law to Allow Rival Parties,” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/25/syria-allows-rival-parties>>.

“largely dismissed by opposition groups as an empty gesture.”²⁷⁸ All previous attempts at meeting the demands of the protesters had not transpired, and the citizens of Syria had no faith that this would provide a real change either. The lifting of the emergency law, which was one of the roots of the rebellion, resulted in no change; therefore, the people had no reason to believe that the change in election policy would produce any alterations to the current system.

Since this last concession the people of Syria have still been fighting for Assad to leave office and depart from the country. Thousands more people are being killed through the fighting and military force that is used against the revolutionaries. On August 12, the country staged a protest known as the “Day of Not Kneeling.” This protest symbolized that the people of Syria would not treat President Assad like a god and kneel for him.²⁷⁹ Demonstrators wanted him gone and would no longer show him any respect because he did not deserve it.²⁸⁰ The human rights violations have become so intense that the United Nations has begun to get involved. The Arab League, which kicked Syria out of its establishment in November of 2011, and United Nations are trying to come up with a peacekeeping mission to help keep the country from falling into a civil war.²⁸¹ This peacekeeping mission hopes to produce a ceasefire. By getting both sides to agree to a ceasefire, no more innocent civilians will die at the hands of President Assad. Most Western nations feel that President Assad must be stopped, but there are nations that side with

²⁷⁸ Ali, Nour, “Syria Passes Law to Allow Rival Parties,” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/25/syria-allows-rival-parties>>.

²⁷⁹ Black, Ian, “Syrians Plan ‘No Kneeling’ Day of Demonstrations Against Killings,” *The Guardian*, 11 August 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/11/syria-mass-protest-no-kneeling>>.

²⁸⁰ Black, Ian, “Syrians Plan ‘No Kneeling’ Day of Demonstrations Against Killings,” *The Guardian*, 11 August 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/11/syria-mass-protest-no-kneeling>>.

²⁸¹ “Syria Unrest: Arab League ‘Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,’” *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>; “Syria Unrest: Arab League ‘Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,’” *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>.

the Syrian regime.²⁸² The only countries that oppose the call for Assad to step down are China and Russia, who see Syria as a trading partner and have no concerns about the human rights abuses that are occurring within the nation.²⁸³ The demonstrators are still in the streets after almost a year, fighting for more freedoms, the removal of President Assad, and the creation of a democratic government. They are determined to rebel until their demands are met.

As of March 2012, President Assad still has power over Syria. The most recent studies indicate that over 3,500 people have been killed by Syrian forces.²⁸⁴ Yet not all of the violence can be accounted for and realistically the number of fatalities is higher. Of those that have died during this uprising over eighty-eight were killed while in police custody.²⁸⁵ Lastly while thousands have been killed, thousands are also still detained in police custody. About 12,000 people have been detained since mid-March of 2011 and remain in the hands of the Syrian government.²⁸⁶ Foreign nations are calling for the resignation of President Assad, and telling him that change is inevitable. Over the summer of 2011, the Obama administration finally “turned against Mr. Assad but stopped short of demanding that he step down.”²⁸⁷ During the fall months, as Assad used more violence against his constituents and the Arab League dismissed the membership of Syria, the United States also called for President Assad to step down from office. However, Assad has not accepted the fact that his time left in office is limited. He continues to

²⁸² “Syria Unrest: Arab League ‘Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,’” *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>.

²⁸³ “Syria Unrest: Arab League ‘Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,’” *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>.

²⁸⁴ “Syria Crackdown on Protests Has Killed More Than 3,500 Says UN,” *The Guardian*, 8 November 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/08/syria-crackdown-death-toll-3500-un>>.

²⁸⁵ Ali, Nour, “Syrian City’s Attorney General Resigns in Protest at Government Crackdown,” *The Guardian*, 1 September 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/01/syria-attorney-general-resigns-protest>>.

²⁸⁶ Ali, Nour, “Syria Passes Law to Allow Rival Parties,” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/25/syria-allows-rival-parties>>.

²⁸⁷ “Syria—Protests (2011-),” *The New York Times*, 3 February 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html?scp=1&sq=arab%20spring%20timeline&st=cse>>.

kill his citizens because he is unwilling to give up power, especially if the majority ethnicity group will take over after his reign.

Assad is still in power for numerous reasons including: his use of the military to stop protests by force, and that protests occurred mostly on Fridays, which did not send the economy into an upheaval. The military forces listened to the government's demand for violence against demonstrators, and brutally crushed protests and killed hundreds of people. President Assad wanted to stop the rebellion, and he thought violence would accomplish that. Since the military is of the same sect of Islam as the President and his government, they benefit from his rule. The relationship between the government and authority figures is a good one, and those in the military would not risk their position in society by siding with the protesters. Therefore, they willingly used tanks, teargas, and guns on large protests and cities known for opposing the government. The violence that Assad has applied to the demonstrations has allowed him to stay in office because forces and brutality have broken up multiple rallies.

Most protests occurred on Friday afternoons in Syria. All major demonstrations that were organized online were set for Friday at 2 P.M. after prayers. This was not the best tactic for those in the street. Protests were predictable and the security forces knew exactly when rallies would take place, which made them easier to crush. The violence that was used against revolutionaries ensured that the protests could not make as big of an impact on the government as those participating wanted. Additionally, unlike other nations, where demonstrators have continuously protested, the people of Syria chose only one day per week. The economy of Syria has not been as interrupted as those from other Arab Spring nations. If the economy went into an upheaval then the government would be forced to make changes or it would lose support from foreign trading partners like China and Russia. Analysts think that "Syria's paralysed economy

could be the key factor ... Its collapse could well precipitate the regime's demise.”²⁸⁸ The number and frequency of protests should increase so that the message of those within Syria is heard and dealt with by the government.

Social Media Use in Syria

In order to try and curb the likelihood that the Arab Spring uprisings reached Syria, President Assad loosened his restrictions on social media before the March protests.²⁸⁹ Assad hoped that by granting this minor freedom, the people of Syria would not feel repressed under his rule. He did not want to seem like other dictators who were shutting down Internet access to maintain control. By giving the people more freedom, Assad’s actions were trying to prevent protests and unrest in the nation. This was unsuccessful for his regime but did open the doors for ordinary people to use outlets such as Facebook and YouTube for political organization. The Syrian government placed restrictions on media once the uprisings actually began.

No foreign media outlets were allowed into the country and no media sources were allowed near the especially troubled spots that were protesting.²⁹⁰ Even the United Nations was not granted access to the country. This lack of communication makes “it almost impossible to verify the dramatic events shaking one of the most authoritarian regimes in the Arab world.”²⁹¹ Even when communicating with those within the country, foreign outlets found it hard to initially find out what was going on. Since “Syria places tight restrictions on the movements of journalists in the country when it comes to security issues and state-run media, officials rarely

²⁸⁸ Bowen, Jeremy, “Arab Spring: Unfinished Business for Protesters,” *The BBC*, 14 July 2011, accessed: 5 March 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14153583>>.

²⁸⁹ Marsh, Katherine, Tom Finn and Martin Chulov, “Syria Protests Continue Amid Increased International Condemnation of Regime,” *The Guardian*, 26 March 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/26/syria-protests-continue-international-condemnation>>.

²⁹⁰ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, “Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria’s Revolution,” *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

²⁹¹ “Syrian Army Units ‘Clash Over Crackdown,’” *Al Jazeera English*, 28 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/04/2011428182333234775.html>>.

comment on such sensitive matters.”²⁹² It was hard for those in the country and those abroad to learn the truth about the protests. President Assad, just as other Arab leaders before him, was playing the demonstrations off as gangs stirring up trouble within the country rather than uprisings against the government. This made the YouTube videos that citizen journalists posted key for the uprising.

Through the Internet people discussed ways to mobilize. For the first few weeks of the protests, “Mosques have so far been the focus of Friday protests, but activists say they are rapidly developing online and offline networks to mobilise people elsewhere.”²⁹³ The Internet has been utilized to decide on times, dates and crucial information for the major protests of the revolution. The revolution has been a combination of using digital media and face-to-face interactions to decide upon how protests should continue to operate.²⁹⁴ Social media has organized large protests and brought large numbers of people to the streets.

Syria did not have as intense of a social media blackout as Tunisia and Egypt did. The government tried to curb social media during only one week of the months long protests; the first week in June was defined as the blackout since there were problems accessing social media sites. Yet, the government did not succeed in quieting the population because “live streaming and better-quality pictures have been emerging from Syria this week despite the government's attempts to curb social media and temporarily block access to email services and Twitter.”²⁹⁵ People found ways around not being able to use the Internet to upload videos by “pass[ing]

²⁹² “Syrian Police Seal Off City of Daraa After Security Forces Kill Five Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 19 March 2011, accessed: 30 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/19/syria-police-seal-off-daraa-after-five-protesters-killed>>.

²⁹³ Marsh, Katherine, “Syrian Security Forces Crack Down on ‘Friday of Martyrs,’” *The Guardian*, 1 April 2011, accessed 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/01/syria-security-forces-crackdown>>.

²⁹⁴ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1000142405270230340610457644586407272194.html>>.

²⁹⁵ Ali, Nour and Ian Black, “Mass Syrian Protest Against Assad Regime Adds to Death Toll,” *The Guardian*, 22 July 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/22/mass-syrian-protest-assad-deaths>>.

memory cards through an assembly line of activists who would get them across the border to Jordan, where relatives and activists would upload the photos and videos of attacks on protesters to the Internet.²⁹⁶ People needed to know about the brutalities of the Syrian government and citizens were not going to stop informing others of these atrocities. Since the tactic of disruption with social media was not working because people were still getting news out about protests, the blackout ended and a new strategy was created to stop images of the protests from being leaked to online viewers. When authority figures saw devices that could record images of the military's use of force and violence, they seized the item to "decrease the risk of further incriminating images being transferred on the internet."²⁹⁷ The Syrian government used a different tactic than a blackout to curb the way information was spread.

Facebook

The number of Facebook users in Syria is 241,859 out of a population of 22,505,091 people. This equates to only 1.07 percent of people within Syria that use Facebook (Salem and Mourtada 2011). That is a small portion of the citizenry. Therefore, while Facebook was used to instigate the first March 18, 2011, protest and some subsequent mobilizations, it was not relied on for the massive mobilization of people. Facebook users tried to incite a demonstration in February but could not organize it. A Syrian living outside of the country, "called for multiple protests across Syria in a Feb. 5 'Day of Rage.'"²⁹⁸ Facebook users were unsure of who the source behind the call to action was and they ignored the desire for protests. Multiple Facebook pages were being used to decide on a date for the first real protest too. This was causing too

²⁹⁶ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

²⁹⁷ Marsh, Katherine, "Syrian Security Forces Crack Down on 'Friday of Martyrs,'" *The Guardian*, 1 April 2011, accessed 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/01/syria-security-forces-crackdown>>.

²⁹⁸ Malas, Nour, "Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

much confusion since “at least a dozen Facebook pages urging protests in Syria were created between Feb. 5 and March 15, according to activists. Organizers eventually coalesced around the Syrian Revolution 2011 page, whose early founder, a young, religious Muslim in Sweden, hails from a family of exiled Muslim Brotherhood members.”²⁹⁹ He too was a Syrian who was not living in the country but organizing the protests to start the revolution. Another attempt for protesting was made and the date of March 15 was set up for the first real protest.³⁰⁰ This is why the revolution in Syria is considered to have begun on March 16, 2011.

In order to communicate without having a person’s true identity revealed, people used pseudonyms on Facebook. Not all of the people who used these fake identities were from within Syria; “young professionals and students used online pseudonyms to connect with other activists on Facebook. The first calls for protests came from abroad, from young Syrians—many of them living in exile with their parents—watching protests unfold in Egypt. They excitedly planned their own revolt.”³⁰¹ Not much is known about the identities of the Syrians who called for revolution from foreign nations. Yet, without their vote of confidence and encouragement from outsiders, Syrians may not have been able to organize the first successful protests. Facebook was important for getting people around Syria to communicate in one spot, and then pass on this information to those in their communities who were not subject to Internet access. Even if a non-native orchestrated this, it does not diminish the usefulness of the social media tool in the uprising. One Facebook page was eventually allocated to discussions of protest. This page was

²⁹⁹ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

³⁰⁰ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

³⁰¹ Malas, Nour, “Syria Revolt Fueled by Roof Fires and Tweets,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303406104576445864072772194.html>>.

used for the March 15, 2011, “Day of Rage,” April 1, 2011, “Day of Martyrs,” and August 12, 2011, “Day of Not Kneeling” protests, among other demonstrations.

Discussion of the protests began online before heading to the streets. After its initial use, Facebook was not as essential because each town and village came up with its own method to succeed when rallying. Local committees dictated how protests would go and where they would be each Friday; “after a while, partly through the work of online activists who linked them to each other, a number of ‘local committees’ were set up in cities around Syria.”³⁰² Organization happened face-to-face after enough people got into the rhythm of protesting every Friday at 2 P.M. Larger protests that happened, such as the “Day of Not Kneeling” that happened in August, were organized online. The “Day of Not Kneeling” organizers used Facebook because they wanted to convey a larger message than the regular anti-government Friday demonstrations. This Friday was going to represent that the people of Syria would not bow to anyone but God, and that they would no longer deem President Assad worthy of his high position. The Facebook group, “the Syrian Revolution 2011,” was used to put this protest together by communicating the details of the rally to those with Facebook access.³⁰³

Facebook was also utilized to remember Hamza, who was the thirteen-year-old boy who was tortured and killed at the end of May 2011. The people of Syria hoped that by making a “We are all Hamza al-Khatib” Facebook page it would be akin to the “We are all Khaled Said” page that had sparked the Egyptian revolution. While more than 61,000 people followed the Facebook page, not enough people in Syria are members of Facebook for it to play as large of a

³⁰² “Syrian’s Unrest: Between Myth and Reality,” *Al Jazeera English*, 24 April 2011, accessed: 1 February 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/04/201142413450323305.html>>.

³⁰³ Black, Ian, “Syrians Plan ‘No Kneeling’ Day of Demonstrations Against Killings,” *The Guardian*, 11 August 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/11/syria-mass-protest-no-kneeling>>.

role in Syria as it did in Egypt.³⁰⁴ This page was less successful than mobilization online because people needed to see the images of Hamza al- Khatib for the message to be understood, whereas if someone passed along the information that was on the “Syrian Revolution 2011” page it would be as if they had read the information too; the message was received even if someone did not use the “Syrian Revolution 2011” page themselves.

Facebook was important for the first stage of protests. It allowed for a single place for people in the North and South to discuss protest ideas. Protests were discussed online before they were enacted in the real world. Grievances, goals and demands were decided upon before people began demonstrating in the streets in March. Facebook gave Syrians a place to discuss these topics, and then pass the information along to others meeting in older forms of mobilization. Facebook did impact the first protest and subsequent larger unified messages in later demonstrations.

YouTube

YouTube played a much larger role in Syria than other social media did. It opened people’s eyes to the horrors of the military and police forces. Since both domestic media and foreign media were censored and restricted during the rallies, citizen journalists who captured the brutalities on camera became the new news source. These people posted videos to YouTube because it would get more notoriety and views than other video based websites such as *DailyMotion*. YouTube is used more universally throughout the world than *DailyMotion*, and the use of YouTube will ensure that foreigners, especially Westerners, see the footage of the protests. People both within Syria and outside of the country watched these videos and were appalled at the treatment of demonstrators. More people in Syria could view the YouTube

³⁰⁴ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, “Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria’s Revolution,” *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

videos than the calls for protest messages on Facebook because a larger portion of people have access to the Internet but do not use social networking sites. Only one percent of the Syrian population goes on Facebook but about twenty percent of people have access to the Internet.³⁰⁵

Videos of Hamza's dead body and funeral were posted on YouTube. They were used as rallying techniques to mobilize people to the streets. It was a YouTube video of Hamza's dead body that showed all of the abuses that had been done to him over his month in detention.³⁰⁶ Hamza was a rallying tool because he represented the innocent people who died for freedom. One YouTube video exemplifies that by depicting him in a coffin with "his angelic grin and thick head of black hair ... below the gold-framed photo lies his body. 'He was taken alive and he was killed because he called for freedom,' says the voice-over."³⁰⁷ The government of Syria understood how motivational these videos could be, which is why President Assad created a response and put that on state run television.³⁰⁸ The program had a doctor and a psychologist who explained the "real truth" about the death of Hamza.³⁰⁹ In the special, Hamza's death was attributed to being shot during a protest, and that the other markings on his body were created by protesters so that they could blame the child's death on the government.³¹⁰ The government knew that the death of Hamza had angered Syrians and continued to redirect support from the

³⁰⁵ "Syria Profile," *The BBC*, 4 January 2012, accessed: 3 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14703914>>.

³⁰⁶ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, "Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria's Revolution," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

³⁰⁷ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, "Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria's Revolution," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

³⁰⁸ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, "Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria's Revolution," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

³⁰⁹ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, "Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria's Revolution," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

³¹⁰ Malik, Shiv, Ian Black and Nidaa Hassan, "Teenage Victim Becomes a Symbol for Syria's Revolution," *The Guardian*, 31 May 2011, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/31/syria-unrest-teenage-victim-hamza>>.

president to the protesters. Therefore, President Assad wanted to show those who were not yet involved in the revolution that the death of Hamza was not the government's fault.

YouTube was essential for providing an outlet for people to see first hand the actions of the government. Violent protests did not break out in bigger cities such as Damascus until later in the revolution; Damascus did not become the third largest protest station until late July. The people who reside in the capital of Damascus have access to Internet but not the ability to see the protests in their town. Therefore even if only twenty percent of people had access to the Internet, it was populations like this that were impacted and enraged by the YouTube videos. These videos were mobilization tools. The video based website mobilized people to the streets by showing them how their beloved leader treated those who wanted more freedoms. The thousands of deaths and ability to see the bodies of those who were martyrs changed people's opinions but also changed demands of protesters from more freedoms to a new government and different leader. People could no longer tolerate President Assad.

Impact of Social Media in Syria

Syrian's impact of social media on the revolution is harder to discern because the revolution is still going on. President Assad has stated that he has no intentions of stepping down as leader. After almost a year, protesters are not any closer to gaining the freedoms and government that they want because any concessions made by Assad cannot be trusted and often do not materialize. Therefore, some say that social media was not that important because Syria, unlike other Arab Spring nations, has not achieved its goal to rid the nation of President Assad. Scholars deem that there was some coordination of social media networks but not enough organization of the people as a whole since no changes have been made (Abouzeid 2011).

Scholars indicate that the general person is not taking action so actors like the Muslim Brotherhood have taken on the challenge to change the government. This revolution is the first that has opposition parties that are calling the shots on when and how to protest. After the first few months of protests, “opposition groups publicly declared their support for the protesters’ demands and in November several announced the formation of a united front, Syrian National Council (SNC).”³¹¹ Leaders of this group include members of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as Burhan Ghalioun, who is a Paris-based dissident. The goal of this opposition group, which Sunni protesters identify with, is to provide “the necessary support for the revolution to progress and realise the aspirations of our people for the overthrow of the regime, its symbols and its head.”³¹² Another small opposition group that has been active since before the protests began is the National Co-ordination Committee (NCC). This opposition group has also found its own group of protesters who connect with it. Since there are multiple opposition groups that are leading the protests, the need for social media to organize and inform is not as strong in Syria as it was in other nations. Since these groups have taken over organization, people are getting instructions through face-to-face contact or older forms of communication. There are multiple opposition groups who are trying to conduct protests in different manners so one giant Facebook group no longer meets the needs of the entire population. Therefore, social media is not as important as it was in the beginning of the revolution because people know about the cause and are just trying to find ways to succeed. Older forms of organization have begun to be utilized again.

³¹¹ “Guide: Syria Crisis,” *The BBC*, 31 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13855203>>.

³¹² “Guide: Syria Crisis,” *The BBC*, 31 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13855203>>.

Whether the revolution has not been as successful as those in Tunisia and Egypt could be attributed to fractions within the protesting groups and different opposition groups, the extensive use of force by the military, or the lack of social media organization for every protest. The cause is still being determined and the impact of social media will not be fully known until the rebellion comes to an end. Yet, scholars like Abouzeid (2011) who claim that social media was not used after the initial start to the revolution or that it was not used enough for organization, are discounting the use of Facebook and YouTube to inform. I believe that social media kept the uprising going and indicated why people should be angered by the government.

Social Media Was Utilized in Syria

In order for a country to be classified as being in the first school of thought, it has to have used social media to organize protests and mobilize people to the cause for democracy.

Organization of protests online must have happened before people began storming the streets during protests for more freedoms or a change of government. These factors were present within Syria. There were calls for protests that were made between February 5 and March 15, 2011, online. The Facebook Page “Syrian Revolution 2011” was used to discuss when and where these protests would start. Analysts decided that the revolution officially began in Syria on March 16, 2011, which is after the online organized protesters took action in the real world. The specifics of these protests were first formed in the digital world and then moved into the physical world.

Social media outlets were not only used for establishing the first few protests and then larger days of revolt after March. YouTube was used to encourage those who were not already fighting in the streets on Fridays to join the rallies. Videos of protests, police beatings, and the dead Hamza had voiceovers that demonstrated why people should join the cause for democracy and a new leader to the government. The YouTube videos were more than pictures or footage.

They had people explaining what was happening in the country and why Syrians should be outraged at the treatment of fellow citizens.

Syria falls into the first category of schools on the impact of social media. Social media was necessary for the revolution to begin and essential for it to continue. Without the mobilization tactics of YouTube people in areas where violence was not occurring would not have known and potentially would not have joined the ongoing protests. People could have settled for the concessions that President Assad was giving the population, but with the videos depicting the violence of Assad's government towards the people of Syria, the demands of demonstrators changed. People no longer wanted more freedoms, they wanted a new leader after seeing what Assad was capable of doing to his own constituents. YouTube was vital in helping the people make the decision to call for his removal. The protests would be different, if they had even happened, in Syria had social media not been present.

Chapter 7: Social Media's Impact in the Arab Spring

Social media was used to some degree in each of the Arab Spring nations. Each country in the Arab Spring was different in the way that its protesters started the revolution and how they executed them. Of the four countries that I analyzed, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Syria, the people in two nations have been successful at overthrowing their leaders and those in the other two are still living in a state of repression. Tunisians and Egyptians have exiled their former dictators to foreign soil, while the citizens of Syria are still protesting for President Assad to leave and those in Bahrain are recovering from a harsh government crackdown that ended protests. Neither of the governments that are still in power after the Arab uprising have made major concessions or changes to the lives of their constituency. Of the two nations that did have government changes, one falls under the school of thought that social media was not needed to start the revolution or sustain it, while the other nation falls under both of the remaining categories of thought: social media was essential for the revolution to begin and to continue to mobilize people to the cause throughout the protests, as well as without social media foreign nations would not have changed their preconceived notions about the rallies from pro-dictator to pro-democracy. Therefore, this thesis takes into account two types of victories. Countries could successfully use social media as a protest tool if demonstrators utilize social media technologies for organizing and mobilizing the revolution, or targeting foreigners to change their opinion about the regime and leader. Countries can also be considered successful if the protesters accomplished the demands of the population. However, I cannot conclude that social media is what led to the success of the Arab Spring and removal of dictators. It is still too early to be able to ensure that if a specific technique or form of communication is used a dictator will then be overthrown.

Schools of Thought in Each Case Study

In two of the countries that were analyzed, Egypt and Syria, social media was a driving force in the protests and in the other two, Tunisia and Bahrain when it was briefly used, social media did not make a difference to the success or failure of the rallies. Of those countries that were successful in overthrowing their regimes social media did not contribute to the success in Tunisia, but Egyptians utilized social media in numerous ways. The use of social media in Tunisia fell under the second school of thought, for it did not add to the protests or mobilize people into the streets. President Ben Ali would have been ousted from his post whether his people used social media to mobilize or not. Even if some scholars deem that cell phones, the most effective media outlet for the country, did bring more people into the movement, it was not a large enough percentage to push the threshold from unsuccessful to a change in government. Tunisian demonstrators would have rid the country of Ben Ali with or without the use of social media.

The Egyptian protests were exactly the opposite of those in Tunisia. Without social media the date, time and other important details of the January 25, 2011, rally would not have been agreed upon across the nation. Activists chose the Facebook page “We Are All Khaled Said” to discuss grievances and to make sure that this protest succeeded when previous ones had failed. Once the movement was taken from the digital world to the streets, social media was key in helping convey to outside countries how President Mubarak’s government was treating the protesters. Through tweets and videos that were posted online, those in Western countries could change their opinion of the Mubarak regime. Before protests most people were content with his leadership and even as protests began governments were hesitant to back the revolutionaries. However, after seeing videos of the revolution opinions changed in favor of those who were

protesting for democracy. Therefore, the Egyptian rebellion falls into both the first and third schools of thought; social media was necessary for the revolution to start and continue, and social media was used to change the opinions of foreigners to be aligned with those in the movement.

Of the two countries that maintained their leader, protesters in one used social media to organize rallies and depict the brutality of the police and military toward the people of the nation while the other country shied away from using social media to benefit the revolution. In Syria the people used both Facebook and YouTube as social media outlets. This country falls under the first group of schools because social media was used to start the revolution and mobilize people to the cause for democracy. Even though President Assad has not left office, more and more people piled into the streets after viewing videos of the ongoing protests in other parts of the country. The underlying cause of rebellion changed from more freedoms to people joining the rallies after watching graphic videos of the violence used against fellow citizens. If it were not for social media, a less diverse grouping of people would have rallied for more rights and regime change.

While Bahrain has the highest number of people with access to Internet, Facebook and cell phones, it is the country that employed social media the least. Since these digital devices were not used during the protests to organize or mobilize, Bahraini protests fall under the second school of thought, which indicates that social media was not needed for the protests to occur. Bahrain was also the only country where the rebellion was completely crushed. Before jumping to conclusions that the lack of social media was the main reasoning behind the failure of this revolution there are other factors that could also have played a part. In Bahrain the government infiltrated social media sites and posted false updates to corner activists and those who opposed

the government. Those who were against the monarchy were rounded up and detained without access to a lawyer. Therefore, social media was not a safe option for demonstrators to use to organize protests. With a population of roughly 800,000 citizens it is significantly smaller than other countries in the Arab Spring. The population makes it is easier to control outbursts and crush the uprisings. Thirty islands comprise the nation of Bahrain and the majority of the protests were occurring at the capital of the main island. This central location also added to the ease with which authority figures could crush the small and confined uprising. Lastly Bahrain was the only country of the four that were analyzed that brought foreign troops to its soil to help crush the protests. Bahrain hosted the Gulf security forces, which means it had an added numbers of troops to crush the population who were protesting. All of these reasons could have combined with the lack of social media use to make it the least successful of the revolutions in the Arab Spring of 2011.

Table 5: Comparison of the four case study countries.

	Tunisia	Egypt	Syria	Bahrain
Month that Revolution began	December	January	March	February
Length of Revolution	29 Days	18 Days	One Year	31 Days
Used Social Media (at any point)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Successful Revolution	Yes	Yes	No	No
Successful SM use	No	Yes	Yes	No
Population	10.4 million	82.5 million	22.5 million	800,000
Population Median Age	30 years	24 years	22 years	31 years
Literacy Rate	78%	66%	84%	91%
Unemployment Rate	16% (2011) Youth = 30%	12.2% (2011)	8.1% (2011)	15% (2005)
Accessibility to Internet	34%	24%	19%	81%
Percentage of Facebook users	19%	6%	1%	24%
Percentage of Cell Phone users	93%	85%	52%	99%
Affected by Blackout	No	Yes	Yes	No
Organization through Facebook	No	Yes	Yes	No
Frequency of Protests	Daily	Daily	Fridays	Daily
Central Meeting Place	No	Tahrir Square	No	Pearl Roundabout
Social media outlets used	Phone, Facebook, DailyMotion	Phone, Facebook, Twitter, DailyMotion	Facebook, YouTube	Twitter, YouTube
Government Type	Dictatorship	Dictatorship	Dictatorship	Monarchy
Military Crackdown	No, switched to support protests	No, switched to support protests	Yes, killed thousands	Yes, killed over forty
Ethnic Conflict	No	No	Shia/Sunni	Shia/Sunni
Outside Influence	No	Yes	Some	No
School of Thought	Second	First and Third	First	Second

Sources: The United Nations (2011) and The World Factbook (2011) websites.

Note: The information is correct as of the end of February 2011.

Contributing Factors to Social Media Use

Table 5 compares the four countries that I have analyzed. The use of social media, including what types of social media were employed, and if they were used for organization are depicted above. The table is important because it also looks at other factors that could explain

why one country used social media when another did not. The table tries to depict all of the factors that can contribute to why the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt resulted in the resignation of dictators while those who reside in Bahrain and Syria still live under the governments that they rebelled against. Through my analysis I attempted to indicate if when or where the protests occurred also played a role in the success of the rallies. Three of the nations protested daily while those in Syria mostly rebelled on Fridays after the 2 P.M. prayers. The economy, working schedule and way of life was not as disrupted in Syria if most of the protests were on Friday; this factor also makes it easy for the government to predict when the next big rally will happen. Additionally if those who were in the streets met in one distinct spot to camp out for the revolution or if the population merely demonstrated throughout the country was another element that was analyzed. Yet neither of these seemed to play a role in which nations protesters succeeded in their revolution and which ones were crushed by the governments.

Looking at characteristics of the countries that were not directly related to social media mattered too. The median age of the population, population size, and literacy rate of the citizens indicate how much social media can impact a nation. When the population of a country has a median age in the twenties, the nation would be more likely to utilize social media than if those who reside in the country were over thirty. The youth of the Middle East are the people who are active on the Internet (Lynch 2007). The countries of Egypt and Syria had a younger citizenry and more online social media was utilized too. These two nations tried to organize through Facebook rather than cell phone. Additionally knowing the population size of a country is important. This indicates how large a state is and puts other figures such as Internet accessibility into perspective. It is easier to visualize how many people have the ability to use the Internet when the total population is known too. The literacy rate should also indicate if social media

was used versus older forms of communication. A high literacy rate usually is associated with a wealthy country. This would also mean that the nation would have a high access rate to the Internet and a high use of mobile phones. Moreover, if the literacy rate in rural parts of a country is low, then reading a post on the Internet would not be possible, but listening to someone at a local Mosque discuss the prospect of a revolution would be a better organizational tool. Therefore, the higher the literacy rate the higher the probability that a country will organize a protest through social media. However, after further analysis the population size and literacy rate of the nation had no impact on whether social media was used in the demonstrations.

A nation's access to the Internet will also impact what types of social media are used in the revolution. The nations where protesters did use Facebook or Twitter successfully were Egypt and Syria, which had lower availability to the Internet than both Tunisia and Bahrain. This seems contradictory because more people could have been rallied through this form of social media in the countries with the larger Internet access; it could have been a successful organization tool. Along with those numbers, the percentage of Facebook members is key to understanding if a country utilized this form of social media when organizing demonstrations. However, these were not indicators of which countries utilized social media in the Arab Spring.

Success of Social Media

When analyzing the success of social media in the revolutions in the Arab World in 2011, there are two forms of success. The first is success of new technology and social media to enable the revolutions to happen in the first place, which both the Egyptian and Syrians protests achieved. Success of social media does not necessarily equate to the success of the revolutions. The second form of success was dethroning the current leader and forming a democracy. Social

media could have helped to accomplish this second form of success but it was not necessary because only the Egypt revolution benefitted from social media usage.

Revolutionaries in Egypt and Syria both successfully used social media to organize people before protests began and mobilize people to the cause of the rebellion; however, only the people of Egypt dethroned their dictator. Yet I would still consider both nations to have been successful when using digital media. Without this new form of technology the protests would not have been organized and unified across the nation and the Egyptian people would still reside in their repressed state of being. Unrest has occurred and while President Assad is still in power in Syria there is pressure from outside countries, both in the Middle East and in the West, for him to renounce his seat in office and turn the country over to the people. Syria has been kicked out of the Arab League as of November of 2011.³¹³ The Arab League and United Nations are trying to come up with a peacekeeping mission to prevent the country from falling into a civil war.³¹⁴ The only countries that oppose the call for Assad to step down are China and Russia. Even with minor roadblocks, the people of Syria are on their way to gaining more rights because Assad's days are numbered, whether he chooses to realize this fact or not. If and when the people's perseverance pays off, it will be remembered that the revolution began online through the use of social media. The citizens will be able to say that they achieved both forms of success.

Protesters within both Egypt and Syria utilized Facebook to begin their revolution. People organized specific dates and times for the initial uprising and numerous marches after the rebellion began. One central Facebook page was used to air grievances against the government and its treatment of citizens. In both of these revolutions one person died and became the martyr

³¹³ "Syria Unrest: Arab League 'Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,'" *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>.

³¹⁴ "Syria Unrest: Arab League 'Seeks Peacekeeping Mission,'" *The BBC*, 12 February 2012, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17004530>>.

image of the uprising. His picture circulated the population in hopes that it would rally more people to the streets to fight for democracy. The people of the two nations used differing techniques to spread the image and message that the martyr died for more rights. Egyptians used cell phones to pass around photos of Khaled Said and Syrians chose to make YouTube videos featuring Hamza al-Khatib's dead body. Both methods were effective in increasing awareness of the issues of protesters and increasing the number of people who wanted governmental change. Egyptians and Syrians both used social media to their benefit and initially changed the mood of the people within the country. Neither group of citizens was willing to live in a subdued society where they were complacent about their lack of freedoms anymore. Action needed to be taken to ameliorate the lives of people in their nation, and people deemed that the use of social media, along with other tools, was a good way to gather people across the country to protest the same message and rise up against the dictatorship at the same time.

What Social Media Factors Distinguish Tunisia and Egypt's Protests

While social media use was successful in some countries, the purpose of the rebellions was to change the leadership of the nation. So far this has only been accomplished in Tunisia and Egypt, and it did not necessarily need social media to happen. Yet when looking at what set these two states apart from the Syrian and Bahraini demonstrations, some practices of social media usage were different in the successful countries and were neglected to be used in the nations that are still living under repressive rule. Besides the timing of the revolutions, the cell phone was a key factor that was used in both Tunisia and Egypt but was not a component in the rallies of Syria and Bahrain.

In all four countries more people have access to a cell phone than the Internet or Facebook. In Tunisia approximately thirty-four percent of people have access to the Internet

while ninety-three percent of the country has a mobile phone. Egypt's Internet access is about twenty-four percent for the whole population but eighty-five percent of people have a cell phone. In Syria the number of people who have a cell phone is more than double of that who can use the Internet. While in Bahrain both Internet and cell phone usage are high, almost the entire country has their own cell phone. Therefore, the cell phone would be the most beneficial social media outlet for protesters in a country to use to send important news and messages. Even with these statistics, only Tunisians and Egyptians utilized the mobile phone as a form of communication.

Cell phone usage was utilized in the protests in Tunisia and Egypt but not in Syria and Bahrain. This form of communication has specific perks that are not available through Internet based social media outlets. Mobile phones allow for the recipients of SMS messages to know who sent them a message. Additionally the receiver most likely trusts the person who sent the information that they are getting to their personal cell phone. By using mobile phones more the protesters could have prevented the complications that occurred with anonymity on websites like Facebook and Twitter. The people of Bahrain did not use social media because they could not discern between government officials and actual demonstrators on the Internet. The use of a cell phone takes away the issue of trust. People will respond in a more positive fashion to a guaranteed safe source such as SMS messages from friends and family. Another added advantage of mobile phones is that when pictures of a dead or mutilated Bouazizi or Khaled was sent to a protester's phone, an individual could forward it to everyone on their contact list with a few clicks of a button. It is harder to do this on the computer than through the use of a mobile phone. For starters phones can be used anywhere, where as in order to receive a Facebook message or send one a person needs to be at a computer or possess a Smartphone. Most Middle Eastern people do not own Smartphones, which are mobile devices with Internet connectivity.

Moreover pictures are more easily restricted on social media sites such as Facebook compared to a SMS message, which the government cannot detect. It is a fast and easy way to remind people why they are fighting for more rights and reforms. Each country had its own Bouazizi, and this technique seemed to be effective in the Tunisia and Egypt revolutions, so it would most likely be successful for protesters in Syria and Bahrain. If it was used in more countries than just Tunisia and Egypt, it could have aided in the success of more revolutions.

Mobile phones were utilized in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions but not by those in Syria and Bahrain. It is unknown exactly why these two nations did not try to communicate through cell phone. However, one can speculate that in Syria any item that had a recording device was taken by authority figures and destroyed. Even simple phones, which are not Smartphones, come with video recorders now; therefore, since the government of Syria did not want videos of the brutality to be posted on the internet, military figures were instructed to take all cameras. Taking out a phone in the middle of a rally was not the best decision in Syria. This may have led the people to use other forms of organization and mobilization rather than the phone. The people of Bahrain did not trust any source of social media. They were unsure of what the government had infiltrated. Early on in the protests the demonstrators decided not to trust any new form of media. Even with a device that was safe and hard for the government to monitor, the revolutionaries aired on the side of caution. If a demonstrator could not directly see the person who was providing them with information, even if it came from a friend or family's phone, then he or she was hesitant to listen. For these reasons the people of Syria and Bahrain stayed away from mobile phones and resorted to other social media forms, or none at all.

Another potential reasoning behind the successful demonstrations of Tunisia and Egypt and the failures of Syria and Bahrain could be the timing of the revolutions. The protesters in

both Tunisia and Egypt caught their respective governments off guard. They occurred very close together in timing, which did not allow for President Mubarak of Egypt to learn from the mistakes of President Ben Ali in Tunisia. By the time that the people of Syria and Bahrain revolted, the leaders could anticipate what activists would do. This made it harder for protesters in Syria and Bahrain to succeed. They needed to be more creative than those in the first two Arab Spring nations, and the governments also were more creative in how they deterred people from joining the revolution or how to stop videos of the revolution from getting online. The governments of Syria and Bahrain placed social media blackouts on the people of the nation much quicker than the previous two nations. Syrian authorities began taking away and destroying cameras or recording devices so that footage could not be leaked, and the monarchy in Bahrain even impersonated protesters to detain other activists. It was harder for Syrians and Bahraini people because their leaders had learned how not to handle a revolution from Ben Ali and Mubarak. Since the movements of those in the street could be predicted and the government could control the outcome, the protests became longer and the likelihood of a successful revolution decreased. The revolution in Tunisia was twenty-eight days and the rebellion in Egypt took only eighteen for Mubarak to leave. The revolution in Syria and Bahrain lasted for longer time periods, or would have if they had not been crushed. During these revolutions concessions happened later but they were not earnest attempts by the government to make any change to the lifestyles of the citizenry. Timing was an essential factor in the successes in Tunisia and Egypt and could have played a role in the failure of protests in Syria and Bahrain.

Other Potential Reasons for Success in Tunisia and Egypt

The two countries that did succeed in dethroning their leader share numerous qualities with the ones that did not accomplish this end. The protesting tactics used by all four countries

were similar in that they all rallied in the streets in different cities, while heading towards the capital, and to some extent disrupted the economies by fighting for changes rather than going to work. Stationing outside of government buildings meant that the protesters could not be ignored and change should have been inevitable. However, there are a few things that set the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt apart from Syria and Bahrain. In all of the countries the military was ordered to use force against those who were protesting in the streets; “*every* ruler ordered his military and security agencies to suppress protests by force (including lethal force). In some cases, the generals said yes; in others, they said no because they calculated that their own and their country’s interests would be best served by regime change” (Barany 2011, 26). In Tunisia and Egypt the military turned against the regime and sided with the protesters, but in Syria and Bahrain the military used aggressive and excessive force against the people of the country (Barany 2011). In Syria the number is growing but currently over five thousand people have been killed at the hands of the security forces, and in Bahrain, which enlisted Bahraini, Saudi Arabian, and United Arab Emirate forces, over forty people died while protesting for more rights.

The reasoning behind each country’s military actions can be related to how the forces were treated by the government and the relationship that the two parties shared. When the ruler of a regime generally satisfies the political and economic demands of a military force then the troops will back those who are currently in power (Barany 2011). This applies to the people of Syria and Bahrain because the military was comprised of the ruling minority party rather than the majority ethnic group. The armed forces of both respective countries lived in a state of luxury compared to the average citizen. Moreover, when a state pays well and treats the military with respect, the government will receive ample support during times of unrest (Barany 2011). Since

the militaries of Syria and Bahrain were treated with respect, they had no incentive to turn against the regime in favor of the poorer protesters whom they could not relate to. Additionally in the cases of Syria and Bahrain, a leader that is prone to human rights abuses creates an army that will back the government. Military officials fear that if they join the side of the demonstrators and back the revolution, that they will get backlash and be prone to violence from those in the streets. This is a concern of the authority figures because when acting on behalf of the regime they previously committed acts against the population and those who were protesting could want revenge (Barany 2011).

On the other hand when forces turn against their regime it occurs when there is distrust in the relationship between the authority figures and the ruler of a country. This will lead to friction and factions within both units (Barany 2011). In Egypt the military had been treated relatively well, so at first it was thought to be unlikely for this group of individuals would turn against President Mubarak. The military was much more central to “the support base for Mubarak (himself an air force general) and never came under opposition or media criticism” (Barany 2011, 28). When the protests began Mubarak heavily leaned on the military to help subdue the movements. The military is only comprised of 1.4 million people, which was a small number who were given the responsibility of controlling the millions of protesters in Tahrir Square and across the country. It strained the military, as well as, put them into an awkward position. The conscripted army had a good relationship with the people of the country and played an active role in society. The generals did not want to shoot at their own people, so they took matters into their own hands by turning against the regime. For the military, backing the regime did not provide a positive future for Egypt and they quickly renounced President Mubarak’s request to shoot peaceful protesters (Barany 2011).

Another factor that could have contributed to the success of rallies in Tunisia and Egypt is the composition of the people within the nation. Each of the four nations is predominately Muslim (eighty percent or more), which means that they are comprised of both Sunni and Shiite Muslims (The World Factbook 2011). What sets Tunisian and Egyptian protesters apart from those in the street in Syria and Bahrain is that the Muslims within the countries wanted the same outcomes from the revolution. In both Tunisia and Egypt the revolution was a class war against the government. Those who were family or friends of those in power were rich but everyone else lived below the poverty level. Friends of the regime could be either sect of Islam. In Syria and Bahrain one sect of Islam ruled and repressed the other, which caused more divisions between the people on the nation. The minority ruled over the majority and this bred resentment from those living in a state of poverty. When demands were made and concessions could be talked about, those in the street had opposing views on how to change the government and what direction to take the country in. When it came time to discuss actual alterations to the government in Syria and Bahrain the only thing that Sunni and Shia Muslims had in common was the removal of the current party. The minority party did not want to give up power to the majority because that would include losing their status within the nation and potentially their wealth too. Concrete demands provide for more change, which is why the people of Tunisia and Egypt dethroned their leaders.

Social media can be an asset to protests but it is not necessary for their success. Social media was essential for organization and mobilization of people in Egypt and Syria. While those in Tunisia did not employ social media tactics to begin or sustain the revolution, they were also the first Arab Spring nation to protest. Demonstrators in Tunisia caught the government, region, and world off guard. People poured into the streets because of anger and a long subdued passion

for a new government. Even though this country did not need digital media to succeed, social media was necessary for other nations to have rallies prosper. Yet, it cannot be said that by having this added technique of organization all countries would be better off. Bahrain's use of social media backfired quickly and therefore was not utilized during the demonstrations for fear of what negative results could be attained.

This thesis concludes that for these four countries social media can help a revolution but it is not necessary for one to succeed. It is still undetermined what factor helped lead these nations to their respective successes and failures but social media cannot be the sole contributor. Not all of the protesters in the nations that rid their countries of dictators used social media, just as not all of the demonstrators who still reside under corrupt regimes deterred from using this new form of communication. Social media was beneficial to countries that used it but protests were no less successful in countries that organized through older more traditional forms of protesting. Social media did not lead to the successes of the entire Arab Spring.

Research Limitations

The Arab Spring occurred in the Middle East just over a year ago. Information about the nations and their protests are still being discovered and analyzed. I am confident that at the time of my writing it was apparent through the research that social media was used in some nations but not utilized in others. In general social media can add to a revolution but is not necessary for the success of protests. It is also not the sole cause of a revolutions victory. However, my findings could have been different had I changed certain aspects of my thesis or had my research been done at a different time.

My research could have been more thorough had there been more available information on the protests. New information about these uprisings is being written about and uncovered

daily. Additionally the people in the Middle East generally speak Arabic. Hounshell (2011) depicted that when organization happened online it was usually in Arabic. The wealthy and elite are the people who have the ability to learn English. Therefore, all of the original tweets and posts that I obtained during this process were from the upper class. If I could understand and read Arabic, then my results could have been different. I could have better understood the common man, who felt the grievances of corruption and economic hardships. Instead I had to interpret, through news articles of people who were present for the rebellions, why this population began protesting in the first place. Having the ability to comprehend organization techniques in Arabic may not have changed my results, but it would have given me a deeper knowledge of the Arab Spring.

Numerous changes happened over the time I wrote my thesis. When I began the people in only three nations had successfully dethroned their leaders. However, since that time various government alterations have occurred including: President Qaddafi being killed, the president of Yemen finally stepping down, and foreign nations putting pressure on Syria, as well as government officials within the country leaving the regime to join the protesters. Once everything has settled and there is more stability in the region, then how social media affected the Arab Spring can be analyzed further. In Syria the people are still attempting to rid the country of President Assad. Each day more pressure is put onto the government and more people from within the nation are joining the opposition parties in the street. On March 8, 2012, the Deputy Oil Minister, Abdo Hussameddin, left the Syrian government to join those in the street who are demonstrating for the Assad family to leave and a democratic nation to be put in his place.³¹⁵ He announced his resignation from the government through a Youtube video, which

³¹⁵ "Syria Deputy Oil Minister Resigns to Join Opposition," *The BBC*, 8 March 2012, accessed: 8 March 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17295748>>.

demonstrates the social media use in the nation. Hussameddin is the highest-ranking government official to leave Assad's regime in the last year, since the uprising began.³¹⁶ Rallies are still occurring and those in power will have no choice but to make concessions or leave. Had this thesis been written at a later date, once more time had passed, then it could have analyzed the information in a different manner. I began researching and writing mere months after the victories and failures of the Arab Spring nations, and had to adapt to the changes that occurred with the protests that were still ongoing.

Lastly my results could have been different had I looked at all six countries, a different set of four nations within the six Arab Spring countries, or analyzed some of the states that are not considered to be in the Arab Spring but had protests at the same time. I chose Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria because they had the most in common with each other. Through social media use in each of these nations I felt that I could best extrapolate how social media was used in the Arab Spring as a whole. As of the beginning of March four of the six Arab uprisings have been successful. Different countries used social media in different ways though, so had I analyzed other nations there is potential to conclude that social media was essential for the protests or that it was unnecessary. Yet, for the nations of Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Syria, under the criteria that I created, it is clear that social media can help a revolution succeed but is not necessary for one to take place. Social media was not the leading cause in the victories of the Arab Spring.

Future Social Media Revolutions

While it cannot yet be decided that social media use was necessary for the success of the Arab Spring as a whole, it did contribute to the protests in Egypt and Syria. Without these new

³¹⁶ "Syria Deputy Oil Minister Resigns to Join Opposition," *The BBC*, 8 March 2012, accessed: 8 March 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-17295748>>.

media tools, the protests would not have occurred on the same scale. At varying degrees Facebook and YouTube were utilized in both of these countries. Through censorship of the Internet this may not be as possible for those wishing to overthrow their governments in the future. Since the revolutions of 2011, companies such as Facebook and Twitter have come out with new policies, or have decided to more strictly enforced policies that were already present within the organization. These guidelines will not help the rights of those under a repressive government and will hinder those wishing to follow in the footsteps of Arab Spring nations.

Of the three big American players in social media websites during the Arab uprising of 2011, only Google (which owns YouTube) is a member of the Global Network Initiative. Facebook and Twitter have refused to join the organization, which has created a “collaborative approach to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy in the [Information and Communications Technology (ICT)] sector, and have formed an Initiative to take this work forward” when concerning human rights of freedom and privacy in different countries (Global Network Initiative 2011). In other words it creates a way for these ICT companies to comply with the domestic laws of a foreign country without compromising the treatment of the indigenous people (Global Network Initiative 2011). Yet, some companies do not want to sign into this agreement because they presume that it will hurt their business in countries with strict free speech policies. Therefore, instead of aiding citizens and protecting their right to revolt, the corporations are thinking in a capitalistic manner. By siding with governments the companies will infiltrate more countries and make more money. Facebook and Twitter have altered core values but YouTube should remain unchanged and can be used in future protests against corrupt governments.

Facebook

Facebook will no longer be an organizational tool during revolutions akin to those in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. Facebook does not want to take credit or even acknowledge that its website was used during the protests of 2011. The company, which has just begun to gain users within the Arab region, does “not want to be seen as picking sides for fear that some countries — like Syria, where it just gained a foothold — would impose restrictions on its use or more closely monitor users.”³¹⁷ The executives at Facebook are downplaying the role of their website in the revolutions.³¹⁸ One executive stated that bravery and determination mattered more than technology during the protests; these company figureheads are trying to place the impact of social media into the second school of thought: it was unnecessary for the success of the rallies. Facebook, even if it will not come out and say it, is more worried about the economics behind its corporation and the number of users than how the people of the world are actually using the website. They do not want to lose business in any country so the organization is cracking down on its enforcement of policies. When the uprisings began, “Twitter and YouTube, which is owned by Google, [were] more willing to embrace their roles in activism and unrest” than Facebook was during this time period.³¹⁹ However, since this time the social media sites of Facebook and Twitter have changed their policies to downplay the role their technology played in the Arab Spring countries.

³¹⁷ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³¹⁸ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³¹⁹ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

The people who created pages such as “We Are All Khaled Said” or “Syrian Revolution 2011” used anonymous names on the Internet. This was for safety purposes because the regimes that they lived under had strict freedom of speech policies. If their true identities had been revealed prior to the beginning of protests then they would have been captured, detained and tortured, or possibly killed for writing opposing views of the government. Facebook claims that it has always held a policy that “require[s] users to sign up with their real identities. The company says this requirement protects its users from fraud.”³²⁰ The company is unwilling to change this policy and maintains that it provides a safer environment for all of its members.³²¹ This statement is simply untrue because it presents security risks to users in developing countries or under repressive regimes.

Facebook deems that it did not know of the false identity of Wael Ghonim, which is why the page remained untouched for so long. Additionally since the Egyptian victory over President Mubarak, Facebook has taken down the “We Are All Khaled Said” webpage.³²² This Facebook page was still being used for discussions in November of 2011, when it was removed. People commiserated over the lackluster improvements since the change of regime. However, Facebook officials claim that it could not remain on the website since the founder of the page had used a pseudonym when creating the page. The use of a pseudonym was a violation of Facebook

³²⁰ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³²¹ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³²² Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

policy; therefore, the page had to be removed.³²³ The company is cracking down on policies of anonymity. In future rebellions people will not be able to organize through Facebook if they are forced to use a real name. If they do use a pseudonym and are discovered then all the effort put into organization will be lost since the page will be deleted. This policy will now be enforced in a harsher manner.

While Facebook cannot find every member that is using a pseudonym, it can check up on the identity of people with thousands of friends, or on users who create pages and groups that over a short span of time gain thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of members. By instituting this form of looking for pseudonyms, the Facebook page “We Are All Khaled Said,” would have been found and shut down months before the January protests. After just a few hours of making the page in June of 2010, “300 people had joined it. Three months later, that number had grown to more than 250,000;” this type of activity would have been a red flag for employees of Facebook to check the identity of Ghonim.³²⁴ The company would have discovered that his name was fake and dismantled his pages.³²⁵ The enforcement of this policy ensures that Facebook will not be used in future revolutions.

Facebook has been battling to defend itself on the issue of privacy and pseudonyms since the Arab Spring began. It has continually reported that all members must use their real name to ensure the safety of Facebook users. In mid February of 2012, the company released a statement

³²³ Preston, Jennifer, “Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³²⁴ Vargas, Jose Antonio, “Spring Awakening: How an Egyptian Revolution Began on Facebook,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 2012, accessed: 7 March 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/books/review/how-an-egyptian-revolution-began-on-facebook.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Facebook%20AND%20Arab%20Spring&st=cse&scp=7>>.

³²⁵ Vargas, Jose Antonio, “Spring Awakening: How an Egyptian Revolution Began on Facebook,” *The New York Times*, 17 February 2012, accessed: 7 March 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/books/review/how-an-egyptian-revolution-began-on-facebook.html?pagewanted=1&sq=Facebook%20AND%20Arab%20Spring&st=cse&scp=7>>.

that they would alter this policy. It appeared that justice was coming for those in foreign nations. Yet the Facebook announcement was depressing. If a person happens to be a celebrity with over 20,000 friends or people who subscribe to their page (subscribing is a way for one individual to see information about a Facebook member without actually being a friend of that person) then they may use a pseudonym. This change of heart came after looking at Facebook members and pages such as Lady Gaga or Snoop Dog, who before this had to go by Stefani Germanotta and Calvin Broadus respectively.³²⁶ Now by being famous or a celebrity, an individual gets the perks that those in developing countries trying to fight against corrupt regimes should be granted.

Twitter

Twitter has also taken measures that initially set off a form of panic among users across the globe. Even though during the actual revolutions Twitter was helpful in numerous ways, for those with Internet access and even those who wanted to send out tweets but were in Internet blackouts, with new policies it will hinder revolutions. In Egypt, after the Internet was shut down, both Twitter and Google provided a way for people to reach foreign nations with their protest updates.³²⁷ By using foreign correspondents' phones Egyptians could "leave voice mail messages that would be filed as updates on Twitter. Biz Stone, one of Twitter's founders, used it as an opportunity to emphasize the positive global impact that comes with the open exchange of information."³²⁸ The new service network that was created for this purpose was known as

³²⁶ Sengupta, Somini, "New Facebook Policy on Made-Up names Lets Gaga Be Gaga," *The New York Times*, 16 February 2012, accessed: 5 March 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/17/technology/new-facebook-policy-on-made-up-names-lets-gaga-be-gaga.html?scp=1&sq=Facebook+AND+pseudonym&st=nyt>>.

³²⁷ Preston, Jennifer, "Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts," *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³²⁸ Preston, Jennifer, "Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts," *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

speak2tweet.³²⁹ Another tactic that Twitter used to help demonstrators during the Arab Spring was to allow its users to use pseudonyms instead of real names and identities.³³⁰ The widespread use of Twitter even inspired the company's "chief executive ... to call it 'the free-speech wing of the free-speech party.'"³³¹ Yet instead of helping citizens find ways around government blackouts, now Twitter is censoring itself too. It is hindering protests when just months ago it was advocating for social media use during uprisings.

No longer will Twitter be used to communicate with the general population within a country. Now it would mostly be used to target foreigners and change their opinion on protests. In January of 2012, "in a sort of coming-of-age moment, Twitter announced that upon request, it would block certain messages in countries where they were deemed illegal."³³² Twitter wants to respect the laws of other countries. In nations with regimes that restrict certain content or words, Twitter will voluntarily take down any post when a government provides a valid reason for deeming the content illegal.³³³ People across the globe were outraged because they felt that this was a new form of censorship.³³⁴ To the users of Twitter the language of the policy is a euphemism for suppression and censorship. Dictating that a 'valid request' is all that is needed

³²⁹ Preston, Jennifer, "Facebook Officials Keep Quiet on Its Role in Revolts," *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed: 14 February 2012 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/business/media/15facebook.html?scp=7&sq=Bahrain%20AND%20%22social%20media%22&st=cse>>.

³³⁰ Sengupta, Somini, "Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³¹ Sengupta, Somini, "Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³² Sengupta, Somini, "Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³³ Sengupta, Somini, "Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³⁴ Goodman, J. David, "Twitter's New Policy on Blocking Posts Is Attached, and Defended," *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/twitters-new-policy-on-blocking-posts-is-attached-and-defended/?scp=9&sq=Twitter&st=cse>>.

for Twitter to remove a post falls under wide interpretation. To a dictator any post can have a valid reasoning for why it is illegal.³³⁵ One person in Sweden posted, “Thank you for the #censorship, #twitter, with love from the governments of #Syria, #Bahrain, #Iran, #Turkey, #China, #Saudi and friends.”³³⁶ People around the globe saw this as a death sentence to any future revolutions in countries with no freedom of speech. Any government could petition for opposition comments to be taken offline because they were illegal. Therefore, Twitter is playing into the hands of the governments and their restrictions.

Twitter has tried to defend itself against the attacks and potential boycotts from users. Representatives of Twitter have indicated that instead of simply deleting inappropriate posts that were on the website, they will appear but have a gray box indicating that something was removed. Before this new decree, “removing a post meant it would disappear from Twitter worldwide; now such removals ... could be limited to individual countries. Elsewhere, the post would still appear.”³³⁷ Therefore, if a protester in the Arab Spring tweeted the time or day of a protest, it would be deleted from that country but any other nation in the world could see it. It would have stopped people within a country from being able to mobilize or communicate through Twitter. This would have been detrimental in Egypt, when citizens utilized Twitter to talk amongst themselves about how to enter Tahrir Square. If the Egyptian revolution happened today, Twitter would only be used to inform outside countries about the demonstrations against Mubarak. Twitter’s example of how the new process works was:

³³⁵ Sengupta, Somini, “Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³⁶ Sengupta, Somini, “Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³⁷ Goodman, J. David, “Twitter’s New Policy on Blocking Posts Is Attached, and Defended,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/twitters-new-policy-on-blocking-posts-is-attached-and-defended/?scp=9&sq=Twitter&st=cse>>.

So if someone posts a message that insults the monarchy of Thailand, which is punishable by a jail term, it will be blocked and unavailable to Twitter users in that country, but still visible elsewhere. What is more, Twitter users in Thailand will be put on notice that something was removed: A gray box will show up in its place, with a clear note: “Tweet withheld,” it will read. ‘This tweet from @username has been withheld in: Thailand.’³³⁸

The company’s defense of this new system was that users could still tell that a post had been tweeted.

Twitter also tried to quell the outbursts by noting a loophole in the system. Twitter identifies where a person lives by their Internet Protocol (IP) address, which indicates the location where a person updates their Twitter. However, the social networking site also lets individuals set a location through the site. Therefore, in the eyes of Twitter employees, a person could change their settings and indicate that their location is worldwide.³³⁹ If the user enables this then he or she would be able to circumvent the new blocking system. The person could see the posts of everyone, even if those within their own country were blocked because of censorship.³⁴⁰ While this may work and allow people to see a broader range of posts, it does not redeem Twitter from changing its pro-revolution viewpoint towards more conservative pro-government actions. It is not backing the human rights of citizens in repressive countries. The company is trying to gain favor with leaders to expand into more markets when it should gain favor with the common man who will use this social media technique to change the world.

Twitter is making all of these changes because it is opening up offices in other countries, starting with a new London office. Laws no longer apply only to the United States, and adding

³³⁸ Sengupta, Somini, “Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³³⁹ Sengupta, Somini, “Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

³⁴⁰ Sengupta, Somini, “Censoring of Tweets Sets Off #Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 2012, accessed: 31 January 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/technology/when-twitter-blocks-tweets-its-outrage.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=Twitter&st=cse&scp=10>.

the United Kingdom complicated things.³⁴¹ Twitter's usual statement of we are a US company and if you have a problem with our privacy policies, come try and sue us in America will no longer work since they will not only be operating domestically.³⁴² Therefore, the organization now has to be in tune with the laws of foreign nations. In order to have more offices and more influence abroad, it must adhere to foreign leaders.

Social Media's Impact in the Entire Arab Spring

There are no sure ways to predict whether the use of social media, or a specific type of social media, will make a revolution succeed. More time is needed to analyze the countries of the Arab Spring. Since "one of the main reasons why recent Middle Eastern and North African events took so many observers by surprise was the sheer opacity of these countries...gathering reliable information about [these states] is extraordinarily difficult" (Barany 2011, 26). Most of the countries did not allow for foreign media to document the protests, which makes it hard to discern what truly happened. After more time, hopefully more countries will have overthrown leaders and there can be more data to describe the use and effectiveness of social media.

Scholars are trying to conclude whether using social media will indicate that a new regime will be put into place. They are trying to find criteria that can be used to predict a protest's victory. The use of some social media tools was more useful than others in the Arab Spring. However, it depended on the country, the ruler, and the way that the social media tool was implemented that made the difference of success or failure. For example Twitter was beneficial to the protests in Egypt but detrimental to those in Bahrain because the sources were

³⁴¹ Miller, Claire Cain, "Free Speech and Privacy Rights Collide on Twitter," *The New York Times*, 22 May 2011, accessed: 5 March 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/technology/23twitter.html?scp=2&sq=Facebook+AND+privacy+AND+Arab+Spring&st=nyt>>.

³⁴² Miller, Claire Cain, "Free Speech and Privacy Rights Collide on Twitter," *The New York Times*, 22 May 2011, accessed: 5 March 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/technology/23twitter.html?scp=2&sq=Facebook+AND+privacy+AND+Arab+Spring&st=nyt>>.

unreliable and often incorrect. Social media usage was beneficial to demonstrators in countries in multiple ways including: online organization before enacting the plans in the streets and using mobile phones since they are harder for the government to restrict. Yet no one social media type or implementation of a social media device can be pinpointed to lead to a revolution's success. Hopefully with more time and more social media revolution successes, a clearer path for demonstration victories can be created. There can never be a true cause and effect for every rebellion but a better understanding and analysis of the role of social media to organize, mobilize, and change the opinion of people within its own country and foreign nations will be recognized and perceived.

Social media use for more than just a mere social networking device, and in such a wide scale as the Arab Spring, is still new. There are not enough case studies to be able to predict whether using cell phones versus Facebook versus YouTube or blogs as an organizational tool will ensure that protesters' demands are met. Revolutions and rebellions are variable to numerous factors. What I can conclude about social media in the Arab Spring is that in 2011, without social media the Arab Spring still would have occurred, but it may not have spread so quickly or to as many countries if there was no social media usage. Yet in 2012 with the harsher enforcement that true identities must be used online, and the policy that the host country has more authority over censorship of a social media site that is based in the West, revolutions like those in the Arab Spring will be unlikely to happen or spread to as many countries in the future. Social media facilitated or will enable certain countries to declare victory against their leaders but this will not be the case in future uprisings unless companies respect human rights and cater to the population rather than a corrupt autocratic regime.

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