2013

Networking and Revolution: How Social Media Has Shaped the Arab Spring

Stacy Beck
Ouachita Baptist University

Recommended Citation

SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

"Networking and Revolution: How Social Media has Shaped the Arab Spring"

written by

Stacy Beck

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Dr. Kevin Brennan, thesis director

Dr. Kevin C. Motl, second reader

Dr. Barbara Pemberton, third reader

Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

April 15, 2013

Networking and Revolution: How Social Media has Shaped the Arab

Spring.

Stacy Beck

Ouachita Baptist University

Spring 2013

Introduction

In the Spring of 2011, a tremor swept through North Africa and the Middle East. What began in Tunisia as one man's self-immolation in protest of the government sparked demonstrations throughout the region. Shouting and demonstrating soon escalated into full out revolution. While countries involved have had varying experiences and levels of success, one thing is clear: social media was a powerful tool in this historic moment.

Facebook currently has one billion users—or one in seven people. Twitter has 400 million users, Instagram is home to 100 million users,[1] and YouTube has one billion unique visitors per month.[2] Twenty-five percent of views are via mobile devices. A staggering 70 percent of YouTube traffic is from outside the United States. In 2011, the year that marked the beginning of the Arab Spring, YouTube "traffic from mobile devices tripled" and the site had one trillion views—or 140 views per every human on earth.[3]

In considering these statistics, this study tracks the use and importance of the Social Media and information and communication technology (ICT) in aiding revolutions. Whether citizen journalism in Tunisia, Facebook pages in Egypt and Yemen, or Social Media attention toward Libya—Arab Spring countries have seen a drastic impact in the speed, success, and spreading throughout the region of revolutions. After analyzing Social Media's presence in the Arab Spring, it is hard to imagine the uprisings without this tool.

---

[1] Brent Gambill. "Social Media." PowerPoint, (April 2013), Ouachita Baptist University.

[2] YouTube. "Statistics," (2013), http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html.

[3] Ibid.

Section I: Click. Click. Upload Complete.

Theory

Social media is the newest form of communication that facilitates mass participation. This medium of networking gives people discursive space in which to share opinions and beliefs with others. Social media is also a resource for sharing news, planning events, and amassing support. News used to reach the globe via newspaper publications and television outlets. The advent of online news allowed information to disseminate even faster, but was still limited in that news agencies chose which stories to print or broadcast. News could be read or seen at any time but was limited to special interests who ignored certain events.

Now, with the invention of ICT and social media, sharing of information has substantially changed. Social media refers to sites that allow for social networking such as Facebook or Twitter. This genre also includes blogs and YouTube where users simply wish to share information and receive comments or suggestions. ICT refers to devices and media that enable communication between individuals or groups. ICT is the vehicle by which people can access social media. Computers, the internet, cell phones and other mobile devices with internet connectivity are essential for the existence of social networking sites and text messaging. The presence and penetration level of social media and ICT within a country's population is representative of a society's coordination abilities and contact with free speech. Such devices are not only used to communicate, they are also used to organize, broadcast amateur journalism, connect with mainstream media around the world, and advocate the protection of fellow cyber activists.

Of these revolutionaries, young people below the age of 30 are likely to be the most active and invested in the cause.[4] People of this age group tend to be more willing to rise up

---

[4] In statistics throughout the evidence section, "youth" refers to people below the age of thirty. Distinctions are made where data refers to people between 15 and 24 years old. People of this latter age set are old

and fight or to launch protests. Surveys show that young people in the Middle East want "to live in a free country," and social media allows them a quick and easy means to organize and fight for said freedom.[5] Sixty percent of the population living in Middle Eastern countries are under the age of thirty.[6] With the presence of an energetic youthful population who desires to be free and who is already connected to the social media, the Middle East and North Africa is a hotbed for liberalization.

In discussing liberalization, the term refers to a move towards democracy. Liberalization can be the advent of an election or the protection of multiple parties and candidates in an election instead of a one-party system. Laws that give citizens more rights is also an example of a move toward democracy. Perhaps the government allows free speech or free press instead of pushing for censorship. An increase in equality among citizens and their rights is an additional means to liberalize. Women may be allowed in government, for example. Perhaps laws are more tolerant toward differing ethnic or religious groups. Maybe laws have not changed, but the people themselves have liberalized by being more open to different social groups. All of these instances are examples of liberalization. Democratization can be a slow process that takes time. Initially, minimal progress may be made and reversals in progress may occur. The key idea to note is that the long-term history must be considered and that signs of hope can exist even in steps backward. A step forward

considered old enough to take part in revolutionary activity yet are young enough to represent youthful idealism and energy.

[5] Spot On Public Relations, "Strong MENA Interests in Mobile Apps," Jan. 31, 2011, http://www.spotonpr. com/tag/statistics/.

[6] Fareed Zakaria, "Why There's No Turning Back in the Middle East," *Time*, Feb. 17, 2011, http://www.time. com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049804,00.html.

does not have to be enormous. Neither does a step backward represent the eternal doom of a nation. New democracies will not be perfect but do show some degree of liberalism.

The above factors tie together in a monumental way. Young people are the ones who are going to be excited about popular new technology. Youthful populations tend to be even more skilled with technological devices than their predecessors. Never before has technology like social media been in existence. This tool moves at hyper speed. Online coordination provides the speed and anonymity to avoid government intervention and knowledge. A protest can be organized and staged in a day long before a regime has had any idea of its citizens' political subversion. Social media users document through posts, videos, and photos of what exactly is happening and when. Local people no longer need the conventional media to broadcast stories on protests. Everyone can already see them live online.

With such popularity, sites about protests catch the attention of media outlets everywhere and get Western news stations onboard. Activists catch the attention not only from local governments but also from governments of democratic, industrialized nations. Pressure on authoritarian regimes grows as support for Arab Spring activists increases. Social media has been a catalyst that has allowed revolutions to be conducted more quickly and effectively than ever before. Governments can no longer hide or deny what they are doing. They face a power unlike any other seen before. Dictators face revolutionaries that do not need hand-written notes or buildings to hold secret meetings. These activists can do much of their work from behind a computer screen or on a mobile device.

Literature Review

Since almost two years have passed since the Arab Spring began, a diverse range of literature has been written on the subject. While other writing offers meaningful insights, this study is unique. Other sources may focus on one country or one detail of the social media argument. This paper looks into the region as a whole and brings in multiple factors of speed, age, technological penetration, and timeline of events. It also offers extensive statistics on the factors involved.

Major works related to social media and the Arab Spring include: Clay Shirky's *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Political Power of Social Media," Philip N. Howard's extensive book, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, and Robert Hackett and Megan Adam's article, "Is Media Democratization a Social Movement?" Additional works are *Revolution 2.0* by Wael Ghonim and *Tweets from Tahrir*, published by OR Books. The former resources are older with the Shirky piece being written during the Revolution. The latter two books are specifically about Egypt post-revolution but offer valuable insights on the mechanisms of social media and networking.

Shirky argues that while social media can be an effective means to impact social and political change, the United States should take a broad, neutral standpoint. Such a position will help ensure American safety and international progress. Hillary Clinton has pushed for freedom of access to sites like YouTube, the *New York Times*, and Google but has undervalued the importance of social networking sites that are purely for communication. The United States has also explored strategies of using social media in specific ways in individual countries. Shirky asserts that the U.S. should not push for in individual, short-term strategies. Instead, he states that "[t]he more promising way to think about social media

is as long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere."[7] He believes that Internet freedom in general should be upheld on a global scale. Let people talk to one another and they will formulate their beliefs and desires and then act. Events and unrest will filter to the media. People will be empowered to act. Where Shirky's article is limited is in an explanation of the Arab Spring. He briefly touches on the recent protest in the Middle East but he keeps a broader, theoretical focus rather than doing several or a single case study (though he does give examples of the success of social media in liberalization such as in the Philippines and Moldova). While Shirky's concern is what U.S. policy should be, the Arab Spring study is about social media's role in promoting liberalization. [8] Shirky is also limited in that he wrote during the initial stage of the revolutions and was not able to see outcomes of later stages of the Arab Spring.

In *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Howard explores the use of ICT in Muslim countries. He does not discount these countries' governments using ICT to control their people, but he asserts that implementation of ITC will inevitably bring in some liberalization. Muslim governments realize the benefits and necessity of using internet for business. For economic growth, these countries will partially liberalize their markets while maintaining some control over businesses and censorship of ICT. As technology modernizes within these countries, people purchase mobile phones that have access to wireless internet. Howard asserts that cell phone use is harder for governments to control and gives citizens a taste of freedom. Free communication helps people express their ideas and organize to fight for change. The situation is ripe for democratization as political parties become more

---

[7] Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media," *Foreign Affairs* 90 (Jan/Feb 2011): 32.

[8] Ibid. 28-41.

competitive via websites and blogs. While Howard's study is useful in considering democratization in Muslim countries as a whole, his study ends before the recent events in the Middle East have occurred. Researchers need to apply his theory to the most recent examples of political movements. With regard to testing his theory, Howard uses complex statistical analysis to look at every Muslim country's degree of technological development compared to each state's level of democratization. He considers the categories of countries' political states such as authoritarian, in a state of transition, in a state of crisis, or in entrenchment. His study lacks simplicity.[9] The Arab Spring study simplifies research by being limited to a few cases and variables. The paper also addresses a more recent time period and can thus see the later effects of the Middle East's "digital origins."

Hackett and Adam's 1999 article, "Is Media Democratization a Social Movement?" focuses more on broadcast media rather than the social media. The piece remarks that the democratization of media has been occurring since the 1970s. This idea illustrates that authors are aware that media is changing and do not leave out the possibility of new types of media—i.e. social media. The study involves interviews of fifteen media activists and questionnaires filled out by a separate nineteen activists. Questions asked are about each person's opinion on the relationship of media and democracy and about his or her thoughts on the democratization of media. Interviewees discuss the biases they see in the media and the limited information that is dispersed. The study concludes that a campaign of a broad group of individuals might be necessary in order to democratize the media. Media has an impact on the stories that news agencies cover and on public opinion and awareness. While this study is useful in that it discusses the power of the media and how access to information

---

[9] Philip N. Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy – Information Technology and Political Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 18-215.

can influence events, it does not talk about the most current forms of media such as using mobile videos and Twitter to do journalism. The article also is more about people's opinions of media and the opening of journalism rather than the about what actually occurs in the world in relation to media.[10] "Networking and Revolution" is a sort of completion of Hackett and Adam's study. This paper explains how media has evolved from its conventional, agency-controlled form to a citizen-directed social media.

Revolution 2.0 is Wael Ghonim's memoir of his experience in the Egyptian Revolution. A strength of this piece is that it is current and is by a person who effectively used social media to help topple a dictatorial regime in North Africa. The source is limited, however, in that it is only about Egypt. The book also has bias about the pros of social media as it was written by a cyber activist. Ghonim does offers insight into how social media has been used to organize and be a part of political protest. He was arrested for his cyber activism. Social media created a protection mechanism that attracted international support and place enough pressure on the Egyptian government to release him.[11] "Networking and Revolution" expands this author's study to include activists and revolutions in other Arab Spring countries.

The last major work involving social media used for political activism is the book *Tweets from Tahrir*. This book compiles tweets chronologically from pre-revolution to post-revolution. By using tweets, the work brings in a human element into history and shows new resources to consider in the writing of history. Communication and technology have changed in the past decade. *Tweets from Tahrir* embraces that change and gives on-the-ground

[10] Megan Adam and Robert Hackett, "Is Media Democritization a Social Movement?" *Peace Review* 11 (Mar 1999): 125-131.

[11] Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0*, (New York: Houghton, 2012).

accounts that are much like a movie in written form. Emotions, opinions, and events are shown throughout the pages. The book gives individuals a voice who otherwise would have been unheard. Information that would have been unknown, lost, or forgotten in now chronicled for all time. A weakness of this work is that it is only about Egypt as well. Perhaps a similar resource exists for other individual countries.

Methodology

While the above works provide different forms of research, this paper addresses the argument in a new and much broader way. Research includes statistics and narratives of multiple countries. These include not only Tunisia and Egypt, but also Yemen, Libya, and Algeria. The study notes percentage of people below the poverty line, Facebook users' percentage of total population and penetration of online population, and even labor type of people within the country. Statistics are given of Facebook use over time in the countries that inspired the region (Tunisia and Egypt) to show the increasing interest of social media throughout the revolution. Literacy rates are also taken into account.[12]

The study looks at the need for outside intervention and compares it to the presence of social media and the percentage of youth within the population. The idea is to see if youth are present and if the education level necessary and access to social media is available. The level of fixed and mobile broadband is detailed in consideration of internet access. It is important to note that family and friends share ICT and that statistics underestimate the level

---

[12] Information is given as available. Not all countries have recent statistics for percentage of people below the poverty line, for example. The main statistics are those about social media and ICT. The other data simply helps show reasons why citizens may feel unrest or that they are literate enough and have access to use social media.

of penetration that ICT has in a society. Reports of coordination through sites like Twitter and Facebook are also used.

This study is meant to piece together the details in order to see the impact of social media. Was this tool more effective in countries where it was more widespread? Did countries that had no Facebook users fair as well as those who had a large Facebook population? Where was outside intervention necessary and how did statistics differ in countries whose acted alone? Which countries revolted first and was there a seeming progression of inspiration throughout the region due to activism and success of others? How was social media used before, during, and after the revolutions? How did international bodies respond? This paper considers all of these factors in arguing its thesis.

Section II: System Error. Reboot.

Tunisia

On December 17, 2010 Mohammad Bouazizi, a twenty-six-year old fruit vendor in Sidi Bouzid set himself on fire in protest of the government of Tunisia.[13] Little did he know what his death would spark not only in his country, but also in countries throughout the region. As the nation that set the spark for the Arab Spring, Tunisia deserves a detailed examination of its social media presence and use before, during, and after the revolution of 2011.

The Tools in Hand

Before looking at the use of Social Media's use, an assessment of its degree of presence must be done. Was there enough access to Social Media-related technology to turn the course of a revolution toward victory?

By 2010, Tunisia had 9.95 million mobile phone users—or a roughly 94 percent penetration level. In September of that year, the government allowed Tunisie Telecom[14], a mobile network provider, to purchase a 3G network license.[15] The 3G network promised more mobile internet connection to a country where one third of its population already has access to fixed broadband services.[16]

In the Spring of 2011, Social Bakers' Social Media-tracking statistics showed a rapid increase in Facebook users around the time of the revolution. Over the three months

---

[13] Ryan Rifai, "Timeline: Tunisia's Uprising," *Al Jazeera*, Jan. 23, 2011, http://English.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/Tunisia/2011/01/201114142223827361.html.

[14] "Tunisie" is the French spelling of Tunisia: la Tunisie.

[15] Simon Davies, "Tunisia Grants a 3G License," Cellular News, Sept. 23, 2010, http://www.cellular-news.com/story/45560.php?s=h.

[16] Budde Comm, "Tunisia – Telecoms, Mobile, Broadband and Forecasts," (2010), http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Tunisia-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html.

preceding April 2011, 389,000 accounts were created representing a 19.23 percent increase in users.[17] In considering growth rank, six months previous to April (Oct-Nov 2010) saw a growth rank of 91st out of 213 countries. By January to February 2011 the growth rank was slightly less at 93rd but still added over half a million new users. In March to April 2011 Tunisia jumped fourteen points to rank 79th in growth rate. Mid-April put the country at 69th.[18] As of April 2013, Tunisia has 3.6 million Facebook users.[19]

In considering the access to the internet via mobile phone or broadband and interest in Facebook use, these statistics point to people likely interested in other forms of social media, i.e. blogs, Twitter, or YouTube. It is also important to recall Howard's assertion in *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* that ICT can be shared by family and friends. Therefore, statistics on internet and mobile penetration actually underestimates reality.

Usually, the people most interested in using new technology are young people. One might ask if "youth" fits under the heading of "The Tools in Hand." Fareed Zakaria believes that youth can turn to violence or protest in areas facing economic issues such as a lack of economic growth. Zakaria states that sixty percent of people living in Muslims countries are 30 years old or less and that it is they who will be using the social media to rise up against their governments authoritarianism. He adds, "From 1970 to 2007, 80% of all outbreaks of conflict occurred in countries where 60% or more of the population was younger than 30."[20]

---

[17] This number represents "monthly active users" only and, therefore, ignores users that rarely visit or interact with their Facebook accounts.

[18] Social Bakers, "Facebook Statistics by Country," Apr. 9, 2011, http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/?interval=last-3-months#chart-intervals.

[19] Social Bakers, 2013.

[20] Zakaria, 2011.

In Tunisia, the median age is 30 years.[21] As will be seen, most bloggers are young—the children of Tunisians who saw, remembered, and understood the transition of power to Ben Ali in the 1980s. Many of these bloggers started cyberactivism in their teens or early twenties and are now approaching their late twenties or early thirties.

Blogging Before the Revolution

Now that it is apparent that ICT and Social Media can be accessed by a majority of Tunisians, was Social Media a part of this country's political activism before the revolution? As early as 2004, cyber-activist sites have been created by Tunisians in their country and abroad. Riadh Guerfali, a Tunisian lawyer and expert on constitutional and internet law, began the "Nawaat blog collective" in 2004 as a forum for free speech.[22] He has spent his career fighting government censorship. He claims that "It wasn't Twitter, it wasn't Facebook that made this revolution"—but the children of those who had been "imprisoned and tortured and really sacrificed their lives."[23] With any battle, it is the fighter and how he uses his weapon that determines victory—not the weapon itself. Bloggers took the weapon of Social Media and not only denounced government corruption, these activists also "took it upon themselves to take on roles unfilled by state-owned media."[24]

[21] CIA World Factbook, "Tunisia," (2011), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html.

[22] Angelique Chrisafis, "Tunisia's most influential bloggers prepare for historic elections," *The Guardian*, Oct. 22, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/22/tunisian-elections-bloggers.

[23] Ibid. 2011.

[24] Farah Samti, "Tunisian Bloggers Discuss Open Data Two Years After the Revolution," *Tunisia Live*, Apr. 10, 2013, http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/12/24/tunisian-bloggers-address-challenges-of-open-data-two-years-on/.

The older generation had experienced Ben Ali's rule since 1987.[25] In the 1980s and 1990s the internet was still in its infancy as a global public service.[26] Tunisian life was dismal with government corruption and the majority of wealth being in the hands of the elite or government-connected businesses. Despite a rise in GDP from US$7,182 in 2005 to US$9,489 in 2010, the common people felt little effect. A protest over unemployment in 2010 was met by harsh government retaliation.[27] In May of that same year, an "anti-censorship demonstration" was "brutally put down by the regime."[28] According to Angelique Chrisafis, writing for *The Guardian*, the May 2010 protest "set the tone for cyber-activists to step up their opposition to Ben Ali" and "one of the most sophisticated cyber-censorship regimes in the world."[29] Political and social activism via Social Media was not just something that arose in the wake of Bouazizi's self-immolation.

Guerfali's next generation are young people like 27-year-old Amira Yahyaoui. At age 17, Yahyaoui had her legs broken in front of her high school after participating in a demonstration. By age 18, Yahyaoui had started blogging and had faced Ben Ali's secret service. She also was involved in the failed May 2010 anti-censorship campaign. She helped make the number 404 be a symbol of the movement wither her Twitter name @mira404 in reference to the "404 – page not found" description on blocked internet data. Amira is just one of many bloggers that Chrisafis highlights in her article, "Tunisia's most influential

[25] John Thorne, "Pre-Revolution Tunisians were growing gloomier, polls show," *The National*, Jun. 27, 2011, http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/africa/pre-revolution-tunisians-were-growing-gloomier-poll-shows.

[26] Computer History Museum, "Internet History," (2006), http://www.computerhistory.org/internet_history/index.html.

[27] Thorne, 2011.

[28] Chrisafis, 2011.

[29] Ibid. 2011.

bloggers prepare for historic elections."[30] By starting blogs and leading political discussions and demonstrations, these bloggers helped create an active cyber culture even before the 2011 revolution. They had already expressed an end to government corruption, brutality, and censorship: three banners to wave during the war. They had already built a cyber-framework that revolutionaries could use for coordination and communication.

Social Media During the Revolution

What happened? On December 17, 2010, Mohammad Bouazizi, a twenty-six-year-old fruit vendor, set himself on fire in an act of protest against the government of Tunisia. On the same day, protests began in Sidi Bouzid and rapidly touched off protests elsewhere. Over the rest of December, more protests took place and the government responded by offering a $10 million employment program. Protest continued unabated and police allegedly shot several protestors. On January 2 the 'cyberactivist group "Anonymous" announced Operation Tunisia in solidarity with the protests by striking a number of Tunisian government websites with "direct denial of service" attacks, flooding them with traffic and temporarily shutting them down."[31] The government's fear could be seen as online activists had their Facebook accounts hacked. January 6 saw perhaps 95 percent of Tunisia's 8,000 lawyers strike against the government's brutality against protesters. "Authorities [arrested] a group of bloggers, journalists, activists and a rap singer in a crackdown on dissent" on January 7.[32] On January 13, the International Federation for Human Rights (Paris) counted 66 deaths since the beginning of the unrest while the government maintained

---

[30] Ibid. 2011.

[31] Rifai, 2011.

[32] Ibid.

the death count to be 23. The next day, Tunisian President, Ben Ali, fired the government and enacted a state of emergency. That night, Ben Ali escaped the country via plane and arrived in Saudi Arabia.[33]

Renowned Tunisian activist and blogger, Sami Ben Gharbia, as interviewed by Riz Khan tells of how his website has connections with protestors "on the ground" so to speak in Tunisia.[34] People post videos, photos, or comments that members of the website can then translate into a coherent story of what is going on. People can use their cell phones to film demonstrations and to upload them to social networking websites. Gharbia states that news agencies like Al Jazeera are using this documentation in order to report stories to Western audiences (many Al Jazeera articles do, in fact, post YouTube videos and sometimes even Tweets within their articles). It is this blogger/activist's view that the revolution in Tunisia could not have taken place without the social media. His site is extremely secure, yet the Tunisian government felt so threatened that they had talented hackers hack into Gharbia's website. Nasser Wedaddy, a Mauritanian blogger in the same interview session, notes that the Western media did not pay attention to events in North Africa for many years and that social websites have helped draw Western interest to actions taking place in Tunisia.[35]

[33] Ibid.

[34] Riz Khan, "Is Social Media Driving Reform?" *Al Jazeera*, Jan. 21, 2011, http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/rizkhan/2011/01/20111207589660793.html.

[35] Ibid.

Cyber-Activism Post-Revolution

Evidence of the importance of this amateur news coverage is the 2011 nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize of a Tunisian blogger, Lina Ben Mhenni. She "blogged from ground zero of the revolution in Tunisia and through her accounts and photographs let the world media know about the situation inside the country."[36] Twenty-seven years old at the time of the nomination, Ben Mhenni found out of the news via Twitter. During the revolution, she was one of few bloggers who remained in danger zones; for example, she "was the only blogger in Regeub and Kasserine when security forces massacred people there."[37] Al Jazeera's Yasmine Ryan reports that Ben Mhenni's photos of dead and injured Tunisians informed fellow activists and the global media about such events. She was one of the few activists who used her real name in blogs and tweets, even when Ben Ali was still in power.[38]

Ben Mhenni and the other cyberactivists already discussed continue to be politically active just as they were before and during the Tunisian revolution. Many of these activists went to a conference for Tunisian bloggers in Tunis in October 2011. They discussed new ways to use their internet skills to help an ailing, post-revolution society.[39] On December 22 and 23 of 2012, the Association of Tunisian Bloggers held "an open blogging workshop in Douz."[40] A fellow blogger and friend of Ben Mhenni, Slim Amamou was appointed "minister for youth and sport days after the revolution, when only a week before he had been

---

[36] Yasmine Ryan, "Tunisian blogger becomes Nobel Prize nominee," *Al Jazeera*, Oct. 21, 2011, http://www. aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/2011106222117687872.html.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Chrisafis, 2011.

[40] Samti, 2012.

handcuffed to a chair in the notorious interrogation rooms of Tunisia's interior ministry."[41]

Many other cyber activists ran for elections for their districts. They felt like 30-year-old

Yassine Ayari who is a computer engineer and blogger. He was driven to run for office as he

saw current party leaders as "dinosaurs" who talk but do not listen. Many of the bloggers are

young, like Ayari—Yahyaoui was only 27 in 2011 and other activists running for office are

described as "young." Even Tunisians living outside of the country entered the race. Tarek

Kahlaoui is an assistant professor of art history at Rutgers University, yet he is decided to run

as an independent in the Tunisian elections.

Just a Note

Tunisia is unique because it set the example for other revolutions in North Africa and

the Middle East. Other revolutions are not quite like Tunisia because they were given the

added courage by the fact that Tunisia successfully ousted its dictator within a month. This

means, that any smaller penetration of Social Media must be coupled with the added energy

from Tunisia's (and then Egypt's) example.

Egypt

Statistics

The next major uprising was in Egypt. Egypt has a young population with a median

age of 24.3 years.[42] ICT evidence points to social networking potential in Egypt. Between

November 2009 and November 2010, the number of mobile subscribers grew from 53.68

million to 66.87 million. That is over 10 million new subscribers in one year. In October of

---

[41] Chrisafis, 2011.

[42] CIA World Factbook, "Egypt," https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html. (2011).

2010, there were 65.5 million mobile subscribers—meaning that Egypt saw an increase of over 1 million new subscribers in just one month.[43] This figure is substantial considering Egypt's population is just over 82 million.[44] By the end of July 2010, Egypt's broadband subscribers hit 10.4 million while broadband internet users reached 18.7 million. While only 12 percent of Egyptian internet users use fixed broadband, 88 percent use wireless broadband. Of these wireless users, 87.5 percent use mobile wireless internet while the remainder use satellite.[45] It is important to note, as Howard did, that cell phones and internet are often shared among family and friends and that statistics underestimate true penetration levels.[46]

Facebook is a key site to analyze for Egypt as the Egyptian revolution has been labeled a "Facebook Revolution."[47] Egypt currently has 6.8 million Facebook users.[48] From February to April of 2011, 1.7 million new Facebook accounts were created. This number represents a growth of 33.83 percent over three months. Like with Tunisia, Egypt's growth rank was measured over the previous six, three, and one month before April 2011 and over the first two weeks of April 2011. In order of the preceding sentence's list, Egypt had moved

[43] International Telecommunications Union, "ICT Statistics Newslog – Egypt Mobile Subscriber Base Reaches 67mn," (2011), http://www.itu.int/ITUD/ict/newslog/Egypt+Mobile+Subscriber+Base+Reaches+67mn.aspx.

[44] CIA World Factbook, "Egypt," 2011.

[45] Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, Egypt. 8th World Telecommunication/ITC Indicators Meeting, (2010), http://www.itu.int/md/D10-WTIM8-C-0026/en.

[46] Howard, 2010.

[47] Catherine Smith, "Egypt's Facebook Revolution: Wael Ghonim Thanks the Social Network," Huffington Post, Mar. 23, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/11/egypt-facebook-revolution-wael-ghonim_n_822078.html.

[48] Social Bakers, "Facebook Statistics by Country," Apr. 22, 2011, http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/.

from 53rd to 47th to 29th to 32nd out of 213 countries (slowing down toward the end is expected as the time is shortening between ranks). Creation of Facebook accounts appeared to speed up around the time of the revolutions. One must see if Facebook and other social media have really played a critical role in the Egyptian uprising.

Before and During the Revolution

Writer Even Hill reports on Al Jazeera how, even before the Egyptian revolution began, bloggers were pushing for social change in Egypt and how the government had arrested and harshly sentenced anti-government bloggers and creators of suspicious Facebook pages. The article features a picture of Egyptians using their cell phones to film or photograph Kareem Amer, "the first blogger to face trial for his online writings in Egypt," who was eventually released.[49] Hill discusses how Western journalists follow Facebook and Twitter posts of local journalists and/or activists. These viewings can translate into stories headlined in the West.[50]

Another news report noted how in Egypt "[b]logs, Twitter, Facebook and mobile phone footage have all played some part in mobilising the crowds and getting messages to the wider world. And this despite a draconian crackdown on media and an unprecedented blackout of the internet by the authorities."[51] The percentage of Egyptians connected to the internet during the shutdown read "zero."[52] This was worse than in Tunisia.

---

[49] Even Hill, "When Reporting Becomes Activisim," *Al Jazeera*, Dec. 1, 2010, http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/egyptelection/2010/11/201011272392020625.html.

[50] Ibid.

[51] *Al Jazeera*, "Blogging on the Nile," Feb. 1, 2011, http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/witness/2011/02/20112181938841767.html.

[52] *Associated Press*, "When Egypt Turned Off the Internet."

Egyptians used ICT to aid in their revolution, but what were the results. Protests began on January 25, 2011 on Police Day after a Facebook Page entitled "We Are All Khaled Said" (for an Egyptian blogger beaten to death after writing about police corruption) organized 100,000 protestors when only 50,000 had originally been called for.[53] [54] Protestors could download flyers to print and hand out to others. Two days later, the government shut off the internet. After a few days, the internet was reconnected as the world continued to watch.

Writer Mary Montserrat-Howlett discusses the role of the social media in the recent revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. She gives examples of how ordinary people in these two countries acted as amateur journalists using cell phones and the internet to document and spread details about the revolutions to the world. She states:

> Behind the legendary falls: youth and the Internet. Harnessing the power of social media, young activists were able to mobilize the masses and successfully deploy a democratic uprising against two autocratic regimes. Before Egypt shut off the Internet, blocked Twitter and Facebook and cut off cell phone service, these tools were used to coordinate and spread the word about the demonstrations scheduled for January 25. Without these mass organizing tools, the demonstrations would never have achieved the global reach it did. As Egypt and Tunisia have proven, social media tools can play a significant role as activists battle authoritarian regimes.[55]

Recently, Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns edited a unique work called *Tweets from Tahrir*. This book "brings together a selection of key tweets in a compelling fast-paced narrative, allowing the story of the uprising to be told directly by the people in Cairo's Tahrir

---

[53] Source Watch, "Arab Spring," (2011), http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Arab_Spring.

[54] Mary Bottari, "The Day Egypt Disappeared," PR Watch, Feb. 14, 2011, http://www.prwatch.org/news/2011/02/9929/day-egypt-disappeared.

[55] Mary Montseratt-Howlett, "How Cell Phones Are Turning Citizens Into Ad Hoc Journalists," The Great Apportunity, Feb. 22, 2011, http://www.greatcanadianapportunity.ca/2011/02/how-cell-phones-are-turning-citizens-into-ad-hoc-journalists/.

Square."[56] Megan Garber of *The Atlantic* discusses *Tweets from Tahrir* as part of a bigger

message that social media posts—whether that be video, photos, or text—are disappearing.

The recent social media book shows the importance of tweets, Facebook posts, and blogs in

recording events. These forms of media are a new way to write and record history that add a

more personal, human element to the story. As a result with this loss of data, internet groups

like Storify have been created as a backup to SM sites. Thus, people in and in relation to

Egypt are now looking at the use of SM in the recent revolution and archiving this

information. People are seeing stories from a real-time perspective and saving elements of

the protests and movement that would otherwise have been forgotten or unable to be

expressed in any other way.[57]

Here are a few tweets from *Tweets from Tahrir*:

Adamakary Adam Makary
#jan25 protester's demands: increase in minimum wage, dismissal of interior
ministry, removal of emergency law, shorten presidential term
10:15:08 Jan 25[58]

ManarMohsen Manar Mohsen
Those tweeting about the protest in Egypt, please use the hashtag #jan25 in order to
spread any information.
10:54:41 Jan 25[59]

norashalaby Nora Shalaby
Trying to break the cordon in front of court #Jan25
14:52:46 Jan 25[60]

---

[56] Megan Garber, "A Year After the Egyptian Revolution, 10% of Its Social Media Documentation Is Already Gone," *The Atlantic*, (2012), http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/02/a-year-after-the-egyptian-revolution-10-of-its-social-media-documentation-is-already-gone/253163/.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns, *Tweets from Tahrir*, (New York: OR Books, 2011): 33, Library of Congress Cataloguing-In-Publication Data.

[59] Ibid. 33.

[60] Ibid. 36.

3arabawy Hossam
The shootings around Lazoughli and the snipers firing at protesters yesterday
happened as the army sat and watch.
15:13:15 Jan 30[61]

Gsquare86 Gigi Ibrahim
There r now fighter jets in the air trying to scare the protesters to leave Tahrir sq but
NOTHING will stop the REVOLUTION until MUBARAK OUT
16:00:31 Jan 30[62]

mosaaberizing Mosa'ab Elshamy
We're fighting on the bridge now. They don't exceed 100. We need to hold on for 30
more minutes. #Tahrir
06:06:20 Feb 23[63]

The day after the initial acts of the Egyptian revolution, Wael Ghonim, "a thrity-year-old

marketing executive for Google, had been interviewed" on television.[64] "The following day

he went missing."[65] *Tweets from Tahrir* gives this man's story but more importantly shows

the power of the social media that Ghonim actively used. Everyone looked to Ghonim as a

representative of all missing protesters. "Appeals were circulated online. Prominent figures

including el-Shazly [(the reporter who interviewed Ghonim)] pressed for his release. Finally,

after eleven days spent blindfolded in detention, he was freed" and immediately spoke on

television.[66] This moment represents the protection mechanism of online activists in case

anonymity is purposefully or accidentally revealed.

---

[61] Ibid. 80.

[62] Ibid. 82.

[63] Ibid. 119.

[64] Ibid. 165.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

Finally, on February 11, 2011, President Hosni Mubarak resigned after nearly 30 years in office.[67] The ouster of Mubarak took less than a month to achieve. Tunisia's revolution took about the same amount of time. Egypt's Police Day protest occurred just a week after Ben Ali's departure. These dictators had been in office for decades and were poised to stay. Then the citizens rose up and used all tools at their disposal—including Social Media—to organize and broadcast their experience to the world.

Yemen

Some Statistics

Yemen represents another successful example of social media's use in toppling its respective government. While Yemen is facing American attention and drone attacks, its early successes should be noted. Yemen has a unique experience with social media. Just 2.26 percent of Yemeni people have Facebook (17.8 % of the online population).[68] The country's median age is 18.3 years.[69] Mobile phone users in Yemen represent 370 per 1,000 people, or 37 percent (2009).[70] In other words, Yemen's population is young, over a third have access to a mobile phone and the country is very minimally connected to the internet and Facebook.

Social Media Before, During, and After Yemen Revolution

---

[67] Ibid.

[68] Atiaf Alwazir, "Social Media in Yemen," *Al-Akhbar English*, Dec. 30, 2011, http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/2931.

[69] CIA World Factbook, "Yemen," (2013), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html.

[70] Nation Master, "Media Statistics > Telephones > mobile cellular (per capita) (most recent) by country," (2013), http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/med_tel_mob_cel_percap-telephones-mobile-cellular-per-capita.

Even before the revolution, Yemenis were being politically active via social media. "Yemen Bloggers" is a website for people around the world who have deep knowledge about Yemen. The featured bloggers are Yemenis who either live in Yemen or blog about this country from afar. They choose to write in the English language. HananIshaq (blog name) is a photographer who blogs from the capitol city of Sana'a, Yemen. NoonArabia describes herself as "Yemeni by birth, Egyptian by choice and Arab by identity."[71] She is claims to be the daughter of a diplomat, a political science graduate, and a "natural born activist."[72] WomanfromYemen began her blog in 2008 and switched its focus in 2011 to the revolution in Yemen with "commentaries, short pieces, videos, and photos that document the revolution and raise awareness on current issues."[73]

"Global Voices English" is another international blogging site that reports of many countries—including Yemen. Its page about Yemen provides links to a multitude of articles and blogs about the country, i.e. "US Drones Hit Yemen a Day After Obama Won," "Yemenis Organize Marches to 'Reclaim' Country's Wealth from Regime," and "Yemen Court Summons Investigative Reporter."[74] The site has reports as recent as the bombings in Boston and is funded by Berkman, Omidyar Network™, Open Society Institute, Ford Foundation, MacArthur, and the Media Development Investment Fund. In its "About" section, the site states,

Global Voices is a community of more than 700 authors and 600 translators around the

---

[71] Yemen Bloggers, "About Us," (2013), http://yemenbloggers.wordpress.com/about-us/.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Global Voices Online, "Yemen," (2013), http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/world/middle-east-north-africa/yemen/.

world who work together to bring you reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media.

Millions of people are blogging, podcasting, and uploading photos, videos, and information across the globe, but unless you know where to look, it can be difficult to find respected and credible voices. Our international team of volunteer authors and part-time editors are active participants in the blogospheres they write about on Global Voices.[75]

The site translates data into over thirty different languages and has "an Advocacy website

and network to help people speak out online in places where their voices are censored."[76]

Global Voices was created in 2005 by Rebecca MacKinnon, former CNN bureau chief for

Beijing and Tokyo, and Ethan Zuckerman, an expert on Africa. The project grew out of an

international bloggers conference at Harvard University when both MacKinnon and

Zuckerman were part of Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society.[77]

Highlighting the usefulness of social media, the blogging site draws from resources

like Twitter and Facebook. On the Yemen section, each article link has a blogger's screen

name and link to their Facebook or Twitter feed. Noon Arabia from Yemen Bloggers even

has an article on this site. One article link entitled, "Female Yemeni Writer Harassed for

'Disrespect of Religion,'" shows a photo with the caption, "Samia Al-Agbhari..a Yemeni

writer facing a propaganda attack. Photo shared by Afrah Nasser on Facebook."[78] Another

post, "Protesting Electricity and Water in Yemen," shows a photo of Yemeni protestors

carrying banners while shouting and marching down a street. The caption reads, "Anger

[75] Ibid. "About," 2013.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid. "Yemen," 2013.

march to protest electricity and water cuts in Yemen. Photograph shared on Twitter by @Alaalsam."[79] Other features of the page offer places to simply express oneself or read Tweet-like posts from people across the globe. Global Voices is just one of many blogging sites that include not only Yemeni dialogue, but also discussions and information-sharing on Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries across the Middle East and North Africa.[80] This site represents the recognition of the existence of censorship in a multitude of countries across the world and offers a forum to go around such censorship. It has offered citizen journalists a way to share news that has not been shared by the conventional media and to promote political activism and protest. As evidence of the global media picking up stories of bloggers, Al Jazeera created Yemen Live Blog to give a "play by play" feed of activity in the Yemen revolution. The feed offers YouTube videos and even a Twitter post from the US State Department.[81]

Aside from websites and blogs, individual cyberactivists have received recognition up to, during, and after the Yemeni revolution. Tawakkol Karman, a famous Yemeni blogger, is one such activist who tells helped show the Yemeni revolution to the world. Karmen claims that the revolution in Yemen "began immediately after the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia on 14 January."[82] She says, "As I always do when arranging a demonstration I posted a message on Facebook, calling on people to celebrate the Tunisian uprising on 16 January."[83] On January

---

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] *Al Jazeera*, "Yemen Live Blog," (2011-2013), http://blogs.aljazeera.com/liveblog/topic/yemen-148?page=109.

[82] Tawakkol Karman, "Our revolution's doing what Saleh can't—uniting Yemen," *The Guardian*, Apr. 8, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/08/revolution-saleh-yemen-peace-historic.

[83] Ibid.

16, 2011 she joined a group of students from Sana'a University outside of the Tunisian embassy. They shouted, "Heroes! We are with you the line of fire against the evil rulers! [....] If, one day, a people desires to live, then destiny will answer their call [....] The night must come to an end."[84] The last statement was the battle cry of the Tunisian revolutionaries. The security forces treated these demonstrators badly; but despite this fact, thousands of Yemenis joined in the demonstration.

Karman joined with key leaders from the student body at Sana'a University and also with human rights activist Ahmed Saif Hashid and writer Abdul Bari Tahir. They all decided that they too could bring down their country's leader, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Protests spread and grew and the government purportedly sent out thugs to attack activists and even had Karman arrested. Media reports of Karman's detention as well as pressure from the Yemeni people caused the government to release her after 36 hours. The movement brought in support from tribes and groups all across Yemen—giving name to the title of Karman's *Guardian* article in which she related her involvement in the revolution: "Our revolution's doing what Saleh can't—uniting Yemen."[85] Messages calling to join the student movement reiterated the revolutionaries' argument that the Yemeni people could handle affairs on their own by removing Saleh and establishing a "civil state with the rule of law."[86]

Across Yemen in cities like Ta'az, Aden, and Al-Hadidah, tents sprung up just like in Cairo's Tahrir square. The people created protest vigils and mini-squares of "liberation and

---

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

change" drawing in hundreds of thousands of people.[87] One can recall photos posted to

Facebook and Twitter of Tahrir Square that shows the Egyptian tents and massive crowds.

Karman writes enthusiastically and triumphantly as she talks of the peaceful unification of

peoples against Saleh in a country that has seventy-million weapons. She references

Yemen's six wars in five years and how in the revolution of 2011, the people have

demonstrated peacefully. The only casualties were protestors at the hands of the Saleh

regime. "Even Ma'arab, the most unruly and turbulent province, [...] witnessed its first

peaceful demonstrations."[88] Even after the Friday of Dignity where government snipers

killed over 50 demonstrators and wounded an additional 1,000, young protestors were the

ones who arrested the marksmen without harming them. Karman and other demonstrators

were determined to let the people rise to power—even in the face of Al-Qaeda,

> We cannot let the bogeyman of al-Qaida and extremism be used to stall historic
> change in our country; Saleh invokes this threat in an attempt to cling to power, as if
> he is the only one capable of bringing stability and tackling terrorism. It would be
> foolish to believe his lies.[89]

At the end of her online article, Karman calls for the support of the international body—a

body that stood behind Tunisia and Egypt.[90] Several 2011 Nobel Peace Prize nominees were

Arab Spring bloggers, but Karman at age 32 was chosen and became the youngest winner

and first Arab woman to receive the award.[91]

Karman was one of several Yemenis who took advantage of any internet and

electricity access that Yemen had. She and fellow activists in the capital of Sana'a would sit

---

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Alwazir, 2011.

in coffee shops to charge and use their laptops. In a nearby square, tents were set up to create local Wi-Fi / internet access sites. Recall Howard's argument that ITC is also used by family and friends and that such small access points could actually reach many citizens. Such has been seen to be the case in Yemen where they have used the limited internet access they have to connect to and spread content via social media.[92]

The statistics of illiteracy, internet access, and labor structure all make Yemen a surprising example of success. Atiaf Alwazir writing for Al-Akhbar English warns not to underestimate social media in such a country as Yemen:

> In addition it may seem unimaginable that social media would have an important role to play in Yemen where illiteracy rates reach approximately 45% according to UNDP and where Internet penetration is less than 2%.
>
> However, it is important to note that a large majority of the Yemeni population are youth, by some estimates, close to 60 percent. These youth also represent the majority of users online. While it is important not to exaggerate the impact of this small group of users, it is also important not to disregard their effeet.[93]

Despite the limited resources, one young Yemeni, Mohammad al-Emad, horrowed a camera to take photos of the protests. A friend then uploaded the photos to Facebook. His success at documenting the revolution via social media allowed al-Emad to coordinate efforts to raise money for a professional-grade camera. This instance is just one example of creativity with limited tools.[94] In similar examples, protestors not only documented activity, but also staged demonstrations. One young activist in Yemen, Ala'a, Jarban, has described his experience

---

[92]Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Farea al-Muslimi, "The Social Transformation of Yemen's Youth Revolution," al-Monitor, Apr. 14, 2013, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/04/transformations-youth-yemen.html.

using SM in his own country. He began posting photos of some small groups of demonstrators and asking others to follow along. He spoke to ABC News:

> I asked them to have an idea how we can show the world and the people of Yemen that those people who go out to demonstrate, especially young people are out there to ask for the better for their country and ask for their rights.[95]

He organized protestors by telling them exactly where to meet and told them to wear white or white t-shirts.[96]

So what have been the results of social-media-organized demonstrations, "liberation and change tents," or of citizen journalists using SM to share news? It is important to look at a brief history leading up to the revolution and then an account of the revolution itself.

A Brief History

Before Ali Abdallah Saleh became president of Yemen in 1990, the country was fractured between the northern Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The 1990s saw rioting over food prices, attempted secession of the South by Saleh's vice president, Ali Salim al-Baid, Saleh's declaration of a state of emergency, the crushing and sentencing to death of dissenters (even in absentia), and the bombing of the USS Cole by Al Qaeda in October 2000. In February 2001, voters showed support of extending presidential terms. Saleh partnered with President George W. Bush in November of 2001 to fight terrorism and even expelled 100 terror-related suspects from Yemen in 2002. The remainder of the 2000s saw violent separatist clashes, the death of northern secessionist cleric Hussein al-Houthi, and brutal crushing of protestors. Saleh was

---

[95] Martha Raddatz, "Social Media Fuels Protests in Iran, Bahrain, and Yemen," *ABC News*, Feb. 15, 2011, http://abcnews.go.com/International/social-media-fuels-protests-iran-bahrain-yemen/story?id= 12926081.

[96] Ibid.

reelected in September 2006 and brought more violence against protestors of fuel prices and government corruption. The Yemeni government signed a ceasefire with the Northern Houthis in February 2010.[97]

The Revolution

In January 2011, protests that ousted President Ben Ali in Tunisia spread revolutionary sentiment to Yemen. Karman's account of demonstrators' activities offers a glimpse at the beginnings of the revolution. January protests pushed Saleh to promise not to lengthen his presidency in 2013 or to have his son succeed him. The death of over fifty protestors at the hands of snipers on the Friday of Dignity occurred in March of that year. Soon after, "key general" Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar as well as other regime leaders defected to support protestors.[98] Saleh then imposed a state of emergency because of risk of civil war. April and May saw bloody government reaction, Saleh's continuing hold on power, and the closing of the Sana'a airport after clashes between troops and tribal fighters. By June Saleh had become injured in a rocket attack and was flown to Saudi Arabia for treatment.

In September Saleh returned to Yemen with a mixed reaction by Yemeni citizens.[99] BBC followed Tweets and Facebook posts and wrote a story about Yemenis' reaction in the article "Yemenis react to Saleh's return on social media." The article quoted blogger @Noon Arabia in her appeal to the international community, "Join Yemen in solidarity in a silent protest in cities around the world."[100] BBC also translated an Arabic Tweet from Moh'd

[97] *BBC News*, "Yemen Profile," "Timeline," Nov. 28, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14704951.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] BBC Monitoring, "Yemenis react to Saleh's return on social media," *BBC News*, Sept. 26, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15040501.

Alomary, a Yemeni citizen from Taizz angered at Saleh's return: "It is mad for us to think that would leave of his own accord ..that would be nearly impossible." On Saleh's Facebook page, an article posted about the president's return only had 6 "likes." The Facebook page "The Revolution of the Youth of the Yemeni People" showed continued defiance of the Saleh regime by posting on September 23, "the vanquished, the deposed [Saleh] has arrived in Sanaa airport... and whether he returned or not does not mean a thing to the youth of the revolution."[101] In reaction to the Facebook post, 120 people commented with the majority expressing anger at Saleh's return. BBC noted that intensity of social media posts on the subject revealed that "feelings about the subject run high."[102]

The Transition

In October of 2011, as noted, blogger Tawakkol Karman was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (along with two others from Liberia. During that same month, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution condemning violence and calling for a transition of power. Saleh then stepped down and transferred power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Hadi was elected president in February 2012 in uncontested elections and accepted over $4 billion in foreign aid toward infrastructure costs, security, and the food crisis.

Post-Revolution Dialogue

In March 2013 Yemen held a National Dialogue Conference to discuss issues Yemen faces as it moves forward. Michael May and Dr. Basimah Rowe of Al Arabiya Institute for Studies state,

---

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

The conference consists of nine working groups, each focusing on the issues most critical to Yemen's future: The Southern question, the status of Saada province, national reconciliation, state building, good governance, the armed forces & security, independent & social issues, rights & freedoms, and national development.[103]

May and Rowe assert that Social Media has "blossomed" in Yemen despite its low rank in internet penetration.[104] They reiterate that blogs, Facebook, and Twitter have allowed Yemenis to let outside readers see the depth of issues and realize the sentiments of the differing groups at the National Dialogue Conference. During and since the time of the revolution, Yemeni citizens have created a multitude of new online forums for political discussion. Yemeni Council is one such site that is in Arabic and gives users different links "dedicated to the country's tribes and provinces—a phenomenon unique to Yemen."[105] Facebook has two well-known Yemeni pages that are especially popular among youth: Second Page for Yemen's Change Revolution and Yemen Eye News. Karman, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient, is honored by being the most followed page in Yemen.[106] Social Media has been used during but even before the revolution. It continues to be a force today that grows as Yemen develops technologically and economically.

Libya

In considering Libya, it is important to note that this revolution was tougher and bloodier than the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. The revolution saw a split more like a

---

[103] Michael May and Dr. Basimah Rowe, "Yemen's national dialogue is blossoming online," *Al Arabiya*, Apr. 14, 2013, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/alarabiya-studies/2013/04/14/Yemen-s-national-dialogue-is-blossoming-online-.html.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

civil war and was not just peaceful protestors but actually fighters. Libya's case study will be slightly different because Qaddafi did not try to be diplomatic like other Arab Spring leaders discussed and he already had an extensive censorship and surveillance system in place. This revolution began after the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, so Qaddafi was able to see overthrows of neighboring regimes and could try to learn from those leaders' mistakes.

Libya Statistics

At the end of the first quarter of 2008, Libya passed the 100 percent mark for ICT penetration.[107] However, during the time of the Libyan uprising, Social Bakers Social Media site listed "0" as the number of Facebook users in this country.[108] The median age in Libya is 27.1 years and 18.6 percent of the population are between 15 and 24 years of age. The total literacy rate is 89.2 percent while the literacy rate for males is 95.6 percent (female literacy rate is above 80 percent). The labor force is divided by: 17 percent agriculture, 23 percent industry, and 59 percent services. A 2004 estimate put the unemployment rate at 30 percent. Industry and exports are mostly related to petroleum and raw materials. In 2011, Libya had a GDP growth rate of -59.7. Seventy-eight percent of the population is urban.[109] In 2005, the Libyan government began a program to integrate ICT with education and to increase access to the internet.[110]

Social Media Crackdown

[107] International Telecommunications Union, "Libya Becomes First African Nation to Pass 100% Penetration Level," July 4, 2008, http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/newslog/Libya+Becomes+First+African+Nation+To+Pass+100+Penetration+Level.aspx.

[108] Social Bakers, "Facebook Statistics by Country," Apr. 22, 2011.

[109] CIA World Factbook, "Egypt," 2013.

[110] British Council, "Skills Around the World: Libya," "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policies," (2013), http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-libyan-country-education-ict.htm.

Before the revolution in 2011, the Libyan government was clearly aware of the threat of Social Media and ICT. Because of better relations with the West due to its surrender of its weapons of mass destruction program, France comfortable sold a surveillance system called Amesys to Libya in 2007. That same year, President Sarkozy welcomed Qaddafi to France—the first time for the dictator in more than thirty years. France even sent engineers to help set up the program and helped make it fully operational by 2009. Margaret Croker and Paul Sonne of the *Wall Street Journal* note, "For months, the agents monitored the journalist's emails and Facebook messages via the Amesys tools, printing out messages and storing them in a file that The Wall Street Journal recovered in an abandoned electronic-surveillance headquarters in Tripoli."[111] The *Wall Street Journal* staff found a surveillance headquarters in Tripoli that had a room full of stacks and stacks of folders. Each folder tracked information and emails of many journalists and others who were deemed dangerous to the regime. One such journalist, Khaled Mehiri, began to do online journalism in 2004 after the internet had started up in Libya. His Facebook posts and emails were analyzed by the government. They tracked his many stories with *Al Jazeera* about government corruption in his country. He was summoned before the court several times for his activity but was aided by human rights lawyers. After protests began on February 11, 2011, Mehiri "covered the protests" for a few days. However, he went incognito after fearing that Qaddafi would send troops to Benghazi.[112]

Apparently Libyan law professor, Faiza al Basha, emailed the U.S. State Department and members at the United Nations to help open access to Google Earth in Libya so that

[111] Margaret Croker and Paul Sonne, "Life Under the Gaze of Gadhafi's Spies," *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 14, 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203764804577056230832805896.html.

[112] Ibid.

protestors could see where troops were. Mehiri and Basha are just a few examples of

activists who worked to reveal corruption of the Qaddafi regime and faced stiff government

retaliation. Amesys was especially effective at its surveillance—even gaining people's

Social Media passwords.[113] Qaddafi was also able to see the results of the revolutions in the

countries on either side of his own: Egypt and Tunisia. He was determined to use his

military, political, and technological strength to crush the revolutionaries and he had years of

experience at brutality.

Revolutionary Social Media

During the time of Libya's Arab Spring moment, Libyans used social media to cover

protests and events. "One of the most popular Twitter handles that covers the Libyan

revolutions is Feb17Libya."[114] Libya Facebook News and several pages just about Libyan

news and called "Libya," have been used as well to cover revolution events.[115] CNN also

made a blog feed for the purposes of covering Libya in 2011. YouTube videos have showed

protesting crowds as well as released information about how "Muammar Gaddafi's Eldest

Son Mohammed Surrenders to Opposition Forces."[116] On Twitter, users tweeted messages

like the one by the Libyan Youth Movement on @ShababLibya, "#qaddafi is at war with

#Libya as we speak, helicopters, troops, thugs, security, & foreign mercenaries all against

unarmed protestors #Feb17."[117]

[113] Ibid.

[114] BostInno, "The Libyan Revolution Through Social Media," Streetwise Media, Aug. 22, 2011, http://bostinno.streetwise.co/2011/08/22/the-libyan-revolution-through-social-media/.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Molly McHugh, "Libya Inspired by Egyptian Revolution, Uses Social Media in Midst of Protests," Digital Trends, Feb. 17, 2011, http://www.digitaltrends.com/international/libya-inspired-by-egyptian-

One can recall images of of Qaddafi's body being drug through the streets after he was killed. After that moment, Social Media exploded with activity. On October 20, 2011, one Twitter user referred to Qaddafi's death by saying "God is Great."[118] One feed, @FreeBenghazi, predicted, "Ben Ali exiled; Mubarak imprisoned; Gaddafi dead. Following the trajectory, Ali Abdullah Saleh will end up in tiny lil pieces."[119] One Facebook user sought on-the-ground knowledge by asking, "Guys, is what this photo claims true?"[120]

Libyan Revolution Timeline

On February 15 and 16 of 2011, police arrest human rights activist Fethi Tarbel and people go to the streets of Benghazi in demonstration. Forces against Qaddafi then seize the city of Misrata and force out Qaddafi's forces on February 24. Two days later, the United Nation Security Council "imposes sanctions on Qaddafi and his family, and refers the crackdown on rebels to the International Criminal Court"; the European Union soon approves sanctions.[121] March 5 sees the declaration of the rebel's National Transition Council (NTC) the legitimate leader of Libya. The U.N. Security council creates a no-fly zone over Libya and authorizes military action to protect civilians on March 17. The first allied strike on Benghazi occurs on March 19. From April to October, Libya sees the death of several members of Qaddafi's family including his sons. His wife and daughter flee to Algeria. Leaders of France, Britain, and the United States support the NTC and call for the

revolution-uses-social-media-in-midst-of-protests/.

[118] BBC Monitoring, "Libyan social media jubilation," *BBC News*, Oct. 21, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15402273.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] *Reuters*, "Eight-month Struggle: Timeline of Libyan revolution," *Al Arabiya*, Oct. 20, 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/20/172797.html.

surrender of Qaddafi supporters. The rebels take over several Qaddafi strongholds and NTC

representatives meet in France to discuss transition in Libya. Sanctions are lessoned as

rebels win throughout the country and Qaddafi is captured and killed on October 20.[122]

Algeria

An outside observer might think that Algerians would jump on the Arab Spring

bandwagon and try to overthrow their government. This was not the case. Algeria has the

technological resources for a people-led revolution, but this case study argues that this

country has already had its Arab Spring and remains unmoved as a result.

Statistics

Bordering Libya to the West is Algeria. This country has many of the factors that

would give rise to a possibly successful revolution. Its median age is 28.1, 18.9 percent are

between the ages of 15 and 24, and 46.7 percent of their total population are below the age of

24. Only fourteen percent of laborers are in agriculture while 38 percent are in industry and

48 percent are in service industry jobs. Facebook penetrates a moderate 12.5 percent of the

population and 97.5 percent of people online. Sixty-six percent of the population is urban.

These statistics show a population that has access to social media and is not largely isolated

in rural, underdeveloped communities. A high 69.9 percent literacy rate shows a moderately

educated population.[123] With the ingredients for idealism, energy, and activism, why has

Algeria been different from other countries in the region?

---

[122] Ibid.

[123] CIA World Factbook, "Algeria," (2013), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html.

Algeria has been seen to be the country that remained quiet during all of the

revolutions. One possible explanation is that Algeria has already achieved great progress

long before Tunisia and Egypt. Algeria experienced a brutal civil war in the 1990s against

radical Islamists. Algerians rightfully feel nervous about the activities of surrounding

populaces, but may offer some hope.[124] Although the country experienced widespread

violence in the past, they now may be "on the verge of democratic maturity."[125] Many

leaders of the key political parties have resigned and/or been replaced with younger

individuals. While this may be a simple internal reshuffling of the political sphere, it could be

a sign of more to come. A *concorde civile* (civil truce) has helped reduce terrorism (aside

from the recent flair up).

The government is developing an extensive infrastructure with the construction of a

metro and tramways in Algiers. The railways are being modernized and agriculture is rising

out of an economic slump. The previous year's parliamentary elections saw the election of

nearly one third (32%) of seats going to women. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has

purportedly said "our generation must leave for the next one to take the reins of the

country."[126] While other North African and Middle Eastern countries have seen Islamists rise

to power, Algeria offers an example where the country accepted Islamism and then

eventually moved away from radical leaders.

[124] Joyce Hackel, 'Why Algerians Shudder at the Mention of "Arab Spring,"' *The World*, Feb. 7, 2013, http://www.theworld.org/2013/02/algeria-arab-spring/.

[125] Abdelkader Abderrahmane, "Algeria: Arab Spring or Political Summer?" *All Africa*, Mar. 5, 2013, http://allafrica.com/stories/201303050297.html?viewall=1.

[126] Ibid.

Egypt, for example, offers this hope as police have now began demonstrations against the newly elected Islamist government. They do not like having to fight for the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated leadership (they were strongly against this group when Mubarak was President). They do not want to have to fight protestors when such action has further destroyed police popularity and has caused police deaths. These executers of the law feel little protection and are simply done with fighting. Police Day and a fight against police brutality began the Egyptian revolution in the first place. The fact that police are now standing up against the Islamist government could be an encouraging sign.[127]

---

[127] Aya Batrawy, "Egypt's police protest against Muslim Brotherhood," *Associated Press*, Mar. 8, 2013, http://news.yahoo.com/egypts-police-protest-against-muslim-brotherhood-163059363.html.

Section III: Update: Someone Liked Your Photo

Measuring Liberalization in the Arab Spring: Analysis

After looking at Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria, some analysis is necessary. Revolutions and government response have shown the power of social media. Social media has lingered as a forum for political discourse even after the revolutions. One must delve into the details about the Arab Spring and Social Media and measure the liberalizing effects.

Youth

All of the countries studied have had young populations. As mentioned earlier, Zakaria has pointed to youth as a major factor in inciting revolutions throughout the Middle East. Algeria, with a fairly young population, may not have joined in the Arab Spring, but this country still had its revolutionary past. Social media attracts the young. Approximately 53.3 percent of bloggers are between the ages of 21 and 35. An additional 20.2 percent of bloggers are below the age of 20.[128] Throughout the statistics about cyber activists in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, the Social Media activists were almost all around or below the age of 30. Photos and videos of protests, Nobel Prize candidates and/or winners in Tunisia and Yemen, arrested bloggers—all were young people. Even at blogging conferences such as the one attended by Lina Ben Mhenni show a photo of twenty-somethings with their laptops.[129] These youth have a memory of a regime put in place during their parents' youth. They have come of age when internet entered the country. Their parents did not grow up with access to such useful tools as ICT and Social Media. These activists have faced the

---

[128] Sysomos Incorporated, "Inside Blog Demographics," Jun. 2010, http://www.sysomos.com/reports/bloggers/.

[129] Ryan, 2011.

brutality of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Saleh, or Qaddafi. The evidenced points to youth, with their energy, activism, and idealism, inciting and winning these revolutions.

The exception is Libya where rebels took arms and fought a bloody war and needed military help. Even in Libya, though, Social Media was used to attract international attention. CNN even made a blog for Libya's revolutionaries.[130] As the revolution progressed and gained more international coverage, Paris invited the NCT to discuss transition. President Sarkozy of France and David Cameron from Britain both cheered on the rebels. President Obama "[called] for the last of Qaddafi's loyalist forces to surrender as he [announced] the return of the U.S. ambassador to Tripoli."[131] Even though Social Media was not able to perfectly mobilize Libyans, this tool was able to draw attention from stronger nations to provide resources and protection to the rebels. Result: Libya ousted and killed a decades-ruling dictator.

Speed

Besides being a chosen-weapon of energetic youth, Social Media has been important for its catalyst-like effect. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs have all added extreme momentum to revolutions. These activists did something their parents could not do: they won a successful revolution. While each case gave past examples of demonstrations and protests against the government—whether that be taking to the streets or writing an political post online—none of these past actions had any effect on the government. Governments just either became more brutal in their censorship activities and treatment of political activists or they simply continued in their corrupt ways. Mubarak's forces firing on protestors would have been ignored by the international community in the past. Demonstrators would have

---

[130] BostInno. 2011.

[131] *Reuters*, "Eight-month struggle," 2011.

been less and would have given up sooner. But because of Social Media, revolutionaries were able to marshal higher numbers of people in exponentially faster times.

Look to Egypt. They originally called for 50,000 protestors but assembled 100,000. This protest in Tahrir Square was not just a one-day activity or even a one-city activity. The demonstration drew the attention of a nation and sparked protests throughout the Middle East. Recall Yemen: the protestors began by called for the fall of Muharak and praising the ouster of Ben Ali. These different revolutions/protests began within weeks of each other and all looked to each other. This would not have been possible without technology like Social Media. Blogs and Twitter feeds were faster than the conventional media. News outlets like CNN, Al Jazeera, and BBC were using Facebook, YouTube, and blogs in order to cover stories. Cyberactivists were way ahead at getting the news out to the rest of the world. These protestors were the ones who decided what news was spread instead of the media stations themselves. It was people power. It was Social Media power.

The self-immolation of Mohammad Bouazizi occurred on December 17, 2010. Yemen's revolution was sparked on January 14, 2011—the same day that Ben Ali left for Saudi Arabia. The Tahrir Square protests began on January 25, 2011 and Muharak resigned on February 11—less than a month after the revolution began. Libya saw protests as early as February 15 of that year and Qaddafi was dead on October 20. It is no coincidence that these countries rose up against their dictators all around the same time. Tunisia clearly marked the beginning of the Arab Spring as other countries all rose up after Tunisia. The countries that rose up the earliest seemed to have faired better. Libyan did not begin to fight until February after both the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions had succeeded. Yemen was able to pressure Saleh to step down but Libya needed intervention.

It is hard to imagine these revolutions occurring so fast without ICT. Information could simply not spread as fast with conventional media and with phones alone. Cell phones and laptops made communication immediate and possible from anywhere. Communication was also much safer when anonymity was kept. Tunisians and Egyptians could plan tactics with people in another city or even talk to nationals abroad. The world could watch the events play-by-play on YouTube and Twitter. Governments could not easily hide atrocities and corruption as activists immediately posted videos and narration online for all to see. Once the information is out there, there is no erasing it or pulling it back. Mubarak may have turned off the internet, but countries like the United States, France, and others knew about this event. These foreign states pressured Mubarak until he gave in and turned the internet back on. Qaddafi was determined to kill every last rebel and cared nothing about what the world thought. Because of the success of Tunisia and Egypt and their broadcasting via Social Media, Western attention was already on the region. They did not ignore Libya but watched closely. The United Nations Security Council decided not to see Qaddafi's carnage as a sovereignty issue but as a human rights issue. They, along with NATO and stepped in to help the Libyan rebels. Qaddafi seemed to not care about making concessions as the Ben Ali, Saleh, and Mubarak did. He also saw that his fate would not be good as Mubarak was arrested and Ben Ali had to flee his country. He gave into brutality and so the war lasted months longer. Perhaps Syria will be similar. Would all of these events have turned out this way without Social Media? SM seems to have been a major asset at the very least.

Liberalization

Recalling theory, this study sees liberalization as a move toward democracy and democratic institutions. The removal of a dictator and holding new elections is an event

worthy of note. Besides these outward forms of liberalization, there are internal evidences of liberalization as well. If society seems to be working together, such as in Yemen, or people are calling for things like freedom, rights, equality, etc. ...these are all indication that liberalization of society's psyche is occurring/has occurred. When people are not afraid to share their opinions openly or become more involved in the governmental process by voting or running for office, this occurrence is also a factor in measuring a move toward democratization. Also, one caveat is that countries may take a step backward or face a bumpy road as they liberalize. Samuel Huntington in his famous work *The Third Wave*, notes that countries face "transition problems" in their move toward democracy."[132] Huntington notes that this does not mean that countries are doomed if they backtrack. Instead, it is just part of the process.

In Tunisia, monuments have made in honor of Bouazizi. One is a three-story tall photograph with a poster nearby reading, "Revolution of Freedom and Dignity."[133] Entrepreneurs can now flourish. One pastry shop owner, Rekaya Ferid, says that under Ben Ali, she had to be careful because if anyone became too successful, Ben Ali and his wife would simply "come and take whatever they wanted."[134] Alia Mahmoud, another Tunisia, has began a non-profit organization called Maghreb Enterprise Development Initiative (MEDI) to encourage and develop small-business owners.[135]

---

[132] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave*, (Norman: Univ of Oklahoma Press, 1993): 209.

[133] Lily-Hayes Kaufman, "Tunisia: After the Revolution," World Policy Blog, Jan. 18, 2012, http://www. worldpolicy.org/blog/2012/01/18/tunisia-after-revolution.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid.

Not only is this opening of the free market in Tunisia a show of a move away from governmental control and dominance, the fact that women are involved in this move is striking. As a Muslim country, this is an important part of liberalization—especially when the government went to Islamists in the polls. These Islamists still remain in office and won a confidence vote in March 2013. The restructured the government to diversify their cabinet after the assassination of the secularist opposition leader Chokri Belaid.[136] The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize of Tunisian blogger Mina Ben Mhenni offers further hope of liberalization as she is a woman who has gained wide support throughout her country. These success by females offer hope at gender equality. Social Media itself helps distances people from the fact of someone's sex as people are behind their computer screens instead of speaking to someone face to face. One can imagine how online users can become more open to listening to a wide array of people when just text is floating before their eyes. Online posts can help someone read an opinion and think about it instead of being put off by yelling, gender, body language, etc.

Yemen and Egypt have had similar experiences. Recall the intermingling of men and women in protests throughout these countries. This advent has empowered women like Karman who is part of a an Islamist party yet is allowed to speak for women's rights and for freedom despite what here party sometimes says. Look to Yemen as citizens from different tribes and regions came together and saw that they could cooperate for the good of their country. When people work together, these has an equalizing and liberalizing effect. People see that women can shout just as loud as men and that someone from one region can be

[136] Tarek Amara, "Tunisian lawmakers set timetable for constitution, elections," *Reuters*, Mar 15, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/15/us-tunisia-constitution-idUSBRE92E0P320130315.

chanting the same slogan as someone from a different area. And Social Media was an enabling factor to this cooperation.

Social Media helped organize the protest and helped people talk long before revolutions began. With the anonymity, women as well as men could easily remain disguised behind a screen name and still be heard. People can talk as equals no matter their background and they can be empowered by free speech without repercussions. Sites like Twitter and Facebook allow citizens to see that many others seek to end government corruption and to elect leaders that will help with rising food prices and youth unemployment. Social Media helps people be politically active even if the government does not give them real power in elections or other political activity. Online forums bypass government propaganda, biased media, and holes in the news and allow citizens discursive space to express political goals and the events that these common people feel are important. This sort of situation was impossible before. Underground newspapers were not enough. Telephone calls could not show images of events. News outlets would ignore people's pleas to report certain events. The digital world and its mobilization of thousands and even millions of people changed all of that.

In considering the election of a Muslim Brotherhood candidate in Egypt, this does not make liberalization hopeless. After the Islamist Mohamed Morsi won presidential elections in July of 2012, he began "granting himself broad powers."[137] While Egypt's people seek a constitutional democracy, Morsi has helped fellow Islamists gain power and even gave

[137] David D. Kirkpatrick and Mayy El Sheikh, "Citing Deadlock, Egypt's Leader Seizes Power and Plans Mubarak Retrial," New York Times, Nov. 22, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/23/world/middleeast/egypts-president-morsi-gives-himself-new-powers.html?_r=0.

himself power over judicial authority.[138] Amid protests, he backtracked. By December 2012, a constitution had been approved—though not perfect. This constitution does have bills passed by the legislature go to the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) to check constitutionality. While the SCC had earlier dissolved the lower chamber of the legislature, this was because it deemed the elected body as amiss due to one democratic "technicality."[139] At least the new government is still a move away from the old dictatorship.

The fact that Egypt seeks a $4.8 billion loan is telling of Morsi's willingness to make concessions in order to help his country's ailing economy.[140] As tourism has declined, Egypt's tourism minister Hisham Zaazou has stated that, "Bikinis are welcome in Egypt and booze is still being served" despite Salafists' opposition.[141] He further reiterated that the government has spoken with Salafists groups and that "now they understand the importance of the tourism sector," but a few remain stubborn.[142] Even Morsi's attempt to raise taxes on alcohol failed due to pressure and criticism from the tourism sector. The fact that Morsi is backing down from his initial power-grabbing shows the liberalization of the country. The people's voice really matters. *E pluribus unum*.

In Yemen voters placed their ballots in February 2012 for a new government. They elected Vice President Abdurabu Mansur Hadi as President. One voter, Mohammed al-

---

[138] Ibid.

[139] Zaid Al-Ali and Nathan J. Brown, "Egypt's constitution swings into action," *Foreign Policy*, Mar 27, 2013, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/27/egypt_s_constitution_swings_into_action.

[140] Lesley Wroughton, "IMF, Egypt say working to reach loan deal in 'coming weeks,'" *Reuters*, Apr 21, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/21/us-imf-egypt-idUSBRE93K0GH20130421.

[141] Amena Bakr, "Booze and bakinis are welcome in Egypt says tourism minister," *Reuters*, Mar 5, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/05/us-egypt-tourism-idUSBRE94407A20130505.

[142] Ibid.

Rowdy, said that this was "the first time people in Yemen are electing somebody on their own, without being influenced by political parties."[143] Besides this structural facade of liberalism, underneath the surface is true liberalization. As stated before, the revolution changed Yemen's psyche. The revolution saw children taking political positions contradictory to their family elders. Women participated and continue to participate in great numbers in the political movement. Differing tribes and Yemenis from different regions were able to sit down together and plan protests.[144] People used Social Media together and society came together to blur lines of sex, cultural, or political background.

In October of 2012 voters elected Ali Zidan as Prime Minister. He apparently served as a diplomat under Qaddafi but defected in 1980. He is an independent and considered to be liberal, although a Muslim Brotherhood-associated party supports him. He supposedly was key in influence Sarkozy to support the rebels against Qaddafi. Holding elections is a crucial step in liberalization. Zidan being called "liberal" is also encouraging.[145] Since the fall of Qaddafi and elections, there has been a surge of freedom of expression. Citizens have graffitied walls with caricatures of the former dictator and with political slogans. While this may sound vulgar, it is actually a celebration and exercise of new freedoms. "At least 120 print outlets have sprung up, as well as fresh alternatives on TV and radio."[146] People have shown their support for freedom of expression and freedom to choose lifestyle.

[143] Mohammed Jamjoon, "Yemen holds presidential election with one candidate," CNN, Feb. 22, 2012, http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/21/world/meast/yemen-elections.

[144] al-Muslimi, 2011.

[145] BBC News, "Ali Zidan elected Libya's new prime minister," Oct. 14, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19943593.

[146] Jamal Dajani, "Libya: Building a free media," Listening Post, Al Jazeera, Oct 31, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2012/10/2012103111519158691.html.

Conclusion

Despite what outsiders may think, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya have all experienced liberalization since their revolutions. Algeria had already made liberal advancements by this time. One might ask, "Was Social Media the key factor in the success of these revolutions and in liberalizing these countries?" The answer is that Social Media played a major role. Activists were already present, but Social Media gave people anonymity, confidence, extended coordination power, networking advantages, speed, and international attention. Without such technology, it is hard to see how such mobilization could have been possible. Speed is an absolute necessity. The countries that coordinated the fastest succeeded the fastest and with the least difficulty. Libya joined late and faced a heavy surveillance mechanism with a shameless leader to top it off. Libya needed help while the others only needed outside pressure—they were able to handle the actual struggle themselves.

One could argue that Social Media itself has a liberalizing effect on an individual. Being on the internet allows a person some amount of access to information that is different from government propaganda. People can confront new ideas for themselves and learn political about political theories. People get used to free speech and bypassing government blocks to move more freely. A computer screen can hide identities so that everyone is equal. If people want to decide something, there is no leader unless everyone designates one together either formally or informally. The online world involves a democratic process. When compared with the real world, it is hard to accept the constraints of life created by the government. Buying mobile phones with internet connectivity or buying PCs is part of the government opening up to liberalization via the economy. Mixing the liberalizing effect of

ITC and Social Media with the softening of government creates an environment ripe for political transition.

Even the governments themselves admitted the power of Social Media as they tried to censor citizens or cut off the internet completely. Why arrest cyber-activists or block certain websites? Why hack into Facebook or Twitter accounts if these sites are weak or harmless? Sudan, for example has learned from the revolutions, and has harshly censored any type of media: conventional or otherwise. Forces have crackdown on protestors recording demonstrations.[147] Social Media is such a powerful tool for organization and spread of political ideas. Citizens get to choose what stories are posted and broadcasted. Citizens are the ones who are writing the stories. If someone were to read Twitter feeds or blogs, they would likely be able to gain a more accurate depiction of different societies' sentiments about certain issues.

What is behind this digital force? People with ideas. Totalitarian rulers may come into power, but power in numbers seems to eventually change the status quo. One cannot underestimate the strength of common citizens when they have technology at their disposal. As the Arab Spring is not over, one must see how the struggle plays out. Will more dictators be overthrown? Will this snowball effect spread to the rest of Africa and to other Middle Eastern countries? Will Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria continue to liberalize and eventually become stable democracy? Only time will tell. But maybe Social Media gave these people a taste they will never forget.

---

[147] Radio Dabanga, "Sudan: Journalists Protest Against Increased Censorship in Sudan," *All Africa*, July 3, 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201207040022.html.

Footnotes

1. Abderrahmane, Abdelkader. "Algeria: Arab Spring or Political Summer?" *All Africa*, Mar. 5, 2013, http://allafrica.com/stories/201303050297.html?viewall=1.

2. Adam, Megan and Robert Hackett. "Is Media Democritization a Social Movement?" *Peace Review* 11 (Mar 1999): 125-131.

3. Al-Ali, Zaid and Nathan J. Brown. "Egypt's constitution swings into action." *Foreign Policy*, Mar 27, 2013. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/27/egypt_s_constitution_swings_into_action.

4. *Al Jazeera*. "Blogging on the Nile." Feb. 1, 2011. http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/witness/2011/02/20112181938841767.html.

5. *Al Jazeera*. "Yemen Live Blog." (2011-2013). http://blogs.aljazeera.com/liveblog/topic/yemen-148?page=109.

6. al-Muslimi, Farea. "The Social Transformation of Yemen's Youth Revolution." *al-Monitor*. Apr. 14, 2013. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/04/transformations-youth-yemen.html.

7. Alwazir, Atiaf. "Social Media in Yemen." *Al-Akhbar English*, Dec. 30, 2011. http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/2931.

8. Amara, Tarek. "Tunisian lawmakers set timetable for constitution, elections." *Reuters*, Mar 15, 2013. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/15/us-tunisia-constitutionidUSBRE92E0P320130315.

9. *Associated Press*. "When Egypt Turned Off the Internet." Source Watch. "Arab Spring." (2011). http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Arab_Spring.

10. Bakr, Amena. "Booze and bakinis are welcome in Egypt says tourism minister." *Reuters*, Mar 5, 2013. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/05/us-egypt-tourismidUSBRE94407A20130505.

11. Batrawy, Aya. "Egypt's police protest against Muslim Brotherhood." *Associated Press*, Mar. 8, 2013. http://news.yahoo.com/egypts-police-protest-against-muslim-brotherhood-163059363.html.

12. BBC Monitoring. "Libyan social media jubilation." *BBC News*, Oct. 21, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15402273.

13. BBC Monitoring. "Yemenis react to Saleh's return on social media." *BBC News*, Sept. 26, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15040501.

14. *BBC News*. "Ali Zidan elected Libya's new prime minister." Oct. 14, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19943593.

15. *BBC News*. "Yemen Profile." "Timeline." Nov. 28, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14704951.

16. BostInno. "The Libyan Revolution Through Social Media." Streetwise Media, Aug. 22, 2011. http://bostinno.streetwise.co/2011/08/22/the-libyan-revolution-through-social-media/.

17. Bottari, Mary. "The Day Egypt Disappeared." PR Watch. Feb. 14, 2011. http://www.prwatch.org/news/2011/02/9929/day-egypt-disappeared.

18. British Council. "Skills Around the World: Libya." "Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policies." (2013). http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-libyan-country-education-ict.htm.

19. Budde Comm. "Tunisia – Telecoms, Mobile, Broadband and Forecasts." (2010). http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Tunisia-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html.

20. Chrisafis, Angelique. "Tunisia's most influential bloggers prepare for historic elections." *The Guardian*, Oct. 22, 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/22/tunisian-elections-bloggers.

21. CIA World Factbook. "Algeria." (2013). https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html.

22. CIA World Factbook. "Egypt." (2011). https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html.

23. CIA World Factbook. "Egypt." (2013). https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ly.html.

24. CIA World Factbook. "Tunisia." (2011). https://www.cia.gov/library/puhlications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html.

25. CIA World Factbook. "Yemen." (2013). https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html.

26. Computer History Museum. "Internet History." (2006). http://www.computerhistory.org/internet_history/index.html.

27. Croker, Margaret and Paul Sonne. "Life Under the Gaze of Gadhafi's Spies." *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 14, 2011. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203764804577056230832805896.html.

28. Dabanga, Radio. "Sudan: Journalists Protest Against Increased Censorship in Sudan," *All Africa*, July 3, 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201207040022.html.

29. Dajani, Jamal. "Libya: Building a free media," Listening Post, *Al Jazeera*, Oct 31, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2012/10/2012103111519158691.html.

30. Davies, Simon. "Tunisia Grants a 3G License." Cellular News, Sept. 23, 2010. http://www.cellular-news.com/story/45560.php?s=h.

31. Gambill, Brent. "Social Media." PowerPoint. (April 2013). Ouachita Baptist University.

32. Garber, Megan. "A Year After the Egyptian Revolution, 10% of Its Social Media Documentation Is Already Gone." *The Atlantic*. (2012). http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/02/a-year-after-the-egyptian-revolution-10-of-its-social-media-documentation-is-already-gone/253163/.

33. Ghonim, Wael. *Revolution 2.0*. (New York: Houghton, 2012).

34. Global Voices Online. "Yemen." (2013). http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/world/middle-east-north-africa/yemen/.

35. Hackel, Joyce. 'Why Algerians Shudder at the Mention of "Arab Spring."' *The World*, Feb. 7, 2013. http://www.theworld.org/2013/02/algeria-arab-spring/.

36. Hill, Even. "When Reporting Becomes Activisim." *Al Jazeera*, Dec. 1, 2010. http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/egyptelection/2010/11/201011272392020625.html.

37. Howard, Philip N. *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy – Information Technology and Political Islam*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 18-215.

38. Huntington, Samuel. *The Third Wave*. (Norman: Univ of Oklahoma Press, 1993): 209.

39. Idle, Nadia and Alex Nunns. *Tweets from Tahrir*, (New York: OR Books, 2011): 33, Library of Congress Cataloguing-In-Publication Data.

40. International Telecommunications Union. "ICT Statistics Newslog – Egypt Mobile Subscriber Base Reaches 67mn." (2011). http://www.itu.int/ITUD/ict/newslog/Egypt+Mobile+Subscriber+Base+Reaches+67 mn.aspx.

41. International Telecommunications Union. "Libya Becomes First African Nation to Pass 100% Penetration Level." July 4, 2008. http://www.itu.int/ITUD/ict/newslog/Libya+Becomes+First+African+Nation+To+Pass+100+Penetration+Level.aspx.

42. Jamjoon, Mohammed. "Yemen holds presidential election with one candidate." *CNN*, Feb. 22, 2012. http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/21/world/meast/yemen-elections.

43. Karman, Tawakkol. "Our revolution's doing what Saleh can't—uniting Yemen." *The Guardian*, Apr. 8, 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/08/revolution-saleh-yemen-peace-historic.

44. Kaufman, Lily-Hayes. "Tunisia: After the Revolution." World Policy Blog, Jan. 18, 2012. http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2012/01/18/tunisia-after-revolution.

45. Khan, Riz. "Is Social Media Driving Reform?" *Al Jazeera*, Jan. 21, 2011. http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/rizkhan/2011/01/201112075896660793.html.

46. Kirkpatrick, David D. and Mayy El Sheikh. "Citing Deadlock, Egypt's Leader Seizes Power and Plans Mubarak Retrial." *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/23/world/middleeast/egypts-president-morsi-gives-himself-new-powers.html?_r=0.

47. May, Michael and Dr. Basimah Rowe. "Yemen's national dialogue is blossoming online." *Al Arabiya*, Apr. 14, 2013. http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/alarabiya-studies/2013/04/14/Yemen-s-national-dialogue-is-blossoming-online-.html.

48. McHugh, Molly. "Libya Inspired by Egyptian Revolution, Uses Social Media in Midst of Protests." Digital Trends, Feb. 17, 2011. http://www.digitaltrends.com/international/libya-inspired-by-egyptian-revolution-uses-social-media-in-midst-of-protests/.

49. Ministry of Communication & Information Technology. Egypt. 8th World Telecommunication/ITC Indicators Meeting. (2010). http://www.itu.int/md/D10-WTIM8-C-0026/en.

50. Montseratt-Howlett, Mary. "How Cell Phones Are Turning Citizens Into Ad Hoc Journalists." The Great Apportunity, Feb. 22, 2011. http://www.greatcanadianapportunity.ca/2011/02/how-cell-phones-are-turning-citizens-into-ad-boc-journalists/.

51. Nation Master. "Media Statistics > Telephones > mobile cellular (per capita) (most recent) by country." (2013). http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/med_tel_mob_cel_percap-telephones-mobile-cellular-per-capita.

52. Raddatz, Martha. "Social Media Fuels Protests in Iran, Bahrain, and Yemen." *ABC News*, Feb. 15, 2011. http://abcnews.go.com/International/social-media-fuels-protests-iran-bahrain-yemen/story?id=12926081.

53. *Reuters*. "Eight-month Struggle: Timeline of Libyan revolution." *Al Arabiya*, Oct. 20, 2011. http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/20/172797.html.

54. Rifai, Ryan. "Timeline: Tunisia's Uprising." *Al Jazeera*, Jan. 23, 2011. http://English. aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/Tunisia/2011/01/201114142223827361.html.

55. Ryan, Yasmine. "Tunisian blogger becomes Nobel Prize nominee." *Al Jazeera*, Oct. 21, 2011. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/20111062221176887872. html.

56. Samti, Farah. "Tunisian Bloggers Discuss Open Data Two Years After the Revolution." *Tunisia Live*, Apr. 10, 2013. http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/12/24/tunisian-bloggers-address-challenges-of-open-data-two-years-on/.

57. Shirky, Clay. "The Political Power of Social Media." *Foreign Affairs* 90 (Jan/Feb 2011): 32.

58. Smith, Catherine. "Egypt's Facebook Revolution: Wael Ghonim Thanks the Social Network." *Huffington Post*, Mar. 23, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ 2011/02/ 11/egypt-facebook-revolution-wael-ghonim_n_822078.html.

59. Spot On Public Relations. "Strong MENA Interests in Mobile Apps," Jan. 31, 2011. http://www.spotonpr.com/tag/statistics/.

60. Social Bakers. "Facebook Statistics by Country." Apr. 9, 2011. http://www.socialbakers. com/facebook-statistics/?interval=last-3-months#chart-intervals.

61. Social Bakers. "Facebook Statistics by Country." Apr. 22, 2011. http://www.socialbakers. com/facebook-statistics/.

62. Sysomos Incorporated. "Inside Blog Demographics." Jun. 2010. http://www.sysomos. com/reports/bloggers/.

63. Thorne, John. "Pre-Revolution Tunisians were growing gloomier, polls show." *The National*, Jun. 27, 2011. http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/africa/pre-revolution-tunisians-were-growing-gloomier-poll-shows.

64. Wroughton, Lesley. "IMF, Egypt say working to reach loan deal in 'coming weeks.'" *Reuters*, Apr 21, 2013. http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/21/us-imf-egypt-idUSBRE93K0GH20130421.

65. Yemen Bloggers. "About Us." (2013). http://yemenbloggers.wordpress.com/about-us/.

66. YouTube. "Statistics." (2013). http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html.

67. Zakaria, Fareed. "Why There's No Turning Back in the Middle East." *Time*, Feb. 17, 2011. http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049804,00.html.